

Note prepared by the Danish Presidency

For the meeting of the Working Group

Convened by the Speakers of the EU Parliaments

- On the question of the rationalisation of European Interparliamentary organisations

Introduction:

The Danish Presidency of the Speakers Conference of EU parliaments has prepared this note to facilitate the debate on the question of the rationalisation of European Interparliamentary organisations.^[1]

The question was first raised by the Conference of Speakers of EU parliaments in The Hague on 3 July 2004 through a proposal from the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Casini, and the then President of the German Bundestag, Mr. Thierse. They suggested the need for a debate which “examines the development of interparliamentary structures, assemblies and institutions at the European level and to review their effectiveness”.

Mr. Thierse was appointed rapporteur on the issue and was asked to prepare a report for the following Conference of Speakers that was to take place in Budapest on 6-7 May 2005. A questionnaire was circulated to the EU parliaments focusing on the functioning of six interparliamentary organisations: the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the WEU Assembly, the IPU and the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

Mr. Thierse reported to the Conference of Speakers in Budapest that the overwhelming majority of parliaments had indicated that the above mentioned inter-parliamentary organisations were conducting their tasks satisfactorily, but that there were three areas in particular where reform seemed possible and necessary.

- 1) Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- 2) The role of the WEU
- 3) The Mediterranean region

The Mandate

The Budapest Conference of Speakers therefore asked the incoming Danish Presidency to form a working group, which would follow up on the debate concerning the rationalisation of the European interparliamentary organisations. The working group was requested to analyse the “European interparliamentary organisations according to their functions, in order to possibly forward a proposal for rationalisation and efficiency”. The working group was furthermore asked to consider “the possibilities of cooperation among the delegations of the EU Parliaments in the margin of the meetings of inter-parliamentary organisations”.

The Working Group's Agenda:

The Danish Presidency proposes that the working group focuses on a limited number of questions. It seems reasonable, as our point of departure, to use the three areas identified at the Budapest Conference by Mr. Thierse:

- 1) Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
- 2) The role of the WEU
- 3) The Mediterranean region.

In addition, the Danish Presidency invites the working group to consider addressing the question of interparliamentary meetings organised in the context of the European Union either by the national parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council or by the European Parliament. Effectively this could raise the question of reviewing the Hague Guidelines that were agreed by the Conference of Speakers in July 2004 in The Hague.

One question that could be pursued would be to explore ways in which to improve the coordination between the Presidency of the Conference of Speakers and the Presidency of COSAC as well as the many other interparliamentary meetings involving sectoral committees of EU Parliaments.^[2]

Another issue would be to prepare a set of guidelines for the operation of the “Calendar for Interparliamentary Cooperation” on the basis of the calendar created by the Danish Parliament, in consultation with the Hungarian and Slovak Parliament. One important question to address in this regard would be to determine what types of interparliamentary meetings which should be included in the calendar.

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Against this background the Presidency proposes the following draft agenda:

- 1) Adoption of agenda
- 2) Cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- 3) The role of the WEU
- 4) The Mediterranean region
- 5) Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union?
- 6) Any other business

Any comments on the proposed draft agenda in advance of the working group meeting are most welcome.

Table 1 of this note gives an overview of the Member State parliaments’ participation in the above mentioned European interparliamentary organisations.

Participation of the EU Parliaments in the Interparliamentary Organisations

Acknowledging that it is the responsibility of each Member State parliament to decide on its’ participation in the many different interparliamentary activities, the Danish Parliament has asked parliaments to indicate their use of resources in relation to a number of interparliamentary organisations and structures. A questionnaire was distributed on 15 November 2005 with the purpose of determining the actual participation of parliamentarians in these meetings.

The scope of the survey included a wide range of interparliamentary meetings, which apart from the above mentioned organisations also included interparliamentary meetings organised exclusively by the EU parliaments such as; the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments and COSAC, plus a number of Regional assemblies like the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Assembly, the PA of the Nordic Council, the Baltic Assembly, etc.

