



Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

COSAC LI Plenary Meeting

Greece

15-17 June 2014

Report of the Delegation

31ENUA0016

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs
Report on attendance at COSAC Plenary Meeting
Athens, Greece, 15-17 June 2014

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 XLX COSAC was held in Athens, Greece on 15-17 June 2014. (Link to [LI COSAC- Programme](#)).
2. The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was represented by Deputy Dominic Hannigan, Chairman, Deputy Eric Byrne and Senator Catherine Noone. The delegation was accompanied by Bríd Dunne, Clerk to the Committee and Conor Gouldsbury, Policy Advisor. The Chairman also participated in a side-meeting of COSAC on the Monday, 16 June. A note of this meeting is available below at *Annex 1*.
3. The COSAC meeting was chaired by Mr Ioannis Tragakis, Deputy Speaker of the Vouli ton Ellinon and Chairman of the Special Standing Committee on European Affairs of the. The main guest speakers at the meeting were Mr Antonis Samaras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic and Mr László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission addressed the conference by video message.

Other speakers included, Mr Vangelis Meimarakis, Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*; Mr. Elmar Brok, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament; Mr Constantinos Tassoulas, Minister of Culture and Sports, President of the "Konstantinos Karamanlis" Institute for democracy, Greece; Mr Carlo Casini, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament; Mr. Paulo Mota Pinto Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Assembleia da Republica, Portugal; Ms Silvia Modig, Member of Parliament, Eduskunta, Finland; and Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Chair of the European Affairs Committee Saeima, Latvia

Procedural Issues

4. The draft agenda of the LI COSAC which was adopted without amendment. A deadline of 12 noon, on 16 June for accepting amendments to the draft conclusions and contributions of LI COSAC applied.

(Link to detailed [LI COSAC - Minutes](#))

5. Members of the Irish delegation contributed to the discussions on agenda items as follows:-

State of Play of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union
(*Deputy Dominic Hannigan, Chair*)

Following the address by the key note speaker, Mr Antonis Samaras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic on the ‘State of Play of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union’, a wide-ranging debate, which included 23 contributions from the conference with diverging views, Mr. Dominic Hannigan, Chair of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, contributed by highlighting the importance of the freedom of movement and the positive effects of internal migration in European economy, noting with concern that not enough was done to defend this principle at a European level.

(Reference minutes pages 3-7 for full debate on this item [LI COSAC - Minutes](#))

'Challenges for the EU: the crisis in Ukraine' (*Deputy Eric Byrne*)

Following opening remarks by keynote speaker, Mr Elmar Brok, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, a substantive debate on the issue ensued, which included 31 contributions from the floor.

Deputy Eric Byrne contributed by referring to the need for the EU to acknowledge its mistakes in negotiating the Association Agreement with Ukraine as part of the overall negotiations in the Eastern Partnership, particularly as obvious markers were flagged when Armenia withdrew from the proposed Association Agreement with the EU in favour of a customs union with the Russian Federation.

The Deputy referred to the erroneous assumptions made by EU negotiators in their assessment of the situation in Ukraine such as underplaying the role of the Right Sector and also pointed to the fact that the denial of the presence of fascists and neo-fascists in Ukraine, was fatal to the understanding of Kiev by the Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine.

He then went on to question the EU position to be taken in response to the composition of cabinet or the Ukraine government and argued the need to convey the message that to Russian speakers in the Eastern Ukraine, that Europe is sympathetic to their fears. Called on the EU to rethink its position, to take intensive diplomatic steps and to strengthen its humanitarian measures.

(Reference minutes pages 7-10 for full debate on this item [LI COSAC - Minutes](#))

'Democratic legitimacy and European leadership: the day after the European elections (*Senator Catherine Noone*)

Speakers Mr Constantinos TASSOULAS, Minister of Culture and Sports, former President of the "Konstantinos Karamanlis" Institute for democracy, Greece and Mr Carlo CASINI, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament chaired the debate on this item. Twenty-one speakers took the floor in the subsequent debate, including a contribution from Senator Catherine Noone, who stated that the European elections had resulted in the growth in the number of independents and those of the far right, some of whom were engaged in a battle to destroy the EU from within; she cited the example of the UK that had seen the emergence of independents at local level, partly because of the austerity measures, and she shared the view regarding citizens' disappointment as they considered the EU responsible for the policies in many cases. She recalled that the mainstream pro-European parties had retained more than 72% of the seats in the European Parliament.

