

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LVIII COSAC
Tallinn, 27-28 November 2017

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

AGENDA:

1. Opening of the meeting of the LVIII COSAC

- Welcome address by Mr Eiki NESTOR, President of the Estonian *Riigikogu*
- Introductory remarks by Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*
- Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the LVIII COSAC

2. Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters

- Information on the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC
- Presentation of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC
- Letters received by the Presidency
- Procedural issues

3. Session I - 'The future of the European Union'

Speakers: H.E. Ms Kersti KALJULAIU, President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr Michel BARNIER, EU Chief Negotiator for Brexit, Ms Danuta HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament

Moderator: Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

4. Session II - 'Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens - what are the best practices of national Parliaments?'

Speakers: Ms Katrin AUER, Associate Professor in the Research Group European Integration, Vienna Institute for Advanced Studies, Mr Pieter OMTZIGT, Member of the European Affairs Committee, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Mr Kristian VIGENIN, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*

Moderator: Ms Monika HAUKANÖMM, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

5. Session III - 'Digital Single Market - current developments of e-services'

Speakers: Mr Siim SIKKUT, Deputy Secretary General for Communications and State Information Systems, Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, most recent Chair of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*, Mr Jean BIZET, President of the European Affairs Committee, French *Sénat*

Moderator: Mr Kalle PALLING, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat
- Debate on the draft Contribution and draft Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC

7. Session IV: 'State of play - building an effective and sustainable Security Union'

Speaker: Mr Julian KING, European Commissioner for Security Union

Moderator: Ms Marianne MIKKO, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

8. Session V: 'The external dimension of migration - preventing and combating irregular migration'

Speakers: Mr Simon MORDUE, Deputy Director General for Migration, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission, Mr Edward ZAMMIT LEWIS, Chair of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Ms Anne-Mari VIROLAINEN, Chair of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

Moderator: Mr Jaak MADISON, Vice-Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

9. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the meeting of the LVIII COSAC

Welcome address by Mr Eiki NESTOR, President of the Estonian *Riigikogu* and introductory remarks by Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Mr NESTOR opened the meeting and referred to current challenges faced by the EU. He categorised these challenges as part of an 'open closed world' which was located right next to Europe. He then drew on previous experiences from the closed world of yesterday where totalitarian regimes relied on the monopoly of a closed information space and which attracted devotees and admirers. Today, as this was crumbling away, they would try to move beyond it, to expand their spheres of influence, because otherwise they would suffer great losses. The closed world fought with the open world not for land or buildings, but for control over minds, and the chance to remain in power forever. Mr NESTOR then called upon the open world to defend its openness and find a functioning format of continuous cooperation between representative democracy and non-governmental organisations.

Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu*, made introductory remarks and welcomed the participants, especially new Chairs participating at the COSAC plenary for the first time, namely Ms Rovana PLUMB, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, and Mr Jonas ERIKSSON, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdag*.

Adoption of the agenda

The Chair presented the draft agenda of the LVIII COSAC, which was adopted without amendment.

2. Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters

- Information on the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

Mr VITSUT informed the participants of the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC held the previous afternoon, and particularly the nomination of Mr Kenneth CURMI, official of the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, as the new Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat.

- Presentation of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr VITSUT then gave the floor to the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, to present the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC. Ms FRYDA briefly referred to the three chapters of the Report. The first one dealt with the future of the European Union. The second chapter focussed on bringing the EU closer to its citizens and national Parliaments' best practices in this regard. The third chapter examined the progress made in the implementation of the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy launched by the European Commission in 2015 and presented the digitalisation of parliamentary procedures.

- Letters received by the Presidency

The Chair referred to the following letters:

- Letters from Mr Carles ENSENAT, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Andorra *Consell General*, Mr Jean-Charles Letter from Mr Jean-Charles ALLA VENA, Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Mr Christophe STEINER, Speaker of the *Conseil national* of the Principality of Monaco and from Ms Mariia IONOVA, Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Integration

of the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine, regarding participation in COSAC. After consultation with the Troika, letters of invitation had been sent out.

- Letter from Mr Jean BIZET, President of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*, informing the Presidency of a report published by the French Senate on the topic of EU competition policy and of their readiness to come and introduce it during the COSAC plenary session.
- Letter from Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, informing the Presidency of the conclusions adopted by the Visegrád Group.
- An exchange of letters between the Estonian Presidency and the Chair of the IPEX Board on creating a synergy between the IPEX platform and the COSAC website.
- Letter from the Clerk of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs of the Irish *Oireachtas* on the Committee noting the expiration of the second term of office of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat.
- Letter from Ms Regina BASTOS, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, about her inability to participate in the meeting of the LVIII COSAC.
- Letter from Mr Jean-Claude JUNCKER, President of the European Commission, inviting COSAC to nominate members of national Parliaments to be part in the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and “Doing Less More Efficiently”. With regard to this letter, Mr VITSUT explained that the discussion would take place during the Chairperson’s meeting at which stage the proposal of the Presidential Troika would also be addressed.
- Letter from Mr BIZET offering his candidacy to the abovementioned Task Force. The issue had already been addressed under the point on the debate on the Conclusions of the meeting.

- **Procedural issues**

As Mr VITSUT explained, the draft text of the Contribution and the Conclusions was circulated to delegations on 13 November 2017. Amendments received from delegations by the deadline of 20 November 2017 were, together with the initial text and a number of compromise proposals elaborated by the Presidency, included in a table. In addition, the Presidency’s compromise proposals were integrated in a draft text. Both the table and the draft text were submitted to the Troika.

Following a detailed examination of each amendment proposed, the Troika, on the basis of the Presidency's compromise proposals, drafted a modified text of the Contributions.

The Chair also informed the delegations that they could submit additional amendments to the Troika compromise text by Monday, 27 November at 12pm. The meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons would only address the points on which new amendments will have been received. The rest of the text would be considered as having reached a compromise.

Mr HÖRCSIK asked for the floor and updated the delegations on the outcome of the meeting of the Visegrád group, with two main topics on the agenda - the role of the national Parliaments in the EU and the state of play of the Brexit negotiations. In this regard, he expressed his delight at having Mr Michel BARNIER at the LVIII COSAC and hoped that this important topic would feature regularly on the COSAC agenda.

3. Session I - ‘The future of the European Union’

Speakers: H.E. Ms Kersti KALJULAI, President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr Michel BARNIER, EU Chief Negotiator for Brexit, Ms Danuta HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament

Moderator: Mr Toomas VITSUT, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Ms KALJULAID reflected on the responsibilities of policymakers and governments in the cybersphere, pointing out that the four freedoms should be adapted from the analogue to the digital world, as taxation and social security policies were also part of the digital agenda. Ms KALJULAID expressed her firm belief that unifying the continent based on something less than the EU would have been impossible. When the stakes were high, she said, the Union showed it was capable of taking quick decisions. In that spirit, the President called for more urgency when dealing with issues of great concern for both citizens and business, namely e-health and common and cross-border identification in Internet.

Ms KALJULAID stressed upon the revived faith in the future of the EU after the low point in 2016. She noted that it was time to be bold and future-oriented instead of staying in a comfort zone and playing it safe. To that end, the President put the focus on creating jobs and enhancing growth, embracing technological innovation and transformation, increasing Europe's competitiveness, strengthening internal and external security, as well as completing the Single Market with a sustainable social dimension. At the same time, she mentioned the need to reinvigorate the debate on Europe's future and find ways to meet today's challenges collectively and successfully.

Achieving these ambitious ideas, Ms KALJULAID admitted, would require examining seriously the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which inevitably would have to be smaller because of Brexit. She called for respect of the principle of subsidiarity and focus on those areas where joint actions were proven to bring added value, such as research and innovation, foreign and security policy, cross-border infrastructure, be it transport or energy, but also cohesion, given that everybody would win from reduced differences between regions.

In regard to bringing the EU closer to its citizens, Ms KALJULAID pointed out that it was important to give the Union its due recognition and not blame it for the national governments' shortcomings or mistakes in redistribution policies. In this area, the role of national Parliaments was vital, said Ms KALJULAID, as they had the necessary instruments - transparency and accountability.

