

XXXVI COSAC

**CO-FINANCING THE PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE
COSAC SECRETARIAT**

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP
established on 11 September 2006

THE WORKING GROUP

The Finnish Presidency presented to the COSAC Troika and Meeting of Chairpersons in Helsinki on 11 September 2006 a proposal for co-financing the permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat¹. The co-financing scheme is intended to begin after the current permanent member has completed her term in January 2008.

The meeting of chairpersons decided that a working group, consisting of officials, should further develop the Presidency's proposal for the XXXVI COSAC². The working group circulated a questionnaire to the parliaments participating in COSAC. Replies were received from 20 Member State parliaments³. The replies to the questionnaire (summary enclosed) led to an exchange of correspondence among the members of the working group, followed by an extranet meeting.

This report reflects the views of the majority of the working group's members. The representatives of two national parliaments dissented from the proposal of the working group.

Owing to the limited time available, the working group's report had to be drafted on the assumption that consensus between all members of COASC would not be found on the future financing of the COSAC secretariat before the Helsinki COSAC. The working group does, however, consider that the preferable solution would be for a unanimous decision by COSAC that would regularise the position of the secretariat, and create a model of financing that involves all parliaments. The working group appeals to all delegations to seek a unanimous position that could be formalised during the German and Portuguese Presidencies.

THE SECRETARIAT AND THE PERMANENT MEMBER; CO-FINANCING

All of the parliaments participating in COSAC consider the secretariat useful and necessary for the work of COSAC. The majority also consider that having a permanent member is vital for the effectiveness and continuity of the secretariat. The arguments may be condensed as follows:

The secretariat: Recent developments have further strengthened the role of national parliaments in the EU and highlighted the role of COSAC. For example, the European Commission decided in May 2006 to transmit all new proposals and consultation papers directly to national parliaments inviting them 'to react so as to improve the process of policy formulation'; the European Council, in its conclusions of June 2006, called on the Commission to 'duly consider' comments by national parliaments – in particular with regard to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles – and encouraged national parliaments to strengthen cooperation within the framework COSAC when monitoring

¹ An updated copy is enclosed.

² A list of members is enclosed.

³ In addition, two chambers gave tentative replies in support of the Presidency's proposal.

subsidiarity; and in the conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of 1 July 2006, the Speakers suggested that COSAC consider a discussion on strengthening cooperation on monitoring the principle of subsidiarity.

The COSAC secretariat is thus being expected to do a growing amount of work. It is not just responsible for producing the biannual report and updating the website (not that either of these tasks should be underestimated): these are just two of the five tasks assigned to the secretariat in the Rome mandate (and it was estimated that they took 35% of the time of the first permanent member). Furthermore, as the papers for the London COSAC showed, Presidencies are increasingly asking the secretariat to perform other additional tasks to assist them in preparing for COSAC meetings. In order to effectively perform these tasks and deliver the results increasingly expected by the politicians inside and outside COSAC, an effective secretariat is essential.

The permanent member: The permanent member is the only member of staff who works fulltime for the COSAC. All the officials from the national parliaments of the Presidential Troika and the European Parliament combine their work for COSAC with other duties for their 'home' parliament.

The permanent member brings consistency, experience, and continuity to the work of the secretariat. The advice and support that the secretariat brings to the Presidencies, and the preparation of COSAC meetings, is therefore of a higher standard. Without the permanent member, no member of staff would stay in the secretariat for more than 18 months. Without a permanent member, the secretariat and the Presidencies would be re-inventing the wheel for each COSAC meeting. Having a permanent member in the secretariat saves work for the Presidency parliament. The same results would not be achieved by Presidencies coordinating.

Dissenting views: The representatives of the Italian Senate and Chamber of Deputies disagree with the majority. In the Italian view, COSAC's Rules of Procedure should first be amended before the life of the secretariat is extended. The Italian parliament also considers that the tasks of the secretariat could easily be assumed by staff from the Presidency and other Troika parliaments.

The representative of the Hungarian Parliament, while agreeing that the secretariat is useful, noted that the Presidency's proposal does not go far enough in supporting candidates from member states whose parliaments cannot afford to detach a staff member for two years. The Hungarian representative proposed that the permanent member of the secretariat could be replaced by having every six months a full-time staff member seconded from the country holding the Presidency. In the working group, the majority maintained that the permanent member is a vital component of the secretariat. The proposal that a staff member of the Presidency parliament should be assigned to COSAC full-time would be good for COSAC. However, parliaments' financial resources vary, and not every national parliament can spare a person to work fulltime for COSAC, even during its Presidency. The working group thus concludes that while it is desirable that the Presidency parliament provides a full-time member to the Secretariat, and this is possible under the current arrangement, it should not be made mandatory. The working group also noted that the Presidency's proposal does provide additional support for parliaments in lower-GNP Member States: this issue is dealt with in the next chapter.

