

Task d): "To consider the organisation of future meetings of COSAC including the question of how to involve the sector standing committees as well as the composition of the delegations"

Note on the organisation of COSAC's future meetings¹

1. The present organisation of COSAC's meetings

The leadership of COSAC today follows the general principles for the Presidency of the EU. This is stated in article 11.1 of the existing rules of procedure:

"The European Affairs Committee of the member country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, holds the Presidency of COSAC during the Presidency in question."

Just like the ordinary Presidency of the EU COSAC has a Presidential Troika. COSAC's Presidential Troika comprises the Presidency, the previous and the next Presidency and the European Parliament (article 1.3 of the rules of procedure).

In addition there is a Chairperson's meeting and a COSAC plenary session.

The Presidential Troika and the Chairperson's meeting meet as required. The COSAC plenary session is held every six months in the country holding the Presidency.

This organisational structure must be adapted to meet the challenges and the new tasks that COSAC is faced with. The following measures are therefore proposed:

2. Proposals for the future organisation of COSAC's meetings

2.1 Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments

¹ This note takes its point of departure in the document "13 notes on the Danish COSAC Presidency's draft of 11 July 2002", which was forwarded to all COSAC delegations in advance of the COSAC meeting in Copenhagen from 16 - 18 October 2002. The document is dated 9 October 2002.

It is proposed that the Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments be integrated into COSAC with the aim of strengthening the co-ordination of parliamentary co-operation in the EU. Historically, COSAC has close ties with the **Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments**, as it was that Conference that founded COSAC in May 1989.

The Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments meets once a year and has been holding meetings regularly since 1975. The Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments functions first and foremost as a framework for the exchange of information and experience. The Conference can adopt resolutions by consensus.

The next meeting of the Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments will be in June 2003.

The integration of the Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments into COSAC could be brought about by making the Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments to COSAC's presidium, and it could, in this connection, scrutinise and **approve COSAC's budget**.

Initially such an integration could take the form of a declaration of intent on the part of COSAC. It is a precondition for an actual amendment of the rules of procedure that the Conference of Speakers of the European Parliaments has had the opportunity to consider the issue.

2.2 "Sector standing committee COSAC"

It is within the tasks of the working group to take a closer look at the opportunities for involving the parliaments' sector standing committees and other committees which deal with sector policy issues in connection with COSAC co-operation. This type of co-operation between parliamentary committees is referred to in the following as "sector standing committee COSAC".

The Convention's working group IV on the national parliaments also recommends that the sector committees be included in EU co-operation and, in this connection in COSAC co-operation.

Sector standing committee COSAC's formations could, in the given case, cover all areas of the EU's activities today, including activities belonging under pillar 2 (Common Foreign policy and Security policy) and pillar 3 (Police and Justice Co-operation).

Representatives of the different committees in the national parliaments already meet on various occasions.

What is known as "PARLAPOL" is a forum for meetings of the parliaments' Legal Affairs Committees at which there are discussions of the national parliaments' scrutiny of the work carried out by EUROPOL. PARLAPOL was established on a Dutch initiative and has to date held two meetings.

The chairpersons of the parliaments' foreign policy committees also meet twice a year. The same applies to the chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs Committees (development aid). The parliaments' Defence Committees have also started to meet to discuss security policy issues of common interest to the EU.

Finally, a sector standing committee COSAC was established on a Danish initiative, as the parliaments' Environment Committees now meet regularly to discuss the EU's environmental policy.

A development is hereby already in progress towards enhanced co-operation between the parliaments' sector standing committees and the other committees.

COSAC can support this development by making itself available as a support structure for the parliaments' sector standing committees and allowing sector standing committee COSAC to use the opportunities that the current protocol on the national parliaments provides COSAC with. The administration in the country where sector standing committee COSAC meetings are held will organise and prepare the meetings. COSAC's secretariat will be able to provide administrative assistance for the meetings.

In this connection the European Parliaments' relevant committees will be included in the co-operation.

Up to the present, sector standing committee COSAC has not, so far as it is known, made any statements on concrete political subjects – sector standing committee COSAC meetings have hitherto been used as a framework for the exchange of information and experience.

Should sector standing committee COSAC wish in the long term to make statements it would be appropriate to use COSAC to pass on such statements, which would then have the character of "COSAC contributions" proper.

2.3 COSAC plenary session and sector standing committee COSAC

A need will arise in connection with an enhanced co-operation between the parliaments' committees under the auspices of COSAC for a co-ordination of matters treated by a COSAC plenary session and matters taken up by a sector standing committee COSAC.

