

XXVII COSAC, Copenhagen 16-18 October 2002

Contribution addressed to the Convention on the Future of Europe, the EU's institutions, the national parliaments and the Presidency

I. Strengthening the role of national parliaments and COSAC

1. The COSAC meeting agrees that it is necessary to involve national parliaments to a greater extent in national EU decisions in order to ensure a firmer democratic foundation for EU co-operation. The people and the democratically elected parliamentarians in the different countries will thus gain greater and more direct influence on joint European decisions, which have considerable consequences for domestic policy.

That national parliaments should be involved in the EU's activities to a greater extent is mentioned both in the Maastricht Treaty (1993) and in the Protocol on the National Parliaments annexed to the Amsterdam Treaty (1999). The role of national parliaments is furthermore dealt with in a declaration to the Nice Treaty (2000) and in the declaration from the European Council in Laeken (2001).

The European Convention is considering national parliaments' role in connection with possible future amendments to the treaty. COSAC welcomes the deliberations of the Convention and the work of the Working Groups of the European Convention on the principle of subsidiarity and the role of national parliaments.

2. COSAC expresses its reluctance to create new institutions.
3. COSAC notes that the Protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty on the Role of the National Parliaments from 1999 provides comprehensive opportunities for the national parliaments and for COSAC, that must be fully applied and strengthened.
4. A decision was made to strengthen COSAC co-operation at the COSAC meeting in Madrid 12 -14 May 2002, and the presidency troika was asked to prepare a proposal for a more effective COSAC more focused on the role of the national parliaments. The Danish COSAC Presidency therefore advanced a reform initiative for the COSAC meeting in Copenhagen on 16-18 October 2002.

II. A reform of COSAC and the establishment of a Working Group

5. During the COSAC meeting in Copenhagen a comprehensive discussion has taken place on the basis of the Danish draft proposals for COSAC reform as well as on some draft contributions.
6. On the basis of this debate and within the present treaty provisions, COSAC decides to set up a working group with the aim of continuing the Danish Presidency's reform initiative while paying attention to other proposals. The working group shall have the following tasks:
 - a) To continue the work of drafting a code of conduct setting out minimum standards for effective national parliamentary scrutiny of governments.
 - b) To draft proposals for how to change COSAC's rules of procedure concerning majority decisions.
 - 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.
 - d) To consider the organisation of future meetings of COSAC including the question on how to involve the sectoral standing committees as well as the composition of the delegations.
 - e) To consider the possibility of letting COSAC assess the Commission's annual legislative programme in order to ensure its compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.
 - f) To consider the possibility of giving COSAC a new and more understandable name.
 - g) To consider a new strategy for IT and administrative co-operation between EU administrative bodies in the national parliaments including the representations of national parliaments in Brussels.
 - h) To consider whether there is a need to establish co-operation agreements with the EU's institutions.
 - i) To follow the work of the European Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference.

7. The Working Group shall conclude its work before 31 December 2002. Regarding the monitoring of the work of the European Convention the Working group shall continue its work after this date. The recommendations from the Working Group shall be considered at an extraordinary COSAC meeting to be agreed by the Greek and Danish presidency.
8. The Working Group comprises the chairpersons of the Community and European Affairs Committees of the national parliaments and of the appropriate body of the European Parliament. The representatives of candidate countries' parliaments participate in the Working Group as observers.