A note on numbers

Of the 25 Member States of the European Union, 13 have a unicameral parliament and 12 have a bicameral parliament. Due to this mixture of unicameral and bicameral systems, there are 37 national parliamentary chambers in the 25 EU Member States. In addition comes six parliamentary chambers in the five acceding and candidate countries plus the European Parliament. This means that 44 parliamentary chambers have received the questionnaire.

Out of these 44 parliamentary chambers, the Danish Parliament received a response to its questionnaire from 36 parliamentary chambers in the EU and the acceding and candidate countries.

Table 2 below shows the results of the survey[3].

Table 3 contains a list of Interparliamentary organisations, which were not mentioned in the questionnaire.

Table 1: Members of Selected European Interparliamentary Organisations

Members	Conference of EU Speakers & COSAC[4]	Council of Europe	OSCE	WEU	Euro-Mediterranean Assembly
Albania		X	X		
Andorra		X	X		
Armenia		X	X		
Austria	X	X	X	Observer	X
Azerbaijan		X	X		
Belarus			X		
Belgium	X	X	X	X	X
Bosnia & Herzegovina		X	X		
Bulgaria	Observer	X	X	Associate partner country	
Canada			X		
Croatia	Observer	X	X		

Cyprus	X	X	X		X
Czech Republic	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Denmark	X	X	X	Observer	
Estonia	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
European Parliament	X				X
Finland	X	X	X	Observer	X
France	X	X	X	X	X
Georgia		X	X		
Germany	X	X	X	X	X
Greece	X	X	X	X	X
Hungary	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Iceland		X	X		
Ireland	X	X	X	Observer	X
Italy	X	X	X	X	X
Kazakhstan			X		
Kyrgyzstan			X		
Latvia	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Lichtenstein		X	X		
Lithuania	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Luxembourg	X	X	X	X	X

Malta	X	X	X		X
Moldova		X	X		
Monaco		X	X		
Netherlands	X	X	X	X	X
Norway		X	X	Associate partner country	
Poland	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Portugal	X	X	X	X	X
Romania	Observer	X	X	Associate partner country	
Russian Federation		X	X		
San Marino		X	X		
Serbia & Montenegro		X	x		
Slovak Republic	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Slovenia	X	X	X	Associate partner country	X
Spain	X	X	X	X	X
Sweden	X	X	X	Observer	X
Switzerland		X	X		
Tajikistan			X		
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Observer	X	X		
Turkey	Observer	X	X	Associate partner	

				country	
Turkmenistan			X		
Ukraine		X	X		
United Kingdom	X	X	X	X	
United States of America			X		
Uzbekistan			X		

Table 2: Participation in Interparliamentary Organisations

	Total use of parliamentarians	Total use of days	Number of members
Speakers' conferences			
Speakers Conference of the EU parliaments	46	97	26
European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments	32	73	46
Nordic and Baltic countries	5	11	8
South Eastern Europe Cooperation Process (SEECp)	8	14	
Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region			
Sessions and other plenary sittings	18	54	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys	11	28	
Baltic Assembly			
Sessions and other plenary sittings	41	50	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys	68	83	
EU			

COSAC meetings	216	486	26
COSAC chairpersons' meetings	72	133	26
Meetings of standing committees held by the parliament in the country holding the EU Presidency	339	598	26
Meetings in the European Parliament for national parliamentarians	367	591	26
Euro-Mediterranean Assembly			23
Sessions and other plenary sittings	76	224	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys ^[i]	102	282	
The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly			46
Sessions and other plenary sittings	950	5.127	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys ¹ (including election observation)	1.717	3.538	
IPU			143
Sessions and other plenary sittings	311	1.860	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys	247	2.133	
Nordic Council			5
Sessions and other plenary sittings	57	169	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys	102	352	
NPA			26
Sessions and other plenary sittings	377	1.534	

Committee meetings and other individual journeys	761	2.239	
OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly			55
Sessions and other plenary sittings	350	1.257	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys (including election observation)	250	687	
Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conferences			11
Sessions and other plenary sittings	33	80	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys	24	46	
Assembly of WEU			10 ^[5]
Sessions and other plenary sittings	369	992	
Committee meetings and other individual journeys	670	1.530	
WTO's Parliamentary Assembly			
Sessions and other plenary sittings	70	246	

