

HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REPORT

ON THE PRACTICES OF PARLIAMENTS

CONCERNING EU PRESIDENCIES

February 2009

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First and foremost may I thank the national parliaments of EU Member States and also the European Parliament for their input to this report. We sincerely hope that the report will substantially contribute to the work of parliaments of Member States holding the rotating EU Presidency in the years to come and that it will also facilitate effective cooperation between national parliaments.

Dr. Katalin Szili

What is the objective of the report?

Cooperation between the national parliaments of EU Member States and the European Parliament has intensified and broadened in scope in recent years, touching upon a wide range of issues crucial in a legislative assembly's work. We believe that with the new challenges facing parliaments it might be worthwhile to investigate the parliamentary dimension of the rotating Presidency. **Sharing relevant experiences will hopefully be useful not only to parliaments of those countries that are yet to take the helm of the European Council but also to those that already know what it means to hold the Presidency-in-office.**

As they prepare to assume the EU Presidency, parliaments face the harsh reality of the fact that while Governments have a Presidency Handbook at their disposal and the Council's General Secretariat also provides continuous assistance in preparing and running the Presidency effectively, national parliaments do not have a similar set of Guidelines setting out their duties and best practices. Such a document would enable parliaments to decide what kind of a Presidency they wish to run, to see clearly what their possibilities and responsibilities are and to identify the pitfalls that they should avoid during preparation and implementation.

As more and more countries from the 2004 round of enlargement follow in the footsteps of Slovenia, the first new Member State to assume a six-month stint at the EU's helm, sharing these experiences becomes increasingly topical and important. However, the information in this report might also be useful to parliaments that have already completed their turn of the rotating Presidency. It was with this aim in mind that I proposed that we explore the untapped potential for cooperation in this field and I was pleased to see that my counterparts received my initiative so positively.

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that this report will not only be consulted now, in February 2009 but you will turn its pages later on as well whenever you face these challenges and in particular when your parliament prepares for your country's next – and perhaps first – EU Presidency.

The report is based on the responses to the comprehensive questionnaire of 84 questions sent to the 27 EU national parliaments and to the European Parliament. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part focused on issues with a political dimension, while the second part tried to explore the practical side of managing a Presidency (e.g. budget, protocol duties, staff-related questions, etc.)

Almost all of the 27 national parliaments have responded to our questionnaire, but with some countries yet to hold a Presidency, some parliaments have no first-hand experience. Nevertheless, we are truly thankful to all colleagues who have returned our questionnaire irrespective of whether their country has ever acted as Presidency-in-office as by doing so they supported this initiative.¹

The Presidencies most relevant to the questionnaire are those which took place after the enlargement of 2004 simply because the size and complexity of the tasks of a Presidency for a national Parliament are comparable thereafter. However, lessons from earlier Presidencies are worthwhile examining too; therefore we have listed below all the Presidencies since 2000 (including the Polish Presidency, which follows that of Hungary):

¹ The analysis underlying this report was based on responses from 20 countries: Austria (2), Belgium (2), Czech Houses of Representatives, Czech Senate, Denmark, Finland, France (2), Germany (Bundestag), Ireland (2), Italian Chamber of Deputies, Italian Senate, Luxembourg, The Netherlands (2), Poland (2), Portugal, Slovenian National Assembly, Slovenian National Council, Spain (2), The United Kingdom (2), and the Hungarian National Assembly.

In addition, we also received valuable responses from Lithuania pertaining to their preparation (admittedly still in its early stage) as well as about their plans for the future.

(2) indicates countries from which the two houses of parliament gave a single set of responses in the name of the entire legislature.

Year	Semester	Country
2000	Jan-Jun	Portugal
	Jul-Dec	France
2001	Jan-Jun	Sweden
	Jul-Dec	Belgium
2002	Jan-Jun	Spain
	Jul-Dec	Denmark
2003	Jan-Jun	Greece
	Jul-Dec	Italy
2004	Jan-Jun	Ireland
	Jul-Dec	The Netherlands
2005	Jan-Jun	Luxemburg
	Jul-Dec	United Kingdom
2006	Jan-Jun	Austria
	Jul-Dec	Finland
2007	Jan-Jun	Germany
	Jul-Dec	Portugal
2008	Jan-Jun	Slovenia
	Jul-Dec	France
2009	Jan-Jun	Czech Republic
	Jul-Dec	Sweden
2010	Jan-Jun	Spain
	Jul-Dec	Belgium
2011	Jan-Jun	Hungary
	Jul-Dec	Poland

As the list above reveals, even within this relatively short period, some countries hold the Presidency more than once, and therefore their Parliament finds itself in a Presidency scenario more than just once. In these cases the responses to the questionnaire usually focus on the latest experiences, highlighting the important recent trend of growing duties of parliaments, which marks the considerable difference between a Presidency in the '90s and a post-2004 one.

The role of national parliaments in the European Union keeps evolving. Naturally, their growing importance brings with it an increasing number of tasks and responsibilities, which

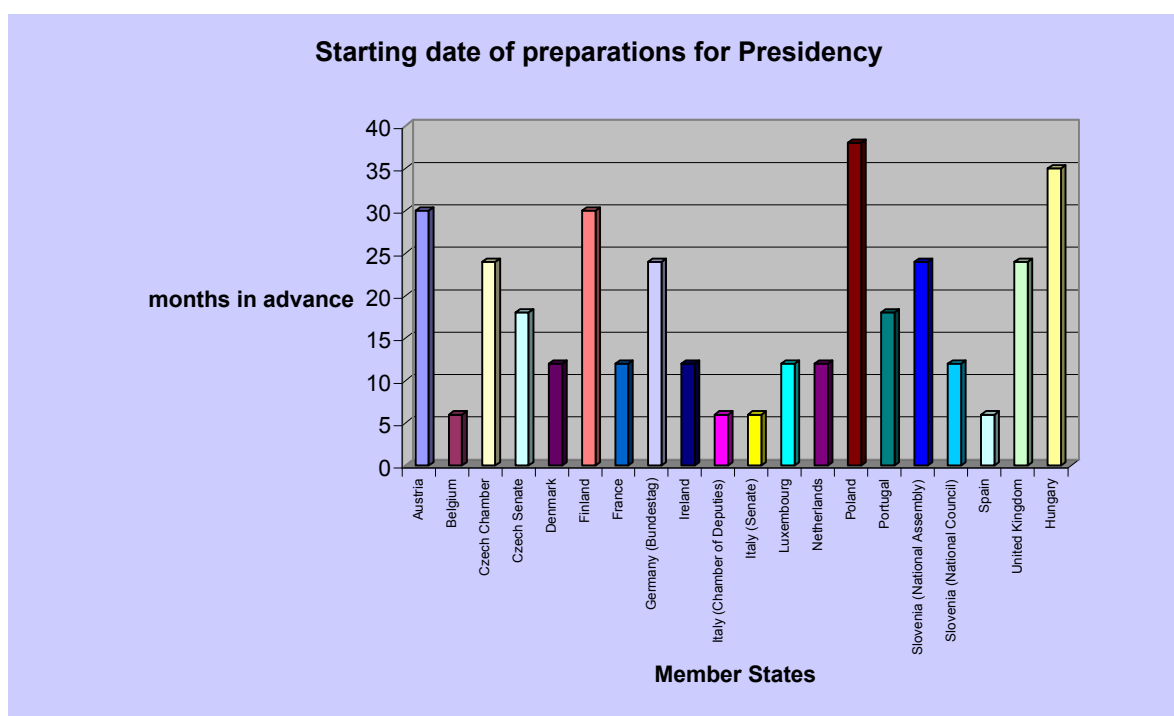
will make the job of those parliaments that will hold the Presidency following the – hopefully close – entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty will have an especially crucial role to play.

POLITICAL ISSUES

When examining the political issues we were looking for answers to the questions: **do parliaments participate in the general preparation of their country for the Presidency tasks and do they have special ad hoc forums for doing so or they simply operate within the existing frameworks?**

The answers to the question **whether the Parliament participated in the general, national preparations for the EU Presidency** showed that 13 out of 20 chambers/parliaments participated in the preparatory work, while 7 parliaments claimed that their participation was partial or indirect. In these cases, the legislative bodies either only participated in the discussion of issues directly concerning parliaments or their influence on the governmental preparatory work was negligible.

How early Parliaments **start their preparations for the Presidency varies greatly**: the Polish Parliament (the Sejm and the Senate) indicated starting 38 months in advance, whereas Belgium, Italy and Spain indicated 6 months. However, on average **Parliaments start preparing for the Presidency 18 months before the Presidency kicks off**.



Based on the replies to questions on **the preparatory mechanisms within the parliaments**, it can be concluded that the overwhelming majority of national legislatures – almost 90% - do not establish a separate political forum dedicated to the supervision of government preparations but perform this oversight via the general constitutional and legal framework. However, it is worth noting that the role of the different parliamentary (political) structures do play very different roles in the various Member States; while in some cases the Committees on European Affairs – often responsible for parliamentary scrutiny of the government – deals with the Presidency, in other case this falls within the remit of the Speaker of the House. On the other hand, a higher ratio of legislatures establishes a special political forum to coordinate Parliament's own internal preparations: in this case the percentage of Parliaments that conducted this internal preparation solely within the existing frameworks remained below 70% (consequently, over 30% establish a special forum for this purpose). The Parliaments that fall into this second, minority group are Belgium, Czech Republic, France, The Netherlands and Hungary.

