



Brussels, 1.12.2019
P(2019) 2

COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE COMMISSION

The Working Methods of the European Commission

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
I. THE COLLEGIAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS	4
1) Collegiality	4
2) College meetings	4
3) Preparation of the College meetings.....	6
II. POLITICAL OWNERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION’S DECISIONS	7
1. Vice-Presidents and Commissioners’ Groups	7
2. Responsibility for the coherence and quality of Commission proposals.....	8
3. Interservice consultation and coordination.....	10
4. One in, one out.....	11
5. Resources and tools to implement the Commission’s policy priorities.....	11
III. COLLEGIALITY IN INTERINSTITUTIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS ..	12
1) Interinstitutional and external representation	12
2) Groupe des Relations Interinstitutionnelles.....	13
3) Group for External Coordination.....	14
IV. RELATIONS WITH THE COMMISSION SERVICES	16
V. TRANSPARENCY/CONTACTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS.....	17
VI. SECURITY	18
VII. CRISIS MANAGEMENT.....	18
VIII. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION	18
IX. A GREEN COMMISSION	19
X. COMMUNICATION	19
1) The communication activities of the Commission	19
2) Structures.....	19
ANNEX 1: RELEVANT EXTRACTS FROM THE TREATIES	21
ANNEX 2: PRINCIPLES GOVERNING WORKING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, THEIR CABINETS AND THE SERVICES OF THE COMMISSION.....	23
ANNEX 3: EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION.....	38

COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE COMMISSION

THE WORKING METHODS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

INTRODUCTION

I want the next five years to be an opportunity for Europe to strive for more at home in order to lead in the world. I will count on you and our College to work together to deliver on what I have promised Europe's citizens in my Agenda for Europe.

For this purpose, I want a strong and fair Commission. I want a Commission whose internal functioning is based on the principles of collegiality and good governance: with clear roles and responsibilities, a strong commitment to performance management and compliance with the legal framework, clear accountability mechanisms, a high quality and evidence-based regulatory framework, openness and transparency, and high standards of ethical behaviour.

For me, the College of Commissioners represents the apex of the Commission architecture and assumes collegial political responsibility for the work of the Commission. Operational implementation is delegated to Directors-General and Heads of Service who lead the administrative structure of the Commission. While respecting clear reporting lines to their relevant Commissioner, the loyalty of Commission services should be to the College.

The Treaties, Rules of Procedure and the present Working Methods organise the European Commission's work to ensure its efficient functioning. The purpose of this document is to describe the Commission's Working Methods and explain how they ensure that the Commission functions as a modern, transparent and performance-oriented institution.

These Working Methods also introduce a number of novelties to the way the Commission works, such as: the role of the Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative / Vice-President, Vice-Presidents and Commissioners' Groups; the creation of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO); the role of the Secretariat-General in supporting the Executive Vice-Presidents and the Vice-Presidents; the Commission's follow-up to European Parliament Resolutions based on Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU); the introduction of the digital transformation objective and an open, inclusive and cooperative way of working. The practical implications of those changes are explained in this document.

I look forward to working together with you in the next five years, as we deliver on a Union that strives for more.

Ursula von der Leyen

I. THE COLLEGIAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1) Collegiality

The College of Commissioners takes decisions collectively. All Members of the Commission are equal when making decisions and equally accountable for these decisions. Once a decision is taken, every Member of the Commission takes ownership of the decision and promotes and defends it. Any position diverging from the position originally adopted by the Commission needs a formal endorsement by the College.

2) College meetings

The **weekly meetings of the College** are the primary means for the Members of the Commission to come together, discuss political issues and take decisions collegially.

It is part of the duties of the Members of the Commission to be **present** at all meetings of the College. Only the President may decide to release Members from the obligation to be present, in duly justified cases and following a written request. Absence from the meetings of the College should be restricted to exceptional and justified circumstances, such as inter-institutional obligations or requirements of external representation of the EU. Members of the Commission cannot be replaced in College meetings.

The President sets the dates and the **agenda of College meetings**¹. The Secretariat-General assists the President in the agenda planning process. This is done on the basis of the indicative 'liste des points prévus' (LPP), which is regularly updated and which contains tentative items to be put on the agenda for the coming months. This list is made available to the public.

In oral procedure, the College will adopt in principle and in particular the following:

- Legislative proposals which the President considers to be of political or strategic importance; proposals to be authorised to negotiate or to conclude international agreements of similar importance;
- Delegated or implementing acts which the President considers to be of exceptional nature or of particular political or strategic importance;
- Individual decisions addressed to Member States or undertakings of similar importance, such as competition cases;
- Decisions to empower a Member of the College, or to delegate to a Director-General the power, to take a decision on behalf of the Commission;
- Certain administrative decisions, e.g. where the College acts as the Appointing Authority;
- Positions to be taken in the course of legislative procedures (ie follow-up to GRI);

(¹) Commission's Rules of Procedure.

- Positions to be taken in the external representation of the Union (ie follow-up to EXCO); and
- Decisions concerning infringement proceedings against Member States.

The College may hold **orientation** debates, which are used, from an early stage, to frame the political parameters within which services should develop a proposal, to discuss sensitive issues requiring the direct input of the College, or to develop a common approach to general political developments.

These debates should normally take place on the basis of an issues paper, prepared by the responsible Executive Vice-Presidents, Vice-President(s) or Commissioner(s) in agreement with the President. The President might also decide to prepare an issues paper for an orientation debate when relevant and appropriate.

The results of the orientation debates should steer subsequent policy preparations and impact assessment work, concentrating on the development and impact analysis of remaining options that require further analysis and stakeholder consultation.

To demonstrate the importance it attaches to **European Citizens' Initiatives**, decisions on whether to register proposed initiatives will be adopted, in principle, according to the oral procedure.

In light of the President's commitment that, when the European Parliament adopts a resolution **based on Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** requesting the Commission to submit legislative proposals, it would respond with such a proposal, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles, the College will discuss all such resolutions. It will do so when Parliament starts working on a possible resolution based on Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as well as when Parliament adopts such resolutions. The Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight will inform the European Parliament of the College decision on the follow-up proposed² within three months of the adoption of the relevant resolution, in accordance with the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making³. The College will also review and respond to requests by the Council **pursuant to Article 241 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union**, in full respect of the proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making principles.

External action will be systematically discussed and decided upon by the College.

The **quorum** for College meetings is the majority of its Members. Decisions in the College are in general taken in a consensual manner. The President may formally note the consensus. However, the President or any Member of the Commission may request that a vote be taken. In that case, a majority of Members is needed for any proposal to be adopted. Each Commissioner has one vote, and Commissioners can only vote in person. The President draws the conclusions of College meetings, which are recorded in the **minutes**, prepared by the Secretary-General, and approved in one of the subsequent meetings of the College.

⁽²⁾ Political reply on the follow-up. Proposals for legislative acts will follow Better Regulation principles and timetables.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.

The College will make full use of state of the art digital methods and tools to ensure the highest efficiency of its decision-making process and the strict confidentiality of its proceedings. In this context, as regards the weekly College meetings, the agenda and its supporting documents should be accessible in **digital format**, in full respect of the Commission overall security framework⁴.

3) Preparation of the College meetings

The meetings of the College require careful **preparation**: this is the main purpose of the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet (Hebdo) which is preceded by meetings of the preparatory bodies: the **special meetings of Cabinets (RSCC)**⁵, ‘**Groupe des Relations Inter-institutionnelles**’ (GRI) and the ‘**Group for External Coordination (EXCO)**’.

	Thursday	Friday	Sa / Su	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
When the College meets in Brussels	RSCC(s)	GRI				College (am) in Brussels
	RSCC(s)			HEBDO (pm)		EXCO
When the College meets in Strasbourg (12 x/year)	RSCC(s)	GRI		HEBDO (am)		
	RSCC(s)				College (pm) in Strasbourg	EXCO

RSCC(s) Special meeting(s) of Cabinets (1 file/meeting). Usually on Thursday, but possible on other days (the more files, the more meetings)

EXCO External Coordination Group

GRI Interinstitutional Relations Group = Deputy Heads of Cabinet. They prepare interinstitutional files for the next Hebdo meeting

HEBDO Weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet to prepare all files for the next College meeting

The purpose of the sequence of preparatory meetings is to address outstanding questions and identify sensitive aspects at each stage of the process, so that College meetings can focus on **key political issues**. Effective preparation of meetings requires that new issues are not raised at a later stage of the process, and that issues that were closed at an earlier stage of the process, are not reopened.

The RSCC, GRI and EXCO conclusions, recommendations and unresolved issues are referred to the Heads of Cabinet for their weekly ‘Hebdo’ meeting, in preparation for the meeting of the College. Hebdo in turn decides which points should be open for discussion at the College.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/security/EN/newDS3/PolicyLegislation/Pages/security-rules.aspx>

⁽⁵⁾ See also the section on Interinstitutional Responsibilities.

In all College preparatory meetings, Heads of Cabinet and Cabinet members speak on behalf of their respective Member of the Commission; it is therefore of crucial importance for the functioning of the Commission's decision-making process that Heads of Cabinet and Cabinet members are mandated by their Member of the Commission with a clear line to take.

To facilitate collegial discussions, **documents** for preparation of the College should be made available in good time, in respect of applicable deadlines⁶. Clear, concise documents help to ensure a focused debate. The content of those documents should be approved prior to circulation by the responsible and associated Commissioner(s) and Executive Vice-President(s), the High Representative/Vice-President or Vice-President(s).

To protect the collegial nature of discussions in the College, Members, officials and other staff are required, in accordance with Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 17 of the Staff Regulations, to protect the collegial decision-making process by not disclosing any information on the discussions held at the meetings, nor on the content of the documents. The Secretary-General is mandated to enforce rigorously respect for the collegial decision-making process.

II. POLITICAL OWNERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION'S DECISIONS

Collegiality is the guiding principle of all the work of the Commission. **Responsibility for the coherence and quality of the Commission proposals** is shared throughout the cycle from policy planning to adoption. Members of the Commission assume full political ownership for the work done by the services under their responsibility.

1. Vice-Presidents and Commissioners' Groups

The President has empowered eight **Vice-Presidents**⁷ to steer and coordinate each of the Commission's priorities. The Mission Letters set out the Vice-Presidents with whom Commissioners should, as a rule, liaise closely if they want to put an initiative on the agenda of the College. Out of the eight, three **Executive Vice-Presidents** will have a dual function, as they will also manage a policy area. One of the three Executive Vice-Presidents, the First Vice-President, will chair the College in the absence of the President. The **High Representative/Vice-President** will support the President in coordinating the external dimension of all Commissioners' work. He will provide a weekly update on foreign policy to the College.