Conclusions:

- All parliaments that answered the questionnaire agree that the COSAC Secretariat is useful and necessary. It would thus appear that **there is unanimous support for extending the life of the secretariat on a permanent basis.**
- A large majority of the parliaments consider that a longer-term and full-time ("permanent") member is essential for the effectiveness of the secretariat.

CO-FINANCING

The majority of the parliaments that answered the questionnaire agree with the Presidency's basic premise that a viable arrangement of the secretariat would require that the costs of maintaining a permanent member of the secretariat should be shared as widely as possible among the member states.

Virtually all parliaments agreed that, for legal reasons, the permanent member of the secretariat needs to be a person seconded by a member parliament. There was also agreement that the costs for seconding a staff member to Brussels for two years are so high that few parliaments can assume them. This limits the pool of qualified applicants who can apply for the post of permanent member. A large majority agreed that some form of co-financing is necessary.

All member states would prefer that the entire COSAC membership participates in funding the secretariat. The majority of Member States' parliaments agree that, if unanimity can not be found for co-financing the permanent member, a "coalition of the willing" is a possible solution.

The working group dealt briefly with how a co-financing arrangement could be made as fair as possible to parliaments with different financial resources. It was noted that, while under a cofinancing arrangement many parliaments are unable to contribute *formally* towards the salary costs of the parliament seconding the permanent member, the cofinancing model proposed will include a *de facto* contribution to those costs, as co-financing would apply to the cost-of-living adjustment and housing allowance paid to staff seconded to Brussels, and these are typically greater for staff assigned from lower-GNP countries.

The working group considers that, as long as co-financing is based on a coalition of the willing, contributions should be calculated as equal fractions (e.g. 1/14) rather than on a GNP-basis. This is because parliaments need to know in advance the size of any economic commitments they make; the magnitude of GNP-based commitments would not be known until every commitment has been recorded. Also, the relatively small amounts involved justify keeping calculations as simple as possible.

It was agreed that, for co-financing to work, there should be a specified minimum number of parliaments participating in the arrangement. The most widely accepted view was that the minimum number should correspond to "one-half-plus-one" of the national parliaments, i.e. 14 at the EU's 2007 membership. The working group notes that the

membership of COSAC is by national parliaments not chambers; it follows that it is desirable that the chambers of bicameral parliaments make a joint commitment to participate in co-financing⁴.

So far, eleven national parliaments have indicated that they are willing – in principle and subject to final agreement on practical and administrative issues – to join the coalition of the willing. As the replies of several parliaments are still outstanding, the working group believes that it is realistic to open the coalition of the willing at the XXXVI COSAC.

Conclusions

- The working group proposes that, unless a unanimous decision is reached at the XXXVI COSAC on co-funding the permanent member of the COSAC secretariat, a private agreement is made among willing parliaments to share in the costs for the permanent member.
- This arrangement shall in no way affect the secretariat's duty to serve all participating parliaments on an equal basis, nor the overall responsibility of the Presidency-in-office for the running of COSAC and the secretariat.
- The agreement shall be open for signature until the Lisbon COSAC, which will determine whether a unanimous decision on the status and financing of the secretariat can be achieved. If not, the agreement shall become effective when the national parliaments of at least 14 member states have joined. There is no barrier to other parliaments joining the agreement after that point.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Different parliaments have widely differing administrative rules that regulate what kinds of expenditure they may co-finance and the accounting and audit rules that should apply. On the other hand the sums involved are small: with the minimum number of 14 participating parliaments, each parliament would contribute less than € 6.000 per year. The contributions would not differ much in kind from a membership fee or a service charge. The working group thus considers that it will be possible to find an arrangement that is acceptable to all participating parliamentary administrations.

There is agreement that the actual salary of the permanent member of the secretariat should be paid by the parliament seconding him or her. The same applies to salary-linked payments like payroll taxes, pension contributions etc. Salary is a question between the seconding parliament and the staff member; it does not concern anyone else. **Salaries (and salary-linked payments) would thus not be eligible for co-financing.**

⁴ It would be for the two chambers to agree between themselves how to divide the contribution of that national parliament. The working group considers that, if the chambers of bicameral parliaments are unable to make a joint commitment to co-financing the secretariat, there is no objection in principle to a single chamber of a bicameral parliament joining the coalition of the willing.

There is agreement that **co-financing should apply to COSAC's office costs**. These include telecommunications and computer costs, stationery etc. The European Parliament provides the COSAC secretariat with furnished office space free of charge.

There is also broad agreement that **co-financing should apply to the additional costs of maintaining a staff member in Brussels**. Such costs may take the form of, for example, an overseas allowance, a cost-of-living adjustment or a special housing allowance.

