

# Chairman of the European Affairs Committee

Parliament of Denmark

Mr. Werner Fasslabend,  
Chairman of the National Council  
Standing Subcommittee on European Affairs

Copenhagen, 18 April 2006

Dear Mr. Werner Fasslabend

I should hereby like to bring to your attention a very important question concerning parliamentary scrutiny of European Union draft legislation.

The Council and the European Parliament are today conferring a significant part of the responsibility for adopting legislation to the European Commission, subject to the requirement that it has to collaborate with a vast number of so-called *comitology committees* composed of civil servants from national administrations. Important political decisions relevant to our citizens are taken within this comitology system.

The European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament has therefore since 1996 scrutinised important Commission draft legislation. However, it has become still more difficult to keep governments accountable as regards these procedures. There appear to be at least two problems with the current rules:

- 1) Lack of accountability and democratic control
- 2) Too short time available for parliamentary scrutiny.

The Council, the Commission and the European Parliament are currently negotiating a reform of the 1999 comitology system. A compromise seems to be emerging enabling both Council and the European Parliament to block decisions under a new comitology procedure created for implementing so-called “quasi legislation”. However, the Council still needs (as it is the case in the current rules in decision 1999/468/EC) to obtain a qualified majority to block decisions. Effectively this means that the Commission can adopt EU legislation against the will of a majority of Member States in the Council.

We find such a procedure undemocratic and propose instead that a *simple majority* of Member States should be able block a decision.

Another problem with the comitology system is the short time made available for parliamentary scrutiny. Today the Commission only gives the comitology-committees a period of two weeks to raise objections. We would like to suggest that this period of time is *extended to four weeks* to allow adequate parliamentary scrutiny.

May I therefore on behalf on the Danish delegation propose that you consider including a discussion on this highly important issue either during our debate on the period of reflection at the meeting in Vienna on 22-23 May or at a COSAC in the near future?

Please feel free to contact me for any additional information you may need.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Conference in Vienna.

This letter is copied to Mr. Gottfried Kneifel.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Arnold,  
Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament