

Minutes of the Fit for Future Platform expert group

Approved - written procedure

Brussels, December 2020

Minutes

Meeting of the Fit for Future Platform ¹
26 November 2020, Videoconference

Summary

The Fit for Future Platform held its first plenary meeting on 26 November 2020. Vice-President Šefčovič chaired the meeting.

The main points of the agenda concerned the annual work programme of the Platform and the draft rules of procedures.

The Vice-President proposed the following topics for the annual work programme 2021: (1) digitalisation, (2) efficient labelling, authorisation, permitting procedures, (3) reporting obligations and (4) simplification of EU legislation. Afterwards, he discussed with the Platform's members and meeting participants which topics they find important.

The members of the Platform discussed the draft rules of procedure, in particular the main challenges for collecting the necessary evidence and gathering the experience with EU legislation on the ground. Additionally, they reflected on how to direct best citizens' input towards the topics in the Platform's working programme.

The Platform's members have been invited to send their written suggestions concerning the topics for the annual work programme and for the rules of procedure by 11 December. The next meeting will take place in the first quarter of 2021.

1. Nature of the meeting

The first plenary meeting of the Fit for Future Platform was chaired by Vice-President Šefčovič. The meeting took place by videoconference, on 26 November 2020 from 14:00 to 18:00. The list of participants is in the Annex². The meeting of the Platform was not public.

2. List of points discussed

- 2021 Annual work programme of the Platform
- Draft rules of procedure

¹ Published in the [Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities, code number 3729- FIT FOR FUTURE PLATFORM](#)

² See Annex I

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without comments.



2. Introduction by Vice President Šefčovič on the vision objectives and outlook 2020 and beyond

Main points raised by Vice-President Šefčovič:

The Vice-President highlighted the important role of the Fit for Future Platform in the context of the Commission's sustained efforts to simplify and reduce unnecessary burden of EU laws. The Platform will also have the role of examining whether EU laws remain future proof, in particular the digitalisation potential of existing EU laws.

Building on the experience of the predecessor REFIT Platform, Vice-President Šefčovič stressed the need to have the Fit for Future's annual work programme closely aligned with the Commission policy-making cycle, taking into account the Commission work programme. It is important that the members work together to produce evidence-based opinions.

Vice-President Šefčovič introduced potential policy areas for the annual work programme: (1) **digitalisation**; (2) **efficient labelling, authorisation and permitting procedures**; (3) **reporting obligations necessary to assess the performance of EU legislation**; (4) **the simplification of EU legislation, in particular from the perspective of coherence and consistency**.

(Link to Vice-President Šefčovič speech:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_2216)

The participants discussed further key issues on which the work of the Platform could concentrate and potential policy areas and avenues on which the Platform could focus to ensure digitalisation and futureproofing:

Mr Denis Meynent (EESC) pointed out that the objective of the Platform should not be less regulation but ensuring that better regulation achieves its purpose, allows the co-legislator to take informed decisions, and helps EU to design and deliver quality legislation, which is key to avoid unnecessary administrative burdens to citizens. He pointed out that the Platform could consider in its work areas such as competition policy, intellectual property law, relations between citizens and public administration (e-government) and impact on SMEs.

(SK) referred to the COVID crisis and the fact that it has resulted in fast track and lighter procedures in terms of legislation. Such approaches could continue in the longer term.

Ms Gisela Hohensee (DE) highlighted that better regulation is a key priority of the DE Presidency, which can only deliver if addressed jointly by the European Parliament, Council and Commission. The representative welcomed the four priorities presented by the Vice-

President, underlined the importance of stakeholders' input to the Platform's work and the need to reduce unnecessary costs in particular for SMEs and micro-enterprises.

John Aquilina (MT) stressed that simplifying existing legislation can contribute to recovery and strengthening resilience, taking into account climate change and digitalisation. Strategic autonomy can be achieved if main regulatory frameworks such as on public procurement and European standards are duly considered. European business can benefit from more efficient legislation on company laws, product regulation, foreign investment, certification requirements, EU funding, state aid rules and lending rules.

Mr Patrick ten Brink underlined that there is a need to ensure coherence with the EU's wider ambitions, such as the Green Deal. Digitalisation can help implementing EU legislation and green claims to build trust in the CE label. The focus should remain on what needs to be achieved.

