

Contribution of the LXII COSAC

Helsinki, 1 – 3 December 2019

Appointment and work programme of the von der Leyen Commission

- (1) COSAC congratulates President Ursula von der Leyen and the members of the college on the appointment of the new European Commission. COSAC considers that President von der Leyen's political guidelines contain a comprehensive and balanced agenda for the future. COSAC observes that many of the agenda's items are urgent, and COSAC's member Parliaments look forward to starting a constructive scrutiny of the Commission's concrete proposals in the near future.

Conference on the Future of Europe

- (2) With respect to the Conference on the Future of Europe, COSAC observes that both the European Parliament and the national Parliaments, as the democratic foundation of the European Union and because of their respective institutional competences, need to be fully involved. COSAC notes that the European Parliament and national Parliaments still have to formulate their positions, but all expect a role in defining the objectives, organising and implementing the Conference on the Future of Europe.
- (3) COSAC expects that the European Parliament and all national Parliaments in the EU have an adequate number of representatives with full rights of participation in the Conference on the Future of Europe, including the right to make proposals.

Multi-annual Financial Framework

- (4) COSAC calls for the timely approval of the 2021 – 2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), recalling that late adoption means delayed implementation of the European Union's strategic targets. Critical policy challenges such as climate change and migration call for collective and coordinated action, as no member – state can face them alone. COSAC stresses the need for significant progress at the December 2019 European Council.
- (5) COSAC observes that all Member States have a stake in the Union's strategic targets, which are competitiveness, the encouragement of innovation, climate policy and biodiversity. A constructive approach to the MFF requires that all Member States' nominal budget targets are balanced against the expected benefits of mutually agreed investments in the future. COSAC recalls that agricultural and cohesion spending are part of these agreed strategic targets and calls for proper attention to policy detail to ensure expenditure levels that safeguard the Union's cohesion, including its outermost regions.
- (6) COSAC observes that adoption of the MFF involves finding agreement on a review of the EU's own resources system.
- (7) COSAC stresses the need for new, objective mechanisms to protect the financial interests of the Union when they are jeopardised by disrespect for the rule of law or where there is a systemic threat to the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. The new mechanisms should conform to the Treaties, add value to and not duplicate existing arrangements. COSAC stresses that the European Union is a community, where mutually respectful dialogue is the rule and sanctions are only a last resort for when dialogue and preventive mechanisms fail.

Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law

- (8) COSAC recalls that 2019 marks the tenth anniversary of the Treaty of Lisbon, and the entry into direct legal effect of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Recalling that the Union is founded on

the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, COSAC reaffirms that these values are normative for all European Union policies. The rule of law is, in COSAC's view fundamental to the EU's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. COSAC commends the work of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and endorses a strong role for the Agency in ensuring respect for fundamental rights in the regular exercise of the EU's functions.

- (9) COSAC observes that maintenance of the EU's values requires constant vigilance. COSAC considers that as all Member States have committed, through the Treaty on European Union, to uphold the rule of law, they all should accept transparent and impartial monitoring and peer review of the condition of the rule of law in the Member States. Such monitoring already applies to candidate countries. COSAC affirms that where deficiencies in the rule of law jeopardise the functioning of the single market or the implementation of European policies, the Union and its Member States have legitimate grounds for concern and appropriate action.

A Winning Climate Strategy for Europe

- (10) COSAC takes note of the conclusions of the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Climate Change on 6-7 October 2019 in Helsinki reiterating the EU's commitment to the goals of the Paris Agreement and stressing the urgency of the climate challenge. COSAC notes with concern the conclusions of the IPCC's Special Report No 15, stating that global warming must be contained at 1,5 degrees to prevent irreversible environmental damage. COSAC notes that a proactive climate policy will be vital for the Union's future industrial competitiveness and its ability to sustain social and regional cohesion throughout the inevitable adaptation of Europe's economic models. COSAC notes that implementing such a climate policy requires significant investment throughout the Union and appropriate measures to mitigate possible hardship caused by the transition to a climate smart economic model.
- (11) COSAC calls upon the European Commission and the European Council to maintain the EU's established role as a front-runner in climate policy by continuing to play a leading role and to step up the EU's ambition level in global climate policy. COSAC notes with satisfaction the European Council's commitment to climate neutrality, which in COSAC's view should be reinforced by committing to a target date in 2050.
- (12) COSAC suggests that the European Commission explores using the European Semester mechanism as a tool for encouraging effective implementation of climate targets as well as the sustainable development objectives of the United Nations' Agenda 2030.
- (13) COSAC regrets the decision of the United States to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accords and calls on the Commission and Council to take necessary steps to assure a level playing field for European enterprises while maintaining an ambitious European climate policy.

The European Union's Future Relationship with the United Kingdom

- (14) COSAC notes with regret both the United Kingdom's imminent departure from the European Union and the fact that we have no certainty of an orderly Brexit on mutually agreed terms. COSAC hopes that the United Kingdom will, after this month's elections, be in a position finally to adopt a national position that permits going forward. COSAC observes with concern that the transitional period following Brexit day that was agreed by the European Commission and the UK Government leaves little time to negotiate the future relationship between the EU and the UK. COSAC calls on all parties to proceed with the maximum of efficiency and good will. COSAC remains committed to supporting the closest possible future relationship between the UK and EU that is compatible with both the integrity of the Union and the interests of both parties.