The practice of the European Parliament shows that two political bodies are involved in dealing with the presidencies. The Conference of Presidents consult senior representatives of the incoming Presidency a few weeks in advance and the Conference of Committee Chairmen also meet the minister responsible for European affairs in the government about to take over

the Presidency baton. It is important to underline that at the beginning of the Presidency the Prime Minister of the presiding country traditionally attends the plenary sitting of the European Parliament in Strasbourg and delivers a speech outlining the priorities of the Presidency.

The overwhelming majority of Parliaments **do not adopt any special strategic documents** concerning Presidency preparations; they rather make summaries of an operational nature. The only three Member States that have adopted such a strategic document are Austria, Hungary and Spain.

In a number of Member States (namely Austria, Belgium, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Slovenia) – constituting almost 40 % of the respondents – however, **there has been some sort of agreement concluded by and between the political groups**. These differed in their nature as some of them aimed at the common approval of the Presidency priorities while others aimed to prevent campaign debates from hindering Presidency preparations.

Presidency preparations had been brought to a political level within the Parliaments in all respondent Member States. It is typically the Bureau or other Speaker-level organs of the parliaments (Presidium, College of Presidents, Conference of Chairmen, etc.) that acts as the responsible political body, but in some cases the most influential and decisive body was the Committee on European Affairs (as is the case in Denmark).

With the one exception of Ireland² all of the queried Member States claimed that **the Speaker played a role of some sort during the preparation of the Presidency**, moreover in most **Member States the Speaker has a key role also during both preparation and implementation**. As far as tasks are concerned, in many national Parliaments the political coordination of Presidency preparations fell upon the Speaker. It should be pointed out that typically the Speaker plays a key role in maintaining relations with the European Parliament. The practice of Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings organised together by the national Parliament and the European Parliament in Brussels has only been standard practice since 2005, therefore some Parliaments had a significantly smaller interface for cooperation with the European Parliament during their Presidency. In the case of those

² In Ireland the role of the Speaker was limited to the protocol role of opening the meetings.

countries, who held the Presidency after joint meetings between the EP and national parliaments became an accepted practice, the Speaker had a decisive role in setting the agenda of Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings. The key role of the Speaker naturally also meant that in practically all of these Member States the Speaker attended at least some of the committee meetings organised during the course of the Presidency and in the case of seven Parliaments the Speaker took part in all such meetings. It is interesting to note that while Denmark stressed that its Speaker *did not* participate in the COSAC meeting, the UK highlighted that the COSAC was *the only* meeting that its Speakers attended. In the practice of the European Parliament, the President of the EP participates in the annual Conference of Speakers of national Parliaments³, and also participates in all Joint Parliamentary Meetings as a co-chair.

When examining Presidency preparations it becomes apparent that the **number of MPs directly and actively involved in preparing the Presidency varies greatly**. Based on the replies to this question the numbers might vary between 5 Members (as in Denmark) and over 30 Deputies (as in the case of Germany), but on average the figure is usually between 15 and 20.

A significant majority of national **Parliaments do not organise any training (neither technical, nor linguistic) for their Members participating in the Presidency**. However, some of the Parliaments noted that language courses were at the disposal of MPs, irrespective of the Presidency. Among the Member States that acceded to the EU in 2004, the Czech Chamber of Deputies provided the possibility to its MPs to take part in both professional and language courses, and Poland plans to do the same. Among the older Member States the example of Austria merits mention where language courses were offered to MPs. One should add that in many countries the French Embassy or French Institute, offered French courses to those interested, sometimes free of charge.

³ According to current practice the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments is organised once a year pursuant to the decisions of earlier years, the organisation of this conference is not necessarily the responsibility of the country holding the Presidency. This was the case when, for example, Hungary or Denmark hosted the Conference of Speakers in 2005 and 2006, respectively, while Portugal took charge of organising the conference during its Presidency (see budgetary issues).

In relation to the legislative timetable, the Member States almost unanimously reported that the Presidency did not influence significantly legislative work in the Parliament. However, for example the Finnish Eduskunta noted that in this period the Parliament showed more flexibility towards the Government in view of the extra workload in the Council. Moreover, the Italian Chamber of Deputies emphasises that its experience showed that it was impractical to schedule parliamentary Presidency events and plenary sittings on the same day. Special attention should be paid to this aspect on the course of planning.

In the case of countries with bicameral parliaments – with the exception of Slovenia – the parliament claimed that they had not adopted any strategic documents on cooperation between the two chambers during the Presidency but conducted their business as usual. Also, with the exception of one Parliament, they did not establish any special common body for this occasion⁴. It is worth examining the practice of the Netherlands, however, where the two houses established a so-called steering group, headed by the Speakers, for managing Presidency-related tasks. This group was responsible for general coordination as well as implementation. The division of labour was not even due to the fact that the Second Chamber (Tweede Kamer) has more MPs, more staff and more resources.

The sharing of responsibilities between the two chambers – deriving from the democratic structure of different states – varies enormously. For Presidencies, just as in general, one can observe major differences between the Member States in how tasks and responsibilities are divided between the chambers.

- In Austria there is no formal sharing of responsibilities between the two houses;
- In Belgium, the duties were pooled in the joint committee dealing with European affairs;
- In the Czech Republic the political and administrative leaders of the two chambers decided by consensus on how to share the duties;
- In France the tasks were shared based on deals between the administrations, which were later approved at a political level;

⁴ It should be noted, though, that for example in Belgium and Ireland European affairs are generally dealt with jointly by the two houses, therefore their cooperation was natural for the Presidency too.

- In Germany it was primarily the Bundestag that dealt with the preparation and the implementation of the Presidency;
- In Italy the two houses shared the responsibilities of the Presidency evenly;
- In The Netherlands cooperation took the shape of the above-mentioned steering group while generally applied rules on burden sharing continued to apply;
- In Slovenia the National Assembly played an almost exclusive role during the Presidency;
- In the United Kingdom the two chambers acted in close cooperation even though the House of Commons did contribute to the Presidency with more practical and technical support.

It can therefore be concluded that in Member States with bicameral parliaments the sharing of responsibilities was uneven. In many cases, one chamber conducted the Presidency practically alone, while in some other cases the division of labour was rather symbolic. Such variation in the arrangements is natural considering the significant differences in how bicameral legislatures organise their daily work.

The sharing of costs between the two chambers is characterised by similar differences between Member States: in some Parliaments the two chambers share the costs evenly (Belgium, France, Italy), in others one of the chambers bears a bigger chunk of the costs than the other (e.g. German Bundestag or the Slovenian National Assembly). Some bicameral Parliaments operate with a single budget and the Presidency does not change this rule, like in the case of Austria, the Netherlands and Spain. It should be pointed out that some parliaments (for example in Germany or the UK have special financial arrangements for COSAC meetings, the single highest cost during a Presidency).

An analysis of the replies to questions concerning **liaison with the government** reveals that in most of the Member States there are informal links between the government and Parliament when running the Presidency⁵. Nevertheless, this informal liaison seems to be effective and meant close cooperation in the majority of cases. There are some other examples, such as in

⁵ This is not the case in the European Parliament which conducts continuous formal consultation with the Presidency-in-office.

Denmark, where cooperation with the government was based on a formal agreement. Many Member States highlighted that establishing and maintaining informal links between Parliament and government officials was of key importance both in the run-up to and during the Presidency⁶.

In 60% of the respondent Member States governments did not hold preliminary consultations with the national Parliament on **issues of substance related to the Presidency** (eg. Presidency programme and priorities; logo; budget; staff issues). This 60 % includes those cases in which consultations were conducted within the existing structures and not within a special procedure, meaning that a dialogue did take place at some level but not on a regular basis or in a formal manner. However, for example the Belgian Parliament, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Hungarian National Assembly did devote special attention to such consultation. The Italian Chamber of Deputies adopted special parliamentary guidelines for the government concerning the Presidency affairs; the Hungarian National Assembly conducts continuous formal dialogue on issues of substance, resulting in positions adopted by an EU Presidency Working Group established specifically for this purpose⁷.

Most governments (6 out of 10), however, did inform Parliament of their decisions taken on Presidency issues in order to ensure subsequent consensus on the adopted elements of the government strategy. In many cases the government secured the approval of Parliament – not a difficult job for a majority government – through normal structures such as standing Committees rather than through some special procedure.

In their responses to questions concerning **governmental participation at parliamentary events** the Member States unanimously reported that ministers⁸ did attend events organised

⁶ An interesting example of cooperation with the government was the Belgian Presidency of 2001, when the government asked Members of the Belgian Parliament to pay visit in the Member States to explore their views about the future of Europe. The report elaborated by the ‘travelling’ MPs – Report on the Future of Europe – became later formed the backbone of the Laeken Declaration, subsequently on adopted by the Heads of State or Government.

⁷ For more on the Hungarian system, please consult the last part of the report and the annexes.

⁸ In this case, however, the ministers are not – or *rather not* – representing their own Governments but are present at the sectoral committee Presidency meetings as leaders of the respective Council formations, representing the Council of the European Union.

by Parliament. In many Member States (like in the case of Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Slovenia) the relevant cabinet members (who acts at the same time as chairs of the Council formations) participated in all parliamentary Presidency meetings, while in other Member States the government and therefore Council were represented at a significant ratio of such meetings (on average 5 to 10 ministers took part in parliamentary meetings during the course of a Presidency). It is important to underline that besides the government members (ministers) state secretaries and deputy state secretaries attended these meetings as well, thus governmental participation at parliamentary events was quite robust in all cases.

The Prime Minister of the Presidency-in-office participated at least in one parliamentary Presidency event in 70 % of the Member States. This was not the case in Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain (where the premier only attended the social event of the Conference of Foreign Affairs Committee Chairmen). Typically, Prime Ministers attended parliamentary events during COSAC meetings, Joint Parliamentary Meetings held in Brussels, and in some cases the COFACC (Conference of the Foreign Affairs Committee Chairmen).

