

CONTRIBUTION XLVI

Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) Warsaw, 2-4 October 2011

1. Multiannual Financial Framework

- 1.1. Having regard to the ongoing economic and financial crisis in some Member States; to the problems of excessive budget deficits forcing a number of Member States to implement far-reaching austerity programmes; to social unrest feeding euroscepticism on the one hand, and the growing needs and challenges related to sustainable economic development of the European Union, the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and to keeping up with global competition on the other hand; COSAC supports the efforts of the EU institutions resulting in the proposed Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020, which will provide a basis for debate and decision in the European Union. However, the result of the discussion has to take into account national budget frameworks and national budget strategies.
- 1.2. COSAC considers it necessary to simplify and increase the transparency of the rules and procedures related to the accumulation, allocation and utilisation of the European Union's own resources and encourages the EU institutions to take appropriate measures in this area. National Parliaments and the European Parliament will consider the merits of these specific measures in due course.
- 1.3. COSAC has been carefully analysing proposals for the establishment of different types of European taxes which would provide a new source of revenue for the EU budget. COSAC takes the view that, in the period of recovery from the crisis, new instruments should not impose an increased financial burden on the private sector or on individuals. In certain cases, such measures could also distort the level playing field between EU entities and their global competitors.
- 1.4. In the light of the complexity of current circumstances and the number of problems relating to the need to improve the planning, approval and performance of future EU budgets, COSAC encourages the competent institutions to accelerate the legislative work in this area and, where possible, to undertake more frequent and extensive social consultations.

- 1.5. COSAC encourages the EU institutions to negotiate and adopt the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 that will enable the medium and long-term EU policies to be fully implemented in compliance with the European principle of solidarity and with regard to the ongoing economic and financial crisis. In this context COSAC stresses that the cohesion policy together with a fair and equitable common agricultural policy are essential instruments and play an important role in fostering solidarity, reducing economic and social disparities among the Member States and achieving EU strategic goals. They should remain focused on further growth and development of the least developed regions.
- 1.6. COSAC emphasizes the particular importance of EU funding for projects of European interest which may not attract sufficient funding from the private sector alone but are essential for achieving the EU policy objectives of a well-functioning internal market.
- 1.7. COSAC welcomes the announcement of the Polish Presidency to organise a conference on the Multiannual Financial Framework on 20-21 October 2011. COSAC also welcomes the Presidency's intention to invite representatives of national Parliaments and stresses the importance of an early involvement of national Parliaments.
- 1.8. COSAC encourages the EU institutions to include the objective of improving the accountability and transparency of the management of EU funds during the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework. COSAC calls on Member States, with due regard to the position of the European Commission, to improve accountability and transparency of the spending of EU funds at the national level.

2. Two years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon – parliamentary experience

- 2.1 COSAC notes with satisfaction its first debate on the evaluation of parliamentary experience and best practices two years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.
- 2.2 COSAC welcomes the active involvement of national Parliaments in subsidiarity checks under Protocol 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality of the Treaty of Lisbon. National Parliaments have taken different points of view on the practical implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.

COSAC believes that national Parliaments and the EU institutions should actively exchange information and their existing practices on the application of Protocol 2, and that its application should become more specific as part of a continuous dialogue between all the parties concerned.

