



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2021) 2365 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 3 March 2021

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2365th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 3 February 2021

(morning)

PV(2021) 2365 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 3 February 2021 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.08 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair. Items 9.2 to 9.4 were chaired by Mr TIMMERMANS.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	Items 1 to 9.1
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 1 to 9.3 (in part)
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	Items 1 to 9.3 (in part)
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	Items 1 to 9.3 (in part)
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member

The following sat in to represent an absent Member of the Commission:

Mr SCICLUNA	Chef de cabinet to Ms ŠUICA
Ms KIRÁLY	Chef de cabinet to Ms GABRIEL
Mr ELING	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ
Mr KRISTÓFFY	Chef de cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 9.1
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms DEPREZ, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2021) 2365/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2365/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2021) 2365)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 1 February 2021.

3. APPROVAL OF THE 2362ND, 2363RD AND 2364TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (14, 19 AND 27 JANUARY 2021)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2362nd, 2363rd and 2364th meetings for a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2021) 7)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 29 January 2021 (RCC(2021) 7).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL ITEMS

i) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Trilogues

(point 1.1.1 of the IRG record)

- European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund (Regulation)
– COZZOLINO report – 2018/0197 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 20.

ii) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – European Parliament dossiers – February 2021 part-session

(point 1.1.2 of the IRG record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading

- Recovery and Resilience Facility (Regulation) – MUREȘAN & GARDÍAZABAL RUBIAL & PÎSLARU report – 2020/0104 (COD)

The Commission took note of the compromise text in SP(2021) 46, further to note SI(2020) 517/3, which it had already approved by written procedure on 22 December 2020.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

iii) Trilogues

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Framework for achieving climate neutrality and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 (European Climate Law) (Regulation) – GUTELAND report – 2020/0036 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 25.

iv) European Parliament dossiers – February 2021 part-session

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading

- Amendment of Council Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 as regards temporary relief from the slot utilisation rules at Community airports due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Regulation) – 2020/0358 (COD)

The Commission took note of the compromise text in SP(2021) 43, further to note SI(2021) 19, which it had already approved on 27 January 2021.

- Laying-down of specific and temporary measures in view of the COVID-19 outbreak concerning the renewal or extension of certain certificates, licences and authorisations and the postponement of certain periodic checks and periodic training in certain areas of transport legislation, for reference periods subsequent to those referred to in Regulation (EU) 2020/698 (Regulation) – 2021/0012 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2021) 44.

- Amendment of Directive 2014/65/EU as regards information requirements, product governance and position limits to help the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (Directive) – FERBER report – 2020/0152 (COD) / Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/1129 as regards the EU Recovery prospectus and targeted adjustments for financial intermediaries to help the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (Regulation) – KOVARÍK report – 2020/0155 (COD)

The Commission took note of the compromise text in SP(2021) 47 and SP(2021) 48, further to notes SI(2020) 482 and SI(2020) 481/2, which it had already approved on 15 December 2020.

v) Council dossiers

(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

- Amendment of Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/1475 of 13 October 2020 on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Council Recommendation) – 2021/0021 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 31.

- Temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction, amending Council Recommendation 2020/912 (Council Recommendation) – 2021/0023 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 32/2.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

vi) Non-Legislative matters

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

- Negotiations for the modernisation of the Energy Charter Treaty: definition of ‘Economic Activity in the Energy Sector’

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 28/2.

4.4. OTHER BUSINESS

- vii) Conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part, and of the Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning security procedures**

for exchanging and protecting classified information (Council decision) – 2020/0382 (NLE)

The Commission noted that this item had been held over to a subsequent GRI meeting.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2021) 13)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2021) 13 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 27 January 2021.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
SEC(2021) 53 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 25 and 29 January 2021.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
SEC(2021) 54 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 25 and 29 January 2021.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
SEC(2021) 55 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 25 and 30 January 2021 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2021) 56)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 1 and 5 February 2021.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2021) 57/3 AND /4)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2021) 10 AND /2)

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr HAHN presented two proposals for administrative decisions that were being submitted directly to the College for approval.

Mr HAHN explained that it was first proposed to appoint Ms Alexandra JOUR-SCHROEDER to the post of Deputy Director-General of DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, in charge of Directorates C, D and E.

