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(Information)

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Conference of Committees for European and Community Affairs of the European Union Parliaments (COSAC)

Contribution adopted by the XXXVth COSAC

Vienna, 22 to 23 May 2006

(2006/C 238/01)

The Future of Europe and the Period of Reflection

- 1.1 COSAC believes that in order to renew the confidence of Europe's citizens in the Union a broad debate which does not limit itself to the fate of the Constitutional Treaty has to be continued at all levels. In this regard citizens' specific concerns and the status of public opinion in the Member States need to be understood.
- 1.2 COSAC takes good note of the debate in the Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the Future of Europe on 8 and 9 May 2006. COSAC is convinced that the meeting made a valuable contribution to conclusions that might be drawn from the period of reflection.
- 1.3 COSAC calls on the European Council on 17 June 2006 to present a roadmap for further measures to be taken, in particular for the future of the ratification process in general, and to come up with specific proposals on how the Union could function better.

The Constitutional Treaty

- 2.1 COSAC calls on the European institutions to explain better the advantages of the Constitutional Treaty not just in terms of institutional questions but also with regard to citizens' rights, transparency, balance of solidarity and subsidiarity, democracy, rights of national parliaments and values.
- 2.2 COSAC welcomes the decision of 16 Member States including most recently Belgium, Estonia and Finland who have either already ratified the Constitutional Treaty or declared their intention to do so as a positive signal to keep the ratification process in motion while equally respecting the decision of other Member States which have not yet ratified.

Subsidiarity and Proportionality

- 3.1 COSAC regards the monitoring of the effective application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as an important element of the scrutiny role of National Parliaments.
- 3.2 COSAC stresses that the EU should act in areas where action on the European level clearly brings added value. This matter was dealt with at a conference on subsidiarity in St. Pölten on 18 and 19 April 2006 as a follow-up to the Hague-conference.
- 3.3 COSAC bearing in mind the role national parliaments already play in the scrutiny of EU legislation as acknowledged in the Amsterdam Treaty's Protocol No 9 on the role of national parliaments in the European Union and Protocol No 30 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality stresses that their full use should lead to more efficiency in implementing EU policies.
- 3.4 COSAC warmly welcomes the commitment of the President of the Commission at the Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the Future of Europe on 9 May 2006 to transmit directly all new legislative proposals and consultation papers to National Parliaments, inviting them to react so as to improve the process of policy formulation. COSAC asks the Commission to take into account comments from National Parliaments — in particular with regard to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles — and within an acceptable timeframe to acknowledge receipt and offer a reasoned response.
- 3.5 COSAC requests the Commission to provide its annual legislative and work programme, the annexes and indicative lists in all languages. In addition, more detailed information on the proposals would allow national parliaments to discuss the substantial policy direction of the Commission.

3.6 COSAC welcomes the Conclusions of the Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments of Budapest of 7 May 2005 that referred to COSAC's 'declaration on the role of National Parliaments in the European debate: Raise national European awareness' and called upon the National Parliaments to hold a debate preferably in plenary session each year on the annual legislative and work programme of the Commission with due respect for their internal work programme, legal framework and traditions.

3.7 COSAC notes that a significant number of National Parliaments have agreed to take part in the second subsidiarity and proportionality check based on legislative proposals from the Commission's annual work programme for 2006. Since part of the proposals will only be dealt with in the second half of 2006 COSAC invites the incoming Finnish Presidency to take over the coordination under the terms of the conclusions of the XXXIV COSAC.

3.8 COSAC looks forward to the official inauguration of the IPEX website by the Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments at their next conference in Copenhagen from 29 June to 2 July 2006 which should allow National Parliaments to better coordinate their activities and exchange their best practises in the framework of COSAC.

Better regulation

4.1 COSAC thanks the President of the Commission for the information on the follow up of its contribution of the XXXIV COSAC with regard to impact assessments. COSAC asks the Commission to translate at least the summaries of all its impact assessments into all official languages of the Union.

4.2 COSAC welcomes the Commission's initiative on better regulation, its efforts to simplify existing EU law and to achieve a better quality of new proposals while preserving the 'acquis communautaire'.

4.3 COSAC encourages the Commission to devise a method aiming at assessing and reducing bureaucratic costs by the end of 2006.

4.4 COSAC welcomes the launch of the Commission's impact assessment web page on the 'Europa' website where the proposals of the legislative and work programme together with roadmaps, impact assessment reports and policy documents can be found.

Openness in the Council

5.1 COSAC underlines the necessity to realise maximum transparency in the EU decision making process for the benefit of our citizens, European democracy and the future of the EU.

5.2 COSAC calls on the Council to allow open sessions for European Union legislative proposals including on certain matters not subject to the co-decision procedure as set out in Art 251 ECT and amend its rules of procedure accordingly.

The 5th Biannual Report

6. COSAC welcomes the 5th biannual report prepared by the COSAC Secretariat which has again been helpful for obtaining an overview of the developments in the European Union that are relevant to parliamentary scrutiny.

The Western Balkans

7.1 COSAC expresses its support for the reform and stabilisation process in the Western Balkans as steps towards the integration of these countries into the European Union. In this context COSAC welcomed the presence of COSAP at its meeting as a special guest.

7.2 COSAC welcomes the start of negotiations to transform the Central European Free Trade Association CEFTA into a comprehensive Free Trade arrangement for South Eastern Europe as an important step on the road to full integration of all countries of the region into the European structures.

Neighbourhood Policy

8. COSAC takes a positive note of the transformation process in the Ukraine and regards the neighbourhood policy as a necessary part of complementing the EU enlargement policy.