Following on that note, Mr BARNIER also warned against using the EU as a scapegoat for everything that went wrong and called for a new momentum in the democratic debate, underlining the key role national Parliaments played in the European society. That debate should be objective and specific, he said, and the dialogue between national Parliaments and the European Parliament should be deeper.

Mr BARNIER noted that the unity across Member States went beyond the issue of Brexit and influenced many initiatives in order to come up with a positive and proactive agenda, learning from past mistakes and doing better. In his opinion, this agenda included strengthening the Eurozone; a deeper Economic and Monetary Union; a real common defence policy; budgetary capacity to react to internal and external treats; capability to deal more effectively and efficiently with cyberattacks, climate change, natural disasters, etc. Mr BARNIER also pointed out the need to preserve the common good, represented by the Single Market and the social market economy. Inside the Union, more solidarity was needed, he said, including a more humane, effective migration policy, and a solid pillar of social rights. Mr BARNIER called for an objective look at the benefit of European policies and, quoting the President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude JUNCKER, supported that we needed to do less on the small things and more on the bigger things.

In this context, Mr BARNIER presented the latest developments of the Brexit negotiation process. He regretted the choice of the United Kingdom (UK), but underlined his respect for their democratic and sovereign decision. This decision, he stressed, had its legal, social, economic, budgetary, financial consequences that the EU was implementing. What was important was to come up with a solid partnership between the two parties, but this would depend on three key elements. The first one was finalising an agreement for the orderly withdrawal of the UK from the Union. Mr BARNIER stressed that the 27 Member States and the European Parliament had been clear what this would entail: 1) securing the rights of 4.5 million citizens living in both the UK and the EU, and those could not be guaranteed without the Court of Justice of the European Union; 2) solving the very sensitive situation of Ireland, having in mind that the

UK was one of the co-guarantees of the Good Friday Agreement; 3) the issue that regarded everyone, namely the money needed to finance projects, agreed upon by the Union of 28. Mr BARNIER underlined that the financial settlement was not a punishment or a revenge, but a simple matter of closing the accounts. He reminded the participants that the moment of truth was approaching - the European Council in December - and that he hoped to see some real progress on those issues, which would allow him to make a recommendation for moving forward with the second phase of the negotiations.

The second key element was to clearly state that the Single Market was not up for questioning. Mr BARNIER insisted that this was not negotiable - the Single Market was the glue holding the Member States together, with everything that it entailed: the four freedoms of movement, high safety, quality and environmental standards, etc. He reminded that the UK was well aware of the rules of the Single Market as it had helped to create them. Mr BARNIER reiterated his respect for UK's decision to leave, but stressed that he could not accept weakening of the European laws because of it.

The third key element for a solid partnership was the respect of future regulations. While regulatory convergence should be encouraged, leaving the Single Market would unavoidably lead to some divergences and the EU should be prepared to deal with them, noted Mr BARNIER. This would be at the core of the future partnership agreement between the UK and the EU, which would be subject to ratification by all national Parliaments. Mr BARNIER underlined the importance of a debate in this regard, as well as the need to avoid regulatory competition in the future.

Mr BARNIER concluded by saying that, if all of the above elements were present, then the EU would be at the verge of a new ambitious partnership with the UK, focussed not only on trade, but also on science, education, innovation, development, defence and security, etc. The future of the EU went beyond Brexit, Mr BARNIER said, but it was inextricably linked to a comprehensive partnership with the UK.

The third speaker of this session, Ms HÜBNER, noted how the EU had always been a union of changes; in fact, adaptation to change had been the only constant thing about it. Throughout EU's evolution, crisis prompted new institutions and resolute political action for common undertakings. The Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO) was one such recent example. It showed that, even if the Member States did not always see things the same way, most of the time they would agree that common actions were necessary to face a common existential threat.

Ms HÜBNER continued by saying that Brexit was testing the level of cohesion within the EU and its ability to stay together and achieve something positive out of something negative. Nevertheless, the Union remained a community of shared values and common interests. Ms HÜBNER remarked that the European project started without the UK and it would continue without it and that others wanted to join; to that effect, some of the seats allocated to the UK in the European Parliament were kept for them.

Regarding the consequences of Brexit, Ms HÜBNER acknowledged that it would leave the EU smaller, but sometimes smaller meant more determined. Brexit improved the understanding of the fundamental role of the European citizenship. She advised everybody to prepare for the worst-case scenario, even though technically all legal and political options were still open, warning that, even in the best case, some people would still be angry and disappointed. Attempts of some politicians to use that to stir turbulences to their own advantage must be countered, Ms HÜBNER cautioned. In her opinion, the breaking of the old system of political parties and the rise of nationalistic, populist, separatist, illiberal movements presented a toxic brew. She also drew attention to a possible "Brexit syndrome" - a traumatic situation, the consequences of which would persist long after the event had passed. Ms HÜBNER said that this should be avoided; instead, a positive focus on the EU was needed. The Union should be improved in terms of performance, goals, transparency and communication, but also cherished as it was not replicable. Those Member States which wanted deeper integration should be allowed to go on with it, as long as the doors remained open for the rest to join in the future. A level-playing field was needed for everybody in the Single Market and a new approach to growth, but also reforms of the Eurozone and help to all Member States to join it, as well as a

robust cohesion policy and more commitments for the social Europe building on the conclusions of the Göteborg summit.

Ms HÜBNER concluded that the EU could not be consumed only by immediate challenges, but had to look through the eyes of the generations to come, be pro-active and create its own positive agenda. Securing citizens' consent on the reforms in all major fields was an upcoming challenge, as was safeguarding the rule of law and the enjoyment of citizens' rights. In conclusion, it also needed to strengthen its visibility and the elections for the European Parliament in 2019 were a good occasion for preparing for the future.

In the following debate, 35 participants took the floor.

Some of the speakers concentrated on what they perceived as negative tendencies across the continent. Ms Concepción DE SANTA ANA, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, talked about the anti-European sentiment that lead to Brexit, followed by Mr Maximos CHARAKOPOULOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, who noted that the European ideal had lost its appeal for the majority of the British citizens and that centrifugal forces were visible across the Union. Ms Oudekki LOONE, Estonian *Riigikogu*, stated that the EU had failed under its shattered delusions about peace, prosperity and welfare.

Mr Bastiaan VAN APELDOORN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, talked about the risk of alienating the European citizens, which, in his opinion, could be prevented by more transparency and accountability. Many participants supported this call, underlining the need for more subsidiarity (Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Austrian *Bundesrat*). Ms Izabela KLOC, Polish *Sejm* and Ms Ioanneta KAVVADIA, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, called for a more enhanced role of national Parliaments, while Mr Franc TRČEK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, underlined the need for a strong regional and local autonomy. Mr Fabio Massimo CASTALDO, European Parliament, called for the creation of more participative democracy tools for reconciling EU citizens with politics, and Ms Sabine THILLAYE, French *Assemblée nationale*, suggested better involvement of the citizens in the policy-making processes. Ms Lolita ČIGĀNE, Latvian *Saeima*, advised to avoid manipulation and dispel the ignorance about EU.

Others focussed on a new vision of economic growth, cooperation and social solidarity in response to the Euroscepticism (Ms DE SANTA ANA, Mr CHARAKOPOULOS, Ms Soraya RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS, Spanish *Cortes Generales*). Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, drew attention to the wage gap existing across Europe and Mr TRČEK called for reducing the differences which impoverished Europeans and keeping those that enriched them. Mr TRČEK was supported by Ms Idoia VILLANUEVA, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, and Mr Kamal Izidor SHAKER, Slovenian *Državni zbor*. Ms Maria Joao RODRIGUES, European Parliament, and Mr SUTOUR referred to the European pillar of social rights, with the first calling it a compass for upward convergence and urging COSAC to address it in its Contribution.

