



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LXXI COSAC

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, 24 - 26 MARCH 2024

Note: The text of keynote interventions which have been shared with the Presidency will be published on IPEX. A video recording of the full meeting is available via the webpage of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Belgian Presidency.

OPENING SESSION

Ms Eliane TILLIEUX, Speaker of the Belgian *Chambre des représentants/Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers* and Co-Chair of the Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs gave a welcome address, followed by a welcome address by Mr Gaëtan VAN GOIDSENHOVEN, Member of the Belgian *Sénat/Senaat* and Co-Chair of the Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs.

The floor was then given to Mr Othmar KARAS, First Vice-President, European Parliament for welcome remarks on behalf of Ms Roberta METSOLA, President of the European Parliament.

PROCEDURAL ISSUES AND MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Ms TILLIEUX welcomed Mr Zoltán TESSELY, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, who attended COSAC for the first time as Chair. She went on to refer to the [draft programme of the plenary meeting of the LXXI COSAC](#), which was adopted without amendments. She then gave a short report from the Troika meeting the previous day. She furthermore recalled the letters received by the Presidency, which were made available on [IPEX](#). She went on to explain that, as a response to the [letter](#) from Ms Ivanna KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE, Chair of the Committee on Ukraine's integration into the EU of the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada*, which contained a request to put forward a joint statement on Ukraine, the Troika had proposed to integrate parts of the proposed text into the draft Contribution from COSAC. Furthermore, regarding the [letter](#) from several heads of delegation asking that Ukraine be put on the agenda of LXXI COSAC, she pointed out that Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE had been invited to take the floor as a keynote speaker during Session I of the meeting. Ms TILLIEUX also referred to the [letter](#) on accessibility of information, and pointed out that much of the content of the letter had equally been integrated into the draft Contribution.

During this point, Mr Yde Johan VAN HIJUM, of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, took the floor to inform that there were some further remarks regarding accessibility of information, which he would like to see added to the draft Contribution.

SESSION I - REVIEW OF THE 2019-2024 EUROPEAN LEGISLATURE AND PROSPECTS FOR THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AGENDA FOR 2024-2029

The session was chaired by Mr VAN GOIDSENHOVEN.

The session began with keynote interventions by Mr Georges GILKINET, Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Mobility, and by Ms KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE.

During the ensuing debate, 25 speakers took the floor.

Members discussed a variety of topics during this session. Almost all of them referred to Russia's war against Ukraine, and initiatives to support Ukraine were widely debated. Challenges to the security situation in Europe were similarly broadly addressed, as was the enlargement process, which was referred to by all speakers from candidate countries. Among other topics, the rule of law, migration policies, competitiveness, proposals for reforms of the EU and the Treaties, and the need to continue addressing the challenge of climate change, were mentioned. Some speakers also took the opportunity to make a brief recapitulation of the five past years, since the last elections to the European Parliament, and the challenges Europe has faced since then.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Mr Francisco José CONDE LÓPEZ (Spanish *Cortes Generales*), Mr Domènec RUIZ DEVESA (European Parliament), Mr Heikki AUTTO (Finnish *Eduskunta*), Mr Michał KOBOSKO (Polish *Sejm*), Ms Radvilė MORKŪNAITĖ-MIKULĖNIENĖ (Lithuanian *Seimas*), Ms Louise MOREL (French *Assemblée nationale*), Mr Giulio TERZI DI SANT'AGATA (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), Mr Hans WALLMARK (Swedish *Riksdag*), Mr Zoltán TESSELY (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*), Mr Anton HOFREITER (German *Bundestag*), Ms Lucija TACER (Slovenian *Državni zbor*), Mr Ján FERENČÁK (Slovak *Národná rada*), Mr Dimitrios KOUVELAS (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), Mr Harris GEORGIADES (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*), Mr Rihard KOLS (Latvian *Saeima*), Mr Martin ENGELBERG (Austrian *Nationalrat*), Mr Evangelos Vasileios MEIMARAKIS (European Parliament), Mr Fernand KARTHEISER (Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*), Ms Laura CASTEL FORT (Spanish *Cortes Generales*), Mr Jani KOKKO (Finnish *Eduskunta*), Mr Jean-François RAPIN (French *Sénat*), Mr Alessandro GIGLIO VIGNA (Italian *Camera dei Deputati*), Mr David KLOBASA (Slovenian *Državni svet*), Mr Seán HAUGHEY (Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*), Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI (Georgian *Sakartvelos p'arlament'i*), Ms Ina COȘERU (Moldovan *Parlamentul Republicii*), Ms Erisa XHIXHO (Albanian *Kuvendi i Shqipërisë*), Mr Oğuz ÜÇÜNCÜ (Türkiye *Büyük Millet Meclisi*), Mr Peter RICKETTS (UK *House of Lords*) and Mr Arman YEGHOYAN (Armenian *Azgayin Zhoghov*).

