

14 October 2013

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE L COSAC**

27–29 October 2013, Vilnius

**1. COSAC’s Contribution to the Strengthening of Interparliamentary Cooperation in the European Union**

1.1. On the occasion of its jubilee 50th plenary meeting in Vilnius, COSAC welcomes its founder Mr Laurent FABIUS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France, former Speaker of the French *Assemblée nationale*, and wishes to express its profound gratitude to Mr FABIUS for his 1989 initiative and subsequent efforts in bringing about the establishment of the Interparliamentary Conference of Bodies Specialised in European Affairs, known as COSAC.

1.2. As the oldest interparliamentary conference in the EU, COSAC remains committed to strengthening of democratic legitimacy and accountability in the EU, promoting the pro-active role of national Parliaments in the EU decision-making process and cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament.

1.3. COSAC calls on the EU institutions to start a discussion with Parliaments on how to exploit to the full extent the possibilities provided in Article 10 of Protocol 1 of the Treaty of Lisbon.

**2. State of Play of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

2.1. COSAC welcomes the political agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 and looks forward to swift conclusion of complementary legal acts. COSAC is of the opinion that the EU budget should play a significant role in stimulating growth, providing needed investments in research and innovation, as well as helping to address the problem of intra-EU macroeconomic imbalances. COSAC stresses that the prime goal now is to ensure that the financial funds for the period 2014-2020 reach European citizens and businesses in time.

2.2. COSAC welcomes the agreement reached by the European Council in June 2013 on a €8 billion youth jobless fund, known as the “youth guarantee”, to implement the youth employment package, yet stresses that further concrete steps are urgently needed. COSAC emphasises that efforts to combat youth unemployment must rely on a comprehensive strategy, including measures to support small and medium-sized enterprises, foster entrepreneurship among young people and reduce failure at school.

2.3. COSAC is of the opinion that the completion of a fully functional internal energy market is one of the major EU objectives, as well as completion of work on the Directive concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services which besides energy market and digital technology will complete the creation of the Single Market as one of the priorities in the EU, which in turn would stimulate the development of a more stable and competitive European economy, thus leading to a greater role for the EU internationally. Therefore it urges the EU institutions to do everything possible to achieve tangible progress in this field.

2.4. COSAC recognises the EU’s interest to have safe, economically strong and pro-European Eastern Neighbours and emphasises that the success of the Eastern Partnership could only be achieved by joint efforts of the EU institutions, EU Member States and the Eastern Partners themselves.

2.5. COSAC welcomes the start of historic negotiations between the EU and the United States on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and considers that, if concluded, the TTIP could provide the much needed boost to the EU economy, possibly adding, according to the Commission’s estimates, up to 400,000 new jobs and 0.5% of additional GDP growth per year.

**3. Ensuring the Success of the Eastern Partnership**

3.1. COSAC emphasises the strategic importance of the Eastern Partnership to the long-term security, democratic development and economic prosperity of its Eastern neighbours. COSAC expects that the 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius will deliver concrete results and open the door to closer political association and deeper economic integration for those Eastern Partnership countries that meet the necessary commitments and requirements. COSAC welcomes the progress that has been achieved in the negotiations on the bilateral Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the Eastern partners and expects that the agreements with Georgia and Moldova will be successfully initialled during the Vilnius Summit.

3.2. Bearing in mind that economic and political situation in the countries of the Eastern Partnership varies, COSAC stresses particular importance of Ukraine for the success of the Eastern Partnership. COSAC commends the results of the European Parliament Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and wishes to thank Mr Pat COX, former President of the European Parliament, and Mr Alexander KWASNIEWSKI, former President of the Republic of Poland, for their relentless commitment and dedication for resolving selective justice problems and facilitating the necessary judiciary reforms in Ukraine. COSAC expects that Ukraine will fulfil the required conditions, as formally defined by the 10 December 2012 Foreign Affairs Council and supported by the European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2012, and that the Association Agreement with Ukraine will be signed during the Vilnius Summit. COSAC supports the provisional application of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement upon signature and expresses its intent to proceed swiftly with the full ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in respective national Parliaments, once all the necessary requirements are met.

**4. Democratic Legitimacy in the EU and the Role of EU Parliaments**

4.1. COSAC notes that democratic deficit is one of the fundamental problems of the political and institutional architecture of the EU decision-making process. COSAC recalls that 2013 is the European Year of Citizens and therefore believes that it is necessary to take measures ensuring that the EU governance and the functioning of its institutions are as democratic and transparent as possible, with the aim of reducing the democratic deficit between the European citizens and the EU institutions.

4.2. COSAC notes that the institutional architecture of the EU is based on dual legitimacy resting on both national and European levels, and that the right balance has to be found between parliamentary control exercised by national Parliaments and the European Parliament. COSAC urges national Parliaments to exercise full parliamentary scrutiny of decisions taken at the Union level and to engage in a thorough discussion on how to use the powers provided by the Treaty of Lisbon to their full extent in their efforts to build a more accountable and legitimate system of governance in the EU.

4.3. COSAC calls for the continued evolution of democratic legitimacy in the EU and suggests the following concrete proposals:

* COSAC calls on the EU institutions to demonstrate the impact of reasoned opinions and political dialogue contributions made by national Parliaments
* COSAC calls on the European Commission, again, to ensure better quality and more timely responses to reasoned opinions and political dialogue contributions made by national Parliaments
* COSAC calls on the Council to agree on a code of conduct stating that each Member State should give an assurance that it’s national Parliament has been involved, in accordance with national constitutional or legal requirements, in forming the positions that the Member State represents in the Council.

