



***Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Task Force:  
Brussels, 25 January 2018, 10-12am.***

**Participants:**

*Members of the Task Force*

Mr. Frans TIMMERMANS, Chairman and First Vice-President of the European Commission;  
Mr. Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, President of the European Committee of the Regions;  
Dr. Michael SCHNEIDER, Member of the European Committee of the Regions;  
Mr. François DECOSTER, Member of the European Committee of the Regions;  
Mr. Jaak MADISON, Member of Riigikogu, (replacing Mr. Toomas Vitsut);  
Dr. Reinhold LOPATKA, Member of the Austrian National Council.

*Assistants and secretariat*

Mr Thomas Wobben, European Committee of the Regions;  
Mr Michael Collins, European Committee of the Regions;  
Mr Christian Gsodam, European Committee of the Regions;  
Ms Tuuli Reissaar, Deputy Representative of the Riigikogu to the European Parliament – (accompanying Mr Jaak Madison);  
Ms Lidiya Simova, Representative of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria at the European Parliament (assistant of Mr Kristian Vigenin, Member of the Task Force);  
Mr. David Liebich (accompanying Dr. Lopatka);  
Mr. Maarten Smit, Cabinet of the First Vice President;  
Mr. Anthony Agotha, Cabinet of the First Vice President;  
Mr. John Watson, European Commission, Secretariat;  
Mr. Duncan Johnstone, European Commission, Secretariat;  
Mr. Detlev Clemens, European Commission Secretariat.

**Opening of the Meeting by the First Vice-President Frans Timmermans**

The Chairman of the Task Force welcomed the members and presented the background to the President's decision to establish the Task Force and the three key issues it would address. There was full support for his view, given the significant volume of work that already exists on these issues, the Task Force should aim to produce a focused report with a number of concrete recommendations in each of the three areas. The Chair explained that the aim of the meeting was to set the Task Force on the right track, agree the working methods, discuss the use of experts and to have a first discussion about the Task Force's work to help frame the discussions at future meetings.

The Members of the Task Force underlined the importance of the role of the European Parliament on these issues. The Chairman confirmed that participation of the European Parliament in the Task Force was indeed desirable and still possible and that its presence would add value and weight to its work and the ultimate findings.

### **Working methods of the Task Force**

The Chairman presented the draft working methods and indicative schedule of meetings of the Task Force. In the ensuing discussion it was agreed that:

- Transparency and feedback are essential to stimulate the involvement and commitment of all those who have a contribution to make to the work of the Task Force;
- The Task Force would also be a place where free and frank discussion could take place;
- The work of the Task Force would also be publicised on a web site and that Members of the Task Force should use social media to promote its activities and solicit input;
- There were no preconceived ideas and no 'taboos'. The Task Force should have an open mind about identifying activities that could best be done at local or regional levels, and areas where more EU action was necessary;
- The Chair indicated his desire to present the work of the Task Force in the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament, the Council and COSAC;
- The Task Force would try to reach decisions by consensus and if this were not possible, the views of individual members would be clearly identifiable in the report where appropriate.

The working methods were agreed with a few limited changes to the dates of future meetings.

### **Experts to assist the Task Force.**

The Task Force discussed the role of experts in the work of the Task force and the type of expertise which might be needed given the range of issues the Task Force would address. The Task Force agreed that it would benefit from the expertise of the European Court of Justice on subsidiarity in a future meeting. The Task Force would return to the issue of nominating experts at a future meeting following further reflection by the members.

### **First exchange of views of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and Doing Less More Efficiently.**

The Task Force held its first discussion about the tasks it would address.

Several issues emerged from the discussion which would be useful to come back to in the later discussions:

- Improving the techniques to ensure subsidiarity works in practice (e.g. the parameters of the early warning system, the criteria for assessing subsidiarity);

- The different administrative structures within the Member States and how this affects the appreciation of subsidiarity;
- Identifying examples where the governance level had been shown to affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislation (positively and negatively);
- The need to take into account the possible need for complimentary and coherent action at all levels of activity (European, national, regional and local);
- Identifying specific cases of a lack of respect for the principle of subsidiarity had proven to be difficult in the past and the Task Force should try and bring objectivity to such a process making more of the substance than processes;
- The members and their organisations had interesting proposals based on their existing work and these would be made available to the Task Force in due course;
- The results of the Task Force should not only be guidelines for a future European Commission but should also be taken into account in the current legislative process.

**Next Meeting: Topics for discussion.**

The next meeting will be on 23 February and will address the issue of how local and regional authorities are currently involved in the preparation and follow-up of Union policies and legislation; and identify possible improvements.