



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2016) 2165 final**

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

Brussels, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016

# **TEXTE EN**

## **MINUTES**

**of the 2165<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission**

**held in Brussels**

**(Berlaymont)**

**on Wednesday 20 April 2016**

**(morning)**

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**Single sitting: Wednesday 20 April 2016 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 10.06 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	First Vice-President	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 8 (in part) to 10
Ms GEORGIEVA	Vice-President	
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Mr OETTINGER	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	
Mr VELLA	Member	
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Lord HILL	Member	
Ms BULC	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	
Ms CREȚU	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms VESTAGER	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr MOEDAS	Member	

Absent:

Mr MIMICA	Member
Ms THYSSEN	Member
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms BIENKOWSKA	Member
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member

(20 April 2016)

*- English language version of the French text which is authentic -*The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Mr BEHRNDT	Chef de cabinet to Mr MIMICA
Ms PASERMAN	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms THYSSEN
Mr POWER	Chef de cabinet to Mr HOGAN
Mr BERMIG	A member of Ms BIENKOWSKA's staff
Ms KIRALY	Chef de cabinet to Mr NAVRACSICS

The following also sat in:

Mr SELMAYR	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr PESONEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SCHINAS	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	
Mr SWIEBODA	European Political Strategy Centre	
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr BALTAZAR	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 10
Mr SHOTTER	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 9
Ms SUTTON	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	
Mr MANSERVISI	Chef de cabinet to Ms MOGHERINI	Items 1 to 8 (in part)
Mr RADZIEJEWSKI	A member of Mr KATAINEN's staff	Item 10
Ms SCHMITT	Chef de cabinet to Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Items 1 to 9
Ms JUUL-JØRGENSEN	Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER	Items 9 (in part) and 10
Ms MICHOU	Deputy Secretary-General	

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

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**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2016) 2165/FINAL; SEC(2016) 178/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(2016) 2165)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 18 April.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2163<sup>RD</sup> AND 2164<sup>TH</sup> MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (6 AND 12 APRIL)**

**(PV(2016) 2163 AND /2)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2163<sup>rd</sup> meeting and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2164<sup>th</sup> meeting for the following week.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

**(RCC(2016) 47)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 15 April (RCC(2016) 47).

It paid particular attention to the following points.



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

- Reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants and amendment of Directive 2003/35/EC (Directive) – GIRLING report – 2013/0443 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 146/3.

- ‘Data Protection’ Package – Protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data (Regulation) – ALBRECHT report – 2012/0011 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 149.

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

##### **i) Programming of Council business**

(SI(2016) 150)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2016) 150 on the Council meetings between 21 April and 4 May.

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

##### **ii) Results of the April I part-session of Parliament**

(SP(2016) 236; SP(2016) 237)

The Commission took note of the information in SP(2016) 236 and SP(2016) 237 on the proceedings of the part-session of Parliament held in Strasbourg from 11 to 14 April.

##### **iii) Action to be taken on Parliament’s legislative resolutions and other resolutions of a legal nature**

(SP(2016) 258)

The Commission decided to empower the Members of the Commission 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(2016) 258, drawn up following the April I part-session of Parliament, the contents of which were noted.

**iv) Non-legislative dossier**

(point 5.1 of the IRG record)

- Committee of inquiry into Emission Measurements in the Automotive Sector (EMIS) – Hearing of Ms Delilah Al-Khudhairy, Director in the Joint Research Centre, on 19 April 2016 – the Commission’s replies

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 253 and /2.

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

**v) Relations with the European Economic and Social Committee – Programming 2016 – List of optional consultations and list of topics for an exploratory opinion**

(point 6.3.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved the line set out in SC(2016) 14 and decided to send the lists annexed to that document to the European Economic and Social Committee.

**vi) Relations with the Committee of the Regions – Programming 2016 – List of optional consultations and list of topics for an outlook opinion**

(point 6.4.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved the line set out in SR(2016) 10 and decided to send the lists annexed to that document to the Committee of the Regions.

#### **4.5. OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **vii) Aide mémoire between the European Commission and the African Union Commission on measures to strengthen the financial management of the African Union Commission**

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 139 and /2.

