

30 June 2014

**On the establishment of a Commission working group on the role of national parliaments in the EU**

Dear Mr. President-designate, Dear Mr. Juncker

We would like to congratulate you on your nomination as President of the European Commission.

We are confident that under your presidency, the European Commission will continue to be a positive force for developing the European Union's democratic legitimacy and not least for the political dialogue with Member State national parliaments.

Democratic legitimacy is crucial for the European Union. But in the wake of the economic and financial crisis, there are signs that this democratic legitimacy is fading. Europe needs a new relationship of cooperation between the Union and its member states. Only together we can rebuild trust in the European project.

**We – the signatories of this letter – therefore call on the new European Commission to set up a working group, to include national parliamentarians and representatives of the EU institutions, to look at the role of national parliaments in the EU. The task of the working group should be to draft an action plan on ways to strengthen the role of national parliaments in the European Union.**

Legitimacy and support for European decision-making must be built from the level of citizens upwards. The European Parliament is an important voice for European citizens and plays its part extremely well. But national parliaments and the European Parliament each have their own distinct roles, and they have a joint responsibility to ensure that the European Union becomes truly accountable and democratic.

Effective involvement of national parliaments is fundamental to ensuring accountability, and legitimacy, for the actions of the European Union. A stronger and more direct say for national parliaments in European decision-making will encourage national parliamentarians to engage more in European affairs and to take responsibility for policy output. National ownership of European decision-making is vital for increasing citizens' faith in European policy solutions.

It is generally agreed that national parliaments have important roles in scrutinising their national governments' approach to European affairs, and in acting as guardians of the subsidiarity principle. Scrutiny procedures must be continuously reviewed and improved. Likewise, improvements in the procedures for considering subsidiarity and proportionality are needed.

Meanwhile, there is a growing consensus among national parliaments that their role in European affairs must go beyond monitoring the principle of subsidiarity and scrutinising national governments. National parliaments must play a more active role in European decision-making.

To this end a number of proposals have been put forward by the Dutch Tweede Kamer, the UK House of Lords and the Danish Parliament.<sup>1</sup> These proposals are all designed to respond to questions such as:

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<sup>1</sup> Tweede Kamer: *Ahead in Europe - Report on the role of the Tweede Kamer and national parliaments in the EU* - May 2014. Folketinget: *Twenty-three recommendations to strengthen the role of national parliaments in a changing European*

- How can we design a democratic framework that matches the European Union's increased role and powers regarding economic governance, while still respecting the prerogatives of national parliaments?
- How can national parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the EU?
- How can we ensure that European citizens do not regard themselves as alienated from European decision-making?

These questions could be among the topics addressed by the proposed working group.

We wish you every success in your new responsibility as Commission President.

Please accept the assurance of our highest consideration.

Best regards,

Eva Kjer HANSEN,  
Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament

Raymond KNOPS  
Chair of the standing committee on European Affairs of the Netherlands House of Representatives

Allan WIDMAN  
Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Swedish Parliament

Lord Timothy BOSWELL OF AYNHO  
Chair of the EU Select Committee of the UK House of Lords

Sir William CASH  
Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee of the UK House of Commons<sup>2</sup>

Dominic HANNIGAN  
Chairman of the joint Committee on European Union Affairs of the Irish Oireachtas

Richárd HÖRCSIK  
Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Hungarian National Assembly

Agnieszka POMASKA  
Chair of the EU Affairs Committee of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland

Edmund WITTBRODT  
Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Senate of the Republic of Poland

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*governance* - January 2014. House of Lords, European Union Committee, 9<sup>th</sup> report of session 2013-14: *The Role of National Parliaments in the European Union* - March 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The United Kingdom doesn't have a written Constitution, but has its own Constitutional Arrangements, which differ from the other 27 EU Member States.

Gediminas KIRKILAS  
Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Lithuanian Seimas

Radu Bogdan TIMPAU  
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Anca Daniela BOAGIU  
Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Romanian Senate

Miroslav KREJCA  
Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Czech Senate

Ondrej BENESIK  
Chairman of the Committee for European Affairs of the Czech Chamber of Deputies

Karlheinz KOPF  
Chairman of Standing Subcommittee on European Union Affairs of the Austrian National Council

Edgar MAYER  
Chairman of the EU Committee of the Austrian Federal Council

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Hon. Luciano BUSUTTIL

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Riitta MYLLER

Chairwoman of the Grand Committee of the Finish Eduskunta

Gunther KRICHBAUM

Chairman of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union of the German Bundestag

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Chair of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, Defence, Cooperation and Immigration of the Chambre des Députés of Luxembourg