

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LII COSAC
Rome, Italy, 30 November - 2 December 2014

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Vannino CHITI, Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, and Mr Michele BORDO, Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*.

AGENDA:

1. Opening of the LII COSAC

- Welcome address by Mr Pietro GRASSO, President of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*.
- Introduction by Mr Vannino CHITI, Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, and Mr Michele BORDO, Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*.
- Adoption of the agenda of the LII COSAC.
- Report on the outcome of the Presidential Troika of the LII COSAC.
- Presentation of the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC.
- Procedural issues.
- Letters received by the Presidency.

2. 'State of play of the Italian Presidency of the EU Council'

Keynote speaker: Mr Matteo RENZI, President of the Italian Council of Ministers.

3. 'The future of supranational democracy 5 years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty: What role for European institutions and national Parliaments?'

Keynote speakers: Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President, European Commission, Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, Lord Timothy BOSWELL, Chair of the EU Select Committee, UK *House of Lords*, Mr Marc ANGEL, Chair of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*.

4. 'Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy: growth, employment, competitiveness'

Keynote speakers: Mr Pier Carlo PADOAN, Italian Economy and Finance Minister, Ms Danielle AUROI, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee, French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*, Mr Juan MOSCOSO DEL PRADO, Member of the Finance Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee, Spanish *Cortes Generales*.

5. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Consideration of the draft Contribution and Conclusions of the LII COSAC.

6. 'European integration prospects: Global role of the European Union and projection of its policies in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe'

Keynote speakers: Mr Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO, Vice-President, European Parliament, Mr Claudio MARTINI, Member of the Committee on EU Policies, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Latvian *Saeima*, Mr Sandro GOZI, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of European Affairs.

7. 'Democratic control of European agencies'

Keynote speakers: Mr Morten KJÆRUM, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and Coordinator of the European Agency Network for 2014, Sir William CASH, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, UK *House of Commons*.

8. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LII COSAC

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening and procedural issues

1.1 Welcome address by Pietro GRASSO, President of the Senate of the Republic

Mr GRASSO welcomed participants to the meeting of the LII COSAC. He noted that COSAC, especially after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, had developed into the most appropriate forum for debating broad European policies and the role of Parliaments in the process of integration. Considering the session on the future of supranational democracy five years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty as crucial, he said that political dialogue and the subsidiarity checks had been very positive experiences, to be further consolidated, which had strengthened the European awareness of national Parliaments. He recalled some specific proposals, such as the more intense and structured involvement of national Parliaments in the pre-legislative phase and their participation in the consultations. He mentioned the constructive interpretation promoted by the Italian Parliament on the subsidiarity check procedure, which should contribute to ensuring a greater quality of European law and, in general, a better functioning of the EU.

Concerning the Review of the Europe 2020 strategy, which had been the heart of the EU Council Italian Presidency, President Grasso mentioned the December European Council, which would take important decisions, including that on the approval of Juncker's plan. He hoped that it would be a sign of political maturity of the EU, which, in emphasising financial discipline, had looked at short term, without any strategic orientation towards expansion of productive capacity. He hoped that the Commission's indication to consider the contributions to the European Fund as neutral in respect to the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) could start a debate on the difference between current public expenditure and capital public expenditure. Concerning the external role of the EU, President Grasso noted that in the two areas of neighbourhood policies, the Great Mediterranean and the Eastern borders, we should be able to respond with strategic and pragmatic political process, providing support to the action of the High Representative and the European External Action Service. He concluded, stressing that Parliaments wished to substantially contribute to political choices of the EU and national Governments, pursuing more efficiency and democracy in the decision making process, promoting growth and work, protecting individual rights and giving a more authoritative voice to the EU in world.

1.2 Introduction by Vannino CHITI, Chairman of the Senate EU Policies Committee, and Michele BORDO, Chairman of the Chamber EU Policies Committee

Mr CHITI recalled the economic, political and social pressures that Europe was experiencing and the delicate issues it was facing on its Eastern and Southern borders. The weak role, and, sometimes, the absence of Europe from these critical scenarios showed that there could not be 28 foreign and defence policies; Europe should instead speak with a single voice in a global scenario.

Concerning the challenges of the economic crisis, still on-going, he stressed that there could not be recovery without growth and that separating the two goals of the SGP had generated the citizens' lack of confidence. He noted that the European Semester Procedure and the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure had produced a substantial centralisation of the main economic policy decisions, but they had implemented policies neither effective nor fair. Mentioning the alarming youth unemployment rate, he added that employment should be the first and fundamental goal. However he stressed that, during the Italian Presidency, there were some very significant new signs,

to be further expanded, such as Juncker's investment plan, which should be the starting point of a European "New Deal".

He emphasised also the need to continue the political project for strengthening Europe as a supranational democracy and to go beyond the intergovernmental method on competencies which were already European (foreign policy, climate changes, and guidelines on major economic policies). He stressed the role of the European institutions and the importance of parliamentary cooperation, developing the experiences of COSAC, CFSP/CFSD and Conference under article 13 of the Fiscal Compact.

In order to strengthen the dialogue with the European institutions, he urged the Commission to better explain the compliance of EU documents with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles and the European Parliament to examine the substantial contributions on the content of the documents issued by national Parliaments. He added that national Parliaments should have the possibility to present legislative proposals on their own initiative, when a certain number of them requested it. In this context, COSAC should identify relevant issues of common interest. He added that there could be a new Europe, with a federal government and a President, whose authoritativeness came from his election and able to decide on foreign and defence policy. He concluded noting that global challenges could not be faced only by national States and quoting "*Il manifesto di Ventotene*" on the definitive abolition of the Europe division in national Sovereign States.

Mr BORDO, taking stock of the interparliamentary activity during the Italian Presidency, stressed the efforts to avoid self-referential debates on the marginal role of national Parliaments or empty claims of new or more powers to block the action of the European institutions or renationalise common policies. Citizens were much more interested in real issues, asking Parliaments and European institutions to re-launch growth and employment, to reduce poverty, to cancel the unacceptable development gaps inside the Union, to manage migration flows in an effective way and on the basis of the solidarity principle, to reduce the cost of energy, to guarantee effective protection against organised crime and terrorism and to protect the environment and the European territory. In this context, the role of national Parliaments could not be measured on their ability to reach the threshold for "yellow cards" and to defend national competencies; they should affirm their position in the European decision-making process, defining effective solutions in order to answer to citizens' expectations. He added that this could only be achieved by acknowledging the complementary roles of national Parliaments and the European Parliament and by replacing competition between them with mutual trust. Mr BORDO concluded saying that the agenda focused on the main economic, social and institutional issues and trusting that the debate would concentrate on concrete and real topics, starting from Juncker's investment plan.

1.3 Adoption of the agenda of the LII COSAC and procedural issues

The Chair presented the draft agenda of the LII COSAC which was adopted without amendment.

Mr CHITI gave the floor to the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, who briefly presented the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC, providing details on its four chapters relating to Europe 2020, the Future of the EU-EU Institutions and Parliaments; the Mediterranean and the role of EU Parliaments; and EU agencies and national Parliaments.

Following Ms FRYDA's presentation, the Chair informed the participants of the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC held the previous afternoon.

Mr CHITI informed that the Troika had issued a modified draft of the Contribution and the Conclusions, incorporating amendments which the Troika was proposing to the Chairpersons meeting. The modified texts were distributed, together with a complete folder, including all submitted amendments. This procedure followed was in line with the letter sent by 14 Chambers on COSAC procedures and practices and discussed during the Chairpersons meeting in July. Following that meeting, the Italian Presidency, after consultation with the Troika, and with the assistance of the COSAC Secretariat, had updated the document on practices regarding voting on Contributions, drafted by the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat in 2012.

The Chair mentioned the letters received from the Swiss and Georgian Parliament, requesting to be invited at the COSAC meeting. After consultation with the Troika, an invitation was extended to these Parliaments to participate as observers. Mr CHITI informed that the Italian Presidency had invited, as an observer, Mr Raffaele Cattaneo, President of the Lombardia Regional Council, elected President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) for 2015.

He also informed about the letter sent by Mr WITTBRODT, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Polish *Senat*, and supported by Mr KRICHBAUM, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the German *Bundestag*. The letter noted that COSAC Contributions should be shorter and more related to the topics on the agenda of COSAC. He said that, in principle, the Italian Presidency agreed with these recommendations; however, Mr CHITI pointed out that in the last 4 Presidencies, starting from the COSAC meeting in Dublin, the final Contributions had been more extensive than in previous COSAC meetings and that their length had been similar to the current draft. He added that the current draft Contribution focused exclusively on the topics on the agenda of COSAC. Mr CHITI added that, for this reason, and independently from the substantial validity of the amendments, the Troika was not recommending approval of certain amendments not linked to issues to be debated during the meeting.

2. State of play of the Italian Presidency of the EU Council

Keynote speaker: Mr Matteo RENZI, President of the Italian Council of Ministers

Mr Matteo RENZI, President of the Italian Council of Ministers, recalled the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide and stressed that Europe was currently at a time of historical significance, in a phase of persistent economic stagnation and "crisis of ideals", with anti-European movements rising in all countries. He stated that there was time for Europe to carry out its responsibility and be a place of peace and hope for future generations.

After having congratulated Mr Donald TUSK, who had taken up office that day as the new President of the European Council, he pointed out that Italy had taken over the six-month Presidency of the EU in a transitional period which had caused some slowness in dealing with European dossiers. Italy would have liked, among others, to speed up negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and press for progress in the Council on the "made in" labelling for products sold on the single market.

Mr RENZI underlined that Europe was at a crossroads: either it changed its economic policy or it was likely to become the "Cinderella of global countries". He stated that Member States had to be loyal to the SGP and undertake the necessary structural reforms to re-launch growth. Italy was currently dealing with reforms of the fiscal system, the Public Administration, the labour market, civil justice, and, most importantly, school, education and research, as well as the electoral law and constitutional reforms.