Several participants mentioned the possibility for a future enlargement of the EU. According to Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, there was a new momentum for the Western Balkans and Lord TEVERSON, UK *House of Lords*, welcomed an expansion of the Union, as long as the Copenhagen criteria were satisfied. Mr HÖRCSIK called for a merit-based approach for the Western Balkans countries and Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, reminded that those countries needed to adhere to the shared European values. Mr Andrius KUBILIUS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, referred to a Lithuanian plan for assisting Ukraine with real and practical instruments and Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN, Romanian *Senat*, underlined the importance of offering long-term prospective to the the Eastern Partnership countries. At the same time, Ms Elvira KOVACS, Serbian *Narodna skupština*, confirmed the commitment of Serbia towards EU membership, same as Mr Adrijan VUKSANOVIĆ, Montenegrin *Skupština*, who also expressed confidence that his country could join the EU before 2025. Ms IONOVA said that she was grateful for the support and promised to participate regularly in such meetings.

Some of the participants in the debate used the opportunity to underline their support for a single-speed Europe (Mr SCHENNACH, Ms KLOC) and the principles of the Bratislava Declaration and the Rome

Declaration (Ms Sirkka-Liisa ANTTILA, Finnish *Eduskunta*), as well as the need for solidarity and cohesion (Ms VASSILEVA, Mr SHAKER, Mr Angelos VOTSIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*).

Other participants reflected on the state of play of the Brexit negotiations and its consequences. Mr HÖRCSIK said that a fair agreement was in the interest of both parties, while Mr KRICHBAUM praised Mr BARNIER for his job that far and Ms ANTTILA expressed full confidence in him. Mr Pieter OMTZIGT, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, warned against a chaotic Brexit and asked what the obstacle to solve the citizens' rights issue was. Mr Peter LUYKX, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, asked for national Parliaments to be directly informed about the negotiating progress through COSAC, as well as for a sufficiently long period of transition so that business companies could adapt. Mr BIZET said Brexit was an opportunity to rethink the Union, focussing more on its political aspects, while Mr Fernando MAURA, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, mentioned the consequences for the EU budget - without the UK contribution, there would be a need to reduce expenditures and revise financing mechanisms for future policies.

Taking the floor to reply, Mrs KALJULAIID noted that the world was changing and, in the face of demographic decline, terrorist attacks and climate change, a new language, new tropes were needed. She underlined that sometimes a crisis was also an opportunity and called for an urgent action and not simply re-action to the changing realities.

Mr BARNIER proceeded with some of the lessons that could be learnt from Brexit. In his opinion, the people who felt forgotten and not protected by the progress were one of the reasons for the result of the referendum and this issue should be properly addressed, beyond the talks about institutional reforms and better decision-making process. To this end, national Parliaments could play a key role as discussion forums and amplifiers of the EU's message, followed by associations and NGOs.

Mr BARNIER also spoke about the need to create a so-called European sovereignty whenever it was not feasible for the Member States to act alone. In the case of the common defence policy, he insisted that there was a way to reconcile the different opinions - those who wanted to move on, should be allowed to do so, without closing the door to the rest. Mr BARNIER underlined also that the Single Market in itself was not enough, in addition to the four freedoms of movement, a more humane and social dimension was needed, and the social pillar of rights was a step in that direction.

Mr BARNIER concluded with some comments on the Brexit negotiations, saying that his preferred option was not to end without a deal or with a very bad deal, but that, in order to achieve an agreement, both sides had to be willing to reach a deal; the UK also would have to present his ideas about the parties' future cooperation. At the end, he noted that COSAC was a good forum to involve national Parliaments in the negotiating process.

Ms HÜBNER, responding to a question on whether there was a possibility of revocation of the Article 50 notification, she clarified that there were still possibilities, rather than options, open. The 'no deal' possibility existed, not least because of the nature of the procedure and the tight deadline. She mentioned that UK representatives had not officially evoked such a possibility, but that, if that were to happen, she would expect it to be strongly conditioned, as unanimity was needed in the UK. The EU position was clear: a deal was needed on time, allowing for an orderly withdrawal. She concluded by referring to confusion because of mixed messages and underscored that it was time to counter this with vision and practical approach. In her opinion, debates represented a learning process, so Ms HÜBNER invited the participants to learn together.

4. Session II - 'Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens - what are the best practices of national Parliaments?'

Speakers: Ms Katrin AUER, Associate Professor in the Research Group European Integration, Vienna Institute for Advanced Studies, Mr Pieter OMTZIGT, Member of the European Affairs Committee, Dutch

Tweede Kamer, Mr Kristian VIGENIN, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*

Moderator: Ms Monika HAUKANÕMM, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Ms Monika HAUKANÕMM, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, moderating the session, said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss best practices and ensure EU work meets citizens' expectation. It was important to tailor the message to target groups as citizens needed to be informed.

Ms Katrin AUDEL, Associate Professor in the Research Group European Integration, Vienna Institute for Advanced Studies, stated that overcoming the democratic disconnect by providing citizens with ownership in EU affairs something they currently lacked, was one of the most important functions Parliaments had in EU politics. As her research and the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC showed, in terms of transparency, Parliaments were overall doing rather well. She commended Parliaments for the immense effort to provide information on EU politics and involve stakeholders, but made a clear distinction between transparency and publicity.

The professor encouraged Parliaments to tailor information to a more general audience and present it in a more accessible way. She underlined the potential of social media to reach a broader audience and allow for feedback. One of her research projects on the news coverage of parliamentary EU activities showed the lack of media interest for parliamentary politics, with the exception of plenary proceedings. Most citizens experienced politics through traditional media, namely newspapers and evening news. EU politics did not make it to the news generally, which usually covered plenary or related comments by MPs. In her view, plenary debates allowed citizens to learn about key issue on the EU agenda and ultimately make informed political choices. Far from 'advertising EU politics', parliamentary debates allowed different, even highly critical views on EU policy issues and decisions to be voiced. Ms AUDEL recommended allocating more time to the debate of EU affairs in plenary (currently around 5%) and focussing on the European Council meetings, by organising debates around the meetings, with targeted input from civil society via social media and online platforms. Ms AUDEL said Parliaments could serve as what Mill had termed "a Congress of opinions".

Mr Pieter OMTZIGT, Member of the European Affairs Committee, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, stated from the outset that democratic deficiency was one of the main factors driving mistrust in institutions. In his view, improving the transparency of the EU's political decision-making would not only benefit citizens, but also their representatives who could better perform their scrutinising role. He argued that by not granting members of national Parliaments sufficient access to documents and voting records, the Council of the EU violated EU transparency regulations. He highlighted the difficulties linked to the excessive use of *limité* documents, the inadequate referencing of documents, and the impossibility of quoting from them or discussing them with experts publicly.

Mr OMTZIGT described the decision making of Member States as opaque and keeping citizens and their representatives far from EU decision-making and referred to concrete examples. National Parliaments were given no real opportunity to have their say on the allocation of the EU's resources, due to the speedy negotiating process of the EU budget, during which no documents were made available, containing information of the issues discussed between Member States or on their points of divergence. He added that the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Stability Mechanism were outside the direct scope of influence of national Parliaments, even if much of the decision-making took place in the Eurogroup and the European Commission. As the Dutch and European Courts of Audit had pointed out, the Eurogroup decision-making process was notoriously opaque, not only in relation to the bail-out funds, but in general. Concerning the Brexit negotiations, the EU did not actively involve national Parliaments in the input for the negotiation rounds, and results were only communicated in a terse manner.

Mr OMTZIGT then referred to the position paper on EU transparency, shared by the delegations of the Dutch *Staten-Generaal* with the COSAC participants. The document outlined measures likely to make the EU's legislative process more accessible: legislative Council documents should systematically be made public without delay; the Council should adopt more specific rules regarding reporting on legislative deliberations; informal but influential bodies, such as the Eurogroup, should be formalised and apply the Transparency Regulation internally, under article 15(3) TFEU; negotiations on the Transparency Regulation must be reopened in order to align it with article 15(3) TFEU.

He invited national Parliaments to sign a joint letter on transparency of the EU political decision-making addressing recommendations to the EU institutions; he also called on them to take stock of the outcome of national debates on the issue at the next plenary meeting of COSAC.

Mr Kristian VIGENIN, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds of the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, saw national Parliaments' effective involvement in the good functioning of the EU as fundamental to ensuring accountability and legitimacy for the Union's actions. Within the existing Treaty structure, important improvements would be possible through the enhanced role of national Parliaments and actions collectively agreed between them, the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament where relevant. It was also necessary to reconfirm the principles of community approach, clear distribution of competences, and loyal co-operation, and the creation of the Task Force on subsidiarity, proportionality and "Doing less more efficiently" was seen as a step forward.