##### **viii) High level conference on the responsible management of the supply chain in the garment sector (Brussels, 25 April 2016)**

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2016) 143.

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

### **5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED**

*(SEC(2016) 179 ET SEQ.)*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 11 and 15 April.

### **5.2. EMPOWERMENT**

*(SEC(2016) 180 ET SEQ.)*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 11 and 15 April.

### **5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**

*(SEC(2016) 181 ET SEQ.)*

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 11 and 15 April, as archived in Decide.

#### **5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES**

**(SEC(2016) 182)**

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 18 and 22 April.

### **6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**

**(SEC(2016) 183)**

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**(PERS(2016) 37)**

#### **6.1. DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR GENERAL POST**

**(PERS(2016) 40)**

On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr CREȚU and also Mr ANSIP, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ and Mr KATAINEN, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2016) 40 for the post of Director-General of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

This decision would take effect immediately.

(20 April 2016)

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**6.2. DG MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS – CHANGE IN ORGANISATION CHART AND INTERNAL PUBLICATION AT GRADE AD15/16 OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL POST  
(PERS(2016) 41)**

On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr AVRAMOPOULOS and Mr TIMMERMANS, the Commission decided:

- to create a Deputy Director-General post in DG Migration and Home Affairs;
- to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice for this new post in PERS(2016) 41.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**6.3. SECRETARIAT GENERAL / DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY / DG NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENLARGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS / DG BUDGET – ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SUPPORT GROUP FOR UKRAINE  
(PERS(2016) 42)**

On a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr HAHN and also Ms MOGHERINI, the Commission decided:

- to attach the operational sections of the European Union delegation in Kiev, together with their staff, to the Support Group for Ukraine, in accordance with PERS(2016) 42;

- to maintain unchanged the maximum number of 30 posts mentioned in the Commission decision of 9 April 2014, not including the current posts at the delegation;
- to also include all categories of external staff in the Support Group for Ukraine.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

#### **6.4. ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION AFTER LEAVING OFFICE**

**(C(2016) 2291; C(2016) 2312)**

The Commission adopted the decisions set out in C(2016) 2291 and C(2016) 2312, and decided in particular:

- that the activity planned by former Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Joaquín ALMUNIA as a member of the Scientific Council of the Aristide Merloni Foundation was compatible with the second paragraph of Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), provided that Mr ALMUNIA scrupulously complied with his obligations to behave in all circumstances with integrity and discretion, and to protect collective responsibility and the confidentiality of matters dealt with by the Commission during his terms of office, laid down in the second paragraph of Article 245 and Article 339 TFEU and the Code of Conduct of Commissioners, and that he refrained from lobbying the Commission and/or its departments in favour of the Aristide Merloni Foundation within eighteen months of leaving office, and that he acted with discretion with regard to any experience or knowledge he may have acquired either directly or indirectly during his terms of office;
- that the activity planned by former Commissioner, Mr Tonio BORG, as representative of the European Parliament on the Management Board of

the European Medicines Agency was compatible with the second paragraph of Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), provided that Mr BORG acted in all circumstances with integrity and discretion in respect of experience and knowledge gained either directly or indirectly during his term of office;

- to instruct the Secretary-General to inform Mr ALMUNIA and Mr BORG of these decisions and of the above conditions.

**6.5. SECRETARIAT GENERAL / DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY / DG NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENLARGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS – SUPPORT GROUP FOR UKRAINE**

The Commission took note of the PRESIDENT's decision set out in point 5 of PERS(2016) 37 to attach part of the staff of the Support Group for Ukraine to the Delegation of the European Union in Kiev.

**7. OTHER BUSINESS**

**GOOGLE – STATEMENT OF OBJECTIONS CONCERNING A FORMAL INVESTIGATION ON ANDROID**

Ms VESTAGER informed the Members of the decision taken by the Commission that morning to address a Statement of Objections to Google, to the effect that that the company had, in breach of EU antitrust rules, abused its dominant position by imposing restrictions on manufacturers of Android devices and on mobile network operators.

