

ent spokesman said on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters at the presidential palace, Vassios Christodoulides said that the participants have at times acknowledged there are problems with the advisory body's functioning.

This has been underlined by recent leaks and participation of minutes, Christodoulides added.

In March Anastasiades suspended the NC, after DIDEK leader Marinos Sizoulis published parts of a national Council minutes, a breach of protocol, although he revealed nothing new.

the deal and in the meantime to brief party leaders separately. The talks' documents can be accessed at the palace but those who view them cannot take copies or notes. Anastasiades met AKEL leader Andros Kyprianou on Monday and DIKO's Nicolas Papadopoulos on Tuesday.

The developments have riled opposition party leaders, most of whom have accused Anastasiades of using the pretext of NC leaks to enforce an information blackout on the Cyprus reunification talks, though the accusation of being kept in the dark preceded

ways better than having only a small team handling this type of issues," he said, alluding to the handling of the Cyprus talks.

The spokesman clarified that the president's goal ultimately is to reinstate NC meetings, provided however that the problems plaguing it have been sorted out.

The confidentiality of what is discussed at the NC must be safeguarded, Christodoulides added.

He neither denied nor confirmed whether Anastasiades is considering scrapping the keeping of minutes of NC sessions.

It's understood that the

better for the NC to continue, provided however the body operates effectively.

Refraining from revealing NC minutes, or what other participants say during sessions, should be among the guidelines, he suggested.

After his meeting with the president, which focused on some economic proposals to ease things for the poor, the DIKO leader said he had reiterated to Anastasiades the request for the National Council to convene.

"We believe that it is not effective and productive to be informed in person,

continuing intransigence, hostile moves, a new financial protocol, naturalisation efforts for tens of thousands of settlers, interconnection of water... and then the leader of the occupation regime tells us that there progress. We do not see such progress."

For his part, Giorgos Lillikas, head of the Citizens Alliance, insisted that with his stance the president is deliberately keeping the parties - and the public at large - in the dark about the Cyprus talks.

He said that earlier the presidential palace had

which were already known. He was alluding to former UN Special Adviser Alexander Downer.

Ruling DISY chief Averof Neophytou sided with the president.

"I absolutely agree that the people should not be kept in the dark. But I wonder, does anyone think that we will have a solution of the Cyprus problem by May 22 [election day] and that the people will be kept in the dark until then?"

"Better that we keep the Cyprus issue away from the populism of the legislative elections," he added.

Visa liberalisation for Turkey only when all prerequisites are met

Visa liberalisation will be granted to Turkey only when all 72 legislative prerequisites are fulfilled, including Ankara's Cyprus-related obligations, European Commission Chief Spokesperson Margaritis Schinas said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the daily briefing in Brussels, and clarifying reported "ambiguity" during the past few days, Schinas said the European Commission would examine the situation, in accordance with the College of Commissioners to make any "discounts" to make any "discounts".

An EC source, speaking exclusively to Cyprus News Agency (CNA), later explained that "there is absolutely no possible way for Turkey to legislate, ignoring the Cyprus related obligations" and pointed out that all these issues were absolutely clear since yesterday, when the visa liberalization report came out. Moreover, another European Commission spokesman

European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, to Turkey had nothing to do with the opening of Chapter 33 on the Budget and economic policy, the preparation of which is already done and is still up to date.

The spokesperson pointed out that the schedule which has been decided is to convene an intergovernmental conference in June, during the last days of the Dutch Presidency and open the chapter there.

On Wednesday, the first Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans will inform the College of Commissioners about his joint trip to Gaziantep, together with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Council President Donald Tusk. On Tuesday, the issue of the agreement with Turkey was also on the agenda of a working lunch of the European Commission President Jean Claude



The SME Instrument

Horizon 2020 funds high-potential innovation through a dedicated SME instrument, which offers seamless business innovation support under the section Societal Challenges and the specific part Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies (LEITs). Provided with about € 3 billion in funding over the period 2014-2020, the SME Instrument helps high-potential SMEs to develop groundbreaking innovative ideas for products, services or processes that are ready to face global market competition. Available to SMEs only, which can however organise a project in the way that best fits their business needs - meaning that subcontracting is not excluded - the new scheme has opened a new highway to innovation through phased, progressive and complimentary support.

What support is available?

The dedicated SME instrument's supports close-to-market activities, with the aim to give a strong boost to breakthrough innovation. Highly innovative SMEs with a clear commercial ambition and a potential for high growth and internationalisation are the prime target.

The SME Instrument offers small and medium-sized businesses the following:

- Business innovation grants for feasibility assessment purposes (optional phase I): EUR 50,000 (lump sum) per project (70% of total cost of the project);
- Business innovation grants for innovation development & demonstration purposes (possible phase II): an amount in the indicative range of EUR 500,000 and 2,5 million (70% of total cost of the project as a general rule);
- Free-of-charge business coaching (optional in phases I and II), in order to support and enhance the firm's innovation capacity and help align the project to strategic business needs;
- Access to a wide range of innovation support services and facilitated access to risk finance (mostly in optional phase III), to facilitate the commercial exploitation of the innovation.

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/sme-instrument>

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