In his view, effective scrutiny by national Parliaments of their own governments' activities on EU matters was essential, and Parliaments needed to learn from each other in that field and exchange within COSAC. He called on the Commission to be more responsive to suggestions and concerns raised by national Parliaments, even if they went beyond subsidiarity and proportionality. Once a "yellow card" was issued, the Commission should take seriously its duty of review and either withdraw or substantially amend the proposal in question.

Mr VIGENIN posited that, as crucial arenas for communicating and debating important EU issues and their national implications, national Parliaments should ensure both policy communication and the provision of accessible information to broad audiences. He then referred to successful practices of the EU Affairs Committee of the Bulgarian Parliament, such as: encouraging stakeholders to provide their opinions and/or attend public committee meetings; interacting with citizens via the Facebook page and the Twitter account; live-streaming of the sittings; making accessible the minutes and an audio/video archive; publishing a brief information and news as a summary of the decisions taken following every Committee meeting; engaging regularly with the Public Council which brought together stakeholders and had advisory capacity.

Twenty parliamentarians took the floor in the subsequent debate. Several speakers stressed the need to relaunch the European process, involving citizens and the younger generations. Ms Danuta HÜBNER, European Parliament, argued that the European youth was the most likely to share EU's identity across Member States, and she expressed sympathy with its call for more information on political parties, more ownership, and a greater use of technology to make democracy more direct. Ms Marina BERLINGHERI, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, called for a campaign aimed at improving the knowledge of the EU values, and for a concrete reset of the integration process, likely to relaunch the economy and preserve the model of the welfare state. Ms Christine DEFRAIGNE, Belgian *Sénat*, referred to citizens' declining faith in Europe and called for less but more efficient action. Mr Martin KLUS, Slovak *Národná rada*, argued that hosting an EU agency would bring EU closer to the citizens, and that in Slovakia the decisions to locate the EBA and EMA agencies in France and the Netherlands were perceived as unfair and as lack of solidarity. Ms PLUMB underlined that the EU institutions should not be mere regulators, but facilitators bringing together citizens, and that national Parliaments should have a stronger role in the European project. She stressed that delaying Romania's accession to the Schengen Area eroded citizens' trust. Ms Rūta MILIŪTĖ, Lithuanian *Seimas*, deplored that the consumer protection policy was regulated by complex and inconsistent legislation and supported the Commission's efforts to update it via an efficient mechanism. Mr Georgios

GEORGIU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, believed decisions were made in Brussels, and that citizens resorted to radical movements because there were no solutions provided to their concerns; the EU, he argued, needed to save its credibility by humane and effective policies.

Ms Tineke STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, deemed access to information to be a prerequisite for democracy and mentioned the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the Access Info case; she invited Parliaments to join their efforts and exert pressure to disclose Council documents in line with EU law. Mr Bastiaan VAN APELDOORN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, stated that transparency was key for the EU's future and inquired on concrete measures to restore democratic accountability and control within the Eurozone. Mr Rasmus NORDQVIST, Danish *Folketing*, argued that transparency would lead to real political discussions and infuse more democracy into processes; he supported the Dutch transparency initiative. Mr Piotr WACH, Polish *Senat*, explained that, in order to respond to citizens' expectations, parliamentarians needed to understand the EU system, simplify it, explain the necessary regulations, and make them more open. He also supported the Dutch initiative on transparency, as did Mr Marc ANGEL, Luxembourg *Chambre des députés*. Ms ČIGĀNE argued that access to information and scrutiny of Council documents depended on national arrangements and encouraged parliaments to follow the Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Latvian examples.

Mr Mihailo ANĐUŠIĆ, Montenegro *Skupština*, stressed parliamentarians' key role in communicating the benefits of the EU and mentioned concrete activities set up by his committee in the context of accession negotiations. Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, mentioned the ongoing public dialogue on the future of Europe, the existence of a parliamentary TV channel free of editorial control, and the need to use social media to interact with citizens. Ms Marinka LEVIČAR, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, emphasised the role of the European House, which hosted the offices of the European Parliament and Commission House in organising activities aimed at citizenship education. Mr SHAKER suggested explaining creatively complex legislative processes and their impact, and quoted as best practice a comic strip on the Slovenian Constitution. Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, called for an enhanced EU citizenship via an EU identity card or creating an Erasmus for apprentices; he stressed the need for more transparency in trilogues and a right of initiative of national Parliaments. Mr ANGEL encouraged Parliaments to follow Luxembourg's example and give more visibility to EU topics by debating them at plenary rather than committee level; he highlighted the exchanges with the Parliament of the youth and the need for dialogues on EU matters within the political parties.

Mr Jaak MADISON, Estonian *Riigikogu*, argued that the "red card" would make the Commission give more weight to national Parliaments' concerns and wondered if the matter should be discussed in-depth. Mr Jarosław OBREMSKI, Polish *Senat*, believed that media and politicians should focus on delivering information, and warned against overregulation which bred citizens' indifference; in his view, the "yellow" and "red cards" needed to be discussed. Ms VILLANUEVA talked about the dangers of a propaganda approach or a unilateral system in the communication with citizens; she commended the regional parliament of Navarra which directly involved citizens in policy-making debates. Mr Hans-Peter PORTMANN, Swiss *Conseil National*, recalled the need to save taxpayers money, put the parliamentary mandates at the service of citizens and abide only by the values of democracy.

In her reply to the interventions, Ms AUDEL reminded once more that parliamentary proceedings needed to be opened up to the public. In her view, since the "red card" was a reactive instrument, with a narrow scope, more efforts should be dedicated to developing the "green card", which enabled creativity.

Mr OMTZIGT argued that exercising scrutiny did not equate with an anti-EU stance and called for transparency to the point where citizens could still influence the legislative process; in his view, scrutiny was possible only if information was available and could be publicly discussed with experts. While he deemed the "red card" to be a good idea, he believed its development could not be similar to the one of the "green card".

Mr VIGENIN supported the idea of a “red card” or other possible tools to influence legislation, but cautioned that with greater power came more responsibility and that a balance was needed. He invited Parliaments to continue their common reflection under the Bulgarian Presidency, encouraged them to share more information with the citizens in order to counter the anti-EU propaganda, and to scrutinise governments more.

In conclusion, the moderator commended national Parliaments’ resolve to continue the exchanges of good practice and to create a more inclusive and better-informed society.

5. Session III - ‘Digital Single Market - current developments of e-services’

Speakers: Mr Siim SIKKUT, Deputy Secretary General for Communications and State Information Systems, Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, most recent Chair of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*, Mr Jean BIZET, President of the European Affairs Committee, French *Sénat*

Moderator: Mr Kalle PALLING, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Mr Kalle PALLING, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, briefly introduced the topic and mentioned that no Estonian Presidency event was complete without talking about digitalisation and that COSAC was no exception. He further said that the session would concentrate on digitalisation of the public sector and more precisely on e-services. He then referenced the findings of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC and briefly introduced the three speakers.

Mr Siim SIKKUT, Deputy Secretary General for Communications and State Information Systems, Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, pointed out that Estonians used digital services to such an extent in their daily lives that the country was given the nickname e-Estonia. He continued by saying that those services allowed Estonian citizens to save time and money, make life easier and more convenient. The same applied for the public sector, he said, making it more efficient. He then explained that there were three types of services available in Estonia: 1) digital signatures; 2) digital services that made bureaucracy more bearable, such as declaring taxes and getting prescriptions for medicines; 3) services that people wanted to use, i.e. voting. He further elaborated that most of the services, however, functioned beneath the surface (as an example he brought digital health records) and that there were very few things one could not get done online in Estonia, these being transactions of high risk such as getting married or selling/buying real estate.