In their areas of responsibility, the Executive Vice-Presidents and Vice-Presidents act on behalf of the President and help the President to exercise her rights and prerogatives. They are entrusted with well-defined priority projects and steer and coordinate work across the Commission in the key areas of the President's Political Guidelines.

(⁶) As a rule, two working days before the start of the weekly 'Hebdo' meetings of Heads of Cabinet, special meetings of Heads of Cabinet, and meetings of the Groups on Interinstitutional Relations and on External Coordination.

(⁷) According to Article 18 of the Treaty on European Union, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is a Vice-President of the Commission.

In particular, the Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents are in charge of political steering and coordinating work in their area of responsibility. This will notably be done via **Commissioners' Groups**, bringing together relevant Members of the Commission. In a strand separate from the formal decision-making process attributed to the College, the Commissioners' Groups will help shaping coherent policies and delivering results, while focusing on cross-cutting issues and building joint ownership. These Groups are established by a Decision of the President⁸ and chaired by the relevant Executive Vice-President, the High Representative/Vice-President or Vice-President. If the President attends a meeting of a Group, she may decide to chair the meeting.

For initiatives mentioned in the Political Guidelines or Mission Letters and key initiatives of the Commission Work Programme, Executive Vice-Presidents and Vice-Presidents can set up Commissioners' **Project Groups** to report to the relevant Commissioners' Group. These Project Groups do not replace the standard collegial preparatory process. The decision to set up a Project Group is taken by the relevant Commissioners' Group. The Project Groups may also include Members of the Commission who are not Members of the Commissioners' Group.

The Cabinet of the President will participate in all Commissioners' Groups and Project Groups meetings and the Secretariat-General will provide for their secretariat⁹. A list of Project Groups and a calendar of meetings for Commissioners' Groups and Project Groups is provided to the College on a regular basis.

This method of working together at political level should be matched with increased cooperation at services level, pooling knowledge and expertise from the administration. For key initiatives of the Commission Work Programme, the Secretariat-General will chair Inter-service Groups bringing together all relevant Commission services.

Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents assess whether and to what extent proposed new initiatives fit the Political Guidelines of the President of the Commission.

Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents manage and organise the representation of the Commission in their area of responsibility in the European Parliament, the Council, in Member States and before national Parliaments and other institutional settings, as well as externally.

Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents promote a proactive and coordinated approach to the follow-up, implementation and communication of the Commission's priority policies across the Union and externally.

2. Responsibility for the coherence and quality of Commission proposals

All acts adopted by the Commission must be aligned with the Political Guidelines and the priorities agreed by the College. The **Commission Work Programme** and the **annual Budget** provide the frame in which the Commission gives effect to the Political Guidelines in

⁽⁸⁾ President's Decision P(2019) 4

⁽⁹⁾ With the exception of the Commissioners' Group for a Stronger Europe in the World, for which a co-secretariat will be provided by the Secretariat-General and the European External Action Service.

a given year. As a rule, the President will include new initiatives in the Commission Work Programme when this is recommended by one of the Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President or Vice-Presidents, on the basis of sound arguments and a clear narrative that is coherent with the Political Guidelines.

Political planning and validation of all acts, including delegated and implementing acts, is essential to ensure that the Commission's decision-making process is steered politically from planning to adoption and to guarantee the delivery of results in line with agreed priorities.

In order to reinforce political responsibility and ownership by all actors, **political validation** of initiatives is required at the different stages of the decision-making process (planning, interservice consultation and initiation of the decision-making process).

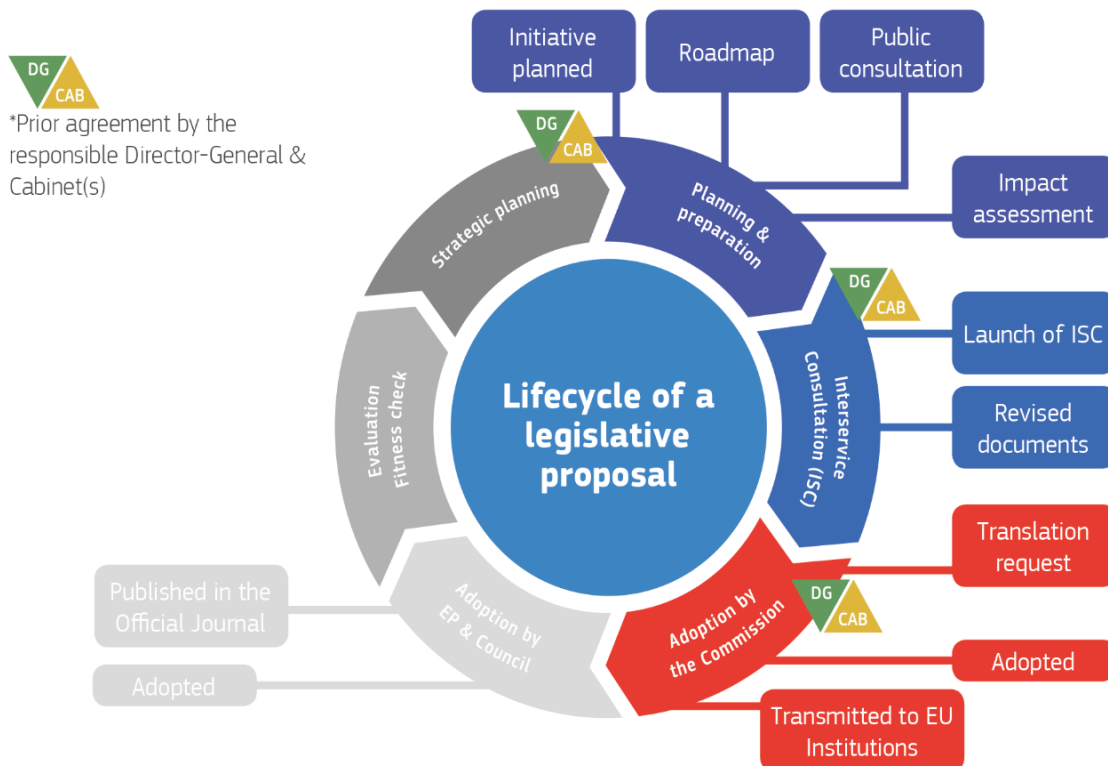
Politically sensitive and/or important acts will require political validation at each stage of the decision-making process by the lead Commissioner and the relevant Executive Vice-President or Vice-President. The President validates the initiation of the adoption procedure. The Secretary-General will coordinate the political validation of politically sensitive and/or important acts. The working arrangements between Members of the Commission, Cabinets and the relevant Commission services further define the modalities of identification and assessment of acts as well as the respective responsibilities.

For all other acts, the Director-General after due assessment with the responsible Member of the Commission, will have full responsibility and ensure full control. Whenever necessary, political planning issues can be raised in GRI and in EXCO.

To ensure transparency and traceability, in principle, all acts will be entered into the Commission's IT tool **Decide** at the planning stage¹⁰.

After the transmission to other institutions, notification and/or publication of adopted acts, the Commission follows up the interinstitutional process.

⁽¹⁰⁾ This does not apply to acts concerning the management of litigation or in the exceptional cases where there would be no planning entry because of urgency reasons. In such cases, with the exception of decisions taken by empowerment or delegation, the Secretariat-General and/or the President's Cabinet will be involved in the validation of the first step of the process done in *Decide*, whether it is the launch of the interservice consultation or the launch of the oral or written adoption procedure.



3. Interservice consultation and coordination

To ensure collegial preparation of new initiatives based on evidence and expertise, **interservice consultations** have to take place¹¹ before the adoption process by the College. Interservice consultations can only be launched after the political validation of a Commissioner and the relevant Executive Vice-President, the High Representative/Vice-President or Vice-President and the agreement of the President. All services concerned by the field of activity or nature of the draft text need to be included in the interservice consultation.

For initiatives mentioned in the Political Guidelines and key initiatives in the Commission Work Programme, Interservice Groups chaired by the Secretariat-General will be established in order to prepare drafts, including the relevant Impact Assessment and the Commission proposal or act, to collect the expertise available across Commission services.

All initiatives likely to have significant direct economic, social or environmental impacts should be accompanied by an **impact assessment** and a positive opinion from the **Regulatory Scrutiny Board**. The explanatory memorandum will present the better law-making dimension and how the Commission plans to address the burdens added or reduced for business and citizens. Should the College chose not to undertake an impact assessment, the reasons for that should be given in the explanatory memorandum. These principles also apply to the Commission's follow up to requests under Articles 225 and 241 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as well as to delegated and implementing acts expected

⁽¹¹⁾ Commission's Rules of Procedure.

to have significant impacts. Impact assessments should draw on the findings of **evaluations** looking at what can be learnt from experience to date. The Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight will validate exemptions from impact assessments, stakeholders' consultations 'and the evaluate first principle' on the basis of **Better Regulation guidelines**. He will also approve the launch of the interservice consultation on any initiative that would have been subject to a second negative opinion by the Regulatory Scrutiny Board before the College decides whether or not to go ahead with the initiative.

4. **One in, one out**

The Commission will apply the 'one in, one out' principle. Every legislative proposal creating new burdens should relieve people and business of an existing equivalent burden at EU-level in the same policy area. The Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight will oversee the application of the principle and ensure that it is applied coherently across the Commission services. He will draw on the Secretariat-General to develop a new tool to deliver this principle in the different policy areas.

5. **Resources and tools to implement the Commission's policy priorities**

The Commission must be able to demonstrate and communicate the benefit of its actions and to explain how the human and financial resources available to it are used efficiently and effectively. Members of the Commission should give high priority to **performance measurement and reporting on achievements** in their respective portfolio areas.

As part of the Strategic Planning and Programming cycle, all Commission services draw up **multiannual Strategic Plans**. These plans explain how the services will contribute to the strategic priorities of the Commission and contain specific objectives and performance indicators to allow performance to be monitored and managed over time. Commission services also draw up **annual Management Plans** setting out the key outputs for the year, in full coherence with the Commission Work Programme. All services report on progress and achievements in their **annual Activity Reports**. The Secretariat-General coordinates the strategic planning and programming cycle in cooperation with other central services of the Commission.

The Secretariat-General, the Directorate-General for Budget and Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security are responsible for ensuring that the budgetary and resource implications of proposals are consistent with the Commission's decisions and priorities.

The **Commissioner responsible for Budget and Administration** reports directly to the President. The President will pay particular attention to his opinion as regards the impact of the Commission's activities and priorities on the human and financial resources of the European Commission.

