



## Meeting of the LIX COSAC 17 – 19 June 2018, Sofia

### Background Information

#### Session I: Achievements of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU

Since 1 January 2018, one decade after Bulgaria has been accepted as fully-fledged member of the European Union (EU), the state was entrusted with responsible task of holding the **Presidency of the Council of the EU** for the next six months. During this period of time, the Bulgarian Presidency has ensured continuity in the work of the Council by coordinating the policies of the member states, developing the foreign and security policy of the Union, concluding agreements on behalf of the EU with other countries or international organizations and jointly with the European Parliament (EP) adopting the EU annual budget.

In regard to the debate on the **European Union's long-term budget**, especially in the context of Brexit, the Presidency declared that it will ensure the smooth and prompt start of the negotiating process. Among other achievements of the country, in the scope of **economic and financial issues**, political agreement was reached on the proposal for a **Directive amending Directive 2011/16/EU as regards mandatory automatic exchange of information in the field of taxation in relation to reportable cross-border arrangements**. The Council also adopted guidelines for the EU budget for 2019 as part of the annual budgetary procedure.

In line with the debate on the **Future of Europe** and the challenges that our Continent is currently facing, the Bulgarian Presidency underlined the importance of creating a **Strong Social Europe**. Having in mind the technological and demographic changes, and the pressure on member states' social systems, as well as other difficulties arising from the urgent need to transform the European economies, industries and jobs, the Presidency concentrated its efforts on some key initiatives. A good example of that is the political agreement with the European Parliament on the **Posting of Workers Directive in the framework of the provision of services**. Another accomplishment of the Bulgarian Presidency in the Social field is the adoption of conclusions, in regard to the establishment of a secure, cohesive and harmonious society, overcoming the demographic challenges within the EU.



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Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

The Bulgarian Presidency emphasized on the need of further development of the **democratic legitimacy in Europe**, especially in regard to the forthcoming EP elections in 2019. Along these lines, the Presidency completed successfully the negotiations on the **Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations**. It also took important part in setting the dates for European Parliament election and actively worked on the European Commission's proposal to reform the European Citizens' Initiative.

Building a Digital Single Market, as strategic part of the EU agenda, was also a priority for the Presidency. Bulgaria achieved significant results negotiating with the EP for the establishment of the European electronic communications code and also on the application of the **Audiovisual Media Services Directive**. It made a lot of efforts to build a shared understanding among Member States on the **Directive on combating fraud and counterfeiting of non-cash means of payment**.

The Bulgarian Presidency has firmly supported the need of a well-functioning Common European Asylum System, better border control and management of the migration flows. Therefore, it made a proposal for amending the **Dublin Regulation** through the establishment of a new ad hoc format called "**Strategic Committee on Immigration, Frontiers and Asylum**". Furthermore, other important agreements in the sphere of defence and security have been also concluded.

One of the biggest achievements of Bulgaria during the Presidency was the **EU-Western Balkans Summit**, held in Sofia on 17 May 2018. During the meeting, in support of the European perspective of the Western Balkans, the so called "Sofia Declaration" was signed. It declared the intentions of the EU Member States to encourage the further development of the region and its connectivity with the Union.

Significant progress has been made in the policy areas of energy, environment, trade matters, etc.

An integral part of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU has been its **Parliamentary Dimension (PD)**. During the first five months of the PD, five interparliamentary meetings have been held:

- Meeting of the Chairpersons of the conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of the parliaments of the European Union (Chairpersons' COSAC);



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Parliamentary Dimension

Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
of the European Union

- Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP);
- Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union;
- Second Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol;
- Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Energy Committees of the Parliaments of the European Union.

Those interparliamentary conferences have brought together many high-level politicians and experts, and produced fruitful discussions on the topical issues of the EU agenda. One of the important documents produced by the Bulgarian Parliamentary Dimension was **the Rules of procedure of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol – consensually adopted in Sofia**. Another positive outcome of the PD was the **Statement of the Heads of delegations**, agreed upon during the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy.

The LIX Plenary COSAC is the concluding event of the Bulgarian Parliamentary Dimension. It aims to put together an ambitious and interesting agenda, host intensive debates on the future of Europe, and last but not least – produce **Contribution and Conclusions** which will be send to the European institutions.