He highlighted Ms JOUR-SCHROEDER's outstanding skills, remarkable career and recognised expertise, which would be valuable assets in her new post.

He added that it was also proposed to authorise the internal publication at grade AD15/16 of the vacancy notice for the post of Director-General of DG Informatics.

7.1. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16 DEPUTY

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

(PERS(2021) 13 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates C, D and E in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (PERS(2021) 13).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 11 and 29 January 2021 (PERS(2021) 13/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms McGUINNESS, it then decided to appoint Ms Alexandra JOUR-SCHROEDER to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

***7.2. DG INFORMATICS – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL POST
(PERS(2021) 14)***

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided:

- to authorise the publication of the vacancy notice for the post of Director-General of DG Informatics, as set out in PERS(2021) 14, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) of the Staff Regulations.
- to authorise Mr HAHN to decide, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, on the date and duration of the publication of this post.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.3. DG INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – EXTENSION OF THE
SECONDMENT OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL IN THE INTEREST OF THE
SERVICE UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF
REGULATIONS**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms URPILAINEN, the Commission decided to extend by one year the secondment in the interest of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, of Mr Anders HENRIKSSON, an AD15 official and currently Chief Adviser in DG International Partnerships, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

This decision would take effect on 1 May 2021.

**7.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF LISTS
OF CANDIDATES FOR HEAD OF EU DELEGATION POSTS AT
GRADES AD14/15
(PERS(2021) 11)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the lists of candidates for the posts of Head of the EU Delegation to Mexico (at grade AD14/15) and Head of the EU Delegation to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva (AD14/15) set out in PERS(2021) 11.

The competent authority of the European External Action Service would make the final appointments on the basis of these lists.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.5. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / DG BUDGET / DG HUMAN RESOURCES
AND SECURITY – OPENING OF A EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION
IN QATAR
(PERS(2021) 12)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 3 of PERS(2021) 10 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr BORRELL, Mr DOMBROVSKIS, Mr LENARČIČ, Ms URPILAINEN and Mr VÁRHELYI, decided:

- to agree to the opening of a European Union delegation in Qatar, based in Doha;
- to take note of the financial statement in PERS(2021) 12 evaluating the budgetary impact of this measure, while underlining that its implementation would have to take into account existing budgetary constraints;
- to note that any decision connected with the above decision to open the delegation and relating to the adoption of the new organisation chart or amendments to existing ones, and any decision to (re)deploy Commission resources, would have to be adopted in accordance with the cooperation procedures agreed by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with internal procedures at the Commission.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.6. COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES
OF FOUR FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION
(C(2021) 9001; C(2021) 9002; C(2021) 9003; C(2021) 9004)**

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2021) 9001, C(2021) 9002, C(2021) 9003 and C(2021) 9004.

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Günther OETTINGER, Mr Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS, Mr Christos STYLIANIDES and Ms Elżbieta BIENKOWSKA after leaving office as Members of the Commission were compatible with Article 245(2) of the

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – EUROPE’S BEATING CANCER PLAN

(COM(2021) 44 TO /3; SWD(2021) 13; RCC(2021) 10)

The PRESIDENT opened the discussion on the Communication entitled ‘Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan’, which was submitted to the College for approval that day.

She sincerely congratulated Ms KYRIAKIDES on her determination, together with Mr SCHINAS, to draw attention to those who were suffering or had suffered from cancer in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She noted the scale of the task to be carried out to strengthen prevention and early detection of cancer, which were the most effective methods of beating the disease, while expressing concern that COVID-19 currently represented an obstacle to the rapid treatment of those affected.

Mr SCHINAS underlined the importance of this initiative for the European Health Union, adding that it responded to one of the major demands made during the European election campaign in 2019.

He saw in this plan to beat cancer a very good example of a comprehensive policy initiative because, in addition to health, it encompassed other policy areas such as employment, education, climate, energy, agriculture, digitalisation, transport, social policy, research and even taxation.

He added that this plan illustrated what the EU could do best, namely, the proposal of an action plan comprising goals, deadlines, funding, partnerships and flagship measures, for the benefit of European citizens.