Human resources should be deployed in line with priorities. Organisational changes should be motivated by such considerations and reviewed by the Secretariat-General and the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security. The Director-General and the relevant Member of the Commission should discuss the draft **annual Activity Reports** in order to enable the Member of the Commission to exercise his/her political authority over the service concerned and in particular to identify means of remedying any weaknesses identified.

The Member of the Commission and the Director-General should meet at least twice a year to discuss internal control issues and possible weaknesses and the plans identified to remedy them.

Senior management appointments are made by the College, on a proposal of the Commissioner for Budget and Administration in agreement with the President and after consultation of the Executive Vice-President/ Commissioner directly in charge of the service.

III. COLLEGIALLY IN INTERINSTITUTIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

1) Interinstitutional and external representation

An important aspect of collegiality is that all Members of the Commission fulfil their responsibilities in terms of attendance to the **European Parliament** and the **Council meetings**, and meet obligations towards other Union institutions and bodies, such as the **European Economic and Social Committee**, the **Committee of the Regions** and the **European Ombudsman**. Under the coordination of the Vice-President for Interinstitutional Affairs and Foresight, Members of the Commission are expected to be politically active in the **Member States** and to make themselves available to present and explain important proposals and initiatives in **national Parliaments**. In accordance with their Mission Letters, all Members of the Commission are expected to visit every Member State within the first half of the Commission's mandate at the latest, and should meet regularly with national Parliaments and take part in **Citizens' Dialogues** across the Union.

Members of the Commission are obliged to respect in full the Framework Agreement on the relations between the European Parliament and the Commission¹² and the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making; and to ensure a permanent dialogue between the Commission and the European Parliament and the Council.

Members of the Commission must give priority in their diary planning to attendance of **plenary sessions**, Council meetings, relevant **committee meetings**, and **trilogue** negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council on legislative initiatives. Members of the Commission will brief the European Parliament and the Council before major events and at key stages of international negotiations. They must be available during the budgetary discharge procedure.

As a general rule, **Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents** should assume interinstitutional obligations which are of more cross-cutting nature and which could therefore also be assumed by the President (e.g. plenary sessions of the European Parliament, strategic Council meetings), while Commissioners should deal with the daily interinstitutional activities in Parliament and Council (e.g. structural dialogue with parliamentary committees, sectoral Council sessions, trilogues on legislative initiatives).

Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents are expected to organise the Commission's presence at plenary sessions of the European Parliament, under the coordination of the Vice-President for Interinstitutional Relations and

⁽¹²⁾ OJ L 304, 20.11.2010, p.47 and OJ L45, 17.2.2018, p.46.

Foresight, in advance and on the basis of the plenary agenda. Executive Vice-Presidents and Vice-Presidents¹³ are also expected to organise the Commission's presence in Council meetings, three weeks in advance and on the basis on the relevant Council's agenda.

The Vice-President for Interinstitutional Affairs and Foresight is responsible for the overall implementation of the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, he leads the interinstitutional discussions on annual programming, and represents the Commission in the General Affairs Council and in discussions on crosscutting issues in the Parliament.

Responding in time and in an appropriate manner to **parliamentary questions** is part of the interinstitutional obligations of the Commission. They are answered by the competent Member of the Commission on behalf of the Commission, following endorsement by the College. The Secretariat-General allocates the responsibility for answering parliamentary questions. The Spokesperson's Service and the President's Cabinet must be informed of all incoming parliamentary questions and of all responses given to them.

The Commission ensures the **external representation** of the Union, with the exception of the common foreign and security policy and other cases provided for in the Treaties. The **President** attends Summits with Heads of State or Government of third countries, on behalf of the Commission. **Members of the Commission** attend Ministerial or other meetings with external counterparts in the areas of their competence. The **High Representative/Vice-President** will support the President in coordinating the external dimension of all Commissioners' work. Whenever the **High Representative/Vice-President** sees the necessity to do so, he will ask the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, the Commissioner for International Partnerships or other Commissioners to deputise him in areas where the Commission ensures external representation of the Union.

Decisions on the appointment of Heads of Delegation are taken by the Appointing Authority of the European External Actions Service, on the basis of a list of candidates consulted with the President and agreed by the College.

2) **Groupe des Relations Interinstitutionnelles**¹⁴

The GRI monitors the legislative process until adoption of the legislative proposals by the Parliament and the Council. It also deals with relations with the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and national Parliaments.

The GRI is a **forum for exchange of information and preparation of positions** on all other aspects of the Commission's interinstitutional work that require coordination between Cabinets and/or services. The GRI will be kept informed at all times on possible European Parliament resolutions and request from the Council based on Articles 225 and 241 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union respectively. The GRI prepares and coordinates the Commission's participation in the European Parliament plenary sessions, and

⁽¹³⁾ The Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement shall coordinate the presence at the Foreign Affairs Council configuration.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Key working methods for the GRI are laid down in Note SEC(2018) 358 of 6 July 2018.

in the Council, as well as the Commission's follow-up to the Parliament's resolutions, parliamentary questions and interpellations.

The GRI is chaired by the Deputy Head of Cabinet of the President and the Secretariat of the GRI is provided by the Secretariat-General. The GRI is prepared by a weekly meeting at the level of the services, chaired by the Secretariat-General (pre-GRI). If no preparatory meeting is required, a **'virtual' preparation** will take place and be made accessible to all designated participants. Services' representatives will be designated by the relevant Directors-General. On important files, special meetings of Heads of Cabinet, chaired by the Cabinet of the President, may be convened to allow for more in-depth discussion of particular issues. Issues that cannot be resolved at the GRI or are of particular importance will be discussed at the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet, and if necessary by the College. The College approves the final position to be taken in all files going through the GRI for decision, with or without discussion. Only after College endorsement may Members of the Commission and their services express the new positions¹⁵.

Established Commission positions and Commission proposals can only be changed by referring an issue back to the Commission through the GRI. Any position papers, statements, letters to other institutions, etc. which may commit the Commission on legislative or other matters must be agreed by the College through the GRI before being presented.

By derogation from the above, Commission positions on non-legislative matters related to external relations as well as on proposals under the procedure foreseen in Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union will be agreed through the Group on External Coordination.

3) **Group for External Coordination**

To ensure a more strategic and coherent external action, a new collegial preparatory body, **EXCO**, is established. It brings together all Cabinets to prepare the external aspects of College meetings on a weekly basis and ensure full political coordination and coherence on external action matters. It should better align the internal and external aspects of our work and enhance the working relationship between the Commission and the European External Action Service.

EXCO will be **co-chaired by the Diplomatic Adviser of the President and the Deputy Head of Cabinet of the High Representative/Vice-President**. The Secretariat-General will provide for its secretariat. Each Cabinet will designate its standing Member who will participate in EXCO. The European External Action Service will advise the co-chairs on foreign policy developments. The Commission's Legal Service, Protocol Service Spokespersons Service and the Directorate-General for Budget have standing invitations. The meetings of EXCO will take place on Wednesday afternoon.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Save in urgent situations where Hebdo – or in exceptional cases GRI – can authorise that the position is expressed, *'ad referendum'*.

The EXCO **agenda** will be set by the co-chairs, also based on suggestions made by cabinets and services. It will focus on all external issues that require political guidance, coordination or follow-up. The agenda may regularly include the following categories:

- Current international issues – information point by the co-chairs;
- Coordination of external aspects of internal policies;
- Overview and coordination of the EU’s financial support to third countries;
- Update on follow-up and implementation of EU external strategies;
- Update and inform on the preparation and outcomes of Summits ;
- Coordination of positions to be taken in international fora¹⁶;
- Changes to Commission positions or proposals on non-legislative matters related to external relations as well as on proposals under the procedure foreseen in Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
- Coordination of external representation including day-to-day coordination of incoming and outgoing missions (Commissioners, the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretaries-General, the Directors-General and the Deputy Directors-General);
- Horizontal Commission clearing-house for relations with specific countries;
- Information from the High Representative/ Vice-President on possible points to be raised in the College;
- Clearance of joint informal contributions by the Commission services and the European External Action Service (such as ‘non-papers’);
- Early warning of upcoming issues and events;
- Updates on ongoing international negotiations.

Following each meeting, the secretariat will circulate **short operational conclusions** agreed by the co-chairs, which will include a mention of which points will be discussed in Hebdo. Hebdo will in turn decide which points should be open for discussion at the College. All EXCO conclusions will be validated by the College. EXCO will systematically revert to previous conclusions to monitor their implementation. Operational conclusions will be drafted by the secretariat.

The Secretariat-General will chair a **preparatory meeting at services’ level**, bringing together all services. Services’ representatives will be designated by the relevant Directors-General. The European External Action Service will co-chair by introducing specific topics and providing the foreign policy framework. If no preparatory meeting is required, a **‘virtual’ preparation** will take place and be made accessible to all designated participants. It will also include a calendar of incoming and outgoing visits, which shall be continuously up-dated by Cabinets. The necessary security features will be ensured. EXCO members will receive an electronic notice when new documents are uploaded.

(¹⁶) Bearing in mind CFSP/CSDP aspects.

The **preparation** of draft policy communications, legislation and financing decisions in the field of external action will follow the **regular path** (inclusion in Commission Working programme, interservice consultation and adoption procedure, where appropriate). EXCO should not be used as a substitute for regular interservice consultation. However, specific external action issues could be raised in EXCO by the co-chairs, if necessitating arbitration at Cabinet level.

IV. RELATIONS WITH THE COMMISSION SERVICES

The **President** will be supported by the Secretariat-General, the Legal Service, the Directorate-General for Communication, including the Spokesperson's Service, and I.D.E.A. The President will establish **specific working arrangements** with her Presidential services.

The President will establish a close relationship with the **Directors-General**, who represent the excellence of the European Commission administration. She will meet them collectively at least twice a year. She will keep them informed about the political priorities she intends to pursue and make use of their expertise.

In their coordination tasks, **Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents** will be supported by the **Secretariat-General**, in accordance with the **specific working arrangements** drawn by the President. In the President's Cabinet and in the Secretariat-General, there will be dedicated contact points for each Executive Vice-President and Vice-President.

Executive Vice-Presidents and Commissioners will have services reporting directly to them. Executive Vice-Presidents and Commissioners assume full political responsibility for the work done by the services that report to them.

As a rule, a **weekly 'Jour Fixe'** meeting between an Executive Vice-President or a Commissioner and the senior management of the services that report to him/her should be organised to ensure that policy planning and implementation are always steered by the political level. This weekly 'Jour Fixe' should include a weekly update on interinstitutional and external relations issues, and on all acts prepared or under preparation by the relevant service including the identification of their political sensitivity and/or importance from the planning stage in line with the established working arrangements. This should also allow for an early warning of the collegial preparatory bodies, and of the College, where appropriate.

