



CORTES GENERALES



INFORME RELATIVO A LA LVI SESIÓN PLENARIA DE LA COSAC CELEBRADA EN BRATISLAVA (ESLOVAQUIA) DEL 11 AL 13 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2016.

En el marco de la dimensión parlamentaria de la Presidencia eslovaca del Consejo de la Unión Europea, el Parlamento eslovaco organizó en Bratislava, del 11 al 13 de noviembre de 2016, la LVI sesión plenaria de la COSAC, con el orden del día y la relación de asistentes que se acompañan como **documentos 1 y 2**. En representación de las Cortes Generales, asistió a esta reunión una delegación compuesta por los siguientes parlamentarios:

- Excm.a. Sra. D^a María de la Concepción de Santa Ana Fernández. Diputada. GP Popular.
- Excmo. Sr. D. José Ignacio Sánchez Amor. Diputado. GP Socialista.
- Excm.a. Sra. D. ^a Idoia Villanueva Ruiz. Senadora. GP Unidos Podemos-En Comú Podem-En Marea.
- Excm.a. Sra. D. ^a Laura Castel Fort. Senadora. GP Esquerra Republicana.
- Excmo. Sr. D. Jokin Bildarratz Sorron. Senador. GP Vasco (EAJ-PNV).

Acompañaron a la delegación D. Manuel Delgado-Iribarren, Letrado de la Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea, D^a Carmen Sánchez-Abarca, Letrada de las Cortes Generales ante la Unión Europea, y D^a Almudena López Garrido, Administrativa de la Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales.

Lunes 14 de noviembre de 2016

Sesión de apertura de la LVI COSAC

La reunión, presidida por el Sr. **BLAHA**, **Presidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Europeos del Parlamento eslovaco**, comenzó con sus comentarios introductorios, para a continuación proceder a la adopción del orden del día de la LVI COSAC. El Sr. **BLAHA** informó de las cuestiones procedimentales, en concreto se dio cuenta de los resultados de la reunión de la troika presidencial que tuvo lugar el domingo 13 de noviembre y se anunciaron las cartas recibidas por la Presidencia. Esta sesión de apertura finalizó con la presentación del 26 informe semestral de la COSAC por parte



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del miembro permanente de la secretaría de la COSAC, Sra. FRYDA (véase en documento 3).

Sesión 1. Estado de Presidencia eslovaca del Consejo de la Unión Europea

El orador principal en esta sesión fue el **Primer Ministro eslovaco, Sr. FICO**, quien expuso los avances logrados por la Presidencia eslovaca a la que consideró como una Presidencia muy exitosa. Se refirió a las prioridades esenciales: la necesidad de reforzar la Unión Económica basada en la mejora de la Unión Monetaria y Bancaria; el Mercado Único Digital y la Unión Energética; Asilo y Política de inmigración. Se refirió también al Paquete Tributario, la creación de un Ministerio Público Europeo, el Acuerdo Climático de París y la ampliación de otras políticas europeas.

Entre los dieciséis intervinientes en el debate, el **Sr. SANCHEZ AMOR** consideró interesante la presentación del Primer Ministro por lo que ha dicho y lo que ha ignorado. En relación con el Brexit, recordó que desde el punto de vista de los Parlamentos nacionales, el Brexit se inició para devolver al Parlamento de Reino Unido una parte de la soberanía que había perdido, D. DAVIS anunció que el proceso de negociación sería opaco para el propio Parlamento, han tenido que ser los jueces los que lo han devuelto al Parlamento. La negociación ya ha comenzado de la peor manera, estableciendo negociaciones bilaterales con los Gobiernos para tener una posición en el Consejo que le permita forzar la mano de la Comisión europea. Las primeras visitas de la PM May fueron Berlín, Holanda, Dinamarca y España, en todas ellas trató de ganar posiciones en esa negociación. Cada país tiene sus intereses, que para Irlanda es la frontera, para España, Gibraltar, para Malta, los títulos universitarios... La cuestión es que la posición del Consejo, que es quien realmente asumirá esta negociación, querrá ser la suma de las posiciones de los Estados miembros.

El Primer Ministro tampoco había hablado de Turquía, el acuerdo sobre inmigrantes, y la situación de los derechos humanos provoca un alejamiento acelerado de Turquía de su camino hacia la Unión Europea, por lo que el Sr. SÁNCHEZ AMOR pidió precisiones.



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Sesión 2. Fortalecimiento de la función de los Parlamentos nacionales en la Unión Europea

Como principales oradores intervinieron el **Sr. TIMMERMANS, Vicepresidente Primero de la Comisión Europea**; la **Sra. BIRCHALL, Presidenta de la Comisión de Asuntos Europeos de la Cámara de Diputados Rumana**; el **Sr. KRICHBAUM, Presidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Europeos del Bundestag alemán**; actuando como moderador el **Sr. KLUS, Vicepresidente de la Comisión de Asuntos Europeos del Parlamento Eslovaco**.

El **Sr. TIMMERMANS** se refirió a la complicada situación que estaba viviendo la Unión Europea y la necesidad de que ésta se adapte a los cambios que se están produciendo. Subrayó que la Comisión Europea en su actual mandato se ha tomado con mucha seriedad el objetivo de escuchar y visitar los Parlamentos nacionales, y en tal sentido recordó la extensa respuesta que dio a la última “tarjeta amarilla” planteada por los Parlamentos nacionales. Concluyó haciendo mención a las nuevas herramientas para mejorar el procedimiento legislativo y escuchar a los diferentes grupos de intereses, de manera que se pueda hacer llegar mejor la legislación europea a los ciudadanos, sin olvidar que la esencia de la democracia reside en el respeto a las minorías y a la diversidad.

La **Sra. BIRCHALL** manifestó que, a su juicio, la utilización de una “tarjeta roja” no produciría ninguna diferencia en la función de los Parlamentos nacionales, y lo primordial es que la Comisión europea haga un esfuerzo por escuchar y explicar sus posiciones a los Parlamentos nacionales.

El **Sr. KRICHBAUM** apuntó las diferencias en el tratamiento de los asuntos europeos por los respectivos Parlamentos nacionales y planteó la cuestión de si la COSAC pudiera utilizarse como plataforma para su difusión; sugirió una mayor flexibilidad en la introducción de asuntos en el orden del día de esta Conferencia, dentro de su función de fórum de debate libre. Concluyó apuntando la necesidad de que los Parlamentos nacionales mantengan una relación de cooperación más estrecha con el Parlamento Europeo, en particular en asuntos como el procedimiento de control de EUROPOL.

Seguidamente intervinieron 37 oradores. Entre ellos cabe destacar que el **Sr. BILDARRATZ** señaló que la clave la había dado el Primer Ministro eslovaco, Sr. FICO, cuando preguntó si la Unión Europea está respondiendo a los problemas de la ciudadanía, la participación de los Parlamentos nacionales, instituciones más cercanas, mejore en calidad y cantidad sus iniciativas. Debería pasarse de cuidar los intereses de



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los Estados a cuidar los intereses de los ciudadanos, la crisis profunda debe ser resuelta con una transformación profunda. Si la Unión Europea no se transforma a tiempo, alguien lo hará en su lugar, dijo, en alusión a los populismos. Preguntó si la Unión Europea tiene una estrategia clara para que a ciudadanía confíe más en sus acciones, y preguntó a la Presidencia maltesa si van a tomar acciones en este sentido.

La **Sra. HÜBNER, Diputada en el Parlamento Europeo**, señaló en su intervención que los Parlamentos nacionales están más cerca de los ciudadanos, pueden por ello contribuir a acercar la Unión Europea a los ciudadanos. Alabó el diálogo conjunto que ha permitido que el Acuerdo comercial entre la UE y Canadá fuera finalmente firmado. Mencionó la importancia de los Parlamentos nacionales para aumentar la legitimidad de los esfuerzos de la Unión Europea.

El **Sr. SÁNCHEZ AMOR** comenzó su intervención en esta sesión mostrando la solidaridad de los europeos con los europeístas británicos, tras la intervención de LORD BOSWELL. Señaló que si la subsidiariedad es usada para analizar el fondo de un proyecto, se deslegitima el procedimiento, deberían ser los Gobiernos en el Consejo quienes cuestionaran el fondo de la iniciativa. Los Parlamentos nacionales no mantienen una reserva de soberanía, la que fue entregada por los Gobiernos a la Unión Europea.

El **Sr. TIMMERMANS** respondió al **Sr. CASH, Diputado de la Cámara de los Comunes**, que todas las instituciones tienen que amoldarse al mundo que les rodea, de cara a las expectativas de los ciudadanos. En el Brexit, los que votaron en contra, una minoría considerable, continúa viviendo en el Reino Unido. Debe existir un equilibrio entre todos los elementos de la Unión Europea, rechazó la Unión Europea a la carta que piden algunos Estados miembros, interesados en el mercado interior y los fondos estructurales, no en el resto de políticas europeas.

Sesión 3. El Compromiso Transatlántico de Comercio e Inversión (TTIP): un acuerdo comercial entre la Unión Europea y los Estados Unidos

Actuaron como oradores principales la **Sra. GEORGE, Politóloga**; el **Sr. HOUBEN, Adjunto al Negociador-Jefe del TTIP y alto cargo de la Comisión Europea**; la **Sra. HÜBNER, Presidenta de la Comisión de Asuntos Constitucionales del Parlamento Europeo**; y la **Sra. TURAN, Senadora belga**; moderados por la **Sra. SCHMÖGNEROVA, antigua Ministra de Finanzas del Gobierno Eslovaco**.



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El Sr. HOUBEN, **Negociador jefe adjunto del TTIP en la Comisión europea**, reemplazó al Sr. GARCÍA BERCERO, Negociador en jefe de la Comisión europea para el TTIP quien finalmente no asistió a la COSAC; y en su nombre expuso el avance de las negociaciones. Preciso así mismo que el TJUE precisó el ámbito de la competencia sobre comercio de la Comisión europea, que está supervisada por el Consejo y los Estados miembros, en la Comisión europea se reconoce que como la política de comercio evoluciona, es más normativa ahora, e incluye el papel de la sociedad, ello conlleva una mayor necesidad de involucración de los Parlamentos nacionales, por lo que consideró que en Europa y los EEUU no se ha conseguido explicar bien los beneficios que implican los tratados internacionales de comercio. Este error debería corregirse rápidamente, para permitir que este debate tuviera lugar de manera abierta y transparente. Concluyó señalando, que tras las elecciones en EEUU; el resultado supone un punto de inflexión, y probablemente tiene que ver con el hecho de que en los últimos 20 años se han reducido muy poco las desigualdades entre los países, y se puede ver en la legislatura del Presidente electo de EEUU, Sr. TRUMP, cuya manera de proceder a partir de enero será muy distinta, señaló, a las habituales hasta ahora. Se espera una narrativa nueva sobre el aprovechamiento de la globalización y el traslado del consenso de Bruselas hacia un consenso de Europa sobre el tipo de tratados que se acuerden. El nombramiento de los 4.000 nuevos funcionarios en la administración de EEUU podría alargarse hasta el verano, por lo que se producirá una pausa en las negociaciones del TTIP que permitirán ver en qué sentido se posiciona la administración de EEUU.

A continuación, la Sra. GEORGE, **polítolega y socióloga, activista y escritora especializada en justicia global social, Presidenta del Instituto Transnacional**, criticó la política de comunicación sobre las negociaciones del TTIP, que han sido conocidas en su opinión en su mayor parte gracias a filtraciones. Señaló que el TTIP no trata sólo de comercio, también de aranceles, que serían ya bajos, y podrían suponer una pérdida de 4 o 5 millones de pequeños agricultores europeos incapaces de competir con las grandes superficies cultivadas de EEUU. Ello implicaría sobre todo, una pérdida de los agricultores orgánicos europeos. Los EEUU rechazan así mismo las denominaciones de origen, que en gran parte desaparecerían en la Unión Europea.

En cuanto a los derechos de los trabajadores, no hay un lenguaje vinculante sobre esta cuestión, el TTIP es una amenaza a la democracia y al sistema parlamentario y judicial, no querría que los legisladores perdieran la posibilidad de legislar. Todo lo logrado por Europa en estos años podría perderse bajo el peso de la influencia de las multinacionales más grandes. Si se aprueba el TTIP, aumentaría el calentamiento global, porque permitiría a las compañías de carbón demandar al Gobierno. Por todos estos puntos, 3,5



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millones de ciudadanos se han organizado y han pedido a la Comisión europea que ponga fin las negociaciones, pero la Comisión europea lo rechazó, por lo que al día siguiente decidieron organizar un referéndum sobre la iniciativa, siguiendo las normas de la Comisión europea. Extendió todo lo dicho al Acuerdo comercial entre la UE y Canadá.

El debate subsiguiente fue moderado por la **Sra. SCHÖMGNEROVA**, antigua ministra de finanzas eslovaca. La **Sra. HÜBNER** señaló que debería mostrarse a los ciudadanos que la globalización supondrá beneficios para la Unión Europea, algo que no se había hecho correctamente. La **Sra. TURAN**, Senadora belga y miembro del Parlamento flamenco, señaló que el TTIP no está muerto, si bien la sociedad civil no admite que una decisión de tal relevancia sea adoptada sin supervisión democrática. El comercio trajo prosperidad a Europa tras la II Guerra Mundial, pero existen graves problemas en relación con la globalización impulsada por las grandes multinacionales. Por ello, la política comercial europea debe contar con la participación de los parlamentarios nacionales, defendiendo los intereses de nuestros ciudadanos.

Tomaron parte en el debate 33 parlamentarios. Entre las intervenciones, la **Sra. DE SANTA ANA**, tras citar al Presidente de la Comisión europea, Sr. JUNCKER, quien definió el TTIP como la negociación comercial más ambiciosa iniciada por la Comisión europea; señaló que el nuevo escenario político en EEUU debe ser abordado, sin olvidar el calendario electoral 2017 en Europa, con elecciones en Francia y Alemania, que puede influir en las negociaciones. Pese a las distintas sensibilidades presentes en relación con el TTIP en el Parlamento español, señaló que el Gobierno de España es favorable a un acuerdo ambicioso y equilibrado, que garantice la protección a indicaciones geográficas, que abra a nuestros mercados de servicios financieros. Fundamental que sea ambicioso y equilibrado, y que permita una cooperación eficaz en el ámbito regulatorio. El Gobierno español apoya los tres pilares básicos estrategia negociadora de la Comisión europea: acceso al mercado, coherencia reglamentaria y reglas globales. Estamos convencidos, señaló, de que el TTIP beneficiará el crecimiento económico de España y de Europa en su conjunto mediante un incremento de las exportaciones, del consumo privado y de la creación de empleo.

El **Sr. HOUBEN** invitó a cualquiera de los oradores a señalar en qué punto de las negociaciones se han reducido los estándares de protección por parte de la Unión Europea frente a EEUU. Criticó la doble posición de quienes rechazan el TTIP pero quieren mejorar los estándares en el mercado de la Unión Europea y EEUU.



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La **Sra. HÜBNER** señaló que el Acuerdo comercial entre la UE y Canadá respeta todas las normas de la calidad alimenticia, tenemos más de 50 indicaciones geográficas en la Unión Europea. En cuanto a la carne con hormonas, cada vez más se piensa en el mercado americano, en Canadá cada vez hay más demanda de productos procesados. Los políticos deberían persuadir a los ciudadanos, nadie quiere cerrar Europa al comercio, los Estados miembros deben cerrar acuerdos bilaterales, sin dejar todo el peso a la Comisión europea.

El **Sr. GRANT, Diputado de la Cámara de los Comunes**, se interesó por cómo afectará el TTIP la vida de los ciudadanos. Si continuamos considerando el sí de las personas como algo automático, perderemos su confianza.

La **Sra. VILLANUEVA** señaló que el TTIP podría ser un buen ejemplo de por qué crece la desafección por el proyecto europeo. La información sobre las negociaciones de este Tratado, señaló, se han obtenido sólo por filtraciones. El TTIP prevé excepciones por listas negativas, los errores siempre a favor de ser incluidos, mientras que sus mecanismos de regulación se alejan de los Parlamentos y de los procedimientos democráticos para reducir los estándares protectores al mínimo común. Los derechos de los inversores extranjeros están protegidos por tribunales extranjeros, por encima de la ciudadanía. Concluyó afirmando que, dado que el 98% de las PYMEs que exportan a EEUU son micro pymes, la reducción de los aranceles no contribuiría a aumentar las exportaciones europeas.

Reunión de Presidentes de la COSAC

Debate sobre el borrador de Contribución de la LVI COSAC

En el debate sobre el borrador de Contribución de la LVI COSAC se debatieron las enmiendas presentadas a dicho texto, entre las cuales se encontraron dos enmiendas apoyadas por la delegación de las Cortes Generales al punto 3.3.a sobre las interconexiones y la Declaración anexa a la Contribución sobre la situación política en Turquía.

Tras un largo debate moderado por el **Sr. BLAHA**, al que asistió la **Sra. DE SANTA ANA** en calidad de **jefa de la delegación de las Cortes Generales**, las enmiendas sobre las que no fue posible lograr un consenso fueron sometidas a votación electrónica, siendo finalmente aprobada la Contribución de la LVI COSAC. Cabe destacar que al final del debate, el **Sr. KRICHBAUM**, jefe de la delegación del Bundestag alemán,



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mostró su disconformidad con el procedimiento aplicado para el debate y votación de las enmiendas al borrador de Contribución, y anunció por ello su voto en contra en la sesión plenaria del día siguiente.

La delegación española no pudo asistir a la sesión 4 dedicada a la Unión Energética y a la sesión 5 sobre seguridad en las fronteras exteriores de la Unión Europea, ni tampoco a la aprobación final de la Contribución de la COSAC, por tener que regresar a España para asistir la sesión parlamentaria en las Cámaras. El debate sobre estos puntos puede verse en el resumen elaborado por el Secretariado de la COSAC que se acompaña como **documento 4**.

Igualmente la Contribución adoptada se incluye como **documento 5**.

