

## **Contribution from COSAC**

**XXVIII COSAC, Brussels, 27 January 2003**

**Addressed to the Convention of the Future of Europe, the EU's institutions, the national parliaments and the Presidency.**

### ***I. Strengthening the role of the national parliaments in collaboration with the European Parliament***

COSAC wishes to once again call the attention to the need for a strengthening of democracy and parliamentarism in the EU. The national parliaments and the European Parliament play an essential role in this respect.

In order for the European project to succeed it is necessary that the national parliaments be involved to a greater extent in national EU decisions. A reform of COSAC that enables national parliaments to be better informed, exchange best practices and express its views on EU-politics in a more efficient manner is therefore necessary.

COSAC reiterates its resistance to the creation of new institutions. The reform of COSAC is not and shall not be a step toward the creation of a new institution in the European architecture. The purpose of a reformed COSAC is to enable the national parliaments to play an active and informed role in EU-politics within the existing treaty-provisions as also proposed by the Convention's Working Group on the role of national parliaments. The protocol on the role of the national parliaments in the Amsterdam treaty gives COSAC and the national parliaments possibilities that have not been fully utilised.

COSAC expects the Convention on the Future of Europe to include the role of the national parliaments and the reform of COSAC in its work on a new constitutional treaty for EU.

COSAC considers, that The European Parliament and the national parliaments each have an important role to play in the area of EU-cooperation and that they have a common interest in a strengthening of democracy in EU. A reinforcement of the role of the national parliaments is therefore in full accordance with a strengthening of the European Parliament.

### ***II. The reform of COSAC***

At the COSAC meeting in **Madrid** 12-14 May 2002, a decision was made to strengthen COSAC co-operation. The chairmanship troika was asked to prepare a reform-proposal in this respect. At the COSAC meeting in **Copenhagen** 16-18 October 2002, it was decided to set up a Working Group consisting of the chairmen of the

European affairs committees of the national parliaments and of a representative of the European Parliament with the aim of continuing the reform process and to draw up proposals for a reform of COSAC. The mandate and the tasks of the working group are described in *annexe 1*.

On 10 January 2003 the Danish presidency sent out its general conclusions concerning the recommendations from the COSAC Working Group as well as the relevant documents. A proposal for new rules of procedures was sent out on 19 December 2002.

After examination of the presidency's recommendations and the general conclusions from the COSAC working Group, COSAC has reached the following conclusions:

1. COSAC adopts the "**Copenhagen parliamentary Guidelines**" for relations between governments and Parliaments on Community issues, which are not legally binding and consist of recommendations to national parliaments.

COSAC recommends the publication of the guidelines in the Official Journal of the European Communities, Serie C.

2. COSAC decides to change the **voting rules** in the rules of procedure with respect to the adoption of contributions. In general COSAC will seek to adopt contributions by broad consensus. If this is not possible, contributions shall be adopted with a majority of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the votes cast; the majority must at the same time constitute at least 50 pct. of the votes. When voting on contributions each delegation shall have two votes in order to allow differentiated voting from bicameral parliaments. When voting on revisions of the rules of procedure, unanimity will still be required and each delegation will still have one vote.

COSAC recommends that contributions adopted by COSAC henceforward shall be published in The Official Journal of the European Communities, Serie C.

3. Reaffirming the decision taken at the COSAC meeting 17-18 October 2002 in Copenhagen, all members of COSAC agree that there is a need for **improved continuity** in the activities of COSAC and therefore a need for **better secretarial support**, especially with 25 parliaments participating in COSAC meetings.

Meanwhile COSAC invites the working group consisting of the chairmen of the European affairs committees of the national parliaments and of a representative of the European Parliament to continue the examination of the aspects related to COSAC secretariat with a view to enable the COSAC to present its position on the question to the national parliaments. The examination should take into account the work of the working group and the contributions of all delegations including the contribution submitted by the Italian delegation.

4. COSAC recognises the need for a **better long term planning** of meetings adapted to the Council's one-year planning schedule of its /activities.
  
5. COSAC also wishes to support the increased co-operation between the **sectoral standing committees of national parliaments and the European Parliament**. COSAC supports the necessity for an interparliamentary agreement. COSAC shall ask the Speakers of the parliaments to prepare and to decide on such an interparliamentary agreement.
  
6. COSAC shall henceforward once a year invite the **European Commission** to a general presentation on the contents of its working and legislative programme.
  
7. The question of finding a better **name** for COSAC shall be referred to the Working Group's follow-up to the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe.
  
8. COSAC adopts the new **IT strategy** for COSAC with better co-operation between the secretariats of the European Affairs Committees in the national parliaments and the appropriate body in the European Parliament as proposed by the working group. This implies the set up of a technical administrative Working Group.
  
9. COSAC invites the national parliaments to continue the work with respect to the elaboration of operational agreements between the national parliaments and the EU's institutions . The working group has raised a number of criteria, which should be seen as a platform for further discussion on the content of such agreements.
  
10. In accordance with the contribution adopted in Copenhagen on 17-18 October 2002, COSAC invites the working group to follow the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe and the next Intergovernmental Conference.

## Annexe 1

Extract from the Contributions from XXVIIIth COSAC  
in Copenhagen, October 17-18 October 2002.

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”On the basis of this debate and within the present treaty provisions, COSAC decides to set up a working group with the aim of continuing the Danish Presidency’s reform initiative while paying attention to other proposals. The working group shall have the following tasks:

- a) To continue the work of drafting a code of conduct setting out minimum standards for effective national parliamentary scrutiny of governments.
- b) To draft proposals for how to change COSAC’s rules of procedure concerning majority decisions.
- c) To draft proposals on how to establish a secretariat for COSAC that ensures the necessary continuity of the work of COSAC, including possible changes in COSAC’s rules of procedure.
- d) To consider the organisation of future meetings of COSAC including the question on how to involve the sectoral standing committees as well as the composition of the delegations.
- e) To consider the possibility of letting COSAC assess the Commission’s annual legislative programme in order to ensure its compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.
- f) To consider the possibility of giving COSAC a new and more understandable name.
- g) To consider a new strategy for IT and administrative co-operation between EU administrative bodies in the national parliaments including the representations of national parliaments in Brussels.
- h) To consider whether there is a need to establish co-operation agreements with the EU’s institutions.
- i) To follow the work of the European Convention and the Intergovernmental Conference.”

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