

SPEAKER OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Maroš Šefčovič
European Commission Vice-President
For Interinstitutional Relations and Administration

Mrs. Lucinda Creighton T.D.
Minister for European Affairs of Ireland

18 April 2013, Budapest

Dear Mr. Vice-President,
Dear Mrs. Minister,

I am pleased to inform you that I have received your letter on the utmost important initiative of the European Commission and the Presidency being dedicated to facilitate the national parliaments to be engaged in a more extensive manner on the issues of the European Semester and the European economic policy coordination process within the interparliamentary cooperation framework.

I am convinced that the issues you put forward are crucial to further strengthen the European Union's legitimacy and bring the EU closer to its citizens. Since its beginning, the European Semester has been handled as top priority by the Hungarian National Assembly, under the auspices of our European Affairs Committee meetings, which contribute well to the aim of discussing the EU-related issues by those representatives who are highly engaged in EU affairs.

As a consequence, our Committee played an important conciliation work on the passed European Semesters, and discussed the arising issues more than ten times in the last two years. Concerning the First European Semester – launched during the Hungarian EU Presidency – the European Affairs Committee was informed by the Ministry for National Economy about the submitted convergence program and national reform program in April 2011 (hereinafter referred to as the programs submitted by the Member State), then, at the beginning of July 2011, the ministry representatives gave further information about the Council's recommendation related to this and to the Council opinion on the updated Convergence Programme of Hungary 2012-2015. Afterwards, in the framework of the second European Semester, related to the process of the European Semester our Committee put on its agenda the programs submitted by the Government to the European Commission. The European Commission's evaluation on the Member States' programs and Country Specific Recommendations were discussed on the European Affairs Committee meetings twice in June 2012, in the presence of the State Secretary (Deputy Minister) of the Ministry for National Economy and the Head of Representation of the European Commission to Hungary.

The third European Semester had been launched on 28 November 2012. The related recommendation of the European Commission, and the third Annual Growth Survey were discussed on the European Affairs Committee meeting on 3 December 2012. Our Committee is planning to put the new convergence program and national reform program, being submitted by the Government, on its agenda in the next few days, and to pay close attention to the European Commission's recommendations - also referred to in your letter -, expected to be published in May 2013, as well as to the decisions that will be made on the basis of the Commission's document by the Council and the European Council.

Dear Mr. Vice-President, Dear Madame Minister, I firmly believe that from national point of view the above mentioned framework is sufficient to address the issues raised. Regarding the interparliamentary cooperation, in my opinion – along the European Parliamentary Week, a welcome initiative by the European Parliament – the Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (Stability treaty) provides further options for national parliaments to enhance their role in economic policy coordination. This is why I consider that the next Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments to be held in Nicosia on 21-23 April 2013 is extremely important, because its agenda, in particular the point on Article 13 of the Stability treaty, reflects the challenges ahead of us. I am certain that we will be able to reach an agreement with my parliamentary speakers colleagues regarding the details of the conference to be set up based on Article 13. In this respect it has to be taken into consideration that during the current economic and financial crisis it would not be reasonable to establish a new interparliamentary institution, but a solution should be reached by reforming and making more effective our current cooperation structures. A possible example could be for this the Interparliamentary Conference on CFSP/CSDP launched last year, or the concept initiated by the Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament – expressed in a letter co-signed also by the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly – according to which meetings should take place on the margin of COSAC with the participation of MPs from relevant parliamentary committees. Whichever solution will be found, it is elementary that parliamentarians from all EU Member States should participate in the interparliamentary meeting, as it is the only way to ensure equal treatment between the MPs of the conference to be set up.

Hungary is dedicated to the stability of the European economy and to the strengthening of the Eurozone, as well as to the resulting enhancement of the coordination of economic policies. This is demonstrated by the fact that Hungary, as a non-Eurozone country, is a signatory to the Stability treaty that was ratified by the Hungarian National Assembly on 25 March 2013.

Dear Mr. Vice-President, Dear Madame Minister, I wish you great success for your further work and in the hope of further cooperation please accept my highest consideration.

László Kövér