

7. Rules of Procedure of the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union - COSAC

The present Rules of Procedure are designed to facilitate and improve the work of the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union, hereinafter referred to as COSAC, established in Paris 16-17 November 1989.

COSAC enables a regular exchange of views, without prejudicing the competences of the parliamentary bodies of the European Union. The Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union to the Amsterdam Treaty amending the Treaty on the European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, empowers COSAC to make any contribution it deems appropriate for the attention of the institutions of the European Union and to examine Union legislative activities, proposals and initiatives. Contributions made by COSAC shall in no way bind national parliaments or prejudice their position.

These Rules of Procedure are adopted in the XXI COSAC of Helsinki on 11 and 12 October 1999. They replace the rules elaborated on 6 and 7 May 1991 in the IV COSAC of Luxembourg, adopted on 4 and 5 November 1991 in the V COSAC of The Hague and modified on 9 and 10 May 1994 in the X COSAC of Athens and 24 and 25 June 1996 in the XIV COSAC of Rome.

1. FREQUENCY AND DATES OF MEETINGS

1.1. Ordinary meetings

One ordinary meeting of COSAC shall be held during each Presidency of the Council of the European Union taking account of different parliamentary practices of Member States, of election periods and of the dates of public holidays in Member States. The date of the next meeting shall be fixed and announced by the date of the preceding meeting at the latest.

1.2. Extraordinary meetings

Extraordinary meetings of COSAC shall be held, if deemed necessary, by an absolute majority of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees of the national Parliaments and of the appropriate body of the European Parliament.

1.3. Preparatory meetings of the Chairpersons

A preparatory meeting of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees and of the representative of the European Parliament shall be held prior to meetings of COSAC, if proposed by the Parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency, after consulting the Presidential Troika. The Presidential Troika of COSAC consists of the Presidency, assisted by the preceding and the next Presidency, and the European Parliament.

1.4. Extraordinary meetings of the Chairpersons

Extraordinary meetings of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees and the appropriate body of the European Parliament shall be held, if proposed, by the Presidency, after consulting the Presidential Troika, or, if deemed necessary, by an absolute majority of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees of the national Parliaments and of the appropriate body of the European Parliament.

1.5. Working groups

COSAC may decide to set up a working group to study a particular issue linked with the activities of the European Union. Such a working group shall also be set up, if deemed necessary, by an absolute majority of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees of the national Parliaments and of the appropriate body of the European Parliament. The Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the Parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency shall act as the Chairperson of the working group. The Secretariat of the Parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency shall provide secretariat for the working group.

2. PLACE OF MEETINGS

Meetings shall take place in the Member State holding the Presidency, although extraordinary meetings, meetings of the Chairpersons and of Working Groups may be held elsewhere.

3. DURATION OF MEETINGS

The duration of ordinary and extraordinary meetings of COSAC shall be one and a half days.

4. COMPOSITION

4.1. Ordinary and extraordinary meetings

Each National Parliament shall be represented by a maximum of six members of its European Affairs Committee(s). The European Parliament shall be represented by six Members. Each Parliament shall determine the composition of its own delegation.

4.2. Observers from the Parliaments of applicant countries

Three observers from the Parliaments of each applicant country shall be invited to ordinary meetings, and may be invited to extraordinary meetings, provided that the European Union has officially opened discussions and/or negotiations aimed at accession with the country concerned and that the Parliament concerned has made an official request to participate in COSAC. These observers shall have the right to participate in debates on specific items on the agenda determined by the meeting.

4.3. Other observers, specialists and special guests

The Presidency shall invite observers from the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, and it may invite observers from the embassies of the Member States of the European Union, and, after consulting the Presidential Troika, specialists and special guests.

4.4. Public access to meetings

Meetings of COSAC shall be public, unless otherwise determined.

5. CONVOCATION

Ordinary meetings and meetings of the Chairpersons and of Working Groups shall be convened by the Secretariat of the Parliament of the Member State holding the Presidency.

Extraordinary meetings shall be convened by the Secretariat of the Parliament of the Member State where the meeting takes place.

6. DESIGNATION OF MEETINGS

The designation of ordinary and extraordinary meetings shall be "Conference of the European Affairs Committees (of the European Union's National Parliaments and the European Parliament) - COSAC" - with the name preceded by the number of the meeting in sequence, followed by the date and place of the meeting.