The Commission took note of this information.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – DELIVERING ON THE EUROPEAN AGENDA ON SECURITY TO FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND PAVE THE WAY TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE AND GENUINE SECURITY UNION  
(COM(2016) 230 TO /3; RCC(2016) 49)**

Mr TIMMERMANS presented the Communication on delivering on the European Agenda on Security to fight against terrorism and pave the way towards an effective and genuine security union.

He noted that the area of security was not new for the current Commission, which has already taken initiatives and proposed important tools. First and foremost among these was the European Agenda on Security, adopted in April 2015. He stressed that systematic exchange of information and enhanced cooperation should put the Member States in a strong position to address the serious security issues confronting them.

He was concerned that so far only a few Member States were systematically exchanging information on security. This illustrated the magnitude of the task and the urgent need for all the Member States to implement the measures already adopted. He emphasised that the Commission's role in this matter was to be a facilitator, given that security remained essentially the responsibility of the Member States, and to propose measures. In view of the cross-border nature of the challenges to be addressed, inaction would be deemed unacceptable by the vast majority of public opinion.

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS spoke of the vision demonstrated by the Commission in adopting the European Agenda on Security a year ago. He emphasised that the fragmentation of the security services made the EU vulnerable to the threat of terrorism, even if responsibility for security was primarily at national level, since terrorism transcended borders and had a global dimension. In his view, the internal



security of any one EU Member State was bound up with that of all of them, since the weaknesses of one State exposed all the others to the threat of terrorism.

He referred to the most recent European developments in the area of security, with the adoption of the EU passenger name record (PNR) Directive by the European Parliament last week and the launch in January of the new European Counter Terrorism Centre in The Hague. He added that by the autumn the Commission would also propose initiatives to allocate more resources to this new centre and strengthen the work of Europol.

Despite this progress, much remained to be done, in particular to encourage information-sharing in the fight against terrorism, one of the weakest links of security in Europe. In this respect, it was important that the Member States made full use of the Schengen information system, which in his view should contain information on the movements of foreign fighters. In addition to the need for increased trust between national authorities, for the information to be useful it must be interoperable, interconnected and accessible in electronic form.

As regards the phenomenon of radicalisation, Mr AVRAMOPOULOS considered that absolute priority must be given to prevention, accompanied by social inclusion efforts. He also called for a more security-oriented approach enabling close monitoring of individuals considered to be high-risk and the sharing of information on these individuals between the Member States and the relevant EU agencies. Combating radicalisation would be the subject of a Commission Communication on 7 June.

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS also mentioned the proposals on control of firearms trafficking and criminalisation of terrorism that the European Parliament and the Council had been examining since last year. Lastly, he referred to the problems of implementing the European legislation on explosives and the fact that many Member States had not yet applied the rules in place since 2013. This therefore justified the initiation of infringement cases.

In his view, these examples demonstrated the need for a culture change in the approach to security and for a pathway leading towards the evolution of a genuine Security Union that would bring together the operational measures, tools and methods which would allow the law enforcement authorities to work together and share resources and information in their joint fight against terrorism.

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

- the fact that the communication struck the right balance between strengthening EU internal security and respect for fundamental rights;
- the complementarity of EU action with that of the Member States, which were still responsible for internal security, and the importance of explaining this properly in external communication;
- the need for EU action to reinforce security and combat terrorism to be taken up at international level and give rise to enhanced cooperation;
- the advisability of including a security dimension in EU development and humanitarian aid policy;
- the vulnerability of transport systems to terrorist actions and cyber-attacks, an issue that would be addressed at the Transport Council in June, and the need for proportionate, effective solutions based on the potential risks identified;
- the significant impact of terrorist attacks on transport systems, which could lead to paralysis and directly affect the functioning of the internal market and the free movement of persons;
- on the one hand, the significant obstacle to European cooperation on security posed by the lack of trust between Member States; on the other, questions about the practices of certain Member States to promote the exchange of information;

- the need to take the victims of terrorist attacks into account in the EU security strategy and to develop the necessary competences and expertise to assist them;
- the need to develop the exchange of information on criminal records of third country nationals, fingerprinting and access to digital evidence;
- the importance of supporting alterations to prisons in order to segregate radicalised prisoners while providing them with humane detention conditions; the Structural Funds, in particular, could be used for this purpose.