It was agreed that total **contributions to the costs for the permanent member should be subject to a limit of € 80.000 per year**. This sum is more than the current level of acceptable expenditure (approximately € 63.500), but is estimated to be less than the total expenditure for a staff-member with a family or coming from a low-salary Member State. If acceptable expenditure is less than the limit, the coalition of the willing would only contribute to the actual cost.

It was agreed that the contributions would be paid retrospectively: The parliament seconding the permanent member of the secretariat would compile the total acceptable expenditure, calculate the contributions to be paid by the members of the coalition of the willing, and send a bill to them. The bill should also include certification that the expenditure has been accounted for and audited according to the rules of the parliament seconding the permanent member.

DECISION-MAKING

The working group notes that continuing the life of the COSAC secretariat has unanimous support. There is also close-to-unanimous support for having the permanent member as a fixture of the secretariat. This momentum should be maintained, for example by a mention in the conclusions of the XXXVI COSAC calling for implementation during 2007.

Assuming that unanimity can not be found for a scheme to co-finance the costs for the permanent member, the working group notes that a voluntary arrangement among those parliaments that are willing needs no formal decision by COSAC. The issue of the secretariat is covered by Article 11.7 of the Rules of Procedure and the Rome mandate; neither of these is affected by the private arrangement proposed between parliaments to contribute to the financial costs of a member of staff seconded from a national parliament to the secretariat. The Presidency would simply ask each national delegation, whether it would join the arrangement and indicate the results in its draft conclusions.

The working group proposes that the commitment by individual parliaments to take part in the co-financing scheme should be made in the form of a letter to the Presidency-in-office of COSAC. A specimen letter is enclosed.

ANNEXES

Draft

LETTER OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CO-FINANCING OF THE PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE COSAC SECRETARIAT

To:
The Chairman of the Grand Committee
of the Parliament of Finland

On behalf of *[Parliament]*⁵, I wish to indicate that our Parliament is prepared to take part in the co-financing of the permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat. This undertaking is given subject to the conditions specified below.

[Delete if not applicable: This undertaking is subject to the approval of the administration of our Parliament. Final confirmation will be given in writing by [date].]

1. The commitment to participate in the co-financing of the permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat is valid from 1 January 2008 until 31 December 2009.
2. The commitment is valid only if the national parliaments of at least thirteen other Member States make a similar commitment.
3. The commitment is to pay a share of the cost of maintaining the permanent member of the COSAC secretariat, up to a maximum expenditure of eighty thousand euros (€ 80.000) per year. The type of expenditure for which the contribution may be used ("approved expenditure") is defined in paragraph 4. The share is calculated by dividing the approved expenditure, up to € 80.000, by the number of parliaments taking part in the co-financing.

The maximum contribution of the *[Parliament]* is € 5.714,29 per year⁶.

The contribution will be paid promptly on request to the parliament that has seconded a staff member to serve as the permanent member of COSAC's Secretariat ("the administrating parliament"), after the end of the year to which the contribution refers. The administrating parliament will provide to the other parliaments participating in the co-financing a report of its approved

⁵ NB. It is desirable that bicameral parliaments make their commitment jointly – in whatever form is most convenient to them.

⁶ I.e. 1/14 of € 80.000.

expenditure for maintaining the permanent member of the secretariat. It will certify that the expenditure has been accounted and audited according to the rules of the administrating parliament. The report will be provided with the request for payment as soon as possible after the end of each calendar year.

4. The contribution may be used by the administrating parliament for the costs of running COSAC's office (including, but not limited to official travel, computer, telecommunications and stationery costs) and to help cover the ancillary costs, in excess of salary and salary-linked payments, of maintaining a staff member in Brussels (including, but not limited to away-from-home allowances, housing in Brussels, allowances for travelling home, removal costs on appointment and end-of-service). The contribution is not to be used towards the regular salary paid by the administrating parliament or for salary-linked payments (including payroll taxes, pension contributions etc.).

5. If the administrating parliament's approved expenditure is less than € 80.000, the contribution will be calculated as a share of the actual expenditure. If the lump-sum contribution does not cover the approved expenses (cf. paragraph 4), the deficit will be absorbed by the administrating parliament.

6. If COSAC adopts a financing scheme for the Secretariat that applies to all member state parliaments, the arrangement referred to in this letter of intent will become null and void on the date when COSAC's financing scheme becomes effective. The administrating parliament will make an account of contributions and expenditures until that date, and return any surplus to contributing parliaments on a pro-rata basis.