Our analysis of cooperation with other parliaments and other institutions showed considerable changes in liaison mechanisms over the course of the years. The so-called trio Presidency is now a well-established form of cooperation bringing closer links between Parliaments and increasingly the European Commission.

Responses to the questionnaire show that 40 % of the national parliaments cooperated with other parliaments (earlier with the troika) predominantly through COSAC (although this figure is significantly influenced by the practice of earlier Presidencies). Since the appearance of trio Presidencies the Member States cooperate more closely with each other and this trend can also be witnessed in parliamentary relations. Preparation for a Presidency also urges Parliaments to cooperate more closely and deeply. In many countries this cooperation remains on an informal level, but in some cases (Denmark-Poland; Spain-Belgium-Hungary) they are formalised.

Cooperation with the European Parliament is primarily characterised by administrative level cooperation in the primary phase of Presidency preparations and is mainly confined to the practical aspects of organising Joint Parliamentary and Joint Committee Meetings. In countries where political dialogue between the Parliament and the EP is initiated at an early

stage in the run-up to the Presidency, cooperation remains limited to the same issues (JPMs and JCMs) but mostly at the level of the Speakers.

Concerning **cooperation with the European Commission** it can be concluded that – with the exception of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Dutch Parliament – **at least one member of the European Commission participated at a parliamentary Presidency event in all Member States**. These were typically visits of Commissioners (on average 2 to 4 Commissioners taking part in parliamentary meetings during the six months) but in some cases the President of the European Commission himself attended some of the parliamentary meetings, events (like in the case of France, Germany or Portugal).

Most national parliaments (in 72% of the respondent countries) **liaised with the Representation of the European Commission and the European Parliament's Office in their capital** mostly contacting them concerning the visits of Commissioners or requests for information materials.

The majority (66 %) of Parliaments did not maintain closer-than-usual **relations with MEPs**. One third of the responses indicated that the intensity of relations grew, though in many cases there was no formal sign for this, only informal contacts became more frequent. Many Member States pointed out that MEPs were effective channels of communication towards the administration and the decision-making bodies of the European Parliament. In addition, some Parliaments noted that their MEPs frequently took part in parliamentary Presidency events, often as key-note speakers.

SUMMARY OF POLITICAL ISSUES

The parliamentary dimension of a country's EU Presidency is the participation of the key democratic institution in the implementation of the Presidency tasks. Even though the work and duties of parliaments in this respect are different from those of the government, the two can complement and reinforce each other thereby representing the country's Presidency priorities more coherently. In order to contribute effectively to running a Presidency, Parliaments must prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. The political burden of this preparation rests primarily on the shoulders of Members of Parliament. If the preparation is

conducted on the basis of clear objectives and a well-defined methodology, Parliament officials can support the work of MPs effectively. Parliaments traditionally possess considerable experience and expertise in organising international events but conducting an EU Presidency requires a more harmonised and more complex approach.

Conclusions

Parliaments generally start their preparation for the Presidency roughly 18 months in advance. In some cases parliamentary preparatory work also entails a broader context: monitoring and constructively contributing to governmental preparations. This can extend the role and boost the influence of parliaments both on a national level and indirectly in European decision-making too. Due to the nature and the significance of an EU Presidency, Parliaments usually monitor Presidency preparations on a political level, often giving this work more weight by establishing a special ad hoc forum. In some cases the preparation is underpinned by the adoption of strategic documents or agreements between political parties, although this is not yet a widely adopted practice. The Speakers themselves play a key role in Presidency preparations; they can facilitate discussion and foster agreements with EU institutions or other national Parliaments. In addition, their presence at parliamentary events of the Presidency is crucial. During the course of the Presidency usually a core group of MPs are participating with coordinative and substantial role in the Parliament's work. Their number is averaging between 15 and 20.

In the case of bicameral parliaments cooperation between the two houses concerning the Presidency is conducted within the regular framework and yields a varying degree of division of labour (and costs) depending on national specificities of the democratic order.

The presence of a minister (also representing the Council during these six months) can underscore the importance of a parliamentary event, and obviously this is even more so for the Prime Minister or a Commissioner. Experience and an analysis of current trends clearly shows that both governments and the European Commission take parliamentary Presidency events increasingly seriously and now consider their regular presence at these meetings a duty.

Ties between national Parliaments and the European Parliament have become closer and more balanced in the last decade as is demonstrated not only by the regular Conferences of Speakers and the growing number of bilateral meetings. But also by the Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings, which are becoming an important forum of European policy debates.

National Parliaments may want to devote particular attention to certain political issues during the preparation of an EU Presidency. The special political forum already established in some parliaments can contribute to more effective preparations within the Parliament as well as the government. Close cooperation with the government and parliamentary scrutiny of government preparations appears to be a good approach as it can reinforce the role of national Parliaments and – in line with the aspirations of the Lisbon Treaty – thereby enable national Parliaments to have more say in European decision-making.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

With our questions on practical issues we aimed to explore the practicalities of Presidency preparations, indeed a complex task falling outside the daily routine of Parliaments. Moreover, we aimed to highlight where parliaments follow similar practices and where they differ from each other. This part first examines organisational issues, then questions related to staff, followed by practical cooperation with the European Parliament, the costs of holding a Presidency, public procurements that might be necessary, the communication of the Presidency and ancillary issues that do not fit into the other parts.

When talking about the practicalities of running a Presidency, the first and most important issue to be considered is **the number of parliamentary events organised during the six months of the Presidency**. The replies to this question showed considerable differences between Member State practices. This is probably due to the fact that some Parliaments counted joint events organized in the European Parliament as Presidency events, while some others did not count them directly. Some Parliaments also included certain bilateral or trilateral events in the total figure, while others used a narrow definition of only committee meetings held in the national capital. With these provisions, the number of parliamentary

events varied between three (Luxemburg) and 20 (Denmark). On average a national Parliament holds around ten meetings during the six-month Presidency (including JPMs but excluding JCMs).

These are typically:

- COSAC (Conference of the committees dealing with European affairs) and the COSAC Presidency meeting
- COFACC (Conference of Chairmen of Foreign Affairs Committees)
- Meeting of committees dealing with justice and home affairs
- Meeting of defence committees
- Meeting of agricultural committees

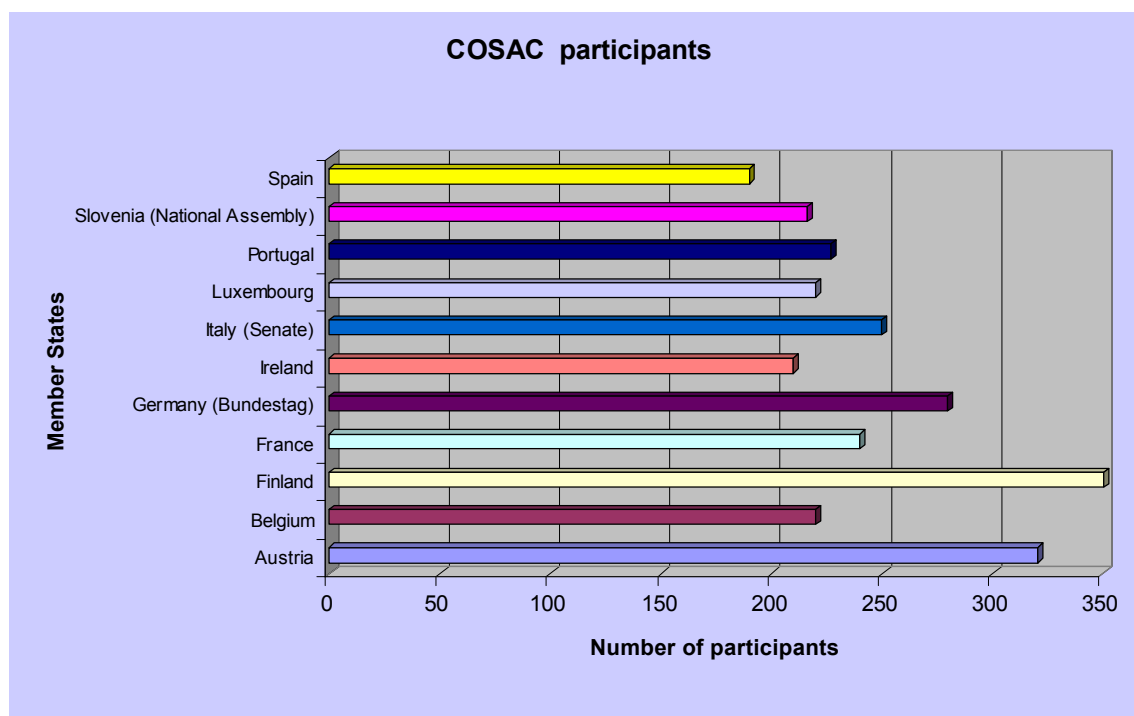
In addition to the above, in the last few years committee meetings of the parliamentary presidencies have focused on a number of other issues, such as:

- Budgetary and financial affairs
- Environmental issues
- International development
- Energy
- Cultural affairs
- Education, research and science
- Equal opportunities

According to the now standard practice an average of two Joint Parliamentary Meetings and a number of other Joint Committee Meetings take place in the European Parliament during each Presidency. The focus of these meetings is partly determined by the practice followed by the MSs in recent years (eg. JPM dealing with the Lisbon Strategy), but the Presidency does have some room for manoeuvre to set the agenda in agreement with the European Parliament (eg. the JPM on the Western Balkans during the Slovenian Presidency).