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS concluded that while much remained to be done to implement the European Agenda on Security, the attacks in Paris and Brussels had highlighted the need to rapidly improve the systematic exchange of information between Member States. Although he supported drawing up common rules at international level, it was essential for the Member States as a first step to implement the measures already adopted at EU level. He considered that the concept of a Security Union offered the Member States a new tool and a cooperation mechanism that might, in time, make it possible to strengthen cooperation between intelligence services in Europe.

The Commission approved the Communication set out in COM(2016) 230/3 for transmission to Parliament, the European Council and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – FIRST REPORT ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU-TURKEY STATEMENT  
(COM(2016) 231 AND /2; RCC(2016) 49)**

At the request of the PRESIDENT, Mr TIMMERMANS presented the

Communication, which provided a first overview of the progress made in the implementation of the Joint EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March, the aim of which was to manage the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in the Greek islands. He noted that the report also referred to the priority measures that must be implemented in the near future by all the stakeholders, namely Turkey, the Commission, the European co-legislator and the Member States.

Firstly, he explained that, since the Statement had been adopted, there had been a substantial decrease in the number of people leaving Turkey to reach Greece, as shown by the number of irregular arrivals recorded in the Greek islands in recent weeks. He welcomed the fact that the approach taken was starting to produce tangible results, especially by decisively tackling the modus operandi of people smugglers.

He did however stress the need to monitor closely other irregular migration routes which might become more significant, particularly in the Mediterranean basin. He especially stressed the importance of ensuring long-term stability in Libya, and also pointed to the need for a more global approach that would take account of developments in sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

He then referred to the other commitments made by the parties to the EU-Turkey Statement. He confirmed that the returns process was about to begin, in full compliance with European and international law. He reminded the meeting of the terms of the 'One for One' scheme, whereby, on the one hand, asylum seekers who had crossed Turkish territory to reach the Greek islands and whose asylum applications had been declared inadmissible in Greece would be returned to Turkey, and, on the other hand, Syrian refugees in Turkey would be resettled in the EU. He noted that implementation of this Chapter of the agreement, which was one of the most sensitive aspects, had only just begun.

As regards the progress made by Turkey with a view to a potential EU decision to liberalise the visa system for Turkish citizens, which was another aspect of the Joint

Statement, he noted that the Commission would be able to propose a decision by the end of June, provided that Turkey met all the benchmarks that had been set. He emphasised the strict conditions that had been laid down and the objective analysis of the facts that would serve as a basis for the report that the Commission would submit to the European Parliament on 4 May.

Mr TIMMERMANS then referred to the spirit in which the agreement was being implemented. He noted the good cooperation between Turkey and Greece and thanked them for the efforts being made by both sides. He also welcomed the very good cooperation between the Greek authorities and the Commission. He nonetheless stressed that it was extremely important that the other EU Member States honour the pledges made to Greece, especially in terms of making experts available, as this would increase the capacity on the ground of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (Frontex).

Mr AVRAMOPOULOS confirmed that the coming days would be critical for the implementation of the other provisions of the agreement. He especially recognised the need to monitor developments closely in terms of the situation in Greece and the process of returning irregular migrants. In response to a request for clarification from the PRESIDENT, he stated that he was encouraged by the additional commitments made by Turkey in relation to the reception arrangements for non-Syrian asylum seekers.

Regarding visa liberalisation, Mr AVRAMOPOULOS welcomed the very clear message given by the PRESIDENT in his speech to the Council of Europe the previous day, when he reiterated the strict conditions that must be met. Having held high-level meetings with the Turkish authorities in Ankara the previous day, he felt that they were aware of the scale of the task at hand and the efforts that would be required to meet the conditions that had been set. He indicated that work was continuing as part of an ongoing dialogue between the Turkish authorities and the

Commission, and that progress could already be seen, including in some of the areas considered a priority by the Commission in the report presented that day. He did, however, acknowledge that there was still much to be done and confirmed that the College would receive a further progress update in two weeks' time.