(Reference minutes pages 10-19 for full debate on this item [LI COSAC - Minutes](#))

6. Meeting of Chairpersons of COSAC

Deputy Dominic Hannigan remained in attendance for the Chairperson's meeting.

The Chair, Mr TRAGAKIS, informed the Chairpersons that they had received an amended draft version of the Contribution and Conclusions, which had been agreed after a discussion on the amendments received by the deadline at the Troika meeting the day before. He invited the Chairpersons to discuss the most recent amendments received after the Troika meeting. The amendments would be discussed in the order they had been received, announced the Chair.

The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* abstained from supporting the Contribution of the LI COSAC.

A debate on the amendments took place. Following disagreement expressed by some Chairpersons regarding the procedure suggested, the Presidency proposed the continuation of the discussion on the basis of the text, as amended by the Chairpersons, the next day.

7. The Irish delegation did not attend day-2 of the conference as the delegation travelled onwards on an official visit to EU candidate countries Montenegro and Albania. This is the subject of a separate report.

8. Final Conclusions and Contribution of COSAC

CONCLUSIONS

Athens, 15-17 June 2014

1. The Bi-annual Report

1.1 COSAC welcomes the 21st Bi-annual Report prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and warmly thanks the Secretariat for its excellent work. The Report provides extensive and useful information on the future of COSAC, on interparliamentary cooperation and in particular on cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament and examines how social and employment related policies can be better monitored, coordinated and scrutinised at the European and national level. It also explored ways to enhance democratic legitimacy and accountability in national budgetary, fiscal and economic policy in the framework of the European Semester and focused especially on the issue of parliamentary scrutiny over the "Troika's" (European Central Bank, European Commission and International Monetary Fund) working methods in cases of countries under macroeconomic adjustment programmes.

2. The Future of COSAC

2.1 COSAC welcomes the diversity of ideas expressed by a large majority of EU Parliaments in relation to its future development with a view to adapting to the evolving landscape of interparliamentary cooperation.

2.2 COSAC notes that EU Parliaments largely expressed the view that both policy and institutional issues should be included on the agenda of future meetings. In this respect, COSAC encourages future Presidencies to take into consideration the proposals submitted by the Parliaments in the Bi-annual Report. COSAC welcomes the call for developing further exchanges of information and best practices on the subsidiarity principle checks in the framework of COSAC following the issuing of two "yellow cards". Furthermore, it takes particular notice of the mechanisms put forward by the majority of the Parliaments and primarily the discussion in COSAC meetings of the European Commission's response to a "yellow card" and deplores the peremptory override of the EPPO yellow card by the Commission despite the threshold being reached and passed by national Parliaments.

2.3 COSAC acknowledges the importance attributed to networking between members of Parliament and therefore supports, amongst others, initiatives that enhance closer cooperation between Members on specific issues of common interest, such as formal and informal meetings of members of Parliaments. Recalling that parliamentary cooperation should be open and inclusive, COSAC welcomes the inaugural meeting of Chairpersons of Committees of European Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU South, as well as the continuation of existing regional meetings. To facilitate this networking, the COSAC secretariat will digitally

distribute - and regularly update - an overview of the contact details of the Chairs of the standing Committees for European Affairs of the national Parliaments.

3. Cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament

3.1 COSAC notes with satisfaction that interparliamentary cooperation appears to be a generalised practice involving the majority of EU Parliaments. It stresses, however, the need for further improvement of interparliamentary meetings held at the premises of the European Parliament and organised by the Presidency Parliament in the Member States to meet the concerns expressed by a large majority of EU Parliaments.