Tabel 3: Participation of EU parliaments in other European Interparliamentary Organisations

Parlament	1. other meeting	2. other meeting	3. other meeting	4. other meeting	5. other meeting
Austria - Nationalrat	Regional Partnership (cooperation between Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia	Central European Initiative			
Austria - Bundesrat					

Belgium - Sénat	BENELUX Interparliamentary Consultative Council (Plenary meetings)	BENELUX (Committee meetings)	European Interparliamentary Space Conference		
Belgium - Chambre des Représentants					
Cyprus - Vouli Antiprosopon					
Czech Republic République tchèque - Poslanecka Snemova	Central European Initiative (Parliamentary Committee, Parliamentary Assembly)				
Czech Republic - Senat	CEI Parliamentary Assembly plenary sittings	CEI PA Committee meetings			
Denmark - Folketinget					
Estonia - Riigikogu	3 Baltics + Poland	3 Baltic+ 3Nordic	NB 8 Chairmen	Baltic FORAFFCO	
Finland - Eduskunta	Parliamentary Network of the World Bank	IPAIT	ASEP		
France - Assemblée Nationale					
France - Sénat	Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (As observer)				

Germany - Bundestag	Conference of Speakers of Euromed Parliaments	The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation as observer			
Germany - Bundesrat	Meeting of the Association of European Senates				
Greece - Vouli Ton Ellinon	Parliamentary Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)	Parliamentary Dimension of South Eastern European Cooperation Process (SEECPP)	Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Cetinje Forum		
Hungary - Országgyűlés	Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative was initiated in 1990 to foster the parliamentary cooperation of the countries of Central Europe.	Parliamentary Dimension of the Regional Partnership was initiated in 2003 to strengthen the cooperation of the participating Central European countries			
Ireland - Dail Eireann					
Ireland - Seanad Eireann					
Italy - Camera dei Deputati	Conference of the Speakers of Euromed Parliaments	ASEP (Asia Europe parliamentary partnership)	ASEF(Asia Europe parliamentary foundation)	EISC (International Parliamentarians association for information technology)	EPRI (European parliaments research initiative)
Italy - Senato	CEI (Center	Conference of	Association of	AWEPA: The	Conference on

Della Republica	European Initiative): Parliamentary dimension of subregional organisation focusing economic cooperation among 17 countries	Speakers of EuroMediterranean Forum: Since 1999, the Conference of Speakers works to achieve the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration, which is intended to establish a comprehensive EuroMediterranean partnership in order to turn the Mediterranean into a common area of peace, stability and prosperity through the reinforcement of political dialogue and security, an economic and financial partnership and a social, cultural and human partnership. The conference meets once a year.	European Senates: the Association's objectives are to develop relationships between members, to promote bicameralism within the framework of parliamentary democracy and to strengthen European identity and awareness.	AWEPA mission is to support the well functioning of parliaments in Africa with regards to democracy, human rights and peaceful conflict management as well as to promote relationship between Africa and Europe in order to share their parliamentary experience.	Climat Change: Over a decade ago, most countries joined an international treaty the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to begin to consider what can be done to reduce global warming and to cope with whatever temperature increases are inevitable.
Latvia - Saeima					
Lithuania - Seimas	The Assembly of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Sejm of the Republic of Poland	The Assembly of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Verhovna Rada (Parliament) of	Forum of the Seimas group for the Parliamentary relations with Russian Federation and		