(Date)

signature

title

Parliament/Chamber

The members of the working group

AT	Nationalrat	Gerhard	Koller
BE	House of Representatives	Hugo	D'Hollander
BE	Senate	Tim	De Bondt
CZ	Ch of Deputies	Lenka	Mozgova
DE	Bundesrat	Andreas	Veit
DE	Bundestag	Jan	Schlichting
DK	Folketinget	Morten	Knudsen
FI	Eduskunta	Peter	Saramo
FR	Assemblée Nationale	Marie France	Hérin
FR	Sénat	Aurore	Bassy
HU	National Assembly	Zoltan	Horvath
IE	Houses of the Oireachtas	Anne-Marie	Fahy
IT	Camera dei Deputati	Gianfranco	Neri
LU	Chamber of Deputies	Isabelle	Barra
LV	Saeima	Girts	Ostrovskis
MT	House of Representatives	Melanie	Vella
NL	Senate	Hester	Menninga
PL	Sejm	Kaja	Krawczyk
PL	Senate	Stanislaw	Puzyna
PT	Assembleia da República	Bruno	Pinheiro
RO	Parliament	Andrei	Mocearov
SI	National Assembly	Zvone	Bergant
SI	National Council	Dusan	Strus
SK	National Council	Maria	Kroslakova
UK	H of Commons	Alistair	Doherty
UK	H of Lords	Richard	McLean
EP	(Observer)	Jan	Patek
TR	(Observer)	Ulas	Kirli
COSAC	(Secretariat)	Sarita	Kaukaoja



CO-FINANCING THE PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE COSAC SECRETARIAT

The permanent member provides the necessary continuity and the institutional memory to the COSAC Secretariat, which otherwise consists of rotating staff from the Troika member parliaments. In recognition of this, COSAC should assure the continuity of the post of permanent member of the Secretariat.

So far, the permanent members of the COSAC Secretariat have been provided through the voluntary contributions of first the Danish and then the Finnish Parliaments, which assumed all related costs⁷. Therefore, only parliaments with sufficient financial resources were in a position to put forward candidates for the post of the permanent member. In order to increase equality between parliaments and to fulfil the London mandate, a method of sharing the cost should be found. For reasons of practicability, a cautious approach is suggested:

COSAC does not have the legal personality needed to act as an employer in Brussels. Also, questions of applicable law, tax regime, social insurance etc. would cause undue difficulty in recruiting staff. Therefore, the permanent member should continue to be a member of the staff of a national parliament for the foreseeable future. It follows that each permanent member of the secretariat will be remunerated according to the rules of his/her national parliament.

However, a member of staff of a national parliament who is seconded to the COSAC post will incur additional, ancillary costs which he or she should not be expected to cover from the remuneration paid by the seconding institution. These include away-from-home-allowances, housing in Brussels, allowances for travelling home etc. In addition, the running of the COSAC secretariat results in a limited number of overhead costs such as website hosting, ADSL connections, travel expenses for participation in COSAC meetings, office equipment etc. (cf. the estimate attached). These extra costs should be borne by all parliaments on an equitable basis⁸.

It is suggested that COSAC agrees on a lump sum of 80.000 € per year which would cover the ancillary cost (in excess of salary) of seconding a member of staff to the COSAC secretariat, office costs and other obligatory expenses. The total amount would be credited to the "home parliament" of the permanent member, not to the individual. The "home parliament" would also take responsibility for budgetary control. An overview of the actual use of the funds would be presented to the attention of the COSAC Conference in spring each year. Any unused funds would be deducted from the lump sum to be collected in the following year.

This lump sum could be divided among the participating national parliaments either on a pro-rata basis or according to the relative strength the GNP of Member States (using the basic method applied in establishing the European Union's own resources). Depending on the number of participating parliaments, the contribution of each chamber could be between 2.963 € and 8.000 € per year on a pro-rata basis (80.000 € divided by 27 and by 10). Applying a GNP criterion is, in the view of the Presidency, not practical, as participation in these costs is proposed to be voluntary: when signing up, each parliament needs to know the sum it is signing up for. Also, the

⁷ Since 2004, the average annual cost of maintaining a permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat has been about 160.000 €/year, including salary.

⁸ The European Parliament already provides for an office, an internal telephone and the basic office equipment analogous to its provision of office facilities to the representatives of EU national parliaments on the premises of the European Parliament. Therefore it should be noted that the European Parliament is already a *de facto* contributor towards the financing of the permanent member.

GNP criterion is rather cumbersome, in view of the relatively small amounts involved. Bicameral parliaments should make their own internal arrangements for the assignment of their parliament's contribution.

In the event that a consensus cannot be reached amongst all parliaments which are members of COSAC, a possibility to opt out should be considered for those parliaments not willing to contribute. These national Parliaments will naturally still participate on fully equal terms in the work of COSAC, and still benefit from the services provided by the COSAC Secretariat. They would be invited to join the common financing scheme at a later stage if they so wish. The permanent member and the secretariat would continue to be accountable towards COSAC in its entirety.