3.2 COSAC recognises the importance of further enhancing cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament by fully exploiting the provisions envisaged in the Lisbon Treaty. More specifically, it considers that there is significant room for improving interparliamentary cooperation, especially at the level of informal dialogue. In this regard, COSAC appreciates the recent *ad hoc* initiatives taken by the European Parliament (namely inviting rapporteurs or specialised members of national Parliaments on specific topics/draft proposals for discussion in Committee meetings in the European Parliament; inviting members of national Parliaments to hearings in the European Parliament; inviting members of national Parliaments to Committee enquiries in the European Parliament). COSAC strongly supports the continuation and further development of such initiatives, as well as the positive response to national Parliaments' requests for any form of dialogue on specific EU issues with Members of the European Parliament.

4. Lisbon guidelines for interparliamentary cooperation

4.1 COSAC stresses that a large majority of EU Parliaments considers that there is a need to update the Lisbon guidelines for interparliamentary cooperation, mainly to take into account the establishment of new interparliamentary fora. Therefore, COSAC encourages future Presidencies to submit a working document based on the replies to the COSAC questionnaire as a useful input to future EU Speakers Conferences in relation to a possible reflexion on the update of the Lisbon guidelines.

5. Democratic legitimacy and accountability in the budget process

5.1 COSAC is of the opinion that national Parliaments and the European Parliament must ensure the democratic legitimacy of the Economic Governance in the E.U. and further enhance their functioning and role on their respective competences. COSAC takes particular interest in the proposals submitted by national Parliaments in order to enhance their participation in the process, identifying political dialogue as a very effective tool in this process between the national Parliaments and relevant stakeholders and forms of interparliamentary cooperation, and in particular the Interparliamentary Conference under Article 13 of TSCG.

5.2 COSAC welcomes the initiative taken by the European Parliament to launch an inquiry into the role and operations of the Troika with regard to the Euro area programme countries.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE LI COSAC

1. European Elections

1.1 COSAC welcomes the successful conduct of the 8th European elections, held from the 22nd to the 25th of May 2014. Although the average turnout in the elections was higher than expected and there were "Spitzenkandidaten" to address European issues during the election campaign, COSAC expresses its concern about both the poor turnout in certain member states and the rise of extremism and xenophobia, as reflected in the results; it therefore urges the respective governments, political parties, as well as the European institutions to reflect on their share of responsibility for these phenomena and act promptly in order to tackle them.

1.2 In this regard, COSAC welcomes the expressed will of the Heads of EU states to place growth and job creation on top of their priorities, together with pursuing further progress in the area of freedom, security and justice and coping with the major challenges of climate change and energy efficiency and security.

2. Economic Governance – Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)

2.1 COSAC reaffirms its conviction that deepening of the EMU, through the introduction of policies dealing with the insufficiencies revealed after the outburst of the crisis, is of utmost importance. In this context, an integrated financial framework with a fully - fledged banking union, with effective supervisory, resolution and deposit guarantee mechanisms at a European level, coupled, as necessary, by a genuine fiscal and economic union is seen as a natural next step to the budgetary coordination framework already in place.

2.2 Consequently, COSAC welcomes the political agreement reached during the Hellenic Presidency of the Council, on the Single Resolution Mechanism, as well as the completion of the agreement on the Single Resolution Fund. These agreements shall play a vital role towards the conclusion of a Banking Union, which will help ensure financial stability, minimise the cost of bank failures on European citizens, restore the markets' confidence in the European banking sector and allow banks to resume supply of credit to the real economy and thus pave the way to growth.

3. Freedom, Security and Justice

3.1 COSAC calls on the European Council to adopt the Strategic Guidelines in the field of Justice and Home Affairs regarding the legislative and operational planning, building upon the progress already achieved in the context of the Stockholm Programme; COSAC underlines the significance of the principle of

solidarity and responsibility in the designation of the Guidelines and stresses the need for full implementation and enforcement of existing instruments in the area of freedom, security and justice in order to improve the quality of life of European citizens.

3.2 COSAC is of the opinion that special attention should be attached to the sensitive issue of migration flows management and the integration of legal immigrants in EU societies with a view to urging European responses to the present and upcoming challenges; to this end, proposals put forward by the Task Force Mediterranean, should be given a concrete follow-up taken into account, as sea routes of migration are the most frequently used and at the same time linked with significant human losses. COSAC stresses the need for initiatives aimed at implementing the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility as laid down in Article 80 of the TFEU in the fields of mutual recognition of national decisions on asylum, pooling of reception places at EU level to face possible situations of crisis and particular pressure, contingency planning and crisis management.