Giving exact or even approximate figures for **the number of participants at parliamentary Presidency events** seems like an impossible task. The number of participants at COSAC meeting during the various presidencies varied between 190 and 350, while other committee

meetings were attended by a much lower number of participants, between 45 and 150. Statistically, roughly half of the participants were Members of Parliament and the other half staff.



	Participants at other committee meetings
Austria	50-110
Belgium	100
Finland	80-150
Germany (Bundestag)	80-120
France	50-140
Ireland	60
Italy (Chamber of Deputies)	60
Italy (Senate)	90-130
Luxembourg	90-110
Portugal	60-80
Slovenia (National Assembly)	50-110
Spain	45-70

One of the first and most important decisions that Parliaments should make during their Presidency preparations **is which sectoral committees they want to hold meetings of during the Presidency semester**. These decisions are taken by the Member States at very different times: some take the decision around half a year before the Presidency begins while Finland, for example, decided more than two years before the actual start of its Presidency. **On average national Parliaments announce planned Committee meetings around 10-11 months before assuming the Presidency.**

There are no universally accepted rules on **how to plan the dates of parliamentary Presidency events**. However, Member States tend to observe the same principles as highlighted in their replies to the questionnaire:

- The meetings should spread over the whole semester to avoid a meeting overload;
- It is a good idea to schedule parliamentary meetings for the days before a major European event (eg. European Council); an opportune time for committee meetings is just before the meeting of the council formation dealing with the same issue;
- Holding meetings on national days should be avoided if possible;
- The provisional government timetable, the calendar of Parliament and the calendar of the European Parliament should be consulted before choosing the dates of the meetings;
- It is expedient to avoid any clashes with other government Presidency events.

The calendar of parliamentary Presidency events is generally informally debated with the government. The exact dates of meetings are usually set around one year before the Presidency kicks off. However, there are examples of Parliaments deciding on the dates at a considerably earlier point (like Finland, which took the decision 24-27 months before its Presidency) or as late as as three months before the launch of the Presidency events (as was the case with Italy). It should be noted, though, that Parliaments do not necessarily publish the calendar as soon as it is finalised. Once again, the practice of when a national Parliament communicates its Presidency calendar to its counterparts varies from one country to the other despite repeated calls at interparliamentary meetings to announce the dates in due time as it

improves predictability and increases the probability of MPs participating in higher numbers.

National Parliaments start **substantive preparations of the Presidency meetings** an average 8 to 9 months before their Presidency begins. Some start earlier (eg. Austria – two years before the Presidency), while others wait until 3 months before the Presidency (eg. Luxemburg or Spain).

Parliaments follow different practices on **whether to set up a coordinating central body** assisting the running of the Presidency within Parliament. Almost half of them claimed that they managed without such a body, while the other half opted to set one up. Even among those who did establish such an organisational body, practices varied greatly. In some countries a special group was established to deal with coordination (Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, The Netherlands, Slovenia⁹, Hungary and Poland is likely to do so too), while in Spain, for instance, one legal counsellor alone was responsible for Presidency coordination albeit with the help of one additional official.

There are different practices in Member State Parliaments as to which bodies are mostly involved in the preparation of the Presidency period. Replies indicate that arrangements are truly country-specific, as demonstrated by the table below.

⁹ Among the special bodies established to coordinate within the Parliaments, the Slovenian National Assembly's so-called Project Group should be highlighted. The members of the Project Group were appointed by the Secretary General in April 2006; the aim of this Group was to deal with all the Presidency-related issues and tasks centrally, including the organisation of the meetings themselves and coordination with the government. This group prepared background materials to the Committees (excluding the specific professional policy issues) and to the Presidency of the Parliament. The Group was responsible for the setting up of the parliamentary calendar, for liaising with the European Parliament at administrative level as well as for all technical and logistical issues.

Austria	President, Conference of Presidents and Committee Chairpersons
Belgium	The FACEA and the Protocol Departments
Denmark	European Affairs Committee
Finland	No specific
France	Presidents and Bureaus of the National Assembly and the Senate
German Bundestag	The President and his deputies, the Presidium, the Council of Elders and the Committees concerned
Ireland	The Joint Committee on European Affairs plus the planning team and the committee secretariat
Italian Chamber of Deputies	The Speaker's office and the committees involved
Italian Senate	The committees involved
Luxemburg	Foreign Affairs Directorate
The Netherlands	The steering group and the organizing committee for each conference
Portugal	The Speaker's office and the committees involved, Secretary General's office, etc.
Slovenian National Assembly	Council of the President, Committee on European Affairs, etc.
Spain	The Bureaus and the International Relations Directorates
United Kingdom	The Speaker

The majority of Parliaments did not adopt any specific **timetable defining deadlines for accomplishing the different tasks related to preparing the Presidency**. Altogether five parliaments adopted such a document but even these mostly concentrated on the organisational aspects of the meetings during the Presidency period.

Among the **cultural/social programmes** organised in connection with the Presidency meetings the following types of events were typical:

- Visits to exhibitions
- Dinners in historical venues
- Music and dance performances (generally traditional or

classical)

- Other venues reflecting particular aspects of national culture (eg. Irish Presidency - Guinness Museum)

While Presidencies naturally try to show their countries to guests, some Member States pointed out the need to keep the balance between the cultural and professional aspects of the programme and avoid excessive cultural programmes. Member States' opinions differed on the extent to which national identity should influence professional and cultural programmes. The general view seems to be that the agenda should not be dominated by items of national interest. Nonetheless, national Parliaments have a certain degree of discretion in picking the Committees to meet, can thereby somewhat shape the agenda to their liking and thus influence the character of their Presidency (see the French initiative for a meeting of the Committees dealing with equal opportunities). All in all, though, it is the cultural/social events where national characters can be brought more to the frontline.

Less than 30 percent of respondent Member States (Austria, the Czech Republic, France, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom) fully or partially outsourced **the organisation of events to external specialist firms**; the big majority solved this in-house. For interpretation, however, Parliaments needed to rely on outside sources, since at COSAC meetings it is obligatory to provide interpretation to all EU languages¹⁰. For meetings other than COSAC the most Parliaments provided interpretation into English and French and a limited number of interpretation booths for delegations wishing to bring their own interpreters. As far as other languages are concerned, the language of the host country, occasionally German, and rarely Italian and Spanish featured as languages interpreted¹¹. Parliaments generally contracted interpreters early in order to ensure their availability.

¹⁰ This is not only problematic from the point of view of costs (since both the interpreters and the technical facilities [booths] entail considerable additional expenses) but also because this requirement often makes it impossible for Parliaments to hold meetings on Parliament premises.

¹¹ An example of cost-saving is the solution applied at the Conference of Speakers. This language regime was adopted in 2005 in Budapest and it helps the host Parliament in the organisation of interpretation without having to foot the full bill of interpretation while providing a rational solution for interpretation acceptable to everybody. It also ensures that every Speaker can address their counterparts in their mother tongue. (This language regime also stipulates the rules for the division of costs and Member State commitments).

Mostly because of the high number of participants arriving to the COSAC meeting (generally around 250) and also due to the difficulty of placing all interpretation booths in the same meeting room, many Parliaments also used **outside venues** (such as conference centres, music halls) **for holding Presidency meetings**. Parliaments are divided evenly on the issue of venues, half of them hosted all meetings in their own building and the other half used outside venues as well. (Cultural side events were naturally held outside Parliament buildings in almost all of the cases.)

Concerning **hotel bookings** the general conclusion is that once the exact dates of meetings are decided Parliaments should place group-bookings in hotels to secure enough rooms for the participants. On average hotel rooms were booked nine months before the Presidency.

Parliaments – except for some rare cases – did not provide **VIP treatment and lounges** at the airport to arriving and departing delegations. Exceptions included the visits of Commissioners and Speakers of national Parliaments, in which case the host Parliament bore the costs of the VIP lounges.

Regarding **security services**, the practice of national Parliaments shows a uniform picture: all Parliaments applied their general security rules.

Concerning **transportation**, the Member States basically followed a similar pattern: the host organised transfer between hotels and the venues of meetings as well as between hotels and the venues of social events. This usually meant buses because of the high number of persons to be transferred. On the other hand the national delegations had to organise their own airport transfers occasionally with the help of their embassies.

The number of Parliament staff directly involved in preparing and running the Presidency varied enormously from one Member State to the other. While Austria, Finland and the UK reported three officials, in Portugal the group preparing the Presidency consisted of a staff of 20. On average around seven Parliament officials were directly responsible for the central coordination of a Presidency; of course the number of staff indirectly involved was higher. In terms of indirect involvement Portugal leads the way again with roughly a hundred officials. For other national Parliaments this figure averaged around 30 with variations from 12 to 50. This extended circle in all cases included the secretariats of the concerned

Committees. These secretariats were involved in one way or another in the preparation and managing of a sectoral Committee meeting. However, according to the responses we have received, the lion's share of the work was done by EU departments, international relations departments and the secretariats of the Committees dealing with European affairs.

Parliament staff dealing with the Presidency were part of the **central national Presidency team** only in Denmark and partly in Germany. In the other Member States they formed a completely separate team from the central Presidency staff. Nonetheless, in some countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France and the UK) some of the Presidency trainings organized by the government were partly open to the parliamentary Presidency staff.

Staff involved in managing Presidencies in national Parliaments generally did not receive any **special bonuses**. However, they were compensated for the extra hours, of which typically there were many during the Presidency period for those in charge of central coordination. The Parliaments of Austria, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain on the other hand did award extra bonuses to members of the Presidency team.

