



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC, 13 NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

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

Mr Hans WALLMARK and Ms Matilda ERNKRANS, respectively Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdag*;

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 Salvatore DE MEO, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament.

AGENDA

PROCEEDINGS	1
1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC	2
2. Approval of the draft programme of the LXVIII COSAC	2
3. Presentation of the 38th Bi-annual Report of COSAC	2
4. Hearings and activities of COSAC planned within the Czech Presidency	3
5. Draft Contribution and Conclusions of the LXVIII COSAC	4
6. Letters received by the Presidency	6
7. Any other business	7

PROCEEDINGS

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

Mr Ondřej BENEŠÍK, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika") to Prague, and greeted Mr Hans WALLMARK and Ms Matilda ERNKRANS, recently elected as respectively Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish *Riksdag*, and Mr Salvatore DE MEO, also recently elected as Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, who were participating at the meeting of the Troika for the first time.

Mr David SMOLJAK, Member of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Czech *Senát*, also welcomed the delegations of the Troika of COSAC, expressing his expectations for a productive meeting.

Mr BENEŠÍK then referred to the [draft 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 LXVIII COSAC

Mr BENEŠÍK alluded to the [draft agenda of the LXVIII COSAC](#), 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.

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

3. PRESENTATION OF THE 38TH BI-ANNUAL REPORT OF COSAC

Ms BENEŠÍK referred to the [38th Bi-annual Report of COSAC](#), which was drafted by the COSAC Secretariat on the basis of replies to the related questionnaire circulated to national Parliaments/Chambers on 19 July 2022, with a deadline on 19 September for submitting the answers. Mr BENEŠÍK thanked the COSAC Secretariat for their work and gave the floor to its Permanent Member, Mr Bruno DIAS PINHEIRO, to present the Report.

Mr DIAS PINHEIRO emphasised the fact that, besides the European Parliament, the Parliaments/Chambers of 26 out of 27 Member-States had replied to the questionnaire, expressing the expectation that the findings of the Report might prove useful not only for the COSAC Plenary but also for the works in the months ahead.

He further recalled that the three chapters of the Report were dedicated to: 1. The Conference on the Future of Europe – parliamentary procedures and institutional affairs; 2. The proposals of the COSAC Working Groups (WGs); 3. The European Union and Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Georgia. The main results from the Report were summarised in a [short video clip](#) produced by the Permanent Member and displayed at the end of his intervention.

4. HEARINGS AND ACTIVITIES OF COSAC PLANNED WITHIN THE CZECH PRESIDENCY

Mr BENEŠÍK referred to other activities within the framework of COSAC during the semester of the Czech Presidency, namely to continue the practice inaugurated by the previous Presidencies of organising informal hearings of European Commissioners or other personalities by videoconference with the Chairpersons of the Committees on European Affairs of the national Parliaments and with the European Parliament.

With that regard, he mentioned that two of these hearings had already taken place, namely with Ms Margrethe VESTAGER, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age on the *Single Market Emergency Instrument*, held on 6 October 2022; and with Ms Věra JOUROVÁ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency, on the *Rule of Law and Media Freedom Act*, held on 27 October 2022.

Furthermore, Mr BENEŠÍK recalled that a hearing with Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight was scheduled for 24 November 2022, on the *State of play of EU-UK relations*.

Finally, a hearing with the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans TIMMERMANS, was also foreseen to take place in December, whereas the concrete date would be announced in due course.

Mr BENEŠÍK also informed the Troika about the visit of a group of Chairpersons of EU Affairs Committees of national Parliaments and the First-Vice President of the European Parliament to Kyiv on 30 September, which was the first such visit to a candidate country in this format. He alluded to the [joint press statement](#) adopted and reiterated the importance of this initiative as a sign of solidarity and support to Ukraine. He then gave the floor to Mr David SMOLJAK and to Mr Othmar KARAS, who participated in this visit.

Mr SMOLJAK expressed his perception that, regardless of the difficulties of the current context, he could learn during the visit that Ukraine was showing a level of confidence and optimism that was truly inspiring and worthy of admiration.

