



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2021) 2368 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 17 March 2021

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2368th meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 24 February 2021
(morning)**

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PV(2021) 2368 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	5-6
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2021) 2368/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2368/FINAL)	7
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2021) 2368)	7
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2365 TH , 2366 TH AND 2367 TH COMMISSION MEETINGS (3, 9 AND 17 FEBRUARY 2021)	7
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2021) 65)	7
4.1. HORIZONTAL ITEMS	8
4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS	8
4.3. RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS, THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS	8
5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2021) 16)	9
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS	9
6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2021) 81 ET SEQ.)	9
6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2021) 82 ET SEQ.)	9
6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2021) 83 ET SEQ.)	10
6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2021) 84 AND /2)	10
7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2021) 85)	10
7.1. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – GENERAL PROVISIONS	10
7.2. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 103)	11

7.3. DG CLIMATE ACTION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 104).....	11
7.4. DG COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 105)	12
7.5. DG DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND SPACE – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 106)	13
7.6. DG EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 107)	13
7.7. DG ENERGY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 108).....	13
7.8. DG ENVIRONMENT – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 109).....	14
7.9. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMEs – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 110)	14
7.10. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 111)	15
7.11. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 112)	16
7.12. DG MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 113)	16
7.13. DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 114)	16
7.14. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 115)	17
7.15. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 116)	19
7.16. COMMISSION BUILDINGS POLICY AND STAFF SUPPORT MEASURES DURING LOCKDOWN	20
8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS –	

FORGING A CLIMATE-RESILIENT EUROPE – THE NEW EU STRATEGY ON ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE (COM(2021) 82 TO /3; SWD(2021) 25; SWD(2021) 26; SEC(2021) 89; RCC(2021) 71).....	21
9. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – FIRST PHASE CONSULTATION OF SOCIAL PARTNERS UNDER ARTICLE 154 TFEU ON POSSIBLE ACTION ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES RELATED TO WORKING CONDITIONS IN PLATFORM WORK (C(2021) 1127 AND /2; RCC(2021) 70)	26
10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON ROAMING ON PUBLIC MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS WITHIN THE UNION (RECAST) (COM(2021) 85 AND /2; SWD(2021) 27; SWD(2021) 28; SWD(2021) 29; SEC(2021) 90; RCC(2021) 72)	31
11. OTHER BUSINESS.....	33
11.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS.....	33
11.2. STATE OF PLAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY.....	33

Single sitting: Wednesday 24 February 2021 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.08 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative/ Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	Items 1 to 10
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	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	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

The following also sat in:

Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr WHELAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 10
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 9
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) 2368/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2368/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) 2368)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 22 February 2021.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2365TH, 2366TH AND 2367TH COMMISSION MEETINGS (3, 9 AND 17 FEBRUARY 2021)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2365th, 2366th and 2367th meetings for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2021) 65)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 19 February 2021 (RCC(2021) 65).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL ITEMS

i) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Council dossiers

(point 1.1.3 of the IRG record)

- Establishment of Horizon Europe – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and laying-down of its rules for participation and dissemination (Regulation) – NICA report – 2018/0224 (COD) / Establishment of the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – The Framework programme for Research and Innovation (Decision) – EHLEER report – 2018/0225 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 56.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

ii) Trilogues

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Conditions for accessing the other EU information systems and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/1862 and Regulation (EU) yyyy/xxx [ECRIS-TCN] (Regulation) – LENAERS report – 2019/0001 (COD) / Conditions for accessing other EU information systems for ETIAS purposes and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/1240, Regulation (EC) No 767/2008, Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 and Regulation (EU) 2018/1861 (Regulation) – LENAERS report – 2019/0002 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2021) 55.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS, THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

iii) Follow-up to opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee – Plenary session of September 2020

(point 6.3.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SC(2021) 4/4 on the follow-up by the Commission to the opinions adopted by the European Economic and Social Committee during the September 2020 session, for transmission to that Committee.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION

(RCC(2021) 16)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2021) 16 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 17 February 2021.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2021) 81 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 15 and 19 February 2021.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2021) 82 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 15 and 20 February 2021.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2021) 83 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 15 and 21 February 2021 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2021) 84 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 22 and 26 February 2021.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2021) 85)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2021) 19)

