

CONCLUSIONS OF THE L COSAC

Vilnius, 27–29 October 2013

1. 20th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

1.1 COSAC welcomes the 20th Bi-annual Report prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and sincerely thanks the Secretariat for the excellent work. The Report provides useful information on the means that could be used to ensure more active citizens' engagement in debating the EU future and participation in the 2014 European elections. It also discusses the effectiveness of ensuring and enhancing democratic legitimacy and accountability, and fruitful interparliamentary cooperation.

1.2 COSAC notes the challenge facing the COSAC Secretariat of many delayed replies to the questionnaire. It calls on Parliaments to try to ensure more timely responses are provided to aid the work of the Secretariat in preparing Bi-annual Reports and the work of the Presidency Parliament in preparing for COSAC plenary meetings.

1.3. COSAC appreciates the practice introduced by the Irish Presidency to organise informal sessions during the plenary meetings of COSAC. It recognises such sessions as a useful means of exchanging views on procedures and practices relevant to parliamentary scrutiny and on topical EU matters. COSAC thanks those involved in the sessions held in Vilnius and calls on future Presidencies to continue working to that end by putting forward topics for focused informal discussions.

2. Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

2.1. COSAC recalls that the co-financing of the current Permanent Member and the office of the COSAC Secretariat and website maintenance costs ends on 31 December 2013. The Irish Presidency, in the first half of 2013, invited Parliaments to renew their commitment to the co-financing agreement for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015. So far 40 Chambers of 27 national Parliaments have signed and sent their letters of intent indicating that they are willing to participate in the co-financing for the above stated period. COSAC welcomes the fact that this number is above the minimum threshold, therefore the co-financing of the Permanent Member and the office of the COSAC Secretariat and the costs of website maintenance will continue. COSAC invites the remaining few Parliaments/Chambers to submit letters of intent as soon as possible.

2.2. COSAC thanks the European Parliament for hosting the COSAC Secretariat in Brussels.

2.3. COSAC expresses its gratitude to the UK *House of Commons* for seconding Mrs Libby KURIEN for the post of the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat. COSAC warmly thanks Mrs Libby KURIEN, whose term of office expires on 31 December 2013, for her devoted and productive work.

2.4. COSAC welcomes the decision of the Chairpersons of COSAC of 28 October 2013 to elect Ms Christiana FRYDA seconded by the *House of Representatives* of Cyprus as Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat for 2014-2015. COSAC is convinced that the newly elected Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat will smoothly continue to manage the work of COSAC Secretariat and contribute to the successful development of the COSAC activities, in accordance with Rule 9.3 of the COSAC Rules of Procedure.

3. Democratic Legitimacy and the Role of Parliaments

3.1. COSAC supports closer and more constructive interparliamentary cooperation and active participation of Parliaments in EU policy shaping. COSAC encourages Parliaments to actively share best practices and information and to discuss EU's political matters of common interest.

3.2. COSAC notes the responses of Parliaments to the Bi-annual Report that call for the ongoing evolution of parliamentary democracy in the EU, as closer European integration should foresee greater parliamentary involvement. COSAC welcomes the call for strengthening of existing mechanisms including the interparliamentary dialogue and better use of the political dialogue by national Parliaments.

3.3. COSAC calls on Parliaments to initiate more parliamentary clusters of interest to examine specific issues of EU policy making and sincerely thanks the Danish *Folketing* for starting this initiative.

3.4. COSAC expresses its hope that there will soon be a full debate on the strengthening of democratic legitimacy of the Union and the fundamental role of national Parliaments for the good functioning of the Union as well as on how this role could be further enhanced. COSAC calls on future Presidencies to consider this topic to be put on the agenda of the forthcoming meetings of COSAC.

4. Macro-regional Cooperation

4.1. COSAC welcomes the initiative of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, as the Presidency Parliament, to convene parliamentarians of the EU Member States from the Baltic Sea region for an informal discussion about the prospects of the macro-regional EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

4.2. COSAC welcomes the European Commission's report on the added value of macro-regional strategiesⁱ and the idea that macro-regional strategies provide regional building blocks for EU-wide policy, marshalling national approaches towards a more coherent implementation at the EU level. COSAC supports the strengthening of the parliamentary dimension in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and other

macro-regional strategies of the EU, which contributes to and promotes comprehensive regional cooperation.

5. COSAC Women's Forum

5.1. COSAC welcomes the initiative of the *Seimas* of the Republic of Lithuania to convene the COSAC Women's Forum to encourage greater involvement of women parliamentarians in COSAC activities and underlines the need for urging the political parties of the EU Member States to give more focus to gender equality, equal opportunities policy, creation of gender balance in society, and wider inclusion of women in politics. COSAC calls on Parliaments to take gender balance into consideration when forming parliamentary delegations and on national political parties to promote better representation of women on the lists of candidates to the 2014 European elections.

5.2. COSAC welcomes the good participation in the COSAC Women's Forum in Vilnius and encourages women politicians both to exploit existing formats of interparliamentary co-operation and to become more involved in COSAC activities by participating in the COSAC Women's Forum and debating topical issues on the EU's political agenda.

5.3. Considering the fact that democratic policy-making in the EU may rest on both formal and informal structures, COSAC encourages future Presidency parliaments, to take over and further develop the initiative of promoting women parliamentarians' involvement in COSAC activities.

ⁱ COM/2013/468 final