



Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

COSAC LIII Plenary Meeting

Riga

30 May - 2 June 2015

Report of the Delegation

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Report on attendance at COSAC Plenary Meeting

Riga, Latvia, 30 May – 2 June 2015

1. COSAC, the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union, is the principal forum for co-operation between committees of the national parliaments dealing with European affairs. COSAC meetings are held biannually and normally take place in the country holding the EU-presidency. The LIII COSAC was held in Riga, Latvia, 30 May to 2 June 2015. (**Link to [COSAC Programme](#)**)
2. The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was represented by Deputy Dominic Hannigan, Chairman, Deputy Sean Kyne Vice-Chairman, Deputy Timmy Dooley, Deputy Derek Keating and Senator Aideen Hayden. The delegation was accompanied by Bríd Dunne, Clerk to the Committee and Fiona Cashin, Policy Advisor. Cáit Hayes and Derek Dignam, Oireachtas Permanent Rep., Brussels also attended.
3. The COSAC meeting was chaired by Ms Lolita Čigane, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.
4. The main guest speakers at the meeting were Ms Ināra Murniece, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia; Ms Laimdota Straujuma, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia; Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union; Mr Jerzy Buzek, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament; Mr Petr Hlobil, Chair of the Green 10; Ms Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Trade, Mr Artis Pabriks, Member of the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament; Mr Herman DeCroo, Member of the Flemish Parliament; Mr Gunter Krichbaum, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the German Bundestag; Mr Dominic Hannigan, Chair of the Joint Committee on European Affairs of the Irish Houses of the Oireachtas; Mr Paolo Tancredi, Vice-Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian Camera dei Deputati; Ms Maria João Rodrigues, Member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament and Ms Danielle Auroi, Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the French Assemblée nationale.

Day 1- 1st June 2015

5. Procedural Issues

- The draft agenda of the LIII COSAC which was adopted without amendment.

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

- A deadline of 12 noon on 1 June 2015 for accepting amendments to the draft contribution of LIII COSAC applied;
 - COSAC secretariat presented the results of the COSAC questionnaire;
 - The Presidency presented details the letters received by the Presidency;
 - The Chair of the French EU Affairs Committee (Sénat) presented a report of an interparliamentary meeting held on the fight against terrorism;
 - The Chair presented a draft COSAC statement for adoption at the Chairperson's meeting;
 - A procedural point was made by Mr. Krichnaum (German Bundestag) regarding the next for brevity of the final text of the COSAC contribution.
6. Members of the Irish delegation contributed to the discussions on agenda items as follows:-

State of play of the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council

(Deputy Sean Kyne)

Following the address by the key note speaker, Ms Laimdota Straujuma, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia on the 'State of Play of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union', a wide-ranging debate took place, which included 28 contributions from the floor.

Opening his contribution to the debate in the Irish language, Deputy Kyne congratulated the Latvian Presidency for its work since assuming the role at a time of great change in the European Institutions. He referred to the Latvian Presidency having a real commitment to strengthening the EU, its institutions and policies and welcomed the focus of the Latvian Presidency on supporting jobs, growth and competitiveness. He reiterated Ireland's support for TIPP, subject to the appropriate safeguards.

(Reference minutes pages 2-6 for full debate on this item: [Minutes LIII COSAC](#))

European Union Energy Policy: State of Play, Challenges and Opportunities

(Deputy Timmy Dooley)

Mr Maroš Šefčovič, Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union; Mr Jerzy Buzek, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament; Mr Petr Hlobil, Chair of the *Green 10* were the key note speakers in this session with a lively debate following their presentations. There were 20 contributions from the floor. The time for debate having lapsed, several speakers including Deputy Timmy Dooley from the Houses of the Oireachtas, were unable to contribute to this debate.

(Reference minutes pages 8-12 for full debate on this item: [Minutes LIII COSAC](#))

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

EU Trade Policy for the Next Five Years: Focus on the EU-US TTIP negotiations

(Senator Aideen Hayden)

Ms Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Trade and Mr Artis Pabriks, Member of the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament were key note speakers in this session. 27 speakers took the floor in the subsequent debate on TIPP.

For Ireland, Senator Aideen Hayden contributed to the debate. She recalled the importance exporting to third countries for Irish and European economies; pointed to a possible need for transitional agreements as well as support to protect SMEs within vulnerable sectors, and stated that in the internal market a fit-for-purpose environment for SMEs did not yet exist.