In addition to the weekly Jour Fixe above, a strategic 'Jour Fixe' should be organised monthly, bringing together the relevant Executive Vice-President or Vice-President and a Commissioner and the senior management of the services that report to him/her. Such meetings will be based on an agenda proposed by the relevant Executive Vice-President or Vice-President and will cover strategic political, interinstitutional and external relations questions. The Secretariat-General and the President's Cabinet shall be present at these strategic 'Jour Fixes'. The Secretariat-General will be in charge of coordinating and preparing these meetings.

The principles governing **the relations between Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President or Commissioners, their Cabinets and the services** that report to them are set out in **Annex 2**, which also includes a template for the working arrangements to be concluded between Commissioners and the services that report to them.

Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents should establish working arrangements with Commissioners which work under their guidance, for good cooperation and access to information. These working arrangements shall be shared with the Secretariat-General and the President's Cabinet.

The President's Cabinet and the Secretariat-General will be the guardians of fairness, objectivity and efficiency in the relationship between Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President, Vice-Presidents and Commissioners.

V. TRANSPARENCY/CONTACTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Transparency should characterise the work of all the Members of the Commission and of their Cabinets.

Contacts with stakeholders should be **conducted with transparency** and Members of the Commission should seek to ensure an appropriate balance and representativeness in the stakeholders they meet. Transparency is of particular importance where specific interests related to the Commission's work on legislative initiatives or financial matters are discussed with professional organisations or individuals. Members of the Commission must not meet professional organisations or self-employed individuals which are not registered in the **Transparency Register**. All Members of the Commission are expected to **make public**, on their respective web pages, all the contacts and meetings held in their capacity with professional organisations or self-employed individuals on any matter relating to EU policymaking and implementation, unless compelling reasons of public interest, such as those provided for in Article 4 of Regulation 1049/2001 on access to documents, require confidentiality¹⁷. These obligations also apply to their Cabinet members and the Directors-General of the Commission.

Under the **Code of Conduct**¹⁸ for the Members of the European Commission, the Commission publishes **an overview of mission expenses per Member of the Commission** every two months, covering all missions undertaken, unless publication of this information would undermine the protection of the public interest as regards public security, defence and military matters, international relations or the financial, monetary or economic policy of the Union or a Member State.

Access to documents is governed by Regulation 1049/2001. Members of the Commission and services should respect the deadlines set by this regulation at all times.

Each Member of the College must ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct for the Members of the Commission and with the rules governing meetings, publication of these meetings and access to documents. To this effect, each Member designates in his/her Cabinet **an 'ethics & transparency contact point'**.

(¹⁷) Commission Decision of 25.11.2014 (C(2014)9051).

(¹⁸) Commission Decision of 31 January 2018 on a Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission (OJ C 65, 21.02.2018).

VI. SECURITY

The Commission should develop a culture of **resilience, business continuity and security**. All members of staff should be vigilant towards cyber and hybrid threats. They must always use secure channels of communication such as encrypted email, when handling sensitive information in full compliance with the security rules in force. They are required to obtain appropriate **security clearance** to access highly classified documents. Unauthorised disclosure inside and outside the Commission, in whichever form, of any information of an internal, sensitive or classified nature is subject to the **disciplinary measures** laid down in the legal provisions in force.

VII. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The Commissioner for Crisis Management, in his capacity as European Emergency Response Coordinator, shall chair a permanent Emergency Response Coordination Group. This Coordination Group shall bring together all relevant Commission services covering crisis prevention and preparedness in order to enhance resilience to crises. The Commissioner for Crisis Management will rely on the Commission's overall crisis coordination system ('ARGUS') – the main crisis response tool in case for multisectoral crises or foreseeable or imminent treats.

VIII. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Commission services will implement the **Digital Strategy for the European Commission** to become a digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven administration.

The College will lead by example by holding paperless meetings supported by an e-College tool. Based on this precedent, paperless meetings will be introduced at all levels of the organisation.

The Commission will continue to digitalise the working processes underpinning its policymaking, including its management of documents (*Decide*, *Hermes* and *EdiT*). This digital transformation aims to simplify, streamline and automate the Commission's working processes, while guaranteeing efficiency, security and legal soundness.

All Commission staff will be equipped with the necessary tools to embrace a collaborative way of working and to reduce the need to print documents. Key horizontal processes, including financial management, case management, grants management, procurement and access to documents, will be streamlined through new or improved sets of tools. In parallel, the Commission will introduce and gradually make use of the qualified electronic signature.

Quick access to reliable data is essential for effective policy-making and efforts will be stepped up to implement the Information, Data and Knowledge Management Strategy across the organisation. In this respect, measures will be taken to better manage and share data within and across services, always respecting restrictions due to data protection, information security and other legal obligations.

IX. A GREEN COMMISSION

The Commission will build on its current efforts and launch new initiatives to improve the environmental impact of its activities also through its Environmental Management System (EMAS), namely in the area of energy, water and paper consumption, waste management, and CO2 emissions. It will apply enhanced implementation of circular economy principles in green public procurement. It will also further strengthen staff's ability to adopt ecological behaviour.

X. COMMUNICATION

1) The communication activities of the Commission

The communication activities of the Commission should be organised to provide clear, consistent and transparent information to citizens, explaining the Commission's priorities, policies and initiatives. Communication should also reach out beyond the traditional media circles of Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg and the capitals of the Member States to engage citizens on the ground, in their communities and regions and in a language that they understand.

The Members of the Commission are the public faces of the institution and should be the best advocates and the best 'spokespersons' of Commission policies. Their communication activities and the structures that support them are closely linked to their political role as Members of the Commission. Their success in terms of media and public perception depends on their ability to communicate convincingly on a large number of issues in all Member States and to be seen as a strong team, contributing positively to the achievement of the key objectives and priorities of the Commission as a whole.

2) Structures

Under the authority of the President, and in coordination with her Executive Communication Adviser, the Directorate-General for Communication leads the European Commission's communication effort and ensures coherence in external communication across the Commission. The Directorate-General for Communication ensures coherence in external communication across the Commission through its governance tools, specially the Corporate Management Board, the Corporate Communication Steering Committee and the Communication Network. It provides corporate communication services and organises specific communication activities, while also ensuring consistency through the network against disinformation by playing an important role in debunking myths and fighting disinformation..

As an integral part of the Directorate-General for Communication, the Spokesperson's Service, in coordination with the Executive Communication Adviser in the President's Cabinet, supports the President and Commissioners so that they can communicate effectively. Each Member of the College has a dedicated Communication Adviser to assist her/him in her/his communication activities, to help prepare 'Lines to Take', interviews, press points and press conferences. In all these activities, Communication Advisers shall keep informed, and where appropriate involved, the Spokesperson's Service.

The Commission's Representations and regional offices in the Member States are part of the Directorate-General for Communication but serve the institution as a whole.

To ensure collegial preparation of and follow-up to all communication activities of the Commission, the Executive Communication Adviser of the President chairs regularly meetings of the Communication Advisers, to which the management of the Spokesperson's Service is invited. In addition, the Chief Spokesperson of the Commission chairs a weekly meeting with the Communication Advisers, the political communication Directorate of the Directorate-General for Communication and to which the Commission Representations are linked up by video-conference, to frame the media activities for the forthcoming week. Press Officers in the Spokesperson's Service ensure the daily effective liaison between Cabinets and spokespersons. For this purpose, they are invited to attend all Cabinet meetings. Communication Advisers should also keep the relevant Representations informed of planned media and outreach activities by Commissioners in the Member States.

ANNEX 1: RELEVANT EXTRACTS FROM THE TREATIES

Article 17.1 of the Treaty on European Union

'The Commission shall promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end. It shall ensure the application of the Treaties, and of measures adopted by the institutions pursuant to them. It shall oversee the application of Union law under the control of the Court of Justice of the European Union. It shall execute the budget and manage programmes. It shall exercise coordinating, executive and management functions, as laid down in the Treaties. With the exception of the common foreign and security policy, and other cases provided for in the Treaties, it shall ensure the Union's external representation. It shall initiate the Union's annual and multiannual programming with a view to achieving interinstitutional agreements.'

Article 17.3 of the Treaty on European Union

'[...] In carrying out its responsibilities, the Commission shall be completely independent. Without prejudice to Article 18(2), the members of the Commission shall neither seek nor take instructions from any Government or other institution, body, office or entity. They shall refrain from any action incompatible with their duties or the performance of their tasks.'

Article 17.6 of the Treaty on European Union

6. *'The President of the Commission shall:*
- (a) lay down guidelines within which the Commission is to work;*
 - (b) decide on the internal organisation of the Commission, ensuring that it acts consistently, efficiently and as a collegiate body;*
 - (c) appoint Vice-Presidents, other than the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, from among the members of the Commission.*

A member of the Commission shall resign if the President so requests. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy shall resign, in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 18(1), if the President so requests.'

Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

'The Members of the Commission shall refrain from any action incompatible with their duties. Member States shall respect their independence and shall not seek to influence them in the performance of their tasks.'

The Members of the Commission may not, during their term of office, engage in any other occupation, whether gainful or not. When entering upon their duties they shall give a

solemn undertaking that, both during and after their term of office, they will respect the obligations arising therefrom and in particular their duty to behave with integrity and discretion as regards the acceptance, after they have ceased to hold office, of certain appointments or benefits. In the event of any breach of these obligations, the Court of Justice may, on application by the Council acting by a simple majority or the Commission, rule that the Member concerned be, according to the circumstances, either compulsorily retired in accordance with Article 247 or deprived of his right to a pension or other benefits in its stead.'

Article 248 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

'Without prejudice to Article 18(4) of the Treaty on European Union, the responsibilities incumbent upon the Commission shall be structured and allocated among its members by its President, in accordance with Article 17(6) of that Treaty. The President may reshuffle the allocation of those responsibilities during the Commission's term of office. The Members of the Commission shall carry out the duties devolved upon them by the President under his authority.'

Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

'The members of the institutions of the Union, the members of committees, and the officials and other servants of the Union shall be required, even after their duties have ceased, not to disclose information of the kind covered by the obligation of professional secrecy, in particular information about undertakings, their business relations or their cost components.'

ANNEX 2: PRINCIPLES GOVERNING WORKING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, THEIR CABINETS AND THE SERVICES OF THE COMMISSION

This annex sets out the basic, compulsory principles for sound cooperation between the Members of the Commission, the Cabinets, the Directors-General and the Commission services¹⁹. It applies to relations within the same portfolio and covers other relations that are necessary for the good functioning of the institution.