SESSION II - GENDER POLICY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MEN IN PARLIAMENT

The session was chaired by Ms TILLIEUX, who in her introductory remarks also informed delegations that a Joint Declaration on more gender-sensitive parliaments would be circulated for co-signing after the conclusion of LXXI COSAC. The declaration would be based on the text on gender policy and the representation of women and men in parliament which was included in the draft Contribution.

The session began with keynote interventions by Ms Marie-Colline LEROY, Belgian Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Equality Opportunities and Diversity; Ms Latifa GAHOUCI, Belgian Senator and Chair of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for women and men; Ms Agnes HUBERT, Founding Member of Gender5+ and Professor at the College of Europe; and Ms Maruša Gortnar, Head of Research and Policy Support Unit at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

The ensuing debate was held in a direct question-and-answer format, allowing for one question at a time from the floor, followed by replies from the keynote speakers.

During the ensuing debate, 23 speakers took the floor.

During the debate, the lack of representation of women in society in general and politics in particular was discussed. Particular emphasis was put on their underrepresentation in national parliaments, as well as at the local and regional policy levels. The economic, social and cultural obstacles to the full participation of women were raised. Whether, and how, quotas could be used to advance the representation of women in politics was also subject to discussion. The debate also concerned initiatives at an EU level, particularly in light of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament in June 2024. The participation of men in gender equality discussions was also raised.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Mr Pere Joan PONS (Spanish *Cortes Generales*), Mr Marc ANGEL (European Parliament), Ms Milagros MARCOS ORTEGA (Spanish *Cortes Generales*), Ms Christine SCHWARZFUCHS (Austrian *Bundesrat*), Ms Marina NIKOLAU (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*), Ms Lucija TACER (Slovenian *Državni zbor*), Ms Elena MURELLI (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), Ms Eva Maria HOLZLEITNER (Austrian *Nationalrat*), Mr Robert TROY (Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*), Mr Tom WEIDIG (Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*), Ms Adéla ŠÍPOVÁ (Czech *Senát*), Ms Matilda ERNKRANS (Swedish *Riksdag*), Ms Louise MOREL (French *Assemblée nationale*), Ms Hanah LAHE (Estonian *Riigikogu*), Mr Algirdas SYSAS (Lithuanian *Seimas*), Ms Katerina NOTOPOULOU (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), Mr David KLOBASA (Slovenian *Državni svet*), Mr Ján FERENČÁK (Slovak *Národná rada*), Mr Daniel RIAZAT (Swedish *Riksdag*), Ms Pranvera RESULAJ (Albanian *Kuvendi i Shqipërisë*), Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenian *Azgayin Zhoghov*), Ms Shqipe ISUFI (Kosovan *Kuvendi i Kosovës*) and Ms Diljá Mist EINARSDOTTIR (Icelandic *Alþingi*).

MEETING OF THE COSAC CHAIRPERSONS - DISCUSSION ON THE CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE LXXI COSAC

Mr VAN GOIDSENHOVEN chaired the first part of the meeting, regarding the draft text on the Conclusions of LXXI COSAC. Following some debate, including one vote on paragraph 8, an amended text of the draft Conclusions was adopted.

