



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2017) 2208 final**

*- English language version of the French text which is authentic -*

Brussels, 3 May 2017

# TEXTE EN

## MINUTES

of the 2208<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 12 April 2017

(morning)

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**Single sitting: Wednesday 12 April 2017 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 10.10 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President	
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Mr OETTINGER	Member	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr MIMICA	Member	Items 7/8/9 (in part) and 10
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	
Mr VELLA	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Mr HOGAN	Member	
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member	
Ms CREȚU	Member	
Sir Julian KING	Member	

Absent:

Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member
Ms THYSSEN	Member
Ms BULC	Member
Ms VESTAGER	Member
Mr MOEDAS	Member

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Ms PANZETTI	Chef de cabinet to Ms MOGHERINI
Mr NOCIAR	Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ
Mr DÓCZY	A member of Mr HAHN's staff
Ms CHAZE	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr ANDRIUKAITIS
Ms BERNAERTS	Chef de cabinet to Ms THYSSEN
Mr CARANO	Expert from Ms BULC's cabinet
Ms JUUL-JØRGENSEN	Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER
Mr VICENTE	Chef de cabinet to Mr MOEDAS

The following also sat in:

Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr VAN NUFFEL	Legal Service	Item 10 (in part)
Mr PESONEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms METTLER	Head of the European Political Strategy Centre	Items 7/8/9 (in part) and 10
Mr SWIEBODA	European Political Strategy Centre	Items 1 to 7/8/9 (in part)
Mr GRASSI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms SUTTON	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	
Mr BEHRNDT	Chef de cabinet to Mr MIMICA	Items 1 to 7/8/9 (in part)
Ms SCHMITT	Chef de cabinet to Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	

Secretary: Mr ITALIANER, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr AYET PUIGARNAU,  
Director in the Secretariat-General.

**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2017) 2208/FINAL; SEC(2017) 175/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(2017) 2208)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 10 April.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF THE 2206<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COMMISSION (29 MARCH) AND THE MINUTES OF THE 2207<sup>TH</sup> MEETING (4 APRIL)**

**(PV(2017) 2206; PV(2017) 2206, 2<sup>ND</sup> PART)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2206<sup>th</sup> meeting, and decided to hold over for one week approval of the minutes of its 2207<sup>th</sup> meeting.



#### **4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

##### ***4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS***

- i) Participation of the Union in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) jointly undertaken by several Member States (Decision) – SAKORAFa report – 2016/0325 (COD)**

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2017) 139.

##### ***4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL***

- ii) Programming of Council business**  
(SI(2017) 145)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2017) 145 on the Council meetings between 13 and 26 April.

- iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Islamic Republic of Iran on implementation of the Paris Agreement**

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2017) 144/2.

##### ***4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT***

- iv) Action to be taken on Parliament's legislative resolutions and other resolutions of a legal nature**  
(SP(2017) 228)

The Commission decided to empower the Commission Members responsible for the sectors in question, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr TIMMERMANS and, if necessary, with the other Members concerned, to adopt the amended proposals for transmission to Parliament and the Council, as set out in SP(2017) 228, drawn up following the April I part-session of Parliament, the contents of which were noted.

**v) Results of the April I part-session of Parliament**

(SP(2017) 231; SP(2017) 232)

The Commission took note of the information in SP(2017) 231 and SP(2017) 232 on the proceedings of the part-session of Parliament held in Strasbourg from 3 to 6 April.

**5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS**

**5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED**

*(SEC(2017) 176 ET SEQ.)*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 7 April.

**5.2. EMPOWERMENT**

*(SEC(2017) 177 ET SEQ.)*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 7 April.

**5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**

*(SEC(2017) 178 ET SEQ.)*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 3 and 7 April, as archived in Decide.

**5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES**

*(SEC(2017) 179 AND /2)*

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 10 and 21 April.

**5.5. DELEGATION COMPLEMENTING COMMISSION DECISION C(2015) 2813 AND RELATING TO THE EXAMINATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTS CONCERNING THE FUND FOR EUROPEAN AID TO THE MOST DEPRIVED (FEAD)**

*(C(2017) 2302)*

The Commission adopted the decision set out in C(2017) 2302.

