

*Draft as of 20 June 2017*

## Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC 9–10 July 2017, Tallinn

### Draft outline

### 28<sup>th</sup> Bi-annual Report of COSAC

#### Chapter 1 – The future of the European Union

With the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of European cooperation being celebrated this year, and against the backdrop of an unprecedented number of challenges, the future of the European Union has been widely debated. Amid the challenges, which range from the UK referendum in favour of leaving the EU, the ongoing migrant and refugee crisis, the rise of populist political parties and a heightened terrorism threat, the Union, as it currently stands, is being increasingly questioned. In light of this, it is fitting to discuss the views of the national Parliaments on the future of the European Union. Building upon the 23<sup>rd</sup> Bi-annual report of COSAC, and with a view to further encourage this debate, Chapter 1 aims to identify the positions and views of the parliaments in the context of parliamentary scrutiny when considering EU policy documents related to the future of the EU.

The chapter is divided into two parts.

The first part aims to take stock of the views of the Parliaments/Chambers on the Commission's White Paper on the Future of the EU, and more specifically to discern their points of view on the five scenarios put forward by the European Commission.

The purpose of the second part is to exchange information and compile the opinions of the Parliaments /Chambers on recently published documents, such as the Commission's reflection paper on *harnessing globalisation* (COM(2017) 240) and on the *social dimension of Europe* (COM(2017) 206). Furthermore, it will endeavour to ascertain whether national Parliaments wish to reconsider institutional arrangements on the EU level and, more importantly, whether they would support changing the EU treaties in order to shape the future of the EU.

#### Chapter 2 – Bringing the EU closer to its citizens

The EU is often accused of opacity, complexity and inability to communicate clearly with its citizens. Although efforts have been made to bring the Union closer to its citizens (among others the European citizens' initiative, the Council regulation (EU) No 390/2014 establishing the 'Europe for Citizens' programme for the period 2014-2020), little attention has been paid to the role of national Parliaments in this equation. Communicating Europe is a complex matter, but national Parliaments, due to their proximity, are in a unique position to reach out to citizens and to make EU politics more transparent and accountable. Building upon the 26<sup>th</sup> Bi-annual Report of COSAC, the aim of this chapter is twofold: the first aim is to further investigate the best practices in involving civil society and citizens in debates on EU matters. The second aim is to find out how national Parliaments communicate their activities related to EU affairs to the general public.

This chapter is divided into two parts.

The first part addresses citizens' involvement in EU discussions and decision making. It does so by inquiring about possible action plans to improve interaction between Parliaments/Chambers and the wider public, as well as by compiling evidence on cooperation formats between these two parties. It further investigates the digital platforms that allow citizens to be more engaged in EU matters.

The second part addresses the visibility of EU-related parliamentary discussions and the decision making process. Parliaments/Chambers will be asked about the frequency of EU-related debates in the plenary, as well as about their transparency, i.e. whether the related documents are available to the public and whether hearings and meetings are open to the public. It will also inquire about the means and modalities of informing citizens on EU matters.

### **Chapter 3 – Digital Single Market**

A deepened Single Market for digital innovation sets the tone for a prosperous European Union, with its citizens and businesses benefitting from the removal of digital barriers, and the opportunities that come with it. Making the Single Market fit for the digital age has been a key task in reinvigorating a cornerstone of European integration, but rapid innovation poses a number of challenges for policy makers. Keeping up with the pace of new economic and social phenomena in digital form is a major stumbling block for lawmakers, and requires quick but deliberated action.

Building on the discussions held during the meeting of the LIV COSAC, this chapter endeavours to further examine the progress made in the elaboration and implementation of the Digital Single Market Strategy which was launched by the European Commission in 2015. More specifically, the emphasis of this chapter is on the digital transformation of parliamentary procedures.

This chapter is divided into two parts.

The first part seeks information on the current voting mechanisms in the Parliaments/Chambers and on possible electronic solutions in parliamentary work.

The aim of the second part is to understand what importance individual Parliaments/Chambers place on the Digital Single Market Strategy, how it features in their EU policy, and which aspects of it have received the most attention from the parliamentarians.