7.1. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Commission took note of the information in point 1 of PERS(2021) 19 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, in the context of the establishment of executive agencies, decided:

- to withdraw the delegation giving the Directors-General concerned the power to adopt changes to the organisation chart and, consequently, to exercise itself the powers regarding these changes to the organisation charts;
- to confirm the application, by analogy, to the executive agencies – without prejudice to their own procedures – of the rules laid down in the

Communication of 31 July 2017 on the organisation charts of the Directorates-General and Services (C(2017) 5231);

- to confirm the transfer of the management selection and appointment procedures started in the temporary mirror entities specifically created by Commission Decision of 19 January 2021 (PV(2021) 2363) for the establishment of the European Health and Digital Executive Agency to the corresponding secondment functions in the organisation charts of the Directorates-General concerned.

7.2. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 103)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reallocation of two seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 103.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.3. DG CLIMATE ACTION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 104)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr TIMMERMANS, the Commission decided to approve:

- the creation of two seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of two Heads of Unit to the European Climate, Infrastructure and

Environment Executive Agency;

- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 104.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.4. DG COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2021) 105)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of two existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, and the suppression of one post;
- the creation of two seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of two Heads of Unit to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
- the creation of two seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of one Head of Unit as Head of Department and of one Head of Unit to the European Health and Digital Executive Agency;
- the suppression of the unit ‘Future and Emerging Technologies’ (CNECT.C.3);
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 105.

After the reorganisation, the total number of directorates in DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology would remain the same and the total number of units (excluding the mirror entities) would decrease from 43 to 42.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

**7.5. DG DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND SPACE – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 106)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of two existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 106.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

**7.6. DG EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 107)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms GABRIEL, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of an existing Principal Adviser post and of 19 existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 107.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

**7.7. DG ENERGY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 108)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms SIMSON, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of three existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, and the suppression of one post;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 108.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.8. DG ENVIRONMENT – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 109)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr SINKEVIČIUS, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of an existing seconded Head of Unit post, created to allow secondment of a Head of Unit to an Executive Agency during the previous delegation period;
- the creation of a seconded Head of Unit post to allow the secondment of a Head of Unit as Head of Department of the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 109.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.9. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMEs – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 110)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of two existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, and the suppression of two posts;
- the suppression of a Principal Adviser post created to allow the secondment of an official to the post of Director of the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises during the previous delegation period;
- the creation of a seconded Head of Unit post to allow the secondment of a Head of Unit to the European Health and Digital Executive Agency;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 110.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

**7.10. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 111)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms JOHANSSON, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of an existing seconded Head of Unit post, created to allow secondment of a Head of Unit to an executive agency during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 111.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.11. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 112)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr REYNDERS, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of two existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 112.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.12. DG MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 113)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr SINKEVIČIUS, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of an existing seconded Head of Unit post, created to allow secondment of a Head of Unit to an executive agency during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 113.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.13. DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 114)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms VĂLEAN, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of an existing Director post and of nine existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, without changing the total number of posts;
- the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2021) 114.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.14. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 115)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms GABRIEL, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of two existing Principal Advisor posts, created to allow secondments, and of 28 existing seconded Head of Unit posts, created to allow secondments to executive agencies during the previous delegation period, and the suppression of a post;
- the creation of a Principal Advisor post to allow the secondment of an official to the post of Director of the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
- the transfer in the interest of the service of Mr Jean-David MALO, currently Head of the European Innovation Council task force at Director level, to the newly-created post of Principal Advisor, and his secondment to the post of Director of the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;

- the creation of five seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of a Head of Unit as Head of Department and of four Heads of Unit to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
- the creation of a post of seconded advisor to allow the secondment of an official as advisor to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency;
- the creation of six seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of two Heads of Unit as Heads of Department and of four Heads of Unit to the European Research Executive Agency;
- the creation of two seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of two Heads of Unit to the European Health and Digital Executive Agency;
- the suppression of a vacant post of Deputy Director-General responsible for Science and Policy Transitions;
- the suppression, at directorate level, of the European Innovation Council Task Force (RTD.TF);
- the net suppression of seven units;
- the transfer in the interest of the service of Ms Anna PANAGOPOULOU, currently Director of the Common Implementation Centre (RTD.B), to the post of Director of the ‘ERA and Innovation’ Directorate (RTD.A);
- the new organisation chart, as set out in document SEC(2021) 115.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of directorates in DG Research and Innovation was reduced from 10 to 9, and the number of units (excluding mirror entities) was reduced from 50 to 43.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