He stressed that the Italian Presidency urged for more investments in growth and welcomed Juncker's investment plan to kick-start growth as the right starting point, which however had to be strengthened. He recalled the positive outcome of the EU Summit in Ypres (June 2014), where, for the first time, the need for more investment, growth and flexibility of fiscal rules was stressed.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, pointing out that without Europe the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Iron Curtain would not have been possible, stressed the need for the EU to invest more, noting however that Europe needed structural reforms to lead to good results.

Ms Athina KYRIAKIDOU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, underlined that Europe needed a fair sharing of responsibilities for the management of migration flows, in order to avoid the rise of xenophobia and racism in the countries receiving refugees.

Sir William CASH, UK *House of Commons*, said that the UK was not happy with the way the architecture of the EU functioned and called for a massive radical reform.

Mr Jean BIZET, French *National Assembly*, stated that Member States had to keep order in public finance, implement their structural reforms and that Europe needed to recreate the conditions of economic competitiveness. He added that the EU had to finalise the Banking Union and have a single resolution mechanism; simplify regulations; implement a single digital market and promote the creation of an energy Union.

Mr RENZI, who, due to other engagements could only reply to the interventions above, fully agreed with Mr KRICHBAUM's intervention about the role of Europe in the reunification of Germany, and said that this would not have been possible without the flexibility in fiscal rules requested by the German Government. With regard to the use of European Funds, he said that flexibility in the application of rules was necessary, namely the exclusion of national, regional co-funding targeted to promote growth from the calculation of the budget deficit.

With regard to migration, he agreed with Ms KYRIAKIDOU on the importance of addressing the risk of xenophobia and said that Europe needed clear rules because indiscriminate acceptance contributed to the rise of xenophobia and racism. He also pointed out that Mediterranean was a European issue and that it was necessary to re-launch relationships with North Africa, based also on economic interests. He said that unless Europe decided that the Mediterranean, and in particular Libya, had to be dealt as a major political issue, there would be no possibility to win the battle against uncontrolled migration; either we solved problems at the roots in the countries of origins or we would not be credible.

Mr RENZI stressed that xenophobia was a major issue in peripheral urban areas of Europe, where it was necessary to take action, not by disseminating anti-immigrant propaganda, but rather by building infrastructures and providing social services and by making use of some European funds should be dedicated to specific actions in peripheral urban areas.

Thirteen other parliamentarians took the floor during the debate.

Ms Nora ALITI, FYROM - *Sobranie of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, said that, that year, the European Commission reconfirmed the six consecutive recommendations for FYROM to start the membership negotiations with the EU. She urged their neighbour Greece and all the other EU Member States to give their support so that they could open the negotiations.

Mr Vitalino CANAS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, expressed its support to the Italian Presidency and the Juncker's investment plan, even if there were some points which needed to be

clarified. He asked whether there was support to greater flexibility in rules and if national contributions would have been considered neutral.

Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, Latvian *Saeima*, informed the Plenary that the upcoming Latvian Presidency intended to build on the work done by the Italian Presidency, further focusing on the issue of Eastern Partnership, in particular with regard to the situation in Ukraine.

Mr Michel HERBILLON, French *Assemblée nationale*, stated that it was necessary to reorient European economic policy toward more investments for growth and employment, bring Europe closer to citizens and renew confidence in Europe.

Mr Luboš BLAHA, Slovak *Národná rada*, expressed his opposition to the TTIP which he considered a threat to democracy in Europe.

Mr Sandro GOZI, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of European Affairs, replied that the Italian Presidency would have liked to do more in the field of enlargement. He added that the EU had to do everything necessary to prepare the accession of all the Western Balkans countries. He stated that Italy was pleased with what President Juncker and Mr Jyrki KATAINEN, Vice President of the European Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said in front of the European Parliament, namely that any national contributions to Juncker's investment plan had to be considered neutral and not computed in relation to the SGP. He concluded by saying that the Italian Government had been working with the Latvian Government for a number of months very positively, and they hoped that, concerning Russia, the Latvian Presidency would keep an open dialogue.

Mr Duarte MARQUES, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, underlined the importance of having a European migration policy and focused on the young Europeans.

Ms Theano FOTIOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, stated that Mr Juncker had promised a package of 300 billion, but that there were in reality much less resources and European citizens did not know how the European Investment Bank was supposed to foot the bill. She added that, in the end, European citizens were going to pay the bill themselves.

Ms Agnieszka POMASKA, Polish *Sejm*, expressed Polish concerns about the raise of anti-European sentiment and the gap between citizens and EU institutions.

Ms Biljana PANTIC PILJA, Serbia - *Narodna skupština*, stressed that membership in the EU was one of the main priorities of the Republic of Serbia and reminded that accession negotiations were officially opened in January, that Serbia had concluded the screening of 21 negotiating Chapters and that it was fully ready to open Chapter 32 on financial supervision. Mr Ivan BAUER, Serbia - *Narodna skupština*, thanked the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* for having approved a resolution concerning the accession of Serbia to the EU.

Mr Bernard DURKAN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, stated that Ireland welcomed the European Investment Package and it hoped this would help to ensure growth and employment for young Europeans.

Mr GOZI replied that TTIP was in the interest of Italy and Europe and that the lack of transparency in negotiations had led to a number of legends. Social and environmental standards would not have been lowered. With regards to young people, he said that Europe needed to do a lot of work on the issue of mobility and he supported Erasmus +.

Mr GOZI also pointed out that the "non-Europe of the economic policy" and "the non-Europe of the Immigration policy" facilitated the raise of extremist, anti-European and anti-immigration movements. He said, in this regard, that two very important priorities of the Italian Presidency were to be more active in policy for growth and to have a true European immigration policy which was not just managing external borders but also having legal channels for migration. He concluded expressing his support to Serbia's accession and saying that Italy would have been ready to open Chapter 32.

Baroness Joyce QUIN, UK *House of Lords*, referred to the detailed report on TTIP adopted by the House of Lords. She stated that it was very important to continue the negotiations and that a good agreement could help the causes of growth and jobs and reduce barriers that many European companies currently had to face. Nonetheless, she added that it was essential to make a clear commitment not to lower employment and environmental standards.

Ms Maria João RODRIGUES, European Parliament, asked if Europe could ensure a stronger priority for growth, investments and jobs, not only on the targets, but also on the country specific recommendations and if the Italian Presidency could invite Member States to provide their national contributions for Juncker's investment plan and ensure that these contributions would not be computed for the public debt and public deficit.

Mr Kimmo SASI, Finnish *Eduskunta*, agreed that the Mediterranean was important; however, in his opinion, Ukraine was currently the most important issue in Foreign Policy and noted that it was necessary to guarantee the integrity of the State. He also said that investments should be on research and development and asked the Italian Government if it respected budgetary rules.

Mr GOZI reminded the Italian engagement on the Ukraine crisis, stressing at the same time the importance to focus on the Mediterranean. Replying to Mr SASI, he assured that Italy complied with rules. However, according to him, the European Semester had to be much more balanced and give importance to other related processes, particularly the review of the Europe 2020 strategy and the 2030 framework for climate and energy.

3. The future of supranational democracy 5 years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty: What role for the European institutions and national Parliaments?

Keynote speakers: Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President, European Commission, Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, Lord Timothy BOSWELL, Chair of the EU Select Committee, UK *House of Lords*, Mr Marc ANGEL, Chair of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*

Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President of the European Commission for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, stated that he was committed to working more closely with national Parliaments in cooperation with the European Parliament and underlined that balance among European institutions was of the essence to ensure balance among nations, bringing the Council back to the forum, in order to respect the letter and the spirit of the Treaty. In case of a "yellow card", the Commission should be more proactive and respond on the content in a political, not a bureaucratic way, also in close cooperation with the European Parliament, explaining its position and taking on board national Parliaments' criticism rather than dismissing it on procedural grounds. National Parliaments should work more closely with the European Parliament. Confrontation, he said, between the European Parliament and national Parliaments in COSAC, experienced in the past, was sterile.

Mr TIMMERMANS added that it was also necessary to spend more time on impact assessment of Commission proposals, stressing the need for the European Parliament and the Council to scrutinise impact assessments along the legislative process and at the end of the process. Furthermore, he supported the idea that national Parliaments should pay greater attention to the practicalities of the implementation of EU legislation and stressed the importance of lightening administrative burden on SMEs. He expressed his intention for quickly starting consultations for an Interinstitutional Agreement for better legislation early the following year.

In combatting European citizens' disenchantment, Europe, he said, should concentrate on what needed to be done. He concluded by expressing his conviction that there was a lot to be done within the remit of the treaties for engaging national Parliaments in drafting legislation and in cutting red tape.

Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chairwoman of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, questioned whether the use by default of the word 'supranational' to describe the nature of EU democracy could ensure that citizens were taken on board; she added that democratic legitimacy would not be such a challenge if the EU were ready to give itself a political identity which was not yet the case. She stressed that the democratic legitimacy challenge would be less daunting if Article 11 of the Treaty of Lisbon were taken more seriously, as it established the responsibility for institutions to engage citizens in a debate and in the decision-making process. In her view, democratic legitimacy could not be reached by declaring it as a remote target, but democratic legitimacy was instead and should be the way in which institutions carry out their daily work. In this regard, she expressed the hope that the European Citizens' Initiative, which was far from realising its full potential, would be better used.

Acknowledging the existence of deficiencies in legitimation that needed to be reduced, Ms HÜBNER said that these were partly explained by the fact that Governments' mandates in European institutions had national scope. The European Parliament, she added, was the only democratically elected institution, where political decision-making took place on the basis of Europe's general interest across national borders.

Although, as the Chair stressed, the Treaty of Lisbon had introduced a reinforced role for the European Parliament and national Parliaments providing thus a strong Treaty foundation for their functioning, there was a need to focus on how to better use its full potential with the objective of making Europe democratically legitimised to citizens. In this context, she underlined the new democratic challenges, exacerbated also by the crisis, and the greater shift of competences from the national level to the European and to institutions like the European Central Bank (ECB) with no direct mandate from citizens. In spite of the finalisation of the internal market democracy remained confined to national borders; the development of IT technologies boosted citizens' interest in participating in political processes. Stressing the need for national Parliaments, local authorities and the European Parliament to facilitate new ways for enabling citizens' participation in decision-making, she supported that democratic legitimacy depended also on popular accountability of institutions which was enhanced by a change in procedures. In this respect, she mentioned that the introduction of *Spitzenkandidaten* contributed to democratic legitimacy which could be further enhanced by the potential increase of transparency in the work of the European Council and by a higher turnout in the European elections, a task on which EU parliaments needed to deliver before the next elections. She mentioned the introduction of novelties contributing to a more democratic decision-making process in the economic governance and stressed the importance of national Parliaments' role in it, as well as of the interplay among all levels of governance and of interparliamentary and interinstitutional dialogue in ensuring legitimacy.

