



Contribution of the XLIX COSAC Dublin, 23-25 June 2013

Economic Governance

1. COSAC welcomes the important debate that is taking place at EU level and in the Member States on plans for the phased completion of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), and the strong role that Parliaments are playing as part of that debate.
2. COSAC welcomes the EU's strong determination to foster Europe's competitiveness and to stimulate sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion in Europe, while pursuing fiscal consolidation.
3. COSAC acknowledges that there is broad consensus on the need for greater democratic accountability and legitimacy to underpin this process, and in the EU more generally, and welcomes the initiative by the Commission and European Council to place these issues on the agenda, as part of the wider debate on EMU.
4. COSAC notes the increasing involvement of Parliaments in the European Semester, but acknowledges that many Parliaments are not yet fully satisfied with their involvement in the process. COSAC encourages those Parliaments to engage more fully in the Semester in 2014, at an earlier stage in the process, and to take up the European Commission's offer of dialogue on the Annual Growth Survey, country-specific and euro area recommendations.
5. COSAC welcomes the significant steps that have been taken in recent months to strengthen EMU. COSAC notes the adoption of the so-called "Two Pack" Regulations on greater budgetary surveillance in the euro area, and welcomes in particular the provisions concerning the right for national Parliaments to request the Commission to present its opinion on a draft budgetary plan to that Parliament.
6. COSAC welcomes the progress as regards the completion of the elements already agreed for a banking union and notes the conclusion of negotiations on a Council Regulation conferring specific tasks on the European Central Bank concerning policies relating to the prudential supervision of credit institutions, and specifically welcomes the inclusion of provisions regarding accountability and reporting by the ECB to the European Parliament, and that at the request of a national Parliament, a representative of the Banking Supervisory Board, together with a representative of the competent national authority, will be obliged to appear before that Parliament to answer questions about the performance of supervisory tasks.



7. COSAC looks forward to the time-bound roadmap to be presented by the President of the European Council to the European Council in June on the coordination of national reforms, the social dimension of EMU, the feasibility and modalities of mutually agreed contracts for competitiveness and growth, and solidarity mechanisms. COSAC emphasises the need for these proposals to permit the setting up of mechanisms leading to a Sustainable Energy and Climate Europe.
8. COSAC welcomes the European Commission's 2013 Convergence Report on Latvia and also the progress that Latvia has made in fulfilling the conditions for adopting the euro on 1 January 2014 as a further indication of the strengthening of economic integration in the EU.

Democratic accountability and legitimacy

9. COSAC considers that the Commission initiative on preparing for the 22-25 May 2014 European elections is particularly welcome, nevertheless it remains deeply concerned about the level of disconnect between Europe's citizens and the European Union; within the framework of Article 10, par.2 of TEU, COSAC underlines the importance, in relation to the European Year of Citizens, of launching genuine public debate prior to the elections in order to stimulate high participation and strengthen the connection between the citizens and the European Union; in this regard, Parliaments and political parties should engage further as facilitators of debates on EU matters raising awareness among citizens on their rights and on the challenges at stake at European elections.
10. COSAC believes that Parliaments, also through European and national political parties, have a special role to play in establishing links between citizens and European decision-making. It acknowledges that Parliaments should aim to make greater use of existing tools, but considers that new mechanisms will also have to be found in order to adequately address, for Parliaments and ultimately citizens, the issues of democratic legitimacy and accountability.
11. COSAC therefore calls on the European Commission and the European Council to engage with Parliaments and to come forward with concrete proposals for greater democratic legitimacy and accountability with the same sense of urgency and ambition as that which has pertained to progressing other aspects of the completion of EMU.



Youth Employment

12. COSAC calls on the European Council in June to agree effective and urgent measures for combating youth unemployment. COSAC emphasises the need to promote the mobility of young job-seekers and workers, including by strengthening the “Your First EURES Job” programme to boost cross-border recruitment and by creating an “Erasmus” programme for professional training. COSAC underlines the importance to encourage youth and female entrepreneurship by enhancing the flows of credit to SMEs, including the development of microcredit.

Enlargement

13. COSAC believes that, notwithstanding the deeper integration that is taking place and envisaged in the EU, that momentum in the transformative process of enlargement should be maintained, and that a realistic prospect of eventual accession needs to continue to be offered to candidate and potential candidate countries in order to incentivise the necessary reforms.

14. COSAC looks forward to the accession of Croatia to the European Union on 1 July, and to the participation of Croatian parliamentarians as full COSAC members, beginning under the Lithuanian Presidency.

15. COSAC welcomes the agreement reached in April between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as the Implementation Plan agreed upon in May. COSAC notes the Commission’s recommendation for negotiations to be opened with Serbia concerning EU accession. Furthermore, COSAC recognises the Commission’s recommendation for negotiations to be opened with Kosovo on a Stabilization and Associations Agreement and the Commission’s report for its implementation.

16. COSAC calls on the Council to open negotiations with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on EU accession, and with Kosovo on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and also notes progress achieved in negotiations with Montenegro and Turkey, under the condition, especially in the latter case, of the continuation of reforms and of the respect of the criteria of Copenhagen.



