

COSAC

Working Group

**Involvement of
Regional Legislative Assemblies in
COSAC?**

19 February 2004

Questionnaire on the question of involvement of Regional Legislative assemblies

The XXX COSAC in Rome decided in October 2003 to set up a Working Group to prepare recommendations to the question of involving *Regional Legislative Assemblies* in the work of COSAC. The Working Group met for the first time in Dublin on 19 February.

The Irish Presidency circulated on 29 January 2004 a *questionnaire* to the chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees of the National Parliaments and the European Parliament in order to prepare the debate in the Working Group. The purpose was to get a better feeling of the views of the Parliaments as regards this question and bearing in mind that Member States and accession countries have very different constitutional systems when it comes to the role and powers of Regional Assemblies, to facilitate a possible solution.

The COSAC-Secretariat had as of Wednesday morning 18 February received 18 replies from the 14 national parliaments¹ in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom. 12 parliaments did not reply.

In 8 out of the 18 replies it was stated that there should be some kind of role for Regional Legislative Assemblies in COSAC either as observers or as participants in the national delegations. In 5 of the favourable replies observer status was proposed for the regional assemblies, while 3 suggested including regional representatives as participants in the national COSAC delegations. However, the latter underlined at the same time that the decision to cede a seat should be left to the discretion of each national parliament.

In 10 replies involvement was rejected, while five of these indicated their will to discuss an observer status for the regional assemblies.

The wording of the 18 replies to the questionnaire can be found in the attached annex A.

Table 1

	1. Should Regional Assemblies be involved in COSAC?	3. If YES, how should the regional assemblies be involved?
Austria (both chambers)	Yes	1 participant in national delegation
Belgium (Chamber of representatives)	No	Mais en tant qu' observateurs
Belgium (Senate)	Yes	Observer
Cyprus	Yes	Observer
Czech Republic (chamber)	No	Observer
Czech (Senate)	No	
Denmark	No	
Estonia	No	Ready to discuss observer status

¹ The reason why there are more replies than parliaments is that the secretariat has received two replies from some Parliaments with two-chamber systems – like Belgium, the Czech Republic, the UK and France.

Finland	Yes	Participant in national delegation
France (Assemblée Nationale)	No	
France (Senate)	No	
Germany (Bundesrat)	Yes	1 participant in national delegation
Italy	Yes	3 observers proposed by CALRE and appointed by COSACs troika
Lithuania	Yes	Observers
Luxembourg	No	
Portugal	Yes	Observer within framework of CALRE
United Kingdom (House of Commons)	No	But willing to consider a small number of observers.
United Kingdom (House of Lords)	No	But willing to discuss observer status

History of the debate

On the involvement of Regional Assemblies in COSAC

The question of involving Regional Parliamentary Assemblies in the meetings of COSAC was raised for the first time in October 2002 by the German Bundesrats European Affairs Committee, at the XXVII COSAC in Copenhagen. At the following COSAC meeting in Athens the Bundesrat formally presented an amendment to the “COSAC Rules of Procedure” suggesting that national parliament should have the possibility to cede 1 of its 6 seats to a regional legislative assembly. At the same meeting the Italian delegation proposed to let regional legislative assemblies participate as “observers”. As no consensus was reached on any of these amendments, it was decided to postpone further examination of the matter to the following COSAC, held in Rome on 6 and 7 October 2003.

Three amendments on the table in Rome

At the COSAC in Rome, the German Bundesrat and the delegations of the Belgian and Italian parliaments each submitted an amendment to the COSAC rules of procedure. The delegation of the Bundesrat proposed a rewording of its amendment from Athens suggesting that a national parliament delegation should be allowed to cede a seat to a regional legislative assembly.

The amendment proposed by Belgium went a bit further in scope and suggested that each national parliament be represented by six parliamentarians (not necessarily members of the European and Community Affairs Committee or the national parliament). However it would still be up to each parliament autonomously to determine the composition of its delegation.

Finally, Italy proposed that regional legislative assemblies should be represented by three observers in COSAC – appointed by the COSAC Troika after proposal from CALRE² and after having consulted the “relevant” national delegations in COSAC.

Working group set up in Rome

COSAC decided at its meeting in Rome to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group responsible for any further examining of the issue. It was decided that the Working Group should start its work already during the Irish EU-presidency.

² CALRE stands for “Conference of European Regional Assemblies” and is one of a number of European organisation for the Regional Legislative Assemblies. Other regional organisations at the European level are; REGLES, AER, AEBR or CPMR.