For the period of the Presidency many parliaments employed **extra staff** to be able to cope with the additional workload. They were often trainees or at most temporary staff with fixed-term contracts. They usually joined Parliament right at the beginning of the Presidency or occasionally a few months before and their contracts generally ran until the end of the Presidency. The biggest number of extra staff was hired by the Austrian Parliament, which had employed six people six months before the Presidency. A number of Parliaments (eg. The Italian Chamber of Deputies, the German Bundestag or the two houses of the French Parliament) addressed the extra workload with in-house redeployments. Only Slovenia and Denmark resorted to using student helpers and mostly for logistical tasks.

The decisive majority of the parliaments (over 80 percent) did not organize any special **trainings for staff directly involved in Presidency-related tasks**; who were left to rely on the experiences that they gained when participating at similar events of preceding Presidencies. Some Parliaments, however, were in close cooperation with their counterparts on EU Presidency issues, such as in the case of the Czech Parliament's two houses, which cooperated with the French Parliament, the Slovene Parliament and the European Parliament. Likewise, France cooperated with Portugal and Slovenia; Slovenia with Finland and Austria;

Hungary with Slovenia, Poland and – within the framework of the trio – with Belgium and Spain.

In the European Parliament the duties related to the parliamentary aspect of EU presidencies are performed by Directorate D (Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments) in the Directorate-General for the Presidency. In recent years the European Parliament has established a practice of providing assistance to Parliaments of incoming Presidencies. For this end they have elaborated programmes that aim to strengthen the administrative capacities of Parliaments in the run-up to their Presidency.

Concerning the preparation for Joint Parliamentary and Committee Meetings (JPMs and JCMs), national Parliaments contacted the European Parliament an average 6 to 12 months before the start of the Presidency. Based on the replies we have received from the national Parliaments it transpires that the Speaker(s) of the national Parliament and the President of the European Parliament almost always decide on the agenda of joint meetings together. The responses show that in some cases the preparation of decisions was somewhat cumbersome on the EP side (due to its unwieldy and bureaucratic procedures), but once the decisions were taken most events proved to be a success. Apart from consulting the European Parliament, national Parliaments do not as a habit discuss with each other the agenda of meetings they plan to organise, although on some occasions they inform each other after the decisions are taken in the framework of various interparliamentary forums (eg. meeting of liaison officers).

Although national Parliaments tend to offload the task of liaising with the European Parliament onto **their permanent representation to the EU in Brussels**, direct links of communication between the European Parliament and national Parliaments in the capitals remain very much operational. On the administrative level Parliaments holding the Presidency usually maintained active relations with the European Parliament. An example of this is that before JPMs take place colleagues responsible for JPMs visit the European Parliament in Brussels. All general costs of the JPMs and JCMs are taken by the European Parliament in all cases.

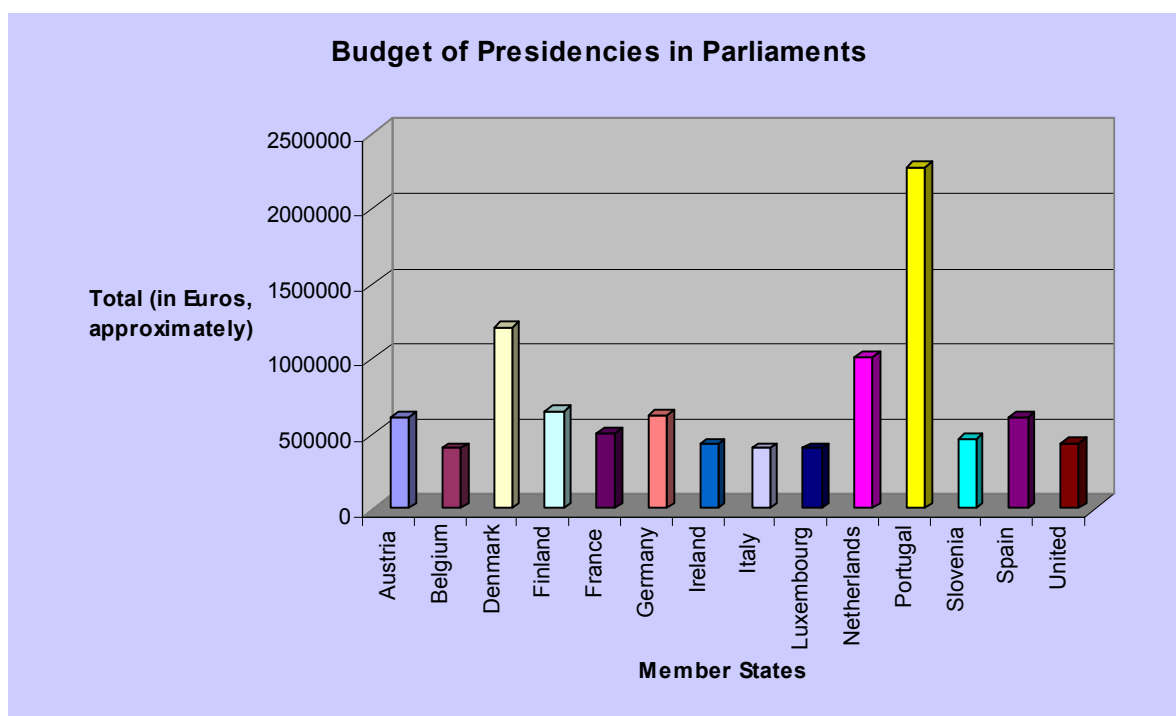
Some parliaments recruited extra personnel for the Presidency period in their Brussels permanent offices. In some cases new staff was delegated to the COSAC Secretariat which saw its workload increase considerably. In some cases staff shortages were solved by the use

of parliamentary trainees. The permanent parliamentary representations in Brussels did not receive additional funding for the Presidency period.

As far as the practice of the European Parliament is concerned, its officials usually contact the national Parliaments of incoming Presidencies six months before the kick-off date and as the Presidency approaches these contacts become more and more intensive in the form of bilateral meetings between the EP and the national Parliament (mostly held in Brussels).

Concerning **the expenditure of a Presidency Parliament**, there are large differences between the Member States. The Presidency budget of a Parliaments depends largely on the ambitions of the Parliament, on the kind of Presidency they want to implement (the same way as in the case of governments but on a smaller scale), what extra costs they are ready to bear (for instance, the costs of cultural events can vary enormously and meetings held outside the capital city can also entail considerable costs)¹². Parliaments tend to overestimate their Presidency expenditure, thus putting more than enough money in reserve. The Dutch Parliament, for example, had a preliminary cost estimate of 1.5 million euros, while in the end its total spending did not exceed 1 million. These excessive budgetary estimates are mostly down to the fact that it is very difficult to predict the number of participants in advance.

¹² It should be noted that the unusually high spending of Portuguese Parliament was partly due to the fact that the Conference of Speakers and the meeting of senior parliamentary officials (preparing the Conference) were also hosted by the Portuguese Parliament during the six months of the Presidency itself.



The **single biggest budget item** is – almost without exception – interpretation. Other major items include transport, technical equipment, gifts and catering.

Most costs generally occur during the six months when the Presidency actually takes place, therefore Parliaments do not earmark funding for preparations in the year(s) before the Presidency. Parliaments unanimously claimed that their costs of the Presidency were included in Parliament's general annual budget, completely separate from the government's national Presidency budget. It is worth mentioning, however, that in many cases Parliaments were able to use the government's logistical resources (in some cases free of charge) and in some countries the government's protocol gifts were used by the Parliament too.

It is interesting to note that the European Parliament does not have a separate budget line for rotating Presidency-related activities, such expenditure comes from the budget line allocated to relations with national parliaments (from which JPMs and JCMs are also financed). The biggest cost is interpretation even in the case of the European Parliament, since at Joint Parliamentary Meetings held in EP premises interpretation is provided into almost all official languages of the EU.

Regarding **public procurements**, most Parliaments informed us that they had not needed to publish EU-wide calls for tenders, they only ran national tenders if at all. The scope of tenders typically included interpretation, transportation and catering. The calls for tenders were usually published one year in advance of the start of the Presidency. However, for instance in the case of the Finnish Presidency, the Finnish Parliament (Eduskunta) had to run an EU-wide public procurement due to the high interpretation costs. This call for tenders was published around two years before the Presidency took place.

Member State practices vary slightly in the field of **communication by national Parliaments during a Presidency**, but there is at least one common denominator: Parliaments organising their communication independently from that of the government. Parliaments mostly used their own, existing resources, press offices and did not hire PR or communication agencies. An interesting exception was the case of the Danish Presidency, when the press and embassies were informed of parliamentary events via government structures, while informing the public fell under the responsibility of Parliament, the Folketing itself. Another good example of cooperation with the government in the area communication is the Czech Republic, where the government incorporated the most important parliamentary events into its general EU Presidency calendar. This initiative might provide a good model to follow for the future: one can see the topics and levels of Presidency meetings more clearly this way and it also makes it easier to communicate parliamentary events to the public and the press, neither of which is an easy task. Media relations should definitely be strengthened for the period of the Presidency. One example comes from the German Bundestag, whose press office expanded its press list before the Presidency and during the Presidency itself they proactively emphasized EU affairs in their general press relations (not only on specifically EU-related occasions). Even though most Parliaments do not elaborate a separate media strategy for these six months (there are, of course, exceptions), they do try to attract the attention of the press with press briefings, press packages and other materials. The majority of Parliaments were not completely satisfied with the press coverage of their events but many indicated that this is a general problem for them.