17. COSAC is deeply concerned about the news coming from Turkey. The right to protest peacefully as well as pluralism and tolerance are some of the pillars of democracy. It is necessary to approach the different positions and orientations through dialogue and peaceful confrontation. Trusting that Turkey will be able to overcome this difficult period, by choosing without any delay the role of a mature democracy, COSAC will continue to firmly believe in Turkey's European perspective and in its role as a major factor for stability and geopolitical balance in the countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle-East. COSAC also wishes the EU to be present with determination to reach these goals.
18. COSAC appreciates that compromise decisions required by the EU were adopted by the Assembly of Albania prior to the parliamentary elections of 23 June concerning certain reforms in the area of judicial and public administration as well as regarding the revision of the parliamentary Rules of Procedure. COSAC calls upon the Albanian political parties which will form the new government nevertheless to remain fully committed to the rule of law. COSAC highlights the importance of the implementation of the roadmap on EU integration in order to ensure the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. COSAC calls on its members to further develop inter-parliamentary engagement with both countries.
19. COSAC calls on national Parliaments, as institutions being informed of applications for EU membership in accordance with Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, to engage further, more fully and comprehensively in the enlargement debate as a means of enhancing public debate on the issue at national level in their respective Member States.

Development

20. COSAC is mindful of the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in full and of the historic opportunity to build on the MDGs and the globally agreed priorities they represent, to focus political attention and direct international cooperation efforts towards a limited number of achievable goals.
21. COSAC is conscious that the deadline for the achievement of the MDGs is drawing close, and that, pending their achievement, global discussions on how to build on the MDGs have started in order to seek to articulate the principles for a new globally agreed set of priorities for international cooperation aimed at eradicating extreme poverty.



22. COSAC acknowledges the strong views expressed by civil society organisations in Europe and across the globe on the need to base the new development framework on the needs, rights and priorities of communities experiencing poverty, exclusion and discrimination.
23. COSAC encourages EU leaders to develop national and local level initiatives aimed at forging consensus on the key priorities in the fight against poverty and marginalisation in Europe and globally, and to communicate the outcomes of such initiatives.
24. COSAC emphasises the need to work towards a continuous strengthening of the EU's and of Members States' development cooperation programmes, through the delivery on their commitments on aid quantity and aid quality; and to phase out all forms of tied aid, in line with the Paris Declaration and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.
25. COSAC calls on national Parliaments to engage further, more fully and comprehensively in the development debate as a means of enhancing public debate on the issue at national level in their respective Member States.

Subsidiarity

26. COSAC acknowledges the work of the Commission in dealing with the large number of reasoned opinions sent to it by national Parliaments. However, COSAC urges the Commission to respond to reasoned opinions issued by national Parliaments with greater speed and with greater focus on the arguments contained within each reasoned opinion.
27. While COSAC values practical arrangements published by President Barroso in 2009 it believes that lessons can be learnt from the experience of the first "yellow card" in response to the "Monti II" proposal.¹ In practice, a degree of uncertainty surrounded these arrangements following the triggering of the first yellow card and COSAC, therefore, invites the Commission to review, to improve and to clarify how these arrangements should operate for both the yellow and orange cards.
28. COSAC invites the Commission, in this review, to state, in particular, how and when its responses should be issued in response to the cards so triggered and the timeframe within which this will be undertaken.

¹ COM (2012) 130

29. COSAC also invites the Commission to identify the way in which it will communicate with national Parliaments in the scenario where a card has



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Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh
An Ghné Pharlaiminteach

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Parliamentary Dimension

been triggered and encourages the Commission to address more specifically the concerns raised by national Parliaments in their reasoned opinions. In this context COSAC notes that in March 2013, following a request to the Commission in the XLVIII COSAC contributions, those national Parliaments that submitted Reasoned Opinions on the Monti II proposal received letters from the Commission providing reasoning why it considered that the principle of subsidiarity had not been breached. However, COSAC notes that the response was generic and did not engage with all the specific arguments raised by the individual national Parliaments.

30. Finally, COSAC believes that the eight week period given for subsidiarity scrutiny is in most cases sufficient. However, in the context of the debate on the future of the EU it highlights that a future Treaty revision should take account of the opinion of national Parliaments that a longer period would make the process easier and mitigate the impact of periods of holidays and parliamentary recess and emphasises that an extension would not mean a significant slowing down of the European legislative procedure.

Political dialogue

31. COSAC considers that national Parliaments should be more effectively involved in the legislative process of the European Union not just as the guardians of the subsidiarity principle but also as active contributors to that process. This goes beyond the adoption of reasoned opinions on draft legislative acts which may block those acts and would involve a more positive, considered and holistic view under which Parliaments could invite the Commission to develop legislative proposals which they believe to be necessary or to review and adapt existing proposals for specific stated reasons.

32. Article 12 of the Treaty of the European Union notes that national Parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union and in that context COSAC will continue to seek to enhance and to promote the further positive involvement of national Parliaments in the legislative process.

33. COSAC calls on the Commission to consider within the existing context of political dialogue any individual or collective requests from national Parliaments for new legislative proposals.

34. COSAC notes the growing importance of national Parliaments' scrutiny to the legislative process. In the particular context of the 2014 European elections, COSAC draws to the attention of the Presidential Troika, the Council, the





European Parliament, and the Commission the need to allow proper time for national scrutiny before legislation is concluded.

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35. COSAC also calls on the Commission to give special attention and consideration to opinions on a specific legislative proposal or specific aspects of a proposal that have been issued in the context of the political dialogue by at least one third of national Parliaments.
36. The Commission is invited to update national Parliaments in advance in writing or at a subsequent COSAC Chairpersons or Plenary meeting or at any other appropriate and relevant interparliamentary conference organised by the Presidency on its reactions to any such requests or any political contributions so received as set out above.
37. With a view to enhancing the involvement and engagement of national Parliaments in the upstream policy formulation process, COSAC invites the Commission to ensure that national Parliaments are specially alerted to all Commission public consultations when they are launched, as called for in the Contribution of the XLVII COSAC, and to pay special attention to any contributions made by Parliaments to any such consultations.