4. EU maritime policies

4.1 COSAC underlines that sea and maritime activities present an inexhaustible source of growth and prosperity for the whole of Europe. It therefore welcomes the joined-up effort undertaken by the European Commission, the External Action Service, the Hellenic Presidency and the Member-States to develop a holistic, cross sectorial strategy in order to promote and safeguard this potential, namely the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS); it is convinced that the EUMSS should consist of both internal and external aspects of maritime security, promote global solutions in dealing with challenges at the European level and make good use of all existing EU tools and structures in the maritime security domain, including CSDP missions and operations.

5. Ukraine

5.1 COSAC welcomes the holding of Presidential elections in Ukraine and notes with satisfaction the high turnout of the Ukrainian people and the clear resolve of the Ukrainian authorities to hold genuine election procedures, largely conforming to international commitment.

5.2 COSAC reiterates strong support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and condemns the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. COSAC strongly supports sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all European countries and believes that there is no place for any separatist activities and provocations aiming at changing borders in Europe of the 21st century, without due democratic procedure.

5.3. Actions of Russian Federation are inconsistent with its existing commitments and obligations including the UN Charter, the OSCE Helsinki Final Act and the

Budapest Memorandum. Crimea Peninsula must be reintegrated with the state of Ukraine in order to bring back stability in Europe.

5.4 COSAC calls Russian Federation Council to rescind its decision of 1st of March, 2014, allowing the use of force against the neighbouring country.

5.5. COSAC stresses that in the current situation it is essential that Russia takes real steps to defend the border of Russia-Ukraine in order to prevent the flow of terrorists and arms to Ukraine.

5.6 COSAC is confident that the quality of the Presidential elections provides the new President of Ukraine with the legitimacy to establish an inclusive dialogue with all citizens and work in order to guarantee the unity of the country while respecting the diversity of Ukrainian society; it calls on the European Union to work closely together with the new President of Ukraine and support him in pursuit of decentralisation and constitutional and structural economic reforms in order to ensure political and economic stability in the country. Moreover, COSAC welcomes statements by the Russian Federation pledging respect for the elections outcome; it therefore urges the Russian Federation to cooperate with the new legitimate President, to commit to a peaceful and constructive dialogue towards de-escalating tensions and to withdraw armed forces from the Ukrainian border.

5.7 COSAC expects that the contracts regarding gas supplies from Russia to the European Union will be fully respected. Following the Ukraine crisis, COSAC considers that energy efficiency and security has risen to a top priority for the European Union. In this regard, COSAC urges the Commission and the Member States to explore ways for financing energy efficiency measures and curbing energy demand, as well as to engage in further developing an EU energy security strategy.

5.8 COSAC welcomes the decision to sign the Association Agreements with Georgia and Moldova on 27 of June 2014 and expects the concurrent signature of the remaining chapters of the Association Agreement with Ukraine. COSAC notes the special role of EU national parliaments and European Parliament in the process of ratification of these agreements and invites them to send a strong message of support to the Eastern partners by ensuring smooth ratification process.

6. Democratic Accountability

6.1 COSAC points out that the twofold democratic legitimacy of the Union, as a union of citizens and of Member States, is embodied, in the EU legislative process, by the European Parliament and the Council, in the context of co-decision process and underlines the role of subsidiarity checks performed by national Parliaments; stresses that legitimacy and accountability must be properly ensured at national and EU level by the national parliaments and the European Parliament; recalls the principle, set out in the Conclusions of the December 2012 European Council meeting, that throughout

the process, the general objective remains to ensure democratic legitimacy and accountability at the level at which decisions are taken and implemented.

6.2 COSAC notes that the economic recess and its impact, such as high unemployment, combined with reduced social spending and downgrading of living standards have proved critical for the diminishing popularity of the European Union. COSAC is, in this regard, of the view that the EU's democratic credibility has been challenged over the past five years, as the need to swiftly address the effects of the economic and financial crisis and to coordinate fiscal policies has led governments or Council formations such as the Eurogroup to delegate competencies to the European level, partly lacking parliamentary control.

