



## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC**

**PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC, 11 JULY 2022**

### **PRESENT AT THE MEETING**

CHAIR: Mr David SMOLJAK, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Czech *Senát*; Mr Ondřej BENEŠÍK, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*;

Mr Pyry NIEMI, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdagen*;

Mr Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Jean-François RAPIN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*;

Mr Othmar KARAS, First Vice-President, European Parliament;

(Mr Antonio TAJANI, Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, was unable to attend).

### **AGENDA**

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## **PROCEEDINGS**

### **1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC**

Mr David SMOLJAK, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Czech *Senát*, welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika"), together with Mr Ondřej BENEŠÍK, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, who expressed his expectations regarding a fruitful and productive work amongst the Troika.

Mr David SMOLJAK opened the meeting by welcoming and giving the floor for a short introduction to Mr Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE, recently appointed as Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, and to Mr Pyry NIEMI, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdagen*, who were participating in a formal meeting of the COSAC Troika for the first time.

Mr SMOLJAK then referred to the agenda of the meeting of the Troika, previously circulated to all delegations, which was adopted without amendment.

### **2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE COSAC CHAIRPERSONS' MEETING**

Mr SMOLJAK alluded to the programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons, which would be divided into two sessions, besides the procedural and other general matters.

The first session would focus on the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union and would be presented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Jan LIPAŤSKÝ, given the fact that the Minister for European Affairs, Mr Mikuláš BEK, would not be able to attend.

The second session would deal with the topic of Media and Democracy: Current Challenges, starting with a video message by Ms Věra JOUROVÁ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency, followed by a keynote speech by Mr Othmar KARAS, First Vice-President of the European Parliament and an intervention by Mr Michal KLÍMA, Commissioner for Media and Counter-Disinformation of the Czech Government.

Mr SMOLJAK also alluded to the fact that, given the decision taken by the European Council in June 2022 to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, the Parliaments of these two countries would take part in the proceedings of the COSAC Chairpersons for the first time in that capacity. Therefore, Ms Ivanna KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE, Chairperson of the Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the European Union of the *Verkhovna Rada*, and Mr Adrian BĂLUŤEL, Member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Policy and European Integration of the Moldovan *Parlamentul Republicii*, would be introduced at the beginning of the meeting and given the floor for a short introduction.

The draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, previously circulated to all delegations, was approved without amendment.

### **3. DEBATE ON THE DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR THE LXVIII COSAC**

Mr SMOLJAK then referred to the draft agenda of the LXVIII COSAC, scheduled for 13 to 15 November, in Prague, introducing the five thematic sessions which would be covered during the meeting:

- the first session would be dedicated to an overview of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU;
- the second session would discuss the Future of the EU;
- the third session would address the issues of the Strategic autonomy of the EU;
- the fourth session would be dedicated to a state of play on Ukraine, namely on reconstruction and migration;
- and the fifth and final session would focus on the European Perspective of the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.

Mr BENEŠÍK referred that the ambition of the Czech Presidency was to link the debates of the LXVIII COSAC with the results of the Conference on the Future of Europe, emphasising the importance of the main findings of the 38th Bi-annual Report, to be drafted on the basis of the questionnaire that would be circulated to delegations after the Chairpersons meeting. The Contribution and Conclusions of the LXVIII COSAC would therefore be elaborated taking into account those findings and the political debates to be held during the Plenary of COSAC.

Since there were no additional remarks on the draft agenda for the LXVIII COSAC, Mr SMOLJAK ended this debate by noting the support of the Troika to the proposed programme.

### **4. APPROVAL OF THE OUTLINE OF THE 38TH BI-ANNUAL COSAC REPORT**

Mr SMOLJAK presented the outline of the 38th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, which would be divided into three parts: the first chapter would focus on the parliamentary procedures and institutional affairs related to the Conference on the Future of Europe; the second chapter would be dedicated to proposals put forward by the two COSAC working groups (WGs)<sup>1</sup> established during the French Presidency; and the third chapter would address the issues related to the EU and Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

The questionnaire would be sent to the delegations on 20 July at the latest, with replies expected by 19 September 2022, so that the Bi-annual Report for the scheduled COSAC plenary meeting in November could be drawn up on time. The replies to the questionnaire

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<sup>1</sup> Working group on the role of national Parliaments in the EU; Working group on the place of values at the heart of the sense of belonging to the European Union.

and the findings of the report would form the basis for the political deliberations regarding the Contribution and Conclusions to be adopted by the LXVIII COSAC.

Mr RAPIN mentioned that the work carried out by the two WGs during the last semester served the purpose of enriching the work of COSAC. He then alluded to the envisaged draft questionnaire for the 38th Bi-annual Report, which would identify all the proposals put forward with three possible replies (*Yes; No; No opinion*), considering that this approach might endanger the consensus achieved by the members of the WGs, while acknowledging that not all COSAC members took part in its proceedings. Mr RAPIN also noted that a special attention had been dedicated to include all the remarks made by members of the WGs to that effect, referring also to the three final meetings which were devoted to the exchange of views and approval of the reports. Therefore, he expressed concerns about the possibility of a large number of Parliaments/Chambers replying *No opinion* about the proposals and questioned how these possible replies should be taken into account.