Por otra parte el **Presidente BLAHA** informó que determinadas delegaciones de los Parlamentos nacionales, entre ellas la de las Cortes Generales, habían aprobado dos declaraciones, una sobre los recientes terremotos ocurridos en Italia y otra sobre la situación en Turquía, abriendo a las demás delegaciones la posibilidad de su firma. Dichas declaraciones se acompañan como **documento 6**.

Asimismo se anunció que la próxima reunión de Presidentes de la COSAC tendrá lugar en Malta los días 22 y 23 de junio de 2017, y la LVII COSAC los días 28 a 30 de mayo de 2017.

El resto de la documentación puede consultarse en www.cosac.eu.

Manuel Delgado-Iribarren García-Campero
Letrado de las Cortes Generales
Letrado de la Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea

Carmen Sánchez-Abarca Gornals
Letrada de las Cortes Generales
ante la Unión Europea



Draft as of 29. 09. 2016

PLENARY MEETING OF THE LVI COSAC

13 – 15 November 2016, Bratislava

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Sunday, 13 November 2016

14:00 – 19:00 Arrival of delegations and registration for the meeting at the hotels

Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

16:30 Departure from the hotels to the Bratislava Castle

17:00 – 18:30 Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

Venue: Bratislava Castle, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka 1, Bratislava

18:30 Departure from the hotels to the Grand Hotel River Park

19:00 **Official dinner** hosted by Mr **Andrej DANKO**, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic *(tbc)*

Venue: Grand Hotel River Park, Dvořákovo nábrežie 6, Bratislava

21:30 Return to the hotels

Monday, 14 November 2016

07:30 Departure from the hotels to the National Council of the Slovak Republic for the meetings of political groups

Meetings of political groups

08:00 – 09:00 Meetings of political groups

Venue: National Council of the Slovak Republic, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka 1, Bratislava *(tbc)*

08:30

Departure from the hotels to the Bratislava Castle (other participants)

Registration (for those not yet registered)

09:00 – 9:30

Opening session of the LVI COSAC

Welcome address by Mr Andrej DANKO,
Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic *(tbc)*

Introductory remarks by Mr Ľuboš BLAHA,
Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the National Council
of the Slovak Republic

Adoption of the agenda for the Plenary Meeting of the LVI COSAC

Procedural issues of the Plenary Meeting of the LVI COSAC

- Information on the results of the Presidential Troika of COSAC
- Letters received by the Presidency

Presentation of the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC

by Ms Christiana FRYDA,
Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

Debate

09:30 – 11:00

Session 1: State of Play of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Keynote speaker:

Mr Robert FICO,
Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic *(tbc)*

Debate

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee break

11:30 – 13:15

Session 2: Strengthening the role of national parliaments in the EU

Keynote speaker:

Mr Frans TIMMERMANS,
First Vice-President, European Commission

Panelists:

Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on
Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament



Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Debate

13:15 – 13:30

Family photo

13:30 – 15:00

Lunch

Venue: Bratislava Castle, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka 1,
Bratislava

15:00 – 16:45

Session 3:

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): a trade agreement between the European Union and the United States (and its challenges, opportunities and risks)

Keynote speakers:

Ms **Susan GEORGE, PhD.**, political and social scientist, activist and writer on global social justice; President of the Transnational Institute

Mr **Ignacio Garcia BERCERO**, EU Chief Negotiator of TTIP; Director, DG Trade of the European Commission

Panelists:

Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Debate

16:45

Return to the hotels

COSAC Chairpersons meeting

17:00 – 18:00

Debate on the Draft Contribution of the LVI COSAC

Venue: Bratislava Castle, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka 1,
Bratislava

18:00

Return to the hotels

19:30

Departure from the hotels to the Bratislava Castle

20:00

Official dinner hosted by Mr **Andrej DANKO**, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (tbc)

Venue: Bratislava Castle, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka 1,
Bratislava

22:30

Return to the hotels

Tuesday, 15 November 2016

07:30 Departure from the hotels to the Bratislava Castle

08:00 – 09:45 **Session 4:**
2016: Energy Union's „year of delivery”

Keynote speaker:

Mr **Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ**, Vice-President of the European
Commission for Energy Union

Panelists:

Ms **Danielle AUROI**, Chair of the European Affairs Committee,
National Assembly of the French Republic

Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Debate

09:45 – 10:15 Coffee break

10:15 – 12:00 **Session 5:**
**Securing the external borders of the EU in the context of
irregular migration**

Keynote speakers:

Mr **Robert KALIŇÁK**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister
of Interior of the Slovak Republic *(tbc)*

Mr **Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS**, European Commissioner
for Migration and Home Affairs *(tbc)*

Mr **Fabrice LEGGERI**, European Border and Coast Guard
Agency Executive Director

Panelists:

Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Member of a national parliament (tbc)

Debate

12:00 – 12:30 **Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions
of the LVI COSAC**

12:30 – 14:00 **Lunch**

Venue: Bratislava Castle, Námestie Alexandra Dubčeka 1,
Bratislava

14:00 **Return to the hotels by bus**
Departures of delegations



**Plenary Meeting of the LVI COSAC
13 – 15 November 2016
Bratislava
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**Réunion plénière de la LVI COSAC
13 – 15 novembre 2016
Bratislava
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS**

MEMBER STATES – ÉTATS MEMBRES

AUSTRIA – AUTRICHE - ÖSTERREICH

National Council / Conseil national / Nationalrat

Mr./M. Karlheinz KOPF	Head of delegation Second President of the National Council, Chair of the Standing Subcommittee on European Union Affairs
Mr./M. Hannes WENINGER	Vice-Chair of the Standing Subcommittee on European Union Affairs
Mr./M. Werner KOGLER	Vice-Chair of the Standing Subcommittee on European Union Affairs
Mr./M. Johannes HÜBNER	Member of the Standing Subcommittee on European Union Affairs
Ms./Mme Gerda ZWENG	Advisor

Federal Council / Conseil fédéral / Bundesrat

Mr./M. Stefan SCHENNACH	Vice-Chair of the European Union Committee
Mr./M. Martin PREINER	Member of the European Union Committee
Mr./M. Gerhard KOLLER	Head of the European Relations Division
Mr./M. Christian HÜTTERER	Permanent Representative of the Austrian Parliament to the EU

BELGIUM – BELGIQUE – BELGIË

House of Representatives / Chambre des représentants / Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers

Mr./M. Peter LUYKX	Head of delegation Member of the Advisory Committee on European Affairs
Mr./M. Veli YÜKSEL	Member of the Advisory Committee on European Affairs
Mr./M. Carlos DEMEYERE	Principal Advisor



Senate / Sénat / Senaat

Mr./M. Philippe MAHOUX

Head of delegation

Chair of the Federal Advisory Committee on
European Affairs

Ms./Mme Güler TURAN

Member of the Federal Advisory Committee
on European Affairs

Mr./M. Pol VAN DEN DRIESSE

Member of the Federal Advisory Committee on
European Affairs

Mr./M. Tim DE BOND

Principal Advisor on EU Affairs

BULGARIA – BULGARIE - БЪЛГАРИЯ

National Assembly / Assemblée nationale / Narodno sabranie

Mr./M. Svetlen TANCHEV

Head of delegation

Chair of the Committee on European Affairs and
Oversight of the European Funds

Mr./M. Ivan IVANOV

Deputy Chair of the Committee on European
Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds

Mr./M. Ayhan ETEM

Member of the Committee on European Affairs
and Oversight of the European Funds

Ms./Mme Lidiya SIMOVA

Chief Expert at the Committee on European
Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds

CROATIA – CROATIE – HRVATSKA

Parliament / Parlement / Hrvatski sabor

Mr./M. Domagoj Ivan MILOŠEVIĆ

Head of delegation

Chair of the European Affairs Committee

Mr./M. Tomislav SAUCHA

Vice Chair of the European Affairs Committee

Ms./Mme Jelena ŠPILJAK

Secretary of the European Affairs Committee

CYPRUS – CHYPRE – ΚΥΠΡΟΣ

**House of Representatives / Chambre des représentants / Vouli ton
Antiprosopon**

Mr./M. Yiorgos LILLIKAS	Head of delegation Chair of the House Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs
Mr./M. Georgios KAROULLAS	Member of Parliament
Mr./M. Stefanos STEFANOU	Member of Parliament
Mr./M. Angelos VOTSIS	Member of the House Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs
Mr./M. Konstantinos EFSTATHIOU	Member of the House Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs
Ms./Mme Hara PARLA	Senior International Relations Officer
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18 October 2016

**Twenty-sixth Bi-annual Report:
Developments in European Union
Procedures and Practices
Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny**

Prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to:

**LVI Conference of Parliamentary Committees
for Union Affairs of Parliaments
of the European Union**

13-15 November 2016
Bratislava

**Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs
of Parliaments of the European Union**

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Background

This is the Twenty-sixth Bi-annual Report from the COSAC Secretariat.

COSAC Bi-annual Reports

The XXX COSAC decided that the COSAC Secretariat should produce factual Bi-annual Reports, to be published ahead of each ordinary meeting of the Conference. The purpose of the Reports is to give an overview of the developments in procedures and practices in the European Union that are relevant to parliamentary scrutiny.

All the Bi-annual Reports are available on the COSAC website at:
<http://www.cosac.eu/documents/bi-annual-reports-of-cosac/>

The three chapters of this Bi-annual Report are based on information provided by the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States and the European Parliament. The deadline for submitting replies to the questionnaire for the 26th Bi-annual Report was 9 September 2016.

The outline of this Report was adopted by the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, held on 11 July 2016 in Bratislava.

As a general rule, the Report does not specify all Parliaments or Chambers of which the case is relevant for each point. Instead, illustrative examples are used.

Complete replies, received from 41 out of 41 national Parliaments/Chambers of 28 Member States and the European Parliament, can be found in the Annex on the COSAC website.

Note on Numbers

Of the 28 Member States of the European Union, 15 have a unicameral Parliament and 13 have a bicameral Parliament. Due to this combination of unicameral and bicameral systems, there are 41 national parliamentary Chambers in the 28 Member States of the European Union.

Although they have bicameral systems, the national Parliaments of Austria, Ireland and Spain each submitted a single set of replies to the questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 1: THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (TTIP) BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES: PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

The first chapter of the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC is dedicated to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) under negotiation between the EU and the US and the parliamentary scrutiny of the negotiations. It concentrates mainly on the flow and quality of information provided to the Parliaments, on how these engage in public debates on the subject and on the specific issue of the reading rooms for access to the consolidated texts of the TTIP negotiations. The different questions aim at assessing the concrete capacities of the national Parliaments to exert a public oversight of the ongoing process of negotiations.

Concerning the flow of information from the European Commission, a majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers considered that the transparency of the negotiation process had somewhat improved. Almost a third of the responding Parliaments/Chambers considered the amount and quality of information received from the European Commission sufficient, with slightly over a third of respondents not having any opinion on the matter.

Concerning who the Parliaments/Chambers invited more often to be informed about the negotiation process, over a third of the respondents indicated that representatives of their respective governments were regularly invited, while only few of the respondents were regularly inviting the European Commission. The latter on the other hand had been occasionally invited by a vast majority of respondents, as well as representatives of the European Parliament, NGOs and academics. Several debates had been organised by many of the respondents at plenary, committee level or in different a format like hearings. The scrutiny could also take the format of a fact-finding inquiry. In a few cases, representatives of the US had been invited to meetings of specific committees.

Concerning the engagement of the Parliaments/Chambers in public debates about the negotiations, a very small minority of the respondents had done it regularly or often by means of press releases, media interviews or conferences, while a vast majority either had occasionally or never engaged in such debates. Some of the respondents stressed that individual MPs could, if they wanted, engage in such public debate.

Concerning the instruments to express the positions about the negotiations, the political dialogue and resolutions by the plenary had been chosen by consistent numbers of responding Parliaments/Chambers although not representing a majority of them. Most of the respondents indicated different instruments and actions including statements, opinions, reports, questions, and public hearings.

Created in the vast majority of the Member States whose Parliaments/Chambers responded, and in most cases upon request of the Parliaments/Chambers, such reading rooms were in most cases set up by the governments, and, in a few cases, by the US Embassy.

According to a majority of the respondents, access to the reading rooms was granted to Government officials and to all MPs, and according a minority of the respondents to members of different specific Committees or other officials. The number of MPs who had visited the reading rooms and the frequency of visits varied among the respondents.

A majority of the respondents had no specific opinion about the conditions of access to the reading rooms, while over a third considered them limiting.

Among the limitations, the inability to be accompanied by assistants or parliamentary officials, designated experts and the language barrier were mostly stressed. A few less underlined the inability to use the Internet and the time arrangements.

CHAPTER 2: 2016: ENERGY UNION'S YEAR OF DELIVERY

The second chapter of the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC focusses on the Parliaments'/Chambers' work on and appraisal of the Energy Union by determining which documents the Parliaments/Chambers have discussed and by seeking their opinion on certain elements, dimensions and aspects of the Energy Union.

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they had discussed the respective documents, namely the Proposal for a Regulation concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply; the Proposal for a Decision on establishing an information exchange mechanism with regard to intergovernmental agreements and non-binding instruments between Member States and third countries in the field of energy; and the two Communications on an EU strategy for liquefied natural gas and gas storage; and on heating and cooling, respectively.

In each case, a minority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they had engaged or planned to engage in the political dialogue with the European Commission.

According to the findings of the Report, most Parliaments/Chambers considered the *ex ante* examination of agreements by the Commission very or somewhat contentious. "Solidarity" and "proportionality and subsidiarity issues" were also elements of concern for the majority of Parliaments/Chambers, whereas "definitions" proved to be the element of least concern.

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers had not issued any updated opinion or document on energy security or energy efficiency, nor had they started discussions on the revision of the directives on energy efficiency and on energy performance of buildings.

Asked how effective the current renewable energy Directive had been in improving renewable energy, industrial development and EU competitiveness in the energy sector, a considerable minority thought it was somewhat or significantly effective, whereas a very small minority thought the Directive somewhat ineffective. Half the respondents had no opinion to express.

As regards the question of which elements of the governance of the Energy Union would best ensure that the EU-level targets for renewables (binding at EU level) and energy efficiency (indicative at the EU level) were delivered, Parliaments'/Chambers' opinion varied, though nearly half considered regional cooperation to be very important.

The correct set up of the emissions trading system, solidarity among EU Member States, investments in low-carbon technologies, market regulation rules and monitoring of progress were among the other elements mentioned by Parliaments/Chambers in connection to this question.

When asked to rate the importance of certain elements included in the Member States' national energy and climate plans with respect to renewable energy in achieving the objectives of at least

27% in 2030, a sizeable amount of Parliaments considered two elements to be very important, namely (i) measures to be taken for increasing the flexibility of the energy system with regard to renewable energy production; and (ii) plans for achieving electricity market coupling and integration, regional measures for balancing and reserves and how system adequacy was calculated in the context of renewable energy.

Asked which dimensions of the Energy Union were deemed most important, the majority of Parliaments indicated energy security, solidarity and trust, as well as research, innovation and competitiveness as very important.

Finally, the Report reveals that most of the responding Parliaments had not taken any action to support the idea of closer cooperation among the EU Parliaments/Chambers on any of the five Energy Union dimensions.

CHAPTER 3: IMPROVING THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

The third chapter focusses on how improvements in the context of the Juncker Commission's commitment to "forging a new partnership with national Parliaments" work in practice and Parliaments'/Chambers' evaluation of these. It also presents Parliaments'/Chambers' views on the response time of the European Commission to the reasoned opinions submitted by national Parliaments/Chambers, as well as on the quality and consistency of the Commission's replies. In addition, this chapter presents national Parliaments' ways of communicating their activities related to the European Affairs to their audience, both professional and general public, in an effort to encourage an exchange of practices in this field.

As far as relations to the European Commission were concerned, a majority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated the number of visits of Commissioners to Parliaments/Chambers had significantly, or somewhat, increased within the mandate of the current European Commission. The visits of officials (directors, general directors) of the European Commission had somewhat increased according to a majority of Parliaments/Chambers; an equal number had not observed any change in the number of visits. The number of visits of MPs or officials of Parliament/Chambers to the European Commission evolved less.

On the evolution of the European Commission's responses to the reasoned opinions issued by national Parliaments, the responses concentrated mostly on 'somewhat improved' or 'not changed'. The specificity of the responses, the time taken to respond and targeting concerns were most emphasised as the aspects somewhat improved.

The majority of those responding thought there was room for improvement when communicating and exchanging with the European Commission. Regarding improvement on the side of the European Commission, many Parliaments/Chambers stressed, for example, that the European Commission should pay more attention to the concerns expressed by Parliaments in their respective statements and/or reasoned opinions, or that the Commission's reply was very general. It was further supported that in subsidiarity checks, in particular when the threshold of the "yellow card" procedure was reached, the concerns raised by a significant number of national Parliaments should be analysed from all possible points of view by the European Commission.

On communicating EU affairs, Parliaments were asked which stakeholders should get further involved in communicating the EU affairs in order to increase the awareness of citizens and inform

them better about EU affairs. Most of those responding considered that it was the Parliaments/Chambers themselves who should be more active.

The majority of the respondents expressed their ambition to play a more vocal role in informing their citizens about the EU affairs in general. Out of those, many underlined hindrances/limitations to this function; a majority marked the complexity of the subject and its difficulty in terms of communication in achieving their ambition, half emphasised the lack of attention from journalists/media, while less than half underlined the lack of resources. Very few respondents mentioned the lack of strategy as a limitation.

Almost two thirds of those responding had no special strategy for communicating the EU affairs. The content related to the EU affairs communicated by the respondents was most frequently the discussions in EU Affairs committee meetings, followed by the plenary sessions when a relevant topic was raised. Less, but still more than half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (very) often communicated the opinions within the political dialogue with the European Commission, reasoned opinions and proposed EU legislation. Almost half of the respondents indicated they only occasionally communicated with the public on implemented EU legislation.

More than half of the respondents did not adapt their communication according to the audience; their communication was general and prepared in only one version. One third did adapt their communication according to the audience by preparing more than one version of communication. More than half of the respondents adapted regularly the content when it came to communicating EU affairs, mainly for the public and for media/journalists. Less than half adapted their content for schools and universities and comparable frequency applied to adapting the content for young people.

