

Commission, Parliament and Council move on with discussions on European Agencies and agree a roadmap for the work ahead

After launching a dialogue on the functioning of European agencies last year, political leaders from the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of the European Union met again today in Strasbourg to take stock of the ongoing discussions and agree on a roadmap for the work ahead. The three institutions committed to finding common ground on how to improve agencies' work in 2011.

European Commission Vice-President, Maroš Šefčovič, said: "Without a clear and shared understanding of what agencies should or should not do, and how they should do it, we risk not getting the most out of them. Both the institutions and the agencies would benefit from a clearer picture of how we interact. So we all have an interest in identifying how we can improve agencies' governance and functioning, with a view to providing a better service to the European Institutions and to European citizens. I believe we are all determined to achieve a common approach on agencies among the three Institutions and I trust this can be done in 2011."

In March 2009, the three institutions created an inter-institutional working group, which is the forum for a dialogue on the functioning of the EU agencies. Its purpose is to assess the existing situation, specifically the coherence, effectiveness, accountability and transparency of agencies' functioning and to find a common ground on how to improve agencies' work. In their discussions since then, the institutions have identified 33 aspects which needed to be addressed. After having mapped out the factual state-of play with regard to each of these aspects, the work of the inter-institutional working group will now focus on the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the system, with the aim to identify possible solutions to problems and ways to put them into practice. The three institutions committed to completing the discussions in 2011.

Background

There are currently 30 European agencies spread across the EU member states. For many citizens, they are the closest presence of the EU. Their activities are varied – some deliver support to the Union's decision-making process by pooling available expertise, some adopt individual decisions applying agreed EU standards, and others aid the implementation of Community policies. However, the ad hoc establishment of agencies over the years has not been accompanied by an overall vision of their position in the Union, which has made it more difficult for them to work effectively and to deliver for the EU as a whole.

On March 10 2009, representatives of the three institutions met for the first time constituting an inter-institutional Working Group on regulatory agencies. The group agreed that the objective should be to agree a common approach on agencies between the three Institutions. Participants committed to deliver conclusions as soon as possible. The group addresses issues such as governance, management, financial and human resources and supervision.