

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIRPERSONS OF COSAC
Helsinki, Finland, 22 July 2019**

AGENDA:

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
 - Welcome address by Ms Tuula HAATAINEN, Deputy Speaker of the Finnish *Eduskunta*
 - Introductory remarks by the Chair
- 2. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC**
- 3. Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters**
 - Briefing on the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC
 - Draft agenda of the LXII COSAC
 - Outline of the 32nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC
 - Co-financing and Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2020-2021
 - Letters received by the Presidency
 - Any Other Business
- 4. Presentation on the Priorities of the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU**
Keynote speaker: Ms Tytti TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs
- 5. What Budget for European Policies?**
Keynote Speaker: Mr Alain LAMASSOURE, Former MEP and Former French Minister

PROCEEDINGS

IN THE CHAIR: Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*

1. Opening of the meeting

- Welcome address by Ms Tuula HAATAINEN, Deputy Speaker of the Finnish *Eduskunta*
- Introductory remarks by the Chair

Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, gave the floor to Ms Tuula HAATAINEN to open the meeting.

Ms Tuula HAATAINEN, Deputy Speaker of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, welcomed the participants to the meeting and referred to the commemoration of two marking moments in the history of Finland:

- the 100th anniversary of Finland's constitutional democracy: on 17 July 1919, the Constitution Act of the Republic of Finland, was confirmed by the Regent of Finland one year after the Finnish Civil War. The decision built the foundations for democracy, peaceful development of society and the rule of law;
- the approval of the Parliament Act and State Electoral Law (May 1906) which established a unicameral Parliament and guaranteed universal and equal unrestricted right to vote. With this Act, Finnish women were the first in Europe to be granted the right to vote.

Ms HAATAINEN congratulated Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN on her election as the first female European Commission President. She also referred to the fragmentation of the political landscape in Europe and the need of cooperation of the moderate forces, and of the importance of maintaining and

developing the legitimacy of the EU project, a task which COSAC could play an important role in accomplishing. Ms HAATAINEN referred to the general theme of the Presidency - "From Discussion to Solutions" - which aimed to show that it was time to identify the ingredients for compromise in relation to important questions, such as climate change, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and migration, and declared the meeting opened.

Ms HASSI welcomed the delegations to the meeting and, in particular, Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs in the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, who was attending the meeting for the first time. She also congratulated Mr Kristian VIGENIN on his election as Deputy Speaker of the Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*.

2. Adoption of the agenda for the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Ms HASSI presented the draft agenda of the COSAC Chairpersons' meeting, which was approved without amendment.

3. Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters

- **Briefing on the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- **Draft agenda of the LXII COSAC**
- **Outline of the 32nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- **Co-financing and Appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2020-2021**
- **Letters received by the Presidency**
- **Procedural issues**

Ms HASSI referred to the Presidential Troika meeting that had taken place the previous evening, in which the Troika supported the Presidency proposals for the agenda of the LXII COSAC meeting in Helsinki on 1-3 December 2019, including an invitation to the Commission President-elect Ursula VON DER LEYEN to address the meeting. Ms HASSI referred to the main topics on the Plenary agenda: a presentation by the Prime Minister of Finland, Mr Antti RINNE; the area of justice, home affairs and fundamental rights marked by the anniversaries of the Tampere acquis and the Charter of Fundamental Rights; and climate strategy and policy for Europe, from a point of view of opportunities and business achievements.

In reply to a question by Mr Vaclav HAMPL, Czech *Sénat*, the Chair explained that the climate session was split into two due to the different availability of the two speakers. Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, suggested to have foreign policy feature on the agenda of the plenary COSAC, in particular with regard to Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership, as well as the EU MFF for 2021-2027. A similar suggestion to include a topic related to the MFF, as well as one addressing the Banking Union, was also raised by Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*. Acknowledging the importance of being flexible, Ms HASSI took note of the requests, adding that these suggestions would be discussed by the Troika. She noted that the MFF could be discussed in plenary as part of the address by Ms VAN DER LEYEN, or the agenda could be adjusted accordingly. At the request of Mr Hayke VELDMAN, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, to have the topic of transparency within the EU at the next Plenary, Ms HASSI asked for a more detailed proposal.