All of the responding Parliaments/Chambers made use of their own website as the main communication channel for EU affairs. This was closely followed by other channels, i.e. meetings with media/journalists, and print publications; the least commonly used channel of communication was publishing articles on blogs or specialised platforms. Many had already explored the use of social media, though the frequency varied. However, there was a group of respondents who had admitted that they had never used this form of communication.

As far as involvement of members in communicating EU affairs, all but one Parliament/Chamber indicated their members had some kind of involvement. More than half declared that some members were actively engaged, less than one-third stated most of their members of respective committees dealing with EU affairs were actively engaged and only a minority indicated limited involvement of their members in this. On the format of the involvement, the most regularly explored forms were the participation in conferences/fora, followed by TV/radio debates and use of social media. Blogging was the form which had been used only occasionally by less than half of the respondents.

More than three quarters of Parliaments/Chambers declared that they had or planned to have their own Facebook and Twitter accounts, while a minority communicated having established Instagram and LinkedIn profiles. In addition, other media were mentioned, like YouTube channels, Google+ network and picture/photo online repository systems like Flickr and Pinterest, as well as new platforms like Snapchat.

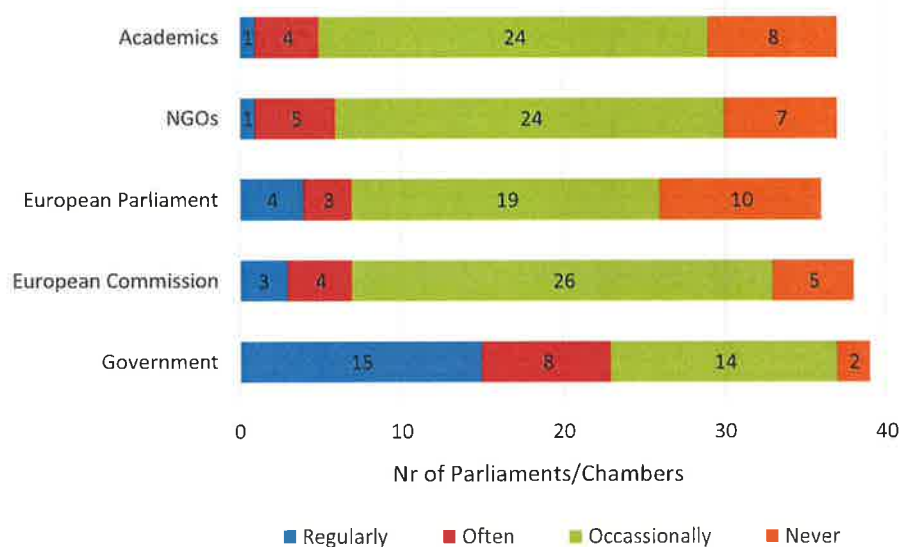
CHAPTER 1: THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (TTIP) BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES: PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Chapter 1 focuses on parliamentary scrutiny of the negotiation process of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the EU and the US. In this context, it explores the issue of transparency in the negotiation process and Parliaments' role within that process by presenting Parliaments' practices as to the scrutiny of TTIP. It also explores the concrete possibilities for Members of Parliament (MPs) and representatives of other institutions and organs to have direct access to the documents on which the negotiations are based.

Section A: TRANSPARENCY OF THE TTIP NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Parliaments/Chambers were asked if and how often they invited members of government, European Commission representatives and/or other specialists to inform MPs about the TTIP negotiation process. The replies showed that a majority of Parliaments/Chambers regularly or often invited members of the Government. A majority of Parliaments/Chambers occasionally invited the European Commission, NGOs and academics. Half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers occasionally invited the European Parliament.

Question: Does your Parliament/Chamber invite members of government, European Commission representatives or other specialists to inform Members of Parliament (MPs) about the TTIP negotiation process?



Parliaments/Chambers indicated they also invited others to inform MPs about the TTIP negotiation process. In a few cases (Czech *Senát*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA)) meetings were held with the participation of the US Trade Representatives and the US ambassador to the EU. The INTA Committee also held meetings with the EU chief negotiator before and after each TTIP negotiation round.

Twelve Parliaments/Chambers¹ provided information on specific hearings/meetings in relation to the TTIP negotiation process for which several other/additional stakeholders were invited. Amongst them was the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, which organised a meeting where amongst others US representatives, the Vice-Prime minister, the coordinator for trade between the EU and the US of the European Commission, representatives of the business community, journalists and diplomats were invited. The Italian *Camera dei deputati* explained that the Committee on Agriculture was conducting a fact-finding inquiry on the impact of TTIP on the Italian agro-food system. During the inquiry, representatives of government, regions and provinces, NGOs, Institute for International Economic Cooperation, agricultural organisations were heard.

The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* mentioned that public discussions were organised with the participation of representatives of the Bulgarian civil society, business, NGOs and academia, as well as of the European Commission.

Specific structures put in place for providing information and discussing the TTIP negotiation process were mentioned by some Parliaments/Chambers. For example, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* set up a special committee to scrutinise the content and procedures of concluding transatlantic trade agreements, and the Latvian *Saeima* established a working group to deal with the issues of TTIP in a detailed manner. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* referred to the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD), which was chaired by the Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly. It is a forum of the representatives of political parties, government, science, economy, churches and civil organisations, which debated the prospective impacts of the TTIP agreement, and adopted a resolution on the negotiations of TTIP in December 2015.

Asked how Parliaments/Chambers engaged in public discourse (the public debate outside Parliaments/Chambers) about TTIP and its negotiation process, a vast majority of them replied they were *never* or only *occasionally* engaged in the public discourse using means and fora like press releases, media interviews, press conferences, universities or conferences. Two Parliaments/Chambers *regularly used* press releases; one mentioned regular use of media interviews and conferences.

Among other means explored by the Parliaments/Chambers when engaging in the public discourse about TTIP and its negotiation process were publishing reports or making presentations available to the public (Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, Romanian *Senat*, European Parliament, UK *House of Lords*).

Seven Parliaments/Chambers² stressed that it was (also) up to individual MPs to participate in different kind of activities in public discourse. The Finnish *Eduskunta* stressed that as a Parliament they did not “engage in public discourse”, but rather organised public hearings and provided necessary support, encouraging its members to get involved in a debate.

On the changes in the transparency of the TTIP negotiation process since its beginning, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers (28 out of 37) evaluated the changes as significantly or somewhat improved. No changes in the process were seen by two Parliaments/Chambers, while seven respondents had no opinion about changes in the transparency of the TTIP negotiation process.

¹ Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, European Parliament -ECON, Austrian *Nationalrat*, Swedish *Riksdag*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Latvian *Saeima*.

² Czech *Senát*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, European Parliament, Swedish *Riksdag*, Danish *Folketing* and Dutch *Tweede Kamer*.

In total, 13 out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers considered the amount and quality of information they received from the European Commission about the TTIP negotiation process to be sufficient, while 10 out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers considered it not to be sufficient. Around one third of the respondents had no opinion on the amount and quality of information received on this topic.³

Some further remarks and improvements that would be appreciated with regard to the TTIP negotiation process related to transparency and the role of the government and of other stakeholders. The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* had requested the Federal Government to take the necessary steps to ascertain that the TTIP negotiations were conducted with the appropriate transparency at national and European level. The French *Sénat* mentioned simplified access to documents and a translation into French as improvements. The Polish *Sejm* preferred to see an intensification of direct contacts between DG Trade and the *Sejm* as well as an increased availability of documents on TTIP in Polish.

Another improvement, as pointed out by the UK *House of Commons*, focussed on the role of the government in providing for more transparency in negotiations, including ensuring adequate stakeholders' involvement. Furthermore, the Finnish *Eduskunta* explained that, as their primary source for information was the government, the question remained whether the European Commission provided adequate information to all Member States.

On the provision of information, the European Parliament's INTA Committee remarked that on some occasions the information provided could be more specific and analytical and the information exchanged with Member States and the Council could be delivered in a more systematic way to the committee or/and its standing rapporteur on TTIP. Meanwhile, the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* requested more visits of European Commission representatives / experts on TTIP to national Parliaments in order to provide detailed information. It also suggested sharing the information between national Parliaments on a bilateral level and / or through an electronic platform.

All parties involved in the TTIP negotiation process should ensure more transparency, according to the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, while the German *Bundesrat* asked for timely publication of all relevant documents and a comprehensible presentation of all guidelines, objectives and red lines of the negotiations for all interested citizens. The need for more transparency depended, in the case of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, mostly on the point of view of the different political parties. Some of them thought the reading rooms were sufficient or even had too much information, while others believed that all the documents in the reading room should be made public, so a public debate could be held about its content.

The Italian *Camera dei deputati* pointed out that the conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments in Luxembourg (22-24 May 2016) contained several suggestions for improvements. Amongst others, they mentioned the need for national Parliaments to have access to information relating to ongoing trade negotiations.

When Parliaments/Chambers were asked about their further actions concerning the TTIP negotiation process and its transparency, out of 35 responding Parliaments/Chambers, 14 replied they engaged in a political dialogue, 10 had adopted a resolution in Plenary and eight had adopted a resolution in a committee.

³ The Austrian *Nationalrat* added on this question that the NEOS indicated a somewhat improvement, TS indicated no changes and the Greens indicated somewhat deteriorated. The INTA Committee in the European Parliament indicated significant improvement, and the ECON Committee a somewhat improvement.

Explaining their actions taken, Parliaments/Chambers gave an extensive overview of resolutions adopted in Parliaments⁴. Besides mentioning the specific resolutions, meetings and hearings in Parliaments/Chambers mentioned above, some Parliaments/Chambers mentioned the use of specific letters as an action undertaken with regard to the TTIP negotiation process and its transparency. Among them, the Czech *Senát* and Portuguese *Assembleia da República* referred to the letter of the 25th of June 2014 in the framework of the political dialogue, on the initiative of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and co-signed by 19 Chairs of relevant committees of other Parliaments/Chambers, on the role of national Parliaments in free trade agreements. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* pointed out that the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Development sent two letters (in March 2015 and in July 2016) to the relevant committees in national Parliaments on issues related to TTIP. It asked for prompt examination of the overall impact of the agreement and analysis of its expected outcomes for the whole of society, environment and economy and for better information exchange on EU level, aided by national debate and social consultations.

Section B: TTIP READING ROOMS

Out of 39 responding Parliaments/Chambers, 35 confirmed the creation of an *ad hoc* reading room by their Member State, with the exception of the Slovenian *Državni svet*, the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* and the UK *House of Commons* and *House of Lords*. In the case of the latter, the government had agreed in principle to set up a reading room, but this had not yet been implemented.

Only nine of the 34 responding Parliaments/Chambers replied that the reading rooms had been set upon their request. In the majority of the cases (28 respondents), the reading room was set up by the government; by the US embassy in the case of the Swedish *Riksdag* and the Lithuanian *Seimas*. The Croatian *Sabor* informed that the room had been set up by the Office of the National Security Council, while the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and *Senát* indicated that the reading room was at first set up at the US embassy and later transferred at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The European Parliament had set up the room itself and introduced structures meant to enable the European Parliament to exercise its responsibilities under the Common Commercial Policy (an exclusive EU competence).

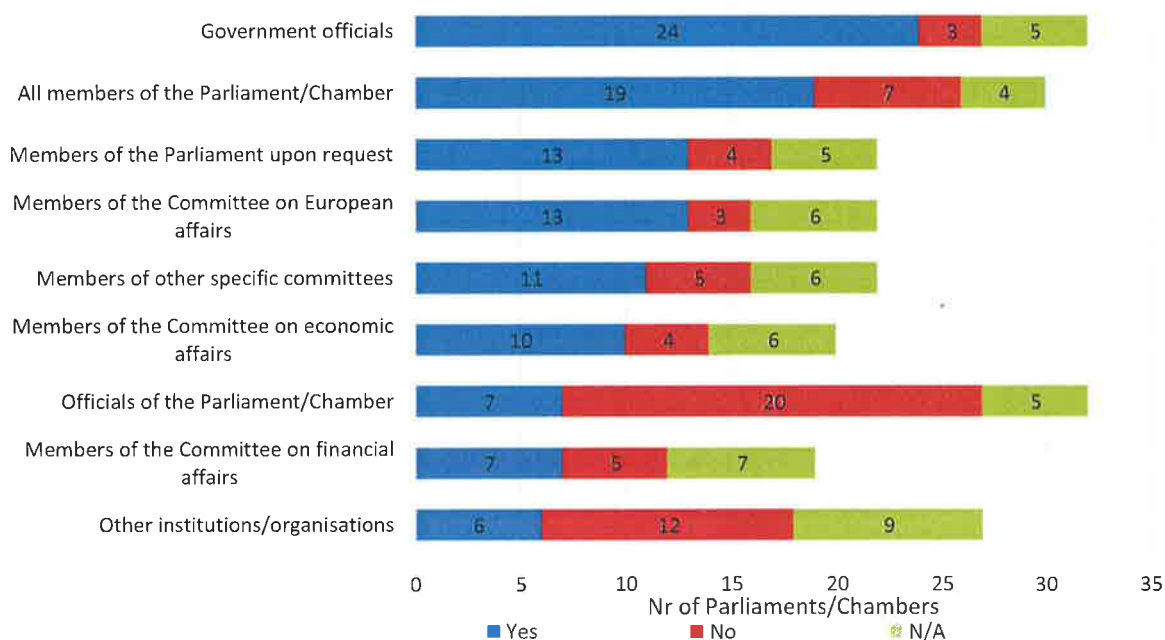
Concerning access to the reading room, 19 national Parliaments/Chambers replied that access was possible for all MPs. Thirteen respondents indicated that access was possible for members of the EU Affairs committee, 11 respondents referred to members of the Economic Affairs Committee, seven respondents indicated the members of the Committee on Financial Affairs, and ten Parliaments/Chambers referred to members of other specific committees. Among these, the Lithuanian *Seimas*, the Belgian *Chambre des Représentants* and the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* indicated the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Thirteen Parliaments/Chambers indicated that all MPs had access upon request. Officials of seven responding Parliaments/Chambers had access to the room, while, according to the replies, access was not allowed to officials of 20 respondents. Government officials had access according to the reply of 24 Parliaments/Chambers. Six respondents indicated that access was allowed to other institutions/organisations. The reply of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and *Senát* referred to all public administration officials and MPs dealing with economic affairs. The Croatian *Sabor* replied that access was granted to civil servants with clearance certificate, and, according to the Croatian Law on Data Classification, automatically to MPs when such access was requested within the framework of their parliamentary duties. The

⁴ Parliaments'/Chambers' detailed replies including information on all specific resolutions can be found in the Annex to the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC on the COSAC website.

European Parliament indicated that, besides all MEPs and officials of the European Parliament, a limited number of political groups staff had access to the room. In the case of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, each political group of the House had one appointed MP with access to the reading room, as well as a representative (official) of the Speaker's office. All of them participated in a Special Committee. In its reply, the Swedish *Riksdag* indicated that the reading room, set up at the US embassy, was accessible for officials at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as officials of certain Swedish public agencies. The *Riksdag* further informed that the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs had asked the US State Department whether Swedish MPs could access the reading room, but the request was rejected. Although the *Riksdag* did not have a reading room, it was receiving documents related to the negotiation process from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. According to the reply, these documents did not include the consolidated texts. The documents relating to the negotiation process could be consulted by members of the *Riksdag* in a reading room at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

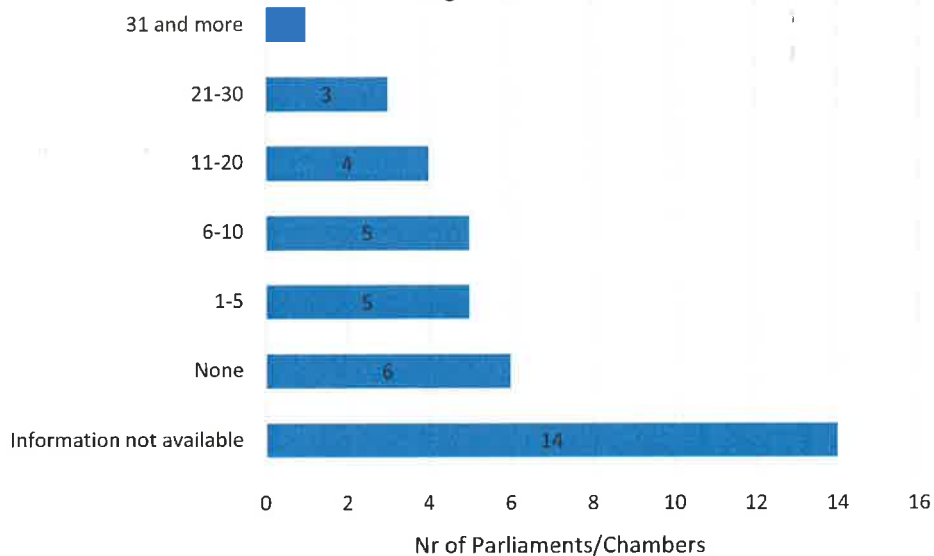
The Belgian *Sénat* informed in its reply that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs had restricted access to the reading room to the members of the entities that would ratify the final TTIP agreement, that are the *Chambre des Représentants* as well as the different federated parliaments.

Question: Who has access to the TTIP reading room?



Of the 38 respondents answering the question concerning the number of MPs who had visited the reading room, 14 had no information available and six Parliaments/ Chambers each indicated none.. Only the German *Bundestag* replied that more than 31 MPs had visited the reading room.

Question: How many members of your Parliament/Chamber have visited the reading room?



On the frequency of visits of the reading room, 17 out of 35 Parliaments/Chambers indicated that no information was available, five respondents indicated that the members had visited the room once, 11 Parliaments/Chambers replied that the visits had occurred sometimes, while three (Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, German *Bundestag* and the European Parliament) referred to regular visits.

The conditions of the TTIP reading room were considered limiting by 13 of the 35 responding Parliaments/Chambers, while four others did not find them limiting. More than half (19) of the respondents had no opinion on the subject.

