



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 28 June 2012
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Dear Ms. Kjer Hansen,

Dear Eva,

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to extend my best wishes at the closing of the Danish Presidency and to thank the Folketinget, and you and your team personally, for the close and constructive cooperation we had over the past six months. To follow up on discussions held during the last COSAC meeting in Copenhagen, and in response to your letter to President Barroso of 26 April 2012, I am pleased to send you the official reply of the European Commission to the Contribution of the XLVII COSAC.

The Commission is looking forward to further intensifying the dialogue with COSAC and individual national Parliaments on topics of particular strategic and political importance, such as the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and economic governance. In this context, we found the exchanges at the Copenhagen meeting on how to re-launch the Single market very fruitful.

I trust that we will be able to continue our exchange of views on political priorities and future initiatives under the Cypriot COSAC Presidency, starting with the Chairpersons' meeting in July in Limassol, at which Commissioner Oettinger will represent the Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President

Ms Eva Kjer Hansen
Chairperson of the
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Reply of the European Commission
to the Contribution of the XLVII COSAC
Copenhagen, 22-24 April 2012

1. Re-launching the Single Market, Single Market transposition and enforcement

The Commission welcomes the support expressed by the COSAC for the swift adoption of the 12 key proposals put forward under the Single Market Act. Convinced that the single market has further untapped potential, the Commission will present later this year further measures to boost growth, jobs and confidence in the single market – a Single Market Act II.

The Commission agrees with the COSAC on the importance of the social dimension of the Single Market, which has been greatly enhanced by the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. According to Article 9 TFEU, it is an obligation for the Union to take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection and the fight against social exclusion.

The Commission is committed to strengthening evidence-based policy making and to producing comprehensive impact assessments for any proposed legislation concerning the single market, which include in-depth analysis of the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of its proposals. The scope of impact assessments has been extended to ensure that they cover all major Commission policies and activities.

The application and enforcement of existing legislation can still be improved. The exercise of social rights as well as of economic freedoms within the Single Market, notably the freedom of establishment and to provide services, all need to be advanced in close cooperation between the Commission, the European Parliament and the Member States.

On 8 June 2012, the Commission proposed a package of measures designed to enhance the implementation of single market legislation and to improve its enforcement. This includes precise commitments on new measures for enhanced enforcement action which the Commission intends to implement in partnership with the Member States. It reflects a more economic and impact-based approach to governance, targeting areas and sectors - such as services and network industries - with the greatest growth potential.

The Communication on governance¹ identifies ways to make the single market deliver for businesses and citizens. It also looks at ways to improve the enforcement of single market rules at national and EU level. In this context, the Commission would like to recall that the successful EU Pilot initiative on EU law has already significantly accelerated the handling of cases of potential infringements, reducing the time needed to find solutions compatible with EU law.

2. A Single Market for services

¹ COM(2012)259

The services directive has been implemented to varying degrees by all the Member States. It covers services which account for more than 45% of EU GDP.

On 8 June 2012, as a follow up to the March European Council, the Commission presented a report on the legal implementation as well as on the economic impact of the directive's transposition. The Commission also presented an action plan to improve the functioning of the internal market in services: "*A partnership for new growth in services 2012 - 2015*"².

In order to ensure that the services directive benefits the consumers, the Commission also presented on this occasion a document on "non discrimination" for reasons of nationality or place of residence³, in line with Article 20 of the Services Directive. The Commission will closely monitor the implementation of the Directive by the administrations of Member States.

3. Sustainable competitiveness and green economy

The Commission welcomes the support of COSAC for the resource efficiency agenda and the call to enhance the single market for sustainable products. In 2011 the Commission adopted a number of interrelated long-term strategies under the Europe 2020 resource efficiency flagship initiative, including the Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe, the 2050 Climate and Energy Roadmaps, the Transport White Paper, and the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. Resource efficiency is integrated in the Commission proposals for cohesion, research and development, agricultural, and fisheries policies under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. The Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe envisages important new initiatives in the course of 2012 and the coming years, including a communication tackling the greening of the single market this year. Governance is a key element of the strategy, since resource efficiency is an integration agenda, with a key role for Member States and other stakeholders in bringing about the necessary changes. The Commission welcomes the COSAC's support for an ambitious energy policy contributing to the resource efficiency flagship. The Commission recalls the importance of implementing the 2050 Roadmaps on Low-carbon Economy and Resource Efficiency which provide the basis for such transition.