**7.15. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY – AMENDMENT OF THE
ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2021) 116)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms KYRIADES, the Commission decided to approve:

- the reassignment of an existing seconded Head of Unit post, created to allow the secondment of a Head of Unit to an executive agency during the previous delegation period, and the suppression of a post;
- the creation of a Principal Advisor post in Brussels to allow the secondment of an official to the post of Director in the European Health and Digital Executive Agency;
- the creation in Brussels of four seconded Head of Unit posts to allow the secondment of a Head of Unit as Head of Department and of three Heads of Unit to the European Health and Digital Executive Agency;
- the creation, in Luxembourg, of a permanent post of Principal Advisor responsible for non-communicable diseases;
- the reinstatement of Ms Véronique WASBAUER in this newly-created post of Principal Advisor responsible for non-communicable diseases, at the end of her secondment as Director of the Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency;
- the relocation, as a temporary function, from Luxembourg to Brussels, of the function of Principal Advisor for Health and Crisis Management;
- the new organisation chart, as set out in document SEC(2021) 116.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2021.

7.16. COMMISSION BUILDINGS POLICY AND STAFF SUPPORT MEASURES DURING LOCKDOWN

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr HAHN outlined the guiding principles of the Commission's buildings policy for the period between 2021 and 2030.

After giving an overview of the situation in Brussels, he explained that the Commission would need to be able to rationalise the management of the buildings it occupied around thematic clusters grouping the DGs by policy area, and thus pursue a more strategic approach.

In its vision of the future, the Commission would need to anticipate the new working arrangements arising from the COVID-19 pandemic while implementing in a practical way its ambition of modernising, 'greening' and digitising, the objective being to favour highly energy-efficient buildings and make every square metre greener with a view to reducing the Commission's carbon footprint.

The new buildings policy he had just outlined would be implemented gradually over a period of ten years. It would make it possible to provide a work environment that met staff needs, with the human dimension at the heart of the Commission's concerns.

In the same vein, Mr HAHN stressed that protecting the mental health and the well-being of staff in the teleworking situation that had been in place nearly across the board for almost a year was a key priority for the Commission.

He noted that the Commission's staff had shown an impressive capacity for adaptation and productivity. However, the difficulties facing them should not be downplayed. In the regular surveys carried out on staff on how they were coping with the current circumstances, digital overload, overtime and difficulties achieving a work-life balance were often mentioned. He pointed

out that 18% of staff regarded social isolation as the main challenge to be addressed in the current work situation.

He listed a number of measures implemented by the Commission to provide support to active staff members and pensioners alike. In particular, he referred to the psychosocial assistance provided, the organisation of virtual interactive events including training on mindfulness and well-being, and support for mutual support initiatives.

Finally, Mr HAHN invited the members of the College to communicate on these measures using concrete examples and to monitor the well-being of their teams and departments, whose exceptional commitment and professionalism were appreciated.

The PRESIDENT stressed the importance of anticipating changes in working arrangements and of assessing far enough in advance the advantages and disadvantages of potentially reorganising work spaces, with a view to providing appropriate structural solutions and lending support during the ensuing change.

The Commission took note of this information.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – FORGING A CLIMATE-RESILIENT EUROPE – THE NEW EU STRATEGY ON ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
(COM(2021) 82 TO /3; SWD(2021) 25; SWD(2021) 26; SEC(2021) 89; RCC(2021) 71)**

Mr TIMMERMANS presented the Communication entitled ‘Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change’, which was submitted to the College for approval.

He pointed out that adaptation to global warming could no longer be neglected in the climate equation and that preparations now had to be made for changes that had unfortunately become inevitable, while climate crises and biodiversity loss still had to be tackled in order to avoid a further deterioration of the situation. He stressed that, even if all future greenhouse gas emissions were eliminated, the world would still have to manage the effects of past emissions for decades to come.