He stressed the more general need to launch a broader policy debate on visa policy and the safeguards required by Member States. In his view, the Commission should seize the opportunity to propose policy changes, which should take full account of the EU's foreign policy priorities, the current migration crisis and security issues.

Mr HAHN provided an update on the implementation of the facility for refugees in Turkey. He explained that a special measure was to be announced that same day, allocating some €60 million to finance aid projects that would provide basic assistance (food, healthcare and accommodation) to migrants sent back to Turkey from Greece. He added that a further sum of some €50 million would be used to support humanitarian aid projects to help Syrian refugees in Turkey. To date, the total amount of funding already allocated through the facility on the ground was €187 million.

He stressed that any funds allocated through the facility were paid directly to the EU's humanitarian partners on the ground and were not channelled through the Turkish authorities as a 'reimbursement' of their 'costs', to help ensure that aid projects for refugees received funding as quickly as possible; he planned to emphasise this point again during his next visits to Turkey.

On the wider issue of visa policy, he stressed the importance of affording equal treatment to all affected third countries – a process also ongoing with Ukraine, Georgia and Kosovo. On the subject of the policy debate proposed by Mr AVRAMOPOULOS, he mentioned the existing provisions, which allowed the visa waiver system to be suspended temporarily for any given third country based on objective indicators.

With regard to the progress of accession negotiations with Turkey, the preparatory work within the Commission for Chapter 33 (Budget) was nearing completion, which should allow it to be officially opened under the Dutch presidency. He confirmed that preparations were also ongoing on a number of other Chapters, including Chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security), and stressed the crucial overall link with the issue of Cyprus.

Together with a clear reduction in the numbers of migrants arriving on the Greek islands by sea since the joint agreement had come into force, Ms MOGHERINI noted an improvement in how the reception of refugees was managed at other points of entry into the EU, as she had recently witnessed on Lampedusa. She felt heartened by this outcome and the excellent cooperation between the EU and the Italian authorities, which had led to more orderly management and better reception conditions for those arriving on the island.

However, she warned of the emergence of new migration routes, where people smugglers were already visibly present. She wanted the Union to implement preparatory measures immediately, to allow it to react in a structured, coordinated manner with the relevant transit countries, if necessary.

As regards Libya, she reported on the discussions at the Foreign Affairs Defence Council on 19 April, attended by the Prime Minister of Libya's national unity government, which had focused on the various potential areas of cooperation with the EU. She emphasised the need for the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to develop practical support programmes to help rebuild the country. She also referred to 'Operation Sophia', the aim of which was to strengthen the capacity of Libya's Coast Guard.

Finally, Ms MOGHERINI referred to the cooperation and assistance implemented with African partners as part of the EU's overall approach aimed at tackling the root causes of migration. In relation to the initiative entitled 'Capacity building in support of security and development', which had already received the political

approval of the European Council, she stressed the urgent need to address the equipment requirements arising from the training courses delivered in the African countries in question. She regretted that, three years on, the funding needed for this equipment was still facing legal obstacles. She hoped that an appropriate legal solution would be found as quickly as possible, referring to the strong desire for such an outcome expressed at that week's Foreign Affairs Defence Council.

She concluded by referring to her recent trip to Iran with seven other Members of the Commission which, among other things, had allowed a political dialogue to be opened on migration issues and the ways in which the EU might provide support for Afghan migrants in Iran.

Mr STYLIANIDES praised the historic progress made on cooperation between Greece and Turkey under the agreement implemented between the latter and the EU. He recommended very clear communication on the support measures implemented in both countries by the EU in order to increase awareness of them among the Greek and Turkish people.

With regard to Greece, he reported on the previous day's launch of the first assistance projects under the new emergency assistance instrument for crises within the EU, which was adopted in March and was worth a total of €83 million. This amount came on top of the €181 million granted since 2015 under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF) to manage the refugee crisis in Greece.

With reference to the funds provided through the facility for refugees in Turkey, he cited a number of contracts agreed between the relevant Commission departments and humanitarian organisations operating in Turkey.