		Ukraine	parliamentarians of the Russian Federation Kaliningrad region Duma		
Luxembourg - Chambre des Député	Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie	Conseil interparlement aire Consultatif de Benelux	Conseil Parlementaire Interrégional (CPI)		
MaltaMalte - Il-Kamra Tad- Deputati					
Netherlands - Tweede Kamer					
Netherlands - Eerste Kamer					
Poland - Sejm	Polish Ukrainian Parliamentary Assembly	Polish Lithuanian Parliamentary Assembly	Meetings of the European Committees of Parliaments of the Visegrad Group States	Meetings of the European Committees of Parliaments of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia	Følgende 5 fora nævnt af Sejm of the Republic of Poland slået sammen i én post: 1) Meetings of Presidents of the Regional Partnership Parliaments, 2) Meetings of committees of the Regional Partnership Parliaments, 3) Conference of Speakers of the EuroMediterra nean Parliaments, 4) Central European Initiative Parliamentary Dimension, 5) Interparliament ary Assembly

					on Orthodoxy.
Poland - Senat	Polish Ukrainian Parliamentary Assembly	World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments	Meetings of the Presidents of Regional Partnership Parliaments	Conference of Speakers of the EuroMediterranean Parliaments	Central European Initiative Parliamentary Dimension
Portugal - Assembleia da Republica	Speakers Conference of Portuguese Speaking Countries Parliaments	Interparliamentary Assembly of Portuguese Speaking Countries Parliaments			
Slovakia Slovaquie - Národná Rada Slovenskej Republiky	Regional Partnership The purpose is to create a strategic partnership in the parliamentary cooperation and to coordinate the common politics.	Central European Initiative The objectives is to strengthen stability in region and widening of economic cooperation between member countries.			
Slovenia Slovénie - Državni Svet Republike Slovenije					
Slovenia - Državni Zbor Republike Slovenije	Central European Initiative	Adriatic&Ionian Initiative	Meeting of the Presidents of the Parliaments of Austria, Czech republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia		
Spain - Congreso de los Diputados					
Spain - Senado					

Sweden - Riksdagen					
United Kingdom - House of Commons	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association				
United Kingdom - House of Lords	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Annual Conference and UK Group visits.				
Bulgaria Bulgarie - Narodno Sobranie					
Romania - Camera Deputatilor	Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophony reunites MPs of Francophone countries within a dialogue of cultural diversity;, Plenary sessions&Com mittee reunions	PABSEC parliamentary dialogue on economic cooperation in the Black Sea region;, Plenary sessions&Com mittee reunions	PACEI PA of the Central European Initiative, facilitates the EU integration of candidate countries and cooperation in the region;, Plenary sessions&Com mittee reunions	Parliamentary Dimension of SEECF Regional parliamentary organization, similar to PACEI and concerning SouthEastern Europe, Plenary sessions&Com mittee reunions	Parliamentary Dimension of the Stability Pact in SouthEastern Europe enhances cooperation and EU assistance to candidate countries in the region;, Plenary sessions&Com mittee reunions
Romania - Senatul	Association of Senates in Europe	CEI Central European Initiative	PNoWB	EPTA	AWEPA
Turkey Turquie - Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi					
Croatia Croatie - Hrvatski Sabor					

The European Parliament - European Parliament					
Republic of Macedonia					

[1] Also the ECPRD is conducting a survey on the question of the participation in the European Interparliamentary organisations. A questionnaire was submitted to all parliaments of the members of the Council of Europe in September 2005. A report summing up the results is currently under preparation. ECPRD correspondents are expected to meet in Warsaw on 8 May 2006 to debate the issue at a seminar.

[2] COSAC and the many inter-parliamentary meetings involving sectoral committees are hosted by the parliament of Member State holding the Council Presidency on a biannual basis, whereas the Presidency of the Conference of Speakers is appointed on an ad hoc basis for 1 year at a time. In addition, the European Parliament hosts Joint Parliamentary meetings which also seek to involve the parliaments of the country holding the Council Presidency in preparing these meetings.

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[4] The guidelines for the Conference of Speakers doesn't provide any specific rules for the participation of the Speakers of the parliaments of candidate- or acceding countries, but recent practise has been to invite them. COSAC's rules of procedure provide for the participation of three observers from each candidate or acceding country (rule 4.2).

[5] All together national parliaments of 37 countries are some how or the other affiliated to the WEU Parliamentary Assembly either as full members (10) or as associate members, affiliated members, affiliated associated members, permanent observers, affiliate permanent observers or affiliate associate partners.

[i] These meetings include committee meetings, election observation, etc., that individual members of delegations take part in by virtue of their membership of a committee or similar instance.