(CoR-RE/SE) highlighted the important contribution that regional and local authorities can make to the Platform's work given their direct experience with EU law implementation. The CoR welcomes the topics introduced by the Vice-President and pointed out additional topics such as geographical indications, state aid rules for broadband infrastructure, rules tackling domestic violence and violence against women.

Ms Ursula Pachel welcomed the novelties implemented in the Fit for Future Platform compared to its predecessor. Horizontal principles such as Sustainable Development Goals need to be streamlined into all sectoral policies. Regarding digitalisation, all citizens should have access to technology and improve their skills. On the issue of labelling, Ms Pachel highlighted the importance of considering the interests and the needs of consumers.

Ms Heidi Rønne expressed the opinion that better regulation is about ensuring level playing field and efficient enforcement. It is important to look into the cost of non-compliance such as in the environmental sector, consumer area and health and safety. The focus should be on increasing the quality of regulation rather than on putting forward new rules when others are removed. The 'One-in, One-out' approach is very worrisome. It represents a wrong and rigid approach to legislation.

Mr Lasse Heidemann Hamilton mentioned as topics that the Platform might consider the following: competition policy, barriers in the internal market, industrial policy and trade policy. It is important to consider in the future the 'digital by default' principle.

Ms Agnès Mathis welcomed the diversity of interests represented in the Platform. She highlighted the impact that digitalisation, social matters and green transition have on enterprises and their relevance for the Platform's work.

Ms Valeria Ronzitti welcomed the Fit for Future Platform building on the experience with its predecessor and working in sub-groups with different interests represented. The four priorities presented by the Vice-President are relevant for the Platform's work. Particular attention should be paid to foresight and the work should be coherent with the Foresight Report.

Ms Véronique Willems stressed the importance of taking into account the SMEs' perspective and acknowledged smart regulation as means to ensure a level playing field. The Platform

should consider in particular how smaller enterprises will be able to cope with implementing the rules in the context of the green and digital transition.

Mr Mark Speich (CoR-EPP/DE) recalled the important work of regions and cities, including through RegHub. They can provide valuable input to the Platform's work given that they are closer to the implementation of EU laws on the ground. The Platform should focus its work on most urgent matters.

Ms Rebecca Humphries expressed the view that a long-term perspective is needed for challenges brought by climate change and nature depletion. The Platform could focus its work on how the Commission could operationalise a 'sustainability first' approach and streamline Sustainable Development Goals. Enforcement is a key issue and potentially an area for the Platform's work.

Mr Peter Waasdorp (NL) stated that the Platform's work should focus on issues affecting SMEs and that the Platform should cooperate with the EU SME envoy network. The use of digital tools is necessary to help SMEs make full use of the single market and understand better the GDPR³ and privacy law and. Digital tools could be useful to ensure coherence between different policies.

Ms Johanna Pohl (PL) considered the annual work programme useful to organise the Platform's work. It is important to focus on reducing the burdens of EU laws especially for SMEs, taking into account concrete contributions by stakeholders and considering laws that could hinder technological developments.

Mr Jakob Solmunde (DK) stressed the importance of supporting business, especially given the current crisis, by reducing burdens. In particular, the Platform could focus its work on innovation and digitalisation (digital ready regulation, innovation friendly rules, possible use of sandboxes), the green transition including circular economy and capping unnecessary burdens for SMEs and entrepreneurs.

Marcos António Nogueira (RegHub) presented the RegHub network. The representative explained how the RegHub could contribute to the work of the Platform by bringing to the Platform the expertise with EU laws implementation on the ground.

Ms Ana Sofia Martins (PT) stressed that the digital and green transitions should be key priorities of upcoming work. Alignment between the annual work programme of the Commission, Council and of the Platform's work programme is essential.

Mr Christoph Bausch stressed the importance of the input provided by citizens through [Have your say: Simplify!](#). The Platform could focus its work on single market legislation given its importance to the business community, including SME. The Platform could also provide input on better regulation work, such as 'one-in, one-out', burden reduction policies, etc. While digitalisation is useful for business, it might also lead to an increased body of legislation businesses need to comply with. In this context, the Platform could consider coherence and consistency by providing input to the Commission's fitness checks.

³ General Data Protection Regulation (EU) [2016/679](#)

Ms Elena Córdoba Azcárate proposed to have the single market and professionals as a cross-cutting priority for the Platform's work. Focus should be on simplification of EU law and digitalisation and its ethical implications, which are especially important for the liberal professions.

