

Meeting of the Secretaries-General of EU Parliaments

Warsaw, 5 – 6 February 2012

Parliamentary scrutiny of the CFSP and CSDP

OVERVIEW

The Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Brussels (4-5 April 2011) established the Inter-parliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CDSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It should be noted that the Conclusions of the Brussels Speakers' Conference were not formally challenged. However, the Speakers failed to reach agreement on certain aspects of the organisation of the conference. In this situation, on assuming the presidency of the Speakers' Conference, the Polish Parliament embarked upon negotiations with a view to reaching a compromise on the unresolved issues.

Having in mind the outcome of the discussion in Brussels and in other forums of international cooperation (e.g. COSAC in Budapest, 29-31 May 2011), the Presidency concluded that it would be necessary to engage with the European Parliament regarding its contrasting position to national parliaments on the issue of the delegation sizes.

After a series of consultations with the European Parliament, the Polish Presidency put forward a compromise proposal as a basis for further discussion with national parliaments.

On 29 November 2011, the Marshals of the Sejm and the Senate of the Republic of Poland wrote a letter to the Speakers of the respective chambers of EU Parliaments with a compromise proposal concerning the size of delegations to the Inter-parliamentary Conference.

By 6 February 2012, the Sejm and the Senate of the Republic of Poland received replies from the following parliaments:

Austria (both Chambers)	Italy (both Chambers)
Bulgaria	Ireland (both Chambers)
Cyprus	Latvia
Czech Republic (both Chambers)	Lithuania
Denmark	Luxembourg
Estonia	Malta
Finland	Netherlands (both Chambers)
France (Senate)	Portugal
Germany (both Chambers)	Romania (both Chambers)
Greece	Slovakia
Hungary	Sweden
	United Kingdom (both Houses)

The Belgian Senate and the House of Representatives, the French National Assembly and the Spanish Parliament announced they would take a position by the end of January.

1. General remarks

The Speakers of EU Parliaments recognised the importance of the effort made by the Polish Presidency to reach a compromise. The responses to the Marshals' letter confirmed the reluctance to form new institutions or cooperation forums (i.e. instead of replacing the existing ones), and especially to create new administrative structures.

In their letters, Speakers also referred to other unresolved issues, such as the Secretariat of the Conference and the composition of delegations. A number of chambers also expressed their positions on the issues already adopted in the Conclusions of the Brussels Speakers' Conference.

2. Issues dealt with in the letter from the Polish Presidency

a. Size of delegations

The Presidency's proposal, according to which delegations of national parliaments are to consist of 4 members and 2 alternates, and the European Parliament delegation of 16 members, was supported by 12 chambers. On the other hand, 13 chambers expressed their support for the principle of equal delegation of an individual national parliament and the European Parliament. Proposals advocated by only one chamber are not included in this overview.

The compromise proposal of the Polish Presidency is supported by: Austria (both Chambers), Bulgaria, the European Parliament, France (Senate), Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (both Chambers), Romania (House of Deputies), Poland (both Chambers).

The proposal stipulating that the EP delegation shall be equal to a delegation of a single national parliament is supported by: Cyprus, the Czech Republic (both Chambers), Denmark, Estonia, Ireland (both Chambers), Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom (both Houses).

Finland, Greece, Italy (both Chambers), Romania (Senate) and Slovakia consider the Polish proposal useful as a basis for further discussion. The German Bundesrat acknowledged the Presidency's proposal, but did not comment on it.

The Presidency welcomed the declaration of some of the parliaments, which, in recognition of the importance of the establishment of the Inter-parliamentary Conference, stated that they might be ready to accept the compromise, despite their present position to the contrary.

It should be pointed out that there is consent that the Inter-parliamentary Conference will adopt positions only by consensus.

b. Size of observer delegations

Some of the parliaments clearly support the 1+1 formula (1 observer and one alternate observer), but most of them have not referred directly to this issue or

expressed support for the Polish proposal as a whole. No alternative proposals on the matter have been received.

3. Other issues not provided for in the Conclusions of the Brussels Speakers Conference

a. Composition of delegations

The main doubts expressed by the parliaments in this regard concerned the role of alternate members in a delegation and the terms on which they can participate in meetings. Several Speakers expressed the opinion that all six delegation members should be allowed to take the floor during meetings.

Most of the chambers that raised the issue of delegation composition in their responses stated that the decision on this matter should be at the discretion of each parliament.

b. Conference Secretariat

Most chambers (8 of 9) which referred to this issue propose that the Presidency should be supported by a Secretariat in the COSAC formula, in cooperation with the Permanent Representatives in Brussels. This would ensure the involvement of representatives of the Troika and the European Parliament in the work on the organisation of the Inter-parliamentary Conference.