Finally, at the meeting between the European Commission and the African Union Commission, held in Addis Ababa on 7 April, priority areas of funding were identified with a view to bolstering the fight against poverty and instability in



Africa.

The PRESIDENT thanked the Members of the Commission for their contributions. He then reported on the talks he had held the previous day with the Turkish Prime Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, and several high-ranking Ministers, during which the application of the agreement was examined and certain aspects were clarified.

In a general sense, he noted that, although the essential elements had been agreed under the EU-Turkey joint statement and during talks between the Commission and the Turkish authorities, a number of points remained to be resolved.

With regard to the efforts made by Turkey with a view to the liberalisation of the visa system, he emphasised that the prerequisites were non-negotiable and that Turkey would have to satisfy the stated conditions before the Commission could propose a decision on visa liberalisation.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT expressed his hope that the closer positive cooperation between Greece and Turkey would continue over the coming weeks and months.

The Commission adopted, subject to a final update of certain figures, the communication set out in COM(2016) 231/2 for transmission to Parliament, the European Council and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

## **10. POLICY DEBATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECODESIGN FRAMEWORK**

**(SEC(2016) 195; RCC(2016) 48)**

The PRESIDENT opened the policy debate on the implementation of the ecodesign framework, for which the background note circulated under the authority of Mr TIMMERMANS and Mr KATAINEN had outlined the context, the elements for

discussion and the main questions for the Members.

Mr TIMMERMANS stressed that the policy debate followed the line the PRESIDENT had set out for the current Commission that it should be a political body guided by ten clear priorities and determined to be ambitious on big issues and more modest on less important ones, 'Big on big things, small on small things'. He explained that the aim of the question put to the Members that day was precisely to ensure that a policy that had been followed for more than ten years would not be reduced to an automatic bureaucratic exercise but would contribute to the Commission's political objectives and would translate into significant results with a good level of political ownership.

He pointed out that ecodesign met the criterion of being ambitious since it already contributed to meeting half the energy efficiency target and a quarter of the greenhouse gas emissions reduction target that the European Union had set itself under horizon 2020. Furthermore, ecodesign would be a way of achieving the Union's even more ambitious objectives for 2030 and would enable it to respect the commitments made in Paris in November 2015 at the 21<sup>st</sup> conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21).

He added that ecodesign was of key importance to the circular economy, for which the Union was also very ambitious. It was in this context that the Commission had decided in December 2015 that the Union would systematically emphasize the general efficiency of resources in products that consume energy; an initiative that was widely welcomed.

Finally, he pointed out the virtues of ecodesign, which gave more decision-making power to consumers, supported the single market and stimulated competitiveness and innovation in Europe, not forgetting the not insignificant fact that ecodesign helped consumers reduce their energy bills by almost EUR 500 per year.

For all these reasons, Mr TIMMERMANS was in favour of judiciously taking

forward the programme for EU ecodesign regulation, although he suggested it should be accompanied by two essential conditions: (i) the choice of products included would be the result of a political decision rather than a bureaucratic one, and (ii) this choice would be made on the basis of objective criteria proving that regulating the products in question would have significant added value. He was also aware of the need to convince the stakeholders – consumers, industry, the European parliament, NGOs, etc. – to speak out in favour of regulation that responded to a request on their part, and indicated that he intended to contact them.

Mr KATAINEN agreed wholeheartedly and said he was now more aware than in the past of the considerable importance of ecodesign, not only for the objectives of energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also for the single market for products and the necessary predictability for industry and innovation.

With regard to energy, he gave some telling examples and pointed out in particular that, applied to certain elements in heating installations and extended across the population of Europe, the savings that would be achievable at Union level would be equivalent to the combined annual energy consumption of Austria and Portugal. He added that ecodesign could be beneficial in an infinite number of areas.

As for the single market for products, he went on to mention another positive aspect that should be taken into consideration, i.e. the central role of standardisation at Union level and also the leading and driving role European standardisation could play at a global level.

Finally, he emphasized the advantages of ecodesign for industry, in particular in terms of regulatory certainty, the development of specific outlets, and incentives to innovate.

