

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Vienna, Austria, 8 July 2018

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIRS: Mr Reinhold LOPATKA, Chair of the Permanent Sub-Committee on EU Affairs of the Austrian *Nationalrat*; Mr Christian BUCHMANN, Chair of the EU Committee of the Austrian *Bundesrat*

Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA, Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds, Bulgarian *Narodno Sobranie*; Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Romanian *Senat*; and Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament.

AGENDA

- 1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- 2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC**
- 3. Debate on the draft programme of the LX COSAC**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 30th Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 6. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

Mr LOPATKA welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika"), and outlined the agenda of the meeting of the Troika, which was adopted without amendment.

2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Mr LOPATKA outlined the topics on the programme of the meeting that would take place the following day.

The first session would focus on the "priorities of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU" which would be presented by Ms Karoline EDTSTADLER, State Secretary within the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

The second session would deal with "the future and perspectives of the European Union", with Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President of the European Commission, as well as Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament.

After the Chair noted a slight change in the participant's list, the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC was approved without amendment.

3. Debate on the draft programme of the LX COSAC

The Chair informed the Troika members that the LX COSAC would take place on 18-20 November 2018 in Vienna. He then outlined the four sessions of the draft programme and the keynote speakers.

The first session would focus on the state of play of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU; the second session would deal with a transparent European Union closer to the citizens in light of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament; the third session would address climate policy and energy union; while the fourth session would tackle Brexit.

Taking on board suggestions to limit keynote speakers, Mr LOPATKA informed the Troika that there would only be two keynote speakers each session.

Ms McGUINNESS said that it would be important to have the EP finish off debates, thus intervening after the national Parliaments if it decides to do so. She also expressed concern regarding the misconception that may arise during the transparency topic, potentially misleading people to believe that the European Parliament was not transparent, when this was not the case. She therefore suggested that it would be best to dissect that topic in order to ensure that a positive message would be derived from the session.

Mr LOPATKA replied by stating that the session would follow the noted order, that is to say, interventions by the keynote speakers, followed by debate and an opportunity for keynote speakers to reply. He acknowledged the concerns expressed by Ms McGUINNESS and noted that the second session would focus on European Parliament elections and on how national Parliaments play their role in bringing this matter closer to the citizen, encouraging citizens to be more active.

The draft programme of the LX COSAC was thus approved.

4. Approval of the outline of the 30th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr BUCHMANN outlined the structure of the 30th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, noting that it would be divided in three chapters, with the first chapter dealing with the role of national Parliaments in ensuring transparency and bringing the EU closer to its citizens, as well as the outcome of the “Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and Doing Less More Efficiently”; the second chapter would seek national Parliaments’ views on climate policy and energy discussions in their plenaries and committees, as well as the EU’s 2020 Climate and Energy package with a view towards the 2030 and 2050 energy strategies; and, finally, the third chapter would deal with Brexit: its state of play and the implications for the future of the EU.

The questionnaire would be distributed by 27 July and the replies would be expected by 18 September 2018.

Ms McGUINNESS welcomed the outline and the topics chosen for the 30th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, noting that an outcome regarding Brexit was expected in October, and stressing that it was really important to have the climate change and energy topic included as these were both very significant issues.

5. Letters received by the Presidency

The Chair referred to the following letters received:

- Letters from Mr Tone Wilhelmsen TRØEN, President of the Norwegian *Stortinget*; Ms Áslaug Arna SIGURBJÖRNSDÓTTIR, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Icelandic *Althingi*; Ms Karin KELLER-SUTTER, President of the Swiss EFTA-EU delegation; requesting participation in COSAC meetings.

- A letter from Mr Friso ROSCAM ABBING, Head of Department of the EU agency for Fundamental Rights, requesting participation of Mr Michael O'FLAHERTY, Director, FRA, to attend as guest.
- A letter from Mr Angel TILVAR, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, regretting his Chamber's inability to be represented at the meeting due to plenary sessions in Bucharest.
- A letter from Mr Jean BIZET, Chairs of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*, requesting an additional item to be included on the agenda of the LX COSAC regarding the participation of national Parliaments in the process of negotiating trade agreements between the EU and third countries.
- A letter from Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chair of the EU Affairs Committee of the German *Bundestag* and Ms Sabine THILLAYE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, regarding several proposals relating to procedural aspects of COSAC meetings.

After consultation with the Troika, the Parliaments requesting participation had been invited as special guests, although Iceland would not be attending the Chairpersons meeting.

The Chair noted that enough time for discussion during the meeting would be assured thanks to limited interventions by keynote speakers. Furthermore, he assured colleagues that party affiliation would be displayed whenever possible.

With regard to the letter sent by Mr BIZET, the Chair noted that there were no plans to include this as a separate item, but encouraged Mr BIZET to raise this topic during the second session.

As for the letter by Mr KRICHBAUM and Ms THILLAYE relating to procedural aspects of COSAC meetings, mainly to ensure enough time for discussions, the Chair assured colleagues that the Presidency was taking this suggestion seriously, which is why only two keynote speakers had been designated for each session, leaving enough time for the perspective of parliamentarians.

Ms VASSILEVA appreciated the topics selected and proposed by the Presidency and also welcomed the efforts to allow enough time for debate.

This sentiment was shared by Ms CREȚU, who also noted how the issue of timing remained a pressing matter for the future. She suggested giving more political weight to the topic of transparency, echoing Ms McGUINNESS. As for the letter by Mr BIZET, it was important not to give the impression that his suggested topic had been rejected, as it was indeed an important topic which should be taken on board during the meeting.

In reply to the last comment, the Chair appreciated the importance of the topic but it was a complex subject which invited many different perspectives. Ms McGUINNESS agreed with this point of view while noting that her own experience with debates on trade agreements had not been a pleasant one.

6. Any other business

No other business.