7. AGENDA

7.1. Before the last ordinary meeting of each year the delegation will indicate the subjects they propose to be dealt with the following year. This matter shall be discussed at the end of the meeting. The Presidential Troika, paying due account to the provisions of Part II of the Protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union, proposes, at the beginning of each Presidency, one or several subjects drawn from the working programme of the Council of the European Union, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, or from proposals made during the meeting referred to above.

7.2. A draft agenda shall be drawn up by the Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the host Parliament, after consulting Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees and the representative of the European Parliament. National delegations may propose to the Presidency that a specific item is put on the agenda.

7.3. The meeting itself shall decide on its final agenda.

8. PREPARATION OF MEETINGS

8.1. The national delegations may send documents relating to items on the agenda to the Secretariat of the host Parliament.

8.2. The national delegation of the Member State holding the Presidency may draw up discussion documents for the Conference.

9. LANGUAGES

9.1. Each delegation is responsible for translating any document which it submits into English or French.

9.2. Participating Parliaments will receive conference documents in French or English. Each Parliament is responsible for translation into its national language.

9.3. Simultaneous translation is provided into the official languages of the EU in the meetings.

9.4. The contributions of COSAC are drawn up in a single original in French and English, each of these being equally authentic.

10. COSAC CONTRIBUTIONS

10.1. COSAC may address contributions to the institutions of the European Union pursuant to the Amsterdam Treaty Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union.

10.2. Each national delegation may propose that a contribution is adopted by COSAC. A draft contribution shall be drawn up if proposed by the Presidency, after consulting the Presidential Troika, or if deemed necessary by an absolute majority of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees of the national Parliaments and of the appropriate body of the European Parliament, or if decided in a meeting of COSAC:

10.3. The draft of a contribution shall be communicated to the delegations in good time before the relevant meeting of COSAC to avail them with a reasonable period for scrutiny and remarks.

10.4. The final draft of a contribution shall be prepared at the preparatory meeting of the Chairpersons preceding the relevant meeting of COSAC. It shall embrace the observations and remarks by all delegations, including possible declarations concerning the vote.

10.5. Adoption of the contribution requires unanimity between the delegations present at the meeting. Abstentions by delegations shall not prevent the adoption of the contribution.

11. ROLE OF THE PRESIDENCY

11.1. The European Affairs Committee of the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union shall hold the Presidency of COSAC during that Presidency.

11.2. The Secretariat of the host Parliament shall prepare the documents for the meeting.

11.3. The Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the host Parliament shall open the debate.

11.4. The Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the host Parliament shall propose a timetable for the meeting and the length of speeches which shall be four minutes, unless the meeting determines otherwise.

11.5. The Secretariat of the host Parliament shall draw up brief minutes of the meeting.

11.6. The Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee of the host Parliament shall present the debate's conclusions, as drawn up by the Presidential Troika.

11.7. The Secretariat of the Parliament holding the Presidency shall provide secretariat for the activities of COSAC during its term. The Secretariats of national Parliaments and of the European Parliament shall provide assistance.

12. DEBATE CONCLUSION

If the meeting decides to issue a communiqué, a draft, annexed with possible contributions adopted, is drawn up by the Presidential Troika.

13. RECIPIENTS OF COMMUNIQUES

Communiqués are sent to the Parliaments of the Member States and the European Parliament, to the Council of the European Union, and to the European Commission by the Secretariat of the host Parliament.

14. REVISION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

14.1. Proposals for a revision of the Rules of Procedure must be sent, in writing, from one or several delegations of one or several Parliaments to all national Parliaments of the Member States and to the European Parliament, at least one month before the meeting of COSAC.

14.2. Any proposals for a revision of the rules should be put on the agenda of the first meeting of COSAC following the presentation of the proposal.

14.3. Adoption of the proposal requires unanimity between the delegations present at the meeting. Abstentions by delegations shall not prevent the adoption of the proposal.

15. ENTRY INTO FORCE

These Rules of Procedure shall enter into force on 1 January 2000. They are drawn up in a single original in English and French, each of these texts being equally authentic.

The text of these Rules of Procedure shall, for the authentication thereof, be drawn up in Danish, Dutch, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Finnish and Swedish. The translations shall be agreed between the national Parliaments using those languages and the European Parliament. In any question relating to the interpretation of these Rules only the English and French version shall have official status.

ANNEX

Declaration by the European Parliament on Rule 10.5 of the Rules of Procedure.

The European Parliament shall abstain in the vote of a contribution which is also addressed to it.