6.3 Moreover, COSAC notes with regret that macroeconomic adjustment programmes were not characterised by sufficient democratic legitimacy and accountability, as stated by the vast majority of respondents in the Bi-annual Report. COSAC stresses that, in the future, genuinely democratically accountable institutions should be primarily involved in designing and implementing such programmes in order to guarantee transparency and political ownership.

6.4 COSAC reaffirms the willingness of national Parliaments to engage in a public debate over the European institutional architecture in the context of the existing Treaties. COSAC strongly believes that ways to achieve democratisation of the decision making process should be explored without putting into question the community method. In this respect, powers vested by the Treaties to the European Parliament should be fully exercised and its cooperation with national Parliaments should be further developed.

6.5 COSAC welcomes the agreement reached on the Regulation on the statute and funding of European Political Parties and Foundations.

6.6 Five years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the consequent appointments of the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, COSAC congratulates Mr. Herman Van Rompuy and Lady Catherine Ashton.

6.7 COSAC expresses the hope that cooperation between the European Council and the European External Action Service and EU Parliaments will continue unhindered and will be further exploited and developed, both bilaterally as well as in the context of interparliamentary cooperation.

6.8 COSAC taking into account the widespread mistrust of citizens towards the European institutions, strongly supports the democratic participation of EU citizens in the legislative procedure, under the European Citizens' Initiative and encourages a more active involvement of the European Parliament in its follow up.

6.9 COSAC is convinced that EU institutions must work together constructively taking into account the election results and the message conveyed by the European citizens when appointing the heads of the main institutional bodies, as envisaged in the TFEU.

7. Addressing the Social Deficit in the EU

7.1 COSAC notes that the deep economic recession in the euro area and the on-going European sovereign debt crisis have placed the debate on the social dimension of the EMU high on the European political agenda. In this respect, COSAC stresses the need for a horizontal integration of the social dimension into EU policies and within the framework of the European Semester. COSAC strongly supports social dialogue and the active participation of competent social partners in shaping more effective and targeted EU policies.

7.2 COSAC calls the European Institutions to respond to citizens demands for protection against the intense global competition; COSAC considers that the high standard harmonisation of social and environmental rights, as well as the fight against fiscal fraud should become a priority in the European agenda.

7.3 COSAC expresses its satisfaction over the first signs of a recovery in economic activity in the European Union throughout 2013, in terms of both productivity and competitiveness. However, it underlines that the continued pursuit of unbalanced fiscal consolidation policies is recognised as ineffective and prolonging the economic crisis unnecessarily as well as impeding recovery in employment prospects. The goal of long-term fiscal consolidation needs to be matched with measures to boost demand and stimulate growth.

8. Rethinking the European employment Strategy

8.1 COSAC notes with great concern that labour market conditions have continued to worsen over 2013, emphasising the unprecedented high level of youth unemployment across many EU countries, the increasing persistency of unemployment and the deterioration in the quality of employment (i.e. involuntary temporary and part-time employment, in-work poverty, informal work, job and wage polarisation); it therefore deplores the limited capacity so far of the EU to address the failures and disparities in labour markets so as to effectively resolve the problem.

8.2 COSAC welcomes the EU key initiatives to tackle youth unemployment (Youth Employment Package, Youth Guarantee, Youth Employment Initiative) and urges the European Commission to further step up efforts in order to create better and more, employment opportunities for the youth of Europe, taking under consideration particularities in the implementation of its initiatives, such as the case of poor rural areas. Regarding the effective implementation of the Youth Guarantee, COSAC considers that the involvement of all government levels and a regular and structured cooperation with stakeholders (i.e. public and private employment services,

enterprises, trade unions, youth organisations) are required, the proper articulation between the national support systems to youth employment and the 'European Youth Guarantee'.

8.3 COSAC encourages EU Parliaments' active involvement in the efforts towards tackling youth unemployment by contributing in the designation of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and scrutinising its implementation. In this regard, it urges Parliaments to engage in interparliamentary dialogue not only between them, but also between them and the European institutions.

8.4 COSAC welcomes the adoption of European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2014-2015 by the Education Council; it is of the view that policy-making should take into account young people's conditions and needs. To this end, it encourages enhancement of a structured cross-sectoral cooperation in youth policy, further evolution of social dialogue and increased active participation of young people to the development and implementation of policies affecting them. COSAC emphasises the importance of ensuring youth policy input into the European Semester and into Europe 2020 Strategy.