This co-ordination could be brought about during the treatment of the Commission's annual working plan at a COSAC plenary session. In this connection a COSAC plenary session – possibly by agreement with the relevant sector standing committees – could decide which areas and subjects could be taken up.

Co-ordination of this kind would not prevent the sector standing committees from contacting the COSAC secretariat on their own initiative, for example, and requesting it to assist in the organisation of a sector standing committee COSAC. Decisions made by such a sector standing committee COSAC could then be sent as an orientation to [troika][chairpersons' meeting][the secretariat] [COSAC], which to the extent necessary could send the contribution to the EU's institutions

With regard to the motivation of the sector standing committees to use the COSAC structure, it is important in this connection that the contributions from the sector committees are given on an equal footing with contributions from plenary sessions of COSAC.

2.4 Organisation of a sector committee COSAC

A central question in connection with the involvement of sector standing committees in COSAC co-operation is whether the grouping within the sector committee COSAC should take its point of departure in the existing council formations of the Council of Ministers.

There is a difference in the ways in which the parliaments have chosen to organise the work of their respective sector standing committees.

It is therefore recommended that, in order to find a common system for meetings of the sector committee COSAC, the point of departure be taken in the council formations of the Council of Ministers, cf. the table below.

Council formation, cf. the Council's rules of procedure	
1.	General Affairs and External Relations
2.	Economic and Financial Affairs
3.	Justice and Home Affairs
4.	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs
5.	Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry and Research)
6.	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy
7.	Agriculture and fisheries
8.	Environment
9.	Education, Youth and Culture

Consideration could also be given to giving the responsibility for meetings within the different formations of sector committee COSAC to individual member

countries in order to ensure commitment, progress and continuity in the work. For example, one country could act as the prime mover in the competition or environmental area and thereby take responsibility for organising and preparing meetings, and ensuring that relevant subjects were taken up by the sector standing committee COSAC in question. Such an "sector project responsibility" could last for a period of one or two years.

2.5 Chairpersons' meetings

In accordance with the decision made at the COSAC meeting in Copenhagen from 16 – 18 October 2002 the chairpersons' meeting already functions as a framework for the working group set up at the COSAC meeting in Copenhagen. The tasks of the chairpersons' meeting include following up on the work of the European Convention and the work of the forthcoming intergovernmental conference.

In the light of the enhanced activity in COSAC, as well as the inclusion of the parliaments' sector-policy committees in the co-operation, it must be expected that the chairpersons' meeting will in future have to perform considerably more tasks than it has to date.

There is therefore a need for more long-term planning of chairpersons' meetings which should be increased to at least two fixed, annual meetings. In this connection it is proposed that a continuous timetable of meetings should be established with meetings scheduled up to two years in advance.

It is also proposed that, on the basis of authorisation from COSAC, the chairpersons' meeting could in concrete cases have the opportunity to play a more active role and thereby the opportunity to submit contributions on behalf of COSAC.

2.6 The role of the regional parliaments in COSAC

EU co-operation is a co-operation between nation states. Nation states are responsible for the internal co-ordination of EU policy between their own regional authorities, and it is the nation states that represent the regional authorities in the EU system.

The regional parliaments are organised at European level in the Committee of the Region.

In order to fulfil a desire to include the regional parliaments in COSAC co-operation it is proposed that the Committee of the Region be given the opportunity to send a smaller delegation with the status of observer to COSAC meetings.

2.7 The geographical location of meetings

It is proposed that the fixed, bi-annual meetings of the plenary sessions of COSAC be held, as formerly, in the country holding the Presidency.

It is proposed that meetings of the parliaments' sector standing committees be held in the country with the responsibility for the sector standing committee COSAC in question, cf. above, item 2.4. Alternatively, meetings could be held in another country by further agreement.

It is proposed that where Troika meetings and chairpersons' meetings are concerned that these be held in Brussels in close collaboration with the COSAC secretariat.

2.8 Dates for holding meetings of plenary sessions of COSAC

As part of the organisation of COSAC's future meetings consideration could be given to the extent to which meetings should be held in connection with the publication of [the Commission's working and legislative programmes][the Presidency's working programme].

It is proposed that a continuous meeting timetable be established for plenary sessions of COSAC with meetings scheduled up to two years in advance.

3. Consequences for COSAC's rules of procedure

As a consequence of the proposed amendments a number of items in the rules of procedure must be changed.

The concrete proposals for changes are contained in the draft of the new rules of procedure.