Ms HASSI explained the outline of the 32nd Bi-annual Report to which no comments were made.

The questionnaire for the 32nd Bi-annual Report would be circulated on Wednesday 31 July 2019, with replies expected by 20th September.

Ms HASSI referred to the co-financing and appointment of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2020-2021. Twenty-five Parliaments had confirmed their intentions to participate in the co-financing mechanism. The remaining Parliaments were urged to submit their commitment. Concerning the nomination for the post of Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, a letter inviting Parliaments/Chambers to nominate candidates would be subsequently transmitted to Parliaments/Chambers, with 20 September 2019 as deadline for candidatures.

Ms HASSI referred to the letters received by the presidency regarding participation at COSAC meetings, which included letters from the Parliaments of Andorra, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Kosovo*.

Lord Robin TEVERSON, UK *House of Lords*, read out a personal message on behalf of Lord Tim BOSWELL, explaining his absence.

4. Presentation on the Priorities of the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Keynote speaker: Ms Tytti TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs

Ms Satu HASSI, Chairperson of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*, gave the floor to Tytti TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs to present the priorities of the Finnish Presidency.

Ms TUPPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs of the Finnish Government, started her address by stating that the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union was taking place in an important juncture at the beginning of a new parliamentary term preceded by European elections, which were marked by the highest turnout in 20 years, a fact that had shown increased citizens' trust in the EU.

The Minister stated that the Finnish Presidency would work in a pragmatic manner, building its work on the respect of common European rules and values. In view of this value base, the Finnish Presidency had put rule of law at the centre of its agenda and was committed to developing instruments to strengthen the rule of law, both through dialogue and through a mechanism within the MFF. Ms TUPPURAINEN explained that the rule of law should be seen in a positive light as one of the values upon which the EU was founded, embraced by all Member States and essential for the functioning of the EU as a whole. The Minister also emphasised that a rules-based international order and a multilateral trading system were similarly crucial for economic well-being and security, and continuing efforts were needed to preserve these systems.

Ms TUPPURAINEN also introduced the other priorities for the Finnish Presidency that included making the EU more competitive and socially inclusive, strengthening the EU's position as a global leader in climate action and comprehensively protecting the security of citizens. She also called for putting arctic issues back on the EU's agenda highlighting Finland's role as a pioneer of EU's northern policy since the launching of the Northern Dimension in 1999. She stressed the need for a comprehensive Arctic strategy that could show the potential of northern regions and the ways in which the delicate environment of the Arctic could best be protected. The region could also serve as an example of how the world could work together. As for the role of national Parliaments in the functioning of the EU, Ms TUPPURAINEN pointed out the importance of increased awareness of EU affairs by national politicians and parliamentarians who had a pivotal role not only in scrutinising their governments but also in ensuring the successful implementation of EU legislation and in communicating important developments in the EU in their home countries. The Minister also stated

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council and to the opinion of the ICJ on the declaration of independence of Kosovo.

that the Finnish Presidency was committed to revisiting and revising the Council's working methods and practices as part of the implementation of the new Strategic Agenda. Finally, Ms TUPPURAINEN stressed that the Finnish Presidency would strive to make all Member States work together in order to avoid the dissolution of the Union into discordant blocs and enhance it as a transnational cooperation of peoples who faced similar challenges.

During the debate which followed, 25 speakers took the floor. In their interventions, parliamentarians expressed their support for the programme of the Finnish Presidency, some of them praising its ambition. Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, European Parliament, stated that the European Parliament would support the Finnish programme and agenda and welcomed the commitment and clarity shown by the Finnish Presidency.

A number of participants drew attention to the climate emphasis in the Finnish Presidency agenda. Mr Sergio BATTELLI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, expressed his support for the decarbonisation goals and called for a Green Deal policy. Mr Soren SONDERGAARD, Danish *Folketing*, stressed that, when it came to fighting climate change, the EU should not prioritise internal market and competition rules in a way that hindered taking climate measures. Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*, drew attention to the significant financial resources that achieving the climate policy goals would require and stressed fair distribution of costs. Ms Annika QARLSSON, Swedish *Riksdag*, called for a positive attitude stating that climate change was not only a threat as it also offered an opportunity that would lead to economic growth and jobs. Similarly, Mr Christian BUCHMANN, Austrian *Bundesrat*, argued that contributing to the climate goals should also contribute to more jobs and that the environment and economy should be better integrated to reflect this goal. Mr Vaclav HAMPL, Czech *Sénat*, stressed that the EU's contribution to the climate goals should be closely tied to its international trade policies.