Lord Timothy BOSWELL OF AYNHO, Chairman of the EU Select Committee, UK *House of Lords*, referred to the UK House of Lords' report on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union published in March 2014 and said that national Parliaments, the European Parliament, the Commission, and national Governments must work together to make the Union more democratic, more secure and more prosperous. In this context, he expressed his disappointment that the Treaty of Lisbon, though it enhanced the European Parliament's role in EU law-making, failed to set out a coherent role for national Parliaments. The "yellow card" procedure conferred upon national Parliaments by the treaties posed, according to him, real practical difficulties casting them in a reactive role and encouraging the former European Commission to provide a legalistic and dismissive response to national Parliaments.

Inviting the European Commission to respond more positively to national Parliaments' concerns, he advocated not only for improvement of the "yellow card" procedure, but also for addressing the question how national Parliaments can, on the basis of Article 12 of the Treaty, contribute actively, not merely re-actively, to the good functioning of the Union. In this context, he stressed, on the one hand, the role of national Parliaments in providing democratic oversight of the actions of national Governments, and, on the other, the need for a new approach involving national Parliaments collectively in the development of EU policies and laws, and re-configuring of the existing political dialogue.

He supported the letter of the Danish Folketing signed by 29 in June 2014 proposing the establishment of a working group to develop new ways of thinking and new working practices, underlining, at the same time, the need to avoid any false opposition between the role of national Parliaments and that of the European Parliament and to demand genuine political dialogue between European institutions and national Parliaments.

Mr Marc ANGEL, Chairman of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, referred to the procedure in his national Parliament, explaining that cooperation between the European Parliament and national Parliaments started at home. Members of the European Parliament had traditionally been invited to every Committee meeting of the joint Foreign and European Affairs Committee and, since recently, after the European Parliament plenary week in Strasbourg to report and exchange on the activities there and in Brussels. The Chairman added that he was planning, together with the Speaker of the Parliament, to introduce 2-3 meetings with high representatives of the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg in Brussels.

Mr ANGEL referred also to the importance of implicating Select Committees in the process of scrutiny and to the electronic petitions' system introduced recently in the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* through which the Parliament had entered into a dialogue with citizens. Furthermore, he referred to a hearing on the TTIP organised and broadcasted recently by the Parliament.

Referring to the deepening of the political dialogue, the Chair mentioned the "green card" for national Parliaments and the "Barroso initiative" launched in 2006 giving new perspectives to national Parliaments and the European institutions. He also mentioned the need for a bigger role of the Council in the interinstitutional framework, and while acknowledging the European Commission's vagueness and delay in its responses to national Parliaments' political opinions and reasoned opinions, he invited the Commission to respond more quickly referring to the impact of political opinions on European legislation. He agreed that the Commissioners as well as civil servants should be more present in the capitals and welcomed the Commission's initiative in introducing European Semester Officers (ESOs), stressing, at the same time, the importance of exchanging best practices in the framework of COSAC, which ensured continuity of work.

Thirty-four speakers took the floor during the debate.

A number of speakers referred to national Parliaments' role in ensuring legislative proposals' compliance with the principle of subsidiarity on the basis of the Treaties. Mr Michael STÜBGEN, German *Bundestag*, and Mr Edgar MAYER, Austrian *Nationalrat*, supported the extension of the eight-week deadline for subsidiarity checks by national Parliaments. Mr Fidas SARIKAS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, referred to the need of reducing the democratic deficit in Europe by strengthening national Parliaments' role and advocated strengthening and deepening the existing "yellow card" procedure to ensure that the European Commission was forced to amend or withdraw a proposal. Ms Christine MUTTONEN, Austrian *Nationalrat*, said it was necessary to look into the subsidiarity procedure, adding that, in the context of the Eurozone, more integration and more democratic involvement were needed. Mr Krzysztof SZCERSKI, Polish *Sejm*, citing the EPPO proposal as a "not good" example, stressed the need for dialogue with the European Commission in this context. Lord John SHARKEY, UK *House of Lords*, referring to the findings of the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC, mentioned the support given by Parliaments to the "green card" and the criticisms of the "yellow card" procedure. He suggested that, in order to avoid self-referential discussions, national Parliaments would have to decide how to proceed. Mr Philippe MAHOUX, Belgian *Sénat*, referred to collaboration between national Parliaments and the European Parliament and to the importance of the "yellow and green cards", as part of building Europe. Mr Paulo MOTA PINTO, Portuguese, *Assembleia da Republica*, said that we should not focus on competition with the European Parliament but on an improved interaction with it; he further stressed the need to focus on political dialogue with the European Parliament and the Commission on concrete issues and to have greater interconnection among Parliaments. Ms Meritxell BATET LAMAÑA, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, referred to the increased role of national Parliaments in monitoring compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, but warned about the possibility that this is used by Eurosceptics and by people questioning the work of the EU and seeking to remove legitimacy from the European Parliament. She underlined the need for national Parliaments to display institutional loyalty and strengthen institutions, especially the European Parliament.

Mr STÜBGEN, German *Bundestag*, taking into account the growing number of first-reading agreements on legislative proposals, invited the European Commission to make this fast-track legislative procedure an exception, as it did not ensure citizens' involvement. Ms Tineke STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, agreed that the first-reading procedure should be used with caution.

Mr MAHOUX, Belgian *Sénat*, said it should be ensured that the Treaty did not dismantle the established rules of social and environmental protection. He further added that EUROPOL and EUROJUST were a necessity, but that they should be working on European terms on the basis of protecting private lives.

Mr Kelvin HOPKINS, UK *House of Commons*, stated that democracy began at home and that British voters believed that national Parliaments should have primacy. Supporting the view that the EU was an agent of neoliberalism as it proved by supporting TTIP, he sought to restore democracy deadly impinged by the EU, asking to bring power back to Member States.

Ms Eva KJER HANSEN, Danish *Folketing*, expressed the hope that more European Parliament rapporteurs would visit national Parliaments and asked the First Vice-President of the European Commission how he would involve national Parliaments in the formation of the Commission's work programme.

Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, pointed out that political dialogue should be based on cooperation between parties. In this context, he supported the idea of a working group for a review of the role of national Parliaments. Such a working group was also supported by Mr SARIKAS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, and Ms STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, the latter hoping

it would be embedded also in the COSAC methodology and calling for the involvement of all parliaments including the European Parliament.

Ms Danielle AUROI, French *Assemblée nationale*, stressed the need to tackle citizens' disenchantment and to restore citizens' confidence by associating national Parliaments with the European Parliament and by reflecting on the key moments of the European Semester in the concretisation of the budget plans.

Ms FOTIOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, asked the First Vice-President of the European Commission whether he approved the pressure exerted by the Troika ((European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund) on the Greek Government to proceed with further cuts on pensions of already starvation levels and asked him to act in order to enforce the relevant articles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Mr René LEEGTE, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, supported that COSAC should be concrete and practical with less plenaries, fewer long speeches, more parliamentary initiatives and more informal meetings, in order for it to be more effective. He referred to an academic research report of the *Tweede Kamer* on parliamentary practices to be presented at the beginning of December and invited parliamentarians to attend a "cluster of interest" meeting on further parliamentary cooperation organised on 19th January 2015.

Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, said, among others, that qualified majority voting should be the rule in Council meetings and enhanced cooperation should be used in sectors such as energy. Furthermore, he invited the Commission to respond more quickly to national Parliaments' opinions. The extension of the use of qualified majority voting was also supported by Mr Angel TÎLVĂR, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*.

Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, suggested that the Speakers' of national Parliaments should be sent the Commission's letter of intent on the forthcoming legislative programme at the same time as this would be sent to the other institutions. He further suggested that a yearly one-day meeting between national Parliaments and the European Commission should be organised to discuss topical issues.

Ms Maite PAGAZAURTUNDÚA RUIZ, European Parliament, stressed the need for more interparliamentary cooperation in order to perfect existing tools, for efficiency when giving answers to citizens and for enhanced collaboration for solving citizens' problems.

Some speakers referred to the TTIP. Mr Peter FRIEDRICH, German *Bundesrat*, asked how the process should be approached, appealing that the TTIP should be considered a mixed agreement and underlining the need for information-sharing and for linking the negotiation process with Parliaments, given national Parliaments' role in ratifying it. Mr Jozef VISKUPIČ, Slovak *Narodna rada*, said that the process had to be made more transparent, while Mr BLAHA, Slovak *Narodna rada*, advocated more involvement and more respect by the Commission towards national Parliaments. Ms Lolita ČIGĂNE, Latvian *Saeima*, asked how the Commission could help national Parliaments to discuss the TTIP more thoroughly and move beyond related stereotypes.

Referring to delegated acts, Mr Andrzej GAŁAŻEWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, said that they eliminated national Parliaments from the debate on legislative change and asked the First Vice-President of the Commission to reflect on abolishing the procedure. Mr MAYER, Austrian *Bundesrat*, said that the procedure should not be used at the expense of drafting good legislation.

Ms STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, suggested dedicating in final proposals of the Commission a paragraph on national Parliaments' views expressed in the Commission's public consultations along with the Commission's motivated response and improving transparency in the workings of the Council.

On enlargement, Ms Majlinda BREGU, Albanian *Kuvendi i Shqipërisë*, urged for the enlargement process not to be postponed and said that the process needed to be credible and measurable, while Mr Mehmet TEKELIOĞLU, Turkish *Büyük Millet Meclisi*, reiterated the Turkish Government's commitment to Turkey's EU accession.

