



Draft Outline of the 23rd Bi-Annual Report of COSAC

Chapter 1: European Union Energy Policy: State of Play, Challenges and Opportunities

Excessive reliance on imported energy makes the EU especially vulnerable to the evolving and quickly shifting international energy landscape, and fragmented European energy market further compounds this vulnerability. The crisis in Ukraine prompted the EU Member States to take an impartial look at factors that influence the European energy sector. A strong consensus is emerging in favour of taking Europe's energy future into Europe's own hands, lest choices be imposed on the EU by external circumstances and events.

The concept of “a resilient Energy Union with a forward-looking climate change policy” was put forward as one of the top priorities of the new European Commission, and it is one of the key points in the Commission's work programme for 2015. Furthermore, the Commission intends to publish a framework strategy and action plan during the first quarter of 2015.

From the outset, this concept involves pooling resources, combining infrastructures, and consolidating negotiating power towards third countries. It also includes diversifying energy sources, routes of supply and reducing the current high dependency of several Member States on energy imports from third countries.

The purpose of this Chapter of the Bi-Annual Report is to exchange information and compile Parliaments'/Chambers' views as to how the European Energy Union could be designed and, in particular, how to best address the challenges in the main areas that will likely constitute the backbone of the future Energy Union: energy security, completion of the internal market, energy efficiency, decarbonisation, research and innovation. It will also examine which particular aspects Parliaments/Chambers would set as their priorities within this broad range of issues.

Parliaments/Chambers will be asked, among other, to give their views on recently published documents, such as the communications from the Commission on *Progress towards Completing the Internal Energy Market* (COM (2014) 634) and on *European Energy Security Strategy* (COM (2014)



330), as well as the upcoming strategy on the European Energy Union, which is due to be published in early 2015.

Chapter 2: The Future of Parliamentary Scrutiny of European Union Affairs

The role played by national Parliaments in the EU decision-making process has traditionally been on the agenda of COSAC meetings. Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, national Parliaments' influence has increased significantly. A number of proposals with potential political, institutional and legal implications have since been put forward to strengthen their role and involvement. In the overall context of this debate and building on the findings of the 22nd Bi-Annual Report, the aim of this Chapter is to further explore this topic and to collect Parliaments'/Chambers' views regarding the short-term and long-term evolution of parliamentary scrutiny of the EU decision making process.

First, this Chapter of the Bi-Annual Report will seek further insight into how reasoned opinions and political dialogue procedures could be improved and made more structured and effective. In this context, various concrete proposals and specific instruments, as well as the role and the potential of COSAC, will be addressed.

Second, Parliaments/Chambers will be invited to exchange their opinions on new ways of involving national Parliaments in the decision-making process of the EU without any formal Treaty changes; for example, on an idea of introducing a “green card” which would give national Parliaments an opportunity to initiate constructive policy or legislative proposals. The viability of this idea and its practical implementation require further consideration. At the same time, it is imperative to continue reflecting on other long-term prospects for a greater contribution by national Parliaments to the EU decision and policy making process.

Finally, this Chapter will seek to further elaborate on the proposals on how to enhance cooperation between the European Parliament and national Parliaments with the aim of facilitating exchange of information and debate on key policy issues and specific legislative proposals or other relevant documents.

Chapter 3: EU Trade Policy and the Role of National Parliaments

Trade directly impacts jobs and growth in Europe, which is one of the reasons why the EU negotiations on free trade agreements with third countries have recently generated a lot of interest



within the EU Member States. This is the case of negotiations with Canada, the United States, and Asian countries. The EU is currently negotiating several other trade agreements, such as the investment agreement with China, a free trade agreement with Japan, the multilateral agreement on trade in services (TiSA), as well as agreements with several ASEAN countries.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the United States would eliminate trade barriers and would create the largest free-trade area in the world, thereby contributing to enhanced economic prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, TTIP deals with a number of sensitive issues which require further inquiry and scrutiny, particularly by the national Parliaments.

Therefore, it is essential for the national Parliaments to use all information available on agreements such as TTIP and the EU-Canada trade agreement (CETA) to the full extent so that informed and vigorous debates on their merits can be held in the national Parliaments, and the constituents are made fully aware of the implications of such trade agreements.

The Treaty of Lisbon has granted new trade negotiation powers to the EU: the Commission has exclusive competence to negotiate trade deals in several new areas, and all trade agreements must be approved by the European Parliament. Nevertheless, the practice of using the so-called *mixed agreements* continues, and that underscores the importance of ensuring that the national Parliaments are well informed.

First, this Chapter of the 23rd Bi-Annual Report will aim to present the extent to which Parliaments/Chambers have been engaged in the debate on the impact of the EU free trade agreements over the last few years.

Second, it will look at the state of play of the debates at the national and EU levels, and, among other, it will identify the most important issues for Parliaments/Chambers during the negotiation process on TTIP.

Third, this Chapter will address access to information for parliamentarians on ongoing EU trade negotiations. In this context, the recent decisions taken by the Commission regarding transparency of TTIP negotiations are relevant and welcome.