In his presentation, Mr SIKKUT outlined the biggest challenges faced by the public sector by referencing the transformation of services through redesign based on tech opportunities. Transformation, however, needed leadership and Mr SIKKUT applauded the strong and ambitious political and administrative leadership of Estonia that had reformed and simplified all the relevant sectors and services. Another challenge he mentioned was the nature of laws and regulations, which were often seen as barriers to reform. In Estonia, however, laws were regarded as enablers that pushed the society to go digital. Ten years before the notion of ‘once only’ was introduced and it meant that the public sector could ask for certain information only once and thereafter it was bound by law to reuse this data. Regarding security and privacy, Mr SIKKUT expressed his conviction based on the practical experience of Estonia that the issue could be solved. It would be necessary to build proper legal and technical safeguards, work on them daily and use state-of-art technology, but it could be achieved.

Regarding ways forward and how to improve digital services in Europe, Mr SIKKUT referred to the Tallinn Declaration on e-Government in October 2017 and pointed to the underlying reasoning which was to better serve the citizens of the EU. The declaration provided a concrete action plan to digitally transform the governments of the EU within the next 5 years. The Tallinn Declaration provided an ambitious roadmap for making sure that digital solutions were available for all services, for making them simpler for the end-user and for providing trust especially through digital identities. The Tallinn Digital Summit also echoed those notions, especially when it came to cross-border solutions. Mr SIKKUT concluded his intervention

by saying that it was in the hands of governments and Parliaments to deliver the goals of the Tallinn e-Government Declaration.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, most recent Chairman of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*, commenced his intervention by comparing Estonia to Germany. He looked at the differences in tax declaration, educational systems and medical services. He then wondered what had created such a wide gap between the digital development of the two countries. Mr KRICHBAUM hypothesised that it could be the relative size of the country that had made it more difficult for Germany to advance in the digital sector. However, he also recognised that there were other causes at work, such as mistrust and hesitance in making one's data available so readily in Germany's case. More importantly, however, the voluntary nature of switching over had led to more acceptance by citizens in Estonia. He then addressed data protection and said that, in Germany, that was a concern for many citizens. He recognised that data protection needed to be ensured, but at the same time stressed the need to avoid legislation going too far in this field and to assess implementation of legislation.

Mr KRICHBAUM went on to speak about digitalisation and the resulting returns on investment. According to experts, it was 2% of GDP which would result in 60 billion Euros in Germany. This could be used and invested in, among others, transport infrastructure, schools and hospitals. Mr KRICHBAUM further pointed out that, when looking at capitalisation of the stock market, one would see that European companies were not represented. He concluded that market capitalisation was where the future was traded and dealt with and hence it would be vital to have expertise from countries such as Estonia.

Mr Jean BIZET, President of the European Affairs Committee, French *Sénat*, recognised the challenges posed by digital advancement and acknowledged that Europe was lagging behind in digital innovation. According to him, the European Commission seemed determined that European law was respected and, in this respect, he welcomed the global and ambitious approach undertaken by Commissioner Margrethe VESTAGER in the field of European competition.

When looking at current developments in e-services, Mr BIZET drew on the experiences of France and said that according to Eurostat, email, online banking, media and social networks were the most frequently used services. The public administration had also set up a portal to allow citizens to use online services (copies of birth certificates, electoral rolls, purchase of fiscal stamps etc.), but, despite that, France was still lagging behind in comparison to Estonia. Mr BIZET then discussed the challenges in setting up efficient electronic services, among which he counted good networks across the European territories, reliable and safe e-services, as well as training for end-users to ensure that any fear or trepidation was overcome.

In light of the digital challenge, Europe needed to play a leading role in the digital economy to ensure growth and jobs, as well as to guarantee an online European identity. A digital strategy must, therefore, take on board the consequences of digital transformation. Mr BIZET pointed out that nowadays, the economic cycle was much faster than the political cycle and it would therefore be necessary to develop new rules to develop digital platforms, propose services, applications and content, and provide free access for users to all those platforms. Also, ensuring efficient taxation of revenues generated by digital activities as well as copyright needs, access to goods and fair pay for authors should also be taken into account. An industrial policy that would promote digitalisation in Europe should be seen as an important aspect. Mr BIZET added that competition policy was an exclusive right of the EU and that it was no longer in sync with the 21st century. He further said that the EU needed digital ambition in trade negotiations and in removing barriers for the setting up of start-ups. He concluded by emphasising the need for cybersecurity in Europe and congratulated Estonia for its advances in this field. He nevertheless recognised that, in the majority of EU Member States, cybersecurity was a blank page.

Fourteen participants intervened in the ensuing debate.

A number of speakers addressed the security concerns resulting from digital services. The Baroness NEVILLE-ROLFE, UK *House of Lords*, agreed with Mr SIKKUT that there was a need for government leadership, and the regulation of the Internet of things, which, despite being convenient, could cause possible harm. Mr VOTSIS pointed out that data protection and data security were issues of concern for the citizens and, in order to counter that, it was necessary to invest in research and innovation. Data archiving and its security were questioned by Mr Rainer ROBRA, German *Bundesrat*.

The question of education and training was considered by many as a crucial issue. Ms PLUMB stressed that all resources should be dedicated to the change from a Single Market to a Digital Single Market. However, she cautioned against a digital gap and a two-tier digital Europe. She called for more to be done for education and innovation in order to make full use of the digital potential. Ms Soraya RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, also addressed the gap between Member States when it came to digitisation and the need to train the citizens in order to use e-services properly and to invest in the safety of our connections. Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*, articulated her conviction that education and training were top priorities. She also expressed her commitment to deepening exchange and sharing best practices.

Mr SCHENNACH questioned whether digitisation was leading to job facilitation or job losses. Mr Martin VAN ROOIJEN, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, asked about the taxation of the digital market and Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Romanian *Senat*, addressed both the labour market and taxation issues.

The Earl of KINNOULL, UK *House of Lords*, addressed the General Data Protection regulation and said that advances in data would make the regulation soon out of date.

A number of speakers also outlined their own countries' successes in developing e-services. Ms Anne LOUHELAINEN, Finnish *Eduskunta*, mentioned Finland's reform of its online health services and Baroness NEVILLE-ROLFE cited the HMRC online services to be found under domain gov.uk. Mr Vladimir DJURIC, Serbian *Narodna Skupština*, mentioned Serbia's domestic IT industry and its rapid growth and export oriented nature. Mr Marc ANGEL, Luxembourg *Chambre des députés*, informed the participants of Luxembourg's role in hosting Estonian data embassy to protect and back up data.

Mr CRAUGHWELL wondered whether politicians were prepared to write legislation to open the Single Market to the extent where everything across borders could be done online.

In response to the remarks and questions in connection to data archiving, Mr SIKKUT elaborated on data embassies and thanked Luxembourg for having been a good innovation partner. In that respect, he said that it was possible to work with existing conventions provided they were interpreted in a modern way. In response to the question from Ireland, Mr SIKKUT emphasised that that it was necessary to provide value-added services, but also relevant safeguards. Drawing on the Estonian experience, he concluded that, when it came to the sharing economy, the key was to just start doing things – there was no perfect solution, but innovation happened by working on it.

Mr KRICHBAUM expressed the view that more investment was needed in training and further education in light of changes to the labour market. He further professed that things would change and disappear, but also adapt to the new world. Referring to the New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman he said that in the next 100 years the world would change more than in the past 20,000 years together.

Mr BIZET acknowledged that both adopting a new legislative framework and striking a balance were necessary. Being quite liberal was a prerequisite to allowing the emergence of start-ups. In response to the Austrian question regarding the alienation of people, he said that it would be beneficial to have an Erasmus for apprentices and not only university students.

Mr PALLING concluded the debate by calling on participants to embrace the digitalisation of the public sector and for policy makers to lead the way in enabling change.

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

The Chair reminded the participants that the second term of office of the current Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, would expire by the end of the year. He informed the participants that the Troika had met with the only candidate for the position, Mr Kenneth CURMI, Maltese *Kamra-tad-Deputati*, the previous afternoon and, as per Article 9.3 of the Rules of Procedure, had unanimously decided to recommend him to the COSAC Chairpersons for appointment. In the absence of any objection, Mr CURMI's appointment for the period 2018-2019 was confirmed. The Chair also thanked Ms Christiana FRYDA, the outgoing Permanent Member, for her work during her term.