In response to the interventions, Mr ANGEL, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, referring to EUROPOL and EUROJUST, mentioned the importance of data protection and national Parliaments' dialogue with representatives of these agencies. He expressed his disappointment about the fact that national Parliaments had not got a positive response to their letter requesting considering the TTIP a mixed agreement. On enlargement, he agreed that the process should be a measurable one.

Lord BOSWELL, UK *House of Lords*, said the debate in COSAC was characterised by common purpose and common understandings. Technical issues on the subsidiarity mechanism had been understood. He stressed the need to find answers to problems together and to engage in dialogue with the active involvement of the European Parliament as well. He supported the establishment of a working group on the role of national Parliaments proposed by the Danish Folketing without delay.

Ms HÜBNER, European Parliament, defended trilogues in European decision-making stressing that many important issues related to democratic legitimacy were discussed during these meetings; in the case of cohesion, following negotiations, a policy more responsive to citizens' needs was achieved. On the TTIP, she underlined that beyond sectoral aspects often discussed, the strategic importance of the agreement should be mentioned and the need for the EU and US to agree on common regulatory standards in order to withstand pressure from other global players in the future. On the role of national Parliaments, she stressed the existing forms of interparliamentary cooperation besides COSAC, emphasising the role not only of the Committees on European Affairs, but also of the interparliamentary meetings with sectoral committees of national Parliaments and calling for the extension of the scope of cooperation and more visits from Commissioners and rapporteurs to national Parliaments. She added that treaties were respected and that intergovernmental agreements signed as a result of the crisis were in the process of being incorporated to the treaties. She said further that parliamentarians had a role in addressing challenges of anti-systemic and anti-European phenomena at national level where politics was made. On the banking union, she stressed how the European Parliament had made efforts to ensure increased parliamentary scrutiny in the process. On the Eurozone, she said that the EU had improved at handling heterogeneity in Europe.

Ms TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President of the European Commission, emphasising that the trilogues involved also the Council, stressed the necessity of engaging with the Council and revitalising its role, especially that of the General Affairs Council; the outcome of the legislative process was largely dictated by the work of the Council. He encouraged parliamentarians to engage with their national Governments and put pressure on Member States regarding the legislative process. On delegated acts and implementing acts he stated they were a consequence of the way the co-legislators legislated. He added that both the European Parliament and national Parliaments were directly elected by citizens, underlining the need to cooperate in order to improve public perception of European institutions. He urged national Parliaments to make a strong case for the importance of respecting the rule of law at national level and invited them to bring global challenges that could not

be faced by individual Member States to the discussion. On the TTIP, he encouraged common work and precise analysis of the reality.

4. Review of the Europe 2020 Strategy: Growth, Employment, and Competitiveness

Keynote speakers: Mr Pier Carlo PADOAN, Italian Economy and Finance Minister, Ms Danielle AUROI, Chairwoman of the European Affairs Committee, French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*, Mr Juan MOSCOSO DEL PRADO, Member of the Finance Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee, Spanish *Cortes Generales*

The Chair, Mr BORDO, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, reminded the audience that many Parliaments/Chambers indicated in the COSAC Bi-annual Report that the goals of Europe 2020 strategy could not be reached without adapting the economic policy framework.

Mr BORDO emphasised two steps towards recovery: first, reaching a proper balance between the needs for fiscal consolidation and for re-launching the economy, accompanied by relevant structural reforms and investments in sectors with a high growth and employment potential. This would also involve implementing the major public and private investment programme put forward by the European Commission, and would constitute a major step forward in the Union's approach, as called for in particular by Italy and other Member States. A second step towards economic recovery would consist in a duly flexible and stepwise approach in the application of EU finance rules for Member States which had undertaken structural reforms and which want to finance investments aimed at re-launching growth and employment. He acknowledged that, for the first time, Juncker's investment plan excluded from the computation of the debt thresholds the resources allocated to investments; this rule should be extended to resources for co-funding investments supported by structural funds.

Mr Pier Carlo PADOAN, Italian Economy and Finance Minister, noted that the issue of growth and employment must lie at the very core of Europe's economic policy. Mr PADOAN believed that growth in Europe was somehow taken for granted, although the requirement for sustained growth must never be lost from sight, from the creation of internal market through the Lisbon Strategy and to the Europe 2020 strategy. Among current issues, he mentioned lack of demand and, at the same time, lack of supply, as well as loss of momentum in the capacity to invest in European economy. There were also many governance issues at the European level.

Mr PADOAN presented the Italian Presidency's view on how a European growth structure could be put together. First, structural reforms had to be made, so as to improve productivity in the Member States. He noted the spillover effect within a highly integrated European Union, as any structural reforms carried out in one country provide immediate flow-on benefits to other Member States. A second structural pillar was provided by the single internal market, where many sectors still have to be better integrated, such as in energy, services, communication. He added that integration had a global dimension and that a greater integration between the European economy and other economies, such as the US economy, would have a strong impact on growth. Third, a solid investment policy is called for, in order to stimulate, at the same time, demand and supply and make use of the opportunities offered by widespread structural reforms. He referred to the Commission's investment plan, noting that the key point was how that investment policy would be able to integrate, or not, within the Structural Reform policy. In this regard, the mid-term review would be of utmost importance, as investment plans are among the priorities which should be a key to a review of Europe 2020 strategy.

In conclusion, Mr PADOAN called for binding new projects in the Member States to these European priorities, especially when formulating projects within the fields of energy and

infrastructure, where the public action could fill "market failures" and produce a strong lever effect. At the long term, he called for unifying the capital market and for taking tangible steps towards achieving a capital market union and fiscal union despite the need of partial transfer of national sovereignty, since such steps are requisite for long term growth.

Ms AUROI, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, made several observations on the upcoming mid-term review, further to the recent evaluation carried out by the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*.

First, she underscored the importance of staying true to the main objectives and targets of this strategy, setting out common priorities accordingly and most importantly, following through and implementing them. To that day, the implementation part had been deemed problematic, and even catastrophic in terms of the results achieved in the fight against poverty and employment targets. Ms AUROI pointed out that lack of visibility and a lack of a sense of buy-in or ownership on the part of the stakeholders had been some of the main reasons why this Strategy has not been properly implemented. A political will to implement this Strategy was needed from both the European Commission and the Member States.

The European Affairs Committee offered suggestions for achieving growth through a truly social Europe, implementing the Youth Employment Guarantee, setting a European minimum salary differentiated by country, and by investing in common fight against poverty. Moreover, no goals could be reached without the Union being given stronger means to act, especially in budgetary matters. In that context, Ms AUROI praised the investment plan announced by Mr Junker as a step in the right direction, albeit not enough to reach the ambitious goals set out by Europe 2020 strategy.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the German *Bundestag*, recalled the importance of holding a vision for Europe's future. One of those visions was that the EU become the most growth-promoting and innovative region in the world. A strategy and further initiatives were needed to achieve that vision, and that was already on the table: the Europe 2020 strategy. Mr KRICHBAUM assessed that the issue was in not keeping up with our own promises, in not fulfilling those goals that we ourselves had set.

He agreed that more growth was needed which would, in turn, lead to more employment. He reminded the audience that that was why the SGP had been created at that time. He also reminded that the 3% deficit threshold was built-in as a deliberate way of saying – if we go into debt, that money had to be invested in innovations, jobs etc.

The second point stressed by Mr KRICHBAUM was lack of credibility. If objectives and rules set out in Europe 2020 strategy were not taken seriously by the very people who had made those rules, nobody would then take them seriously. He invited to review the strategy, but then to apply what would be decided. There were difficulties in many countries, but there were also opportunities that need to be seized and developed.

As one good example, Mr KRICHBAUM mentioned the dual vocational training system in Germany, which helped young people with training and employment. He called for solidarity in tackling youth unemployment in the EU Member States, since in some areas youth unemployment reached worrisome levels. Mr KRICHBAUM concluded by saying that Europe 2020 strategy was a good strategy that must be forcefully applied.

Mr Juan MOSCOSO HERNÁNDEZ DEL PRADO, Member of the Finance Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee in the Spanish *Cortes Generales*, indicated that the main issue is

Europe's sluggish growth, emphasising that Europe needed to devise common solutions to its common problems. Europe 2020 strategy, in his view, did not offer that solution.

He presented his view on what Europe should do to avoid the risks of deflation and stagnation. Any solution should first include means of boosting Europe's overall demand. Second, reforms and a shift from the current policies favouring austerity, as these policies were seen as breeding injustice and inequality. He stressed that higher levels of investment were needed. They would in turn lead to better productivity, facilitate enhanced labour mobility and quality of employment, improve social inclusion, and increase GDP by letting more women access the work market.

Mr MOSCOSO HERNÁNDEZ DEL PRADO also touched upon energy and investment issues. Current large-scale development of shale gas resources in the US will significantly lessen the cost of energy in the US, affecting investments in Europe.

He stood firmly against the austerity policies imposed by liberalism and economic dogma, stating that they could lead to worse consequences than the economic crisis itself. The way forward should be found in more efficient growth policies, more investment and policies lowering unemployment levels, as well as sound fiscal incentives.

Twenty-five speakers took the floor during the debate.

Ms Maria João RODRIGUES, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament, recalled that the Lisbon strategy, which combined reforms and investments with measures of fiscal consolidation, had weak implementation means. For the success of the Europe 2020 strategy, it was essential to re-focus on investments and ensure the balance between them, reforms and responsible fiscal consolidation. She argued that the European Parliament should deal with EU institutions, while national Parliaments should deal with the European Commission and national governments. In order to reconcile rebalancing the budgets and getting back to recovery and job creation, national Parliaments could act in close coordination with their respective Governments on the Annual growth Survey and specific initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy before they were on the agenda of the Council and the European Council; they could also urge Governments to exclude national contributions for the Juncker plan from deficit and debt.

Mr Norbert SPINRATH, German *Bundestag*, agreed that the low level of investments was one of the key issues, as well as goals not always being taken seriously enough. Nevertheless, set rules may need to be fine-tuned during their real-world implementation, so as to reflect evolving situations. He pointed out that SGP is not only about stability but also about growth, which has to be put in practice by making use of opportunities and reducing red tape.