Mr Franz Wirtenberger (AT) expressed support for the four priorities put forward by the Vice-President. He reminded of the importance of checking rules against workability and common sense. He stressed the importance of subsidiarity, strategic autonomy and welcomed linking digitalisation as a Platform topic with specific initiatives in the Commission's Work Programme.

Ms Nadia Marin (IT) stressed the need for the Platform to focus on a selected and limited number of topics with significant impact on the ground, on citizens and business. She welcomed the alignment of the Platform's work programme with the policy cycle. The work of the Platform should take into consideration the key priorities of the digital and green transitions, as well as strategic foresight. The Platform can contribute in the context of the Commission's evaluations and fitness checks.

Ms Angelika Poth-Mögele underlined the importance of the perspective of local and regional authorities given that they are the ones bearing (some of) the costs of EU laws implementation and monitoring and enforcing their implementation. The Platform could usefully provide input into analysis for future initiatives. As an example, as the Commission is working on the Environmental Action Programme, the Platform might consider the potential for simplification and reducing burdens linked to the monitoring and reporting in the area.

Mr Grzegorz Lang expressed the view that there is a need to ensure that legislation is future proof, while dealing with pressing issues linked with the recovery from the current crisis. Linked to this, one particularly important aspect is ensuring the resilience of EU economy. Mr Lang further stressed that legislation should be assessed primarily by considering its final purpose.

Ms Silvia Borelli expressed the view that EU legislation can be improved if the focus is on quality, better enforcement, increased compliance, rather than focusing on approaches such as 'one-in, one-out'. It is important to ensure that a balance between the need for innovation and horizontal EU principles such as the precautionary principle, or 'sustainability first' principle. Ms Borelli highlighted the potential of digitalisation as regards cybersecurity, data exchanges and sharing (including social security information) and facilitating cross-border cooperation among Member States.

Mr Libor Lochman stressed the importance of bringing together the social dimension, digitalisation, the Green Deal and smart and sustainable mobility. In the context of the Green Deal and sustainability, taxonomy is an important issue to consider. Better coherence between different policies and better communication with stakeholders are important issues.

Mr Patrick Briere referred to a number of policies that pose particular reporting obligations such as structural funds regulations, competition policy (state aid rules), Services Directive, the CE marking regulation, declarations on VAT. Existing or soon to be created networks (Enterprise Europe Network, Digital Innovation Hubs, etc) could help stakeholders and authorities better understand these complex issues. IT portals designed to ease procedures

(Single Market Gateway, SME Portal, Solvit) should be improved. It is important to ensure the same level of implementation of EU rules across all Member States.

Ms Gergana Ivanova (BG) expressed the view that the key issue is to ensure coherence and consistency of EU law. Simplification and digitalisation could contribute to achieving less burdensome and more future proof legislation. Exchanges with the SME envoy network are important for the Platform's work. Suggestions for simplification from stakeholders in any policy area should be carefully considered by the Platform, if they are suitable and significant.

Ms Anna Johansson (SE) welcomed the potential topics presented in the background note, in particular digitalisation and digital ecosystems. The Platform should remain flexible and focussed. Issues should not be dealt with in isolation as there are often links between different policies. The Platform could also provide advice on the wider better regulation process and methodologies, such as for instance sandboxes.

Closing remarks from the Vice-President

The Vice-President followed up on points raised during the discussions by:

- The Vice-President welcomed the general support for the potential topics of the annual work programme and acknowledge the importance of the quality of legislation. He welcomed the alignment of the Platform's work with the policy cycle of the Commission. The Platform could provide a very valuable contribution to revisions of existing legislation, including by considering foresight, the need to mainstream and strengthen environmental and climate objectives and identifying the potential for increased use of digital tools. Sandboxes and experimental clauses are aspects to explore.
- The Vice-President recalled that the 'One-in, One-out' approach will not be applied in a mechanical way. The Commission needs to remain flexible and ready to adapt to challenges. The Vice-President highlighted that the Commission adopted more than 1000 legal acts since the beginning of the pandemic to help recovery. Its implementation will not imply a lowering of social or environmental standards or of the legislation's quality. Information on the implementation of the approach will be further presented in the Commission's Annual Burden Survey exercise as of 2021.
- The Vice-President also acknowledged the views on the importance of SMEs and ensuring they benefit from the single market. He highlighted that the EU SME Envoy will be an important interlocutor of the Platform. The Vice-President welcomed the input and perspective of regional and local authorities.

