

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

Vilnius, Lithuania, 7 July 2013

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS, Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, *Seimas* of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr Petras AUŠTREVĪČIUS, Deputy Speaker, Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, *Seimas* of the Republic of Lithuania, Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*; Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*; Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ, Vice-President, European Parliament; and Mr Carlo CASINI, Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, European Parliament.

AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC
2. Approval of the draft programme of the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC
3. Debate on the draft programme of the L COSAC
4. Debate on the outline of the 20th Bi-annual Report of COSAC
5. Co-financing and appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2014–2015
6. Letters received by the Presidency
7. Any other business

PROCEEDINGS

1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

The meeting was chaired by Mr Gediminas KIRKILAS who welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") and congratulated Ireland on its successful Presidency of the Council of the EU. Mr KIRKILAS assured that the progress made over the last six months would not be allowed to slip away.

The agenda of the meeting of the Troika was adopted as proposed by the Lithuanian Presidency.

2. Approval of the draft programme of the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Mr KIRKILAS said that the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC would deal with some procedural items, including the approval of the outline of the 20th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, as well as co-financing and appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2014-2015. He then turned to the agenda of the next day and highlighted two debates to be held. The first one would focus on the priorities of the

Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and would be opened by Mr Linas LINKEVIČIUS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. The second debate would deal with the future of a political and economic union and would be launched by Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Inter-institutional Affairs and Administration.

The draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC was approved without amendment as proposed by the Lithuanian Presidency.

3. Debate on the draft programme of the L COSAC

Mr KIRKILAS presented the draft programme of the L COSAC to be held on 27–29 October 2013 in Vilnius.

The proposed topics for the agenda included: 1. State of Play of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU to be presented by Mr Algirdas BUTKEVIČIUS, Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania. 2. 2014 elections to the European Parliament: a platform for civil debate on the future of the EU to be addressed by Mr Pat COX, former President of the European Parliament, and Mr Andrew DUFF, Member of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament and former member of the Constitutional Convention. 3. Implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy to be addressed by Mr José Manuel BARROSO, President of the European Commission, and Ms Pervenche BERÈS, Chair of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament. 4. Democratic legitimacy of the EU and the role of national Parliaments to be addressed by Ms Eva KJER HANSEN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish *Folketing*, and Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*. 5. Digital Agenda: challenges and prospects: cyber security and benefits for business to be addressed by Ms Neelie KROES, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Digital Agenda, Mr Ilja LAURS, Chief Executive Officer of *GetJar*, and other speakers yet to be confirmed.

Mr Miguel Ángel MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ said that the draft programme was vivid and attractive although he made some suggestions to amend it. He expressed his desire that the Presidency should not invite speakers from the European Parliament without first consulting the Troika. He noted that in case Mr Laurent FABIUS would not be able to attend the L COSAC and make a presentation on the topic "Contribution of COSAC to interparliamentary cooperation in the EU", it would be useful to have other prominent speakers as an alternative (e.g. Mr Íñigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO, Spanish European Affairs Minister and former member of the Presidency of the Convention for the Future of Europe, or Mr Mario MONTI, former Prime Minister of Italy and former Member of the European Commission). Mr MARTÍNEZ underlined the need to keep political balance between different political groups when inviting keynote speakers for COSAC. Mr MARTÍNEZ proposed that the title of the first session of 29 October could be extended to incorporate the contribution of the European Parliament. The modified title could be as follows: "Democratic legitimacy in the EU and the role of national Parliaments and the European Parliament". He also proposed that in addition to the two keynote speakers who had already agreed to present the topic, Mr Carlo CASINI, Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, could also be invited to speak on this topic, also representing a southern EU Member State.

Given the political importance of this debate, Mr MARTÍNEZ suggested extending the duration of the session. He also asked for all speakers to be treated in an equal manner, either as "keynote speakers" or "contributors" in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Mr Dominic HANNIGAN said that if there was a need to substitute Mr FABIUS, the names proposed by Mr MARTINEZ were acceptable. In relation to the keynote speakers on the topic of the 2014 European Parliament elections, Mr HANNIGAN believed that there was a good spread across the political parties. He also noted that the session on democratic legitimacy in the EU was very important and that it should lead to a discussion primarily among national Parliaments. Mr HANNIGAN also proposed not allocating more time for the debate but giving the floor to only two speakers during the session.

Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS said that the topics of the draft programme were very important. Mr TRAGAKIS said that the political discussion on the role of national Parliaments and the role of the European Parliament on democratic legitimacy should be initiated primarily at national Parliament level, because they play a decisive role, and then extended to European Parliament level. He also proposed to authorise the Lithuanian Presidency to choose a constitutional expert as the third speaker on the subject. Mr TRAGAKIS also noted that the issues related to the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity should also be discussed during the L COSAC.

