



May 22, 2001

CONTRIBUTION FROM THE XXIVth COSAC IN STOCKHOLM TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The future development of the European Union

1. COSAC expresses its strong support for the enlargement process of the EU and calls on the Governments of the Member States to take appropriate measures so that the ratification process of the Treaty of Nice is completed by the beginning of 2002. COSAC urges the European Union and its Member States to admit a first group of new Member States in time for the European election in 2004.
2. COSAC underlines the role of Parliaments in the debate about the future development of the European Union. Parliaments in the Member States are close to their voters, and can thus function as a link between the citizens and the debate at the European level. Along with the European Parliament, national Parliaments should therefore actively and continuously foster a public dialogue about the future of the EU. COSAC stresses the necessity to include the Parliaments in the candidate countries in the debate. One important aim of this debate is to ensure a well functioning Union.
3. COSAC in itself is a suitable forum for the debate. COSAC is recognised in the Treaty and is entitled to forward contributions to the EU institutions. COSAC will continue to meet during every presidency and there is already a practical framework in place for COSAC and a Troika that ensures continuity. At the same time the rotating Presidency of COSAC facilitates that attention is paid to different subjects. COSAC has the virtue of including national Parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries, as well as the European Parliament. The size of the delegations at COSAC ensures that different political views from each country are represented. Thanks to the regularity of the COSAC meetings, personal networks develop between participant members. Everyone involved may bring ideas from COSAC discussions to their national debate.
4. COSAC hereby declares its intention to actively follow and participate in the debate. COSAC intends to put the future development of the Union on its agenda at its meetings until the next IGC. A COSAC Working Group, which was set up during the Swedish Presidency, has discussed the role of national Parliaments and the European Union. COSAC has decided that the Working Group will continue its work and study the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration.
5. A Convention was used as a forum for drafting the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Experiences from this work should be taken into account, when the European Union enters the more structural phase of the debate on its future. As part of the preparations for the IGC 2004, a conference based on this model should be convened in order to develop proposals for EU reform. As to the composition and working methods of such a body, COSAC stresses the necessity that national Parliaments are given a strong and early role. The Member States are after all the contracting parties to the Treaties and their national Parliaments are responsible for

the eventual ratification of amendments to the Treaties. The parliaments of the candidate countries should be included in the preparations for the IGC 2004.

Protocol on the role of the national Parliaments in the European Union

6. COSAC recalls what is stated in the Protocol on the role of the national Parliaments in the European Union, that scrutiny by individual national parliaments of their own government in relation to the activities of the Union is a matter for the particular constitutional organization and practice of each Member State. This means that the EU should function in a way that allows every national Parliament to work with EU matters in the way it decides for itself. The handling of matters at the EU level should thus give time and room for scrutiny by Parliaments at the national level.
7. COSAC draws the conclusion that the Protocol on the role of national Parliaments has not been fully implemented since some Parliaments claim that they do not receive the documents within the stated time limits. COSAC urges the institutions to ensure that the Protocol, which is an integral part of the Treaties, is followed. COSAC notes that the Protocol does not explicitly say by *whom* Commission consultation documents (green and white papers and communications) “shall be promptly forwarded to national Parliaments of the Member States”. COSAC asks the Council of Ministers and the Commission to clarify the division of responsibility between them in this respect. COSAC also reaffirms its statement from the COSAC meeting in Versailles regarding modification of the Protocol in order to ensure that national parliaments have enough time to scrutinise EU matters.

The new strategic objective of the European Union

8. COSAC, in the spirit of the Lisbon European Council, welcomes the acceptance by the Stockholm European Council of the recommendations drawn up by the COSAC meetings in Lisbon and Versailles regarding the Union’s new strategic objective to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. COSAC recognises the impetus given to this process by the Swedish EU Presidency.

Following-up of this Contribution

9. COSAC urges the institutions to take this Contribution into account. COSAC looks forward to the report on the future of the European Union that, according to the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union, shall be presented to the European Council in Göteborg in June 2001 and expects the report to consider this Contribution. COSAC also notes that the main theme for the meeting in Stockholm in September 2001 of the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments will be the role of national Parliaments in the European structure.