Mr KARAS referred to the importance of this visit, mentioning that it followed a decision taken at the COSAC Chairpersons meeting held in Prague, on 11 July 2022. Furthermore, he also alluded to the First Parliamentary Summit of the Crimean Platform, organised in October 2022, in Zagreb, noting that both events were successful in showing support to Ukraine. Finally, Mr KARAS considered that Parliaments and also Governments should enhance the coordination to assist the candidate countries in developing their democratic institutions, pointing to the key role that COSAC could play with that regard.

5. DRAFT CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE LXVIII COSAC

Mr BENEŠÍK introduced the procedure regarding the adoption of Contribution and Conclusions by the LXVIII COSAC, recalling that it was the first time in three years (since the LXII COSAC, in Helsinki) that COSAC was adopting these documents, given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic context. He then recalled the fact that the Presidency had consulted the Troika for comments and reactions about the initial drafts of the Contribution and Conclusions on 19 October, on the basis of which the Presidency prepared a revised draft that was circulated to all delegations on 31 October, of which the Troika was previously informed. He therefore noted that the Troika was involved in all the preparatory and drafting phases, and all deadlines had been met.

He also mentioned that the Czech Presidency had tried, from the very beginning, to draft a text which would be clear, brief and potentially very consensual, expressing his wish to be able to eventually present both texts at the Plenary as a Troika proposal.

He noted that several amendments to the drafts were put forward by delegations within the set deadline of 9 November and that the Presidency had distributed a table with those amendments to the Troika, together with revised compromise texts of the Contribution and Conclusions that attempted to embrace all suggestions made. Mr BENEŠÍK further noted that the Presidency was committed to achieving a maximum level of compromise, while recalling that, during the French Presidency, the Czech delegation had always been a loyal and supportive Troika partner, not opposing the proposals and ideas presented. Therefore, he considered that the Troika should strive for a compromise text to be endorsed at the meeting and therefore presenting itself once again in a unified manner.

Mr Hans WALLMARK took the floor to thank the Presidency for its efforts in trying to reach a compromise, considering that the drafts presented were a pragmatic and acceptable approach and therefore gathered the support of the Swedish delegation.

Mr KARAS started by saying that the European Parliament considered that the topics for the draft Contribution were well chosen, since they reflected the agenda of this COSAC Plenary. Regarding the draft Conclusions, he mentioned that the European Parliament could also accept the mentioning of the 38th COSAC Bi-annual Report, the visit of a group of COSAC Chairs and himself to Kyiv in September 2022 and the informal COSAC meetings with Commissioners. He also noted that concerning the

content of the Contribution, the European Parliament was aware that the Presidency had presented an overall compromise text, after having received some amendments by some delegations. Notwithstanding the fact that the European Parliament would have preferred the more neutral wording of the previous version (dated 31 October) concerning the issue of the COSAC WGs under the French Presidency, on paragraph 15 of the Draft Contribution and on Paragraph 2 of the Draft Conclusions, he declared that the European Parliament could accept the most recent text proposal by the Czech Presidency, for a matter of overall compromise.

Mr Pieyre-Alexandre ANGLADE, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, thanked the Presidency for its work in trying to reach a compromise and highlighted the need to strengthen the reference regarding the judgment of authors of war crimes or crimes of humanity before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the paragraphs concerning Ukraine in the Contribution of the LXVIII COSAC.

Mr Jean-François RAPIN, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French *Sénat*, also thanked the Presidency for the work done so far, while considering that the proposed compromise was not balanced in comparison to the initial drafts proposed by the Presidency to the Troika, and that he claimed were agreed by the Swedish and French delegations, with regard to two specific points: he mentioned that the Contribution should come back to a stronger wording regarding the WGs, namely by explicitly welcoming the conclusions adopted by them; and that COSAC should clearly ask the EU institutions to respond to all these proposals, taking the exercise one step further.

For these reasons, the French delegation put forward two additional amendments on the Contribution and on the Conclusions at the Troika meeting, one on the explicit reference to the ICC (paragraph 4) and another on the conclusions of the WGs and the follow-up required by the EU institutions on them (paragraph 15).