Mr Carlo CASINI supported the proposal to modify the title of the session on democratic legitimacy and to invite the third keynote speaker on this topic. He indicated that he was not sure whether he would be able to attend due to an AFCO delegation visit to Washington DC at the same time. He also informed the Troika that according to his knowledge Mr MÉNDEZ DE VIGO was not available to speak on the dates of the L COSAC in October.

Mr MARTÍNEZ said that if Mr CASINI would be unavailable, the third keynote speaker in this session could be "somebody who is more a constitutionalist than a politician".

Mr KIRKILAS thanked the participants of the meeting for their proposals and concluded that the Troika had agreed to expand the topic on democratic legitimacy as follows: "Democratic legitimacy in the EU and the role of EU Parliaments". In order to have a comprehensive discussion on this topic, the Troika decided to start the L COSAC meeting on 29 October half an hour earlier and to extend the time allocated for the topic on democratic legitimacy by half an hour. It was also decided to invite the third speaker, an academic to speak on the topic.

4. Debate on the outline of the 20th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr KIRKILAS presented the outline of the 20-th Bi-annual Report. The report could examine three key issues: 1. 2014 elections to the European Parliament: a platform for civil debate on the future of the EU. 2. Democratic legitimacy in the EU and the role of EU Parliaments. 3. Implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, with a special focus on the social dimension.

In view of the decision to extend the topic on democratic legitimacy, Mr MARTINEZ suggested adding to Chapter 2 of the Outline the following sentence: “Chapter 2 of the report will investigate the methods national Parliaments use to pursue democratic scrutiny of and control over their governments as well as the methods used by the European Parliament to control the European Commission and other executive bodies”. Members of the Troika agreed with the suggestion of the European Parliament.

The draft outline of the 20th Bi-annual Report of COSAC was approved as proposed by the Lithuanian Presidency and amended with the proposal of the European Parliament.

5. Co-financing and appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2014–2015

Mr KIRKILAS informed the Troika that the term of office of the current Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Libby KURIEN, who had been delegated to this post by the UK *House of Commons*, would expire on 31 December 2013. Letters of Intent concerning the co-financing of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat and related office costs for 2014-2015 had been received from 31 Chambers of 23 national Parliaments. Mr KIRKILAS said that the reminders about sending the Letters of Intent to the national Parliaments that had not yet responded asking them to respond by 15 October 2013 would be sent out soon after the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC. A decision on the appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat would be taken during the L COSAC meeting. Mr KIRKILAS informed the Troika that the Lithuanian *Seimas* would send out letters to all national Parliaments inviting them to nominate candidates for the post of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, including the candidates’ CVs, motivation letters and letters of recommendation from the supporting Chairperson, by 10 September 2013. Interviews with the candidates for the post of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat would take place at the meeting of the Troika in the *Seimas* on 27 October 2013, and the best candidate would be selected. The process would be conducted in the spirit of transparency, impartiality and fairness. The national Parliaments who had put forward candidates to be interviewed would be invited to observe the proceedings for the purpose of transparency. If any candidates were proposed by national Parliaments of the Troika, their representatives in the Troika would be asked to abstain from the decision-making process. The information on candidates would be made available to all COSAC delegations and would be posted on the COSAC website and the website of the *Seimas*.

Mr KIRKILAS noted that according to the Rules of Procedure of COSAC, the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat would be appointed at the meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons on 28 October 2013 on the recommendation of the Troika. The newly appointed Permanent Member would hold the post from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015.

Mr KIRKILAS noted that the Lithuanian Presidency had asked the COSAC Secretariat to prepare a background paper on the appointment of the Permanent Member to assist the Presidency, the Troika and the Chairpersons in the process of selection and nomination.

Mr HANNIGAN expressed hope that a candidate would be chosen by the Troika and not on the floor of the plenary of COSAC. Mr MARTÍNEZ emphasised that the Troika

should agree on the best candidate and the consensus was most welcome but if consensus was not found, the Troika should be able to vote. Mr KIRKILAS agreed that consensus should be found in the Troika.

6. Letters received by the Presidency

The Lithuanian Presidency had received one letter. It was the letter from the Chair of the EU Consultative Committee of the Norwegian *Storting* regarding the participation of its delegation both in the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC and the L COSAC meeting. After consulting the Troika, the request from the Norwegian *Storting* was granted.

7. Any other business

Mr CASINI made some suggestions for the amendment of the draft questionnaire which was currently being prepared by the Lithuanian Presidency and the COSAC Secretariat and promised to transmit them to the Presidency in writing. Mr KIRKILAS thanked everybody for their comments and suggestions and closed the meeting.