8.5 COSAC acknowledges the significance of entrepreneurship for the EU economy, in particular in Small and Medium Sized enterprises (SMEs) as a source of economic growth and job creation. In this regard, it encourages the promotion of policies that facilitate business start-ups, especially in emerging and cutting – edge technologies and young entrepreneurs in accessing finance and support services and strongly supports the development of entrepreneurial education and culture (i.e. through traineeships, exchange programmes, information and support services) to facilitate the effective integration of young people into the labour market.

8.6 COSAC draws attention to the worrisome trend of high unemployment rate of young adults, aged 25 – 34. COSAC acknowledges that young adults should benefit from youth labour market programmes or retraining to improve their skills and employment prospects. Therefore it calls on the Commission to take up concrete and imminent initiatives in order to facilitate such actions and introduce specific measures for this age group.

9. The female capital against the backdrop of the economic and financial crisis

9.1 In the follow – up of the work of the Women's Forum held under the Lithuanian Presidency, COSAC notes with great concern that the austerity policies to address the financial crisis are resulting in severe reductions in social services and job security. COSAC draws attention to the fact that the impact of such policies on women's economic independence as well as on their working and living conditions, is negatively affecting the balance of work and family life, while undermining, at the same time, their equal opportunities in the labour market.

9.2 COSAC underlines that the current economic and financial crisis, which has fuelled a social crisis, should not jeopardise progress achieved in the promotion of gender equality, reproductive health and rights.

9.3 COSAC notes that, although the Strategy for equality between men and women 2010-2015 has been introduced as the main tool to support gender equality in the implementation of the EU2020 strategy, the share of the burden shouldered by women has in fact become heavier.

9.4 COSAC deplores the fact that gender mainstreaming has an insufficient or non-existent profile in the EU2020 agenda and the European Semester; it therefore deems necessary that gender perspective is incorporated in the elaboration of the EU 2020 targets, in particular those related to employment, Research and Development, energy, education and poverty and becomes a reality.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dominic Hannigan', followed by a horizontal line.

Dominic Hannigan T.D.
Chairman

8th July 2014

ANNEX 1

Record of Side Meeting at COSAC – Consideration of Draft Correspondence to EU Commission President

The Chairman Deputy Hannigan attended a side-meeting on the margins of COSAC to discuss the draft letter circulated in advance by the Danish delegation of the conference requesting the establishment by the incoming European Commission President of a Working Group on National Parliaments. This correspondence was considered by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 27 May 2014.

Representatives from the UK House of Lords, NL Tweede Kamer, Danish Folketing, Swedish Riksdag, Houses of the Oireachtas attended the side meeting.

The following issues were discussed and clarified:

1. The proposed Working Group would be open to all Member States and the EU Commission. Denmark expressed the view that it could also be opened to the European Parliament and European Council.
2. The objective of the proposed Working Group (WG) would be to improve national parliament input to EU decision-making through political dialogue within the context of the current Treaty arrangements. UK (Boswell) suggested (undisputed) it would look at National Parliaments concerns; seek a perspective from the EU Commission on improving political dialogue; the use of early interventions i.e. the green card; input into the EU Commission Work Programme etc. He stated that this will require a change of attitude and willingness by the EU Commission to improve the use of existing provisions.
3. The consensus view is that the objective of the WG can be achieved by substantially improving the political dialogue process.
4. The timing of this initiative coincides with the appointment of a new European Commission later in 2014 and could be used at the confirmation hearings to seek assurances from Commissioner candidates. Netherlands suggested that Member States might brief their MEPs on the issues.
5. It was suggested that a small group of Member States (a cluster group) attending this meeting would drive the process on behalf of all interested parties in the short-term, until most if not all other Member States joined it.
6. Meetings can initially be conducted by video-conference in the core group set-up phase.
7. The Dutch Parliament suggested it host a meeting of the working group in the Autumn 2014.
8. By the end of COSAC that date (15 June) it was hoped to extend the list of signatories to the Danish letter and to maintain this momentum in order to achieve its objective in as short a time period as possible, i.e. within a month.