

Dear colleagues,

In advance of the HLG meeting of 3 May 2016, I am sending you an outline of the main elements of our agenda and my expectations for our discussions. The HLG on 3 May takes place ahead of the upcoming COMPET Council on 26 May, which is the focus of our agenda. This HLG is planned as a morning session followed by a working lunch, starting at **10:00 hrs** and finishing at **15:30 hrs**.

Competitiveness check-up: development of the scoreboard

The first item on the agenda concerns the development of the competitiveness scoreboard. As agreed in the last HLG of 8 February, a technical working group has discussed how a competitiveness scoreboard could be designed as a helpful tool to strengthen the competitiveness check-up. The technical working group was led by Austria with the participation of the Trio Presidency, other Member States and the Commission. This group has met twice since our last HLG meeting. Austria will be asked to present the competitiveness scoreboard (MD 11/16) and the Commission will be asked to indicate how they will use the scoreboard in order to strengthen the competitiveness check-up in Council. Thereafter, delegations are asked whether they support the proposed scoreboard, and the way it will be used, with the aim of coming to an agreement on both and send it to the COMPET Council of 26 May.

Regulated professions National Action Plans

Subsequently, we will discuss **regulated professions**. This discussion comes as a follow-up to the mutual evaluation of regulated professions stemming from Art. 59 of the Professional Qualifications Directive as amended in 2013. In time for the transposition deadline of the Directive, by 18 January 2016, Member States were to submit national action plans (NAPs) presenting an overview of their regulated professions, the outcomes of their assessment of proportionality in their regulation and, as a result, identifying appropriate reforms.

The aim of our discussion is to share experiences and reflect on remaining challenges to tackling barriers for professionals on the Single Market. This discussion will be supported by a paper of the Commission (MD 12/16) and is structured in two rounds. For the first round, we will use an European Policy Committee (EPC) working method to start this discussion: two Member States will briefly present their NAP, each followed by a reaction from two other Member States. Hence, we will have two presenting and two reacting Member States.

After these presentations and comments, we will have a second round, where the Commission will present information on the work as regards the announced Single Market Strategy action on providing recommendations to Member States on specific professions. Subsequently, we will have an exchange of views on the presented action plans, on the action plans more generally and on how to organise the role of the HLG in this process, including in the monitoring of the upcoming recommendations.

I expect our morning session to finish at **12:30 hrs** and our lunch to start at **12:45 hrs**. The lunch will take place in the Justus Lipsius building (80th floor). One person per delegation is invited to this lunch, which I expect to finish at **14:45 hrs**. Due to security measures in the Justus Lipsius building, the 80th floor needs to be empty after 15:00 hrs and we will return to our meeting room to resume our final agenda items.

Working lunch to prepare the debate by TELECOMS and COMPET Ministers on DSM

Over an informal lunch, we will prepare the lunch **debate by TELECOM and COMPET Ministers on 26 May**. The Netherlands Presidency has scheduled the TELECOM and COMPET Council in such a way that all Ministers can meet over lunch to discuss the realisation of a digital single market, one year after the presentation of the DSM Strategy. The Presidency note for this item (MD 8080/16) sets out the rationale for our discussion and the Commission will provide further information on the current state of play of the DSM Strategy. On this basis, we will have an exchange of views, in order to prepare the debate by Ministers during the Council lunch on 26 May. The Netherlands Presidency will use the outcome of our discussion in the HLG to further prepare for the ministerial debate.

Like before the February HLG meeting, I would like to invite you to already share your input on pressing issues by email, prior to our discussion in the HLG. Written input will be taken into account to the same extent as the interventions made during our discussion. You are welcome to send your input and any other questions you may have to the Secretariat (dgg3.directorate@consilium.europa.eu) and/or to Ms Stèphanie de Beer (s.debeer@minez.nl).

Incoming Presidency

We will resume our afternoon session at **15:00 hrs** with information on the **incoming Presidency** by Zuzana Nehajova, vice chair of the HLG for Slovakia. She will also give an update to the HLG about the work on the **start-up initiative**, that aims to improve the environment for start-ups and innovative SMEs in Europe. It began with a stock-taking exercise of the current policies and measure implemented in individual Member States.

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Finally, we will wrap up our meeting with a brief presentation on the **draft agenda of the COMPET Council of 26 May**. I expect our meeting to finish at **15:30 hrs**.

I am looking forward to meeting you all on 3 May.

Best regards,

Maarten Camps