It decided to delegate to the Director-General responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion the power to adopt, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, measures relating to the examination and acceptance of accounts concerning the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) under Article 50 of Regulation (EU) 223/2014, in accordance with the conditions set out in C(2017) 2302.

**6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**

*(SEC(2017) 180/2)*

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

*(PERS(2017) 21)*

**6.1. DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY – SECONDMENT OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL IN THE INTERESTS OF THE SERVICE UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS**

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms CREȚU and also Mr ANSIP, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided to approve the secondment in the interests of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Natalija KAZLAUSKIENĖ, currently Principal Adviser for policy and implementation in DG Regional and Urban Policy, to the cabinet of the government of the Republic of Lithuania in Lithuania, for a period of three years.

This decision would take effect on 1 September 2017.

**6.2. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF AD12 VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNITY PLANT VARIETY OFFICE (CPVO) IN ANGERS (PERS(2017) 20 TO /3)**

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr ANDRIUKAITIS and also Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided:

- to approve the list consisting of a single candidate set out in point 2 of PERS(2017) 21, for the post of Vice-President of the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask Mr ANDRIUKAITIS, the Member of the Commission responsible for health and food safety, to communicate this decision and the list consisting of a single candidate to the Administrative Council of the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**6.3. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – MODIFICATION OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND TRANSFER OF A GRADE AD14 OFFICIAL**

*(SEC(2017) 191)*

On a proposal from Ms OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms JOUROVÁ and also Mr TIMMERMANS, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided:

- to create a temporary principal adviser post in DG Justice and Consumers; this post would be abolished upon the departure of the job holder;
- to transfer in the interests of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Paul NEMITZ, currently Director of the ‘Fundamental Rights and Rule of Law’ Directorate in DG Justice and Consumers, to the newly created post of Principal Adviser;
- to adopt the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2017) 191.

These decisions would take effect on 16 April 2017.

**6.4. DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF AD14 DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION (ETF) IN TURIN**

*(PERS(2016) 86 TO /3)*

On a proposal from Mr OETTINGER, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms THYSSEN and also Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided:

- to approve the list of three candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 4 of PERS(2017) 21, for the post of Director of the European

Training Foundation (ETF), and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;

- to ask Ms THYSSEN, the Member of the Commission responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, to communicate this decision and the list of candidates to the Governing Board of the European Training Foundation (ETF).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN MIGRATION**

**(COM(2017) 211 TO /3; SWD(2017) 129 AND /2; RCC(2017) 37)**

**8. ELEVENTH REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL ON THE RELOCATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES**

**(COM(2017) 212 TO /3; RCC(2017) 37)**

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – SIXTH PROGRESS REPORT TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE AND GENUINE SECURITY UNION**

**(COM(2017) 213 TO /3; RCC(2017) 37)**

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS presented the Communication on the protection of children in migration, which was being tabled for approval by the Commission. He emphasised the fact that migrant children represented at least 30% of migrant arrivals on Union territory and that this group required both special attention and

protection based on the principle of the best interests of the child.

Although the European Union already had an adequate framework to meet the specific needs of child migrants, he stressed that more had to be done to protect all children at all stages of the migration process. In particular, it was necessary to ensure the protection of these children in their country of origin and in transit countries, where their lives were at risk, as well as on arrival and throughout their stay in European territory, where their age, identity and status should be determined, their reception guaranteed, and long-term solutions identified that were adapted to each child. In general, he stressed the importance of protecting migrant children from abuse, exploitation, disappearance and the risk of radicalisation.

With the help of its agencies, the Union was capable of providing technical and financial assistance to the Member States, on which the bulk of the responsibility for receiving and protecting migrant children rested. Mr AVRAMOPOULOS therefore hoped that the measures proposed in the Communication would be ratified at the meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in June. He also stated his intention to work closely with non-governmental organisations, which were expected to welcome the approach proposed by the Commission.