With regard to the proposals adopted by the Conference on the Future of Europe, Mr RAPIN reminded the approach followed in the component of national Parliaments, which was to take note of the proposals formulated and proceed to the next steps of this process, while the approach now proposed by the Czech Presidency seemed to be different.

He finally noted that despite the fact that the position of the European Parliament about the proposals of the WGs was now rather negative, during the Conference on the Future of Europe there had been a dialogue between the French Presidency and the European Parliament aiming at adopting a joint declaration which touched upon several similar issues.

Mr ANGLADE, while noting that he had not participated in the proceedings of the WGs, echoed some of the remarks made by Mr RAPIN and the consensus he alluded to. He appreciated the intention of the Czech Presidency to validate, in a transparent way, the support concerning the proposals, but reminded of the consensus already obtained by the WGs. Therefore, Mr ANGLADE supported the concerns expressed by Mr RAPIN regarding the potential uncertainty of the replies obtained.

Mr SMOLJAK reiterated the appreciation for the work and activities of the WGs, emphasising that the Presidency intended to reflect the outputs of these WGs in the Contribution and Conclusions of COSAC. He further explained that the aim was to give Parliaments/Chambers the possibility to issue their position on the different proposals in a transparent way, in order to prepare a clear and structured material for a debate at the COSAC Plenary, so that the work could progress further.

Mr BENEŠÍK reiterated that the purpose of this approach was not to question the results of the WGs, rather to obtain greater clarity and precision so that the democratic process of drafting the Contribution and Conclusions of the COSAC Plenary could indeed be developed in a transparent way.

Mr KARAS thanked the former French Presidency for the cooperation. With respect to the WGs he noted that the results achieved did not represent a total consensus and were not binding. He considered that the work and the reflection should be continued. He also noted that the time for the meeting of the COSAC Plenary in November would be different from the time in which the WGs and the Conference on the Future of Europe were established. In fact, Mr Karas noted that the aggression of the Russian Federation had changed the context and therefore the debates of the coming months, including at the level of the European Council and within Parliaments, would provide greater clarity on several issues (e.g. inflation, energy, implementation of the results of the Conference on the Future of Europe) ahead of the COSAC Plenary. Mr Karas supported the approach envisaged by the Czech Presidency with regard to the follow-up of the individual proposals tabled by the WGs. He also suggested including some references to the results of the Conference of the Future of Europe, noting that only 10% of the proposals would require launching the Convention and Treaty changes, and to the consequences of the war in this debate, in order for COSAC not to dispute competences but rather be united on a common package of proposals and suggestions for the COSAC Plenary in November.

Mr RAPIN intervened to suggest that, while acknowledging that the proposals that were faced with a formal opposition would not be considered, those that would gather some support be integrated in the political analysis regarding the Contribution and Conclusions of the COSAC Plenary.

Mr NIEMI expressed support for the approach followed by the Czech Presidency, noting that the immediate future would pose many challenges that require transparency, open mind and flexibility.

Mr SMOLJAK recalled that the objective of the Presidency would be to reflect the results of this work in the Contribution of the COSAC Plenary.

Mr ANGLADE reiterated the suggestion made by Mr RAPIN regarding the consideration of the proposals. He further asked to include in the questions formulated for the Bi-annual Report a reference to one of the proposals made by the working group on the place of values at the heart of the sense of belonging to the European Union, namely that each Parliament/Chamber would appoint one of its Members from its European Affairs Committee (two for unicameral parliaments) to follow the rule of law issues throughout the year that would form an internal COSAC working group which could meet once a year, for example to discuss the Commission's annual report.

Mr RAPIN further suggested that, in those cases where there would be a majority of *No opinion* replies from Parliaments/Chambers, the proposal of the working group should be referred to.

Mr SMOLJAK replied that in his view *No opinion* did not imply disagreement, rather a neutral position. He then concluded by considering that the purpose of the current debate at the Troika was not to discuss the specific questions and its replies, but rather to approve the outline for the Bi-annual report.

The draft outline of COSAC's 38th Bi-annual Report was therefore approved.

## **5. LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENCY**

Mr SMOLJAK referred to the following letters received by the Presidency requesting invitation to attend the COSAC meetings:

- Mr Benedikt WÜRTH, President of the Swiss delegation for relations with the European Parliament , Swiss *Assemblée fédérale*;
- Mr Masud GHARAHKHANI, President of the Norwegian *Stortinget*;
- Lord Charles KINNOULL, Chair of the European Union Committee, UK *House of Lords*;
- Bjarni JÓNSSON, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Icelandic *Althingi*;
- Ms Maka BOTCHORISHVILI, Chair of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia;
- Mr Pere LÓPEZ AGRÀS, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Legislative Committee of Andorra, only for the COSAC Plenary;
- Ms Rrezarta KRASNIQI, Chairwoman of the Committee on European Integration, Kosovo<sup>2</sup> Kuvendi i Kosovës.

Mr SMOLJAK said that, following consultation with the Presidential Troika, invitations would be sent to all the above-mentioned Parliaments.

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr SMOLJAK thanked all participants for the constructive debate and closed the meeting.

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<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244(1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.