

**Debate on the Annual Policy Strategy for 2008
XXXVII COSAC
13-15 May 2007, Berlin**

The agenda for the XXXVII COSAC in Berlin from 13 to 15 May 2007, as approved at the chairpersons' meeting on 12 February 2007, includes a discussion on the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2008

The Berlin COSAC implements a decision taken by the XXXVI COSAC in Helsinki in November 2006, where there was a consensus that the European Commission's Annual Policy Strategy should be debated at the spring COSAC meetings (point 9 of the conclusions).

In order to structure the debate at the XXXVII COSAC in Berlin, the Presidency had asked parliaments to inform the COSAC Secretariat which topics they consider to be of particular interest for a joint discussion. The COSAC Secretariat has received answers from 14 parliaments, parliamentary chambers respectively.

The following topics are mentioned as of interest for a joint discussion:

1) Energy and Climate Change

The topic is regarded as of special importance by the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, the Luxemburg Chamber of Deputies, the German *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat*, both chambers of the Czech Parliament, the Irish *Oireachtas*, the Polish *Sejm*, the Bulgarian Parliament and the House of Representatives of Cyprus. Parliaments see the topic in the light of the agreement reached at the Spring European Council 2007 on a European Energy Policy and stress the importance of its implementation. The German *Bundesrat* and the Czech Chamber of Deputies underline that the EU Energy Policy has to respect the particularities and specific interests of each member state.

2) Security and Freedom

The topic is pointed out as of particular interest by the Parliaments of Luxemburg, Cyprus, Latvia and Bulgaria and the German *Bundestag*.

The Luxemburg House of Representatives underlines the importance of the implementation of the second generation of the Schengen Information System (SIS II) as well as of an enhanced cooperation with regard to the control of the EU's external borders and the fight against terrorism and organised crime. The Czech Chamber of Deputies is of the opinion that the implementation of the SIS II is not a prerequisite for the further enlargement of the Schengen area. According to the Czech Senate, the EU bodies in the field of Justice and Home Affairs, such as Europol, Eurojust and Frontex, should be strengthened. In the view of the demographic situation, the Bulgarian Parliament sees the establishment of the free movement of persons as a

priority. The House of Representatives of Cyprus underlines the importance of an appropriate balance between fighting terrorism and the protection of human rights and expresses its concern regarding the implementation of a centralised database of fingerprints.

3) Europe as a World Partner: Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy

An EU perspective/strategy for the Western Balkans is stressed as issue of special importance by the Austrian and the Bulgarian Parliaments as well as by the Czech Chamber of Deputies. The latter criticises that the formulation in the Annual Policy Strategy on the topic implicates that there is a connection between the status settlement for Kosovo and the European Perspective of Serbia, which would go beyond the Copenhagen Criteria and the Criteria of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The European Neighbourhood Policy is highlighted as a topic of interest by the Austrian and the Romanian Parliament as well as by the German *Bundestag*. The Luxemburg Chamber of Deputies calls for an enhanced role of Europe as a World partner, especially through better cooperation with countries in the EU's neighbourhood and the Middle East, a partnership with Russia and a development and economic cooperation with Africa. In its plenary debate on the Annual Policy Strategy, the German *Bundestag* underlined the importance of the conclusion of a new partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia. The importance of the chapter "Europe as a World Partner" is also stressed by the Latvian *Saeima*.

4) Better Regulation

The topic is mentioned by the German *Bundesrat*, the Luxemburg Chamber of Deputies, the Irish *Oireachtas* and the House of Representatives of Cyprus. The German *Bundesrat* and the Luxemburg Chamber of Deputies stress the importance of this topic with regard to improving the administrative environment of businesses, especially small and medium sized enterprises. According to the House of Representatives of Cyprus, the Annual Policy Strategy does not contain any specific measures for the limitation of bureaucracy.

5) Social Solidarity

The Romanian Parliament mentions the topics social solidarity and equal opportunities as a whole; the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* wishes to put a focus on "Flexicurity".

According to the Luxemburg Chamber of Deputies, the Annual Policy Strategy lacks concrete proposals for the protection of European workers and employees against the negative effects of globalisation, social dumping, illegal immigration etc., except for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. The Chamber of Deputies also finds that the EU has never treated the topic of social services in a consequent manner.

6) Improving Communication

The topic is highlighted by the Irish and the Austrian Parliaments.

7) Human and Financial Resources/European Agencies

The German *Bundestag and Bundesrat* regard the reasons for the planned increase in the human resources of the Commission as intransparent. Both Houses are concerned about the Commission's plan to establish new agencies as well as to extend the tasks and the budget of existing agencies. The *Bundesrat* finds that the issue of European agencies touches questions of subsidiarity, transparency and democracy.

The issue of the financing of European agencies is also mentioned by the Czech Chamber of Deputies who expresses its reservations.

8) Others

Parliaments also stressed the following topics as of interest for a joint discussion:

- Education, research and innovation, European Citizenship and protection of human rights, Justice and Home Affairs, intercultural dialogue and multilingualism (Romanian Parliament). The topic of multilingualism was also touched during the plenary debate of the Annual Policy Strategy in the German *Bundestag* who demands the translation of all politically relevant Commission documents into all official EU languages;
- the Lisbon Strategy (German *Bundestag*);
- the future cohesion policy (Bulgarian Parliament);
- combatting drug smuggling and protecting children against the improper use of the internet (House of Representatives of Cyprus);
- the Single Market Review (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, German *Bundesrat*),
- the Budget Review (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*);
- a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base/harmonisation of some aspects of direct taxation (Czech Parliament), the Galileo Project (Czech Senate), the European Institute of Technology (Czech Chamber of Deputies).

The UK House of Commons is particularly interested to hear the views of the COSAC members on the role of national parliaments in the debate of the Annual Policy Strategy and whether it is considered to be a useful document on which to focus efforts. Of further interest for the House of Commons are reactions to major proposals such as migration policy and the overarching direction of the policy proposed for 2008.

The House of Representatives of Cyprus finds that the Annual Policy Strategy appears to be quite ambitious but that it contains in many instances references of a vague or declaratory nature. It furthermore doubts that the Strategy takes the concerns and aspirations of citizens sufficiently into account, especially with regard to the Lisbon Strategy and Enlargement. It finally stresses the importance of national parliaments being adequately consulted by the European Commission on the Annual Policy Strategy.