Sir William CASH, UK *House of Commons*, stood up for having a deregulation programme so that businesses, especially small and medium-sized, could generate the jobs indispensable to further growth.

Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, deemed it impossible to respect our own commitments in the social field if we keep to the current policy of austerity measures. He was supported by Mr Maximos CHARAKOPOULOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, who pointed out that austerity policy could not be the only way out of the crisis, and therefore that a new policy is needed to regain balance in Europe. Ms FOTIOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, questioned the credibility of the whole European project should the goals set by the EU not be achieved, owing to draconian austerity measures. These may lead to a limited ability of some Member States to remain competitive, and hence to growing gaps in equality. She asked the panel how Europe 2020 strategy

could redefine its priorities and goals in order to alleviate the worrisome situation arising in countries worst hit by the crisis.

Ms Aideen HAYDEN, Irish *Seanad Éireann*, believed that the headline targets of the strategy continue to be relevant. However, she made a recommendation for the following improvements: first, the introduction of qualitative measures within the targets, e.g., job *quality* targets to promote job sustainability. Second, the Strategy should move away from the one-size-fits-all approach in achieving its targets and it is vitally important that regional inequalities within the EU be addressed; also, the Strategy would benefit from some decentralisation. Third, the social indicators set out in the alert mechanism report should be used to monitor any negative social outcomes, and to promote positive measures.

Ms Riitta MYLLER, Finnish *Eduskunta*, expressed support for the new initiative by the European Commission on investment plans, but called for combining it with the Europe 2020 strategy, as only that would bring substance to Juncker's investment plan.

Mr Pavel GAMOV Swedish *Riksdag*, stood against any further European integration, calling for more integration among EU Member States themselves. Thus, in his view the Europe 2020 strategy had to be either thoroughly reformed or abolished.

Mr Yıldırım Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, stated that Europe 2020 provided solid guidelines for Turkey in its reform process, but would like to understand how Europe sees the place of Turkey within this strategy and what will be its positive impact on Turkey by 2020.

Mr Carl SCHLYTER, Swedish *Riksdag*, suggested that resources efficiency and cost effective investment policies could lead the way out of the current crisis, and that recovery shall remain elusive as long as Europe heavily depended on imported energy. He suggested that the time had come to stop talking about growth and devising complex plans, but we should get down to work with a newly creative approach.

Mr STÜBGEN, German *Bundestag*, touched upon the structural reforms and the European Semester, calling on the European Commission to provide realistic and practicable recommendations. Otherwise, such recommendations might mainly stay on paper, instead of being acted upon urgently.

Mr Kelvin HOPKINS, UK *House of Commons*, criticised the economic policies in the Eurozone and expressed his support to devolving economic and financial powers back to the Member States.

Mr Nico SCHRIJVER, Dutch *Eerste Kamer* re-emphasised the need for transparency towards the citizenry at national levels on the use of EU funds. He informed of a Dutch Parliament initiative calling upon the Government to submit to the Parliament an official national declaration on the use of such funds, and asked the colleagues if such an initiative could be supported in their respective countries.

Mr Jozef VISKUPIČ, Slovak *Narodna rada*, stressed the need for real instruments in order to implement key visions and strategies, such as genuine economic diplomacy.

Mr Peter FRIEDRICH, German *Bundesrat*, promoted investing in education, training and research as the solution, leading to skilled people working on innovative solutions, and designing better-quality, competitive products for world markets.

Mr Nuno MATIAS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, supported the view that without growth and competitiveness, the goals set out by Europe 2020 strategy would never be reached, and invited to make full use of the new initiative by the European Commission on investments, and of a possible new free trade agreement with the US and Canada so as to help the recovery of Europe's economic performance.

Mr BLAHA, Slovak *Narodna rada*, called for establishing a social and economic democracy, letting workers participate in the decision-making process of the companies they work for, and the creation of special worker funds.

Mr Edmund WITTBRODT, Polish *Senat*, expressed his support for the policy set out in Europe 2020 strategy and agreed with those who deemed essential the overall roles of innovation and growth. His Committee suggested binding up the European Semester with the strategy in order to lighten fiscal burdens, so as to free up resources becoming available for investment into infrastructure and other projects.

Mr Pablo CASADO BLANCO, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, singled out in his remarks two key points - the need to align the Growth and Stability pact with other plans, in light of the recent G20 summit, and the need to take full advantage of a possible free trade agreement with the US.

Mr Svein Roald HANSEN, Norway *Stortinget*, agreed with the view that economic growth and employment had to take center stage, and TTIP could contribute to that aim. Norway, he added, welcomed the European Commission's dialogue with EFTA countries in this regard. He also stressed the need for good cooperation on energy and climate issues to enable reaching ambitious targets at the Paris conference next year.

Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, pointed out three key issues: first, focus on research and development, with the current target of 3% deemed inadequate. Second, the need to invest within the European Energy Union, and third, the need to reinvest into governance of the internet and digital world. Europe must have its own funds earmarked for that purpose, and be more daring.

Mr Averof NEOFYTOU, Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, firmly backed the need to predicate European economic growth upon budget discipline. Hard work and less talk were needed to push through reforms. He also stressed the need to implement the digital agenda. The latter was also Mr Jožef HORVAT, Slovenian *Državni Zbor*'s key message, who stressed that the Digital Agenda remains one of the most important flagship initiatives in need of implementation.

Responding to this lively debate, Mr PADOAN commented on three issues: first, whether the overall European solution should be the result of a sum of national policies, or rather whether a genuine, separate European policy was needed. In his view, national solutions were fundamental, but not sufficient. Second, the complexity of the issues facing us calls for deploying all available tools and binding them together within a common framework. Third, the establishment of common institutions can be instrumental in taking the right social and economic policy decisions.

Ms AUROI agreed with those calling for a more efficient and fairer Europe. In her view, a key was social Europe; she called for establishing a basic minimum wage in Europe, which would be set at different levels in each country, but which would send a strong signal. Second, simplification of the administrative systems was needed. Third, a need to agree on priorities within the 350 billion euro investment package, among which the implementation of the European energy and climate package, the digital world, and research should be present. Fourth, a need to ensure security within the EU and at its borders, and finally, transparency issues needed to be better tackled.

Mr KRICHBAUM summed up the debate by saying that the overarching question was: how do we kick-start our economies? The solidarity principle was a key factor as Europeans could learn a great deal from each other. He cited the example of the Baltic States, which went through equally stringent measures even before the crisis had hit the rest of the EU, and which showed that it is possible to clean up one's act and to then return to growth. He reiterated his view that the main task was to implement agreed-upon targets, education and research being those where most efforts must be concentrated. He pointed out that since Europe was a high-cost area, it needed to be better than everyone else to stay competitive on the global stage.

Mr MOSCOSO HERNÁNDEZ DEL PRADO concluded that there was consensus that the objectives of Europe 2020 strategy are not reached, because the reforms were not enabled by corresponding investments. He called for a new fiscal and economic policy within the SGP, which would include new and different incentives. These would include transparency and accountability for macroeconomic policies, as mentioned by the Dutch member. No improvement was foreseen as long as the objectives did not comply with what happened in the field - as a case in point, the drastic reduction of Spain's education budget went against the objectives set out in the strategy.

5. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

The Chair, Mr CHITI, informed the Chairpersons that they had received a text which incorporated the proposals recommended for approval by the Troika, following the Troika meeting that had taken place the previous day, as well as the complete list of the amendments tabled both before the meeting and until the deadline of 12pm of that day, set by the Presidency. Mr CHITI then invited the Chairpersons to discuss all the amendments paragraph by paragraph, starting with the Contribution. Following a long debate and voting in cases of controversy, a further amended text of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LII COSAC was agreed by the Chairpersons.

6. European integration prospects: Global role of the EU and projection of its policies in the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe

Keynote speakers: Mr Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO, Vice-President, European Parliament, Mr Claudio MARTINI, Member of the Committee on EU Policies, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Latvian *Saeima*, Mr Sandro GOZI, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in charge of European Affairs

Mr CHITI introduced the topic under discussion, focusing on the challenges that the EU was facing at its borders. Concerning the issues that the Eastern Partnership countries were facing following Russia's intervention in Ukraine, Mr CHITI underlined that unilateral changes in the borders of states were not acceptable, and though the EU did not want a new Cold War, it could not sacrifice values on which peaceful coexisting of people were founded. With regard to the Mediterranean, the Chair noted that open conflicts were in progress, destabilising the region, such as civil wars in Libya and Syria, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the unresolved issue in Cyprus, and urged for actions providing for the integration of countries in the Western Balkans. He also noted that barbaric forces in the area, exploiting religion, undertaking bloody actions and taking advantage of areas of lower development, as well as poverty, immigration and evictions of Christians in the Middle East were adding up to the unease of the region. Mr CHITI underlined that Europe must have a common firm policy built on the principle of peace regarding these issues and concluded by noting that the Eastern and Mediterranean regions were both equally important and that discussions among parliamentarians and the European institutions should continue regardless of which Member State held the Presidency expressing solid commitment in that regard.

Mr BORDO noted that the weakness of Europe's actions in the Mediterranean highlighted certain problem areas in the European construction, namely the lack of a common European foreign policy, even in the areas closest to the EU and a shared policy on migration flows, as well as the inability to respond to people's expectations. He noted that Italy was left alone to deal with a real humanitarian crisis that brought 160.000 migrants to the country during 2014 - an increase of 400% compared to 2013. He recalled the Italian operation Mare Nostrum, which, only recently, hesitantly replaced by the EU operation Triton, saved 100.000 lives. He concluded by highlighting three points which he regarded necessary to improve the EU approach to migration flows: strengthening cooperation with countries of origin and transit of migrants by developing mobility partnerships programmes for region protection; assigning the process of application for asylum to diplomatic posts of the EU in third countries; distributing migrants who had the right to asylum according to the provisions of article 80 TFEU.