For that reason, the new strategy, building on the 2013 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, aimed to shift the focus from understanding the problem to developing solutions, to align with the Paris Agreement and the proposed European Climate Law.

Mr TIMMERMANS considered that, by taking a whole-economy approach, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable in order to ensure fair and equitable resilience, this strategy would contribute to making the European Union not only climate neutral, but also climate resilient by 2050.

In addition, the aim was to work towards smarter, swifter and more systemic adaptation to give new impetus to the EU’s international efforts in this area, particularly by supporting its international partners.

He said that, in order to make adaptation smarter, the strategy focused primarily on improving knowledge and data availability, beyond the uncertainty inherent in climate change. He also wished to make Climate-ADAPT the authoritative European platform for climate change adaptation knowledge.

He added that, in this context, the EU would also start to assess the health impact of the climate crisis through the creation of a new Climate Health Observatory, and

would look at the direct impact of extreme temperature variations on the development of new diseases.

He then noted that, because climate change affected all levels of society and all sectors of the economy, adaptation actions had to be systemic.

Therefore, the Commission would continue to support the development and implementation of climate change adaptation strategies and plans addressing three cross-cutting priorities, namely (i) integrating adaptation into macro-fiscal policy, (ii) fostering nature-based adaptation solutions, and (iii) encouraging local adaptation measures.

Finally, in order to speed up adaption, he underlined that it would be necessary to bridge the gap between planning and implementation on the one hand, and to reduce climate risk, on the other. To take one example, he pointed out that fresh water would be one of the main climate change adaptation battlegrounds, as there would often be too much or too little, depending on the region, so that more would have to be done to protect the quality and quantity of water in Europe.

Mr TIMMERMANS explained that the Commission intended to step up collaboration with the insurance sector because of the significant climate protection gaps within the EU, the financial burden of which too often fell on uninsured families and businesses or public finances in the event of natural disasters.

Finally, he pointed out that climate change adaptation policies had to reflect the EU's role as a global leader in climate change mitigation. He added that the Paris Agreement had established climate change adaptation as a global goal, thereby making it a key factor in sustainable development. The EU would therefore promote sub-national, national and regional approaches to adaptation, with a particular focus on Africa and Small Island Developing States.

He also pointed out that the EU would continue to promote resilience and climate change preparedness at international level by scaling up funding, for example

through the EU's instruments for external action, and by strengthening global engagement.

Mr TIMMERMANS concluded his presentation with the observation that the EU and its Member States were doing their share of the work needed. He stated that they had increased their overall climate finance support to EUR 21.9 billion in 2019, of which 52% had been used to help the EU's partners adapt to climate change.

He stressed that by intensifying work on adaptation, the EU was now giving itself the means to better prepare for the inevitable changes that the planet would face in the future.

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

- the recognition of the recurrence of extreme weather events, which put the most disadvantaged people and coastal regions at greater risk;
- the importance of defining an appropriate strategy in good time to allow the many challenges ahead to be overcome, using a wide range of tools that addressed the multifaceted consequences of the climate crisis;
- the relevance of the strategy's focus on ecosystem health and the development of nature-based solutions, given the important role that oceans and forests were expected to play in the process of adaptation to climate change;
- the contribution that the EU's climate change adaptation capacity would make toward building resilience, which in turn depended to a large extent on the health of ecosystems;
- the recognition in the strategy of the profound transformations it entailed in all sectors of the economy and society;

- the particular attention to be paid to sustainable water management, which was a crucial element of the EU's proposed action on soil and forest management and would soon be the subject of specific initiatives by the Commission;
- the central role of agriculture in implementing the strategy and the importance of supporting farmers, who were often the direct victims of the consequences of climate change;
- the desirability of using all the instruments available under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy for this purpose;
- the importance of fully integrating the international dimension of the strategy in order to promote the EU's climate diplomacy and support its partners' adaptation efforts in order to act at global level;
- the explicit support expressed by the Member States for this dimension and the need to step up EU financial support by mobilising private finance as far as possible;
- the key role to be played by EU research and innovation policy in the development of climate adaptation technologies in line with local realities;
- the value of the European Union Solidarity Fund as the most important and visible solidarity-based response implemented by the EU and intended to be mobilised regularly in the climate change adaptation process;
- a reminder of the consequences of climate change as regards increasing levels of poverty and lesser access to education, and its impact on inequality and on the most vulnerable groups, particularly women, in developing countries that were particularly affected;
- the need to prioritise people with disabilities, who were particularly vulnerable to disruption to critical infrastructure due to climate change;

- the value of engaging in close cooperation with the insurance sector in order to develop instruments that would ensure adequate cover for damage caused by climate change.