Ms KYRIAKIDES first of all highlighted the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic had precipitated a sharp fall in the number of cases of cancer detected and treated in recent months, because fewer people were going to the doctor or hospital due to fear of the virus. She therefore predicted an increase in the number of cases in the future.

She then confirmed the comprehensive approach of the Beating Cancer Plan, which took into account a great number of elements and comprised specific measures, ranging from prevention to early detection and encompassed treatments and quality of life of cancer patients and survivors. She noted, for example, that one of the ideas proposed was to create a 'Knowledge Centre on Cancer' in order to facilitate the coordination of scientific and technical initiatives in this area at EU level, encourage cancer prevention, develop treatments with the aid of new research and an innovative ecosystem, and step up vaccinations to combat cancer caused by human papillomavirus.

She said that one of the key elements of the Beating Cancer Plan was the creation of a working group responsible for monitoring its implementation, in order to ensure that regular progress was made.

She added that, under the plan, investments of almost EUR 4 billion would be made from the *Horizon Europe* and *EU4Health* programmes.

She concluded by underlining that the European Commission could be proud of the collective work accomplished thanks to this crucially important initiative.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the broad support for this very important initiative, the balance, ambition and timeliness of which were highlighted;

- the reminder of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was not the only major public health issue with which the EU was confronted, given that cancer had also claimed numerous victims across Europe;
- the observation that cancer, like the COVID-19 pandemic, was the result of an imbalance between lifestyle and natural environment;
- the call for a more active fight against cancer risks linked to tobacco consumption, as well as against cigarette smuggling, while recognising the importance of protecting EU tobacco producers;
- a mention that workers were still at risk of exposure to carcinogenic substances, particularly asbestos, in working environments;
- the welcome inclusion of air pollution among the causes of premature death in the EU to be taken into consideration;
- the recognition of the risk of an increase in the number of cases of cancer linked to the current incapacity of healthcare systems to invest sufficient resources in early detection, because of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the recognition of the limited resources of healthcare workers with sufficient specific training in cancer;
- the need to guarantee equal access to quality treatment throughout the EU, without distinction between urban and rural areas, and to build the corresponding infrastructure, if necessary;
- appreciation of the fact that the proposed plan paid particular attention to children;
- the importance of ensuring that workers who had survived cancer but who were unable to continue to perform their duties, for example because of the negative impact of treatment on their physical condition, could reskill;

- the key role played by Europe as regards ionising radiation applications of nuclear and radiation technology and the need to avoid future shortages of radioisotopes;
- the reminder that the EU was the global leader in the supply of medical radioisotopes, with a market share of more than 60% for some of the most-used radioisotopes, and that some of the most important recent pharmaceutical and clinical developments in cancer treatment had taken place there, thanks to nuclear medicine;
- the call not to fund campaigns and initiatives that would, directly or indirectly, result in an increase in health risks;
- the need to find a balanced approach with regard to the recommendations addressed to citizens about healthy food;
- the support that the plan would receive from the European Parliament.

The PRESIDENT again thanked Mr SCHINAS and Ms KYRIAKIDES for their excellent work. She welcomed the presentation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, since the struggle of those who battled cancer was a struggle shared by everyone in Europe.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2021) 44/3 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments, accompanied by the synopsis report on the stakeholder consultation in document SWD(2021) 13, the contents of which were noted.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. SITUATION REGARDING COVID VACCINES

The PRESIDENT returned to the issues related to vaccine availability and the epidemiological situation in the EU.

She began by assessing the progress made to date; three vaccines had been authorised in the EU just ten months after the World Health Organization had classified the COVID-19 epidemic as a pandemic, whereas vaccine development usually took between five and ten years. She hailed this remarkable and unprecedented outcome.

In her view, the facts today proved that the Commission had made the right choices, both in selecting its vaccine portfolio and in its strategy to support vaccine production. She pointed out that EU-based companies whose vaccines had been authorised were today supplying the whole world.

She reported on the emergence of variants that were spreading extremely rapidly, which was an issue causing concern. She stressed that it would take months to develop and produce new vaccines if new variants demanded it, but that preparations should be made here and now to deal with any such eventuality.

The Commission took note of this information.