In an attempt to inform the public better, most Parliaments set up a Presidency page on their existing website, but one had a completely new, dedicated homepage. On-line registration for meetings was not used as widely: only Finland, Germany and Italy gave participants the choice of registering for meetings through a web interface, but their feedbacks were absolutely positive. Not one Parliament felt the need for special software to run its

Presidency. Materials relating to the Presidency and the various meetings (agendas, lists of participants, practical details, etc.) were made available to participants both in electronic and printed form. Parliaments used all sorts of information material to raise awareness of their activities and Presidency meetings. In half of the concerned countries these publications were prepared specifically for the Presidency, while in the other half they recycled existing publications (maybe updating and editing them).

Parliaments do not as a rule consult **NGOs** about their Presidency plans (one exception is Finland where the Parliament contacted relevant NGOs, which then contributed with their valuable expertise to specific policy issues). The involvement of **Parliamentary research services** in a Presidency is also generally rather limited. Few Parliaments used their research facilities for this specific purpose and those who did requested only policy materials for the sectoral committee meetings to distribute to MPs as background material.

Conclusions

A Presidency means many practical challenges to Parliaments. A smooth running of a Presidency requires precise and thorough preparation, and hence the coordination of many different small details. In order to be able to focus on substantive discussions and real policy debates, meetings must be well prepared. Therefore it is crucial that we share best practices with each other, because – unlike for political issues where national specificities can make a big difference – for practical issues there are universally applicable solutions to problems that all Parliaments must face.

It is worth noting that irrespective of the model of coordination a Parliament chooses it is practical to set up an organ/body both on political and on administrative level, to coordinate work. The key task is to define the number and focus of parliamentary events and then establish a cost estimate for these events. The latter is by no means an easy task since the number of participants is almost impossible to predict precisely and might vary from one semester to the other or even from one meeting to the next.

Over the years Parliaments have elaborated a set of pragmatic considerations for the selection

of meetings. It is important that meetings are evenly spread over the six months to avoid concentration. It is advisable to schedule Parliamentary meetings for the days before some big European event (eg. European Council) and Committee meetings for just before the meeting of the relevant Council formation. Holding meetings on national holidays should be avoided if possible. The provisional government timetable, the calendar of Parliament itself and the calendar of the European Parliament should be consulted before choosing the dates of meetings and clashes with major government Presidency events in the capital should also be avoided.

The most challenging tasks that Parliaments face is the organisation of the COSAC, which puts the biggest strain on any Parliaments not only financially but also in terms of logistics. COSAC meetings are often physically impossible to hold within the Parliament buildings due to the need for interpretation into all EU languages (which requires a great number of interpretation booths) and the high number of participants (on average double of that of the biggest sectoral Committee meeting).

One of the key tasks of preparing for a Presidency is to select those who will be in charge of coordination and to train them. This team has to tackle many difficulties from hotel bookings through organising interpretation down to small details such as when to distribute gifts. Previous experience demonstrates that if due diligence is exercised, hotel rooms and interpretation do not become a cause for headaches, but in both cases it is indispensable that steps are taken well in advance to book the proper services. Another task is organising transport for participants; luckily there is a well-established practice among the Parliaments of the Member States.

The organisation of interpretation is a huge task for Parliaments since at COSAC meetings interpretation into all official EU languages is required. According to standard practice, for non-COSAC meetings interpretation into English and French are provided as well as a limited number of interpretation booths for delegations wishing to bring their own interpreters with them. A good model for the future can be the language regime applied at the Conference of Speakers.

Parliaments do not always have the human resources necessary to perform all Presidency-related duties, therefore the liaison role of their permanent offices in Brussels play a crucial

role during the Presidency period. In some cases additional staff or trainees need to be hired, but their recruitment must be justified and preferably cover the six months of the Presidency.

The planning of Presidency expenditure is another important and difficult job. Member States with previous experience can provide useful help to the unpractised parliaments in this area.

We can safely say that Parliaments have always paid particular attention to the issue of communication through their press relations and Presidency homepages, but as some Parliaments indicated difficulties in this field, in the future even more attention should be devoted to how to communicate parliamentary Presidencies and how to communicate the work of Parliaments in general.

The conclusion we can draw for practical issues is that it is always a good idea to have a central coordination team of carefully selected officials to ensure an oversight of implementation.

OTHER REMARKS

The Parliaments of many Member States have contributed with their valuable feedback to the preparation of this report, including some – like Hungary – where Presidency preparations are only in an initial phase. Two of these countries merit a special mention: Poland and Lithuania. Poland will hold the Presidency in the second half of 2011, while Lithuania will do so only in the second half of 2013. It is, therefore, remarkable that both countries are already well advanced in the preparation for their Presidency. In both of these two countries the centre of preparatory work is the secretariat of the Committee dealing with European affairs. They have taken important steps not only in internal strategic planning but also in establishing contacts with external partners, which can make it considerably easier for them to learn from the mistakes and successes of others in order to conduct a successful Presidency. In addition to cooperation with national Parliaments and EU institutions, the Lithuanian Government has requested the assistance of the European Commission's TAIEX office. TAIEX organises seminars on how to prepare for a Presidency, and Lithuanian Parliament officials have been able to take part in these seminars.

PREPARATION OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE EU PRESIDENCY IN 2011

The most important aspects of the preparation by a Parliament for a Presidency are outlined in this report, based on the information received from the national Parliaments and the European Parliament. Below we wish to present the preparation of the Hungarian National Assembly for the Hungarian Presidency in the first half of 2011.

The Hungarian EU Presidency in the first half of 2011 entails special responsibilities for the Hungarian National Assembly. Current tasks related to preparation can be divided into four groups:

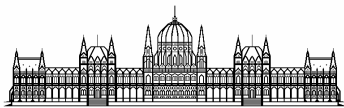
- The work of the five-party EU Presidency Working Group
- The coordination of Parliament's own preparation
- Cooperation among the parliaments of the Spain-Belgium-Hungary trio
- Preparation and presentation of this analytical report to the Conference of Speakers on 27-28 February, 2009 in Paris

The five parliamentary political groups of the Hungarian National Assembly agreed on 21st February 2008 to establish the so-called EU Presidency Working Group. The duty of the Working Group that consists of the representatives of the political groups is to monitor the most important tasks that lie ahead in Hungary in relation to the Hungarian EU Presidency in 2011 and moreover to serve as a forum for the conciliation of these issues between the parliamentary political groups and also between the Parliament and the government. According to the rules of procedure of the Working Group it can adopt consensual positions in the following fields: defining the priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency; image of the Hungarian EU Presidency; and institutional-staff related issues in relation with the Presidency. Moreover, the Working Group is holding consultations on further matters such as the internal national and international communication of the Presidency; budget of the Presidency; planning of the events to be held in Hungary on the course of the Presidency. (Please consult the annexes for the rules of procedure and one of the adopted positions of the Working Group.)

The internal preparation of the Hungarian National Assembly falls within the responsibility of the EU Presidency Coordination Group, which is lead by the Head of the Office for Foreign Relation and the operational work of the Group is ensured by the EU Department of the Office for Foreign Relations. The conception regarding the performing of the Presidency within the Parliament is to be ready by the summer of 2009. During 2008 bilateral meetings were hold with the officials of the Slovenian Parliament that already performed a successful EU Presidency and moreover with the relevant officials of the Polish Parliament, who are in the same phase of preparations as the Hungarian National Assembly is.

A declaration was signed on 5th November 2008 by the Speakers of the trio Parliaments of Spain-Belgium-Hungary on the cooperation between the Parliaments concerning the Presidency. This cooperation consists of different levels: political level (including close cooperation on the level of Speakers) and level of officials (see annex).

THE QUESTIONNAIRE WHICH SERVED AS THE BASIS FOR THE
PREPARATION OF THE REPORT



HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
Office for Foreign Relations

QUESTIONNAIRE ON PRACTICES OF PARLIAMENTS
CONCERNING EU PRESIDENCIES

Introduction

While EU national parliaments exchange best practices in many fields, the issue of the parliamentary dimension of the preparation and the management/implementation of the EU Presidency has not been explored in detail so far. For governments a ‘Presidency Handbook’ is available, and also the General Secretariat of the Council supports their activities and give them a helping hand, while us, Parliaments may stay without the real knowledge that was gathered by previous parliaments that went through the Presidency.

This topic is therefore highly actual. Having regard to the positive reactions from Member States both at the Meeting of the Secretaries General and at the Conference of Speakers in Lisbon, the Office for Foreign Relations of the Hungarian National Assembly would like to kindly ask you to fill out this questionnaire and send it back to the following e-mail address possibly **not later than 12th December, 2008**:

eu-pres@parlament.hu

Contact persons on this matter:

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The answers to the questionnaire will be summarized in a report and will be presented by Dr. Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly to the Conference of Speakers in February, 2009.

Miscellaneous

- In case your country has not held EU Presidency yet, we would still very much appreciate your ideas on how you plan to organize the issues mentioned below or in general on your approach to the parliamentary dimension of the EU Presidency.
- Concerning the European Parliament it is clear that different approach is applied than in national parliaments. Still, we would be very much interested in receiving information from the European Parliament on its practices and its cooperation in general with national parliaments on EU Presidency issues.
- Should you have any statistics – besides information requested in the questionnaire - about the parliamentary dimension of the EU Presidency, it would be more than welcome.
- If you have any other additional questions, comments or information that might be useful in this matter, please be so kind to share it with us.

PART I
POLITICAL ISSUES

1. Has your country already held the EU Presidency? If yes, when?
2. Was your Parliament/Chamber involved in the preparation of the country's EU Presidency? To which extent/in which form?
3. How much in advance did your Parliament start the preparation for the Presidency?