Mr TIMMERMANS ended the discussion by reiterating the extent to which the effects of climate change were already being felt both inside and outside the European Union. He considered that the new strategy would make it possible to speed up and deepen preparations for strengthening the EU's adaptation capacities, a prerequisite for a climate-resilient future.

Following this presentation, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2021) 82/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2021) 25, SWD(2021) 26 and SEC(2021) 89, the contents of which were noted.

**9. CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – FIRST PHASE CONSULTATION OF SOCIAL PARTNERS UNDER ARTICLE 154 TFEU ON POSSIBLE ACTION ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES RELATED TO WORKING CONDITIONS IN PLATFORM WORK
(C(2021) 1127 AND /2; RCC(2021) 70)**

The PRESIDENT asked Ms VESTAGER, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr SCHMIT to present to the College the document submitted for its approval with a view to launching the first phase of the consultation of the social partners, under Article 154(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on possible action addressing the challenges related to working conditions in platform work.

Ms VESTAGER began by noting that the discussion to be launched on improving

the working conditions of people working through digital platforms was particularly justified since this new way of working was set to continue in the long term and the pandemic had accelerated the expansion of online work, bringing profound transformations for the economy and society. It was therefore important to look at ways of turning it into a sustainable growth model.

She pointed out that it was estimated that around 24 million people provided services through online or on-location labour platforms, but that these activities constituted the main employment of only 3 million of these.

Highlighting the sometimes precarious working conditions of platform workers was part of the Commission's efforts to ensure greater fairness by ensuring that European values were integrated in the digital economy.

Thus, this initiative was closely connected to the Commission's recent legislative proposals on digital services and markets, aimed at better protecting consumers and their fundamental rights online, and would lead to fairer and more open digital markets for everyone. It was also linked to the proposals to secure trust in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, which would follow up on the White Paper on this subject at the end of April.

Ms VESTAGER concluded her presentation by stressing that the aim of this consultation of the social partners was to get their input on the possible approach to be taken in an EU action by seeking the right balance between two objectives, namely making the most of the opportunities of the platform economy and ensuring that the social rights of platform workers were the same as in the 'traditional' economy.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS added that the consultation, the first phase of which was being launched that day, marked a new milestone in the further implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular the chapter on fair working conditions, for which the Commission would present an action plan the following week.

Thus, this was the first step in the process of consulting the social partners, aimed at examining their views before launching a second-stage consultation on the content of the initiative that the Commission could take.

This informative document set out in detail the issues and perspectives related to platform work, which was a relatively new and complex area.

On the basis of the results of the consultation, the Commission's proposals would need to strike the right balance between the measures to be taken to address the challenges linked to platform working conditions, on the one hand, and promoting the opportunities offered by this form of work, on the other, taking into account the backdrop of the current crisis.

Mr SCHMIT stressed that the ultimate aim of the questions put to the social partners was to clarify certain grey areas of law, in order to ensure that platforms and the legislation applied to them were subject to EU labour law and social protection rules. He referred to the recent judgments of certain courts, which shed light on these grey areas.

The aim of this first phase consultation was therefore to determine the scope of this clarification in a developing sector, with the complex ramifications this entailed.

In conclusion, he said that the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, in its conclusions of October 2019, had asked the Commission to present initiatives concerning platform work.