The commitment of the Finnish Presidency to facilitate the MFF negotiations, with the view of reaching an agreement, was generally welcomed by participants. Ms Anneli OTT, Estonian *Riigikogu*, stressed the importance of finding compromises and working for the unity of the EU in this regard. Ms Iren SARKOZY, Slovakian *Národná rada*, underlined that a smooth transition to the next budgetary period would require finalising the negotiations within a reasonable time. On the other hand, Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, suggested that more time would be necessary in order to reach consensus among the Member States that were to adopt the MFF agreement by unanimity. Furthermore, Mr HÖRCSIK called for a more balanced budget reflecting better the objective of real convergence and avoiding drastic cuts of traditional policies. Mr Bojan KEKEC, Slovenian *Državni svet*, emphasised that the MFF negotiations must enable the equal development of the Union.

Parliamentarians also supported the deepening of the Single Market and enhancing a socially inclusive economic environment. Mr Angel TÎLVĂR, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, expressed his support for the emphasis on sustainable development in a comprehensive way. Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, underlined the importance of completing the Capital Markets Union and drew attention to the European space policy which he argued was a driver of innovation and could allow the EU to lead in data technology. As for social Europe, Mr Ettore Antonio LICHERI, Italian *Senato*, and Mr Sergio BATTELLI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, expressed their support for the idea of introducing a European minimum wage. Mr Domagoj MILOSEVIC, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, called for finding solutions to socioeconomic imbalances and differences within and between the Member States.

A number of parliamentarians welcomed the objective to strengthen the rule of law framework. Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Romanian *Senat*, highlighted the importance of democracy and rule of law stating

that the solution to financial and political issues could not be expected to be found in the market. Mr Paaavo ARHINMÄKI, Finnish *Eduskunta*, underlined the necessity for all the Member States as well as EU candidate countries to respect common values that provide the foundation and strength of the common action. Lord Robin TEVERSON, UK *House of Lords*, referred to principle of the rule of law as a basis for EU membership and argued that democracy was not just about elections but about the rule of law as well. Mr Antonio TAJANI, European Parliament, called for the Finnish Presidency to pay more attention to human rights issues in the world, to address situations in Venezuela and Russia in particular, and to protect freedom of the press also within the EU.

A number of speakers referred to the EU's enlargement policy, calling for the EU to take a clear position and advance negotiations in the Western Balkans (Mr BUCHMANN; Ms VASSILEVA). Mr Žygimantas PAVILIONIS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, expressed his support for the accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia and called for a similar strategic approach for Eastern Neighbourhood countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Parliamentarians from the candidate countries stated that their countries wished to join the EU and emphasised the importance of constructive dialogue in proceeding to or advancing in accession negotiations and when performing structural reforms in candidate countries (Mr Nenad ČANAK, Serbian *Narodna Skupština*; Mr Slaven RADUNOVIC, Montenegrin *Skupština Crne Gore*; Ms Rudina HAJDARI, Albanian *Shqipëria*; Mr Mehmet Kasım GÜLPINAR, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, and Ms Shpresa HADRI, North Macedonian *Sobranie*) Moreover, Mr GÜLPINAR argued that the EU should have a strategic vision when it came to terrorism, illegal immigration and energy, and stated it was unfortunate that the EU did not understand the steps taken by Turkey. Mr GÜLPINAR also called for Finland to support efforts for the liberalisation of visa regime and the revision of customs union. Mr ČANAK underscored that Serbia is participating in resolving challenges facing the EU such as climate change and migrant crisis. Mr ČANAK also expressed his expectation that the new EU leadership, as the facilitator of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, would influence the withdrawal of Pristina's decision to impose taxes on Serbian products.