Ms TILLIEUX chaired the second part of the meeting, regarding the draft text on the Contribution of LXXI COSAC. Following some debate, including votes on the amendments, an amended text of the draft Contribution was adopted.

The adopted texts were put forward for approval by LXXI COSAC during the Closing session (see below).

SESSION III - OPEN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY: COMPETITIVENESS AND RESILIENCE

The session was chaired by Mr VAN GOIDSENHOVEN.

The session began with keynote interventions by Mr Nicolas SCHMIT, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Mr Thierry BRETON, European Commissioner for the Internal Market and Mr Marek HUDON, Professor at Solvay Brussel School of Economics and Management.

During the following debate, 33 speakers took the floor.

All members emphasised the importance of European Open Strategic Autonomy by highlighting its different aspects. Interventions focused, among other things, on the security of energy supply, a fair and social transition, the prevention of further regulatory burdens, the need to increase investments in research and development, and education in general, as well as support for small and medium sized enterprises. Some members also stressed that the goals of the green transition should not be detrimental to economic competitiveness. The support for farmers and the agricultural sector was also raised, as well as protecting the European economy from external negative influences and unfair trade practices.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Mr Péter BALASSA (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*), Mr Salvatore DE MEO (European Parliament), Mr Pere Joan PONS SAMPIETRO (Spanish *Senado*), Mr Helmut SCHOLZ (European Parliament), Mr Francisco José CONDE LÓPEZ (Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*), Mr Mats LÖFSTRÖM (Finnish *Eduskunta*), Mr Bastiaan VAN APELDOORN (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*), Mr Miroslav GREGORIČ (Slovenian *Državni zbor*), Ms Christine THELLMANN (Romanian *Camera Deputaților*), Mr Jonas JARUTIS (Lithuanian *Seimas*), Mr Timo HARAKKA (Finnish *Eduskunta*), Mr Alessandro GIGLIO VIGNA (Italian *Camera dei Deputati*), Mr Franc BREZNIK (Slovenian *Državni zbor*), Mr Jean-François RAPIN (French

Sénat), Mr Stefanos PARASTATIDIS (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), Mr Ján FERENČÁK (Slovak *Národná rada*), Ms Hélène RYCKMANS (Belgian *Sénat/Senaat*), Mr Ferdinand TIEFNIG (Austrian *Bundesrat*), Ms Lucija TACER (Slovenian *Državni zbor*), Mr Marc DEMESMAEKER (Belgian *Sénat/Senaat*), Ms Elena MURELLI (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*), Ms Jytte BENGTTSSON GUTELAND (Swedish *Riksdag*), Mr Rainer ROBRA (German *Bundesrat*), Mr Vasile DÎNCU (Romanian *Senat*), Mr Chrisis PANTELIDES (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*), Mr Rihards KOLS (Latvian *Saeima*), Mr Mikko POLVINEN (Finnish *Eduskunta*), Mr Maciej KONIECZNY (Polish *Sejm*), Mr Mihailo ANĐUŠIĆ (Montenegrin *Skupština Crne Gore*), Mr Oğuz ÜÇÜNCÜ (Türkiye *Büyük Millet Meclisi*), Mr Peter RICKETTS (United Kingdom *House of Lords*), Ms Rrezarta KRASNIQI (Kosovan *Kuvendi*).

SESSION IV - DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW IN EUROPE: THE WAY AHEAD

The session was chaired by Ms TILLIEUX.

The session began with a keynote intervention by Mr Didier REYNDERS, European Commissioner for Justice.

The ensuing debate was an interactive session with a panel of experts, moderated by Mr Rob HEIRBAUT, Belgian journalist specialised in EU matters. The members of the panel began by delivering a short speech each. This was followed by an interactive debate between the panellists and Members. The panellists were Mr Koen LENAERTS, President of the Court of Justice of the European Union; Ms Françoise TULKENS, Professor emeritus at UCL and former judge and Vice-President at the European Court of Human Rights; and Mr Arnaud VAN WAEYENBERGE, Professor at HEC Paris and researcher at Center Perelman on the philosophy of Law.