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

- the need to address the issue of working conditions in platform work at a time when the first signs were appearing of a return to a 'new normality' after the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to shape the digital labour market of tomorrow;
- the possibility that once economic activity resumed after the pandemic, an

increasing number of tasks would be done through telework;

- the fact that the Communication being presented provided a good basis for a debate with the social partners on the many new issues arising in the expanding, but still fragile, working environment of platforms;
- the EU’s obligation under the Treaty on European Union to work to shape a Europe based on the social market economy and, in particular, to promote social protection;
- beyond the question of platforms, the need to take into account the broad issue of reform of the labour markets;
- in the case at hand, the desirability of giving companies working through platforms the opportunity to increase their job offer while at the same time obtaining assurance that they provided workers with access to social protection;
- nevertheless, the difficulty of imagining a single solution for all the types of jobs linked to platforms, given the wide variety of existing situations;
- the suggestion that, for example, the specific features of the new delivery services should be recognised and guidelines adopted in order to adapt the working conditions applicable in this market segment without disrupting the functioning of this new business model;
- the need to examine how to grant appropriate employment and social security status to platform workers who were employees, not self-employed;
- a reminder of the significant cross-border dimension of platform work;
- the high expectations of young people, who were the most affected by the new forms of digital employment;
- recognition of the low representation of women in the digital platform sector

(only 18% of the labour force), in particular in highly skilled jobs;

- a reminder that the main reason given by the companies concerned to justify this low proportion of women was qualification and training levels; a mention of another reason to be taken into account, namely that the precarious nature of the jobs available in the sector made them less attractive to women because of their caring responsibilities;
- hence the need to address these different aspects in order to support access by women to this sector, which was a promising one in terms of business opportunities and employment; the efforts made in cooperation with the Member States to reinforce access by women to the necessary training; the desirability of involving the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in this work;
- a mention of another feature of employment in the digital sector, which often offered first job seekers a flexible way of working, but frequently without social protection;
- support for the inclusion of the important concept of work-life balance in the consultation document.

Ms VESTAGER thanked the Members of the Commission for their support and confirmed the extremely complex nature of the debate being launched. She considered that the Commission was adopting the right approach by taking the initiative of consulting the social partners with a view to possible legislative measures, rather than waiting for courts to rule on certain aspects of platform work, as was the case today, with the risk of divergent positions between different courts.

In her view it was essential that platforms take responsibility by ensuring access to social protection for platform workers. She added that by paying their taxes, the platforms would contribute to the welfare state.

The PRESIDENT said it should be borne in mind that unless platform workers were

given access to social protection, individuals themselves and the social system were liable for the risks and consequences of events in workers' lives. It was therefore necessary for platforms to contribute to the protection of everyone.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the consultation document C(2021) 1127/2 and authorised the Director-General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to send it to the social partners.

10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON ROAMING ON PUBLIC MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS WITHIN THE UNION (RECAST) (COM(2021) 85 AND /2; SWD(2021) 27; SWD(2021) 28; SWD(2021) 29; SEC(2021) 90; RCC(2021) 72)

At the PRESIDENT's invitation, Ms VESTAGER and Mr BRETON presented the proposal for a recast of the Regulation on roaming on public mobile communications networks within the Union, which was submitted to the College for approval that day.

Ms VESTAGER and Mr BRETON highlighted the fact that the ban on surcharges for the use of roaming telephony services was one of the EU's greatest successes, as it symbolised one of the major tangible benefits of the European project that affected citizens' daily lives. They invited all the members of the College to highlight the EU's role in bringing about this undeniable progress, which was now taken for granted.

The current rules, as laid down in Regulation (EU) No 531/2012, would expire on 30 June 2022, but market regulation was still necessary in order to prevent the re-emergence of barriers to the functioning of the single market and to maintain the benefits of the scheme whereby roaming was charged at national rates.

The main aim of the proposed recast was therefore to extend the validity of the

scheme for a further 10 years. This would give operators much-desired predictability and would tie in well with Europe's Digital Decade by offering to the citizens excellent 'roam-like-at-home' connectivity throughout Europe.

Mr BRETON noted that, in order to reduce the impact of these measures on telecoms operators, the proposed recast would lower caps on wholesale tariffs, i.e. the maximum tariffs that domestic operators paid foreign operators for the provision of roaming services.

The recast also provided an opportunity to improve services, in particular by ensuring that users enjoyed the same service quality when roaming as they did at home, tightening up transparency requirements for value-added services and guaranteeing access to emergency communications.