- Debate on the draft Contribution and draft Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC

Mr VITSUT informed that the draft Conclusions and Contribution were circulated on 13 November 2017. Since then, the Presidency had received amendments from national Parliaments and the European Parliament on both documents. He further informed the Chairs that, following the discussion during the Troika meeting on the day before, they had received a modified document, as well as the amendments tabled until the deadline of noon of that day. Referring to the guidance with regard to adopting the Contribution and the Conclusions, he underlined that, in those cases where amendments had not been resubmitted on the Troika text, it was considered that consensus was reached.

Following an animated debate, an amended text of the draft Contribution of the LVIII COSAC was agreed.

In relation to the draft Conclusions, the Chair noted the letter sent on 14 November 2017 by the President of the European Commission, which informed COSAC about the establishment of a Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and "Doing Less More Efficiently", and mentioned additional amendments received from national Parliaments after the deadline on part 4 proposed by the Estonian Presidency. Acknowledging the late stage at which the letter had reached the Presidency, he opened the floor for debate. Following an animated debate and voting in cases of controversy, the Presidency presented a compromise proposal on paragraph 4.5., which was finally adopted. The final draft of the Conclusions, as amended, was agreed upon.

7. Session IV: 'State of play - building an effective and sustainable Security Union'

Speaker: Mr Julian KING, European Commissioner for Security Union

Moderator: Ms Marianne MIKKO, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Ms Marianne MIKKO, Member of the European Union Affairs Committee of the *Riigikogu*, moderating the session, reminded the EU's recent decisive steps to enhance security and called for further efforts at national, EU and international level.

Mr Julian KING, European Commissioner for Security Union, who welcomed the opportunity to exchange with national Parliaments within COSAC, explained in his address how the EU could support national action in the field of prevention, protection and response to security threats.

The Commissioner gave a brief overview of the evolving on-line and off-line security threats. On-line threats, such as the WannaCry cyberattack or the Russian cyber interference targeted democratic institutions. Off-line, terrorism, which was directed against the values and way of life of the EU, continued to be a threat, particularly low-tech terrorism. Those threats were both transnational in nature and required international, collective and coordinated responses.

In the field of cybersecurity, the EU proposed an EU-wide certification framework for ICT products and services; it also created a network of cybersecurity competence centers and a new European cybersecurity competence and research hub. Measures to tackle terrorism included, EU legislation to cut access to firearms and the precursors used for homemade explosives (currently reviewed for even more stringent control), to tackle money laundering, to criminalise travel for terrorist purposes, and to criminalise those who helped to train and fund terrorist activities. The 2016 Action plan on financing terrorism had been largely implemented, and more action was taken for ensuring swifter access of national authorities to financial information on perpetrators held by another country.

Commissioner KING emphasised the need to learn from common experiences on tackling radicalisation and the issue of foreign fighters. He mentioned the interim report of the EU High-level group on radicalisation, made of representatives of national authorities and the European Parliament, which worked in cooperation with the civil society. Mr KING informed the audience that the Internet Forum (composed of experts, representatives of the Member States and of the internet platforms), was working on detecting and removing the terrorist propaganda material from the internet. Should voluntary measures proved to be not fast enough, the EU reserved its right to resort to legislation.

Commissioner KING also pointed to the increased use of the EU tools for sharing information by law-enforcement national authorities who also cooperated within Europol and other EU agencies. National intelligence units created a platform in The Hague, outside the EU framework.

Mr KING underlined the importance of the information on travel and movement patterns for the prevention and response to terrorism. The EU Passengers Name Record Directive (PNR) would enter into force in May 2018, a new Entry/Exit system to the Schengen zone was agreed and ETIAS, a European pre-clearing system for those travelling to Europe under visa-waiver scheme should be agreed upon soon. In addition, the Commission would put forward proposals to make all existing systems interoperable via a European portal.

In conclusion, the Commissioner appealed to national Parliaments to transpose legislation within the deadline, and stressed the need of political will and real engagement in implementing the agreed solutions. Mr KING promised to continue visiting national Parliaments, but called for a strategic dialogue with them on the wider security landscape.

The moderator recalled the Estonian reaction to 2007 cyberattacks and its decision to combat them, before opening the floor for the debate in which seventeen parliamentarians took the floor in the subsequent debate.

Almost all the delegates taking the floor referred to terrorism or its presence in the cyberworld.

Mr Veli YÜKSEL, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, referred to the thousands of foreign fighters that would be returning home and that were considered a possible threat. Mr Pol VAN DEN DRIESSCHE, Belgian *Sénat*, also mentioned the terrible experience relating to terrorist attacks in Belgium, wondering whether Europe was perhaps being too tolerant. He expressed his concern regarding people who did not accept societal norms in the West, and spoke of a multicultural dream that did not actually work. He urged for greater efforts in order to ensure fostering integration and to work in a more repressive manner when it came to protecting Europe's democratic societies. Mr OMTZIGT also referred to returnees from Syria who had committed terrorist attacks, arguing that, since they had fought for an organisation carrying genocidal attacks, they had to be punished under the genocide convention (UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide), and expressed dismay at the fact that they had not been imprisoned. He called for an EU policy to make sure genocide was punished and wondered how it would be possible to protect citizens in one country from attacks from people living in countries which did not shoulder their responsibilities. Mr CHARAKOPOULOS confirmed this increased presence of radicalised people in Europe, adding that radicalisation in the Muslim world had also increased. Mr Petar PETROV, Bulgarian *Narodno Sobranie*, spoke of the existence of radical Islamic education centres in his country, with some

priests having studied in Saudi Arabian radical Islamic centres. Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, also stressed the importance of combatting radicalisation.

Many members linked terrorism to cyberthreats and online presence. Mr YÜKSEL mentioned the use of social media to spread extremist propaganda and referred to a recent German law obliging online platforms to withdraw messages of hate within 24 hours, and called for a similar European directive. Lord TEVERSON questioned how serious online platforms were about cooperation and expressed concern at how foreign governments' interference through social media in the way countries in the West ran their democratic nations. The Baroness NEVILLE-ROLFE also called for key initiatives to reduce harm from the internet and make it more secure.

Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of Oireachtas*, called for cybersecurity and the need for common security agreement, a sentiment echoed by Mr Rafał TRZASKOWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, and Mr Tunne KELAM, European Parliament, who also said that the role of national Parliaments and governments was to establish clear and binding rules for navigating cyberspace, as well as providing compulsory teaching of cyber hygiene to schoolchildren and civil servants.

Ms Soraya RODRÍGUEZ RAMOS, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, spoke about the cyber financing of terrorism, and asked whether the EU directive on combatting money laundering was sufficient, while also wondering how to increase cooperation with third countries to combat criminal financing.

A number of members talked about borders and migration. Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, said Hungary had decided to protect its external borders effectively in spite of criticism, because security of external borders was a prerequisite for internal security; the reintroduction of internal border controls proposed in the amendments of the Schengen borders code was, in his view, unacceptable. Mr CHARAKOPOULOS said unilateral action was not the answer to border controls, and called for the strengthening of security at external borders, while reminding colleagues that Greece was at the forefront of migratory flows. Mr Piotr APEL, Polish *Sejm*, said migration was a phenomenon that needed addressing, while Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN, Romanian *Senat*, said it was not right that Romania was a high contributor to Frontex, but was blocked from accessing Schengen. Mr CRAUGHWELL said that thousands of undocumented migrants were allowed in the EU, among which were potential perpetrators who could easily live in one country and attack another. Greater soft-target protection was needed in this regard through increased cooperation of the police; Ireland would not support any talks on the creation of an EU military army.

Information exchange was another predominant topic during the debate. Mr Ivan IVANOV, Bulgarian *Narodno Sobranie*, stressed that effective use of EU information systems and databases were key in thwarting terrorist threats and organised crime, and this would be a top priority of the Bulgarian Presidency. He also expressed hope that the Schengen Information System would hopefully help in overcoming accession barriers of Romania and Bulgaria which would also help foster security in Europe. Similar sentiments were expressed by Mr CORLĂȚEAN. Mr BIZET called for greater interoperability of European databases and better national PNR to ensure the European PNR was efficient, and both Mr BIZET and Ms Eleni STAVROU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, urged for greater cooperation with Europol. Agreeing with other members, but reminding them that security was mostly a national competence, Ms Renske LEIJTEN, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, asked how Member States could be assisted in and encouraged to exchange information in a better way without turning it into a European competence. Both Ms ČIGĀNE and Mr TRZASKOWSKI appealed for more information sharing to diminish lack of trust. The Lord TEVERSON called for efforts to improve the traceability of terrorists involved in terrorist attacks.