9.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr BORRELL briefed the College on the latest developments in external relations.

He began by referring to the military coup in Myanmar, then turned to the situation in Venezuela. He added that at the most recent meeting of the 'Foreign Affairs' Council, the EU ministers had also discussed relations with

the United States. Finally, he moved on to the situation in Russia.

9.3. PREPARATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY – STATE OF PLAY

At the invitation of Mr TIMMERMANS, Mr DOMBROVSKIS reported to the College on the state of play of the work on the European Recovery and Resilience Facility, which was the centrepiece of the NextGenerationEU recovery plan.

This Facility would support the reforms and investments undertaken by the Member States to mitigate the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby fostering a sustainable and inclusive recovery and laying the foundations of a stronger, more resilient Europe better prepared for the challenges of the green and digital transitions.

Although the European Parliament and the Council still had to officially approve the Regulation establishing the Facility so that it could come into force as soon as possible, the political agreement between the two institutions reached on 18 December called on the Member States to finalise their national recovery and resilience plans so that they could access the unprecedented funding made available by the Facility through loans and grants of up to EUR 672.5 billion.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS reported first on the national plans submitted to the Commission.

With the exception of three Member States, they all intended to formally submit their plans to the Commission before the end of April, and most of them had already communicated to the Commission draft plans or an overview of their main elements. Nine Member States could submit their formal plans by the end of February or the beginning of March.

At this stage, only four Member States intended to apply for loans: Greece,

Hungary, Italy and Slovenia.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS then explained the timetable, which tied in with that of the European Semester of economic and budgetary policy coordination. Once a Member State had formally submitted its plan, the Commission had to assess it and give its opinion on its content by means of a delegated act within two months, after which the Council would have four weeks to approve the implementing decision.

The first disbursements could take place in the summer, provided that all the Member States had ratified the Own Resources Decision by then. Otherwise, as the Member States must be well aware, the Commission would not be able to borrow on the capital markets.

At its last meeting on 27 January, the Facility's Steering Board had discussed the possibility of frontloading certain plans in the interests of stabilisation. The Board would return to this issue in the near future in the light of the Commission's funding capacity in 2021.

Lastly, Mr DOMBROVSKIS referred to the content of the national recovery and resilience plans.

He began by underlining that it was important to ensure a balance between investment and reforms, as pointed out by the Steering Board.

Although the Member States appeared to be moderately willing to undertake ambitious reforms, consideration could nonetheless be given to introducing reforms that fostered the rapid absorption of investments, particularly in order to improve the business environment and administrative capacity. Consideration could also be given to introducing structural reforms (for example, of the labour market, the pension system and taxation) to promote social and economic resilience. In this context, he stressed that fair reform requirements needed to be set for the Member States.

To receive support under the Facility, the national recovery and resilience plans were expected to contribute to effectively addressing all or a significant subset of the difficulties identified in the country-specific recommendations issued by the Council to the Member States under the European Semester. A degree of prioritisation would be allowed with regard to reform and investment under the conditions laid down in the guidelines for the Member States published on 22 January 2021.

Apart from resilience, which should feature prominently in the national plans, a minimum of 37% of the planned expenditure under the plans should support the green transition and 20% the digital transition. The information available at this stage suggested that the investments envisaged by the Member States should be consistent with these objectives.

Lastly, he stressed that when designing their investments, Member States should take EU sustainable investment criteria into account. The Commission would shortly draw up guidelines on this point.

In conclusion, Mr DOMBROVSKIS said that the coming months would be crucial. The Commission would be working hand in hand with the national authorities in drawing up and implementing ambitious and credible national plans to ensure the success of efforts not just to rebuild the European economy but also to transform it.

Mr GENTILONI stressed that, coming as it did on top of the measures taken by the Member States since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Facility had unprecedented firepower.

This added value should make it possible to manage common priorities, introduce long-awaited reforms and take into account the varying situations in different Member States in kick-starting their recoveries, to prevent the further widening of divergences.

To ensure a level playing field for all Member States, they needed to be provided with general policy guidelines on the requirements that the reforms needed to address. Member States should also be given general criteria for interpreting the requirement to address ‘all or a significant subset’ of the difficulties identified in the country-specific recommendations to the Member States issued in the context of the European Semester.