(Reference minutes pages 12-19 for full debate on this item- [Minutes LIII COSAC](#))

7. Meeting of Chairpersons of COSAC

Deputy Séan Kyne, Vice Chairman remained in attendance for the Chairpersons' meeting in substitution for the Chairman.

The Chair of the meeting, Ms Čigāne, informed the meeting that the Chairs had received a document which incorporated in the original Troika draft of the Contribution, amendments recommended for approval by the Troika, as well as the complete list of the amendments tabled in advance of the deadline.

A list of substantive amendments submitted by Ireland (as amended with in conjunction with the Presidency) is annexed at 1.

The Chair then invited the Chairpersons to discuss all the amendments paragraph by paragraph. Following a debate on the amendments and electronic voting in the case of some amendments, an amended text of the Contribution of the LIII COSAC was agreed by the Chairpersons.

Day 2 - 2 June 2015

Future of the Parliamentary Scrutiny of European Union Affairs

8. National Parliaments' Involvement in EU Decision-making: State of Play and Overview of Existing Instruments

This keynote speakers were Mr Herman De Croo, Member of the Flemish Parliament and Mr Gunter Krichbaum, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the German Bundestag.

In a debate with 14 contributions, calls were made for national Parliaments to work more closely with the European Parliament; confidence in the EU institutions had to grow so as to lend more democratic legitimacy to the EU institutions and that closer cooperation with the aim of cutting distance between national Parliaments and EU institutions was needed, thus making the EU and its society more European.

(Reference minutes pages 19- 23 for full debate on this item: [Minutes LIII COSAC](#))

9. **Green card: Towards an Enhanced Political Dialogue**

(Deputy Dominic Hannigan, Chairman)

The keynote speakers in this session were Deputy Dominic Hannigan and Mr Paolo Tancredi, Vice-Chair of the EU Policies Committee, Italian Camera dei Deputati.

The Chair, Ms Čigāne opened the discussion on this agenda item underlining that the question of the "green card" had triggered a wide range of reactions ranging from enthusiasm to scepticism. She then gave the floor to the keynote speakers representing both sides, while regretting that the European Commission was not able to intervene.

In his contribution, the Chairman thanked the Dutch Eerste Kamer, the Danish Folketing and, in particular, the UK House of Lords for their respective roles in launching the debate on a greater role of national Parliaments in the EU.

He noted that a majority of Parliaments did not see the green card challenging the European Commission's right of initiative, nor the role of the European Parliament. In this context, he welcomed the position expressed by the European Parliament's AFCO Committee, who considered the "green card" proposal positively as long as it did not amount to a real right of initiative. Furthermore, he reckoned that the "green card" would only give a limited role to a group of interested national Parliaments in the agenda- setting, given the fact that the number of green cards would be relatively low and it would be up to the European institutions to react on these.

Mr Hannigan noted that a majority of Parliaments supported the idea of introducing a "green card". A wide consensus seemed to be emerging on key issues, such as the scope, the threshold, the timescale, and the role of the European Parliament. He stressed that the next logical step would be to launch a pilot project. In this regard, he proposed to consider the proposal by the UK House of Lords on food waste. Finally, he expressed his hope that the European Commission and, in particular, Vice-President Timmermans would give this initiative the attention it merited and would respond to it.

(Reference minutes pages 23-26 for full debate on this item -[Minutes LIII COSAC](#))

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

10. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LIII COSAC

- The COSAC Contribution was agreed, without further amendment and adopted accordingly.
- The COSAC Statement on the Russian Federation was adopted.
- Dates for the LIV COSAC was confirmed for 29 November -1 December and the Chairpersons meeting 12-13 July.



Dominic Hannigan T.D.
Chairman

8 July 2015

ANNEX I

New 3.7

COSAC calls on the European Commission to continue to assist EU workers if and where job displacement does occur in the short term, by means of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

5.2 (a) COSAC calls for a whole of Europe response to this crisis situation. It is of the opinion that all Member States have an obligation to assist people fleeing from war and that the utmost should be done to assist people fleeing poverty and persecution in their home countries. COSAC acknowledges that some Member States are accepting more refugees and immigrants than others and that this is placing significant burdens on the resources and finances of these Member States.

5.3 (a).

COSAC calls on the European Commission to explore the option of processing of migrants in a remote area outside of the EU (extra-territorial processing) as a matter of urgency. This could help to eliminate the need for migrants to undertake a dangerous sea crossing and to stem the numbers currently crossing the Mediterranean Sea.