Brexit also featured a couple of times during the session, with both Ms STAVROU and Ms ČIGĀNE calling for efforts to mitigate the impact of Brexit in the area of cooperation and exchange of information.

Mr KIRKILAS stressed the importance of interoperability between EU and NATO in order to have a stronger and more resilient EU, adding that it was highly important to ensure all companies across the EU had equal access to European Defence Fund programmes, while Ms KAVVADIA expressed scepticism, and wondered whether programmes like the EDF were merely facilitating the interests of the military industry, as dictated by the powerful lobbies in Brussels.

In his replies, Commissioner KING said the feedback received from colleagues of national Parliaments was extremely helpful in comprehensively assessing the security processes, adding that any debate related to subsidiarity should not hinder work in this area.

The Commissioner acknowledged that cyber-enabled threats were extremely challenging, and that the pace of the evolution of those threats had been speeding up, meaning Europe needed to be even more focussed in trying to counter them. Indeed, cybercrime in Europe had grown five times since that strategy, meaning that more had to be done to slow its growth, which was also acting as a significant drag on economy. In this regard, the EU was looking to bolster the cyber resilience of systems and devices used online, but also work on behavioural resilience, and here the Commissioner agreed with Mr BIZET's suggestion of focussing on cyber-hygiene through a debate on critical awareness to be employed online both as an individual or a national authority. Enhancing the mandate of the European cybersecurity agency was also being proposed.

Commissioner KING said that the Commission also sought to build civil deterrence, and, as Lord TEVERSON had mentioned, improve traceability; the EU needed to get better at identifying perpetrators and then holding them to account.

As for international cooperation, Commissioner KING agreed with Mr KIRKILAS on the need to work together and strengthen cooperation between EU and NATO, adding that this reinforced cooperation should also be extended to other likeminded countries, in particular the US.

Replying to concerns expressed by Members from peripheral countries, the Commissioner said the European Border and Coast Guard would help those Member States on the frontline, though it was important to provide continual support.

With regard to the EU's internal borders, the revision of the Schengen border code meant that everybody who entered the Schengen area was controlled thanks to the Schengen Information System, and Commissioner KING promised that those countries, which were not yet fully able to avail themselves of this, would be able to shortly.

As crucially important as sharing of information was, the Commissioner stressed that it could never be an obligation, so it was therefore important to show how useful it was to share.

The Commissioner warned that, as terrorists were being defeated on the ground, they would resume their struggle through other means, including through cyberattacks, which meant there was a need to garner maximum cooperation from the big online platforms. He referred to the concrete deadlines set at the G7 to work with the big internet companies to take material down within two hours of it being posted where it was technically possible to do that. The evolving nature of the threat also meant that there was a great need for continued support and that Europol and other agencies had to find new ways to address challenges, particularly those concerning soft targets, and crack down on extremist propaganda online.

As for the issue of terrorist financing, the EU was currently working on shared definitions, as well as increasing transparency related to bank accounts and bank details with regard to the fourth anti-money laundering directive.¹

8. Session V: ‘The external dimension of migration - preventing and combating irregular migration’

Speakers: Mr Simon MORDUE, Deputy Director General for Migration, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission, Mr Edward ZAMMIT LEWIS, Chair of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Ms Anne-Mari VIROLAINEN, Chair of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

Moderator: Mr Jaak MADISON, Vice-Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*

Mr MADISON opened the session on migration, an area which he said entailed action within the EU and also cooperation with third countries, while also highlighting the modest number of returns of people who did not need protection, before introducing the panel.

Mr MORDUE said that the EU-Turkey agreement was under pressure but still holding, and this was evident from the reality: a migratory flow of 80 a day instead of 10,000. This sort of action went hand in hand with Member States’ efforts and the putting in place of a comprehensive strategy.

With regard to the internal dimension of migration, Mr MORDUE praised the creation of the European border and coast guard agency, as well as the improvement of the Schengen Information System. From the external side, on the other hand, there was the EU-Africa Summit, which provided an opportunity for open discussion. Mr MORDUE stressed that migration was not going away, so the only thing left to establish was the attitude towards it: was it to be seen as a threat or an opportunity?

Mr MORDUE said efforts were underway to ensure orderly flows instead of the disorderly flows witnessed in 2015 and 2016, adding that Europe should continue being a leading global actor in protecting refugees and safeguarding human rights. In this regard, it was imperative to avoid smuggling by incentivising people not to follow that pathway and instead opt for legal channels, and this could be done through a resettlement scheme for people who genuinely deserved to be able to reach the EU legally.

Mr MORDUE stated that economic migrants were still needed, but even this must be done in an orderly way. He also recalled that 1/3 of people identified for return had effectively been returned to their countries of origins. He said it was also important to look into the interaction between the asylum process and the return process.

Referring to the horrendous situation in Libya, Mr MORDUE stressed how important it was for the EU not to be seen as the source of these camps, as these had been existing for a number of years, and the EU had done a lot of work to combat them.

Explaining the way ahead, Mr MORDUE pointed out a number of goals, including the replacement of irregular disorderly flows with regular orderly ones, combatting smuggling and working with African partners. Migration was a challenge which would be there for the next 10-15 years, but there was a light at the end of the tunnel and it could already be seen.

Mr MORDUE concluded by calling the common asylum system as the last missing piece of the puzzle which would hopefully become available in the near future.

¹ DIRECTIVE (EU) 2015/849 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC.

Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS said that migration would not go away, and it was up to Member States to handle it in a smart manner. Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS stated that return and readmission agreements and other relevant legal channels were central elements of any effective cooperation in migration matters, as migrants could treat legal options as credible alternatives to smuggling. He was certain that strengthening legal channels would contribute to saving the number of lives lost at sea and curtail the abuses committed by smugglers.

Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS noted that resettlement was one of the preferred systems to deal with the current flows, and the goal of resettling 50,000 of the most vulnerable refugees by October 2019 was a positive but temporary solution. He said that, despite efforts at EU level for countries of origin to respect their obligations, cooperation in this regard was still lacking.

Other ways how to address migration related to tackling the root causes, providing scholarships, grants and research. Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS stressed however how important it was for migrants benefitting from such measures to return and thus limit the brain drain.

Concluding, Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS summarised the main points necessary for a sustainable solution to the problem, namely an efficient prevention of irregular flows; a reliable system of returns; the common shouldering of the responsibility of a common external border; and the establishment of a stable framework for resettlement.

Ms VIROLAINEN welcomed the work done to boost EU migration policy internally and externally, but stressed that more had to be done in this regard. A comprehensive approach was needed for policy to be effective. Current inequalities, wars, and widespread poverty to which there was no quick solution in sight meant migration flows were with us for years to come.

Ms VIROLAINEN warned against setting aside basic values for short term advantages, as this would mean giving up on Europe as a community of values. She echoed Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS's remarks by calling for legal and safe paths into Europe. It was also important to cooperate with IOM and UNHCR, and work together with them in order to improve conditions on migration routes. She lamented the fact that slavery had arrived to the neighbourhood, namely to Libya and stressed that the EU should not turn a blind eye to such developments.

While acknowledging that human trafficking should be addressed, Ms VIROLAINEN underscored the importance of addressing root causes and not just effects. There was a veritable EU interest to ensure growth and prosperity in Africa as instability there meant instability in Europe. In this regard, it was essential that Member States strive to create opportunities for trade and investment: the EU must review its trade policies to open up its own markets.

As for the coherence of EU policies, Ms VIROLAINEN stressed that trade and migration had to be interlinked so as to boost the 2030 sustainable agenda. Curbing climate change had to also be high on the agenda.

Turning her attention to returns, she stated that voluntary subsidised returns presented the most effective and humane solution. Readmission agreements also played an important role. Furthermore, an EU list of safe countries was needed.

Ms VIROLAINEN reminded her colleagues that money was needed for both internal and external action: direct funds were especially important when addressing root causes of migration. This could be achieved through coordination between the different financing sources.

