



The Hague, May 2006

Dear Colleagues,

During the COSAC chairpersons meeting last February in Vienna we took the important decision to appeal to the European Council of Ministers to deliberate in public on at least two European proposals (divorce matters and postal services). I would hereby like to thank our Austrian colleagues for the letter they sent to this end to the Federal Chancellor of Austria on the 8th of March. The initial initiative of the Dutch Senate however anticipated a decision by COSAC to scrutinise at least ten to fifteen European proposals; Although we do support - from a qualitative point of view - the decision taken to scrutinize (for now) two European proposals, we are rather disappointed in the consequently limited effect this had on the implementation of the decision regarding public Council deliberations. We believe – in the interest of the European citizens and the European future – our goal should be to strive at maximal transparency and public decision making.

The European Parliament has recently (Tuesday 4 April 2006) adopted two progressive resolutions for the purpose of more transparency: the resolution on the Special Report from the European Ombudsman following the draft recommendation to the Council of the European Union in complaint 2395/2003/GG concerning the openness of the meetings of the Council when acting in its legislative capacity (2005/2243(INI); P6_TA-PROV(2006)0121) and the resolution with recommendations to the Commission on access to the institutions' texts (2004/2125(INI); P6_TA-PROV(2006)0122). We are of the opinion that the considerations, proposals and specific recommendations in these resolutions are in line with the interests of our citizens and the national parliaments.

The upcoming Finnish EU Presidency already announced that one of the objectives during their presidency will be to increase the transparency in the European decision making. To indeed draft EU regulation on public access to documents, to do their utmost to improve openness to the public of the Council's activities and perhaps propose to change the Council's Rules of Procedure. We are confident that the Finnish presidency will live up to the expectations.

Taking into account the different initiatives and the unanimous ambition on several levels in the EU, we believe that it is now the right time to act and as national parliaments join in with the European Parliament and the upcoming Finnish EU Presidency. Therefore, we would like to suggest that during the COSAC-meeting in Vienna, 22-24 May 2006, we decide to take our initial step towards more transparency a step further.

We propose that the COSAC “concludes to welcome the ambition of the Finnish Presidency and the progressive initiatives of the European Parliament to realise a maximum transparency in the EU decision making process for the benefit of our citizens, European democracy and the future of the EU. COSAC fully endorses the resolutions of the European Parliament and urges the national governments and the European institutions to take – in 2006 – the necessary steps to implement the (proposals and recommendations in these) resolutions with the sole purpose that all deliberations, on every level and throughout the entire European decision making process will be open to the public.”

We do sincerely hope that all national parliaments will support our proposal and look forward to the meeting in beautiful Vienna,

With kind regards,

P.R.H.M. van der Linden
The chairman of the committee on European Cooperation Organisations,
Senate of the States-General
The Netherlands