The principles set out below can be supplemented by practical arrangements indicated on the attached form. This annex must be filled in by common consent between the Member of the Commission and the Director-General²⁰ and shared with the Secretary-General at the latest by 1 January 2020.

1. PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION AND RESPECTIVE ROLES

1.1. Principles of cooperation

The Members of the Commission, the Cabinets and the services are collectively responsible for working closely together in order to ensure effective implementation of the President's Political Guidelines and the College's priorities. They establish working relations based on loyalty, trust, transparency and the mutual provision of information, in keeping with the principles set out in the Working Methods.

Cooperation is established primarily between the Member of the Commission and the Director(s)-General reporting to him or her and must be supplemented by a close relationship between the Cabinet and the services, following an inclusive leadership and work culture, with less hierarchies and more working together.

1.2. Executive Vice-Presidents and Vice-Presidents

All requests from Executive Vice-Presidents (in their coordination role), and from Vice-Presidents – in particular for briefings and for meetings – should always be made via the Secretariat-General and in close consultation with the President's Cabinet. All requests from Executive Vice-Presidents for briefings focusing solely on policy areas for which the Directorate-General associated with the portfolio role is responsible (as set out in the Mission Letter) should be made directly to the Directorate-General under the authority of the Executive Vice-President.

Executive Vice-Presidents or Vice-Presidents and the President must give their political validation in the corresponding IT system (*Decide*) at all stages of the decision-making process (planning, interservice consultation and decision) for all acts politically sensitive and/or important within their remit.

Where Vice-Presidents convene coordination meetings bringing together Members of the Commission and the services, the Secretariat-General will organise these meetings, provide the minutes and coordinate the follow-up.

⁽¹⁹⁾ This designation also covers the Offices of the Commission.

⁽²⁰⁾ This designation also covers the Heads of Services and the Directors of the Offices of the Commission.

1.3. Members of the Commission and Director-General

A close relationship based on trust and the mutual provision of information must be established between each Member of the Commission and the Director(s)-General concerned. The Member of the Commission issues general guidelines or gives instructions to the Director-General, in accordance with the College's priorities. The Director-General, for his/her part, advises the Member of the Commission on the files relating to his/her portfolio and informs him/her of any subjects of relevance to the implementation of the priorities or the management of his/her services. He/she is accountable to the Member of the Commission and the College for proper implementation.

The Member of the Commission ensures that contacts are maintained with the staff of the services under his/her authority and organises at least one annual meeting with them, as well as regular contacts with the management of the services under his/her authority.

In order to ensure full political ownership and control, the Members of the Commission are responsible, together with the relevant Director-General and whenever needed, in close cooperation with the relevant Executive Vice-President(s), the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-President(s), for the identification at planning stage of all acts to be adopted by the Commission in their area of competence, as well as for the assessment of their political sensitivity and/or importance.

Together, they will assess the political sensitivity in light of the political context and the potential impacts of the acts, notably if they are likely to be controversial with Member States or with the European Parliament, attract significant public interest, cause reputational damage to the Commission or the European Union, or have major financial implications. As a result of this assessment, which could be done during the weekly 'Jour Fixe', the Director-General will become fully responsible for the flagging of the political sensitivity and/or importance of acts in *Decide* as from the start of the decision-making process (i.e. at planning stage).

The modalities for the identification and assessment of acts should be set out in the working arrangements concluded between both (see attached form). These working arrangements, defined in line with the Mission Letter of the relevant Member of the Commission, should clearly establish the respective roles and responsibilities, notably by identifying the categories of acts which would not need systematic political scrutiny because of their intrinsic routine, repetitive and administrative nature.

Acts not flagged as political sensitive and/or important, will require the explicit validation of the Director-General in *Decide* at planning, interservice consultation and decision stage.

1.4. Cooperation between Cabinet and services

In addition to the direct relationship between a Member of the Commission and the Director(s)-General concerned, there should be daily cooperation between the Cabinet and the services. They work together in a spirit of loyalty and mutual assistance, in keeping with their respective roles and responsibilities.

As a matter of principle, the Cabinet is represented by the Head of Cabinet or the Deputy Head of Cabinet, and the Commission services are represented by the Director-General, a member of the senior management or his/her assistant. The assistant(s) to the Director-General acts on behalf of the Director-General as the main interface between the Cabinet and the Commission services. The Cabinet and the Commission services establish by common accord (using the attached form) their respective points of contact and describe how any specific existing or new coordination or liaison structures function.

1.5. Responsibilities of Cabinets

A Cabinet is at the direct service of a Member of the Commission and works in the general interest of the institution. It plays an essential role in the proper functioning of the collegiate system. The Cabinet is actively involved in the process of preparing the meetings of the College, during which it expresses the points of view of the Member of the Commission on the various points on which decisions are to be taken.

As regards sound cooperation between Cabinets and services, it is important to stress that:

- The Cabinet draws as much as necessary on the assistance of the services under the authority of the Member of the Commission. The Cabinets of the Executive Vice-Presidents in their coordination role, the High Representative/Vice-President and the Vice-Presidents, are able to draw on any service in the Commission whose work is relevant for their area of responsibility via the Secretariat-General, in consultation with the President's Cabinet. The Secretariat-General will facilitate the cooperation between services necessary to deliver on the Executive Vice-Presidents' and Vice-Presidents' request;
- The Cabinet informs the Commission services of the College's work, especially when it has a direct impact on their activities, and of the decisions taken by the Commission;
- The Cabinet may not represent the Member of the Commission in relation to the Member's formal institutional responsibilities. Apart from formal institutional responsibilities, whenever the Member of the Commission is unable to attend an event and he/she cannot be represented by his/her Cabinet, he/she asks the Director-General or another senior member of the service to represent him/her; exceptions to this rule require the prior agreement of the President's Cabinet;
- The Cabinet does not involve itself in the direct management of the services, which is the exclusive responsibility of the Director-General.

Where appropriate, the Member of the Commission or his/her Cabinet may ask the Secretariat-General, the Legal Service or the Spokesperson's Service to attend a 'Jour Fixe' or other strategy or information meetings, especially when they consider topics relating to major and/or general policy, legal or communication issues. A representative from the Cabinet of the responsible Vice-President will be invited to the 'Jour Fixe' meetings.

1.6. Responsibilities of services

The services of the Commission are placed by the President under the authority of the Executive Vice-President and the Member of the Commission in charge of the portfolio concerned and work under their/her/his responsibility. The services are responsible for implementing the President's Political Guidelines and the priorities decided by the Commission and developed by the Member of the Commission and – to this end – are actively involved in drawing up the institution's policies and initiatives. The services have a responsibility to work together in good faith. When relevant and in consultation with the relevant Commissioner, they will support the Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and Vice-Presidents in their activities. The services are coordinated by the Secretariat-General on behalf of the President. To this end, the services apply the guidelines and instructions issued by the President, via her Cabinet or the Secretariat-General.

In this context, it is important to emphasise that:

- The Director-General is fully responsible for the management of the services under his/her authority, and for the effective implementation of the guidelines and decisions adopted by the Member of the Commission. He/she is accountable to the Member of the Commission and the College for his/her management;
- The Director-General will be responsible, together with the lead Commissioners (and whenever needed in close cooperation with the relevant Executive Vice-President, the High Representative/Vice-President or Vice-Presidents), for **the identification of all acts** to be adopted by the Commission as well as all staff working documents, and **the assessment of their political sensitivity and/or importance** in accordance with the Political Guidelines and the priorities of the College;
- If the act is not considered as politically sensitive and/or important and no political scrutiny is needed, the validation of the Director-General will be requested in Decide, so that full responsibility is taken. Tables could be extracted from Decide at regular intervals to allow for adequate follow-up with the lead Commissioner. The Director-General can always request the validation by the lead Commissioner for any specific act;
- The services keep the Cabinet regularly informed of progress in the files and activities of its services, including on external relations and interinstitutional issues;
- The services also inform the Member of the Commission of relevant documents, especially key reports drawn up by the various monitoring authorities (see point 5.2);
- In principle, the positions of the services are passed on to the Cabinet by the Director-General or his/her representative indicated in the annex. The services inform their Cabinet of any direct contact with other Cabinets.

1.7. Exchanges of information/communication

There must be a continuous, transparent and smooth exchange of information between the Member of the Commission and the services, on the basis of the following principles:

- Exchanges and meetings on policy priorities, their implementation and the methods of cooperation between the Cabinet and the services are regularly organised between the Member of the Commission and the Director-General. Good coordination between Cabinets and services is ensured by a weekly 'Jour Fixe' meeting between the Head of Cabinet and the Director-General and/or their representatives indicated in the annex. For discussions on specific files, teams working on those files should be invited to the meetings;
- In principle, instructions from the Cabinet to the services are sent in writing, directly by the Head of Cabinet or his/her Deputy to the Director-General and his/her assistant on behalf of the Member of the Commission. If, in exceptional cases, the Cabinet has to communicate directly with the services, it informs the Director-General thereof via his/her assistant;
- Requests for input from services other than those reporting directly to the Member of the Commission in question must be sent through the responsible Cabinet, which transfers the request to the assistant of the Director-General of the service concerned;

- The positions of the services are sent to the Cabinet by the Director-General, or by a representative of the hierarchy or his/her assistant. Any information notified to the Cabinet by the services is deemed to have been provided to the Member of the Commission. Routine replies on a known and established position of the service may be provided directly by a head of unit or a director to the Member of the Cabinet responsible for the file, with a copy being sent to the Director-General's assistant for information purposes;
- Replies that require the adoption of a new position or a change in position, and replies on sensitive topics, are sent by the Director-General to the Member of the Commission via his/her Head of Cabinet.

The specific principles governing cooperation agreed by common accord between the services and the Cabinets are to be set out in practical arrangements governing working relations between Members of the Commission, Cabinets and services, to be agreed by the Members of the Commission and the Directors-General concerned (cf. the template attached to this Annex).

2. POLICY SHAPING

2.1. Strategic planning cycle

The identification and delivery of the political priorities of the Commission are carried out in the context of the Activity-Based Management/Strategic Planning and Programming (ABM-SPP) cycles. The Strategic Planning and Programming cycle encompasses the setting of objectives, allocation of resources according to these objectives, risk management, regular monitoring and reporting on whether the objectives have been reached as well as regular evaluations. Cabinets and services are jointly involved in drafting policy guidelines by advising the Member of the Commission and providing him/her with any necessary relevant information. The services are responsible for implementing the priorities adopted.