4. The Digital Single Market

The Commission welcomes the COSAC's call to deploy the full potential of the digital economy and confirms that ensuring swift implementation of the Action plan on e-commerce to remove the obstacles which hinder the development of Europe's digital economy remains a priority.

The Commission is determined to deliver a Digital Single Market as announced in the Digital Agenda for Europe⁴. Electronic signatures and the mutual recognition and acceptance of electronic identification across borders are essential to boost trust in the internet economy and to stimulate online services. On 4 June 2012, the Commission adopted a legal framework for electronic signatures and identification⁵ which should provide legal certainty of electronic

² COM(2012)261

³ SWD(2012)146

⁴ COM(2010)245

⁵ COM(2012)238

transactions and increase confidence of users in public and private online services. The cross-border dimension of the legislative measures proposed should also facilitate the implementation of existing EU legislation such as the Services Directive and the Patients' Rights Directive.

The Commission welcomes that the European Parliament and the Council have reached an agreement on new EU Roaming rules following the Commission's proposal of 6 July 2011⁶. On 10 May, the European Parliament voted in favour of this agreement and the Council adopted the regulation at the Competitiveness Council on 30 May.

5. Strengthening the political dialogue between national Parliaments and the European Commission

The financial, economic and sovereign debt crises have shown why closer coordination among Member States is needed. In this context, the Commission is convinced that inter-parliamentary cooperation as well as a solid political partnership between the Commission and national Parliaments is of key importance.

Almost exactly six years after its launch, the Commission remains fully committed to strengthening and further developing the political dialogue between national Parliaments and the Commission, in particular within the framework of the European Semester. As already outlined by President Barroso at the XLVII COSAC meeting, the Commission sees two particular moments during the European Semester when an intensified dialogue with national Parliaments could provide real added value, if requested by the national Parliaments:

- first, following the publication of the Annual Growth Survey of the European Commission, which sets out broad priorities for the EU as a whole for the coming year;
- and second, once the Commission has presented and, after endorsement by the European Council, the Council has adopted country-specific guidance on the basis of the National Reform Programmes and Stability and Convergence Programmes submitted by Member States.

At these key stages, the Commission is ready to discuss with national Parliaments both horizontal and country-specific questions related to economic governance and to provide further clarification of its positions. Indeed, the key to the success of the European Semester lies in the extent to which its results are reflected in national policy-making during the second half of the year – the national semester – during which budgets and reform programmes are proposed by governments and adopted by parliaments.

For practical reasons, the Vice President of the Commission for Economic and Monetary Affairs would not be able to participate personally in all such meetings. Therefore, the Commission suggests that if a national Parliament requests such a meeting and the Vice President is not available, it is – subject to previous agreement by the respective national Parliament - represented either by another Member of the College, or by senior officials. Alternatives to face-to-face meetings, for example the increased use of videoconferences, should also be considered.

⁶ COM(2011)402

The Commission also confirms that national Parliaments may submit written enquiries related to a legislative proposal or consultation document to the Commission, as many already do today, as long as these enquiries are formulated in the framework of the existing political dialogue. The specific institutional relationship between the Commission and the European Parliament must be fully respected.

The Commission recognises the importance of the active participation of national Parliaments during the pre-legislative phase, and in particular in the context of public consultations. Further to its Communication on "Smart Regulation in the European Union"⁷, the Commission is now carrying out a review of its consultation policy. Among other things, the review will look at how to increase the reach of its consultations and strengthen the quality and transparency of the information on the results of consultations.

⁷ COM(2010)543