

Task c): " To draft proposals on how to establish a secretariat for COSAC that ensures the necessary continuity of the work of COSAC, including possible changes in COSAC's rules of procedure

NEW NOTE

Note on the establishment of a COSAC secretariat "Note on the conclusions"

1. Establishing a secretariat

All organisations with even a minimum of tasks have a secretariat to ensure the continuity and coherence required in their work. On an international level, this applies both to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and to the inter-parliamentary assemblies of NATO, the WEU and the OSCE. None of these parliamentary assemblies would be able to cover their work without a secretariat.

This applies in equal measure to inter-parliamentary cooperation within COSAC with a host of concrete tasks requiring completion for COSAC to fulfil its role. This includes the creation of continuity and coherence in its work across 28 European countries and the European Parliament.

Consequently, the recommendation is for a *small* COSAC secretariat to be established.

The enclosed **annexe** contains a detailed description of the questions and possible solutions in connection with establishing such a secretariat. The following conclusions have been reached:

2. Tasks

Under the proposal, the primary tasks of the secretariat would be

- to assist the country holding the presidency with the preparation, convocation and organisation of COSAC meetings (both ordinary and extraordinary),
- to act as a secretariat to meetings of the Troika and of the chairpersons and to be in charge of the preparation, organisation and convocation of these meetings,
- to draw up draft "contributions" from COSAC, cf. the protocol on national parliaments,
- to be in charge of coordination and the exchange of information between national parliaments, including benchmarking and designating "best practices",
- to draw up analyses and draft discussion papers,
- to draw up minutes of meetings within the framework of COSAC,

- to draw up draft budgets for COSAC,
- to act as a point of contact for European Union institutions,
- to be in charge of an official COSAC documentation archive and
- to manage IT cooperation between parliaments, including running the COSAC website.

Further tasks might be added, inter alia those arrived at in the COSAC working group in connection with the group's deliberations on COSAC reform.

3. Staffing

It is estimated that efficient completion of the above tasks would require a secretariat consisting of 5 members of staff employed on contracts of 4 to 5 years' duration.

The recommendation is for a secretariat comprising 1 secretary general and 4 members of staff.

It is proposed that the secretary general be appointed by the COSAC assembly following nomination by the Troika or the meeting of the chairpersons. It is proposed that taking on additional staff be left to the secretary general following agreement with the meeting of the chairpersons.

4. Location

It is recommended that the secretariat be located in Brussels. There have been discussions with representatives of the European Parliament and the Belgian parliament and, in principle, both are prepared to offer office space in their buildings. It is important to work towards a solution which takes into account the need for close cooperation between the secretariat and the permanent representatives of the national parliaments in Brussels, e.g. by locating the secretariat in the same place as the permanent representatives.

5. Costs and financing

With the staffing proposed above, the annual COSAC budget is estimated at approximately EUR 600,000 (EUR 400,000 in salaries and EUR 200,000 for other expenses). To this should be added approximately EUR 100,000 for IT equipment etc.

The proposal is to share the costs equally between the parliaments wishing to participate. This would mean an annual cost per parliament of approximately EUR 40,000 if 15 parliaments and the European Parliament participate. With 25 parliaments and the European Parliament sharing the costs, the annual contribution per parliament would fall to EUR 24,000.