All acts to be adopted by the Commission in oral, written, empowerment and delegation procedures will be entered in Decide at planning stage. The only exceptions to this 'all-in' principle would be acts which cannot be planned by nature, e.g. linked to crisis situations/matters and which need to be adopted in very short deadlines, or to the management of litigation.

2.2. Interservice consultations (ISC) and Coordination

Implementation of the President's Political Guidelines and the College's priorities implies close cooperation between the Cabinet of the Member of the Commission and the services reporting to him/her.

It also requires a high degree of coordination with the other Cabinets and services in order to ensure that the Commission functions on a collegiate basis and that its proposals are relevant, coherent and of a high quality. In this area, Cabinets and lead services respectively are responsible for informing the other Cabinets and services concerned at their level in order to ensure that politically sensitive and/or important initiatives are prepared as upstream as possible, including through the convening of interservice groups. Close cooperation from the very early stages of preparation ensures that proposals benefit from the collective knowledge and expertise of different services across the Commission.

The Secretariat-General ensures that this inclusive and collegial way of working is properly applied under the authority of the President, and chairs the interservice groups for all politically sensitive and/or important initiatives, including all those in the Commission Work

Programme. All such initiatives will already have received the relevant political authorisation at the planning stage.

For Inter-Service consultations, it should be remembered that:

- The Cabinet(s) concerned – including those of the relevant Executive Vice-President(s) or Vice-President(s) – are consulted before the launch of any interservice consultation that concerns its / their policy area and involves a new policy initiative or a politically sensitive and/ or important policy initiative. Services inform the Cabinet of the interservice consultations that come under routine management (especially those of a financial nature) of the portfolio of the Member of the Commission. The practical details for Inter-Service consultations should be set in the practical arrangements governing working relations between Members of the Commission, Cabinets and services;
- An interservice consultation on a politically sensitive and/ or important act can only be launched with the agreement (political validation) of the Director-General, the responsible Commissioner, the relevant Executive Vice-President(s), the High Representative/Vice-President or Vice-President(s), and the President;
- In addition, the services inform the Cabinet of any particularly important interservice consultations launched at the initiative of other services. Negative opinions issued by the services, save those issued by the Legal Service, have to be agreed with the Cabinet of the Commission to whom they report;
- In any event, the Cabinet informs the services of the major changes introduced during discussion between Cabinets or in the College.

When the conditions for a fast-track procedure are met in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat-General will convene and chair the interservice meeting, record the outcome and ensure the appropriate follow-up. After the fast track meeting the lead Directorate-General resumes responsibility for the file.

3. RELATIONS WITH THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The Secretariat-General acts as an interface between the Commission and the other European Union institutions, the Member States' Parliaments and non-governmental bodies and organisations²¹. The Secretariat-General is responsible for the smooth coordination of the Commission's activity and positions vis-à-vis the other institutions. The Secretariat-General represents the Commission in Coreper I & II, it provides support to Members of the Commission at all Council meetings (both formal and informal, including lunches), and participates in the Conference of Presidents and upon invitation in the Conference of Committee Chairs of the European Parliament.

In connection with this:

- Cabinets and the various services must exchange information concerning any formal or informal contact which they have with the other institutions and which has an impact on their own activities or on joint activities. The services must alert the Cabinets to important

(²¹) However, the Legal Service is responsible for relations with the jurisdictions, in particular with the Court of Justice of the European Union but also with all national or international jurisdictions, including the WTO Dispute Settlement Body and the European Court of Human Rights. Directorate-General BUDG coordinates relations with the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets and Committee on Budgetary Control and relations with the Court of Auditors, with particular regard to the annual declaration of assurance.

points of view expressed by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on matters relating to their portfolio, in particular sensitive oral or written questions;

- Cabinets and services must liaise in preparation for GRI meetings in order to ensure that the positions expressed within a given portfolio are consistent. The services must inform the Cabinets of the outcome of pre-GRI meetings. GRI fiches should be agreed by the Cabinets of the responsible Commissioner(s) and the relevant Executive Vice-President(s) and/ or Vice-President(s). The Secretariat-General and the Legal Service, should be pre-consulted as a rule;
- Cabinets and services must inform the College, via the GRI, of any developments regarding possible European Parliament Resolutions based on Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
- Correspondence sent by a Member of the Commission to the other institutions (or to their representatives) having institutional implications or concerning cross-cutting matters should be submitted to the GRI for advance consultation before being sent. As described above, validation by relevant Cabinets and pre-consultation of services should be ensured;
- The services must also provide representation at the appropriate level (in principle, at senior management level) in meetings with the other institutions (in particular the European Parliament, the Council and the Union's advisory bodies).
- The services must prepare timely and quality answers to oral and written questions by Members of the Parliament, major interpellations and draw the relevant Cabinets' attention to questions on sensitive topics and prepare background documents for the European Parliament's part-sessions and meetings of the Council;
- Whilst Commission proposals or other initiatives are being negotiated, Cabinets must be systematically informed by the services regarding the course of the discussions within the European Parliament's committees and Council working parties, and regarding the work of COREPER. Any change in position by comparison with the established line, must be discussed with the Cabinet and submitted to the GRI in view of its endorsement by the College;
- Services are required systematically to send reports on progress of negotiations in Council working parties (or equivalent committees), European Parliament committees and trilogues to their Cabinet(s) and the Secretariat-General.

4. SPEECHES, BRIEFINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE

4.1. Speeches and briefings

A Cabinet may ask the services to provide briefings and elements for speeches for a Member of the Commission or his/her representative. High-quality documents delivered on time will ensure that the Member of the Commission is supported effectively by his/her Cabinet and services as he/she carries out his/her duties.

All briefing requests from the Executive Vice-Presidents in their coordination role and the Vice-Presidents to Commission services should always be made via the Secretariat-General. In this respect SG.A.4 (SG BRIEFINGS VPS) is the entry hub for the briefings requested for meetings with interlocutors from outside the Commission. The Secretariat-General policy units prepare briefings for internal meetings for Executive Vice-Presidents and Vice-Presidents on specific topics pertaining to their portfolio. The respective Cabinets send their request directly to the policy units in charge of the policy area.

All briefing requests from the Executive Vice-Presidents to their line Directorate-General, and corresponding outputs, are copied to the Secretariat-General.

The Cabinet's responsibilities

The Cabinet outlines precisely its overall expectations over briefings.

The Cabinet addresses requests for briefings and speeches to be prepared for the Member of the Commission to the service in good time – and no less than 10 working days prior to the deadline for receiving the briefing – to ensure quality inputs from services and the production of a tailor-made briefing (the final product will vary depending on time effectively allocated).

A briefing request includes all necessary information to ensure that the services have a proper understanding of the content and the salient points of the meeting. The Cabinet provides feedback concerning the quality and the usefulness of the briefings received (level of detail, length, etc.) to services and make available to services the final version of the briefing or speech. Further operational details should be covered in the Practical arrangements governing working relations between Members of the Commission, Cabinets and services.

A member of the services will attend the meeting/event and prepare operational conclusions of it. If exceptionally, no member of the services was present, the Cabinet provides a report on the event within 7 working days after the event.

Where the Member of the Commission or his/her representative goes away on mission, the briefing or a file containing the schedule and the main messages must be shared in advance with the Commission representation in the Member State or the EU delegation.

The service's responsibilities

The briefing/speech is produced by the services within the specified deadline, in accordance with the good practices and the examples given on the Commission's Intranet site for the President's briefings²². Validation and transmission mode will be outlined in the practical arrangements governing working relations between Members of the Commission, Cabinets and services, including for contributions to briefings/ speeches prepared by the services, following requests from other Members of the Commission. Specific working arrangements may be devised in the case of cross-sector portfolios requiring the involvement of several services.

4.2. Dealing with correspondence

Pursuant to the Code of Good Administrative Practice, any correspondence received by a Cabinet must be answered at an appropriate level within 15 working days. The deadline set for the draft reply to be prepared by the service and forwarded to the Member of the Commission must take this requirement into account.

The relevant Cabinet is responsible for correspondence addressed to a Member of the Commission. Where the service's expertise is required for the draft reply, the Cabinet sends the correspondence to the Director-General's assistant.

If the correspondence is written in a language other than French, English or German and requires an urgent reply, the Cabinet has it translated into one of those languages before it is sent to the service for a reply to be drafted, and also has the draft reply translated.

(²²) <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/sg/briefings/Pages/index.aspx>

Management of correspondence addressed to the Commission's President, Executive Vice-Presidents and Vice-Presidents is covered by a special procedure under the responsibility of the Secretariat-General. Draft replies prepared by other services at the request of the Secretariat-General are validated by the Director-General of the lead Directorate-General (the corresponding Cabinet must be notified).

Multi-Commissioner correspondence

Correspondence suspected of having been addressed to more than one Member of the Commission is covered by a special procedure administered by the Secretariat-General and intended to ensure that correspondents receive a single, internally consistent reply from the Commission. The Secretariat-General consults the Cabinets in order to find out which of them have received it. It allocates it to the relevant Cabinet, so that a reply on behalf of all other addressees can be prepared. Any associated services are consulted regarding the draft reply. The letter is signed by a Member of the Commission or by the Director-General/the head of service or a member of the appropriate service. It explicitly states that the reply has been drawn up on behalf of all those to whom the correspondence is addressed. The lead Cabinet has to inform all addressees of the reply given.

5. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND THE HANDLING OF SENSITIVE INFORMATION

The Commission has introduced various mechanisms²³ for planning its work, for optimum management of its resources and for ensuring that the relevant information reaches the people responsible in good time. Those mechanisms are operated by the services under the supervision of the appropriate general departments. Both the services and the Cabinets must be familiar with those mechanisms and comply with the rules relating to them.

5.1. Human-resource management

Staff is recruited in accordance with the Staff Regulations applicable to officials and other servants of the European Communities and the specific procedures adopted by the Commission, in particular the Decision on the exercise of the powers conferred on the Appointing Authority (AA)²⁴ and – for the Cabinets in particular – the Communication concerning the composition of the Cabinets of Members of the Commission²⁵ and of Spokespersons.

The Appointing Authority for middle managers within the services is the Director-General/head of service. In the case of grades AD13 and AD14, the procedure calls for the prior agreement of the Commission President and of the Commissioner for Budget and Administration, after consultation of the Members of the Commission concerned in their policy area. In the case of grades AD9 to AD12, the Member of the Commission must be consulted.

The general management of human resources must take account of the objective to achieve gender balance at all levels of Commission management by the end of the mandate, as set by the President in her Political Guidelines and Mission Letter to the Commissioner for Budget and Administration.