He also pointed out that the Commission had decided to include ecodesign, the possibility of repairing products and the efficient use of resources in its Communication of December 2015 on the circular economy.

Mr KATAINEN felt that that day's policy debate was important if the Members were to better understand the political issues involved in this matter, take ownership of it and reflect on ways of improving its management in the future.

On this last point he felt that one of the central issues of this debate must be that of communication. He admitted that ecodesign standards were sometimes ridiculed in the media in terms of the political and geostrategic issues the Union was faced with. This was why he recommended paying particular attention to communication, which in his view should focus on the considerable advantages ecodesign regulation could have at European level, starting with energy savings and the consequent reduction in consumers' bills.

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

- the support of the Members of the Commission for achieving the EU climate and energy objectives for 2020 and 2030 in particular;
- unanimous support for the fact that any ecodesign regulation initiatives for a product should originate from a policy decision, rather than a bureaucratic one;
- as regards energy efficiency in particular, the fact that ecodesign was one of the few tools available at European level to influence performance;
- the consequences in terms of predictability for firms, and the knock-on effect at the global level if the EU continued to lead the way as regards standards; the fact that having common standards was a major asset for the EU, and the objective interest it had in taking the initiative in this area;
- the actual savings that ecodesign would bring to consumers;
- the need to take into consideration the criticisms levelled at the EU, which was seen as intruding too much into citizens' daily lives; from this point of view, the

sensitivity surrounding certain products whose ecodesign could be regulated by the EU;

- the recommendation that a diplomatic approach be taken when choosing the products whose ecodesign could be regulated; to this end, the need for an objective assessment of the potential for savings and the added value thereof;
- the value of consulting interested parties, industry, consumers, non-governmental organisations, and others; the desirability of involving them also in making the case for ecodesign regulation;
- the importance of communication in any future product ecodesign regulation exercise and the careful choice to be made when setting its implementation timetable; the need to reiterate that, through this regulation, the Commission was responding to a request made by consumers and industry, making it necessary to seek targeted communication relays among stakeholders; the need to include the consumer protection aspect in communication, and, also, the objective figures and data on the contribution that ecodesign could make, for example, to the commitments undertaken as part of the COP21 or to energy security;
- support, consequently, for the idea put forward by the PRESIDENT for a first decision by the College identifying the products targeted by the regulation exercise, rather than individual products considered in succession, and a comprehensive communication strategy to better stress the cumulated scope of this set of ecodesign standards in achieving the EU's major policy objectives;
- in this context, the importance of giving greater visibility to the impact of ecodesign regulation on growth, employment, EU competitiveness, the development of both large enterprises and SMEs, and the potential prospects in terms of research and innovation afforded by ecodesign, including in other regions of the world;

- the merit of giving more room in ecodesign regulation to the promotion of repairable, recyclable and reusable products, and the suggestion that ecodesign be extended to ending planned obsolescence, an initiative which would have strong public support;
- in some areas, the value of changing our thinking and the need to place the emphasis on innovation rather than standardisation and to use new business models, such as leasing.

Mr KATAINEN welcomed this helpful policy debate and noted the Commission's support for grouped product regulation, the need to highlight the benefits of ecodesign both for consumers and industry, and the importance of better communication highlighting, above all, the savings which could be achieved. He was relying on the College to take ownership of these initiatives when the time came.

The PRESIDENT closed the policy debate by concluding that the College would review in the autumn the choice of products whose ecodesign could be regulated in the form of a package grouping together all the products concerned. He stressed the need to have collegial decisions on all ecodesign regulation issues and to review the process at Commission department level in order to prevent any non-collegial decisions being taken in the future. He also stated that the Commission would need a good communication drive in order to convince potential allies to come out in favour of the initiatives that it would take, without concealing that he had some doubts on this point. In any case, he invited the Members of the Commission responsible to present the draft package of eligible products to the College next autumn, which would provide enough time to draw up a solid communication strategy.

The Commission took note of the results and conclusions of the policy debate and of the background note in SEC(2016) 195.

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

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The meeting closed at 12.31.