However, Mr AVRAMOPOULOS regretted that little progress had been made in relocating migrant children, and in this context he presented the eleventh Commission report on relocation and resettlement.

First, he noted the positive development represented by the relocation of 1 600 migrants from Greece and 800 from Italy in the past month, which was the highest number of relocations in one month since the system had been set up. Austria had recently announced that it would resume relocations following a temporary derogation, starting with 50 vulnerable migrants, including children, from Italy. Sweden would also resume relocation of migrants in June; until then it benefited from a derogation.

He then turned to the lack of any participation by Hungary and Poland in the relocation system, adding that the Czech Republic had not relocated any migrants since last summer, and Bulgaria, Croatia and Slovakia were relocating very few – less than 2% of the number set.

He considered that in these cases political pressure should be brought to bear at the highest level to encourage these Member States to respect their commitments, failing which the States that had thus far respected theirs could be discouraged from doing so in future. The Commission's objective was to ensure that all migrants considered eligible were relocated in the coming months, and ideally before September.

Finally, Mr AVRAMOPOULOS mentioned the progress made with regard to the resettlement measures; 15 500 migrant resettlements had already been implemented, of a total of 22 500 granted in July 2015.

Ms JOUROVÁ welcomed the fact that the protection of all migrant children, whatever their situation, was an integral part of the European Union's overall approach to migration. The main added value of the Communication was to integrate the measures for the protection of the child into the Union's asylum system. She stressed the need for the Union to give migrant children long-term prospects, to help them to overcome the identity crisis they inevitably faced.

Sir Julian KING outlined the content of the sixth progress report towards an effective and genuine security union, which in this case was primarily focused on the fight against serious and organised crime and on the Union's future priorities in this area. A new 'security union policy cycle' was being prepared at the Council for 2018 to 2021, based on a Europol evaluation of the threat posed by serious and organised crime at international level.

The sixth report confirmed Europol's list of five main threats, namely (i) cybercrime, which was increasing, (ii) crime linked to drug production and



trafficking, the biggest criminal market in the Union, (iii) the activities of people smugglers, which were also increasing rapidly, (iv) organised crime involving property, which was increasingly cross-border in nature, and (v) human trafficking, one of the most serious and most lucrative forms of crime. To these five threats the Commission added three others to be given priority in the new cycle, which it had selected after consulting the relevant departments and cabinets. These were (i) firearms trafficking, which was of key political importance in view of its links with terrorism, (ii) cross-border VAT fraud, which resulted in the loss of 40 to 60 billion euros in tax revenue at European level each year, and (iii) environmental crime, in particular illegal waste trafficking, which was one of the priorities of the Commission and of the European Parliament.

Sir Julian KING ended his presentation by noting that the new security union policy cycle would be launched by the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 9 June.

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS returned to the systematic checks on travellers in place at the air, sea and land borders of the Schengen area since 7 April pursuant to an amendment of the Schengen Code adopted by the Council on the day after the Paris attacks. This measure, approved by the Member States, was intended to enable better identification of the movements of Union nationals going to fight in and returning from Syria.

Implementation of these checks had resulted in queues at some land borders, even though the Member States had had ample time to prepare for them. Some Member States had informed the Commission that they wished to make use of the option of carrying out random but targeted checks, on the basis of their own assessment of the risks and on condition that this did not weaken the level of security sought. Mr AVRAMOPOULOS announced that a meeting of experts had been called, at the Commission's request, to clarify certain points and to ensure that the rules on systematic checks were properly applied, to ensure the security of the entire Schengen area.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr AVRAMOPOULOS, Ms JOUROVÁ and Sir Julian KING for their presentations and for the quality of the work accomplished in all these fields.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the communication in COM(2017) 211/3, for transmission to Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2017) 129/2, the contents of which were noted;
- approved the reports in COM(2017) 212/3 and COM(2017) 213/3, for transmission to Parliament, the European Council and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

### ***ISSUES RELATING TO THE RESPECT FOR EUROPEAN FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND EUROPEAN LAW IN HUNGARY***

***(INFO(2017) 25)***

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr TIMMERMANS reported on a series of developments in Hungary that raised the question of their compatibility with European law and the shared values on which the European Union was founded under Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. He mentioned the information note that had been sent to the Members of the Commission in order to set out the facts of the situation and analyse them objectively.