(²³) The decision-making procedures, the Planning and Strategic Programming Cycle, the principles of activity-based management, Audit Progress Committee, etc.

(²⁴) Currently: Commission Decision C(2007) 5730 of 30 November 2007, as amended by Commission Decision C(2009) 3074 of 29 April 2009.

(²⁵) President's Communication to the Commission P(2019) 3.

5.2. Management of financial resources

Each Directors-General is responsible for the smooth running of his/her service in accordance with the rules and standards laid down by the College. He/she accounts for his/her responsibility by means of his/her annual report to the Member of the Commission and to the College. Detailed information is called for in order to enable (in particular) the Member of the Commission to exercise his political authority over the service concerned and, where appropriate, to carry out monitoring as part of the budgetary-discharge procedure.

Accordingly:

- The Director-General and his/her services endeavour to identify and reduce management-related risks;
- The services provide the member of the Commission regularly with appropriate information concerning budgetary and financial matters. They draw his/her attention to any major problem in this area, relating to a previous, current or foreseeable state of affairs ;
- In this framework and on the basis of the principle of sound cooperation, the services supply the Member of the Commission with the relevant documents which will enable him/her to assess the service's financial situation²⁶. The Member of the Commission is also informed of any substantial change concerning the Directorate-General's financial systems and the checking procedures;
- Prior to finalisation of the annual activity report, the Director-General discusses the draft with the Member(s) of the Commission. The purpose of the discussion is to inform the Member(s) of the Commission in view of his/her political responsibility and to decide on an action plan proposed by the Director-General for the purpose of remedying the weaknesses identified by means of the caveats expressed in the draft report. This action plan is set out in a written document and is covered by a specific follow-up procedure. The Director-General remains fully responsible for the content of his/her declaration of assurance and should not be instructed to modify the declaration;
- The Member of the Commission and the Director-General meet at least twice a year in order to discuss the internal-control weaknesses highlighted or the caveats expressed in the services' annual activity report and the action plans devised in order to remedy them;
- With regard to the management of the administrative appropriations for which the Cabinets have a specific budget, the Directorate-General and the Cabinet are kept entirely separate, particularly where mission and entertainment expenses are concerned.

5.3. Document management

Good document management is essential for the functioning of the Commission. Document management within the Commission must ensure that the institution is able, at any time, to quickly retrieve documentary records of the actions it has taken and for which it is accountable. Proper document management contributes to efficiency and effectiveness, facilitates the exchange and retrieval of information and allows the Commission to comply with the applicable regulations as regards, in particular, data protection, access to documents and information security.

⁽²⁶⁾ Examples of document which may be forwarded: information relation to the financial management of the Directorate-General /service (problems, description of financial systems, internal-control mechanisms), Court of Auditors reports, records of parliamentary debates relation to the discharge, annual activity reports, reports/recommendations issued by the Internal Audit Service, Directorates-General/services Internal Audit Capacities and related actions plans, reports on the results of ex-post checks.

In accordance with the Commission Decision on document management a document drawn up or received by the Cabinets and/or the services – including email – must be registered if it contains important information which is not short-lived and/or may involve action or follow-up by the Commission or one of its departments.

5.4 Handling of sensitive information

If the Cabinets and the services communicate to the outside world any information of an internal, confidential or classified nature, they will be liable to the disciplinary measures laid down in the legal provisions in force.

The Director-General immediately forwards to the Member of the Commission any sensitive information which may engage his/her responsibility and/or that of the College. Such notification is carried out by means of the following formal referral procedure:

- Written notification giving rise to a swift formal response on the part of the Member of the Commission in whatever form he/she judges most appropriate (personal interview, request for additional information, etc.);
- Drawing up of a documented action plan, the implementation of which is covered by specific monitoring arrangements agreed between the services and the Member of the Commission.

The Member of the Commission is also informed – as soon as he/she takes office – of serious situations which have come to light in the past and which have not been fully remedied, and also, during their mandate, of any fraud or irregularity brought to the attention of the Director-General and likely to have a significant impact on the European Union's reputation and/or budget. The services convey to the Member of the Commission the reports or documents relating to the investigations carried out by OLAF which require special follow-up.

Annex: Template detailing the working arrangement agreed by the Members of the Commission, the Cabinets and the services.

**PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS GOVERNING WORKING RELATIONS
BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, CABINETS AND SERVICES²⁷**

Member of the Commission:

.....

Directorates-General/service:

.....

Specific working arrangements have to be laid down by the Cabinets and services in this document. The aim of this Annex is to define in more detail the implementation of the principles laid down by the President of the Commission on the working relations between Members of the Commission. In any event, it cannot derogate from these principles.

1. Principles of co-operation and respective roles

Compulsory:

Points of contact for relations between the Cabinet and the services of the DG (name, hierarchical position and function)

.....

Persons authorised to represent the Member of the Commission (name, grade, area (if the representation is limited)):

.....

Optional:

Specific coordination or liaison structures between the Cabinets and services:

.....

Compulsory:

Strategy meetings on policy priorities (Member of the Commission/Director-General):

⁽²⁷⁾ As Vice-Presidents are assisting the President in the exercise of his tasks, they are covered by specific working arrangements, which the President will agree with his services. An exception to this are the HRVP and the Vice-President for Budget and Human Resources, who have serviced which report to them.

Planned frequency:

.....

Planned day and time:

.....

Optional:

Agenda and minutes:

Other participants:

Miscellaneous:

.....

Meetings between Head of Cabinet and Director-General

Participants (name, hierarchical level and function):

.....

.....

Optional:

Drafting and dissemination of the agenda and documents for the meeting (persons responsible, deadlines):

.....

Drafting and dissemination of minutes (persons responsible, deadlines):

.....

Miscellaneous:

.....

.....

3. Formulation of policy

Compulsory:

Criteria for the identification/flagging of political sensitive and/or important acts by the Director-General.

Specific arrangements for Cabinet by the services before the launch of an Inter-Service consultation in the portfolio relating to a new policy initiative or a politically sensitive initiative:

.....
.....

3. Relations with the other institutions

Optional:

Specific arrangements for management of relations with the other institutions:

.....
.....

4. Speeches, briefings and correspondence

Compulsory:

Arrangements for briefings:

Planning

.....

Process: requests-validation-transmission-exchange of information-repository

.....

Deliverables

.....

Feedback

.....

Reports

.....

.....

.....

.....

Optional:

Specific arrangements for briefings requiring the involvement of several services (horizontal portfolios).....

.....

.....

Compulsory:

Specific arrangements for dealing with mail:

.....

5. Management of resources and processing of sensitive information

Optional:

Specific arrangements laid down by the services and Cabinets by mutual agreement:

.....

.....

6. Other working arrangements laid down by mutual agreement between the Cabinets and services (optional)

Additional arrangements may be agreed. They must abide by the principles set out in the main document and the rules laid down in the area concerned.

.....

Date:

Approved by:

Member of the Commission

Director-General

ANNEX 3: EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

The guidelines below relate to the interaction between the following elements:

- the political level (the President, the Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President, the Vice-Presidents, the Commissioners and their Cabinets);
- the role of the Directorate-General for Communication, including the Spokesperson's Service (SPP) and the Representations in the Member States;
- the communication activities of the Directorates-General (Directorates-General).

The guidelines aim at ensuring the quality and coherence of the Commission's communication.

1. RELATIONS BETWEEN CABINETS, THE SPOKESPERSON'S SERVICE AND DIRECTORATE-GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Directorate-General Communication, including the Spokesperson's Service, is placed under the authority of the President and works closely with the other Presidential services, notably the Secretariat-General and I.D.E.A.

On political communication matters, the European Commission Chief Spokesperson reports directly to the President of the European Commission. He/she leads the overall activities of the Spokesperson's Service. For all other matters, he/she reports to the Director-General of Directorate-General Communication.

The European Commission Chief Spokesperson, his/her Deputy and the Coordinating Spokespersons represent the President of the Commission and the institution as a whole towards the media and liaise on this directly with the President's Cabinet. The Commission Spokespersons and the Spokespersons for the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission report to the European Commission Chief Spokesperson and communicate with the media on behalf of the Commission, under his/her authority. All Spokespersons serve the common interest of the Commission as a College.

Appropriate involvement of the relevant teams of the Directorate-General for Communication, in particular the Political Communication Directorate, to the work of the SPP and of the Cabinet Communication Advisers, needs to be ensured, to enable the delivery of quality and timely communication products.

The Spokesperson's Service organises a daily press briefing, normally at 12:00. Once a day, at 11:45, the European Commission Chief Spokesperson circulates all new 'Lines to Take' to Heads of Cabinet, Deputy Heads of Cabinet and Communication Advisers for their information. The European Commission Chief Spokesperson also makes available a 'Lines to Take' database (updated regularly) that can be accessed by all Cabinets 24 hours/ seven days per week and by the Representations to ensure collegial communication on all issues at all times.

The Spokesperson's Service also organises the following types of press briefings:

- A regular weekly press briefing/conference after the College meeting: every Wednesday (respectively Tuesday during Parliament plenary sessions in Strasbourg), communication should centre on the College meeting. The President, Executive Vice-Presidents, High Representative/Vice-President, Vice-Presidents or Commissioners present the main decisions of the day in the press room;
- Press conferences/statements, as a rule by the Commissioners: these are organised as often as necessary and at the best suitable time, whenever announcements or political events warrant it;
- Background briefings with political staff (Cabinet members/Cabinet Communication Advisers) and/or officials from the services to prepare important initiatives;
- Briefings on upcoming political issues, where appropriate, to set out the agenda and main topics for the days to come.