Vice-President Šefčovič invited the Platform members to send written contributions for the **annual work programme by 11 December to the Platform's Secretariat (SG-F4F@ec.europa.eu).**

3. Fit for Future rules of procedures and working methods

The session was chaired by Mr Michael Wimmer, Director, Secretariat-General, Strategy, Better Regulation & Corporate Governance.

Mr Wimmer presented the draft rules of procedure (RoP), which are based on the Fit for Future Platform Decision and subject to the horizontal rules established by the Commission for the functioning of expert groups. In addition, the draft RoP take into consideration the experience with the REFIT Platform. They introduce important improvements, in particular to align the work of the Platform with the political cycle of the Commission and ensure a collaborative manner to work.

Mr Wimmer highlighted in particular the point on the Platform's opinions, which represent the Platform's concrete contribution to support the Commission's work to reduce burdens, simplify EU legislation and identify potential for digitalisation. The opinions have to be based on evidence and input brought in by the members of the Platform, including suggestions from citizens and stakeholder collected through the [Have your say: Simplify!](#) website.

On concrete working arrangements, Mr Wimmer presented the structure of the Platform built around two groups (Government group and Stakeholder group). The members will work together in four sub-groups and in plenary meetings. This structure will ensure a better mix and more balanced level of expertise. One of the sub-groups will bring together regional and local authorities.

The participants discussed further key issues regarding the work of the Platform in sub-groups and by digital means, main challenges for evidence gathering and how to focus best the input of citizens on [Have your say: Simplify!](#) to the Platform's mandate.

Main issues raised by participants:

- **Evidence gathering** – Several speakers pointed out to the challenge of timeline, consultation fatigue and language barriers, as potential issues. It will be very important for the Platform to be able to reach out to local and regional stakeholders and gather their experience with the implementation and effects of EU laws on the ground.
- **Suggestions gathered through [Have your say: Simplify!](#)** – Several members referred to the importance of citizens' and stakeholders' input, while ensuring focus on the Platform's mandate. Clarifications were asked on how to deal with suggestions that are not linked to the topics in the annual work programme. There was a suggestion to consider organising topical calls for suggestions, linked to the annual work programme. The Secretariat was asked to regularly provide an overview and statistics about the suggestions received.
- **Sub-groups organisation** – Several speakers asked for clarifications regarding the organisation of sub-groups and their functioning. In particular, speakers wanted to know about the role of the sub-group meant to bring together regional and local authorities.
- **Deadlines for the Platform to receive documents before meetings** – There were several calls for increasing the period that the members will have to process and assess

the invitations, agendas and documents, in particular in view of gathering input and coordinating with various actors within their institutions/ organisations.

Mr Wimmer referred to the main points raised:

The role of the Platform is to advise the Commission. The opinions of the Platform need to be well substantiated and aligned with the policy cycle, so that the Commission can use them optimally.

Regarding the collection of evidence, ensuring the comparability of data is important. In terms of consultation and evidence gathering on the “Have your say: Simplify!” it is important to manage expectation regarding the mandate of the Platform.

On the issue of deadlines, the Secretariat will always try to circulate documents in good time before each meeting. All the information related to the Platform and its sub-groups will be available to the members through the IT tool that will be made available to facilitate the work of the Platform.

On the organisation of sub-groups, one sub-group will bring together the RegHub, the network of contact points of local and regional authorities collecting information from the ground. Their expertise and experience will be very valuable to the Platform’s work.

The Platform will work as much as possible on based on consensus, if votes are needed it will be during plenary sessions. The role of the subgroups will be to prepare the work that, once mature, will be brought to the plenary for deliberation. Each sub-group will work on different topics in the Annual Work programme.

Finally, Mr Wimmer recalled that the RoP will be revised based on the written input of the members.

4. Presentation: IT tool facilitating the Platform’s work, the privacy statement and data protection requirements and the website of the Platform Secretariat

The Platform’s Secretariat (Ioana Condurat, Deputy Head of Unit, Secretariat-General) explained the importance of increasing the visibility of the work and achievements of the Platform. Citizens and stakeholders need to understand the mandate of the Platform so they can provide focused and relevant suggestions. The Commission launched a [website](#) for the Fit for Future Platform and carried out communication campaigns to raise awareness.