- 2.3 In accordance with Article 5 of Protocol 2, COSAC underlines that for national Parliaments to exercise the powers vested in them it is necessary to enable the financial effects of EU draft legislative acts to be evaluated, and, in the case of Directives, the implications for national legal systems also to be evaluated. Moreover, COSAC recalls that EU draft legislative acts should be justified on the basis of qualitative and quantitative indicators. COSAC notes that subsidiarity analyses in the Commission's explanatory memoranda have, to date, not met the requirements of Article 5.
- 2.4 COSAC notes the concerns of national Parliaments with the quality and independent nature of impact assessments of EU draft legislative acts which at times are considered to be schematic and not satisfactory in substance. COSAC draws attention to the suggestion by a number of national Parliaments to have the full text of impact assessments translated into all official languages of the EU.
- 2.5 COSAC welcomes the debate it held on the cooperation of national Parliaments with the European Commission. COSAC requests the European Commission to take the results of the debate into account in the Commission's own evaluation of the state of the Union and in the preparation of the Commission's Work Programmes.
- 2.6 In principle COSAC is satisfied with national Parliaments' close and open cooperation with the European Commission, established under the Treaty of Lisbon. The informal political dialogue between the European Commission and national Parliaments will contribute to strengthening the parliamentary dimension in the EU decision process. However, COSAC notes that pursuant to Article 6 of Protocol 2, reasoned opinions submitted must state why the draft in question does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity, rather than why it does.
- 2.7 COSAC calls upon the European Commission to provide more precise and substantive replies to reasoned opinions on EU draft legislative acts. Many national Parliaments consider that the European Commission's replies should focus to a greater extent on specific doubts expressed in reasoned opinions submitted by national Parliaments. COSAC requests the European Commission to take the necessary steps to ensure that her replies to reasoned opinions or contributions

within the scope of the informal political dialogue are transmitted within three months.

2.8 COSAC notes the concerns voiced by numerous national Parliaments, some of them in reasoned opinions, that the powers granted to the European Commission to regulate by means of delegated acts are too extensive. COSAC notes that this may lead to a situation where essential elements of an area, reserved for the EU draft legislative acts, will be outside the scope of control of national Parliaments.

2.9 Having regard to further interparliamentary cooperation, COSAC stresses the importance of intensified communication as part of the dialogue and exchange of information and best practice between the European Affairs Committees of national Parliaments of the EU Member States and with the European Parliament.

CONCLUSIONS XLVI
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European Union (COSAC)
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1. Appointment and Co-financing of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

- 1.1 COSAC thanks Ms Loreta Raulinaitė for four years of intensive and fruitful work as the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat. During her two terms of office, Ms Loreta Raulinaitė has performed her duties in reliable, diligent and committed manner, contributing to the tightening and development of interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union.
- 1.2 COSAC welcomes the decision taken by the Chairpersons at its plenary meeting held in Warsaw on 3 October 2011 to appoint Ms Libby Kurien as a new Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for the term of office of two years from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2013 in accordance with Rule 9.3 of the COSAC Rules of Procedure.
- 1.3 COSAC welcomes letters of intent from 38 Parliaments/Chambers expressing their commitment to co-finance the position of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat and the running of the COSAC office and website.
- 1.4 Moreover, COSAC is grateful to the European Parliament for providing the COSAC Secretariat with appropriate office facilities on its premises in Brussels.

2. Bi-annual Report

- 2.1 COSAC welcomes the 16th Bi-annual Report prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and thanks the Secretariat for its excellent work. The Report provides comprehensive information on the present and future role of national Parliaments in cooperation with governments and their scrutiny within the process of establishing the new Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU attuned to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and the evaluation of parliamentary experience and best practices in the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon.

- 2.2 COSAC is convinced that the 16th Bi-annual Report will provide a valuable source of information on interparliamentary cooperation and set new directions for national Parliaments' further cooperation with the EU institutions.

3. IPEX website

- 3.1 COSAC thanks the IPEX Board and in particular the European Parliament for the rewriting of the IPEX website and its launch on 28 June 2011 and welcomes the new technological facilities offered by the new platform.
- 3.2 COSAC invites national Parliaments to publish on time and regularly update their information posted on the IPEX website. The provision of comprehensive and reliable information will contribute to better and more effective interparliamentary cooperation. COSAC encourages national Parliaments to reconsider the role of IPEX correspondents in the light of the new tasks requested for the new website in order to ensure that IPEX becomes a more reliable source of information.
- 3.3 COSAC believes that efficient interparliamentary exchange of information via IPEX makes citizens familiar with the functioning of the European Union and enhances their awareness of EU matters.