Mr Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO, Vice-President of the European Parliament, outlined that since its creation in 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was more necessary than ever and its objectives more than ever before at risk. The Vice-President recalled that the ENP was created in order to promote a zone of stability, security and wellbeing in the east and south of the EU and that democratic movements such as in Tunisia in 2011 had shown how citizens fought for a better life, liberty and respect of human and fundamental rights. However, he noted, that in the previous months-Libya, Syria, Ukraine or the Palestinian Territories where a third Intifada was possible, had been subject to political, economic and security crisis. In the light of these crisis, the objectives of the ENP became more important than ever: supporting social and structural changes, promotion of the rule of law, respect of human rights and transition of market economies by guaranteeing security and prosperity of their citizens. Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO explained that to this end, the EU made use of various incentives; namely: economic, based on the principle of more payments for more reforms; political, establishing a dialogue on human rights, migration and visas based on Association Agreements; trade, by providing privileged access to the European market. At the same time, noted Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO, the EU brought those countries closer to itself by favouring the adoption of European law and standards and creating comparative advantages for European businesses with regard to third countries.

In relation to the reaction of the EU to its neighbourhood crisis, Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO stated that the EU had introduced a growing differentiation based on the progress and the reforms delivered by its partners. The European Parliament constantly supported those strategic changes; the action plans established with the EU partners and adjusted to their needs and expectation; bilateral relations with the EU in the framework of the ENP were complementary to the multinational relations which took place in the framework of other fora. He stressed that it was important to conduct a common reflection at the EU level and at the level of national Parliaments on the ways to modify European policies in a constantly changing world.

On the South of the Mediterranean, Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO called for the support of the growing Tunisian democracy. He then underlined the necessity of EU mediation for the reconstruction of national unity in Libya and stressed the need for assistance from the international community in order for Lebanon and Jordan to face the refugee flows from Iraq and Syria.

In Eastern Europe, Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO noted with concern the escalation of violence in Ukraine and Putin's vision of a new Russia. The Vice-President mentioned that Mr Putin was promoting a policy of Russian integration with countries of the Eurasian area and in some cases he even used the so-called "hybrid war". In all those countries, Russia, advocates that governments decentralise competences and give great autonomy to Russian-speaking areas, which in many cases are areas of great geostrategic importance, such as in the case of Crimea. Responding to Russia's pressure on Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, noted Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO, the EU had signed

Associations Agreements with those countries, as well as temporary trade preferences and the European Parliament had ratified them. He also underlined that the European Parliament supported greater implication of the EU in the countries of the ENP. In that regard, he stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy.

Mr VALCÁRCEL SISO noted that EU's credibility in the international sphere would greatly depend on the success or not of its efforts to stabilise its neighbouring area and urged for faster reaction to political changes in the neighbourhood and a demonstration of real political leadership. He also called for coherence among Member States, among EU institutions and between Member States and EU institutions, and underlined the role of the European Parliament and national Parliaments in demanding and guarantying that coherence. He also stressed the inability of individual Member States to deal with global challenges and argued that the world needed the return of the reunited EU to the international sphere.

Mr Claudio MARTINI, Member of the Committee on EU Policies, *Italian Senato della Repubblica*, co - rapporteur with Mr Giovanni Mauro on an inquiry carried out by the Committee on the situation in the Middle East referred to the results of this inquiry. He underlined the fact that the macro-region of the Mediterranean, despite its diversities, should be considered as coherent and mentioned the varied intensity of cooperation with neighbouring countries, which was defined by many parameters, mainly protection of human rights and compliance with the rule of law, but also by political aspects: for instance the "Arab Springs" of 2011 and their consequences should be taken into account in the overall evaluation of the intensity of relations with those countries. He also pointed out the fact that, unlike some countries of the Eastern Partnership, third countries of the Mediterranean did not have the prospect of entering the Union. However, that should not limit the areas of cooperation with those countries, especially since the strategic priority to the South of the Union needed to be restored to balance American and Chinese activities in the area and to balance the fact that the latest EU enlargement was to the North and to the East. In that regard, Mr MARTINI underlined that neo-colonial logic should be totally disregarded and new philosophy and instruments should be adopted. He also pointed out that the Barcelona process had already lost its momentum and that the cooperation with the countries of the Mediterranean should overcome the limits of bilateralism and be launched on a community approach. In particular, Mr MARTINI mentioned models based on decentralised cooperation, capable of giving proper value to sub-national levels and partnerships, with the necessary flexibility to ensure the feasibility of the programmes and giving priority to the cultural and youth sector.

Mr MARTINI made some additional points: regarding the institutional process he noted that new legitimacy should be given to the process of North and South institutional collaboration, as well as a new political reference framework should be adopted; regarding the conditions of the institutional progress, he noted that it should be based on an equal footing and on the principle of reciprocity; as regards the social and cultural dimension, he emphasised that the Mediterranean must be a concrete opportunity for growth and employment of younger generations. He concluded with a reference to the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, which proposed a European Strategy for the Mediterranean envisaging decentralised multilevel cooperation and providing a link between the north and the south of the Mediterranean.

Mrs Lolita ČIGĀNE, Latvian *Saeima*, Chair of the EU affairs committee, emphasised that the year 2014 was indeed the year of radical challenges, the 'moment of truth' for the ENP. She stressed that military expansion of Islamic fundamentalists in Iraq, Syria and Libya, as well as Russia's blatant aggression in Ukraine significantly destabilised the EU's Southern and Eastern regions.

She stressed that those two regional policies must not be opposed to each other neither in official statements, nor in the 'behind-the-scenes' bargaining process and in fighting for funding.

She stressed that the Eastern Partnership would be one of the priorities during the Latvian Presidency and that the Riga Summit should set in motion a fundamental revision of it. She mentioned that many practical matters should be considered during the Riga Summit, for instance, taking stock of the signed Association Agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova and searching for new cooperation models in the areas of mutual interest with Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

She added that along those practical matters, an in-depth discussion had to be conducted on at least two outstanding key political issues; firstly, the need to set clear and fair goals within the Eastern Partnership addressing the question of what the outcome of that initiative should be for those partner countries with a true aspiration to join the EU; and secondly, the need to address the question how to build relations with Russia.

Ms ČIGĀNE expressed the firm conviction that the reviewed Eastern Partnership must convey a clear political message that Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia would have an opportunity to start EU accession negotiations at some point in future, after completing all the required democratic reforms and ensuring compliance with the set criteria. However, regardless the lengthy reform process, a clear perspective of accession would be the best motivation to make serious and significant reforms in the Partnership countries.

In her view, the Eastern Partnership should be diversified with a tailored approach to each specific partner country. She informed that the Riga Summit would seek to agree on relevant roadmaps including strong and supportive signals for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, with a perspective on either accession or a special privileged economic and political partnership in distant future.

On Russia she noted, that Putin's Russia had been escalating the conflict aimed at the reacquisition of control over former Soviet area. Annexation of Crimea, arming of Donbas separatists, as well as involvement of regular Russian army units, on the Ukrainian territory attested Putin's imperialist goals.

She pointed out that, before restarting EU's relations with Russia, a radical change in Russia's behaviour was needed. First, Russia must respect the sovereignty and full territorial integrity of Ukraine. That would allow the EU to withdraw the majority of sanctions. Second, and more importantly, Russia had to fully recognise the European choice of the Ukrainian, Georgian and Moldovan people. She added that unfortunately Russia was showing no signs of willingness to de-escalate the conflict and that its troops were still present in Ukraine.

She stressed the EU's solidarity and ability to find a solution in the most difficult situations. She called for the EU to speak clearly and straightforwardly with Russia.

Mr MAURO, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, co - rapporteur on an inquiry carried out by the Committee on the situation in the Middle East, stressed the need to consider the Mediterranean as a macro-region. Inside of the macro region, there are number of problems and prospects, but all of great meaning, what will determine the future of Europe. He stressed that Europe had duties towards future generations and had to focus on the Mediterranean perspective. He emphasised the need to work on high level university education and to have religious and cultural interconnection. He proposed to set up a bank of the Mediterranean.

Twenty-seven parliamentarians took the floor in the subsequent debate.

Mr Norbert SPINRATH, German *Bundestag*, expressed the opinion that the ENP had to be adapted to the present circumstances, as certain things had gone wrong. It was very important to take into account not only national, but regional and local authorities, and involve them in the ENP. He was convinced that, if the EU would build the ENP, it had to be done from bottom up rather than top-down perspective.

Mr TRAGAKIS, Hellenic *Vouli ton Ellinon*, recalled the readiness to give new impetus to the implementation of projects in the Mediterranean expressed at the first summit of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the Union for the Mediterranean organised in April 2013. He called for greater economic support for the FRONTEX, in order to better protect the southern border of the EU and referred to the discovery of important hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus which may serve as a catalyst for regional cooperation to the benefit of the peoples in both sides of the Mediterranean.

Mr Jerome LAMBERT, French *Assemblée nationale*, stated that the current armed conflicts in both regions marked the failure of the international community and that the EU was risking losing its influence. He expressed hope for new democracy in Ukraine and called on the EU to have a dialogue with all stakeholders and with Russia, adding that we must give political support to the people of Crimea. He added that Europe had to be present in international diplomacy, as well as in the military sphere.

Mr Andrzej GAŁAŻEWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, argued that Europe was against having a cold war, but in reality there was a hot war at Europe's borders. He stressed that the new ENP and new CFSP were very important with regard to foreign policy. The problems in the South and in the East were different: in the Mediterranean region there were internal problems in individual countries, but in the Eastern region there was an aggressor, an imperial country. He said that there were frozen conflicts in Azerbaijan and Armenia and that these could be activated at any point.

Mr Joan SABATE I BARRAS, Spanish *Cortes Generales* urged the EU to reorient relations with Russia and recognise that the agreement with Ukraine was a mistake. He emphasised the need to make more diplomatic efforts.

Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, spoke about the enlargement issues and the Balkan countries, and their prospects for EU membership. EU needed to ensure that any policy in relations to justice and financial balance was crucial in terms of their future membership. He also referred to the Mediterranean, stressing that certain countries must have economic policy, which ensured, that those countries had a future. With regard to Ukraine, he expressed his satisfaction with the relevant decision taken by the COSAC.