During the debate, 13 speakers took the floor.

Some of the topics raised during this debate included: the importance of respecting the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union, including solidarity; the situation of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the need for Member States to implement the decisions of the ECJ; the separation of powers and the risk presented by politically-motivated attacks on the rule of law; the threats posed by corruption and the attacks on media freedom; the need to ensure access to justice for all, and the positive impact which civic and political education programmes in schools could have. During the debate Members also highlighted the respect for the rule of law as an essential criteria for the accession negotiations with EU candidate countries, and raised concerns regarding the integrity of electoral processes and the threat posed by disinformation and content generated by Artificial Intelligence, notably ahead of the European Parliament elections in 2024. The specific situation of the rule of law in Member States such as Spain, Hungary or Greece, and in EU candidate countries (some of which would be included for the first time in the next European Commission Annual Report on Rule of Law), such as Bosnia and Herzegovina or Türkiye were also mentioned.

The following speakers took the floor during this debate:

Ms Laura CASTEL FORT (Spanish *Cortes Generales*), Ms Hanah LAHE (Estonian *Riigikogu*), Ms Milagros MARCOS ORTEGA (Spanish *Cortes Generales*), Mr Rihards KOLS (Latvian *Saeima*), Mr Marco LOMBARDO (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), Mr Zoltán TESSELY (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*), Mr Marc ANGEL (*European Parliament*), Mr Radovan KOVAČEVIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina *Parlamentarna skupština*), Mr Daniel RIAZAT (Swedish *Riksdag*), Mr Dimitrios KOUVELAS (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), Mr Robert Marius CAZANCIUC (Romanian *Senat*), Ms Katerina NOTOPOULOU (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), and Mr Kadri Enis BERBEROĞLU (Türkiye *Büyük Millet Meclisi*).

CLOSING SESSION

During the Closing session, Mr VAN GOIDSENHOVEN presented the draft texts on the Conclusions and Contribution of LXXI COSAC, which had been approved during the meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons. He also informed delegations that on request from the delegations of the German *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat*, a footnote would be included in the Contribution on the chapter concerning the Middle East, stating that they could not support that section. The following remarks were made:

- Mr Hans WALLMARK (Swedish *Riksdag*) thanked the Belgian Presidency for organising the meeting, but considered it unfortunate that it was not possible to adopt the texts by unanimity. He underlined the importance of an inclusive process in COSAC, making everyone feel ownership of the end product, and manifest European unity.
- Mr Dimitrios KOUVELAS (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*) underlined that, due to a technical correction as regards to paragraph 12 of the Contribution, the text adopted during the chairs meeting on Monday 25 March differed from the text adopted during the plenary meeting on Tuesday 26 March, which in his view changed the content of the paragraph.
- Mr Ondřej BENEŠÍK (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*) noted that the Czech delegation would like to join the concerns expressed by the German *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat* regarding the chapter on the Middle-East of the Contribution.
- Mr Francisco José CONDE LÓPEZ (Spanish *Cortes Generales*) thanked the Belgian Presidency for its efforts in order to seek consensus, and remarked that to achieve this COSAC could attempt to adopt shorter, more general texts, while also drawing, where relevant, on the expertise of academia and experts. He underlined the importance of COSAC as a forum, and thanked the Belgian, Hungarian and former Swedish Presidency for good cooperation in the Troika.

Finally, the floor was given to Mr TESSELY, who briefly mentioned that during the upcoming Hungarian Presidency, COSAC Chairpersons meeting would take place on 28 and 29 July 2024, and the LXXII COSAC on 27 to 29 October 2024. Topics for debate at the LXXII

COSAC are foreseen to include the demographic situation in Europe, questions regarding the labour market and competitiveness, and enlargement.

Ms TILLIEUX thanked everyone for having participated, and closed the meeting.