Mr KEKEC spoke in favour of enhancing the Schengen border, arguing that protection of the EU's external borders would be indispensable in order to manage the increasing pressure on the peripheral Member States and for resolving the security and migration questions.

Speaking during the second session due to time constraints, Mr Nicolaos TORNARITIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, referred in his speech to the Eastern Mediterranean, and accused Turkey for occupying Cypriot territories, for threatening international maritime cooperation and for jeopardising security in the region. He pleaded with colleagues to ensure the situation would be treated as a European problem, and not just a Cypriot one.

In her replies, Ms TUPPURAINEN emphasised that the Finnish approach to the rule of law was a positive and constructive one. Instead of naming and shaming or pointing out individual countries, the objective was to enhance dialogue on the rule of law that enshrined the principle as a positive asset of the EU that united the Member States. She then confirmed that the Finnish Presidency would aim to achieve a 2050 climate neutrality goal. Finally, Ms TUPPURAINEN stressed that the Finnish Presidency considered the MFF negotiations a priority and would aim to have the Negotiation Box with concrete figures on the table by the end of the Presidency, calling on participants to support this aim.

5. What Budget for European Policies?

Keynote speaker: Mr Alain LAMASSOURE, Former MEP and Former French Minister.

Mr Alain LAMASSOURE, Former MEP and Former French Minister, started his speech by emphasising that, as a retired politician, he would not be speaking on behalf of any political party or institution, but rather aim to share with participants the outcome of his personal experience, developing on three points.

Firstly, Mr LAMASSOURE highlighted that the European budget was unique in the world, voted and executed in a balanced manner. Moreover, it was financed, partly, by own resources. However, the revenues had declined. He further noted that the European budget was within a Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which had been voted by the only multi-national parliament in the world - the European Parliament. Mr LAMASSOURE also acknowledged that the European budget had particularities and drawbacks, giving as an example the fact that the revenue had escaped all parliamentary control. The last characteristic of the European budget presented by Mr LAMASSOURE was that, in practice, the level of the budget had been blocked for twenty years, and thus could not take into account new political priorities. He referred to net beneficiaries who wanted to preserve traditional policies, while net contributors refused to increase their share to finance new policies. The practical consequence of this situation was the existence of parallel budgets, financed through Member States contributions and which escaped any real parliamentary control.

Secondly, he underlined two political options: a conservative approach and a disruptive, or revolutionary, approach to the MFF.

Mr LAMASSOURE explained that the conservative option meant adopting the proposals of the European Commission, voted by the previous European Parliament, and which were not the object of real political debate in the Council. He stressed that for each European programme and policy, Members of Parliaments needed to check if the level of critical mass that allowed efficiency had been achieved. As an example, he referred to the European Fund for Strategic Investments that focused on a smaller number of operations and allowed several billions of euros in investments to be launched in Europe, whereas cohesion and regional funds, rather than being concentrated in an effective mass, were dispersed in thousands of micro-projects that did not always serve the interests of European citizens. In his opinion, reforming the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in a way that would correspond to the contemporary economic policy was an urgently needed task. Furthermore, there were two subjects for concern: on one hand, research and development, on the other, development and cooperation aid. Parliamentarians were responsible for ensuring that the European budget and national budgets regarding these policies were well designed and coherent with other policies and in line with the general European objectives.

Finally, Mr LAMASSOURE presented the disruptive approach, which implied that if Europe wanted to be credible and to deliver, there were certain choices to be made. For example, the European Council should be asked, when taking decisions concerning certain objectives, to clearly adopt a budget for achieving those objectives. Secondly, Mr LAMASSOURE suggested that, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, and based on solidarity, the EU should adopt a principle of budget neutrality, or what could also be called a principle of constancy. The principle implied that, for a greater efficiency, European institutions had to demonstrate their added value. He recommended that the COSAC, in cooperation with national courts of auditors and the European Court of Auditors, should develop a network that would ensure that whenever a new competence or a new policy would be put in place at European level, the mechanism would not cost more but allowed efficiency. He added that without such a control mechanism, the EU would not be able to develop its own resources. Mr LAMASSOURE underlined that the Commission had made several proposals on the own resources, which he supported, and suggested that whenever a European policy entailed additional public resources, those resources should contribute, at least partially, to financing the European budget.

