

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC
Tallinn, Estonia, 9 July 2017

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Mr Edward ZAMMIT LEWIS, Member, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Mr Kristian VIGENIN, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*; and Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, Vice-President, European Parliament.

AGENDA

- 1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- 2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC**
- 3. Debate on the draft programme of the LVIII COSAC**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2018-2019**
- 6. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 7. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

Mr VITSUT welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika"), especially the Bulgarian Chair participating for the first time in a Troika meeting.

In the absence of any objection, the agenda of the meeting of the Troika was adopted without amendment.

2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Mr VITSUT outlined the topics on the programme of the meeting that would take place the following day. The first session would focus on the "priorities of the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU" and would be presented by Mr Jüri RATAS, Prime Minister of Estonia. The second session would deal with the topic "from start-ups to scale-ups - EU's unused potential" and would be presented by experts.

The draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC was approved without amendment.

3. Debate on the draft programme of the LVIII COSAC

The Chair informed the Troika members that the LVIII COSAC would take place on 26-28 November 2017 in Saku Suurhall, Tallinn. He then outlined the five sessions of the draft programme and the keynote speakers.

The first session would focus on the future of the EU and would be addressed by the President of the Republic of Estonia, Ms Kersti KALJULAID. The second session would focus on the role of national Parliaments and would deal with ways to make the debates on EU affairs in national Parliaments more open and inclusive. Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President of the European Commission,

would address this session. The third one would deal with the Digital Single Market focussing on digital services and would be addressed by Mr Andrus ANSIP, Commissioner for Digital Agenda. The fourth session would focus on security and would be addressed by Mr Julian KING, Commissioner for the Security Union. Finally, the fifth session would deal with migration and would focus on its external dimension. Mr Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS, Commissioner for Migration, would address this session.

Ms McGUINNESS made two suggestions regarding the draft programme of the LVIII COSAC. First, she suggested that Ms Danuta HÜBNER, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs, listed as keynote speaker under session II on bringing Europe closer to its citizens, be moved to session I on the future of the EU, as her experience in constitutional affairs would be more fruitful for the discussion. Secondly, regarding the topic on the future of the EU, she suggested that the discussion would not only deal with the relevant document and the five options, but that it would incorporate the other position papers that the European Commission has adopted, e.g. on the economic and monetary union and globalisation, as those, including budget, would be part of shaping the future of Europe.

The Chair accepted Ms McGUINNESS' suggestions.

Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS agreed with the topics proposed by the Estonian Presidency focussing particularly on the role of national Parliaments in line with bringing Europe closer to its citizens, the digital single market, which had also been a priority of the Maltese Presidency, and migration. Stressing the situation in Malta and in Italy, he thanked the Estonian Presidency for including migration in the programme, as this showed that the issue was no longer a matter solely of Southern countries, but of the entire EU.

Mr VIGENIN agreed with the proposed topics and in principle raised the issue of the limited time allowed for discussion during plenary meetings, especially if five topics were introduced in the programme. As the topics followed a logical sequence, he suggested asking members of Parliaments to be selective of topics in their interventions and not take part in all discussions.

The Chair responded that the Presidency would consider the proposal.

Ms McGUINNESS went on to propose an amendment to the title of session II to formulate a question along the lines of "what can Parliaments do to bring Europe closer to its citizens" or "how can Parliaments help to bring Europe closer to its citizens" in order to focus the topic and spark a debate. In addition, she suggested herself as one of the keynote speakers under this session, as Ms HÜBNER would be moved to session I. On session V regarding migration, she suggested an addition in the title in order to focus the topic and include the issue of how to prevent people from coming to Europe. This would take into account the EU's efforts in preventing and combatting illegal migration associated with compacts with Africa and Europe's efforts in assisting people to remain home. She further proposed a rapporteur of the European Parliament as a speaker under this session.

Mr VITSUT gave a positive response to the first proposal on session II. Regarding session V, however, he said that the Presidency would consider the proposals, underlining that keynote speaker Commissioner AVRAMOPOULOS himself would discuss the topics and ideas proposed.

4. Approval of the outline of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr VITSUT reported that the first chapter would tackle the future of the EU; the second would focus on the topic of bringing the EU closer to its citizens; finally, the third would deal with the Digital Single Market. The questionnaire would be distributed by 27 July and the replies would be expected by 18 September 2017.

Ms McGUINNESS praised the outline and the topics chosen for the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC. Acknowledging her thus far not extended experience in COSAC, she asked how the content of the report could be disseminated. Stressing the importance of access to information by the public and of encouraging debates on the topics chosen, which would allow national Parliaments to compare themselves with each other, she proposed that one way of disseminating the results would be a press release drafted by the COSAC Secretariat.