When specifying the kind of limitations perceived by the MPs, the 15 responding Parliaments/Chambers indicated the following reasons: inability to be accompanied by assistants, experts or parliamentary officials (nine respondents), language barrier (nine respondents), inability to use the internet (seven respondents), time arrangements to access/study the available documents (six respondents) and location of the reading room (three respondents). The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* regretted that only a limited number of MPs was allowed to access the reading room, while the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* emphasised the fact that none of the information could be shared in public or with experts, not being MPs. The Finnish *Eduskunta* did not formulate actual complaints, but considered the security arrangements exaggerated. In the case of the Austrian Parliament, the additional information referred to a different perception of the political groups about limitations. The SP/VP group considered that although the creation of TTIP reading rooms in Member States (Austria was among the first to set up such a reading room within the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy) was widely acknowledged as a significant improvement, a number of parliamentarians still criticised access to negotiating documents as insufficient and the modalities of access to the TTIP reading room as overly restrictive. The Ministry had taken steps to further facilitate access, for example through more flexible opening hours. The Greens stressed that such reading room had to be in the Parliament's premises.

The Slovak *Národná rada* pointed out that the conditions to access the documents in the reading rooms were limiting, namely the fact that members could not be accompanied by their expert staff and take the records of the text for later use.

The Parliamentary Group AKEL- Left - New Forces of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* considered as limitations the inability to be accompanied by assistants or parliamentary officials, designated experts, and the inability to use the internet. The Group also stressed that TTIP reading rooms should be accessible by all MPs because the TTIP influenced other House Standing Committees, like those on Labour, Agriculture and Environment.

CHAPTER 2: 2016: ENERGY UNION'S "YEAR OF DELIVERY"

Building on the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC finalised in May 2015 under the Latvian Presidency, the second chapter of the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC on Energy Union focuses on a number of proposals and communications and highlights Parliaments'/Chambers' views on energy security and energy efficiency, as well as renewables and other related dimensions. It also examines the current level of cooperation between Parliaments/Chambers on the relevant topic.

Section A: PARLIAMENTS'/CHAMBERS' POSITION ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S DOCUMENTS

A vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers (32 out of 39 respondents) had discussed the Proposal for a Regulation concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply⁵. Of these, nine engaged in the political dialogue with the European Commission.

Amongst the latter, a couple of Parliaments/Chambers signalled a breach of subsidiarity and/or proportionality. The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, for instance, deemed the proposal complying with neither the principle of subsidiarity nor the principle of proportionality, and raised concern on the financial costs involved in building new infrastructure, adding that the right of the European Commission to initiate infringement proceedings against a Member State if a natural gas company did not comply with the obligation to notify was a measure that went beyond what was necessary to achieve the desired objective. The Estonian *Riigikogu* echoed this sentiment, stressing that the Member States should retain the flexibility in regards to the specific structure and content of intergovernmental agreements.

The Austrian *Bundesrat* argued that the proposal was to be rejected on grounds of subsidiarity, since the composition of the "regions" mentioned in the document interfered with the sovereignty of the Member States.

The Italian *Camera dei deputati* pointed out that, when defining regions, account must be taken both of the existing infrastructure situation and of projects currently underway in the context of TEN-E network provisions, and of interconnections through third countries (such as Switzerland).

The German *Bundesrat* considered the obligation to disclose commercial agreements as too far-reaching and potentially leading to competition distortions.

Some Parliaments/Chambers, such as the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* and the Swedish *Riksdag*, explicitly expressed the view that the proposal did not breach the subsidiarity principle.

⁵ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the EU concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supply and repealing Regulation (EU) No 994/2010 (COM (2016) 52).

Almost as many Parliaments/Chambers (29 out of 39 respondents) had discussed the Proposal for a Decision on establishing an information exchange mechanism with regard to intergovernmental agreements and non-binding instruments between Member States and third countries in the field of energy,⁶ with seven Parliaments/Chambers engaging in the political dialogue with the European Commission.

The Czech *Senát* called for a review of proportionality of the proposed information exchange mechanism taking into account the real negotiating possibilities of the Member States.

The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* disagreed that *ex ante* compatibility checks undertaken by the Commission were required, noting that in case of incompatibility with EU law, there were mechanisms already in place that could be applied as provided in the Treaties.

The French *Sénat* expressed a similar view, stating that the *ex ante* check impinges on the competences of the Member States.

The Finnish *Eduskunta* argued that the proposed obligations for governments to notify the Commission of its international agreements in this sector was incompatible with the Treaty's delineation of national/EU powers, a view also shared by the Austrian *Bundesrat*.

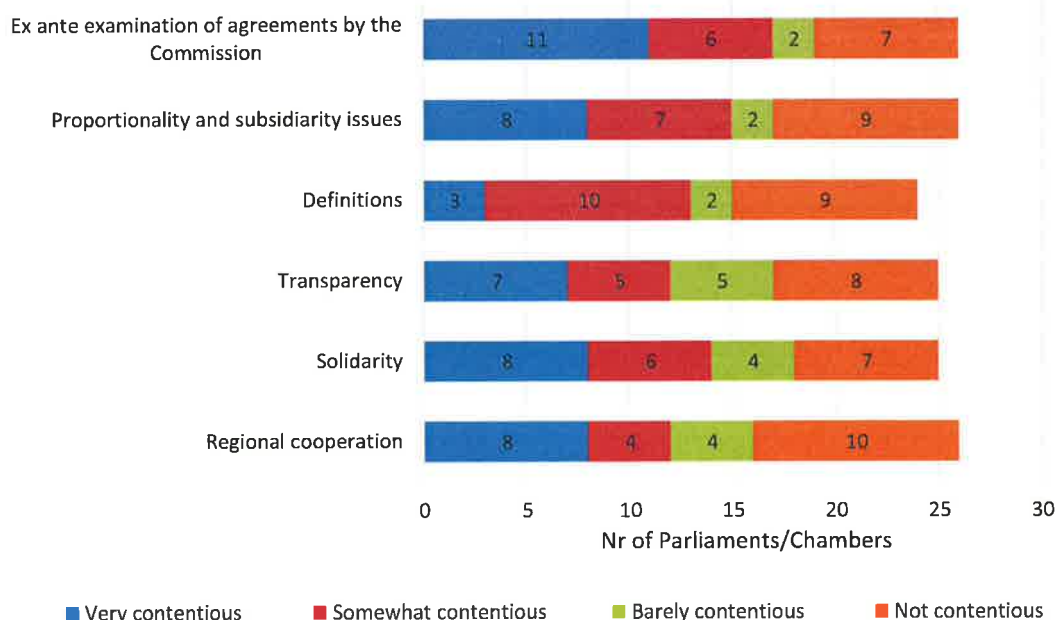
Once again, some Parliaments/Chambers, like the Romanian *Senat*, voiced their approval of the proposal, deeming it to be fully in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality.

When asked which elements from the European Commission's "Winter Package" on energy security were deemed the most contentious, Parliaments/Chambers expressed mixed feelings. Almost half thought the *ex-ante* examination of agreements by the Commission very contentious, while a further six Parliaments/Chambers considered it somewhat contentious.

The other elements that proved to be of most concern to Parliaments/Chambers were "solidarity" and "proportionality and subsidiarity issues". Parliaments/Chambers were fairly divided when it came to "regional cooperation". "Definitions" was the element of least concern: only three Parliaments/Chambers found these very contentious.

⁶ Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council of the EU on establishing an information exchange mechanism with regard to intergovernmental agreements and non-binding instruments between Member States and third countries in the field of energy and repealing Decision No 994/2012/EU (COM (2016) 53).

Question: Which elements from the European Commission's "Winter package" on energy security did your Parliament/Chamber identify as the most contentious?



Asked whether the communication on an EU strategy for liquefied natural gas and gas storage⁷ had been discussed, the majority of respondents (22 Parliaments/Chambers) replied that they had indeed discussed this document. However, 17 Parliaments/Chambers out of 39 had not yet discussed the communication. Four Parliaments/Chambers had planned to engage in the political dialogue with the European Commission. The Italian *Camera dei deputati*, for instance, stressed that Member States must not be prohibited from taking preventive non-market measures, such as providing for strategic storage, either to make up for failures or shortfalls of imported supplies from outside the EU or to deal with the effects of exceptional climatic conditions.

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers (21 out of 39 respondents) had also discussed the communication outlining an EU strategy on heating and cooling⁸, though slightly less than half (18 out of 39 respondents) had not. Of the remaining Parliaments/Chambers, only three planned to engage in the political dialogue with the European Commission. Of these, the Czech *Senát* noted that the sectors involved must be regulated exclusively at the national level given the different context in individual Member States. The Italian *Camera dei deputati*, on the other hand, had a number of suggestions to make, noting, *inter alia*, the importance of addressing the situation of consumers whose income did not cover the associated costs of refitting. On the other side of the coin, the European Parliament urged that more consumer awareness be raised about the often low performance of their installed heating systems. The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* proposed the use of financial instruments by the European Commission, such as grants, in support of SMEs seeking to improve their energy efficiency.

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers did not issue any updated opinion or document on energy security or energy efficiency since the drafting of the 23rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC

⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an EU strategy for liquefied gas and gas storage (COM (2016) 49).

⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – An EU Strategy on Heating and Cooling (COM (2016) 51).

under the Latvian Presidency. In fact, only ten out of 38 responding Parliaments/Chambers had issued an updated opinion or document on energy security, and nine Parliaments/Chambers (out of 39 respondents) had issued one on energy efficiency.

As for energy security, the Slovak *Národná rada* called for a well-functioning regional cooperation and increasing transparency. With regard to energy efficiency, the Czech *Senát* thought it questionable that the proposal for a Regulation should allow incentives only for products within the top class of energy efficiency, excluding products from lower classes, which may nonetheless contribute to increasing energy efficiency, and therefore proposed that such incentives be also applied to the latter.

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers had not started discussions on the revision of the directives on energy efficiency and on energy performance of buildings. Out of 39 respondents, only three had in fact done so, though 13 Parliaments/Chambers indicated their intention to do so.

When asked how effective the current renewable energy Directive had been in improving renewable energy industrial development and EU competitiveness in the energy sector, nearly half (19 out of 37 respondents) had no opinion to express. Of the other half, the majority (10 Parliaments/Chambers) considered the directive somewhat effective. Four Parliaments/Chambers thought the directive significantly effective, and as many thought it somewhat ineffective.

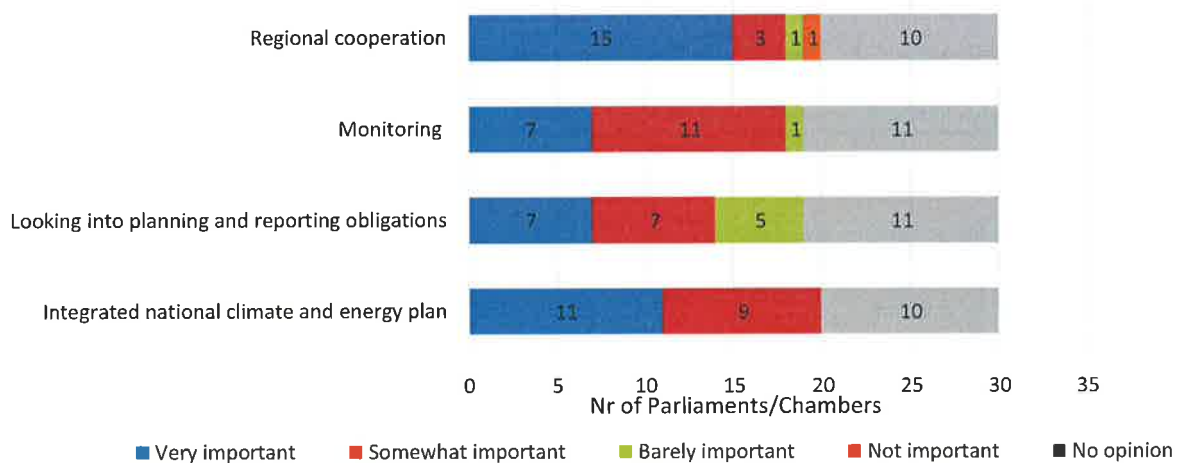
Section B: SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE ENERGY UNION FROM PARLIAMENTS'/CHAMBERS' POINT OF VIEW

Elements of Energy Union governance

As regards the elements of the governance of the Energy Union that would best ensure that the EU-level targets for renewables (binding at the EU level) and energy efficiency (indicative at the EU level) were delivered, Parliaments'/Chambers' opinion varied⁹. Regional cooperation was considered to be very important by half of the respondents (15 out of 30) and integrated national climate and energy plans were again considered to be very important by over a third of the respondents.

⁹ Please check the divergence of views of different political groups on questions 9-11 of the COSAC questionnaire in the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* in its reply in the Annex to the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC found on the COSAC website.

Question: In the opinion of your Parliament/Chamber what elements of the governance of the Energy Union will best ensure that the EU-level targets for renewables (binding at the EU level) and energy efficiency (indicative at the EU level) are delivered?



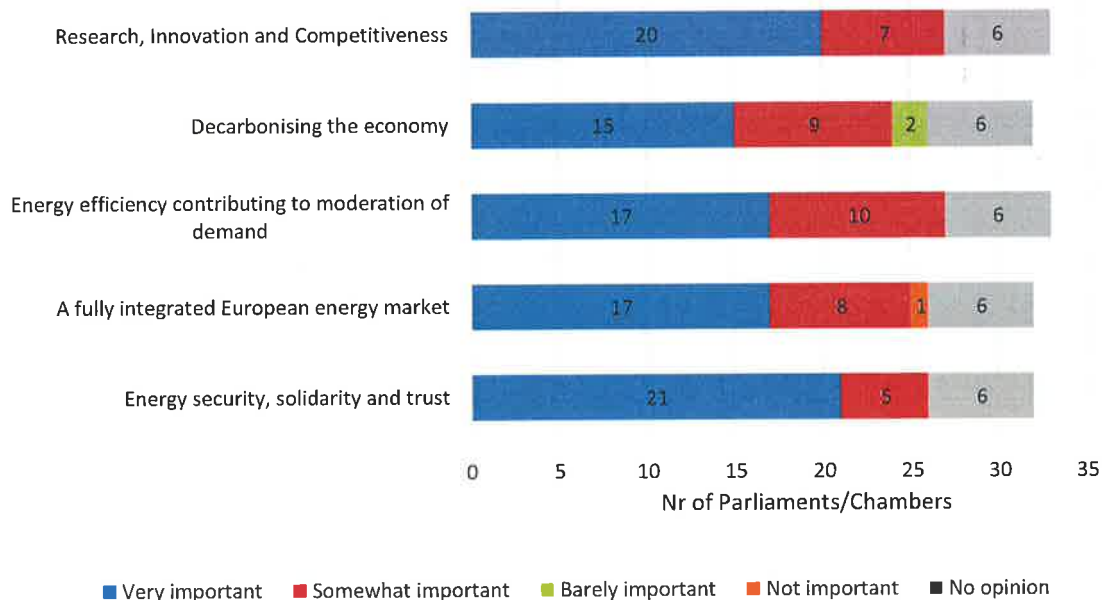
Other elements mentioned by Parliaments/Chambers, included the correct set up of the emissions trading system, investments in low-carbon technologies and solidarity among EU Member States deemed as very important (Slovak *Národná rada*), market regulation rules that would drive forward the move towards low greenhouse gas-emitting energy and production systems deemed to be somewhat important (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), intermediate monitoring of the progress achieved (Romanian *Senat*).

Measures to be taken for increasing the flexibility of the energy system with regard to renewable energy production and plans for achieving electricity market coupling and integration, regional measures for balancing and reserves and how system adequacy was calculated in the context of renewable energy (15 out of 32 and 12 out of 32 respondents) were considered by Parliaments/Chambers to be very important elements (included in the Member States' national energy and climate plans with respect to renewable energy) in order to reach the objectives of at least 27 % in 2030. An overview of renewable energy trajectories and policies to 2050 to ensure that 2030 policies lie on the path to 2050 objectives were considered to be somewhat important by almost one third of the respondents (11 out of 32).

Important dimensions of the Energy Union and closer cooperation among EU Parliaments

More than half of the respondents considered energy security, solidarity and trust, as well as research, innovation and competitiveness very important dimensions of the Energy Union.

Question: Which dimensions of the Energy Union does your Parliament/Chamber consider to be the most important?



Most of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (26 out of 35) had not taken any action to support the idea of closer cooperation among the EU Parliaments/Chambers on any of the five Energy Union dimensions.

However, those Parliaments/Chambers which chose to give information on action they had taken mentioned, among others, debates and meetings in which they had participated and/or organised.

The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* referred to its active participation in all debates concerning energy security and stability in the region and Europe. The Czech *Senát* mentioned a meeting of the EU Affairs Committees of the Visegrád Group countries hosted by the Senate itself in Prague in 2015 and its conclusions and the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* added the related meeting held in Warsaw on 1 February 2016. The Slovak *Národná rada* referred to two meetings planned under the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU where the Energy Union would be the key subject – plenary meeting of the LVI COSAC (13 – 15 November 2016) and Meeting of Chairpersons of the Economic Affairs Committees on Energy Union (1 – 2 December 2016). The French *Assemblée nationale* had organised a meeting in the context of the Weimar triangle meetings where it discussed with the Polish and German partners the national strategies on energy mix and the efforts required for reaching the objectives regarding the Energy Union. The French *Sénat* mentioned meetings with the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* and the German *Bundesrat*. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* mentioned the organisation of the interparliamentary conference on Energy Union during the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the EU. The European Parliament said it had taken action in all dimensions and that the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) remained open to all bilateral and multilateral dialogue with national Parliaments, giving the example of a meeting organised in Spring 2016 with the relevant Romanian *Senat* Committee on Energy Union.