Every Commissioner designates one member of his/her Cabinet to be in charge of communication. This Cabinet Communication Adviser plays a central role in shaping the communication profile of the Commissioner, in close and permanent cooperation with the SPP and the Executive Communication Adviser of the President. To this end, he/she:

- Is the contact point for relations between the Spokesperson's Service and the Commissioner;
- Takes part in the regular meetings chaired by the Executive Communication Adviser of the President;
- Takes part in a weekly meeting chaired by the European Commission Chief Spokesperson with all Cabinet Communication Advisers, the political communication directorate of the Directorate General for Communication and Commission Representations in order to establish a communication planning that reflects the political agenda of the College;
- Can request support from the Spokesperson's Service for media activities of his/her Commissioner;
- Ensures that the Commissioner's web presence – which is managed by Directorate-General for Communication and the Spokesperson's Service – is always up to date, including the Commissioner's agenda;

- Is in charge of the speeches and social media activities of the Commissioner;
- Is called upon by the Spokesperson's Service for political input to 'Lines To Take' on matters under the portfolio of his/her Commissioner;
- Helps to adapt the main political messages of the Commission (provided by the Spokesperson's Service) to the political needs of his/her Commissioner;
- Accompanies the Commissioner on missions with media impact to support and advise him/her, in coordination with the SPP and in close liaison with the Press Officers in the Representations or Delegations. Where appropriate, and in exceptional cases, the European Commission Chief Spokesperson may decide to provide human resources support to Cabinets by allowing a Spokesperson or Press Officer to accompany a mission;
- Chairs weekly meetings between the Cabinet, the corresponding Press Officer(s) in the SPP – or where appropriate a Spokesperson – and the Information and Communication Units in the portfolio Directorates-General on devising and implementing the Directorates-General's Communication Strategies in line with the Commission's Internal Control framework (see points 2 and 3 below on communication by the Directorates-Generals and the Corporate Communication Steering Committee) and the steer provided by the Corporate Management Board and the Corporate Communication Steering Committee;
- Has no mandate to speak to the media on the record.

Press releases and other press material are prepared and issued by the SPP, in close cooperation with the Cabinet Communication Advisers. Where required, these are supported by additional materials such as press packages, factsheets, or audio-visual products, produced in association with the political communication Directorate of Directorate-General Communication. The planning for press material is established by the SPP in close cooperation with the Cabinet Communication Advisers, following the joint weekly meeting and the Cabinet Communication Advisers' weekly communication meeting with the respective services and the SPP, with the involvement of the political communication Directorate of Directorate-General Communication. As a general rule, input for press material, media briefing files, and press speaking points is requested by the Spokespersons and Press Officers from the services directly in order to be finalised by the SPP in close cooperation with the Cabinet Communication Advisers.

To ensure coherence and consistency between policy and media activities, the Secretariat-General provides the necessary material to the SPP ahead of media activities involving the President, the Executive Vice-Presidents, the High Representative/Vice-President and the Vice-Presidents.

In addition to the services of the SPP, Directorate-General Communication provides a number of other services to members of the Commission and Cabinets in order to strengthen the Commission's communication activities: daily press reviews and media analysis, media monitoring, audiovisual studios for live and recorded messages, web pages, support for digital communication, including social media, and political reporting on developments in the Member States.

To benefit best from the work of Directorate-General Communication, the Cabinets should:

- Plan the activities of their Commissioners in the Member States, especially the Commissioners' visits and direct engagement with citizens, for example in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe and involve the Representations the Member States well in advance;
- Respond to the information provided by Directorate-General Communication or the Representations and ensure that it is followed up;
- Inform Directorate-General Communication and the Representation concerned about any initiative that could have media or political repercussions, particularly letters and declarations. Instructions should be given to Directorates-General under the responsibility of the Cabinet to do the same for initiatives taken at the level of the Directorate-General.

The Representations of the Commission in the Member States should:

- Consult Cabinets about sensitive political issues and, at the same time, inform Directorate-General Communication's Directorate for Political Communication and, where necessary, the Directorate-General concerned;
- In case of press-related queries, consult the relevant members of the Spokesperson's Service;
- Upon request of the Spokespersons or Press Officers, contribute to briefing packs for members of the Commission for their use when speaking to regional and national media during their visits to the Member States, building on the regular political reporting and analysis provided by Representations to headquarters;
- In agreement with the European Commission Chief Spokesperson, his/her Deputy or the Coordinating Spokespersons, adapt 'Lines to Take' to the political and media situation in the Member States and, where necessary, propose lines to take on important national issues that may have consequences for European politics.

2. COMMUNICATION AND THE DIRECTORATES-GENERAL

As a general rule, the Spokespersons and the Representations of the Commission in the Member States are responsible for contacts with the media.

The Information and Communication Units of the Directorates-General are the key partners of Directorate-General Communication. In order to enable them to fulfil this central role:

- Steer and guidance must be provided by the Corporate Management Board, the Corporate Communication Steering Committee and the Communication Network, and by the Directorate-General for Communication as domain leader in the area of external communication, including in relation to the Conference on the Future of Europe and corporate communication.
- The Cabinet Communication Adviser, the corresponding Press Officer(s) of the SPP – or where appropriate, a Spokesperson – and the information and communication units of the services must be in regular contact through weekly communication meetings;
- The unit should be included in the management meetings of the Directorate-General;
- The unit appoints a contact person in charge of relations with the SPP in order to ensure the quality and swift delivery of press material and draft ‘Lines to Take’. This member of the unit must have the skills required to draft, or coordinate the drafting of ‘Lines To Take’ and other quality press materials under short deadlines. The contact person of the unit must have a thorough understanding of online communication and interface with the Directorate-General’s digital team;
- The unit keeps the SPP and the Cabinet Communication Advisers informed about any forthcoming announcement or event that will need proactive communication with the media or that may raise questions from journalists. The SPP will inform the Directorate-General in good time of its needs as regards the preparation of press material;
- The unit deals with requests from the SPP addressed to the Directorates-General, including requests for ‘Lines to Take’ for use in the press room. This procedure should be swift and documented in writing. It should guarantee that a quick and precise reply can be provided to questions from journalists and the public;
- The unit prepares draft press releases, draft interview replies and articles, press packs, technical briefing notes and replies to the technical questions from the press for the SPP. Following the agreed procedure, Directorates-General send their draft by e-mail to the SPP, with a copy to the Cabinet Communication Adviser. The Portfolio Press Officer or a Spokesperson approves ‘Lines to Take’, press releases and any other press material and ensures that they are issued and transmitted to all the Representations of the Commission in the Member States. In order to ensure timely and efficient preparation, draft press material relating to College files must be sent to the European Commission Chief Spokesperson or his/her Deputy after the Inter-Service Consultation and before special meetings of Heads of Cabinet;

- The unit ensures that the Directorate-General's digital team thoroughly monitors online conversations and informs the SPP as soon as possible of emerging online activity relevant to the Commissioner's portfolio. The Directorate-General advises and supports Directorate-General Communication in crisis communication situations;
- The unit prepares daily press reviews that are relevant for the portfolio Commissioner;
- The Head of the information and communication unit is a member of the Communication Network and is responsible for ensuring transparent, coherent and coordinated planning of communication activities, whether corporate or sectoral/stakeholder, in line with the guidance provided by the Corporate Management Board, the Corporate Communication Steering Committee and the Communication Network.

Directorates-General communicate with interested parties and the general public in coordination with the SPP and Directorate-General for Communication, on the basis of the communication priorities established by the Commission and always in accordance with the Lines to take established by the SPP. Communication activities must be part of the communication plan of the Directorate-General, developed in consultation with the Cabinet. Directorates-General should provide the material for their external communication activities.

In terms of the media, SPP can refer journalists directly to the Information Unit of a Directorate-General on purely technical issues under the responsibility of the Directorate-General. The Directorate-General will involve the SPP or will keep it informed, as appropriate, of its reply to the request. The services must never reply on any subject on which the Commission has not yet adopted an official position. Directorates-General approached directly by the media shall refer them to the SPP.

Members of staff can be granted approval by the SPP to speak on the record on issues within their areas of responsibility.

3. THE COMMISSION'S REPRESENTATIONS IN THE MEMBER STATES

Representations support the President and the whole Commission in their interaction with Member States. Heads of Representation are nominated by the President and act under her political authority. They participate in diplomatic activities, including in meetings of EU Heads of Mission. Representations also maintain direct contact with national, regional and local media.

The Representations promote permanent political dialogue with the national, regional and local authorities, parliaments, social partners and civil society. They prepare, support, accompany and follow up visits by Members of the College and by senior officials of the Commission and the European External Action Service, aiming for outreach beyond capitals, and help to organise meetings and press coverage.

The Representations provide country-specific knowledge, analysis and advice to the President and all Members of the College, with a view to maximising the impact of Commission policies in the Member States. They report to Commission headquarters,

including directly to the President, about relevant political and other developments in the Member States.

The Representations reach out to citizens and play a key role in organising citizens' dialogues and direct engagement with stakeholders and citizens, including in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Representations conceive and implement a variety of communication actions in line with their 'Country Strategies'.

The Representations play a key role in implementing corporate communication in the Member States and work closely together with the European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLO) in the Member States and regions. In almost all Member States, the Representations are hosted in joint premises with the EPLO, in the 'Houses of the European Union'. A new strategy is being developed, including Europa Experience installations, in order to reach out better to citizens.

Together with the Spokesperson's Service, Representations promote the visibility of the EU through press, information and communication activities. They help to identify the aspects of EU policies that are important locally and can frame messages and activities to match local needs. They help prepare the ground for Commission strategic political initiatives through outreach and relevant citizen engagement activities. They monitor the media, provide information to journalists, organise press conferences, respond to questions, debunk myths and fight disinformation. They also organise visits of journalists and other multipliers to Brussels, in close coordination with the Visitors' Centre.

The work of the Representations is supported by Europe Direct Information Centres, which provide a decentralised information and communication service in the Member States that ensures outreach to citizens at regional and local level. They help to identify the aspects of EU policies that are important locally and can frame messages and activities to match local needs. They help prepare the ground for Commission strategic political initiatives through outreach and relevant citizen engagement activities.

Annex to the Annex: Catalogue of Representations' services

1. Setting up meetings and supporting Commissioners during meetings with:

- government, parliament, political parties, social partners
- civil society, general public and/or stakeholders

2. Increasing the visibility and media coverage of Commissioners' visits:

- interviews and press conferences
- media monitoring of visits

3. Providing relevant contributions to Commissioners' mission files:

- Advice on formulating programmes for missions
- Background information on Commissioners' interlocutors (relevant briefings)
- Country-specific knowledge, analysis and advice

4. Logistical needs:

• Protocol:

- confirm arrangements for arrival / transit / departure
- confirm any fees which Commissioners and delegations will have to pay
- inform relevant national authorities and EU agencies about visits

• Security:

- check whether national authorities require/offer extra protection – guards, motorcades, etc

• Transport

- car for Commissioner:

• Missions with official agenda of travel submitted well beforehand: Representation car and driver under special provisions²⁸. In all other cases: car to be rented, with/without chauffeur. These costs are charged to the Commissioner's mission allocation.

Representation to assist at arrival/departure/transit at the airport/rail station.

²⁸ See point 3 in 'Rules governing the use of car fleets of Commission Representations and their offices in the European Union', Ref. Ares(2019)2768845 - 24/04/2019:
https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/comm/howwedoit/Infrastructure_Logistic_IT/Documents/2768845_Car%20fleet%20rules%20validity%2001052019.pdf