The Finnish presidency proposes

- that co-financing comes in to effect when choosing the next permanent member for the period 2008 - 2010.
- that COSAC agrees on a lump sum to be covered by contributions from [willing] Member States and credited to the "home parliament" of the permanent staff member. This lump sum would cover office costs and contribute to the ancillary costs for the staff member.
- The annual lump sum is fixed at 80.000 € per year for the years 2008 – 2010.
- This arrangement will be formalised as an agreement among the national parliaments taking part, and mentioned in the conclusions of the Helsinki COSAC.
- The agreement will be conditional on at least ten parliaments taking part in the arrangement on a pro-rata basis.

MODIFICATION OF COSAC'S RULES OF PROCEDURE REGARDING THE SECRETARIAT

The XXXIV COSAC decided that "modification of COSAC's Rules of Procedure regarding the secretariat should also be discussed within the period of two years from 15 January 2006." The Finnish Presidency has made no proposals, but prior to the chairpersons' meeting invited suggestions from the Troika bearing in mind the following considerations:

- The Secretariat's prominent role in implementing the work of COSAC indicates that the Secretariat should be mentioned in the Rules of Procedure.
- The case could also be made that the Rules of Procedure need to be examined in other respects, as well. The role of the Secretariat could also be examined in the context of a wider examination of the RoP.
- Any future amendment of the European Union's treaty system will necessitate a review of COSAC's Rules of Procedure.
- Short of amending the RoP, the same result could also be achieved when appointing the current permanent member of the Secretariat by renewing and, if necessary, amending the COSAC conclusions adopted when creating the Secretariat, and appointing the first two permanent members of the Secretariat.

As no proposals have been received, the Presidency proposes to leave the question of amending the rules of the procedure to future presidencies.

Background and mandate

For almost as long as COSAC has existed there has been an ongoing debate about the need and eventual form of a COSAC secretariat. During the Danish presidency (autumn 2002) a working group was set up in order to reform the work of COSAC. One of its tasks was to compare existing formulas of organising a secretariat for different interparliamentary organisations⁹. Among the recommendations a formula for co-financing salary and ancillary costs of the secretariat was introduced.

Following discussion under the Danish, Greek and Italian Presidencies in 2002-03 concerning a Danish proposal for a COSAC secretariat, the COSAC secretariat was established at the XXX COSAC in Rome in October 2003 for a trial period of two years. Recalling the Rome guidelines on the secretariat¹⁰ it was decided that the secretariat will consist of maximum five members of whom four will be detached respectively by the Troika members and the EP, during the period of 18 months. The fifth member of the secretariat will be 'permanent' and will be appointed upon presentation by the Troika, selected by the Chairpersons of the national delegations. The permanent member, for practical reasons, has to be seconded by one of the national Parliaments.

In most cases the members of the secretariat have been national parliament representatives or civil servants of the European parliament who have taken up the COSAC duties in addition to their function in Brussels. Therefore the "permanent member" is actually the only one working full time for COSAC.

Remuneration and other expenses of the members of the secretariat are borne by their respective parliaments. The European Parliament has provided offices and facilities (e.g. computers, printers, paper and telephones) in its building in Brussels free of charge. The Danish Parliament provided software for the COSAC website in March 2004.

The contribution adopted by the XXXIII COSAC in Luxembourg in May 2005 invited the incoming UK Presidency "to evaluate the functioning of the secretariat". The UK Presidency fulfilled this mandate by examining the work of the secretariat in relation to the decision of the Rome COSAC. The UK Presidency also considered the need for the secretariat and the list of tasks given to it¹¹.

Based on the work done by the UK Presidency, the Conclusions of the XXXIV COSAC state the following on the COSAC secretariat:

5.1 Further to the review of the functioning of the Secretariat conducted by the UK Presidency in accordance with the decision of the XXX COSAC (the Rome Mandate), and the recommendation of the COSAC Chairpersons, and noting that the evidence gathered by the Presidency demonstrates that the work of the Secretariat has contributed to the effectiveness of COSAC, especially through the compiling of reports which have informed COSAC debates, COSAC has agreed that the Secretariat, with a permanent member, should continue to operate.

5.2 COSAC records its appreciation of the work of Morten Knudsen. COSAC thanks the Folketing of Denmark for facilitating and funding the secondment of Morten Knudsen to the post.

5.3 COSAC welcomes the decision of the chairpersons to appoint Ms Sarita Kaukaoja, the Eduskunta's permanent representative in Brussels since June 2000, to the post of permanent member of the COSAC secretariat for a period of two years from 15 January 2006.