In addition, the committees of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* were generally supportive of cooperation among Parliaments of the Member States of the EU, while the Lithuanian *Seimas* supported all five dimensions of the Energy Union. It saw the dimension of energy security,

solidarity and trust dimension (implemented through the Baltic energy market interconnection plan (BEMIP)) and the dimension of a fully integrated European energy market (implemented through the BEMIP and the negotiation process with BRELL countries (Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) on synchronisation of the Baltic States' electricity system with the continental Europe networks) as the most important. The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* mentioned the dimensions of energy security, solidarity and trust; energy efficiency in support of moderating demand; research, innovation and competitiveness, emphasising the actions of diversification of supply, cooperation on security of supply, ensuring adequate transparency of commercial contracts for gas supply, empowering to choose the supplier, increasing buildings energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions in the transport sector, and adapting energy markets and networks to renewables.

The French *Sénat* adopted a law regarding energy transition putting in place measures favouring renewable energy.

Certain Parliaments/Chambers, which had not taken action in any dimension of the Energy Union, stated nevertheless that they would support certain dimensions and actions. The Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* mentioned solidarity, regional cooperation, information exchange; the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* would significantly support actions towards the increase of energy security, the diversification of routes and sources, the promotion of renewable energy and the moderation of energy demand; the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* would support dimensions 1 and 5; and the Polish *Sejm* underlined that the priority for Poland was security of supply and reduction of dependence on natural gas supplies.

Regarding selected aspects of the Energy Union and its dimensions, the Swedish *Riksdag* stated it had not rated the importance of the proposed measures, but that general priorities could be found in the records of the Government's deliberations with the Committee on Industry and Trade. The Committee on Industry and Trade supported the position of the Swedish Government supporting the conclusions on Governance of the Energy Union including the 2030 objectives. It also mentioned that the Swedish Government had consulted the Committee on EU Affairs regarding the Energy Union on several occasions ahead of meetings of both the Council and the European Council.

CHAPTER 3: IMPROVING THE ROLE OF NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

Chapter 3 on improving the role of national Parliaments focuses on how improvements in the context of the Juncker Commission's commitment to "forging a new partnership with national Parliaments" work in practice and Parliaments'/Chambers' evaluation of these. The chapter in question also presents Parliaments'/Chambers' views on the response time of the European Commission to the reasoned opinions submitted by national Parliaments/Chambers, as well as on the quality and consistency of the Commission's replies.

In addition, this chapter presents national Parliaments' ways of communicating their activities linked to the European Affairs to their audience, both professional and general public, in an effort to encourage an exchange of practices in this field.

Section A: RELATIONS/COMMUNICATION WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Visits of the European Commission

A majority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated the number of visits of Commissioners to Parliaments/Chambers had significantly (11 out of 39) or somewhat (16 out of 39) increased within

the mandate of the current European Commission. The visits of officials (directors, general directors) of the European Commission had somewhat increased according to 17 out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers, but also 16 out of 39 Parliaments/Chambers had not observed any change in the number of visits.

The number of visits of MPs or officials of Parliament/Chambers to the European Commission evolved less. In total nine out of 38 Parliaments/Chambers noted a somewhat increased number of visits of MPs' delegation to the Commission, and eight out of 38 saw a somewhat increased number of visits of officials of Parliaments/Chambers to the European Commission within the mandate of the current Commission. The Swedish *Riksdag* explained that with regard to the number of visits to Brussels, generally an increase was noted during the year following a parliamentary election in Sweden, which however could not be linked to the mandate of the current European Commission.

To improve the relations with the European Commission in terms of organised visits both in their own countries and to the European Commission, the Austrian *Nationalrat*¹⁰, Swedish *Riksdag*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, UK *House of Lords* and Polish *Sejm* recommended good planning and cooperation on setting dates for visits of the European Commission, which should take into account the parliamentary work schedule. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* suggested the use of video conferencing to have a greater number of meetings between the national Parliaments and the European Commission.

On the number and frequency of visits, the Lithuanian *Seimas* and Austrian *Nationalrat*¹¹ suggested regular visits of representatives of the European Commission, as it would contribute to a more intensive and tangible inter-institutional political dialogue. Another suggestion came from the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*; each commissioner should visit at least once during his/her mandate. The Estonian *Riigikogu* added that meetings in Parliaments should always be part of Commissioners visit programmes to Member States, while Parliaments themselves should also invite Commissioners directly.

On the topics and issues to discuss during visits, the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* and Latvian *Saeima* suggested visits on targeted issues of interest and substantive topics. The Latvian *Saeima* stressed that, during these discussions openness, up-to-date information and expertise from the European Commissioners were expected.

The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* expressed the view that the European Commission should present its policies to the national Parliaments in a similar way as it did to the Council, i.e. through meetings with specialised MPs and/or with the national Parliaments' representatives. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* suggested the European Commission could organise thematic seminars and study-trips on a regular basis for MPs as well as official, as these could contribute to the strengthening of the bilateral institutional relations and ensure a framework for direct exchange of views.

¹⁰ Answer provided by SP/VO in the Austrian *Nationalrat*.

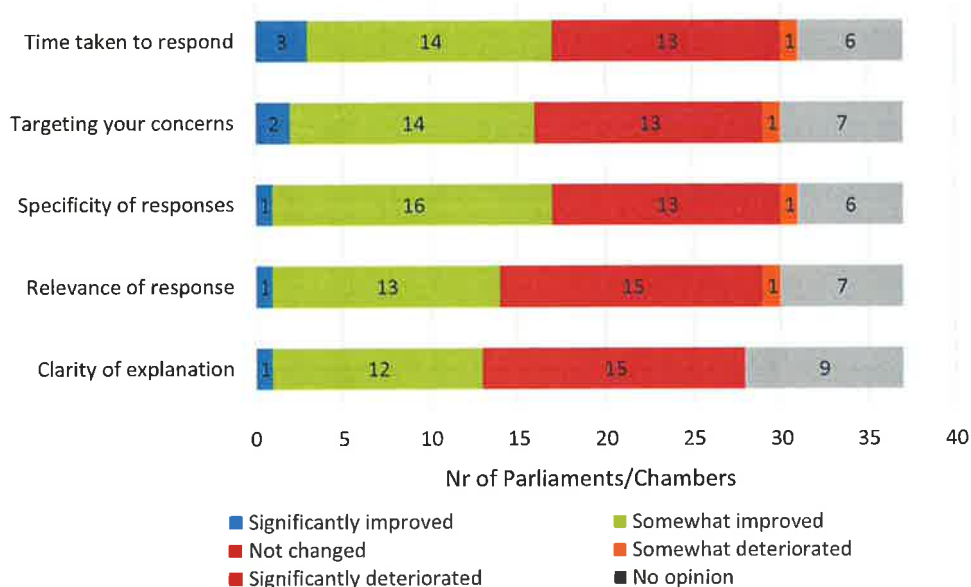
¹¹ Answer provided by SP/VO in the Austrian *Nationalrat*.

Evolution of the current European Commission's responses to the reasoned opinions issued by national Parliaments

Parliaments'/Chambers/ replies as to the evolution of the European Commission's responses to the reasoned opinions issued by national Parliaments concentrated mostly on 'somewhat improved' or 'not changed'¹².

The specificity of the responses, the time taken to respond and targeting concerns were most emphasised by the respondents as the aspects somewhat improved. An almost equal number thought the clarity of explanation and the relevance of responses had not changed.

Question: In the experience of your Parliament/Chamber, how have the following aspects of the current European Commission's (2014 -) responses to the reasoned opinions issued by national Parliaments evolved?



Communication and exchange with the European Commission

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers (27 out of 39) thought there was room for improvement when communicating and exchanging with the European Commission, 10 had no opinion on the matter, and only two thought there was no room for such improvement.

Regarding improvement on the side of the European Commission, many Parliaments/Chambers stressed that the European Commission should pay more attention to the concerns expressed by Parliaments in their respective statements and/or reasoned opinions (e.g. Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Latvian *Saeima*) and cover every issue raised (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*), that the Commission's reply was very general (Czech *Senát*); that it should address the issues raised and give clearer explanation of its position (UK *House of Commons*); that the Commission should do more to meet the concerns of national Parliaments, particularly by more seriously considering amending proposals on the basis of the assessments of Parliaments (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*); that all

¹² Please check the divergence of views of different political groups on questions 3 and 4 of the COSAC questionnaire in the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* in its reply in the Annex to the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC found on the COSAC website.

proposals must be accompanied by better justifications, in particular, as regards the application of the principle of subsidiarity (Swedish *Riksdag*); and that also the Commission's responses should be better targeted (Polish *Senat*); that it would be helpful for responses to reflect the role national Parliaments could play in policy development at EU level (UK *House of Lords*). It was further supported that in subsidiarity checks, in particular when the threshold of the "yellow card" procedure was reached, the concerns raised by a significant number of national Parliaments should be analysed from all possible points of view by the European Commission (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*).

More detailed suggestions were given by the Polish *Sejm*. With regard to national Parliaments' opinions and the Commission's replies, it was proposed to transform this register/collection into a database equipped with search functions: search by type of document, by Parliament/Chamber and date (of adoption or of transmission of a document by Parliament/Chamber), to make a distinction between reasoned opinions and opinions sent as a political dialogue, to apply a clear distinction between documents from different chambers of bicameral parliaments (on the results list the documents are mixed), to inform about the author of translation of the documents and to check whether the links were correct. With regard to subsidiarity scrutiny, it was proposed to indicate the deadlines for scrutiny, to publish the information on the web page about reaching the threshold for "yellow/orange" card and the next steps in the procedure and to inform Parliaments on how (and where) they could intervene, when there was no *lettre de saisine* accompanying an EU draft legislative act.

Parliaments/Chambers also commented on the time it took for the European Commission to respond to reasoned opinions sent to the European Commission. The Estonian *Riigikogu* said there should be a concrete agreed time for the European Commission to answer to letters and that Commissioners should directly ask Parliaments when and why they would like to meet and offer the opportunity for visits to Brussels. The Belgian *Sénat* said that the Commission's response should be sent as rapidly as possible.

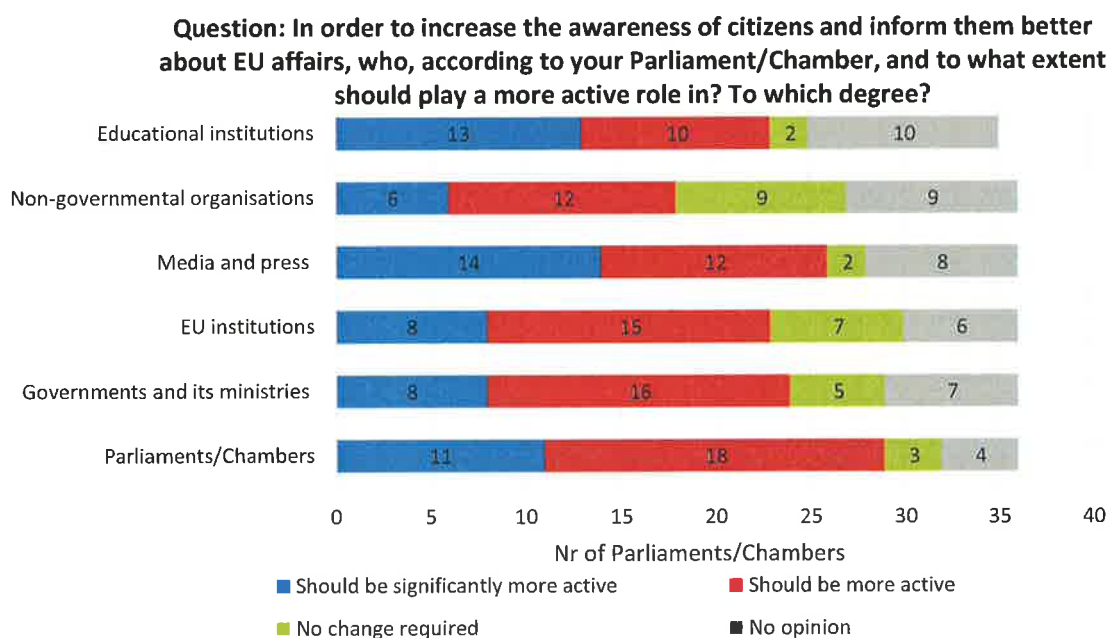
As to communication with the European Commission, it was supported that there should be more formalised channels and fora of communication between the Commission and Parliaments and that interparliamentary cooperation should be strengthened and improved and it should include Commission representatives (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*). In addition, it was suggested that it would be useful to put in place a system of direct and regular dialogue, particularly at the stage of the conception and planning of the major EU initiatives in order to avoid divergences at a later stage; to this effect, IT tools could be used other than the regular meetings (Portuguese *Assembleia da República*). It was furthermore pointed out that the new exchange system of the European Commission for communicating EU proposals was found to be not very user-friendly (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*). The dialogue between the national Parliaments and the European Commission should take the form of a more tangible cooperation based on reciprocity. The European Commission should make every effort to maintain and strengthen this kind of cooperation (Lithuanian *Seimas*). The European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON) mentioned that an inter-institutional agreement, as foreseen in the Five Presidents' Report, would help streamline communication and involvement of the European Parliament as regards European Semester Procedures.

As regards improvements on the side of Parliaments, it was suggested that Parliaments should be more active in EU affairs and more involved in the EU legislation process (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*); that they should stick more to the content in particular when drafting reasoned opinions (Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*); that they should increase their analysis capacity and better monitor

the dynamic of Commission's positioning (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*); and that they should exchange more with each other before sending out reasoned opinions (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*). It was further argued that the opinions adopted by the national Parliaments should be concise, sufficiently elaborated and well-structured (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*).

Section B: COMMUNICATING EU AFFAIRS

National Parliaments were asked which stakeholders should get further involved in communicating the EU affairs in order to increase the awareness of citizens and inform them better about EU affairs. Most of those responding considered that it was the Parliaments/Chambers themselves who should be more active. The results showed that there was almost an equal room for improvement for all stakeholders in the domain of improving communication of EU affairs, with the exception for non-governmental organisations; only eighteen parliaments thought the latter should get more active.



Twenty-seven respondents out of 39 expressed their ambition to play a more vocal role in informing their citizens about the EU affairs in general, two said they did not have this goal and the rest, 10 Parliaments/Chambers, expressed no position on this question.

The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* thought that national Parliaments were not in position to tell third parties how to communicate, but this should not stop those Parliaments/Chambers from developing strategies and making them known to the general public. The Czech *Senát* remarked that the EU institutions, especially permanent representations, had the potential to communicate the EU affairs better, focusing on promoting and raising awareness rather than concentrating on high level debates or very general public debates. The European Parliament saw communicating with citizens as a primary concern of the EU institutions with the aim of fostering trust in the European project and allow citizens to exercise their right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. It thought important that the inter-institutional communication priorities were agreed between the EU institutions and, additionally, during these times it remained necessary to have a stronger focus on delivering results to EU citizens through more streamlined and democratic decision-making.

some Parliaments (Austrian *Nationalrat* and Dutch *Eerste Kamer*) the opinions varied depending on the political group whether the Parliaments/Chambers should be more engaged in communicating EU affairs. According to the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, it was the citizens too who should seek to acquire better knowledge on EU actions and decision-making mechanisms.

Perceived limitations

Out of those Parliaments/Chambers who wanted to play a more vocal role in informing citizens about the EU affairs in general, 18 marked the complexity of the subject and its difficulty in terms of communication as the main limitation in achieving their ambition. This was followed by the lack of attention from journalists/media (14 Parliaments/Chambers) and from the general public (as pointed out by the Estonian *Riigikogu* and Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*). It was as well difficult to assess as to what extent the information reached the public despite the continuous effort to improve the communication, according to the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*. Media/journalists were often interested only in negative impacts of the EU legislation, which complicated conveying the information to the public by the Belgian *Sénat*. Additionally, 10 Parliaments/Chambers thought it was the lack of resources, which hindered them in communicating EU affairs. According to the European Parliament, the psychological and physical distance of 'EU institutions' was an important limitation; EU were affairs often considered as 'foreign affairs' without linkage to domestic politics. The busy agenda of members should not be forgotten, as pointed by the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and often it was the politicians who defined their means and content of communication, complemented the Latvian *Saeima*. Only three Parliaments/Chambers mentioned the lack of strategy as a limitation in achieving the ambition to play a more vocal role in informing citizens about EU affairs in general.

To name some best practices to overcome the limitations, the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* established an online platform for informing their citizens about different stages of the legislation process and allowing them to send their commentaries, while the Swedish *Riksdag* had a plan to develop a new website in the near future to improve the availability of information to its citizens.