Mr Marek ZIOLKOWSKI, Polish *Senat*, said that Europe faced two dangers; Russia in the East and migratory flows in the South. He stressed, that EU must not only defend its borders, but be active in a positive way in the neighbouring countries. He called for Europe's actions to be quick and proactive. Europe might be a giant, but in a foreign policy it was very feeble, slow and inefficient giant, he said. He also urged to give the countries of western Balkans clear perspective of the EU membership.

Ms STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, expressed concerns about what could arise, when Mare Nostrum operation would be taken over by the FRONTEX Triton operation. She asked what Italy would undertake to prevent loss of lives after the Mare Nostrum withdrawal. She also called for reinforcement of the EU's resettlement policy and urged to make it less permissible.

Mr BLAHA, Slovakian *Narodna rada*, stated that the EU had to respect other cultures, including orthodox Russia. He stressed that Slovakia did not recognise Crimea's separation from Ukraine, as well as Kosovo separation from Serbia. He also expressed Slovakia's negative position on sanctions. He pointed out, that Europe needed a stable Russia. He also noted that Ukraine was still run by oligarchs. Ukraine's future was federalisation and neutrality. He emphasised the need for real solutions and improved relations between Russia and Europe.

Mr Christine DEFRAINE, President of the Belgian *Sénat*, stressed the need to encourage the countries, which chose to have economic and political association with Europe. She added the need to restore dialogue with Russia by ensuring that EU delivered a constructive message, without creating new factions with Russia. With regard to the Mediterranean, she emphasised the need for strengthened migratory policy.

Mr Victor DOLIDZE, *Parliament of Georgia*, informed, that Georgia was doing well both regarding NATO and the EU. He informed that Georgia had closed the Visa liberalisation chapter of the Association agreement, and that it was getting ready for the Riga summit. He added, that Georgia was doing all to normalise relations with Russia, unfortunately Putin is signing cooperation agreement with Abkhazia. He also emphasised the need not only to concentrate on sanctions, but to increase defence capabilities. Russia must know, that strong and democratic Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova was a guarantee for the regional stability and for Russia's stability itself.

Mr Mehmet TEKELIOGLU, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, informed that because, of the brutality of the Assad regime, there are 1.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey. With regard to the Cyprus issue, he noted, that, if there was willingness to use the carbon resources for the benefits of all Cypriots, Turkey had the best role in sending those resources to Europe. He also urged that the dialogue with Moscow must be continued. He stressed the EU's need to increase cooperation with Turkey.

Mr Antonio CARDOSO, Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica*, focused on Morocco and Portugal's, capabilities of producing electricity from renewables, solar and wind energy. He stressed Portugal's strategic geopolitical position, which could provide an alternative source of energy for the Europe. He called, that the EU should fund energy links between Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe, supporting gas and oil pipelines across the peninsula.

Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, called for implementation of the innovative policies with Morocco. He stressed that the financing of the ENP must be divided as follows: 1/3 to the Eastern partners and the rest for the Mediterranean countries. The use of those funds should be optimised, he added. He congratulated the Greek and the Italian Presidencies for striking balance between East and South, and expressed hope that the Latvian Presidency would do the same and would not concentrate only on the Eastern Partnership.

Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, expressed his doubt as to whether sanctions against Russia were proper action to solve Ukraine's crisis: Ukraine, he added, had to make small gestures for its minorities underlining that the support of the Hungarian minorities was not only a Hungarian issue, but also European. He stated that a territorial autonomy would be the best solution in that situation.

Mr Cezary TOMCZYK, Polish *Sejm*, stressed the need for solidarity and integration. He also emphasised that Russia was not a strategic partner, but a strategic problem.

Mr Gordan JANDROKOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, noted that the EU had a great responsibility towards Southern and Eastern neighbours and that a unitary policy towards non-EU countries was

needed. With regard to Eastern Europe, he added that the situation there influenced the whole continent and Europe had to be brave and active.

Mr NEOFYTOU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, focused on the issues of the Mediterranean, among others on social problems, refugee and asylum seekers problems, and violation of human rights. He stressed two ways to deal with those: firstly, by letting the people from those countries understand that the EU was willing to help and, secondly, through the definition of values and provision of mechanisms to tackle the problems by EU institutions.

Mr Vitalino CANAS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, stressed the importance of the Tunisia as the only positive outcome of the Arab spring.

Ms FOTIOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, informed about Syrian refugees in Greece, emphasising that it was a problem of the entire Europe and asked when and what measures would be taken, in order to transfer them to the EU Member States and whether financial support for rescue and search mechanism would be provided also for Greece and Cyprus as done with the Mare Nostrum plan..

Mr HANNIGAN, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, pointed out the enlargement fatigue, which was also to blame along with some Member States' attitude towards the rule of law, and stressed the need to reflect on imbalances and delayed integration due to candidate countries' failure to reform. He urged to push for the benefit of further integration. Mr Aykan ERDEMIR, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, called for stronger commitment of the EU in the neighbourhood.

Mr Arminas LYDEKA, Lithuanian *Seimas*, stressed the need to talk with one voice, supported by actions. He denounced the anti-European campaigns orchestrated by Russia during the electoral campaign in Moldova and the setting up of extremist parties in the EU with the help of Russian funding. In order to achieve proper peaceful solutions, these had to be supported by the international community. He expressed his surprise that some countries, e.g. Serbia were willing to be part of the EU, but were not supporting the common position. He stressed that smooth integration of Balkan and Eastern partnership countries in the EU would contribute to the peace and stability of those regions and called for offering membership perspective to those countries, as this would strengthen the prosperity and security of the EU.

Ms PAGAZAURTUNDÚA RUIZ, European Parliament, noted that it was important to remember that European borders belonged to Europeans and that action at the EU level in terms of security and migration was necessary. With regard to the borders of the Mediterranean, she stressed the need for cooperation and development policies to create an area of stability, as well as the need to ensure a corridor for refugees.

Mr Carmelo MIFSUD BONNICI, Maltese *Il-Kamra Tad-Deputat* stressed the Tunisian example as an encouraging one.

In response, Ms ČIGĀNE reiterated the need to deal with issues related to the Mediterranean. Referring to Mr SPINRATH's intervention, she said that the regional involvement in the ENP was needed. She acknowledged interventions as to the sanctions having an impact on ordinary people's lives, but reminded however the diplomatic truth – it took two to tango. She stressed that Putin did not want to negotiate with Europe; therefore Europe did not have other means other than sanctions to use. She also welcomed the comments on further EU enlargement and, concurring with the idea about enlargement fatigue, agreed that enlargement was not a goal per se, but an instrument towards stability and peace. She pointed out that the enlargement question was not one for the nearest future, pointing nevertheless to the need to show those countries, willing to be part of the EU, that the perspective and the door were open. She noted that those discussions would be continued also in

Riga, stressing that the more in-depth discussions would be on Eastern partnership, given the geographic location.

Mr Claudio MARTINI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, stressed the political issues, which he noticed in number of comments, without neglecting the problem of Russia. He believed there was a need that the central gravity of the Europe must be relocated by paying attention to the southern border. He stressed the need for a common approach to deal with migration flows in the countries of origin, which required an enhanced dialogue with those countries. The more we dealt with the issues at the points of departure, the more benefits we gained. He proposed that after 20 years of Barcelona process, new paradigms and a decentralised approach had to be found. He noted that he was positively surprised by the comments on Tunisia, which demonstrated that expansion of democracy and people's participation was possible with awareness, unimaginable without EU support.

Mr Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO, Vice-President of the European Parliament, stressed the importance of dealing with the ENP at local and regional level. In relation to the Mediterranean the EU should show the political will and coherent and effective approach towards Mediterranean. EU should also use all instruments for ENP and for the pre-accession, to promote democracy. On immigration, he agreed to tackle the problems at its source, focusing on countries of origin, where we needed to spread the EU's values, democracy and good governance and defend the human rights and fight against human trafficking mafias. He called for greater financial investments in the Eastern and Southern neighbouring countries. EU enlargement allowed Eastern neighbours to become closer to the EU and triggered their aspiration to be part of the EU. He stressed, that the main objective was political and economic cooperation, supporting those countries. On the issue of the Russian and Ukrainian conflict, he expressed his view, that there was no struggle between the EU and Russia. He emphasised that Europe's late reaction was too slow in terms of diplomacy, and that the EU had to ensure that Putin's ambitions to recover the empire were not successful.

Mr GOZI, Italian Under-Secretary of State in charge of European Affairs, confirmed that the two issues discussed are the priorities for the entire Europe. With regard to enlargement, the Italian Presidency would make sure that the intensity of the dialogue with the candidate countries and other would not reduce, especially in the Balkan regions. He noted that the situation in the Mediterranean and the Eastern partnership, as well as relations with Russia were essential. He stressed the need for solidarity in terms of economic approach. He also urged to have no opposite reactions between South and East and, on the rule of law, he claimed that Europe was not as demanding towards itself, as towards its neighbours. He also emphasised the need for success stories. Tunisia today represented the success story in the north of Africa. On the external borders, he stated, that these were common borders and, thus had to be dealt with shared responsibility and a sense of solidarity.

7. Democratic control of European agencies

Keynote speakers: Mr Morten KJÆRUM, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and Coordinator of the European Agency Network for 2014, Sir William CASH, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, UK *House of Commons*

In his introductory remarks, the Chair, Mr BORDO, underlined that the highly specialised topic of the democratic monitoring of agencies was unprecedented for COSAC and that the increasing number of agencies was one of the most contentious and important developments of the EU. The goal of the session was to: determine in which limits it was legitimate to delegate wide powers, also regulatory in nature, to bodies which were not envisaged by the treaties, and also to examine options to strengthen the link between agencies and national Parliaments; to allow the latter to fully use agencies' potential for exercising their legislative functions, develop policies and exercise

scrutiny; to assess the adequacy of the existing democratic accountability mechanisms and consider possible improvements.

Mr Morten KJÆRUM, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), stressed that agencies which were set up in order to carry out specific legal, technical or scientific tasks had an important role in delivering evidence-based advice to help shape informed policies and laws at the EU and national level. He added that the agencies also enabled economies of scale, and in many sectors, agencies reduced the overall costs to taxpayers and consumed altogether only 0,6% of the overall EU budget.