Inside the Parliament/Chamber

4. Were there any political bodies in your Parliament/Chamber for the purpose of discussing the preparation of the country to the EU Presidency?
5. Were there any political bodies in your Parliament/Chamber for the purpose of discussing the parliamentary preparation?
6. Did your Parliament/Chamber adopt any strategic paper on the preparation and execution of the Parliamentary Presidency? If yes, was it by any means approved at a political level?
7. Was the political level involved in the preparation of your Parliament? In which form?
8. Did the factions of your Parliament agree on any political declaration or document concerning the Presidency in general or in concrete issues (as for example the objectives etc.)?
9. Did your Speaker/President play any role in the preparation? If yes, which role?
10. How many meetings did your Speaker/President participated at during the Presidency

in relation to that (e.g. COSAC or all committee meetings)?

11. How many MPs were involved in the work related to the implementation of the Presidency?
12. Did you have any training (professional or language) for your MPs?
13. Did you introduce a change in the legislative work during the Presidency period? If yes, in which form?

Cooperation with the other chamber (if applicable)

14. Did your Parliament adopt any strategic paper on the special cooperation for the Presidency between the Chambers?
15. Did you set up a common coordinating body for the Presidency?
16. How did you decide on the division of tasks between the Chambers?
17. How did you decide on the division of budget between the Chambers?

Cooperation with the Government

18. How close was the cooperation with the Government concerning the EU Presidency?
Did it take any formal or informal institutionalized form?
19. Did you negotiate with the Government on substantial issues as regards to the country's preparation to the EU Presidency? (e.g. shaping the Presidency programme and priorities, logo, budget, staff issues)
20. Did the Government involve the Parliament in order to ensure (consensual) political support for the most important issues of the Presidency?
21. How many ministers (or deputy ministers/state secretaries) participated at parliamentary Presidency meetings?

22. Did the Prime Minister or President of the Republic participate at parliamentary Presidency meeting? If yes, which meetings did s/he attend?

Cooperation with others

23. Did you cooperate with the troika or trio countries' parliaments? If yes, was it a formal or ad hoc practical cooperation?

24. Did you have any special cooperation with the European Parliament at political level as well, or only at officials' level?

25. Did Council and European Commission representatives (commissioners or other high ranking officials) attend parliamentary Presidency meetings?

26. Did you cooperate with the European Commission Representation and the Information Office of the European Parliament before and during the Presidency?

27. Did you have any special or strengthened cooperation with your MEPs during the Presidency period?

PART II PRACTICAL ISSUES

Organization

1. How many parliamentary events took place during your Presidencies?

2. How many and what kind of parliamentary committee meetings were organized in the framework of the Presidency semester?

3. How many people participated at the various parliamentary meetings? How many of them were MPs and officials?

4. When did you decide on the type of committee meetings to be held during the

Presidency?

5. Did you have any special consideration when choosing the date for the parliamentary events?
6. When did you prepare the calendar of events for the parliamentary meetings? Did you conciliate with the government offices?
7. How much in advance did you start the substantial preparation of the meetings?
8. Did you have any special or ad hoc bodies for the internal organization of the parliamentary Presidency events?
9. What were the most important organs of the Parliament/Chamber that were involved in the Presidency?
10. How often did you cooperate with the government offices and in which fields respectively?
11. Did you have any timetable of activities adopted by the Parliament/Chamber concerning the preparation of the Presidency?
12. What kind of cultural programmes were organized during the meetings, if any?
13. How much – do you think – national particularities (cultural, political, etc.) can influence the programmes?
14. Did you hire an event organisation agency to perform the organisational tasks related to the parliamentary meetings? If yes, was this discussed with the government?
15. How was the interpretation organized during the meetings? How many languages did you use?
16. Did you hold all your meetings in the parliamentary premises or were there other places as well?
17. Was there any concern when thinking about the hotel booking? Did you conciliate this issue with government offices?

18. How long in advance did you make the block reservation in the hotels used for the Presidency meetings?
19. Did you ensure VIP lounge at the airport for the participants of the parliamentary meetings?
20. Did EU Presidencies general rules on security issues were applied to parliaments? Who was in charge of security of delegations to parliamentary events?
21. Did you provide any transportation to any participants? Did you have to count with extra transport costs?

Staff

22. How many colleagues were involved in the central coordination of the Presidency within the Parliament? Where and on what level did this coordination happen?
23. How many colleagues were involved all in all in the Presidency at the Parliament/Chamber?
24. Were the tasks mainly supported by the administrative unit on EU affairs/Foreign Relations or the staff of the Committees' Secretariat?
25. Was the parliamentary staff dealing with the Presidency part of the overall 'Presidency staff' of the country?
26. Was the parliamentary staff involved in trainings provided by the Government in the preparation phase?
27. Did the people who participated in the Presidency work receive any additional benefit than their usual salaries?
28. If you hired extra persons for the Presidency, when did you do so and on the basis of what kind of contract?
29. Did you hire (university or other) students to assist in the implementation of the

Presidency programme in the Parliament?

30. Did your staff have trainings in other parliaments to be more practiced in dealing with the EU Presidency?

European Parliament

31. When did you start the discussions with the European Parliament on Presidency issues (e.g. which JPMs, JCMs should be organized)?
32. Who decided finally on the issues to be dealt with during the JPMs/JCMs?
33. Was there any coordination on these issues with the other Parliaments of the trio/troika?
34. How did you cooperate with the European Parliament? Was it mainly the task of the permanent representative or rather dealt with by the Parliament?
35. How did you divide the costs of the JPMs with the European Parliament?
36. How often did civil servants participate at meetings in Brussels for coordination issues?
37. Was there any new staff hired to assist your representative in Brussels?
38. Did your representative have a specific budget for activities related to the Presidency?

Budget

39. How much was the overall budget of your Parliament/Chamber for the Presidency?
40. How was it divided between different types of costs? (e.g. transportation, interpretation, presents, etc.)
41. Were there any special budgetary lines in the budget of the Parliament/Chamber for preparation also in the previous years before the Presidency?

42. Did the parliamentary budget form part of the overall EU Presidency budget of the country or was it dealt with separately?

Public procurement

43. Did you have to publish EU-level public procurement tenders or simply national ones?
44. Which were the subjects that had to run through public procurements (e.g. logistics, gifts, etc.)?
45. How much time in advance did you publish the tenders?
46. Did you make one tender for all services and goods or separate for each one?

Communication

47. How did you organize the communication of the Presidency as regards the parliament?
Did you cooperate with the government offices on these issues?
48. Did you have a particular PR strategy and media plan for the Parliamentary Presidency?
49. How did you aim to involve media for the events? Did you have a media strategy elaborated before the Presidency?
50. Did you have good media coverage of the parliamentary presidencies?
51. Did your Parliament/Chamber create a separate homepage for the Presidency or were Presidency activities presented on the main home page of your parliament?
52. Did you use online registration for the Presidency meetings? If yes, did you consider it successful?
53. Did you have to use any special software for the Presidency in your parliament? If yes,

were they developed within the parliament?

54. What kind of information did you provide to the participants? (paper, on-line, etc.)

55. Did you prepare any special publication about your Parliament/Chamber for the Presidency?

Other questions

56. Did you work together somehow with civil organisations concerning the Presidency?

57. Were the parliamentary research centres anyhow involved in the Presidency work? If yes, by what means and for which tasks?

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE SO CALLED EU PRESIDENCY WORKING GROUP OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE MONITORING AND COORDINATION OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE HUNGARIAN EU PRESIDENCY

Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Working Group on EU Presidency

1. The Working Group on EU Presidency (hereinafter referred to as “Working Group”) shall operate until 31st December 2010 during the period of the preparations for the Hungarian EU Presidency in the first half of 2011. It may adopt positions with the consensus of its members and conduct consultations accordingly. Its main rule is to conciliate, cooperate and form common positions on the most important tasks related to the Hungarian preparation. The political groups of the Hungarian National Assembly expect the Government to provide the necessary documents in due time to enable the Working Group to define its position and conduct consultations.
2. The members of the Working Group shall adopt positions with consensus on the issues identified below with regard to the preparation for the EU Presidency. A position can be considered as adopted by consensus if it is agreed upon by the pronounced support of all members. The political groups of the Hungarian National Assembly expect the Government to take the relevant decisions within governmental competence in accordance with the position previously adopted by the Working Group. The political groups of the Hungarian National Assembly shall expect the Government to present an oral explanation if it had to deviate from the position agreed by the working group.
 - a. *The definition of the priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency, whereas the identification of the Presidency objectives, political issues, EU policies and legislative dossiers, which are planned to be included on the agenda of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Team*

Presidency and on the agenda of the EU during the term of the Hungarian Presidency. Accordingly, the determination of the Hungarian starting position for the elaboration of the Spanish-Belgian-Hungarian Team Presidency's joint 18-months Presidency working programme. The political groups of the Hungarian National Assembly expect the Government to conduct continuous consultations with the Working Group.

b. Shaping the visual image of the Hungarian EU Presidency, the symbols of the Presidency and the formulation of its main message, which will be formally captured in a Presidency motto and in its content represent the contribution of the Hungarian Presidency to the common European project.

c. The principal questions of the human resources structure and the institutional framework related to the implementation of the Hungarian EU Presidency.

3. The Working Group shall perform consultations on the issues identified below related to the preparation for the Presidency. Should the consultation result in the adoption of a common position, the political groups of the Hungarian National Assembly shall expect the Government to take it into consideration as guidance for decisions taken within governmental competence:

a. Communications policy of the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency in Hungary and abroad.

b. The budget of the Hungarian Presidency.

c. Planning of the programmes and events in Hungary related to the Presidency, the fullest use of the opportunities inherent in the Hungarian Presidency in the promotion of the Hungarian cultural heritage, Hungary and Hungarian cities in Europe.