As regards the most recent developments, Mr TIMMERMANS referred first to the Hungarian law on higher education, preliminary analysis of which by the Commission's Legal Service showed that some of these provisions could infringe

European law on the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services, as well as the conditions for obtaining work permits for third-country researchers. The provisions could also infringe certain obligations under agreements concluded in the context of the World Trade Organisation. The in-depth analysis of this law must be completed to enable the Commission to decide on possible measures to be taken at its next infringement cycle on 26 April.

Secondly, a full analysis should also be conducted of the draft law on non-governmental organisations. Normally the Commission did not comment on draft laws, but the Hungarian draft law concerned ‘foreign sources of financing’ that might come from other EU Member States. For this reason, he considered that a political message should be sent now emphasising that excessive restrictions on the free movement of capital and on fundamental rights must be reasoned and non-discriminatory.

Thirdly, he raised the issue of the national consultation in the context of which the Hungarian government had sent every household a questionnaire concerning in particular the influence of non-governmental organisations financed by foreign capital, illegal immigration, the alleged ban by the EU institutions on reducing energy charges for households and the ‘attacks by Brussels’ on the Hungarian government’s tax cuts and job creation programmes. On this point, he supported the PRESIDENT’s proposal that the Commission respond to the questionnaire itself, addressing not just the Hungarian government but also the Hungarian people.

With regard to the legal dimension of this issue, Mr TIMMERMANS highlighted the numerous infringement cases already pending against Hungary that were linked to the fundamental values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. He mentioned first the Hungarian legislation on asylum. Infringement proceedings had been initiated for non-compliance with certain rules, in particular with regard to appeals, and a new law in the same area providing, inter alia, for the automatic detention of illegal migrants in camps at the borders and their return without due

process, without any guarantee during detention and without respecting the provisions on the reception of migrants. He pointed out that Mr AVRAMOPOULOS had raised these issues during his visit to Hungary at the end of March, and that an in-depth technical exchange would be initiated with the Hungarian authorities. The Commission must take decisions rapidly if the Hungarian government did not act constructively to correct the failings identified as soon as possible.

He also recommended remaining vigilant in a series of cases relating to discrimination with regard to Roma and women and to the incorrect transposition of the framework decision on the fight against racism and xenophobia, despite some positive signs. In addition, he cited several other ongoing infringement cases concerning discrimination with regard to certain economic activities, the effect of which was to create a general climate of rejection of foreigners in Hungary.

In all, a significant number of cases related to the values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, in particular human rights – human dignity, freedom and equality – and certain societal aspects of these values – pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and solidarity.

Mr TIMMERMANS stressed the fact that respect for the values set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union was an obligation of all Member States, and did not apply just to the measures taken by them to implement EU law. He considered that the College should express a view on how to use all the instruments available to the Commission to ensure these values were respected, including infringement proceedings if necessary, but also taking into account the other means provided for in the Treaties.

He therefore proposed, first, that the Commission should assume its legal responsibilities by pursuing to the end the infringement proceedings under way and, secondly, more generally, that it should decide to initiate a political dialogue with Hungary. He hoped that the EU institutions and the other Member States would

assume this responsibility collectively.

In addition, he welcomed the firm line taken a few days earlier both by Mr NAVRACSICS, who had stressed the important role of the Central European University not just in Hungary but also at European university level, and Mr MOEDAS, who had expressed alarm at possible restrictions of scientific and academic freedom and a violation of the shared values of openness that could damage Hungary's academic reputation and its relations with the European partners.