5.4 COSAC thanks the Eduskunta of Finland for facilitating and funding the secondment of Ms Sarita Kaukaoja to the post.

⁹ The note on the establishment of the secretariat can be found on the COSAC website

http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/27/wg_december/wg_dec4/

and the annex to the document: http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/27/wg_december/wg_dec5/

¹⁰ <http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/30/cosac/doc/>

¹¹ The UK presidency note "review of the secretariat":

<http://www.cosac.eu/en/meetings/London2005/ordinary/meetingdocuments/secretariat/>

5.5 COSAC notes the case made for the co-financing of the permanent post and has decided that the question of the financing of the post needs to be further examined. Modification of COSAC's Rules of Procedure regarding the secretariat should also be discussed within the period of two years from 15 January 2006.

* * *

Estimate of the annual ancillary costs for a permanent member of the secretariat

(Calculations based on a single person without children)

OFFICE COSTS (incl. cost of the website)

Website hosting contract ¹² - monthly fee	
Basic price	€ 90,00
Automatic services	€ 50,00
Traffic, 6 Gb à € 8,00	€ 48,00
Total	<u>€ 188,00</u>
= Annual fee 12 x 188	€ 2256
(if maintenance is needed the price is € 40/hour. Estimation:	€ 2000)
Annual DNS costs for cosac.eu (registration fees already paid by Finnish Parliament)	€ 100
Annual DNS costs for cosac.org	€ 100
Bi-annual e-mail service (secretariat@cosac.eu) /€ 234 x 2 year	€ 468
ASDNL -connection in the office (€ 150/month) x 12	€ 1800
Mobile telephone approx. (€ 250/month) x 12	€ 3000

Misc.: Office supplies, office equipment (Parliament of Finland bought a fax/scanner for the office), portable computer, stamps, newspapers etc. € 5000

Library and archives¹³ € 2000

Approx. € 17 000
(€ 21 000 with VAT)

OTHER OBLIGATORY EXPENSES: i.e. travelling to COSAC-meetings

(Estimated minimum costs)

Travel (minimum 6 x European flights) - economy class approx. € 500	€ 3000
Hotel nights (10 x € 150)	€ 1500
Taxis/trains - other airport travel	€ 1000

Approx. € 5500

EXPENSES RESULTING FROM RESIDING IN BRUSSELS (excluding basic salary)

Average rent for a 1 bedroom apartment for one person: € 1500 x 12 months	€ 18 000
Travel (home 2 x year)	€ 1000
Expatriation allowance and insurances approx. € 1000 x 12 months	€ 12 000
Moving costs one way approx. € 10 000	€ 10 000

Approx. €41 000

Total cost per year Approx € 63.500

¹² The hosting price consist of three elements:

- 1) A basis price for the services above (band width, backup, performance guarantee and statistics). The basis price is 90 €/month.
- 2) A price that depends on the number and use of automatic services (subscription, crawlers, search indexing, scripts and batch). The prices for automatic services vary between 50 and 160 €/month. The Cosac site is for now in lowest category regarding automatic services. The price is thus 50 €/month
- 3) Finally, there is a price for the traffic on the website. The traffic is measured in transferred Gb. The price is 8 € pr. GB. The Cosac website presently transfers around 6 Gb. The price is thus 48 €/month.

More automatic services or surpassing the level of traffic with more than 20% means that the price is renegotiated

¹³ One of the main responsibilities of the permanent member is to take care of the archives and small collections of publications relating to national parliaments. Currently all material (incl. dictionaries) belong to the parliament of Finland.



Questionnaire concerning
Co-Financing The Permanent Member Of The
Cosac Secretariat
SUMMARY OF REPLIES

1. The Conclusions of the XXXIV COSAC found that "the work of the Secretariat has contributed to the effectiveness of COSAC ... (and) ... the Secretariat, with a permanent member, should continue to operate".
Does your parliament/chamber agree with this finding?

Yes	BE (HoR, S), BG, CZ (CoD, S), DE (BR, Bt), DK, EE, IE, FR (NA, S), HU, LV, LU, MT, NL (TK, S), PL (Sejm, Sen), PT, RO, SK, SI (NA), UK (HoL, HoC)
No	IT (CdD, S)
Remarks	

2. The permanent member of the COSAC secretariat is currently provided by one member state parliament, which seconds a staff member to the COSAC Secretariat and absorbs the entire cost for the staff member and the non-fixed costs for running the office. The Presidency believes that this method of financing the office and the post of the permanent member of the Secretariat is not sustainable in the long term. It harms the continuity of the post, as the appointment of a new permanent member is likely to be postponed to the latest possible moment. This system of financing also discriminates against applicants from member states, whose parliaments do not have the financial resources to pay for a Brussels-based staff member for three years.

Does your parliament/chamber agree with the Presidency's opinion?