He called for all possible support to be given to the Member States to encourage them to use loans and not just grants.

He confirmed that the Commission could only start to borrow on the capital markets in August 2021 if the Own Resources Decision had been ratified by each of the Member States. There was a risk that three of them might not have ratified it by the end of April, which would jeopardise the planned timetable.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the need for the College to take political ownership of the stages of preparing implementation of the European Recovery and Resilience Facility. Far from being purely technical, the Facility was an initiative on an unprecedented scale of crucial importance for the future of Europe;
- hence a call for this item to be included regularly on the agenda of Commission meetings so that the College could be informed of progress;
- a call for special vigilance with regard to implementation of this Facility in order to manage the associated risks and avoid pitfalls; this was an essential requirement if it was subsequently to be envisaged as a permanent economic governance tool;
- a call for the Facility to build on the well-established European Semester exercise, recognised as solid and useful by the Member States, by

ensuring that the national recovery and resilience plans were closely linked to the strategic guidelines provided in the country-specific recommendations;

- the importance of ensuring the quality and credibility of the content of the national plans so that the Commission could attract investors on the capital markets;
- in this regard, the observation that due to the prolongation of the current crisis, access to the capital markets was tighter and could become even more so as a result of the measures the EU's international partners might adopt;
- the strong demand that existed for green bonds; hence the desirability of defining green bonds and providing reliable guarantees that 37% of the projects included in the national plans would effectively generate these bonds;
- a call not to exclude certain entire sectors automatically on the grounds that they did not meet environmental requirements; the need for a more detailed analysis, above all pending a College debate on taxonomy;
- recognition of the reluctance of some Member States to opt for loans, which would increase indebtedness; at the same time, however, the suggestion that the role of loans in the projects should be highlighted and debt conversion scenarios discussed with the finance ministers;
- the vital importance of treating the Member States on an equal footing;
- the need to ensure that the Member States took ownership of their own plans, particularly in the interests of effective implementation of their content;
- whether it was realistic for the Own Resources Decision to be ratified by

all the Member States in time for the Commission to be able to borrow on capital markets in the summer;

- the usefulness of synergies between certain policies, in particular between the recovery and resilience plans and the Common Agricultural Policy.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS reiterated the value of guidelines for meeting the investment targets in the green and digital priorities and ensuring consistency with the country-specific recommendations in the context of the European Semester.

It was also important to specify the eligible investments and how the Recovery and Resilience Facility tied in with other sources of European funding.

Mr TIMMERMANS thanked Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr GENTILONI for their explanations, which had enabled a productive and welcome exchange on a key issue for European integration.

In conclusion, he noted the College's desire for political ownership and for continued involvement in the process of preparing implementation of the various elements of the European Recovery and Resilience Facility.

The Commission took note of this information.

**9.4. GUIDANCE ON THE AVOIDANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF
CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS – APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 61 OF
THE 2018 FINANCIAL REGULATION WITH A VIEW TO THE FINAL
DISCHARGE
(INFO(2021) 2)**

At Mr TIMMERMANS' invitation, Mr HAHN drew the College's attention to the guidance drawn up in collaboration with the European Parliament and the Member States in order to highlight the rules applicable to combatting and

handling conflicts of interests, whatever the form of management of the European funds concerned.

He reminded the meeting that at the end of the discharge procedure for the 2018 budget year, measures to strengthen protection of the EU's financial interests had been added to the Financial Regulation.

Article 61 was one such addition, extending the rules on conflicts of interests to any person involved in budget implementation under direct, indirect and shared management, and covering situations which might objectively be perceived as a conflict of interests.

The purpose of the guidance was to promote uniform interpretation and application of these rules in respect of the financial actors and staff of the EU institutions and of the Member States involved in the implementation, monitoring or auditing of the use of EU funds, whatever their form of management. It would also serve to raise awareness of the provisions on conflicts of interests amongst the Member States and external partners involved in implementation of the EU budget.

Mr HAHN concluded by asking the Members of the Commission to take note of this guidance, which formed part of the Commission's continual efforts to strengthen the fight against conflicts of interests. The guidance would be published shortly.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

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The meeting closed at 12.41.