On this issue, Mr VIGENIN was unsure as to what promotion of the report meant, underlining that the information in question was part of the report and that the report itself was made public. He stressed that it was up to national Parliaments to make use of the information.

Ms McGUINNESS encouraged active promotion of the results to promote debate and to get added value of the work done, suggesting further that a reference to the report be included in the political conclusions of COSAC.

Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS agreed that it was more up to national Parliaments to make use of the information presented in the report and posited a practical suggestion; he proposed to add in the conclusions of COSAC a reference encouraging national Parliaments to dedicate a session where the main conclusions and points of the report were discussed for future best practices that could be adopted in national Parliaments.

Mr VIGENIN proposed that a recommendation be included in the final conclusions encouraging national Parliaments to organise public hearings on the findings of the Bi-annual Report; national Parliaments could not be obliged to hold such discussions, but their attention could be drawn on the issue in question.

Ms McGUINNESS further suggested that a review on the report's results could be pursued.

Ms Christiana FRYDA, Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, took the floor to cast light on the work of the Secretariat and the practice followed in this regard. According to the practice, the Bi-annual Report of COSAC was disseminated to all COSAC delegations, all national Parliaments and the European Parliament two weeks in advance of the plenary meetings. It was also published on the COSAC website. In addition, the Secretariat had developed the practice of drafting an abstract, a summary easily accessible to all, at the outset of the report. Furthermore, according to practice established in the last years, the report was presented to the plenary of COSAC.

Mr VITSUT said that time was needed to think about all possibilities.

The outline of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC was approved without amendment.

5. Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2018-2019

The Chair informed the Troika members that the second term of office of the current Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, was expiring on 31 December 2017 and that a new Permanent Member would have to be appointed for the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2019. According to the Rules of Procedure of COSAC, the COSAC Chairpersons were tasked with appointing the new Permanent Member on the proposal of the Presidential Troika.

On the selection procedure, Mr VITSUT informed of the Presidency's intention to address a letter to all national Parliaments inviting them to nominate candidates for the post, by including the candidates' CVs, motivation letters and letters of recommendation from the supporting Committee Chairs by 29 September 2017. The procedure would be explained in more detail at a later stage, after the candidacies

would have been submitted; however, the Presidency underlined that the process would be conducted in a spirit of transparency, impartiality and fairness. He added that the information received would be shared amongst Troika members and would also be uploaded on the COSAC webpage. He informed further that, by mid-October, the candidates would receive an invitation to the interview foreseen at the Troika meeting on 26 November. The Chairs nominating a candidate would be invited to the Troika meeting as observers. In case a candidate was proposed by a Troika member, then the representative in the Troika would be asked to abstain from the decision-making process. Mr VITSUT expressed the hope that the candidate to be appointed by the Chairs would be selected by the Troika by consensus.

Mr VITSUT referred to a background paper on the appointment of the Permanent Member prepared by the Permanent Member of the Secretariat in advance of the previous term and requested that it be updated.

Finally, on the state of play concerning the co-financing of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat and related office costs for 2018-2019, the Chair informed the Troika members that letters of intent had been received from 39 Chambers of 26 national Parliaments. A reminder about the remaining letters would be sent out after the Chairpersons' meeting.

6. Letters received by the Presidency

The Chair referred to the following letters received:

- Letters from Mr Olemic THOMMESSEN, President of the Norwegian *Storting*, Mr Thomas AESCHI, Member of the National Council, President of the EFTA/EU Delegation, Swiss *Assemblée fédérale*, Ms Tamar KHULORDAVA, Chair of the Committee on European Integration, *Parliament of Georgia*, and Ms Jóna Sólveig ELÍNARDÓTTIR, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Icelandic *Althingi*, requesting participation in COSAC meetings. After consultation with the Troika, these Parliaments had been invited as special guests.
- A letter from the Chairs of the European Union Affairs Committee of the countries of the Visegrad Group requesting to include in the programme of the LVIII COSAC an item on the development of infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe.
- A letter from Ms KHULORDAVA requesting to include in the programme of the LVIII COSAC an item on the future of the Eastern Partnership.

Regarding the last two letters, Mr VITSUT stressed that the Presidency saw its parliamentary events as part of the entire six-month parliamentary dimension of the Presidency. Transport connections would be the focus of the Conference of the Chairpersons of the Economic Affairs Committees taking place in Tallinn on 21–22 September 2017, while EU budgetary challenges would be discussed during the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union, on 30-31 October 2017. The Chair also pointed out that he had met Ms KHULORDAVA and had explained how the topic on the future of the EU was going to be prepared. It was agreed that, at that preparatory stage, the programme of the LVIII COSAC would not be modified.

7. Any other business

No other business.