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**Joint Committee on European Union Affairs**

**How can we better co-operate as national Parliaments?**

**Informal meeting hosted by the Tweede Kamer**

**Brussels, 19th January 2015**

**Report of the Delegation**

# Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

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### How can we better co-operate as national Parliaments?

#### Informal meeting hosted by the Tweede Kamer

Brussels, 19th January 2015

1. During the LII COSAC Plenary meeting in Rome in December 2014, a debate on the role of national Parliaments was held. Following this debate, Mr Rene Leegte, member of the European Affairs Committee, Tweede Kamer, indicated his intention to invite the other national Parliaments to attend a meeting in Brussels to explore the topic in more detail.
2. The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was represented by Deputy Dominic Hannigan, Chairman and accompanied by Fiona Cashin, Policy Advisor and Mr. Derek Dignam Oireachtas Permanent Rep., Brussels.
3. The meeting was attended by members from 14 national Parliaments. Representation from Vice President Timmermans cabinet, the European Parliament and the European Commission were also present.
4. In an effort to discuss the role of national Parliaments in more depth, the question of, 'How can we better co-operate as national parliaments?' was selected for discussion with specific topics on the agenda such as **'the green card'** and **'the Commission's Work Programme'**.
5. The agenda for the meeting included possible next steps towards establishing a 'green card' for national Parliaments, on the basis of a discussion paper prepared by the UK House of Lords.
6. Mr Rene Leegte, member of the European Affairs Committee, Tweede Kamer, opened the meeting with an introduction on the structure of the meeting.
7. There was an exchange of views. For Ireland, Deputy Dominic Hannigan, Chairman made the following points -
  - Regarding the Commission Work Programme, the timing of the initiative and selection of priorities would be important with any proposed 'letter of intent' being also sent to the speakers of all national Parliaments. This should be used to generate momentum. The Chairman also spoke about the importance of more formal co-ordination and suggested the establishment of a national Parliament secretariat which potentially could emerge from the current COSAC secretariat.

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- Regarding the Green card initiative, the Chairman welcomed the paper as produced by the UK House of Lords which addresses the need for balance without being anti-European Parliament or Commission.
  - In relation to the name of the initiative and to avoid any Treaty or procedural issues, the Chairman proposed that it could be called 'Enhanced Political Dialogue' a term would be understood and could be accepted under current dialogue arrangements.
8. The Danish Parliament representative proposed to proceed to a trial with the green card initiative, as there was nothing in the Treaty to prevent this. It was proposed that a specific non-controversial EU legislative proposal be selected for this purpose which would allow national Parliaments to gauge EU Commission reaction to the green card initiative, potentially around the issue of a European Business Forum.

### **Conclusions -**

9. Following the exchange of views, conclusions of the debate were circulated and agreed. The conclusions set out the proposed approach to the Yellow card and Commission Work programme 2015.
10. **Yellow card** – interested national Parliaments will form a small working group to examine how other improvements to the yellow card process, including extending the 8 week period and scope of the procedure, could look and present this to the plenary COSAC in Riga.
11. **The Commission Work Programme 2015** – as concluded during the plenary COSAC in Rome in December 2014, all national Parliaments are asked to prioritise proposals selected from the Commission's Annual Work Programme 2015. Parliaments will be requested to make these lists available to each other using the network of parliamentary representatives, IPEX and COSAC. During the annual January chairpersons COSAC, a provisional list giving an overview of all priorities can be shared.
12. The Tweede Kamer will propose a tentative format for this list, to be discussed and concluded at chairpersons COSAC Riga. In this regard and in a follow up letter the Chairman noted that it was important to have a list but that energy should not be wasted on getting a range of national parliaments to select particular priorities.
13. A final comprehensive overview will be sent to the European Commission and to the European Parliament, ideally before April 1<sup>st</sup>.
14. During a follow up session, this joint list with priorities can be discussed in more detail, as well as a possible follow up.

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15. Anytime a parliament wants to take up a proposal as a frontrunner or champion, others can 'bandwagon' and form a working coalition.
16. During the year, if a group of parliaments wants to enhance their cooperation, for example on a yellow card or Commission Work Programme priority, it is important that a quick and effective exchange of views can be reached between the Parliaments involved.

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

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Dominic Hannigan T.D.

Chairman

16 December 2015