Ms Condurat reminded the importance of data protection and privacy issues. Members were invited to consult the [privacy statement of the Platform](#) and the privacy statement prepared for the meetings⁴. The Commission is committed to process personal data and retain them insofar this is necessary and in respect of the legal provisions on data protection. If needed for other reasons, explicit consent will be asked for the use of personal data.

The Secretariat (Alexandra Manole) then briefly presented the main features of the portal “[Have your say: Simplify!](#)” as well as the IT tool that will be used by the members to co-edit

⁴ See annex II

opinions, to share documents and receive access to the suggestions made by citizens and stakeholders.

3. Conclusions and next steps

Mr Wimmer closed the meeting recalling that the date of next meeting of the Platform still has to be confirmed, but will likely be during the 1st quarter of 2021. Members of the Platform are invited to send their comments on the topics for the annual work programme of the Platform, the rules of procedure and any other practical issue **by 11 December**.

ANNEX I

Attendance list

Chair: Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President,

J. Nociar, Head of Cabinet, F. Hoss (Member of Cabinet of the Vice-President)

M. Wimmer (Director EC, SG A, Strategy, Better Regulation & Corporate Governance)

Secretariat of the Platform: A. Cipollone, I. Condurat, A. Manole, V. Guerreiro, M. Gerolymatou, J. Guernonprez

Other participants⁵:

For the SME envoy: Mrs Schreiber (EC-DG GROW)

Representative for RegHub: Marcos António Nogueira (Head of EU office: Alentejo/Europe Initiative)

Stakeholder group members

Name	Attendance
Antonios ANGELAKIS	Yes
Christoph BAUSCH	Yes
Silvia BORELLI	Yes
Patrick BRIERE	Yes
Patrizia BUSSI	Yes
Elena CÓRDOBA AZCÁRATE	Yes
Lasse HAMILTON HEIDEMANN	Yes
Rebecca HUMPHRIES	Yes
Goranka LALIC NOVAC	Yes
Grzegorz LANG	Yes
Libor LOCHMAN	Yes
Agnès MATHIS	Yes
Ursula PACHL	Yes
Angelika POTH-MÖGELE	Yes
Heidi ROENNE	Yes
Valeria RONZITTI	Yes
Patrick TEN BRINK	Yes
Kirsi VÄÄTÄMÖINEN	Yes
Véronique WILLEMS	Yes
Colin LUSTENHOUWER (EESC)	No
Denis MEYNENT (EESC)	Yes

⁵ Members of the Committees have been accompanied by their Secretariat; Commission officials from other departments (DG GROW, Secretariat-General) attended the meeting of the Platform.

Government group members

Name	Attendance
AT – Dr Franz WIRTENBERGER	Yes
BE	Yes
BG – Ms Gergana IVANOVA	Yes
CY – Ms Patrina TARAMIDOU	Yes
CZ – Mr Jan KRAVČÍK	Yes
DE – Ms Gisela Hohensee	Yes
DK – Mr Jakob SOLMUNDE	Yes
EE	No
EL – Mr Ilias KOROMILAS	Yes
ES – Ms Maria Pia JUNQUERA TEMPRANO (attended by Ms MONJE SAN ROMAN)	Yes
FI – Ms Anu LAITINEN	Yes
FR	Yes
HR	No
HU	No
IE – Mr John SHINE	Yes
IT – Nadia MARIN	Yes
LT – Mr Tomas URBAN	Yes
LU	Yes
LV – Mrs Zaiga LEIPINA	Yes
MT – Mr John AQUILINA	Yes
NL – Mr Pieter M. WAASDORP	Yes
PL – Ms Joanna POHL	Yes
PT – Ms Ana Sofia MARTINS	Yes
RO – Ms Anca LUPU	Yes
SE – Ms Anna JOHANSSON	Yes
SL	Yes
SK	Yes
Mr Mark SPEICH (CoR)	Yes
Ms Anne KARJIALAINEN (CoR)	Yes
(CoR-RE/SE)	Yes

ANNEX II⁶

⁶ Due to technical reasons, the meeting took place on Webex instead of, as initially planned, on TEAMS.



20201118_Privacy_statement_EG_meeting