



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 24.1.2019
C(2019) 313 final*

Dear Lord Boswell,

The Commission would like to thank the House of Lords for its Reasoned Opinion on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council discontinuing seasonal changes of time and repealing Council Directive 2000/84/EC {COM(2018) 639 final}.

When preparing its proposal, the Commission examined available evidence, which suggests that a harmonised approach to seasonal time changes in the Union is critical for a good functioning of the internal market. However, the original purpose of these time switches has become much less relevant. In particular, sought energy savings have shown to be limited. While evidence on the overall health impacts remains inconclusive, there is research suggesting that the effect of the time switches on the human biorhythm may be more severe than previously thought. The time changes can also be a source of confusion and switching costs for businesses.

The system of biannual clock changes has also increasingly been questioned, by the European Parliament, by a growing number of Member States, and by citizens as demonstrated in the results of the Commission's public consultation {SWD(2018) 406 final}.

On that basis, the Commission proposes to discontinue the seasonal time changes in the Union in a harmonised manner across the Union, while ensuring that Member States retain the competence to decide on their standard time and in particular, following the proposed abolishment of the seasonal time switches, whether they will want to move to the standard time corresponding to their summer time on a permanent basis or whether they will apply their current standard time (winter time) permanently.

*The Lord Boswell of Aynho
Chair of the European Union Select Committee
House of Lords
Palace of Westminster
UK – LONDON SW1A 0PW*

As regards the House of Lords' opinion that subsidiarity is not being respected, the Commission would like to recall that the Union already has a harmonised legislative framework in place for seasonal time changes. This is set out in Directive 2000/84/EC, according to which all Member States currently have to respect the seasonal time changes. Through its proposal, the Commission wants to retain a common regime in this area, but through a discontinuation of the practice of seasonal changes of time, in a harmonised manner in all Member States. The Commission is thus not going beyond its existing prerogative to legislate in the area of seasonal time changes.

At the same time, the Commission continues to respect the national prerogative for choosing the applicable time zone on the territory of each Member State. The risk of fragmented time zones already exists today under the current division of competences between the Member States and the European Union. Still, so far this has not lead to any fragmentation.

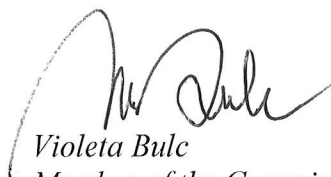
The Commission's proposal is currently in the legislative process involving both the European Parliament and the Council.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the House of Lords and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'FT', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'V Bulc', with a large, sweeping initial 'V'.

*Violeta Bulc
Member of the Commission*