Although non-essential travel was discouraged in view of the current health situation, he welcomed the fact that the Commission was paving the way to a brighter future in which citizens would be able to fully enjoy the benefits of free movement as enshrined in the Treaties.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2021) 85/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, as well as to the European Data Protection Supervisor, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof, the subsidiarity grid and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2021) 28, SWD(2021) 27, SWD(2021) 29 and SEC(2021) 90, the contents of which were noted.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT asked Mr BORRELL to brief the College on the latest developments in external relations.

Mr BORRELL reported on the discussions at the Foreign Affairs Council of 22 February on the situation in Myanmar and in Ethiopia, the in-depth discussion on EU-Russia relations, and the exchange of views via videoconference between EU ministers and the new US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, on the major global challenges on which the EU and the United States wished to cooperate.

Lastly, he referred to the killing of the Italian Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo on 22 February, and informed the College that he had sent his condolences, on behalf of the EU, to the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Commission took note of this information.

11.2. STATE OF PLAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE FACILITY

The PRESIDENT gave the floor to Mr DOMBROVSKIS to brief the College on the conclusions of the fifth meeting of the Steering Board for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility held the previous week.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that three issues had been examined at the meeting: (i) the preparations needed to ensure the funding of NextGenerationEU, (ii) the state of play on the submission of draft national Recovery and Resilience Plans, and (iii) the timeline for the next steps until the first disbursements.

Mr HAHN had been invited to present the main aspects of the funding strategy for NextGenerationEU. The Steering Board had supported this strategy, but had also agreed that expectations needed to be managed, since the first wave of disbursements to cover pre-financing could not realistically be expected before July. In this context, he referred to the need for the national parliaments to ratify the decision on new own resources.

With regard to the state of play of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans that had been submitted, he explained that the members of the Steering Board had approved the negotiating mandates for the discussions under way with five of the Member States that had made the most progress (France, Slovakia, Greece, Spain and Portugal).

These mandates were based on an assessment of the five draft national plans against the relevant country-specific recommendations and investment needs. The aim of this ‘gap analysis’ was, on the one hand, to assess the plans’ compliance with legal requirements for all, or a significant subset of, the country-specific recommendations, and with green and digital objectives, and, on the other hand, to ensure a horizontally consistent approach so that all Member States were treated equally.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS described the three aspects of this gap analysis.

The first concerned the national plans’ contribution to the viability of public finances through structural reforms to reinforce Member States’ resilience in the context of the recovery, focusing in particular on spending reviews and labour market policies.

The second related to the need to ensure proper implementation of reforms, including reforms that had already been adopted, which meant that the Member States should include milestones and interim targets in their plans.

The third aspect was the need for more ambition in certain areas, in particular the green transition, the fight against corruption and the strengthening of public administration.

The Steering Board had noted that the national plans were far from ready. While progress was satisfactory with regard to matters of substance, the Member States still needed to make significant progress on a number of technical aspects. These technical aspects included the provision of information to prove compliance with the ‘do no significant harm principle’, the tagging of expenditure, the provision of more detailed costing information, the setting of milestones and interim targets, and the preparation of audit and control systems.

He had sent a letter to all the Member States a few days earlier to underline the importance of these aspects; not only were they legal requirements, but they were also crucial to the successful implementation of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans.

As for the timeline and next steps, Mr DOMBROVSKIS said that the Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation had entered into force on 19 February, and that the first series of proposals for national plans was due to be formally submitted in March. Negotiations with a number of Member States were therefore at a decisive stage.

In his letter, Mr DOMBROVSKIS had asked the Member States to refrain from formally submitting their plans until broad understanding has been reached with the Commission. He said that the Commission was willing to help the Member States, but that it was vital that they took the Commission’s feedback and guidance into account to ensure smooth and swift assessment and approval of the national Recovery and Resilience plans.

Once a Member State had submitted its plan, the Commission would have two months to assess the plan and the Council would then have one month to

approve it. He emphasised that time would be tight given the complexity of the exercise.

By way of conclusion, he noted that the next Steering Board meeting would take place the following week to continue its work on the negotiating mandates for the other Member States.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr DOMBROVSKIS for this information and brought the meeting to a close.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 11.01.