Communication strategy

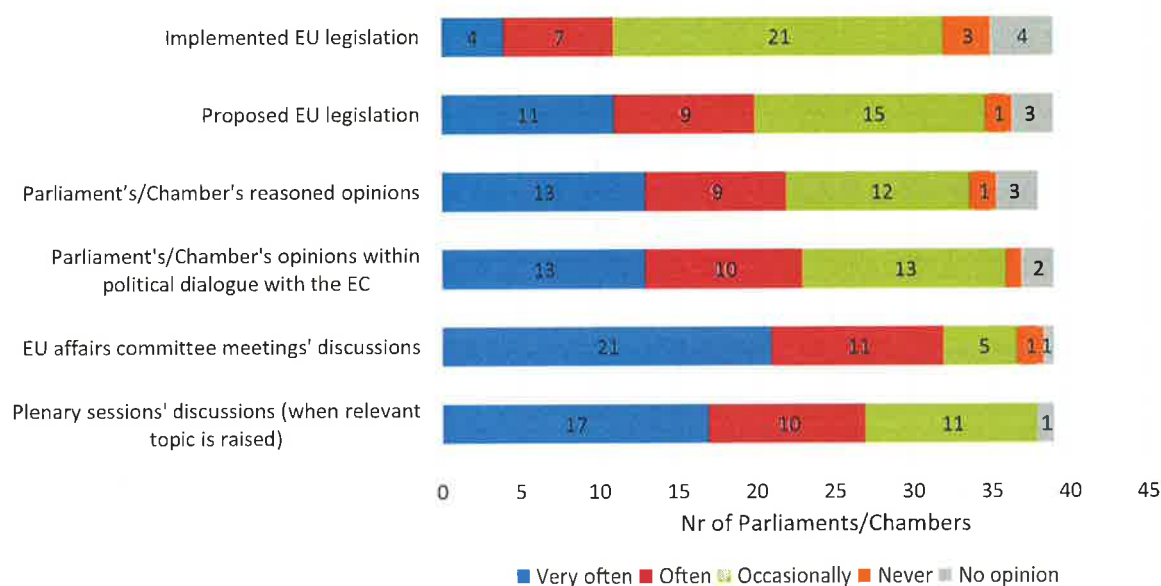
When asked about whether the Parliaments/Chambers had a special communication strategy for the EU affairs, almost two thirds (24) of those responding had no such strategy and 14 had one. Amongst the elements listed as part of their strategies, especially in direct communication, many Parliaments/Chambers (Romanian *Senat*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, European Parliament, Swedish *Riksdag*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, both Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and *Tweede Kamer*) established dedicated websites or sections on websites focusing on EU affairs, which were often targeted at different audience (young people, schools, etc.). Another online tool used by the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and *Tweede Kamer* was a specialised EU affairs newsletter prepared and distributed regularly informing about the upcoming activities of the Parliaments/Chambers and those in Brussels in relation to EU affairs. The online communication was often complemented by using the social media (French *Sénat*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and *Tweede Kamer*), online streaming (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Swedish *Riksdag*) and in the case of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* by a dedicated TV channel. Some of the Parliaments/Chambers organised meetings with the public, either in large (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*) or in a more targeted way (Swedish *Riksdag*) or through building a direct relationship between citizens and EU Affairs Committee (Romanian *Senat*). Among other channels, the Spanish *Cortes Generales* used its Congressional Transparency Portal for communicating the EU affairs and the European Parliament relied on a mix of direct (website, streaming, social media, organised visits of public to the

premises, visitors' centre, information campaigns, debates and events) and indirect communication (via providing information and supporting journalists) defined by its strategy. Similarly, the Swedish *Riksdag* had developed a strategy 'Administration's Communications Strategy' which identified the following major target groups for external communication: the public, the Government, public authorities, county councils, regions, municipalities, media, organisations, the business sector, schools, universities and colleges and international bodies. For the UK *House of Commons* the up-to-date online publications were an important channel in communicating the EU affairs even without any specific Parliamentary Strategy. The UK *House of Lords* EU Committee had a media strategy which included a dedicated social media account, news releases, website updates and a regular newsletter, the context for communicating EU affairs in the UK was different to that in all other Member States following the result of the referendum on UK membership of the EU.

Content of communication

Taking into account the content related to the EU affairs communicated by the respondents, most frequently it was the discussions in EU Affairs committee meetings. This was followed by the plenary sessions when a relevant topic was raised. Less, but still more than half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (very) often communicated the opinions within the political dialogue with the European Commission, reasoned opinions and proposed EU legislation. Around half of the respondents indicated they only occasionally communicated with the public on implemented EU legislation.

Question: What is the main content your Parliament/Chamber does/would communicate with the public, and how often, in relation to EU affairs?



Adapting the communication

Almost two thirds of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (23 out of 37) did not adapt their communication according to the audience; their communication was general and prepared in only one version. One third did adapt their communication according to the audience by preparing more

than one version of communication. Thirteen out of 19 Parliaments/Chambers adapted regularly the content when it came to communicating EU affairs mainly for the public and for media/journalists. Eleven out of 17 Parliaments/Chambers adapted their content for schools and universities (three had done regularly and eight sometimes) and comparable frequency applied to adapting the content for young people. To demonstrate the modification of the content, the German *Bundestag* mentioned its annual 'open day' including round tables on EU-issues, annual school day "Europe" and Youth Parliament. Similarly, the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* organised in their premises visits of college students and young graduates and provided traineeships, the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* adapted educational material on how the EU works for high school students and the Swedish *Riksdag* within its visitors programme for schoolchildren, highlighting the connection between national legislation and EU legislation where possible.

Established channels for communicating EU affairs

All of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (39) made use of their own website as the main communication channel for the EU affairs. With regard to frequency, 36 of the respondents used this platform regularly, two used it sometimes and only one did occasionally. This way of communication was closely followed by other forms. First, meetings with media/journalists, where the vast majority (33 out of 38) of responding Parliaments/Chambers were involved with various frequencies (10 respondents communicated this way regularly, eleven sometimes and 12 occasionally). Second, it was the print publications, namely brochures, flyers, where 33 out of 39 Parliaments/Chambers used this form of communication. The least commonly used way of communicating declared was publishing articles on blogs or specialised platforms, where only two Parliaments/Chambers had been engaging in this activity regularly, nine Parliaments/Chambers sometimes and 16 respondents occasionally.

Many had already explored the use of social media, though the frequency varied. However, there was a group of respondents (seven) who had admitted that they had never used this form of communication. Some other examples included the Czech *Senát* which published weekly reports on topical EU issues and both monthly and annual reports on the EU agenda, complemented by the articles in the Senate bulletin, similar to the Sejm Chronicle published by the Polish *Sejm*. Likewise, the Belgian *Chambre des représentants* and the Latvian *Saeima* had developed a set of information sheets on topics of institutional interest including aspects of the EU (both available online and in paper form). The Swedish *Riksdag* had put in use the Riksdag Information Service which answered questions about the EU on a daily basis via e-mail or phone. A possibility to inform the public during the 'open day' and through the visits of members to schools and universities was pointed out by the German *Bundestag*. The latter added that it had made use of portals for youth and children, Parliament TV, mobile app and international students exchange program as well. The UK *House of Lords* worked in conjunction with a number of UK universities on a "Parliamentary Studies Module", which included a session on scrutiny of EU matters. Additionally, the European Parliament had provided the media with press and audio-visual materials.

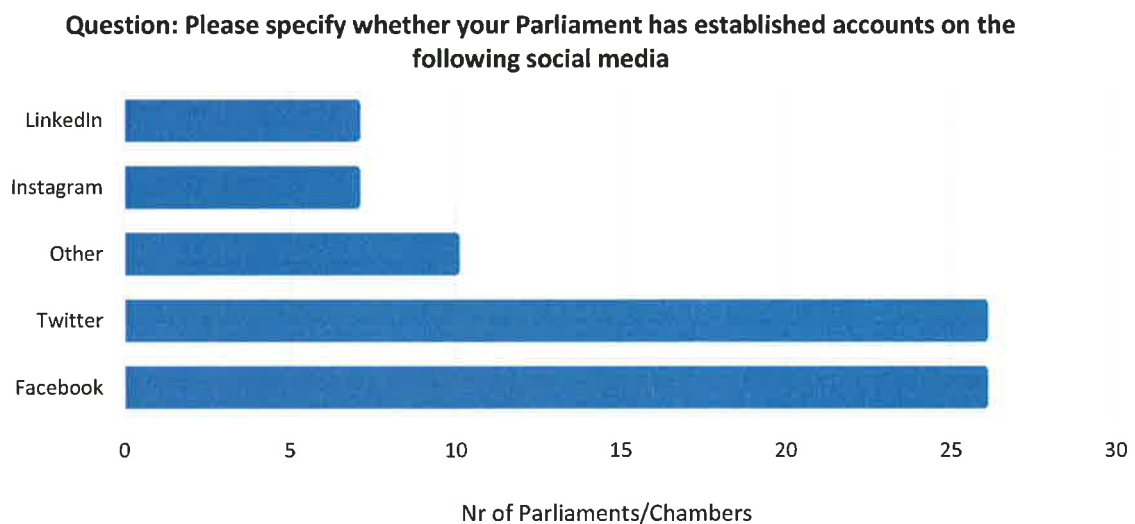
Involvement of members in communicating EU affairs

As far as involvement of members in communicating EU affairs, all but one Parliament/Chamber indicated their members had some kind of involvement. More than half (21 out of 38) declared that some members in their Parliaments/Chambers were actively engaged, in 10 Parliaments/Chambers most of their members of respective committees dealing with EU affairs were actively engaged and six respondents indicated limited involvement of their members in communicating the EU affairs. On the format of the involvement, the most regularly explored forms were the participation in

conferences/fora with more than a half of respondents (19 out of 37) indicating this option, followed by TV/radio debates and use of social media (16 respondents out of 36 and 37 respectively). Blogging was the form which had been used rather occasionally by 16 out of 35 respondents. The Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* pointed out that it was very difficult to monitor these activities and, according to the UK *House of Commons*, the German *Bundestag* and the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, the members communicated in their own personal capacity as well, via, among others, their personal social media accounts, and individual blogs. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* had made use of internal communication, informing members, advisors, staff members on current EU affairs and found this an important part of sharing the information together with publishing biannually a strategic plan concerning EU activities of the Parliament.

Use of social media

Three quarters of Parliaments/Chambers (26 out of 34) declared that they had or planned to have their own Facebook and Twitter accounts, seven had communicated via Instagram and five via LinkedIn profiles.



In addition, some Parliaments/Chambers specified they also used their own YouTube channels (European Parliament, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Latvian *Saeima*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*), Google+ network (French *Assemblée nationale*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*) and picture/photo online repository systems like Flickr (Polish *Sejm*, European Parliament, Latvian *Saeima*) and Pinterest (European Parliament) and new platforms like Snapchat (European Parliament and envisaged by the Belgian *Sénat* to communicate better with the young audience). The German *Bundestag* did not have any official social media account established.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LVI COSAC
Bratislava, Slovakia, 14-15 November 2016

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Ľuboš BLAHA, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Slovak *Národná rada*.

AGENDA:

1. Opening session of the LVI COSAC

- Introductory remarks by Mr Ľuboš BLAHA, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Slovak *Národná rada*
- Adoption of the agenda
- Procedural issues and miscellaneous matters
 - Information on the results of the Presidential Troika of COSAC
 - Letters received by the Presidency
- Presentation of the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC by Ms Christiana FRYDA, Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

2. Session 1 - 'State of Play of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union'

Keynote speaker: Mr Robert FICO, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

3. Session 2 - 'Strengthening the role of national Parliaments in the EU'

Keynote speaker: Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President, European Commission

Panellists: Ms Ana BIRCHALL, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Romanian *Camera Deputaților*, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chair of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*

Moderator: Mr Martin KLUS, Vice-Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Slovak *Národná rada*

Debate

4. Session 3 - 'The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): a trade agreement between the European Union and the United States (and its challenges, opportunities and risks)'

Keynote speakers: Ms Susan GEORGE, political and social scientist, activist and writer on global social justice; President of the Transnational Institute, Mr Hiddo HOUBEN, EU Deputy Chief Negotiator of TTIP; Director, DG Trade of the European Commission

Panellists: Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, Ms Güler TURAN, Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs, Member of the Belgian *Sénat* and Flemish Parliament

Moderator: Ms Brigita SCHMÖGNEROVÁ, former Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe; former Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic

Debate

5. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Debate on the draft Contribution of the LVI COSAC

6. Session 4: '2016: Energy Union's "year of delivery"'

Keynote speaker: Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Energy Union

Panellists: Ms Danielle AUROI, Chair of the European affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Kalle PALLING, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Estonian *Riigikogu*, Mr António COSTA SILVA, Member of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*

Moderator: Ms Zuzana GABRIŽOVÁ, Editor-in-chief of Euractiv.sk

Debate

- Letter from Mr Pedro AGRAMUNT, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), regarding participation at COSAC. After consultation with the Troika, a letter of invitation had been sent out.
- Letter from Mr Kalle PALLING, Chair of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, regarding the informal consultations of the European Union Affairs Committees of the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish Parliaments held in Tallinn on 8-9 September 2016.
- Letter from Mr Ondřej BENEŠIK, Chair of the Committee for European Affairs of the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* on the conclusions of the Meeting of the European Affairs Committees of the Visegrad Group countries held in Velehrad on 3 October 2016.

Regarding the letter from Mr Vannino CHITI, Chair of the Committee on EU policies of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, he said he would come back to it at the meeting of the Chairpersons.

1.4 Presentation of the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC by Ms Christiana FRYDA, Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat

Mr BLAHA then gave the floor to the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, to present the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC. The report consisted of three chapters: 1) The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union and the United States: parliamentary scrutiny of the negotiation process, 2) Energy Union's "year of delivery", 3) Improving the role of national Parliaments.

2. Session 1 - 'State of Play of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union' Keynote speaker: Mr Robert FICO, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

Mr Robert FICO, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, welcomed the participants to the plenary meeting of the LVI COSAC. He reflected on the Bratislava Summit that was organised in September, which, he added, showed that Slovakia had been a reliable partner. He then mentioned several key priorities for the Slovak Presidency, amongst others the need of an economic strong European Union with a functioning banking and monetary union. In this regard, the trust of citizens was crucial. Furthermore, he reflected on results achieved on the Digital Single Market and Energy Union priorities. When it came to the asylum and migration policy, Mr FICO stressed that it was important to keep in mind the strong relation between economies in the world. Summing up several results of the past months, as well as those expected until the end of the Slovak Presidency, including amongst others, the taxation package, the European Public Prosecutor's office, the Paris Climate agreement and the enlargement policies, he concluded that so far the Presidency, despite all the challenges that arose, could be considered successful.

In the debate that followed, 16 members took the floor. Several focussed on the possible Brexit and its possible causes as well as effects for the EU. It would have an effect on the whole of Europe, as was expressed by Mr Terry LEYDEN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*. He urged to keep a special focus on Ireland as it shared the border with the UK. Ms Colette MÉLOT, French *Sénat* pointed out the new model of relations with the UK and asked what the results of the Bratislava summit were. Meanwhile, Ms Rubina BERARDO, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, stressing the importance of trust and building confidence as was shown during the Bratislava Summit, pointed out the need for concrete measures, for example to tackle youth unemployment. Mr Karlheinz KOPF, Austrian *Nationalrat*, mentioned the need for the EU to take into account the tremendous changes in society and concerns of citizens, underlining the role of national Parliaments. At the same time, according

was not new, the real problem was the total loss of border control. The Slovak Presidency relied on three main principles in finding a solution: first, on having functioning control of the EU's external borders; second, on tackling the root causes of migration; and third on using solidarity in an effective way.

He confirmed that a dialogue between the EU and Turkey was needed more than ever before, not only on the EU-Turkey agreement, but also on, for example, topics such as the rule of law and media. Furthermore, he stated that the USA was the EU's closest ally when it came to external issues, and it was necessary for the EU to formulate their interests.

Mr KORČOK concluded by stressing that more than ever there was a need for stronger engagement of Parliaments and for communication with the public.

3. Session 2 - 'Strengthening the role of national parliaments in the EU'

Keynote speaker: Mr Frans TIMMERMANS, First Vice-President, European Commission

Panellists: Ms Ana BIRCHALL, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chair of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German *Bundestag*

Moderator: Mr Martin KLUS, Vice-Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Slovak *Národná rada*

After a short introduction by the Chair, Mr TIMMERMANS started with remarks on the situation the EU was facing. He pointed out that the whole world was changing and the EU needed to adapt to these changes. There would be many challenges, including different jobs requiring different skills in the future, he added. Together with these challenges there was a shift in the expectations of EU citizens to which the EU would need to react. National Parliaments, as home to some of the closest elected representatives, should be involved in this process.

Mr TIMMERMANS stressed that the European Commission within its current mandate had been very serious about listening to and visiting national Parliaments over its term. He continued with an example of the latest "yellow card" on the posting of workers, whereby, according to the Vice-president, the European Commission prepared an extensive response tackling the concerns of the national Parliaments, and not merely those concerning subsidiarity, but also with regard to political issues.

When addressing the involvement of Parliaments in the legislative dialogue, he specifically mentioned key tools of a better law making process - external stakeholder input, early stage involvement and REFIT platform of the European Commission. It would be sometimes better to look back and review the existing legislation, which was sometimes forgotten in the process, added the Commissioner. Mr TIMMERMANS tackled the issue of clear responsibility, which would help to communicate the legislative acts to citizens better. The relation between the rule of law, democracy and human rights was key to the functioning of the EU, he stressed. The true essence of democracy was respect for minorities and diversity.

The moderator, Mr Martin KLUS, Vice-chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Slovak *Národná rada*, introduced the panellists and raised a few questions regarding the provisions of the so-called "red card" mechanism, which were part of the void EU - UK deal, the better inclusion of national Parliaments' perspective by the EU institutions and on whether the national Parliaments should follow the Brexit negotiation process in an institutionalised and joint way.

the functioning of the EU, pointed out that in the EU it was only certain political parties and certain countries who were dominating EU politics and that the needs of British people were not reflected. Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, European Parliament, stressed that the desire to build a greater responsibility was present and that the national Parliaments were closer to EU citizens, which could help promote the European issues and make them aware of the importance of EU elections too.

Centralised decision-making process' efforts after the Lisbon Treaty were one of the responsible factors for the current situation, said Mr Tibor BANA, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*. Mr Peter LUYKX, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, noted that minorities should be shown respect, but that these in turn had to respect the results of election results, while referring to the EU as a puzzle of identities. The EU would need to be made legitimate to its citizens in order to guarantee its future, expressed Ms Anneta KAVVADIA, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*.

A recurring topic was the "yellow card", the proposed "green card" and a possible "red card". Some speakers stated that there was no need for another (red) card instrument (Mr BENEŠÍK, Mr KOURAKIS), as it would make the process more complicated (Mr Philippe MAHOUX, Belgian *Sénat*), with one speaker referring to it as a "drama piece" (Mr Miguel TIAGO, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*). They would rather see the "green card" explored (Mr KAROULLAS and Ms Marietta KARAMANLI, French *Assemblée nationale*) as a tool of cooperation between the national Parliaments and the European Parliament (Ms MÉLOT) to boost the EU policies (Mr KOURAKIS); the example of food waste legislation was used as a reference (Ms AUROI).

The disappointment with the most recent "yellow card" was voiced by Mr Jarosław OBREMSKI, Polish *Senat*, and Ms Izabela KLOC, Polish *Sejm*, who mentioned the defence of workers' rights of only eleven countries in the revision. Empathy in this case was required, said Mr Ondřej BENEŠÍK, Czech *Poslanecká Sněmovna*; he appreciated the attitude of the European Commission, though the answers to the "yellow card", according to him, were vague.