Concluding, Mr LAMASSOURE stressed that the spirit of budgetary coordination, the European Semester, had to change. He underlined that national budgets and the European budget had to be aligned and responsive to the changes in the world, which would require developing a genuine common budgetary cooperation.

In the subsequent debate, 25 speakers took the floor, with the vast majority of them praising the views and ideas presented by Mr LAMASSOURE.

A number of speakers referred to the traditional policies, cohesion and agriculture policies, stressing that adequate financing for these policies should continue to apply. Mr Žygmantas PAVILIONIS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, voiced his country's support to all initiatives aiming at increasing competitiveness and convergence throughout the EU and raised concerns with regard to the budgetary cuts in cohesion and agriculture policies. Ms Vita Anda TĒRAUDA, Latvian *Saeima*, followed this approach, pointing out that cohesion was a success story, having enabled considerable economic growth in Latvia, and that efforts were still necessary to achieve convergence goals. Mr Rainer ROBRA, German *Bundesrat*, also underlined the importance of traditional policies and stressed his wish to maintain cohesion, pleading for development and arguing that social and territorial convergence were still not ensured. Similar views were expressed by a number of participants who stressed the need to continue financing cohesion and agriculture policies (Ms Ivelina VASSILEVA, Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*; Mr Josko KLISOVIC, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*; Mr Sergio BATTELLI, Italian *Camera dei deputati*; Ms Regina BASTOS, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*; Ms Anneli OTT, Estonian *Riigikogu*; Mr Igor PEČEK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*; Ms Gabriela CREȚU, Romanian *Senat*.) Mr Jarosław OBREMSKI, Polish *Senat*, argued that cohesion policy helped Member States to develop their infrastructure, enhance their competitiveness and close the development gap between rich and poor Member States.

A number of participants also referred to the need to reform the CAP. Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, European Parliament, stressed that with the challenges in biodiversity and climate change, agricultural policy was becoming an environment policy, and particular focus should be paid to food security as well. Similarly, Lord Robin TEVERSON, UK *House of Lords*, underlined the need to support farming industry for it to adapt into less carbon intensive practices. Some participants referred to the new challenges and the need to invest in such fields as security, sustainability and competitiveness while reforming the CAP (Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*; Mr Pål JONSON, Swedish *Riksdag*). Mr Jean BIZET, French *Sénat*, also agreed to reform the CAP, but highlighted its strategic role and the need for it to take into account new technologies and development in artificial intelligence.

Some participants drew attention to the new challenges and the need to reform the MFF to reflect the changed priorities. Mr Reinhold LOPATKA, Austrian *Nationalrat*, stressed that the EU should focus its attention to those objectives that can be better achieved at the European level and underlined the need to focus on competitiveness, promoting sustainability and protecting external borders and seeking efficiency gains in other areas. Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, argued that particular focus should be paid to efficiency and that certain programmes should be modernised, for them to be adapted to new challenges. Mr BATTELLI underlined the need for the budget to be flexible, in order to address unforeseen emergencies, and expressed support for new own resources of the EU, such as capital gains tax, digital tax and Value-Added Tax (VAT). Similarly, Mr Antonio TAJANI, European Parliament, pleaded for a visionary MFF that could build on the own resources of the Union. He stated that better coordination between the EU and national budgets as well as investment policies that reinforce the competitiveness of the Member States were necessary to give more weight to Europe in a global scale. Mr TAJANI also referred to the need to focus on Africa

particularly in terms of investments into education and strategic areas. Other speakers called for actions to increase stability in the Western Balkans (Mr LOPATKA) or in Eastern Mediterranean (Mr Mehmet Kasım GÜLPINAR, Turkish *Büyük Millet Meclisi*).

