

Chairman to the European Affairs Committee

Folketinget, Denmark

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Proposal for a contribution to the XXXIInd COSAC

I. Introduction

During the next two years Member States will be considering the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, either through the direct ratification in the national parliaments or through national referendums. The enhanced democratic legitimacy of the European Union that the Constitutional Treaty provides for - through an enhanced role for the European Parliament and the National Parliaments - will be a crucial factor in the ratification of the Treaty.

Although the Constitutional Treaty will not come into force before November 2006, it is crucial that Member States, National Parliaments and the citizens of Europe are aware of the democratic benefits that the Constitutional Treaty provides for. By promoting an effective and efficient method of cooperation and information exchange between parliaments in the European Union, COSAC will facilitate an anchoring of EU-policy in the National Parliaments.

COSAC should therefore continue the debate on how best to promote the exchange of information between National Parliaments and the Treaty's provisions on the "subsidiarity test" that has already begun.

In particular COSAC should address how it will provide for the exchange of information with regards to the early warning mechanism in the Treaty.

The future role of COSAC in this regard should take into account the work being done by the Speakers Conference in the IPEX Working Group, and should specifically state how COSAC envisions its role vis á vis IPEX. A specific role for COSAC should be formulated in order to ensure that there is no duplication of work with regards to interparliamentary cooperation. It should be noted, that the XXIXth COSAC encouraged the cooperation between COSAC and the IPEX Working Group (section 3).

A formal request by COSAC to cooperate with the Speakers Conference through the IPEX database could be forwarded to the next meeting at the Conference of Speakers which will take place in Budapest on May 6-7 2005.

II. Specific proposal to the contribution of the XXXIInd COSAC

COSAC recognizes its future obligations as formulated in the Constitutional Treaty's Protocol nr. 1 on the role of national parliaments in the European Union, in particular with regards to COSAC's role in the promotion of the exchange of information and best practices between national Parliaments and the European Parliament, including their special committees. The XXXIInd COSAC calls upon the Conference of Presidents of the European Union Parliaments to involve COSAC in the future work with the exchange of information in relation to the early warning mechanism.

In addition, the Luxembourg Presidency is called upon to assess the future role of COSAC and prepare a report, which will be formally debated at the next ordinary meeting of COSAC. The report should analyze the specific role of COSAC and the COSAC Secretariat with regards to the exchange of information in relation to the early warning mechanism and associated matters.

III. Annex – relevant texts

A: Excerpt from the Contribution of the XXI^X COSAC, Athens :

"8. Preparing for an enhanced role of National Parliaments and for intensified inter-parliamentary cooperation:

- a) COSAC may promote the exchange of information and best practices between National Parliaments.
- b) COSAC encourages National Parliaments and the European Parliament to engage in closer and more constructive cooperation.
- c) COSAC supports the best possible use of Information Technology for providing information to and from National Parliaments, the European Parliament and the EU institutions, accordingly to the standards of the IPEX working group."

B: Title II of Protocol 1 of the Constitutional Treaty "Interparliamentary cooperation"

"The European Parliament and the national Parliaments shall together determine how interparliamentary cooperation may be effectively and regularly organised and promoted within the European Union.

The Conference of European Affairs Committees may submit any contribution it deems appropriate for the attention of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the Commission. That Conference shall in addition promote the exchange of information and best practice between Member States' Parliaments and the European Parliament, including their special committees. The Conference may also organise interparliamentary conferences on specific topics, in particular to debate matters of common foreign and security policy and of common security and defence policy. Contributions from the Conference shall in no way bind national Parliaments or prejudice their positions."