As to the COSAC meetings and the cooperation among Parliaments, according to Ms Åsa ROMSON, Swedish *Riksdag*), Mr Anne MULDER, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, and Mr MADISON, the cooperation between the national Parliaments could be further improved. Ms ČIGĀNE thought that reviewing practices in COSAC and introducing debates on hot topics, as well as listening to colleagues' opinions could help in this improvement. Tackling the frequency of COSAC meetings, Mr Yves POZZO DI BORGO, French *Sénat*, said that this platform deserved more frequent meetings given the importance of national Parliaments' voice. The lack of sharing best practices and differences in opinions among Parliaments and governments should be tackled when aiming at intensifying the dialogue with Parliaments, said Ms KARAMANLI.

According to Mr Giovanni MAURO, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, the European Commission should allow more room for national Parliaments when dealing with the migration issue. Extending the deadline from eight weeks to 10 weeks when reacting to the legislative proposals and sending these back to national Parliaments was suggested by Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Austrian *Bundesrat*, who together with Mr SUTOUR voiced their concerns in relation to the delegated acts and trilogues. These, according to Mr SUTOUR, should be subject to scrutiny by national Parliaments and thus provide more transparency.

Mr MULDER suggested organising so-called Brussels days for national parliamentarians by the European Commission, which would enhance the dialogue. The need for more meetings of national Parliaments was supported by Mr SHAKER.

4. Session 3 - 'The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): a trade agreement between the European Union and the United States (and its challenges, opportunities and risks)'

Keynote speakers: Ms Susan GEORGE, political and social scientist, activist and writer on global social justice; President of the Transnational Institute, Mr Hiddo HOUBEN, EU Deputy Chief Negotiator of TTIP; Director, DG Trade of the European Commission

Panellists: Ms Danuta Maria HÜBNER, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, Ms Güler TURAN, Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs, Member of the Belgian *Sénat* and Flemish Parliament

Moderator: Ms Brigita SCHMÖGNEROVÁ, former Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe; former Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic

Mr Hiddo HOUBEN, EU Deputy Chief Negotiator of TTIP, Director at DG Trade of the European Commission, recalled that negotiations were launched in 2013 on the basis of a unanimous and public mandate from the EU Member States. In addition, this mandate was followed by two resolutions of the European Parliament. He recalled the fact that trade was one of the funding policies of the Union and insisted on the fact that for both negotiating parties the goal was to establish the highest standard agreement. Mr HOUBEN also pointed out that, compared to earlier similar agreements, the normative aspect in TTIP was a new element. Concerning the regulatory cooperation, he declared that the aim of the European Commission was to increase the standard of protection between the two economies. He admitted that differences would remain in a few areas like food standards, chemicals etc. On the current state of play, Mr HOUBEN reminded that, although more than half of the technical work had been done and although it was possible to reach an overall stable and conclusive document before the end of the Obama administration, the difficult part was about to start. Pointing out that trade policy ought to become a genuine EU policy, developed by all actors of the EU, he expressed the wish of the European Commission to facilitate a transparent debate based on facts. Closing his initial remarks, Mr HOUBEN reminded the audience of the coming adjudication of the EU Court of Justice about the scope of trade policy and about the competences of the EU, and stressed the fact that the entire exercise of the TTIP negotiations had been conducted under the oversight of the Council and the European Parliament. Nevertheless, he admitted that the role of trade had changed and that it was fair to accept that the national Parliaments played a role in the definition of these kinds of treaties. Furthermore, he recognised a change of perspective on trade, whereby in the 20th century trade policy was about protection of producers, while in the 21st century the accent was more on protecting consumers. Mr HOUBEN concluded by saying that the case for openness of economy and free trade, that had helped reduce inequalities between countries, had to be won again by better mastering globalisation.

The second keynote speaker, Ms GEORGE, presented what she called a brief 'Decalogue of reasons' to oppose the ongoing TTIP negotiations, while stressing that the reason behind it was not opposition to the concept of free trade. She named as first reason secrecy stating that the EU had begun negotiating with a mandate whose authors were unknown and stressed that most information came from leaks. She then referred to the enormous presence of transnational corporations in the negotiating process: 93 % of meetings involved them. Ms GEORGE continued that the EU study, supposedly backing the negotiations, was flawed quoting economist Jeronim Capaldo of TUFTS University who, using a different economic model, concluded that the agreement would lead to the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, considerable loss of labour income and of financial stability.

Enumerating other reasons, Ms GEORGE declared that trade was not the core of the agreement, as it was essentially about investments. While she declared that she was generally in favour of

the unreliable numbers that supported the negotiations and the unwillingness of the European Commission to accept that things had changed (Ms AUROI), and the undemocratic nature of the agreement (Ms Anneta KAVADDIA, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*).

Among those who clearly supported the free trade negotiations with the US, many saw the agreement as a strategic step for the EU member States. Some insisted on the necessary balance that the ambitious project must seek, in order to insure a high level of regulatory cooperation, coherence with other EU policies in terms of geographical indications and food standards (Ms Maria de la Concepción DE SANTA ANA, Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*). Others stressed the need to show the benefits that the agreement negotiated in transparency would bring to the EU citizens, which was an important task also for the national Parliaments (Ms BIRCHALL). Mr Mats LUDSTRUM, Finnish *Eduskunta*, regretted the loss of pace in the negotiations and stressed that the lesson of the CETA debacle should not be wasted. He insisted that public concern had to be taken into consideration. He underlined the risk that negotiations could be blocked with a view to increasing their bargaining power. Mr Svein Roald HANSEN, Norwegian *Stortinget*, stressed that TTIP would have an impact on the single market and that it was imperative to ensure that no barriers would result between the EU and the EFTA countries. Ms KARAMANLI stressed that it was necessary to ensure that the increase in trade between the EU and US would not lead to decrease of trade among EU Member States. She also put accent on the need to reinforce safeguards on EU standards. Ms Colette MÉLOT, French *Sénat*, underlined the fact that by signing such an agreement the EU and the US would recognise that they were on equal foot. She underlined also the role of national Parliaments in the adoption of the agreement. She insisted that the agreement should not be used to grant extraterritoriality to the US legislation. Mr Börje VESTLUND, Swedish *Riksdag*, fully supported fair trade relations, because they were in line with democratic principles. He stressed that, due to the negotiations, there was an improvement in transparency, standards and other key objectives of the EU citizens. He stated that the dispute settlement scheme had still to be developed in order to reassure the EU's concerns.

Mr Bastiaan VAN APELDOORN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, recognised that the TTIP was a controversial subject. He asked whether Ms GEORGE's Decalogue applied also to CETA and wondered if the TTIP would be defined as a mixed agreement. The need to grant full transparency was voiced also by Mr Maximos CHARAKOPOULOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*. Mr Dominik TARCZINSKY, Polish *Sejm*, wondered what the EU would do in case the USA did not change its stance on the issue of public procurement. He blamed the lack of transparency entirely on the Commission.

Reacting to the first round of interventions, Mr HOUBEN highlighted that, although President Trump had made a number of protectionist statements, he never mentioned TTIP. He further stressed that the EU would be reviewing its position according to the official US statement when it came. According to him, national Parliaments were free to give their respective governments whatever indication concerning the mandate of negotiations and that would have an influence in the process itself. He replied to critical remarks made, among others, on transparency, communicating with citizens, secret negotiations, lowering standards of protection mentioning the publicity of the mandate, the oversight of both the Council and the EP, the publicity of the EC position at every stage of the negotiations, and the reading rooms. Commenting on aspects of trade on agriculture, he stressed that the EU had a net surplus in trade with US. As far as the geographical indications were concerned, Mr HOUBEN underlined that it was something the EU could obtain through negotiations. He also stressed that only by negotiating with the US, could the EU promote trade of its own products and services. Concluding, he underlined the difference of nature of the International Court System, which represented a clear improvement compared to the ISDN.

On the opposite side, Mr Franc TRČEK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, expressed the view of the minority of his Parliament mentioning the democratic deficit of TTIP. He also stressed that many local administrations opposed these agreements. Ms Oudekki LOONE, Estonian *Riigikogu*, expressed her gratitude to Ms GEORGE and invited everyone to refrain from optimistic messages. For her, the TTIP was about making life easier for multinationals. Mr KOURAKIS stressed how every day social unrest was growing. He affirmed that for SMEs the benefits of the agreement would be minimal, while there would no longer be any obstacle for the growth of multinationals. He stated that under the proposed framework they would no longer be accountable.

Ms Idoia VILLANUEVA, Spanish *Senado*, pointed to clear signs of the growing distrust in the EU project amidst the trouble experienced by the transatlantic trade agreements. Mr Marc ANGEL, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, considered the TTIP a process facing a slow death. Mr PRETZELL expressed his adhesion to the views of Ms GEORGE and thanked her for her work. Mr Igor PIMENOV, Latvian *Saeima*, wondered if the TTIP could really contribute to the competitiveness of SMEs, and if it could have beneficial influence for EU Member States. A final critique came from Mr Gerard CRAUGHWELL, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, who condemned the process of negotiations initiated by faceless people. He indicated that the EU agriculture could be destroyed because of the agreement. He also stressed the limitations of access to the reading rooms.

In the final response to all interventions, Ms TURAN stressed that norms that were under discussion had immediate implications for the lives of all. She acknowledged that trade agreements were very important, especially those with US and Canada and underlined that the EU had to seize the opportunity to strengthen its values. Although recognising the US as very important partners, she recalled the equal importance of other partners and other international norms like the ones of ILO. Finally, Ms TURAN agreed that the European Commission had a mandate, but insisted on Parliaments' duty to always take a good look at the content of negotiations. Balanced trade agreements were the objective of the Union, according to her.

Ms HÜBNER recalled the procedure that had led to the mandate. She recalled that all EU actors were involved and reminded the national Parliaments of their obligation to scrutinise their governments when the mandate was being defined. She praised the ICS which would be composed by judges appointed by the parties and she rejected the idea that the right to regulate was under threat.

Mr HOUBEN expressed his appreciation for the rich and deep debate. He stressed that it was important to define together how relations with national Parliaments would be structured in the future as far as trade was concerned. He recalled the looming adjudication of the EU Court of Justice concerning the competences in the field of trade. He recalled the legal framework as indicated by the treaties according to which the main responsibility in terms of scrutiny was the EP.

Finally, Ms GEORGE also expressed her appreciation for the quality of the discussion and the alertness of the national Parliaments.

5. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

The Chair informed that all delegations had received a table with the original draft text of the contributions circulated on 31 October 2016, the amendments submitted by delegations before the meeting, a modified compromise text following the Troika's meeting the day before, as well as new amendments submitted by the deadline of 12pm that day. A discussion as to the procedure of

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ briefly described some of the elements of this “jumbo package”, starting firstly with energy efficiency and new standards by which to measure the energy performance of buildings whereby smart buildings were to be part of this new economic structure and transformation in Europe; smart financing for smart buildings, linked to the European Fund for Strategic Investment, and offered to all those who would like to restructure buildings. Secondly, he mentioned eco-design and eco-buildings, which were bound to lead to huge savings. Thirdly, he referred to the package concerning new electricity market design, with renewables better integrated into the system and a regional and close-border approach adopted, linked with a new directive on renewables and a new role of Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). This, he said, was the agenda for the end of the year.

On the other hand, 2017 marked the year of implementation: the year in which each government was to work on energy governance and climate plans, and discussions on how they wanted to fit in this energy union and respect the commitments signed up for in Paris. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ summarised the upcoming year as basically the coordination of 27 energy plans.

The moderator, Ms Zuzana GABRIŽOVÁ, Editor-in-chief of Euractiv.sk, welcomed the panellists, and invited them to talk about the most pressing issues in the area of energy and climate in their respective countries.

The first panellist, Ms Danielle AUROI, French *Assemblée nationale*, referred to the COP 22 conference taking place in Marrakech to which she was attending. She said that, while the EU shaped the decision making in Paris, she wanted to see more solidarity and integration at the EU level. Ms AUROI stressed that the EU was the leader in the global fight against climate change, and lauded the added value of joint European steps and the several priorities of the EU energy policy. It was important to ensure an energy system which was more efficient and yet resulted in less pollution; reduce the carbon footprint; integrate the energy market; and to have a transition to alternative and renewable energy sources in a more efficient manner. To this end, Ms AUROI stated that the EU had to increase its investing. Turning her attention to Parliaments of third countries, Ms AUROI was pleased that the Indian delegation had been convinced to sign COP 21.

The following panellist, Mr PALLING said that the EU had to become connected, open and smart for a competitive Europe. This would bring new growth and opportunity to business with a well-functioning energy union. The latter could not do without free market and quality connections, however. Mr PALLING admitted that efficient energy security and use of resources were not easy to achieve, but were the key to success, as were digital solutions and the greater involvement of consumers.

Mr PALLING continued by recalling that Tallin was taking over the Presidency from Malta, and it intended to put focus on energy issues, including an integrated energy market, investments and energy interconnections to eliminate energy islands and ensure supply. Mr PALLING called for a wider choice for consumers by opening energy markets, as was the case in Estonia, which also provided cheaper energy solutions when compared to other Member States. Referring to efforts toward establishing an interconnected market in Estonia, Mr PALLING said that Estonia had achieved a lot for the benefit of the country, but also for the region and the EU as a whole, citing cables between Finland and Estonia, the Baltic connector, and a similar connection with Latvia as examples. Mr PALLING stressed that an interconnected energy market should be on everybody's agenda.

Mr Piotr APEL, Polish *Sejm*, contributed to this subject from another point of view, urging the EU and its Member States to sign international agreements which proposed greener measures on the global scale, and thus ensure that trading partners adopt similar measures.

A couple of speakers, including Mr Zoltán TESSELY, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, referred to the special needs and characteristics of different countries, in particular those on the periphery. In this vein, Mr Arto PIRTILAHITI, Finnish *Eduskunta*, and Mr Piotr WACH, Polish *Senat*, both asked for recognition of forestry in counterbalancing emissions. Some Polish Members (Ms KLOC, Mr WACH, and Mr APEL) stressed Poland's dependence on the coal industry and the jobs that it created.

Social issues and questions of fairness and energy justice were also touched upon by some Members, with Mr KOURAKIS, and Mr António CARDOSO, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, both calling for solidarity, whereas Mr Franc TRČEK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, explicitly referred to the fight against energy poverty and price dumping.

With regard to countries outside the Union, Ms TAŞKESENLIOĞLU said Turkey had great potential thanks to its geopolitical advantage and played an important role in the transportation of energy throughout the region, whereas Mr Dominik TARCZYNSKI, Polish *Sejm*, accused Germany, which, he stressed, bought energy from Russia, of setting unacceptable policies in the field of energy.

In her replies, Ms AUROI referred to energy injustices and said that subsidies to assist in building insulation and transition were in place in France and were important to ease the transition. She asked the Commission whether any measures against price dumping were in place.

Ms AUROI said that certain Member States wanted to have direct negotiations with Russia and wanted even more Russian natural gas to come to Europe: a more integrated market would enable the EU to answer the demand in a joint and united voice.

Ms AUROI asked the Commission how much money was needed to invest in energy union, and how much would be saved thanks to smart buildings.

As for renewable energy sources, she was concerned because some sources were preferred over others, and sometimes this applied pressure on certain sources. Ms AUROI also referred to the need to cooperate on carbon economy in order to come up with an attractive price of carbon in order to support fulfilment of targets.

Mr COSTA SILVA said it was clear that Europe spoke with a multitude of voices and this was a good sign as it showed a diversification of points of views. He added that one could not adapt everything to everyone though, and common ground had to be found. In this regard, it was necessary to adopt a long list of measures guaranteeing energy efficiency throughout the EU.

Mr COSTA SILVA warned against a one-size-fits-all solution, proposing instead measures which fit different regions with their specific characteristics.

Mr PALLING said that investments in interconnections should be taken care of by the EU and then this would invite private investment. He stressed that when all the states were connected together, the gas and energy market would become wider, and this meant economies of scale and cheaper

Concluding, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ said the energy union was really about the new economy and how to create the new backbone for the economy of the 21st century. He was looking forward to visit national Parliaments and go through the energy policy with Members of Parliament.

7. Session V: 'Securing the external borders of the EU in the context of irregular migration'

Keynote speakers: Mr Robert KALIŇÁK, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic

Panellists: Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Mr Lucio ROMANO, Vice-Chair of the Committee on European Affairs Policies, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*

Moderator: Ms Katarína CSÉFALVAYOVÁ, Vice-Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Slovak *Národná rada*

Opening his speech, Mr Robert KALIŇÁK, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the Slovak Republic, made reference to the period when Slovakia together with other countries were joining the Schengen zone. For the successful external border protection, according to the Deputy Prime Minister, it was important to defend internal security within the Schengen area and to actively prevent illegal migration. To achieve this, Mr KALIŇÁK identified two key elements. The first one concerned technical considerations and human resources. The second one had to do with high quality readmission agreements and here Mr KALIŇÁK stressed the need to cultivate sound relations with third countries, referring to the re-admission agreement with Ukraine as an example of such agreement, which worked perfectly.

A successful return policy could work as the main tool when fighting illegal migration and serve as a demotivation for illegal migrants, he continued, explaining that those who were not subject to persecution would think twice before travelling if they knew that a good return policy was in place and that they would be returned back to their country.

Mr KALIŇÁK also emphasised the need to have a top quality asylum policy, and recalled cases when a change in political stance in a third country led to automatic asylum status to certain people in that country, which then caused additional linked problems as they later came in great numbers to the European countries.

Mr KALIŇÁK questioned the current practice, which seemed to favour those who could afford the trip to Europe leaving the most vulnerable behind. Furthermore, this did not augur well for the recovery of countries like Syria in the longer term. Finally, he also stressed the need to distinguish between migrants and pinpoint real asylum seekers.

Finally, with regard to the integration process and past mistakes made, Mr KALIŇÁK said that this was far from perfect in some European cities, which were indiscriminately facing large number of migrants.

The moderator, Ms Katarína CSÉFALVAYOVÁ, introduced the panels and asked for their comments on the keynote speech delivered by Mr KALIŇÁK, in particular referring to European cooperation in this field, and future steps to be taken.

Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, said that Brexit and migration were the two main challenges currently faced by the EU. These would challenge the stability of the whole union if no common priorities were set, as

Mr SAUCHA and Ms Dušica STOJKOVIĆ, Serbian *Narodna Skupština*, both emphasised the importance of keeping the Balkan route closed. Mr SAUCHA, together with Ms KAVVADIA, Mr CHARAKOUPoulos and Mr Anastasios KOURAKIS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, also noted the importance of the coastal guard in protecting external maritime borders. The latter also pointed out the restrictions faced by coastal Member States on maritime borders and law, as well as the humanitarian dimension of the crisis.

Other issues brought up during the debate concerned the costs incurred by Member States afflicted by the migratory pressures and the sales of firearms which exacerbated these pressures (Ms KARAMANLI), the radicalisation in Member States and possible return of radicalised citizens from Syria (Mr YÜKSEL) and the importance of distinguishing between different types of migrants, and especially between refugees fleeing war and persecution and economic migrants (Mr MADISON).

Ms Francisca PERREIRA, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, insisted on the EU dimension of any action aimed at protecting external borders. She stressed that the EU had to give power to the agency and insure the continuity of Schengen. Mr Angelos VOTSIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton antiprosopon*, underlined that one had to disconnect terrorism from migration, because the two phenomena were not necessarily linked. He insisted that more integrated efforts were needed to fight irregular immigration and trafficking, as well as the roots of the phenomena. Saluting the decision on the coast guards, he invoked an immediate implementation of the joint EU-Turkey statement. Mr BANA declared that the EU was under unprecedented migratory pressure and that the EU had to prevent terrorists from abusing the right to protection for asylum seekers. He concluded claiming that Hungary had taken the right decision by building a wall to protect the EU external borders. Mr Svetlen TANCHEV, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, underlined the high pressure that Bulgaria was facing on the EU external borders. He stressed that, though not a member of the Schengen area, Bulgaria had acted as a *de facto* member. He added that his country was actively supporting the entry-exit system.

In his reply, Mr HÖRCSIK underlined that one of the most crucial problems for the EU was protecting the external borders, which implied the question of solidarity and security. According to him, the solution was to be found in a joint effort implicating origin, transit and destination countries. He also appealed for a stronger effort of the EU as far as the external dimensions of the problem. He affirmed that the scarce implementation of Council decisions concerning relocation and resettlement for the benefit of Italy in Greece was a sign of the inadequate nature of the measures.

Mr ROMANO underlined the cultural diversities, disputes and divides that the issue of migration had demonstrated. Nevertheless, he said he was sure that it was possible to find a joint approach. To that end, he insisted that it was necessary to change the methodology in facing the problem. He stated that barriers and fences would have no effect on the phenomena we were facing. He insisted on the need to developing partnership with countries like Senegal or Nigeria as the only way to solve the problem, which was a global problem, at the origin.

Mr KALIŇÁK replied to the first interventions by assuring that he understood how crucial it was to share the burden and expenditures that countries like Italy and Greece were sustaining. He insisted on the need to help each other in an effective way and stressed that the current system of relocation had failed. He expressed the opinion that the EU needed to have a frank discussion to find a functioning model of relocation and it would need to be supported by all Member States. He regretted that on some serious issues a lot of time had been wasted before coming to action, like it

In his final reply, Mr HÖRCSIK referred to an existing clear strong will to find a common solution for the current crisis. He invited the Commission to take further steps for a secure EU and invited everyone to look for solutions in the countries of origins and in the countries at war.

Mr ROMANO recognised that the positions were different, but welcomed that the EU Member States were debating and at the EU level were building bridges, which was the duty of leaders and of all humanity. He stressed that the solution depended on a bigger show of goodwill from all and a fair share also of the negative consequences of being members of the EU.

Mr KALIŇÁK saluted the importance of the debate. He stressed the need to fight against abuse of the right to access and protection as the crucial way to an effective migration policy. For him, only a successful return policy could ensure that the EU had a functioning asylum policy for those who were really persecuted. He also listed the prevention of criminality, responsibility in the external action and readmission policy, like the one that Spain had enacted, as priorities for the EU in the field.

8. Adoption of the Contribution of the LVI COSAC

Mr BLAHA mentioned that the first draft of the LVI Contribution, which had been sent to the delegations before the meeting, and the amendments submitted to the text were discussed by the Troika. The Presidency, following the Troika meeting, submitted a revised compromise text allowing the possibility to table new amendments. A modified text was presented and approved by the Chairpersons the day before.

The text of the Contribution of the LVI COSAC was adopted, as amended by the Chairpersons.

Mr BLAHA informed the delegations that two declarations had been submitted following approval at the Chairpersons meeting. First, a declaration on recent earthquakes in Italy submitted by the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, which was open for signature by individual Members at the foyer of the premises. Second, a declaration on the recent situation in Turkey, jointly submitted by the German *Bundestag*, French *Assemblée nationale*, French *Sénat*, UK *House of Lords*, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Finnish *Eduskunta*, Swedish *Riksdag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Danish *Folketing*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Luxembourg *Chambres des représentants* and Italian *Senato della Repubblica*; in relation to this, the delegations were asked to submit their intention to join the declaration by email to the Presidency by the end of the day. The Chair stressed that only this electronic form would be taken into consideration and therefore the list in the foyer for this declaration should be disregarded.

Mr BLAHA gave the floor to Mr BUSUTTIL, who informed the delegations about the upcoming COSAC Chairpersons' meeting in Malta on 22-23 January 2017 and the LVII COSAC on 28-30 May 2017. A short video about the Maltese Presidency was screened.

Finally, Mr BLAHA thanked all the delegations for participating in the meeting, as well as the meeting's organisers.



Bratislava, 15th November 2016

PLENARY MEETING OF THE LVI COSAC

13 – 15 November 2016, Bratislava

Contribution of the LVI COSAC

1. Strengthening the role of national Parliaments in the EU

1.1 COSAC appreciates the progress of the current European Commission (2014 -) in improving the relations with national Parliaments, as documented in the 26th Bi-annual Report of COSAC, notably through the increased number of visits of Commissioners to national Parliaments/Chambers, and encourages the European Commission to further pursue this effort to create a form of lasting dialogue with national Parliaments. This dialogue supports the competencies of the national Parliaments to keep their national Governments accountable and to scrutinise their national and EU policies.

1.2 In the field of political dialogue between the European Commission and national Parliaments, COSAC sees potential for improvement of responses to national Parliaments' reasoned opinions and therefore suggests that the European Commission better addresses national Parliaments' specific concerns within a period of no more than eight weeks and analyse all possible points of views when preparing its responses, especially the responses when the so-called "yellow card" mechanism is triggered. COSAC also stresses the importance of discussions and exchanges of views in the subsidiarity check procedure between national Parliaments.

1.3 COSAC, in light of the established political dialogue with the EU Commission, invites the European Parliament to enhance, for its part, the consideration of the national Parliaments' opinions in the framework of the political dialogue in the relevant parliamentary committees.

1.4 COSAC considers the „green card" mechanism an important tool to improve the role of national Parliaments and therefore encourages national Parliaments to continue exploring future possibilities of using the initiatives under the „green card".

1.5 COSAC notes that communicating the EU issues effectively in current circumstances proves to be one of the crucial elements in bridging the gap between the European Union and its citizens and recognises the role of national Parliaments in engaging citizens, providing them with impartial information and raising general awareness of EU related issues. In this respect it is important to underline the democratic mandate the national Parliaments have representing the voters. In the context of the outcome of the UK referendum, COSAC recognizes the crucial role of national Parliaments, as institutions of direct democratic mandate and accountability, in contributing to the functioning and the future of the unique project of the European Union.

1.6 COSAC invites all parliaments to play a more vocal role in communicating the EU issues and to achieve this, encourages national Parliaments as well as the European Parliament to share

their experience and best practices in the field of communication among them. Furthermore, COSAC notes that targeting and adapting the content of communication of EU issues may prove useful when engaging with specific groups, such as universities, schools, etc.

1.7 To make full use of available technologies, COSAC invites Parliaments to fully explore possibilities arising from using social media channels, which may increase awareness about EU issues and about Parliaments as the most relevant centres of debate, especially in relation to the European youth.

2. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): a trade agreement between the European Union and the United States (and its challenges, opportunities and risks)

2.1 COSAC recognises that EU's trade policy is of utmost geopolitical and economic importance for Europe to shape globalisation, to strengthen international standards and to increase access to foreign markets; COSAC considers that fairly negotiated, transparent and widely shared comprehensive trade agreements with third countries, negotiated with a view to reaching mutually beneficial results can be important tools that are capable of improving the EU's share of global trade; COSAC notes that international rules will be set by others, if the European Union does not act now.

2.2 COSAC views balanced trade agreements as a chance to promote growth and job creation, as well as to strengthen sustainable development, enforcing human rights, labour and social standards, and environmental sustainability on a global scale, but also to ensure the provision of services and municipal services. COSAC demands that the European Union better defends its interests in the negotiations and insists on principle of reciprocity.

2.3 COSAC acknowledges the differences in opinion and the scepticism being voiced by many European citizens about the content of these trade agreements and urges the European institutions, national Parliaments and the governments to address the concerns, to clearly demonstrate the impacts of the trade agreements and to ensure transparency of the negotiation processes.

2.4 COSAC welcomes the Commission's improved transparency measures of the TTIP negotiation process, however, it stresses the need to achieve an even higher level of transparency for all trade agreements that could address the concerns of European citizens and parliamentarians.

2.5 COSAC is convinced that the negotiation process and the outcomes of this process should fully respect the principles of freedom, democracy, rule of law, dignity and social cohesion, on which European Union is founded, and in this way ensure a solid guarantee that there will be a strengthening, rather than weakening of European regulations and standards, in case of the conclusion and signing of TTIP.

2.6 COSAC emphasises that the national Parliaments, as well as the European Parliament, must be able to scrutinise the TTIP negotiation process in line with provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (notably article 218). COSAC considers that TTIP can only be provisionally applied, once the European Parliament has given its consent to a final agreement concluded by the Council. COSAC therefore urges the Commission and the governments of Member States to continue the process of intensified communication with national Parliaments and the European Parliament. COSAC also reminds that it is expected that TTIP is a mixed agreement, therefore an eventual entering into force of TTIP will be subject to the relevant national ratification procedures in all Member States.

3. 2016: Energy Union's „year of delivery”

3.1 COSAC welcomes the project of the Energy Union and its ambitions to lead the EU towards a more secure and sustainable energy policy, putting it at the forefront of renewable energy production and the fight against climate change. This cannot be achieved on purely intergovernmental level, therefore common European solutions are needed.

3.2 COSAC notes that the EU is the biggest importer of energy in the world, whereby reliance of a number of its Member States on a single supplier makes the EU extremely vulnerable. COSAC sees the high energy prices in the EU compared to competitors with concern. Therefore, COSAC is in favour of strengthening consumer rights that can, inter alia, effectively help in the fight against energy poverty. COSAC therefore recalls that the goal of the Energy Union is to provide European consumers with not only secure, sustainable and ecological energy, but also with energy which is competitive and more affordable. In attaining this objective, sovereign decisions of the Member States must be respected, while supporting solutions, which are better achieved at the EU level.

3.3 COSAC stresses the importance of the Member States' solidarity and trust to achieve energy security in the EU and underlines the importance of their common approach with regard to third countries. In this context, COSAC expresses concern at projects, which are perceived as technically, environmentally, economically and geopolitically ungrounded and counter-productive from the energy security point of view. On the contrary, in regards to the strengthening of the Single Market and energy security, COSAC supports efforts to maximise the EU's use of indigenous sources of energy including those for stable and secure electricity generation and optimal diversification of energy supply routes, while underlining the importance of closer regional cooperation.

3.4 COSAC recalls that 12 Member States remain below 10% electricity interconnection target and thus largely isolated from the internal electricity market. COSAC calls for the European Fund for Strategic Investments to give special attention to projects that address the most significant lack of sufficient interconnectivity.

3.5 COSAC welcomes the Paris Agreement and considers it as a milestone in the fight against climate change and as a strong commitment to the environment and next generations. COSAC

also welcomes the swift ratification of this agreement by the EU and calls for its unconditional implementation. COSAC considers that the project of Energy Union can make a substantial contribution to achieve the Paris Agreement's goals and, in the longer term, help meet energy and climate targets set by the EU for 2020, 2030 and 2050.

3.6 COSAC underlines the importance of research and development investment for the Energy Union and stresses their potential in constructing a secure, effective and ecological Energy Union and in reducing energy production costs with a clear priority in respect of the Paris Agreement on Renewable Energy. In this respect COSAC also welcomes the work for a better Emission Trading System (ETS) which contribute to modernise the European Energy.

3.7 COSAC believes that efforts in developing innovative low-emission technologies and solutions as well as progress in cost-effective innovations play an irreplaceable role in strengthening EU's competitiveness.

3.8 In order to achieve as large energy savings as possible, COSAC supports measures at the local level focused on building reconstruction and increasing the share of the public transport usage.

4. Securing the external borders of the EU in the context of irregular migration

4.1 COSAC recognizes all humanitarian aspects of solving the migration and refugee crisis. COSAC further stresses the importance of finding safe and legal ways for eligible asylum seekers and refugees to come to the EU. COSAC appreciates the EU's cooperation with countries of transit and origin of migration flows, and stresses that protection of human rights of migrants and asylum seekers and refugees must be at the centre of EU actions undertaken in order to solve the migration crisis. COSAC considers securing the EU's external borders as a matter of immediate priority for the successful management of current and future irregular migratory flows.

4.2 COSAC reaffirms the importance of solidarity, responsibility and fair burden sharing among member states based on the need for an acceptable solution to irregular migration in accordance with Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) while respecting human rights and all international treaties and conventions. COSAC encourages the European Union to address and eliminate the root causes of migration. COSAC invites the Slovak Presidency, but also future Presidencies, to submit compromise proposals and to actively contribute in finding effective and acceptable solutions on migration issues with a special focus on human rights, solidarity and humanity, as well as on easy-to-access reception management on the ground.

4.3 COSAC also underlines the necessary internal European and global solidarity for effective resettlement programs to support states such as Italy and Greece in tackling refugee care and shelter.

4.4 With regard to the maintaining and tightening of controls of the Eastern Mediterranean route, COSAC calls for an immediate implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and reminds the need for its full and uniform application towards all Member States of the European Union.

4.5 COSAC endorses the recognition made by the European Council, at its October meeting, of “the significant contribution, including of financial nature, made by frontline Member States in recent years”; COSAC calls on the European Institutions to take into special consideration the efforts put forth by these States to fulfil the humanitarian obligation that are: to save the lives of the growing numbers of asylum seekers that arrive to Europe’s external borders, to provide for rescue operations, identification, health care assistance, shelter, clothes, food, and social integration. To this end, these specific expenditures should be considered in the calculation of the structural government budget balance.

4.6 COSAC highlights that the European Union, as an area of freedom of movement and opened borders, needs to pursue a joint European migration policy with emphasis on both the protection of EU’s citizens and external borders, safety and solidarity with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants while respecting human rights and all international treaties and conventions. COSAC strongly supports all initiatives aiming at the protection of the external borders and restoring regularity in the Schengen area and therefore welcomes the creation of the European Border and Coast Guard. COSAC underlines the importance of prompt implementation of the regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard and solving the problem of insufficiently quick returns, by taking full advantage of the EBCG’s mandate. In this context, COSAC recalls the need for personnel and material supply for the effective functioning of the European Border and Coast Guard.

4.7 COSAC welcomes ongoing work on the project of linked SIS (Schengen Information System) – AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System) for identification of missing persons based on fingerprints, as well as the feasibility study and legislative proposal on the EU Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to be published soon which will help secure EU borders and determine if the person did not exceed the permitted time of stay in the EU. COSAC underlines the challenge of effective implementation of these new tools within the shortest possible time.

4.8 Stressing the challenges linked to the security and the control of external borders of the EU, COSAC asks that the discussions in the European Parliament on the implementation of the EU entry/exit system for recording entries and exits of third country nationals crossing the external borders of the EU Member States and on establishing of a registered travellers programme (RTP) are finalised as soon as possible, while addressing concerns as to the costs, proportionality and data protection.

4.9 Finally, COSAC stresses the importance of sharing good practices in integrating migrant youth and families in local societies providing education and good work.

DOCUMENT 6

DECLARATION by German Bundestag, French National Assembly, French Senate, House of Lords of UK, Cyprus, Finland, Sweden, Hellenic republic, Latvia, Denmark, Spanish Congress of Deputies and Senate, Luxembourg, Italian Senate:

COSAC condemns the attempted coup d'Etat that took place in Turkey last July, but expresses its strong concern at the large number of politically motivated arrests that have taken place in recent months.

COSAC calls for the immediate release of imprisoned parliamentarians, the application of the rule of law to all ongoing cases, and respect for freedom of expression.

COSAC calls for evaluation of pre-accession assistance relating to reform of the Turkish judicial and institutional system.

DECLARATION PAR LE BUNDESTAG ALLEMAND, L'ASSEMBLEE NATIONALE FRANÇAIS, LE SENAT FRANÇAIS, LA CHAMBRE DES LORDS DU ROYAUME-UNI, LE CHYPRE, LA FINLANDE, LA SUEDE, LA GRECE, LA LETTONIE, LE DANEMARK, LE CONGRES DES DEPUTES ET LE SENAT ESPAGNOL, LE LUXEMBOURG, LE SENAT ITALIEN

La COSAC condamne la tentative de coup d'Etat ayant eu lieu en Turquie en juillet dernier mais exprime sa vive préoccupation quant au grand nombre d'arrestations pour des motifs politiques ayant eu lieu au cours des derniers mois.

La COSAC demande la libération immédiate des parlementaires emprisonnés, l'application des règles de l'Etat de droit à toutes les procédures en cours et le respect de la liberté d'expression.

La COSAC demande l'évaluation des aides de pré accession relatives à la réforme du système judiciaires et institutionnel turque.