In reply, Mr BENEŠÍK reiterated that the compromise proposed by the Presidency aimed at ensuring that the Contribution and Conclusions remained within the mandate of COSAC, by welcoming the establishment of the WGs and its proceedings and inviting the EU institutions to reflect on the issues covered by them. In fact, he added that the proposals were made within the WGs and there had been no vote or decision of COSAC about them, also alluding to the fact that, in their replies for the 38th COSAC Bi-annual Report, many Parliaments/Chambers had indicated they had “no official opinion” on many of those proposals. For that reason, and from a formal point of view, the Contribution could not go beyond the competences and mandate of COSAC when addressing such issues to the EU institutions.

Mr Jean-François RAPIN expressed his disappointment with the compromise proposed, since he considered that COSAC should go further in expressing a clear vision on the role of national Parliaments and on their cooperation with the EU institutions.

Mr KARAS supported the approach of the Presidency, noting that there was a different interpretation of the results of the WGs, highlighting that the European Parliament welcomed this initiative but had a different understanding of its outcome and for this reason could not support the French Presidency with that regard. He recalled that not all Parliaments had participated in the works or adopted a position on the proposals, and that no compromise had been reached. He further considered that the wording put forward by the Czech Presidency was a good step forward. He reminded that in June there had been a conflict on the results, whereas now the Troika was agreeing on welcoming the WG's establishment and inviting the institutions to reflect on the issues covered by them. Finally, he reiterated that despite the fact that the draft circulated to delegations on 31 October was more in line with the position of the European Parliament, he acknowledged the need for a compromise on the basis of what the Presidency had just explained and therefore supported it.

Mr WALLMARK took the floor to express his support for what he considered a true compromise by the Presidency and therefore endorsed the wording mentioned by Mr BENEŠÍK.

Mr BENEŠÍK expressed his hope that the explanations provided were clear enough, while noting that politics was the art of the possible and that a compromise was the result of the efforts made by everyone to find an acceptable solution. Furthermore, he highlighted that the Presidency would like to avoid lengthy discussions on the matter that could harm the possibility of adopting a Contribution. He then asked all the Troika members, namely the French delegation, if they would support the current compromise being submitted to all COSAC delegations as the Troika compromise with regard to the Contribution and Conclusions.

At this stage, both Mr ANGLADE and Mr RAPIN informed that they would acquiesce to the Troika compromise text, while noting that they retained the right to submit further amendments to the consideration of all the Chairpersons during the proceedings to discuss and adopt the Contribution and Conclusions at the LXVIII COSAC.

The draft Contribution and Conclusions were therefore approved by the Troika.

6. LETTERS RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENCY

Mr BENEŠÍK referred to the letter received by Sir William CASH, from the United Kingdom (UK) *House of Commons* requesting an invitation to attend the LXVIII COSAC. He added that, following consultation with the Presidential Troika, an invitation had been sent to the above-mentioned Chamber.

He also mentioned the letters sent by the Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Polish *Senat*, Mr Bogdan KLICH, on the possible establishment of a COSAC liaison office in Ukraine and the reply given by the Presidency.

Finally, he also alluded to the letter sent by the Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish *Folketing*, Ms Eva KJER HANSEN, proposing to include a point about the role of national Parliaments on the agenda of the LXVIII COSAC. Mr BENEŠÍK informed about the reply given by the Presidency, noting that the time frame dedicated to COSAC Plenary Conferences was limited and rearranging the agenda at the request in such a short time before the Conference was extremely difficult for various reasons. However, and given the importance of the topic, the Presidency proposed to extend the agenda of the informal online meeting with Vice-President of the European Commission Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, scheduled for 24 November, so that the COSAC Chairpersons would have the opportunity to discuss efficiently current pressing issues related to the role of the national Parliaments.

All the letters mentioned were made available on [IPEX](#)

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other issues were raised, and therefore Mr BENEŠÍK thanked all participants for the constructive debate and closed the meeting.