**5. Political Dialogue**

5.1. COSAC invites the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, to engage with national Parliaments in a closer, more effective and more constructive political dialogue aimed at tangible results on topical EU matters, especially on its flagship initiatives and other. COSAC recalls the Contributions of the last three Presidencies, which contain proposals on how to improve political dialogue between the European Commission and national Parliaments.

5.2. COSAC invites the European Commission to take into consideration the comments by national Parliaments expressed in the 20th Bi-annual Report of COSAC on the effectiveness of the political dialogue focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of interactions.

**6. European Elections 2014: a Platform for Debate on the EU Future with its Citizens**

6.1. COSAC expresses its conviction that the success of the European project is impossible without the active engagement of citizens of the Union. Realising that the powers of the European Parliament are greater than ever before, COSAC underlines the importance of active participation of citizens of the Union in the 2014 European elections and invites national Parliaments to engage in political debates on the key issues prior to the elections.

6.2. COSAC emphasises that the 2014 European elections will be the first held elections after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, which stipulates that the European Council must take into account the elections to the European Parliament and having held the appropriate consultations shall propose a candidate for President of the European Commission to be *elected* by the newly assembled European Parliament. COSAC believes that the establishment of such a link between the elections to the European Parliament, as an institution directly elected by the citizens, and the selection of the President of the European Commission will be a significant step in reducing the democratic deficit in the EU.

6.3. COSAC regrets that until now European election campaigns have been focused primarily on issues of national significance, leaving the debate on specific EU matters outside the remit of the campaigns. COSAC therefore calls on national political parties to seek that the 2014 European elections should become a platform for a constructive, informative and inclusive debate on the future of Europe with its citizens.

6.4. COSAC welcomes the commitment expressed by Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, in his 2013 State of the Union address to present ideas on the future of the Union and on measures to consolidate and deepen the community method.

**7. Implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy**

7.1. COSAC supports the ambitious goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy; however, it considers that in order to achieve these goals, it is crucial to strengthen the structure of management of the Strategy and to improve the mechanisms of funding of the priorities of the Strategy, in particular by more effective absorption of cohesion funds, by involving such institutions as the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as by attracting more private capital.

7.2. COSAC notes that progress towards smarter, more sustainable and inclusive, resource-efficient and job-creating growth in the EU should be more actively addressed at the national level and that national Parliaments should exercise on-going parliamentary scrutiny of the progress achieved with regard to the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy. COSAC also considers that the implementation of the seven Europe 2020 flagship initiatives should be evaluated with a clear indication of what has been achieved and of the ways to remove the existing remaining obstacles.

7.3. COSAC considers that the current level of engagement of national Parliaments in the process and procedures of the European Semester could be developed further. COSAC calls on the European Commission to follow up on its commitment to develop a regular political dialogue with national Parliaments within the framework of the European Semester, which would take place twice a year, as outlined in the official reply of the Commission to the Contribution of the XLVII COSAC and the XLIX COSAC. COSAC encourages national Parliaments to actively scrutinise the national reform programmes and stability and convergence programmes of their respective governments before they are submitted to the Commission. COSAC stresses the need for national Parliaments to actively engage in accelerating the necessary structural reforms in their respective countries.

7.4. COSAC expresses its deep concern about the negative long-term social consequences caused by the recent economic and financial crisis, particularly in terms of increased unemployment, especially among young people, and deepened social exclusion throughout Europe. COSAC, therefore, welcomes the communication of the European Commission on strengthening the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), adopted on 2 October 2013[[1]](#footnote-1), and encourages the EU Parliaments to actively engage in the debate on the development of the social dimension of the EMU.

**8. Digital Agenda: Benefits for Business**

8.1. In the context of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the single market in Europe COSAC expresses its concern that the EU Digital Single Market has not been fully implemented yet. COSAC invites competent EU institutions and national Parliaments to actively contribute to the creation of an effective Digital Single Market in Europe, which would have a significant positive impact on Europe’s competitiveness and job creation and would serve as an impetus for the development of digital industry in Europe, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, such as start-ups.

8.2 COSAC underlines that e-commerce is becoming an essential part of trade and an important impulse for consumer choice, competitiveness and technological innovation. It therefore considers that further development of e-commerce and other online services would positively contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy. COSAC takes note of the Commission’s communication on e-commerce and other online services[[2]](#footnote-2) and encourages the Commission to continue identifying means to ensure the protection of consumer rights in the digital market.

8.3. COSAC welcomes the conclusions of the European Council of 24-25 October 2013 on the guidance towards the completion of the Digital Single Market by 2015.

***NB! This paragraph will be amended depending on the conclusions of the European Council.***

**9. Digital Agenda: Cyber Security**

9.1. COSAC welcomes the Cyber Security Strategy of the EU put forward by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy[[3]](#footnote-3). It also welcomes the European Commission’s proposal for a Directive concerning measures to ensure a high common level of network and information security across the Union[[4]](#footnote-4). COSAC is convinced that cyber security is a vital component of the business and security policies of the EU and should be one of the strategic pillars of the security and defence policy in every Member State.

9.2. COSAC expresses its concern over fundamental differences that exist in Member States in their preparedness, security, strategic culture and ability to draft and implement national strategies on cyber-security. A number of Member States having not adopted their national strategies on cyber-security also remains a source of concern.

1. COM(2013) 690 final [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. COM(2013) 627 final [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. JOIN(2013) 1 final [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. COM(2013) 48 final [↑](#footnote-ref-4)