Twenty-six participants took the floor.

A good number of them talked about migration from Africa and the Middle-East. Ms Marina BERLINGHIERI said it was difficult to cooperate with destabilised countries facing corruption, but a long term strategy for investment in culture and youth in these countries was nonetheless needed together with the finances necessary to help Africans sustain these projects. Mr SCHENNACH echoed those sentiments, but also spoke of assistance to Lebanon, and of ensuring more secure circumstances for women and children in refugee camps. On the same vein, Ms Liliana TANGUY, French *Assemblée nationale*, stressed that Africa should be seen as a strategic partner. Mr Andrius KUBILIUS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, asked on the other hand where the assistance to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova was, and why this was only addressed to Africa. Ms KAVVADIA expressed her concern regarding the concentration camps in Libya and push-backs in the Mediterranean, while Mr Franc TRCEK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, referred to the mining for materials needed for smartphones, which also led to wars in Africa.

Mr Piotr WACH, Polish *Senat*, agreed with the point presented by Ms VIROLAINEN and urged his colleagues to look at the long term problems, most importantly the rapidly growing population in Africa and Middle-East, adding that fences would not stop migrants, and that the EU should focus instead on assisting and promoting the limitation of population growth.

Some members also spoke about young people and youth unemployment. Ms BERLINGHIERI, Ms TANGUY and Ms DE SANTA ANA, who also referred to child migrants and the need to strengthen their rights.

The issue of human rights was also brought up during the debate. Ms Tineke STRIK, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, asked how the EU ensured that the external dimension abided by these rights when migrants became stranded in transitory countries, and proposed setting respect for human rights as a condition for agreements before entering into deals with third countries. Mr Kimmo KIVELA, Finnish *Eduskunta*, whilst also agreeing that everybody's dignity and human rights had to be respected, warned against being naive in doing so, as not all migrants travelled *bona fide*.

A number of Members expressed solidarity with countries facing disproportionate migratory flows. Mr CRAUGHWELL thanked countries in the Mediterranean facing these problems, reminding colleagues of the visit to Pollazzo earlier this year, while Mr KELAM expressed his solidarity specifically with Malta, adding that it was high time to change the rigid rules of the Dublin system. Mr Malik AZMANI, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, also talked about solidarity, saying that this was indispensable when dealing with the internal dimension of migration, which was actually the biggest challenge, adding that when it came to the external dimension, one of the key issues there had been return policy.

Other Members spoke about return policy. Ms TANGUY called it ineffective, and called for a policy which was pragmatic while at the same time respecting human rights; Mr Ivan IVANOV, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*, acknowledged that return policies were fundamental, but stressed the importance of a coordinated and sustainable approach that ensured fair procedures for people needing protection to be granted asylum in EU.

Frontex was also mentioned during the debate, with Mr BIZET welcoming further development, especially with regard to the proposal to create a border and coast guard which would be able to carry out control at the external border and Schengen area. Ms TANGUY asked whether Frontex could help in combatting mafia groups.

Opinions on current policies were mixed. Both Mr KUBILIUS and Ms TANGUY criticised the attitude of merely reacting to crises as they happened, and called for long term policies. Mr BIZET praised the hot spots, describing them as a positive development in trying to control people and identify them when entering the Schengen area, adding that the EU should consider hot spots in third countries as well. He also called for improved readmission agreements. Mr Sergio BATTELI, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, warned against Member States acting on their own and called for an EU policy. Striking human traffickers and

cutting their money flows, which was also used to finance terrorist attacks, was deemed an urgent issue for Mr KELAM. Ms Elvira KOVACS, Serbian *Narodna skupština*, said her country was dealing with migratory flows, providing the necessary protection, but also going to great lengths in order to manage border control and fight human smuggling, yet she lamented the fact that Serbia was not an EU Member State and therefore had no access to funding. Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, saw a reluctance to seriously address the issues in a timely manner. Mr CHARAKOPOULOS called for an equitable distribution of migrants across the EU, also stressing that Turkey must accept the agreements made with the EU and its resulting obligations. Mr Václav HAMPL, Czech *Senát*, said Europe could certainly be proud for being a safe harbour and that despite the dangers of the journeys undertaken by migrants, it was still easier to reach Europe than US or Australia; he therefore asked whether it would be possible to discuss with the latter to provide legal ways into their countries. Mr BANA said Europe was still under heavy migratory pressure, and the uncontrolled flow brought security risks; controlling borders and tackling root causes was the best way to deal with this, and a sustainable solution was needed, one which would also strike hard on smugglers and close smuggling routes. Mr David STELLINI, Maltese *Kamra tad-deputati*, wanted to see a beefing up of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) based in Malta, and an agreement on the list of countries of origin, adding that there should be more focus on the root causes of migration as per the Valletta Action Plan, which all countries had supported but which was lacking in concrete follow-up measures.

As for attitudes toward migration, here again opinions were mixed. Mr ANGEL stated that people were welcome in developed countries, and said that words must be backed by actions, especially when it came to funding the agencies and organisations, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which were dealing with the problems identified during the meeting. Others were more cautious. Mr KELAM said that regular migration was acceptable, but not when it became a threat to the identity or security of European citizens, concerns which, if left unchecked, gave rise to populism. Migration should also not be considered as a substitute for not producing children in the EU, he added. Mr CRAUGHWELL said one had to discern between genuine refugees and economic migrants, a sentiment echoed by Ms ANTTILA and Mr Zoltan TESSELY, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, who recounted his experiences as Mayor of Bicske, where according to him only 2% of migrants faced real problems and were in need of genuine assistance, as well as Mr Lech KOŁAKOWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, who decried the acts of certain politicians who had, according to him, irresponsibly invited people to the Union, resulting in a number of unidentified migrants living in the EU Member States.

In his replies, Mr MORDUE stressed that consistency at the EU level was needed. The transformation of asylum office into asylum agency in Malta would help in this regard. He was adamant that the EU was not pouring money to Libyan abuse; quite the contrary, it had also strived to ensure the respect of human rights. The same could be said about Turkey; there, the money did not go to their government but rather to refugee organisations.

Addressing the issue of unaccompanied minors, Mr MORDUE stated that 1/3 of all migrants fell in this category, and it was therefore vital to ensure that adequate reception and guardianship were in place. In reply to Mr CRAUGHWELL, Mr MORDUE stressed that a distinction should be made between economic migrants and refugees. The suggestion that migrants and refugees were linked to security and terrorist threats was simply untrue; data showed the latter was mostly related to local grown terrorism.

Mr MORDUE said a lot of work was being done together with Europol, in order to go after financial flows and dismantle smugglers' networks.

When it came to the situation in Greece, Mr MORDUE expressed his dismay at how difficult the situation was, and the experience of working with Greek authorities. It was important for Greece to be more efficient in the appeals and returns process. On the topic of returns, he welcomed return agreements with Bangladesh and Guinea.

Concluding, Mr MORDUE stressed the need for responsibility on the one hand and solidarity on the other, and reminded participants that the EU was based on solidarity and the rule of law.

Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS, in his replies, thanked Mr KELAM for acknowledging the efforts of the Maltese, and Mr BATELLI for highlighting how Malta and Italy had dealt with migration for a number of years.

When dealing with migration, Mr ZAMMIT LEWIS noted how investment was important, and mentioned the Khartoum Process. Stabilising countries needed money, he stressed, and agreed with Ms TANGUY that Africa could not be seen as a problem but as a partner. He reminded colleagues that migration was a challenge needing global solutions.

Ms VIROLAINEN stated that migration was a complex question and therefore had no simple answers. She agreed that it had been a phenomenon for many years, and was a puzzle with many pieces, and would need real measures how to tackle root causes, combat trafficking, improve return policies and succeed in integration while not giving up on values.

Concluding the session, Mr MADISON agreed there was not enough time for this issue, but big problems were solved with little steps, and hopefully this debate was a small step in the right direction.

9. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC

The texts of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC were unanimously adopted with no amendment.

After thanking the organisers of the meeting and the participants, Mr VITSUT gave the floor to Mr VIGENIN who informed the delegations about the upcoming meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons in Sofia on 21-22 January 2018, as well as the LIX COSAC on 17-19 June 2018.