As to the areas where additional funds were needed, speakers referred to:

- Competitiveness and sustainability (Mr TAJANI; Mr LOPATKA; Mr PAVILIONIS);
- Energy and electric power plants (Mr PAVILIONIS);
- Trans-border infrastructures, such as Rail Baltica (Ms OTT) or Pan-European Corridor IX and Rhine-Danube Corridor (Mr Gabi IONAȘCU, Romanian *Senat*);
- Climate change (Mr JONSON; Ms BASTOS; Mr IONAȘCU);
- Education and research programmes, such as Erasmus and Horizon Europe (Lord TEVERSON; Ms OTT);
- Internal security, migration and external borders' protection (Mr BATTELLI; Mr TAJANI; Ms McGUINNESS; Mr JONSON; Ms VASSILEVA; Mr LOPATKA; Ms BASTOS; Mr Igor PEČEK; Slovenian *Državni zbor*; Ms OTT; Ms Senida MESI, Albanian *Kuvendi*); and
- Neighbourhood and enlargement (Mr PAVILIONIS; Mr TAJANI; Mr LOPATKA; Mr KLISOVIC; Ms MESI).

The potential disruptive impact of Brexit on the next MFF also featured during the debate (Ms Regina BASTOS; Ms Mairead McGUINNESS). Mr Terry LEYDEN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, affirmed that Ireland would stay in the EU, advocated to protect the Good Friday Agreement and thanked the EU for its unity and solidarity shown towards Ireland on Brexit-related matters. Mr Pål JONSON, Swedish *Riksdag*, warned that, in the coming years, some Member States might experience recession, which would result in increased pressure on their own budgets. Mr JONSON underlined that the size of the EU budget should remain at the current level, which was a view echoed in a number of interventions (Mr Reinhold LOPATKA, Austrian *Nationalrat*; Ms Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN, the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*; Mr Igor PEČEK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*). Some participants stressed that the EU budget would need to be increased and own resources should be developed (Ms CREȚU; Ms McGUINNESS; Mr TAJANI; Mr BATTELLI; Mr BIZET).

Ms Sabine THILLAYE, French *Assemblée nationale*, stated that national budgets should be better coordinated with the European budget and called for a complementary approach between national Parliaments and the European institutions, particularly the European Parliament, when taking forward budgetary proposals. Finally, some participants expressed their support for concluding the MFF negotiations by the end of the year (Ms VASSILEVA; Mr JONSON; Ms TĚRAUDA), with Ms McGUINNESS emphasising the need for solidarity between Member States in the negotiations. Ms McGUINNESS also underlined the importance to inform citizens about the European budget's sources of revenue, in order to build awareness.

In his concluding remarks, Mr LAMASSOURE expressed his appreciation regarding the quality of interventions, the relevance of questions, and in particular those interventions that defended the positions of their countries and their political formation, but within the European vision. He noted that some participants were attached to the continuation of the Cohesion Policy while others would have preferred a reorientation of budget priorities in line with political priorities. Addressing a question regarding the size of the budget, Mr LAMASSOURE noted that as long as Member States admitted that the level of the European budget could not exceed 1% of Gross National Income, any

increase in funding would be done to the detriment of current EU policies, which was a reason to contemplate the necessity of raising the level of funding for the EU budget.

With regard to the European Semester, he proposed to consolidate national budgets by considering the EU budget as an addition to the twenty-eight national budgets. Consolidation would allow a better understanding of the impact of the public policies at the European level. He further suggested that the national Parliaments and the European Parliament should coordinate to control what he termed satellite budgets that were agreed inter-governmentally and were not subject to parliamentary scrutiny neither by the European Parliament nor by national Parliaments. He stressed that the satellite budgets constituted a system in which decisions concerning public resources were made without a proper public debate or parliamentary scrutiny. In this context, he commended the long-term vision advocated by Mr TAJANI.

Mr LAMASSOURE acknowledged the solidarity showed by Ireland in the debates regarding Brexit, and emphasised that the priority for Member States should be to show solidarity towards Ireland. He noted that many speakers had not agreed with the disruptive approach, while others had shown interest in financing new policies and priorities. He welcomed the support shown by some participants regarding new own resources and concluded by emphasising that the solution to the difficult budget negotiations would be to replace national contributions with own resources.

Concluding the meeting, Ms HASSI thanked Mr LAMASSOURE for the presentation and all the participants for their contribution to the discussion. She expressed hope that the constructive debate would continue in the COSAC plenary in December and said she believed participants' contributions would bolster the good work of the Finnish Presidency.