He emphasised that agencies worked for the benefit of the EU citizens in nearly all areas that impacted their lives.

He welcomed the willingness of national Parliaments to improve relations with agencies and reassured the audience on the agencies' commitment to enhance the cooperation with national Parliaments.

He made an in-depth presentation of the accountability mechanisms governing the work of agencies, focusing on the set up and composition of the governance structure which was agreed by the Commission, Parliament and the Council in Agency's founding acts and on the funding of agencies. He explained that the EU institutions and bodies held the agencies politically, financially and judicially accountable for their activities. These included the European Commission, Council, Parliament, as well as the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors, the Internal Audit Service, the European Anti-Fraud Office and the European Ombudsman. He added that parliamentary oversight over the EU agencies may include questions, inquiries, hearings, budget discharge, visits and committee contact and stressed the role of the European Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee, Budget Committee and the Budget Control Committee in regularly assessing the work of agencies, determining each agency's annual budget, and scrutinising how each agency have spent the money, before deciding whether the budget can be discharged.

He referred to the ever closer ties forged by many EU agencies to Member States through focal points in national administrations, national parliaments and corresponding national bodies.

He explained that the European Commission's roadmap on implementation of the common approach for EU agencies agreed upon by the Parliament, Commission and Council, led to many measures to ensure greater coherence in the way they function with a view to improving agencies' efficiency and accountability. He added that a new inter-institutional working group would look specifically at decentralised agencies' resources, to jointly define a clear development path. In parallel, introducing modern technologies into public administration and effective business tools was also under consideration.

He concluded by stating that agencies felt accountable also to the EU citizens and that they remained fully committed to provide their fair share of the measures required to address the difficult economic situation and assist the EU and its Member States to stimulate growth, create jobs and build a more inclusive society for Europe. He reiterated the availability of agencies to actively support the work of national Parliaments and enhance cooperation with them.

In his intervention, Sir William CASH, Chair of the European Scrutiny Committee, UK *House of Commons*, argued that the democratic control of European agencies was seriously deficient which was symptomatic of the democratic deficit problem of the EU as a whole. In his view, a radical redesigning of the treaties was necessary to regain trust and to return the fundamental democracy which resided in the national Parliaments, whilst recognising European Parliamentary involvement.

He added that there were too many agencies and that some of them had immense influence, even effective control. In his view, the 2012 common approach to decentralised agencies bypassed accountability of these agencies by national Parliaments and he stressed the need for improved cost efficiencies in agency spending.

With respect to the FRA, the UK insisted that the collapse of the EU pillar structure had not extended the mandate of the agency. He explained that both the Labour Government and the Conservatives rejected the Charter of Fundamental Rights, but that the European Court of Justice had ruled that it was applicable to the UK, adding that the European Scrutiny Committee had proposed that the UK should pass an Act of Parliament excluding that Charter of Fundamental Rights from its judicial system.

Concerning EUROPOL, the UK House of Commons had insisted that Article 9 of Protocol 1 to the EU Treaties on the role of national Parliaments demonstrated that it was not for the European Parliament unilaterally to decide how national Parliaments should ensure political oversight of EUROPOL. He urged his colleagues to raise the matter of parliamentary scrutiny provisions with their government ministers, so that Council could adopt a strong position and underlined that any attempt by the EU institutions to impose a new model of scrutiny on national Parliaments must be resisted.

He also mentioned that the European Public Prosecutor, which might take over much of the Eurojust jurisdiction, was confirmed by the Commission despite a clear “yellow card” and added that, under the current proposal to reform Eurojust, the President of the Eurojust College would only be required to appear before the European Parliament, not national Parliaments.

In his view, it was disturbing that in their response to the Bi-annual Report of COSAC, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers stated that they had never addressed the issue of EU agencies, an omission for which national Parliaments were to blame.

In his opinion, accountability must be demanded, and beyond acknowledging the importance of control, steps needed to be taken to ensure that agencies were effectively controlled. In this regard, he referred to an amendment put forward by the UK *House of Commons* and *House of Lords*, as well as the Irish Parliament, which stated that it was essential to explore how national Parliaments should monitor such agencies. Regarding the Troika amendment, which stated that EU agencies should be encouraged to inform national Parliaments on their activities and work programme, he argued that information was regarded as a substitute for accountability, whereas accountability required questions from democratically elected representatives in national Parliaments, and answers to those questions.

Nine parliamentarians took the floor in the subsequent debate. Most speakers underlined the need for increased accountability and transparency of agencies and their readiness to be more involved in this process.

Mr POZZO DI BORGIO, French *Assemblée nationale*, stressed that the Fundamental Rights Agency, which was a concurrent to the Council of Europe, could be useful only if the two structures held consultations between them. Mr Denis DUCARME, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, stressed the European Parliament was fulfilling its expected control activities but that these needed to be re-organised in the future; parliamentary control, the primary mission of the EP, was in his view necessary and in the case of some agencies there was willingness for national Parliaments to be associated to the European Parliament control, notably in the field of justice, policing and immigration; he also called for more proactive approach from national Parliaments’ specialised

committees, for increased exchanges of information and transparency which could all contribute to combatting euroscepticism.

Mr Yıldırım Mehmet RAMAZANOĞLU, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, asked for a stronger role of national Parliaments regarding the democratic control of agencies and extended his country's support to these activities.

Lord BOSWELL, UK *House of Lords*, stressed the importance of effective scrutiny of all agencies; regarding Europol, he stated that the Commission proposals for parliamentary scrutiny were very much what was needed and that the European Parliament's amendments would raise significant issues of constitutional principle and might lead to the a supervisory body lacking the necessary flexibility and responsiveness; in his view work should be pursued on a case-by-case basis to ensure the right scrutiny mechanisms for each agency at national and EU level.

Mr Svein Roald HANSEN, Norwegian *Stortinget*, asked for the EFTA-EEA members to be considered as observers in the new parliamentary processes of agencies' scrutiny; referring to Europol and Eurojust, which were of specific interest for Norway, he added that Norway wished to be associated in the scrutiny mechanism of Europol once finalised and would continue its work with the new EP on an amendment allowing its participation.

Mr Yiannos LAMARIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, underlined the importance of agencies and the need to revise existing mechanisms in light of the difficult economic conditions. He referred to the absence of an agency working in the field of foreign policy, security and defence and the need to consider the establishment of such an agency; he also underlined the need to strengthen agencies' relations with national Parliaments, including via the communication of annual programs and reports.

Ms HAYDEN, Irish *Dáil Éireann*, mentioned this topic was under discussed and stressed that the existing mechanisms did not recognise national Parliaments' role in all cases and that the latter's role in the establishment and oversight of agencies should be further explored. On the establishment of the EPPO, Ireland believed that the Commission did not adequately consider the option of strengthening existing or alternative mechanisms.

Mr TRAGAKIS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, argued that according to the LII Biannual Report, despite the growing number of agencies and their perplex mission, more than half of Parliaments had never carried out an overall consideration of the role, function and accountability mechanism of neither EU agencies in general nor of a specific agency; he added that national Parliaments had to contribute in the debate on the role and effectiveness of EU agencies and cited the example of providing input on the role of EU agencies in the implementation of the European Sea Strategy, endorsed under the Greek Presidency and continued by the Italian.

Mr Kelvin HOPKINS, UK *House of Commons*, strongly supported Sir CASH's views and stressed that democracy should be bottom-up, stem from citizens, allow opposing views to be recognised, while keeping open the possibility of change. Mr Johannes HÜBNER, Austrian *Nationalrat*, agreed that the tasks assigned by the citizens to the EU could be taken away from it; he argued that 50 per cent of agencies' activities were unnecessary. On the creation of the FRA, he expressed the view that initially a Racism Observatory had been set up due to the alleged non observance by Austria of democratic standards and that it subsequently closed down because it proved to be unnecessary.

In his reply, Sir CASH expressed his satisfaction with the consensus on the need for democratic control of agencies and called on national Parliaments to take action on this matter. On EUROPOL, he mentioned there was a constitutional principle involved and welcomed the interest of Norway

and Turkey in being engaged in scrutiny. He argued that the lack of reaction the Commission to the yellow card on the EPPO was an example of democratic deficit being by-passed. He concluded by adding that there was a serious question mark on the European project and called for the creation of a stable Europe, with proper principles, democratic accountability and trust.

Mr Morten KJÆRUM ensured he would bring back all comments to his colleagues in the Agencies' network and acknowledged the urgency to strengthen interaction with national Parliaments. He highlighted that one of the strengths of agencies was that they were anchored in Member States. He mentioned that the creation of focal points in national Parliaments could be envisaged by all agencies, in order to ensure a steady flow of information. He underlined that national members from the Management Boards of agencies would be available to respond to invitations by national Parliaments to discuss relevant issues for the parliamentary agenda. He added that building the necessary trust and knowledge would shatter the perception that agencies were unnecessary and concluded by reminding the creation of a new interinstitutional group which would take over the activity of the previous one.

8. Adoption of Contribution and Conclusions of LII COSAC

Mr CHITI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, presented the final draft of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LII COSAC to the meeting. He mentioned the thorough and constructive discussions of the texts within the Troika and Chairpersons' meetings. He informed that the Chairpersons had examined all items in the texts with no pre-formed ideas and expressed satisfaction with the outcome, which was based on common work to find solutions taking into account all views, an attitude which was essential in interparliamentary cooperation.

Ms ČIGĀNE, Latvian *Saeima*, expressed the hope the Contribution and Conclusions could be adopted. She welcomed participants to Riga for the upcoming COSAC Chairpersons meeting on 1-2 February 2015 and the LIII COSAC meeting on 31 May - 2 June 2015. She announced the topics on the agenda: the priorities of the Latvian Presidency (Engaged Europe, Competitive Europe and Digital Europe), the European Commission priorities, the Energy Union, TTIP, the future of the parliamentary scrutiny of the EU affairs and the Eastern partnership. She added that 6 conferences would be organised in the framework of parliamentary dimension of the Latvian Presidency.

The texts of the Contribution and Conclusions of LII COSAC were adopted, as amended by the Chairpersons, with no amendment.