

# Meeting of the Secretaries General of the EU Parliaments Warsaw, 5 – 6 February 2012 Synthesis of discussion

## **Preliminary remarks**

On 5-6 February 2012 the Secretaries General of the EU national parliaments, the European Parliament and parliaments of candidate countries gathered in the Polish Senate to prepare the next EU Speakers Conference to be held on 19-21 April 2012 in the Polish Sejm. The meeting was hosted by Ms Ewa Polkowska, Secretary General of the Polish Senate, and Mr Lech Czapla, Secretary General of the Polish Sejm.

Mr Lech Czapla briefly presented the outcome of the meeting of the Secretaries General of the Trio and Troika that took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> February.

## **National Parliaments and international agreement on a reinforced economic union – information exchange on the topic of the choice of the ratification procedure in the individual Member States of the EU**

Ms Ewa Polkowska, Secretary General of the Senate, in her introductory address reminded the meeting that the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union was to be signed in March 2012. The so called 'fiscal compact' will enter into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 provided that 12 out of the 17 euro-zone Member States have ratified it.

The Presidency welcomed the opportunity to share information on the ratification procedures of each Member State of the European Union as constitutional requirements for treaty ratification differ from one Member State to another.

Secretaries General presented overviews of ratification processes of the new Treaty which would apply in their respective Members State as follows . The Secretary General of the National Assembly, Corinne Luquiens explained that in France the ratification procedure would depend on the results of the upcoming presidential election. The Secretary General of the Senate, Hugo Hondequin indicated that in Belgium the ratification procedure foreseen by the constitution was complex, as not only the national parliament, but also regional assemblies had to ratify the Treaty.

Slovakia and Portugal expect to ratify the Treaty without difficulties. In Latvia, Denmark and Germany the procedure is still being discussed. Ireland is awaiting the legal advice of its Attorney General. Some Member States might be obliged to hold a referendum.

Jacqueline Biesheuvel-Vermeijden, Secretary General of the Dutch House of Representatives stressed the need for close interparliamentary cooperation once the Treaty enters into force, but without creating any new bodies.

It was considered important that according to art. 13 of the new Treaty "the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the Contracting Parties will together determine the organisation and promotion of a conference of representatives of the relevant committees in order to discuss budgetary policies and other issues covered by that Treaty" and in this regard , the Polish Presidency called on the forthcoming Cypriot EUSC Presidency to focus its attention on this matter.

The Secretary General of the Senate invited those participants, who did not have the opportunity to express their country's position during debate, to write to the Polish Presidency outlining their views.

## **IPEX: Annual Report**

### **Approval of the amendment of IPEX Guidelines**

Mr Harro Semmler, Secretary General of the German Bundestag, chair of the IPEX Board, reminded participants that a new IPEX 2.0 website had been launched on 1 July 2011, which he considered a great success. He informed them that after an extensive recruitment process a new IPEX information officer had been employed and pointed out that new rules concerning the contributions from parliaments needed to be agreed.

The Secretaries General expressly welcomed the willingness of the European Commission and the Council to work closely with the national parliaments in the IPEX framework.

Moreover, it was agreed that to achieve better efficiency in the use of IPEX as an information exchange tool, proper human, financial and technical resources had to be allocated to it in each parliament. It is expected that parliaments would support further development of IPEX. This point was strongly supported by Netherlands, Portugal, Denmark and European Parliament.

The Secretaries General were informed about the:

- Action Plan on promoting IPEX in parliaments adopted by IPEX Board on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012;
- Survey of the ongoing initiatives of the EU Parliaments and Institutions for establishing standards for digital data and documents;
- Written report on the work of IPEX in 2011.

The Secretaries General adopted:

- the IPEX Guidelines (version approved by IPEX Board on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012); and,
- the conclusions on IPEX.

In accordance with the new IPEX Guidelines and the EUSC Stockholm Guidelines Secretaries General agreed on the composition of the 2012 - 2013 IPEX Board (Poland, Cyprus and Lithuania). The German Bundestag declared its readiness to continue chairing the IPEX Board.

## **Information on the progress in the implementation of the conclusions of the previous Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments**

Ms Ewa Polkowska, Secretary General of the Senate summarized briefly the progress in the implementation of the conclusions of the Speakers Conference in Brussels concerning: the database for the exchange of information on the parliamentary oversight of the security and intelligence services between the competent parliamentary committees, parliamentary control of Europol and the operation of the subsidiarity control mechanism of national parliaments.

Ms Ewa Polkowska informed that during the last Conference of Speakers in Brussels, an agreement was reached on the majority of aspects concerning the organisation of the Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Therefore in its proposal the Polish Presidency focused only on the outstanding issues. However, it was strongly emphasized that the priority of the Polish Presidency was to reach an agreement on all aspects concerning the establishment of an Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), in particular, on the size of delegation. As far as it was concerned the two main positions expressed by national parliaments/chambers in their replies to the Polish Marshals' letter of 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011 were: firstly - the principle that the "EP delegation should be equal to each NP delegation" (*arithmetic parity*); secondly - the principle that there should be "16 delegates of EP in relation to 4+2 delegates of NPs" as proposed by the Polish Presidency (*representative parity*).

Ms Ewa Polkowska also referred to the issue of alternate members. She explained that the introduction of alternate members had been proposed in order to make each parliamentary delegation fully representative. In the case of bicameral parliaments or parliaments where all committee chairmen are appointed by the government majority, such an arrangement would enable representatives of the opposition to take part in the Conference as well.

During the debate Secretaries General fully agreed that the Inter-parliamentary Conference should be organised as soon as possible. The discussion focused on the size of delegations and mostly confirmed differences mentioned above. Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia and United Kingdom suggested that the Swedish proposal (*arithmetic parity*, but "each parliament should be given ample opportunity to supplement its delegation with observers") might be a comprehensive solution.

Considering the above, Secretaries General supported the initiative of Secretary General of the European Parliament, Mr Klaus Welle, who suggested an "open formula" of the conference (in which the decision on the size of the delegation would rest with each parliament) with a review of its functioning after two or three years. The Secretary General of the Polish Senate informed that this proposal would be brought to the attention of Marshals of the Sejm and the Senate. The position of Polish EUSC Presidency will be presented to the Speakers of EU Parliaments by a separate cover.

Secretaries General also agreed that the organisation of the Conference should be supported by a Secretariat in the COSAC formula, in cooperation with the Permanent Representatives in Brussels.

## **Presentation of the agenda and programme of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments 2012**

Mr Lech Czapla, Secretary General of the Sejm, presented the agenda of the EU Speakers Conference to be held in Warsaw in April. The Speakers will address the parliamentary control of the CFSP and CSDP as well as relationship between parliaments, media and public opinion. The proposition of the President of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic to consider the issue of the crisis of European unity was welcomed by the Polish Presidency and was put on the agenda of the next Speakers Conference. The Secretary General of the Sejm stated that the compromise on the parliamentary control of CSDP and CFSP would be a priority for the Presidency.

Secretaries General stated that a closed door session ("1+1") should be organised. It was proposed that it should concern topics related to the economic, financial and budget crisis in the European Union.

It was stressed by several Secretaries General that consensus should be reached before the beginning of the Speakers' Conference, particularly on the issue of parliamentary control of CSDP and CFSP.

### **Tour of the Parliament – presentation of the rooms in which the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments will be held**

The participants visited the plenary hall of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland where the EU Speakers Conference in April will be held.