4. The leaders of each political group or one MP from each political group delegated by them to the Working Group shall be the members of the Working Group who are entitled to adopt positions. Each political group shall delegate one more additional permanent member to substitute the member entitled to adopt positions in case of his unavailability. The Working Group shall operate in a co-chair system, where the Co-chairs shall be the leaders of the largest political groups of the governing coalition and the opposition or other MPs they may delegate to the Working Group. The Co-chairs shall agree on the chairing before each session of the Working Group and perform this duty in an alternate order.
5. The Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Senior State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or the State Secretary appointed by him/her shall participate in the meetings of the Working Group and in its work. Other ministers, senior state secretaries and/or state secretaries of the Government – responsible for issues related to the EU Presidency preparations – may also participate upon invitation from the Working Group.
6. Two experts of each parliamentary political groups, permanent members and invited guests may attend the meetings of the Working Group.
7. Secretarial support for the working group shall be provided by the Office for Foreign Relations of the Hungarian National Assembly, with the participation of the General Secretariat of the Hungarian National Assembly and in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The General Secretariat of the Hungarian National Assembly delegates one member to the Secretariat of the Working Group.
8. The meetings of the Working Group shall be convened by the two Co-chairs via the Secretariat. The agenda of the meetings of the Working Group shall be proposed by the two Co-chairs based on the work plan elaborated with regard to the tasks related to the Presidency preparation and issues raised by the members of the working group. In order for the appropriate preparation of the meetings, the Co-chairs shall invite – via the Secretariat – the competent representatives of the Government to send the background materials and documents related to the agenda of each meeting. The working groups shall meet when necessary but at least once in every two months during the period

of parliamentary sittings. Extraordinary meetings may also be proposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the leaders of political groups.

9. The meetings of the Working Group are not public; only those referred to in paragraphs 4 to 7 and the minute-keepers may attend.
10. Word-by-word minutes shall be prepared on each meeting of the Working Group. The Working Group may decide by consensus to classify the position adopted at the meeting, after giving due consideration to the Government's opinion and in accordance with relevant legislation in force. The minutes kept and the positions adopted at the meetings shall be sent by the two Co-chairs – via the Secretariat – to the members of the Working Group, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister in Charge of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Government representatives who have participated in the respective meeting of the Working Group.

Budapest, 21st February 2008

Ildikó Lendvai

Leader of the political group of
Hungarian Socialist Party

Zsolt Németh

Deputy leader of political group of
Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union

Dr. Zsolt Semjén

Leader of the political group of
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Dr. János Kóka

Leader of the political group of
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Károly Herényi

Leader of the political group of
Hungarian Democratic Forum

**AN EXAMPLE OF A STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE EU PRESIDENCY
WORKING GROUP OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**



Hungarian National Assembly
Office for Foreign Relations
EU Presidency Working Group
Secretariat

Statement

At its meeting on 11 November 2008 the EU Presidency Working Group discussed budgetary issues and questions concerning the image appearance of the Hungarian EU Presidency.

As a result of the discussions, the EU Presidency Working Group adopted the following consensual positions:

1. The EU Presidency Working Group approves of the logo tender procedure presented by the Government.
2. The EU Presidency Working Group requests that the Government consider the possibility of an Internet survey on the trio Presidency logo providing the opportunity for the public (i.e. every Hungarian citizen) to express their opinion on designs previously selected by a selection board from among submitted tenders.
3. The EU Presidency Working Group will publish its official opinion on the list provided by the selection board by 18 November 2008 and notifies the Government accordingly. In forming its official opinion, the Working Group will make every effort to reach a consensus based exclusively on strict professional criteria.
4. The EU Presidency Working Group recommends that the Government organise events which enable the familiarisation of the Hungarian population in the largest possible number with the selected logo designs.
5. The EU Presidency Working Group asks the Government to provide details of EU Presidency events which will take place in Hungary as soon as possible and to name the countryside locations which the Government, in view of EU requirements, finds suitable to host such events.
6. In the spirit of cooperation and joint efforts for the preparations, the EU Presidency Working Group calls upon the Government to adjust to the procedures of the Working Group and contribute to its work in that it should provide the Working Group,

pursuant to its rules of procedure, with written documentation concerning the items of its agenda.

7. The EU Presidency Working Group wishes to interview, prior to its appointment, the government commissioner for operative management of preparations for the Hungarian EU Presidency in 2011.
8. The EU Presidency Working Group further calls upon the Government to identify areas requiring infrastructural development which should be started already in 2009 in connection with the Hungarian EU Presidency (e.g. permanent representation in Brussels, VIP airport arrival and departure services, smaller-scale developments in other locations, connecting roads, etc).
9. The EU Presidency Working Group further calls upon the Government to specify the amount of funds earmarked for training on the Presidency in 2009 to 2011 and bonuses for Presidency Staff members.
10. The Government is further called upon to prepare a schedule for the implementation of IT and communication system development requirements and to calculate the amount of necessary resources.
11. The EU Presidency Working Group requests that the Government explore the opportunities, ways and limits of using Presidency-related funding, and identify necessary measures.

Attila Mesterházy

Deputy Faction Leader of Hungarian Socialist Party

Zsolt Németh

Deputy Faction Leader of Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union

Mátyás Firtl

Deputy Faction Leader of Christian Democratic People's
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Dr Mátyás Eörsi

Deputy Faction Leader of Alliance of Free Democrats

Károly Herényi

Faction Leader of Hungarian Democratic Forum

**DECLARATION ON COOPERATION BY THE TRIO PARLIAMENTS OF SPAIN,
BELGIUM AND HUNGARY**



EU – PRESIDENCY
2010-2011



CORTES GENERALES DE ESPAÑA
SPANISH PARLIAMENT



FEDERAAL PARLEMENT VAN BELGIË
PARLEMENT FÉDÉRAL DE BELGIQUE
FEDERAL PARLIAMENT OF BELGIUM



MAGYAR ORSZÁGGYULÉS
HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



5 • XI • 2008

Declaration on Cooperation

*on a strategic partnership between
the House of representatives of Spain, the Senate of Spain,
the House of representatives of Belgium, the Senate of Belgium and
the National Assembly of Hungary*

DECLARATION ON COOPERATION

**on a strategic partnership between
the House of representatives of Spain, the Senate of Spain,
the House of representatives of Belgium, the Senate of Belgium and
the National Assembly of Hungary**

The five parliamentary chambers of the countries of Spain, Belgium and Hungary (hereinafter referred to as 'Parties') hereby declare their willingness to cooperate and mutually support each other in the preparation for the three countries' EU Presidencies in 2010-2011

considering

- *the strategic importance of the EU Presidency in the life of a country both on national and international level;*
- *the common interest of the successful implementation of the trio Presidency of Spain, Belgium and Hungary,*
- *the growing importance of the national parliaments and the challenge that is raised by the Lisbon Treaty to seize these opportunities and possibilities.*

therefore Parties agree in strengthening their relations and deepening their cooperation with the present Declaration based on the following principles, objectives and tasks:

1. Parties agree to support each other's preparation to the EU Presidencies in 2010-2011 and agree to cooperate for the successful implementation of the trio presidency with meaningful discussions on substantial and practical matters as well.
2. With respect to the aim of mutual support, Parties agree to hold discussions on the priorities of Spain, Belgium and Hungary, with a view to exerting influence on the definition of those priorities and with special attention to the parliamentary aspects of those issues.
3. Parties agree to hold consultations on the exact implementation of the parliamentary parts of the trio presidency, without detriment to their consultations in the classic troika framework (current, previous and following presidencies). They will consult especially on the definition of the events to be organized and the support that can be given to each other before and during the implementation.
4. Parties agree that when bilateral discussions take place with the European Parliament on issues that touch upon the presidency trio, Parties take on board the responsibility of informing each other.
5. Should there be any bodies set up by the Parties for the successful preparation and implementation of the EU Presidency of their countries, these bodies shall cooperate with each other on an equal basis. The bodies shall exchange views and practices as well as they shall serve as basic organs for the continuous discussions between Parties. Thus, Parties will examine the possibility of exchange of professionals for short terms to get more in-depth knowledge on each other's systems.
6. In order to implement the provisions of the present Declaration, the Parties shall, if required, by mutual agreement, arrange for organizing the following events:
 - the Speakers of the Parties can organize working meetings and/or informal gatherings on the occasions of EU interparliamentary meetings;

- the Speakers of the Parties shall organize a common meeting discussing the developments on the issues regarding the EU Presidency first in the spring of 2009, which could be complemented by similar meetings upon the initiative of any of the Parties;
 - in parallel with the collaboration on the level of the Speakers, the representatives of the Parties involved in the preparation (e.g. members of EU Presidency working groups) both on political and official level shall meet as often as needed during the preparation and the implementation of the presidency to exchange views, best practices and consult on the interrelating activities of their Parliaments as regards to the EU trio presidency; the first of such meeting shall be organized in the autumn of 2008.
7. The mutual visits of the delegations shall be funded according to the customs of European interparliamentary cooperation.
 8. The leading officials of the five parliamentary chambers of the countries of Spain, Belgium and Hungary shall take all necessary administrative measures for the implementation of the present Declaration. This includes the appointment of an official responsible for the cooperation provided for in the present Declaration.

Signed in Brussels on 5 November 2008 in five original copies.

Signed by

Teresa Cunillera I Mestres
Vice-President of the Congress of Deputies
of Spain

Francisco Javier Rojo García
President of the Senate of Spain

Herman Van Rompuy
President of the House of Representatives of
Belgium

Armand De Decker
President of the Senate of Belgium

Dr. Katalin Szili
President of the Hungarian National Assembly