Yes	BE (HoR, S), BG, CZ (CoD, S), DE (BR, Bt), DK, IE, FR (NA, S), HU, LV, LU, MT, NL (TK, S), PL (Sejm, Sen), PT, RO, SK, SI (NA), UK (HoL, HoC)
No	IT (CdD, S)
Remarks	EE: no comment;

3. The Presidency believes that COSAC cannot, at the moment, directly employ a staff member. COSAC does not have an independent budget, and does not have the legal status needed to act as an employer in Belgium. The legal difficulties are complex and are unlikely to be resolved before a new permanent member should be employed, from 2008. It follows that the next permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat will need to be, for purposes of employment law, a staff member of a member state parliament.

Does your parliament/chamber agree with the Presidency's opinion?

Yes	BE (HoR, S), BG, CZ (CoD, S), DE (BR, Bt), DK, EE, IE, FR (NA, S), HU, LV, LU, MT, NL (TK, S), PL (Sejm, Sen), PT, RO, SK, SI (NA), UK (HoL, HoC)
No	IT (CdD, S)
Remarks	SI adds that proposal may be seen as starting point for discussion of status of permanent member. PL (Sejm): notes differences in salary levels between national parliaments.

The Presidency has outlined in its memorandum of 9 October 2006 a proposal for co-financing the post of permanent member of the COSAC Secretariat. The Presidency has also drafted a "letter of intent" detailing

what commitments this proposal would require of participating Parliaments. We have reserved space for general comments below, but ask you first to reflect on the following issues:

4. The Presidency believes that, for political and legal reasons, it is not practicable to create before 2008 a system of co-financing that would be compulsory for all member states. The Presidency concludes that, for the near future, co-financing should be assured by a "coalition of the willing". The Presidency takes it for granted that the COSAC Secretariat will continue to serve all member state parliaments, irrespective of whether they contribute to the costs.

Does your parliament/chamber agree with the Presidency's conclusion?

Yes	BE (HoR, S), CZ (CoD, S), DK, EE, IE, FR (NA, S), LV, LU, MT, NL (TK, S), PL (Sen), RO, SK, UK (HoL, HoC)
No	IT (CdD, S)
Remarks	BG: would prefer a unanimous arrangement. DE (BR, Bt) would prefer a unanimous arrangement. EE: agrees with Presidency, but a universal and compulsory arrangement should be explored first. IE agrees with Presidency assessment, but notes that the preferable solution would be for all parliaments to participate, in proportion to their ability. HU suggests that it might be better to replace the permanent representative with an additional staff member of the Presidency country, to be subject to co-financing. PL (Sejm): expresses preference for all parliaments participating. PT: Coalition of the willing could lead to problems, but PT may consider, if this approach has majority support. SI (NA): issue unresolved.

5. The Presidency believes that, for the "coalition of the willing" to be a realistic approach, a minimum of ten national parliaments should participate. According to the Presidency's memorandum, the maximum contribution of each national parliament would be 8.000 Euros.

Does your parliament/chamber agree that a minimum number of participants is a necessary pre-condition of the Presidency's co-financing proposal? What should the minimum number of participants be?

Yes (10)	BE (HoR, S), CZ (CoD), DK, IE, FR (NA, S), LU, MT, NL (TK, S), PL (Sen), RO, SK
No	IT (CdD, S)
Remarks	BE (S): between 10 and half the member states. BG: prefer unanimous arrangement. CZ (S): minimum 12 member states. DE (BR): there should be a minimum number of participants and a fixed maximum contribution. EE: no comment. IE: a majority of member state parliaments (14). HU: different basic proposal, cf. qu. 4. LV: Half the member states. NL (S+TK): minimum 10, preferably 15. PL (Sejm): All 27. PT: Majority of MS parliaments (14). SI (NA): depends on position on qu. 4. UK (HoL) agree on the principle. (HoC) agree with proposal, but note the problem of "free riders".

6. The Presidency proposes that the 80.000 Euros to be raised should be shared equally among the national parliaments taking part. The minimum contribution would be 2.963 Euros and the maximum 8.000 € per year. The Presidency does not propose linking contributions to member states GNP, because this would cause administrative difficulty (some parliaments cannot get permission to sign up, unless the sum is known; with GNP-based contributions, the range would be much larger than the maximum and minimum indicated above). In any case the sums in question are believed to be within the means of all participating parliaments.

Does your parliament/chamber agree with the Presidency's assessment? If not, how would a system of GNP-based contributions be calculated and implemented?

Yes	BE (HoR), CZ (CoD, S), DK, EE, IE, FR (NA, S), LV, LU, MT, NL (TK, S), PL (Sejm), RO, SK, UK (HoL, HoC)
No	IT (CdD, S)
Remarks	BE (S): No position. BG: Wishes further discussion. EE: no comment. IE: as in qu. 4. HU: different basic proposal, cf. qu. 8. PL (S) prefers GDP per capita to be considered in allocating contributions. PT: No reply at this stage. SI (NA): subject to position on qu. 4 and working group conclusions.