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

- the support of the Members of the Commission for the overall approach recommended by Mr TIMMERMANS aimed at establishing a political dialogue with Hungary within the Union, while remaining extremely firm on the implementation of EU law and respect for its fundamental values;
- the importance of a precise, balanced response from the Union to challenges to its values and fundamental rights, so as to avoid leaving any room for interpretation, along with a reaction of firm and strong support from all Member States;
- the opportunity afforded by the Hungarian national consultation to launch a dialogue addressing the parts of the questionnaire that challenged the role and actions of the Commission and ran contrary to the values and objectives reasserted in the Rome Declaration of 25 March, to which Hungary was a signatory;
- the need to involve the European Parliament and the Council in the Commission's efforts, to ensure that the Union spoke with one voice and could use all the tools at its disposal to ensure respect for the law and its fundamental values;
- in addition, the need for the Commission to continue to conduct the ongoing infringement proceedings against Hungary in the normal way;

- the hope that the approach taken in relation to Hungary would be determined entirely on the basis of the failings to be addressed, while remaining consistent with the position taken by the Commission concerning violations of the EU's fundamental rights and values in Poland;
- the fact that the Hungarian government was usually open to dialogue and prepared to cooperate with the Commission's administrative services for issues relating to the implementation of EU law;
- the need for the positions of the government majority in Hungary to be examined by the European political group to which it belonged.

Mr TIMMERMANS noted that, in his role as the Commission member safeguarding the principles of the rule of law, his duty was to focus on the legal means of encouraging the Hungarian government to amend its legislation. For this reason, he proposed that the infringement proceedings already under way should run their full course.

The right approach also needed to be found to open up a political dialogue between the Hungarian government, the other Member States, the European Parliament and the Commission.

In operational terms, Mr TIMMERMANS noted the Commission's agreement for the prompt completion of a full legal assessment of the compatibility of Hungary's new higher education legislation with the free movement of services, freedom of establishment, and EU rules on the admission of third-country researchers. Should this assessment lead to the conclusion that EU law had been infringed, the Commission would examine the possible measures to take at its next infringement decisions cycle on 26 April.

He also noted the concern expressed by the Commission in relation to current Hungarian law on asylum and the Hungarian authorities' respect for the EU's values of human dignity, freedom, respect for human rights, tolerance and solidarity. The

Commission would monitor the development of the situation very closely as part of the technical exchange initiated by Mr AVRAMOPOULOS' departments.

As regards the other laws specifically referred to that day, the Commission would return to the question of the possible next steps as part of the infringement decisions cycle on 26 April.

In relation to the Rule of Law Framework, Mr TIMMERMANS noted that this was a specific mechanism for entering into a dialogue with a Member State in which there existed a systemic threat to the rule of law. Although this approach applied to Poland, he felt that Hungary's situation was different.

In conclusion, he recalled the emotions stirred by the fall of the Berlin Wall almost 30 years ago, which was an unprecedented event for the entire continent, the collective struggle for freedom that preceded it, and the far-reaching impact of the EU enlargement that followed. He was sure that the EU would overcome its current tensions.

The PRESIDENT agreed with the analysis of Mr TIMMERMANS and the College. He explained that he had personally fought for the Member States of Central and Eastern Europe to join the EU, and hoped that people would look back at history and remember that the process of joining the EU was a collective struggle, both for the countries that were already members and those who wanted to join.

However, he would never have imagined that it would still be necessary to fight to ensure respect for fundamental values within the Union, as he thought history had settled this question once and for all. In any event, he rejected the criticism aimed at the EU by certain leaders in Central and Eastern Europe, which he felt was unwarranted. Solidarity could not be one-sided, and was a question of give and take. Although he was aware of the frustrations among some citizens of these Member States, which should be taken seriously, he felt that the Union should make no apology for its policy of solidarity or its values. However, leaders should not be

confused with their people, and the more general populist discourse that consisted of attacking Europe, which he felt did no credit to those who employed it, should be borne in mind. It called for a firm response, without leaving the way open to demagoguery. Meanwhile, European political groups should clarify their position on this discourse if they wanted to have any impact.

Finally, the PRESIDENT praised the remarkably clear message delivered by Mr NAVRACSICS last week on behalf of the Commission and himself on the Hungarian higher education legislation, for which he expressed warm thanks.

The Commission took note of this information and of the note distributed as INFO(2017) 25.

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The meeting closed at 12.11.