7. Would your parliament/chamber be prepared in principle to join the "coalition of the willing", as outlined in the Presidency's memorandum?

If yes, the following additional information would be helpful:

7a. Could your parliament/chamber give an informal or formal undertaking to join the "coalition of the willing" by the Helsinki COSAC? If informal, how soon could a formal commitment be given?

7b. The Presidency proposal implies that a relatively small amount of money is collected annually from the participating parliaments, probably by invoice or letter. The Presidency notes that a comparable system of co-financing has been implemented for the Conference of Speakers since 2005 (all member state parliaments pay their share of the interpretation costs to the host parliament on a pro-rata basis), so there is a precedent for parliaments transferring money to other parliaments for mutual projects. The Presidency proposes that the parliament seconding the next permanent member of the Secretariat will collect the funds from the "coalition of the willing", be responsible for the administration of these funds and report on their use annually. The Presidency also proposes that, if there is a surplus from one year, it will be deducted from the sum raised the next year (i.e. if the Secretariat spends only 67.000 euros, there will be 13.000 € less to collect the next year).

Bearing in mind the administrative rules of your parliament/chamber, do you see a need to amend any of these proposals? Please specify.

BE	HoR: Broadly agrees with Presidency proposal. S: Is willing to join in principle, but formalisation may be delayed until Berlin COSAC. Administrative details require further internal study.
BG	Will join a unanimous decision by COSAC.
CZ (CoD, S)	Agrees in principle; can sign up (CoD: formally; S: informally) before Helsinki COSAC; no administrative problems.
DE (BR, Bt)	Agree in principle and ready to join. Bt has reservations about legal basis.
DK	Agrees in principle; can sign up (informally) before Helsinki COSAC; no administrative problems.
EE	Not at the moment.
IE	Agrees in principle, can sign up before Helsinki COSAC; suggests that contributions be collected ex-post.
FR (AN, S)	Agrees in principle, can sign up before Helsinki COSAC; (AN needs internal consultation on administrative details).
HU	HU proposes an alternative arrangement; cf. qu. 8.
IT (CdD, S)	IT considers that any secretariat arrangement should be preceded by an amendment of COSAC's rules of procedure.
LV	Agrees with the proposal and the administrative set-up, but can answer on LV participation later – by Helsinki COSAC.
LU	Agrees in principle; can sign up (formally) before Helsinki COSAC; no administrative problems.
MT	Although in favour of Presidency proposal, MT is not currently able to sign up
NL (S, TK)	Agrees in principle; can sign up (informally) before Helsinki COSAC; S: no administrative problems; TK: administrative issue needs internal consultation..
PL (S)	(Sen): Agrees in principle; can sign up (formally) by end of year; tentatively no administrative problems. (Sejm): Yes, provided all MS parliaments join.
PT	No reply at this stage.
RO	The Romanian parliament has already formally approved participation in the presidency scheme. In future, the organisation of the secretariat may need revision.
SK	Slovakia plans to join the coalition of the willing; the date for a formal commitment needs to be confirmed and the administrative arrangements need further study.
SI (NA)	Issue still being discussed.
UK (HoL)	No objections in principle, but several practical and administrative questions remain to be sorted. Participation will depend on outcome of working group and decision of internal bodies.

8. If your parliament/chamber favours another approach than that proposed by the Presidency, please explain your proposal.

HU	We agree that in the COSAC Secretariat one staff member should deal full time only
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	<p>with COSAC and that this member of the Secretariat should be financed by the national parliaments. However the proposal of the Presidency does not abolish one of the most problematic elements of the current situation, i.e. that it “discriminates against applicants from member states, whose parliaments do not have the financial resources to pay for a Brussels-based staff member for three years”, since the Presidency’s proposal envisages to co-finance only one part of the costs and the salary of the permanent member should be further financed by his/her own parliament. We think that this would still exclude several parliaments to make nominations for the permanent member. On the other hand we understand why the Presidency did not propose to share also the salary of the permanent member, since this would open very sensitive debates. However all these mean that in this phase we cannot concentrate only on one option and we have to consider other options and approaches as well.</p> <p>We are not sure that a permanent member for two or three years is the only way to keep the Secretariat operational. Another solution could be if during each Presidency the national parliament of the country holding the Presidency could delegate one additional staff member to Brussels who would deal exclusively with COSAC (so the person could not be the same as the permanent representative). This system could ensure the best coordination with the Presidency especially in the organization of the COSAC plenary and the Chairpersons’ meetings. From budgetary point of view it would be more manageable and simple as well, since during its Presidency each national parliament has a special budget. This system would also ensure equal chances and equal workload, since all the Member States would have its turn. Another advantage that no financial administration (reimbursement, etc.) is needed among parliaments in this system. It would also eliminate the uncertainty concerning the continuity of the post.</p>