

(1st draft as of 6 November 2018)

Plenary Meeting of the LX COSAC

18-20 November 2018, Vienna

Contribution of the LX COSAC

1. Security and the fight against illegal migration

1.1. COSAC recalls the need for a comprehensive EU approach to migration, which ensures coherence between internal and external policies, encompasses all migration routes and is based on the principles and values on which the EU is built. A long-term and effective response to the human, social and political challenges of irregular migration and forced displacement demands enhanced cooperation with the countries of origin and transit as part of a broader partnership in order to tackle the root causes of these phenomena.

1.2. COSAC considers that greater efforts must be made to protect the EU's external borders, with the goal of preventing irregular entry into the EU, tackling human trafficking and smuggling and preventing loss of life at sea. It also underlines the necessity to significantly step up the effective return of irregular migrants in line with fundamental principles of international and EU law. Existing readmission agreements should be better implemented and new agreements concluded, including by using the necessary leverage consisting of all relevant EU policies, instruments and tools.

1.3. COSAC welcomes the Commission proposals on the Return Directive, the Asylum agency and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency¹, ensuring the most efficient use of resources and with due respect for the responsibility of the Member States.

1.4. COSAC recalls that the EU heads of state or government gathered at an informal

¹ COM(2018) 634 final, COM(2018) 633 final and COM(2018) 631 final.

meeting in Salzburg on 19-20 September 2018 to discuss important matters of internal security, took stock of progress achieved, and agreed, inter alia, to step up the fight against all forms of cyber-crime, manipulation and disinformation. In this regard, COSAC calls for measures to combat cyber and cyber-enabled illegal and malicious activities and build strong cybersecurity. Work on all recent Commission proposals should be concluded before the end of the legislature.

1.5. COSAC stresses the importance of measures aimed at strengthening the capacity to prevent and respond effectively to radicalisation and terrorism. It supports recent steps to improve the interoperability of information systems and databases as well as to strengthen the Union's crisis management capacity and the coherence and effectiveness of the EU and national crisis response mechanisms.

2. Securing prosperity and competitiveness through digitalisation

2.1. COSAC emphasises that, in order to sustainably secure its prosperity and competitiveness, it is essential that the EU consistently avoid overregulation and make progress in the fields of innovation and digitalisation.

2.2. COSAC invites the co-legislators to take work swiftly forward on the proposals on digital taxation and on the latest data package as well as to deliver on the remaining legislative proposals concerning the Digital Single Market before the end of the current legislative cycle. In line with the position of the European Council, COSAC welcomes the ongoing work of the Commission and Member States on a coordinated plan on artificial intelligence.

2.3. COSAC welcomes that the Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe continues well-established funding instruments but will also provide new impetus, be it with respect to the European Innovation Council or developments towards a stronger mission orientation of research and innovation. COSAC supports the development of key capacities of the Digital Europe Programme such as high-performance computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and advanced digital skills as well as ensuring their wide use and accessibility across the economy and society by businesses and the public sector alike.

2.4. COSAC is concerned that the persistent digital gender gap throughout the EU is jeopardising progress in this area. Women are under-represented at all levels in the digital sector in Europe. Although this sector is rapidly growing, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year, the share of women in this sector is decreasing. To counteract this development, COSAC supports Commission initiatives aimed at combating stereotypes, investing and enhancing digital competences, and facilitating women's participation in digital

entrepreneurship and innovation.

3. Western Balkans / South Eastern Europe

3.1. Together with the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU, COSAC reconfirms its unequivocal support and strengthened engagement for developing a concrete EU perspective with measurable results for the Western Balkan / South Eastern European partners relating to their individual performance and based on shared values and principles, such as democracy, rule of law, good governance, media freedom, respect for human rights, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, along with the fight against corruption and organised crime.

3.2. COSAC welcomes the Joint Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations signed at the Western Balkans Summit in London on 10 July 2018 in the framework of the Berlin Process and supports the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU in advancing the agenda.

3.3. While acknowledging the progress made by the Western Balkan / South Eastern European partners, COSAC reiterates that more efforts are needed to accelerate domestic reform processes and achieve irreversible and sustainable results. COSAC underlines that continued steady efforts are also needed to tackle outstanding bilateral disputes in the region, including border disputes. COSAC welcomes positive developments in the region, especially the historic agreement between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece in the long-standing name dispute.

3.4. COSAC calls on the Western Balkan / South Eastern European partners to strengthen their resilience to destabilising foreign interferences and disinformation and to lock in their strategic choices by progressively and fully aligning with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.

4. Brexit – current state

4.1. COSAC acknowledges that the EU27 leaders reaffirmed at the European Council (Art. 50) meeting on 17 October 2018 their full confidence in Michel Barnier as the Union Chief Negotiator and their determination to stay united. Despite intensive negotiations, not enough progress has been achieved yet.

4.2. COSAC encourages the Union Chief Negotiator to continue his efforts to reach an agreement in accordance with previously agreed European Council guidelines, and welcomes plans to convene a European Council, if and when the Union Chief negotiator reports that decisive progress has been made.

4.3. COSAC stresses the importance of further cooperation at inter-parliamentary level with the United Kingdom after Brexit. COSAC will examine possible modalities after the withdrawal agreement is concluded and the framework of the future relations between the EU and the United Kingdom is known.

5. Climate policy and Energy Union

5.1. COSAC reaffirms the commitment of the European Union and its Member States to swiftly and fully implement the Paris Agreement and to continue to lead in the fight against climate change, including through the adoption of pending legislative proposals at EU level. The Agreement remains a cornerstone of global efforts to effectively tackle climate change on a global level.

5.2. COSAC welcomes the project of the Energy Union and all efforts aiming at a more secure and sustainable energy policy. COSAC supports the comprehensive approach putting the European Union at the forefront of the fight against climate change and increasing the production of renewable energy. With a view to COP24 that will be held in Poland from 3 until 14 December 2018, COSAC hopes for the adoption of ambitious and comprehensive implementing rules of the Paris Agreement.

5.3. COSAC considers that the project of the Energy Union can make a substantial contribution to achieve the Paris Agreement's goals. In particular, COSAC underlines that the promotion of renewable energies contributes to reaching the goals set out in the Paris agreement. At the same time the use of renewable energy diminishes the European Union's dependency on energy imports.

5.4. COSAC endorses measures that lead to a swift and comprehensive adoption of the

Clean Energy Package, especially all steps taken to create an internal market for electricity and to improve the risk-preparedness of the European Union. Furthermore, COSAC welcomes the creation of a system for the governance of the Energy Union which integrates climate and energy planning into a single framework as this would create a cooperation mechanism to oversee the implementation of the 2030 EU climate and energy policy objectives.

5.5. COSAC notes that a number of Member States rely on a single energy supplier thus making the European Union - the world's biggest importer of energy – particularly vulnerable. COSAC supports all efforts to maximise the European Union's use of indigenous sources of energy. COSAC points out that measures taken to protect the environment and increase the production of renewable energy are also contributing to the European Union's competitiveness. In this context, COSAC highlights the importance of research and development. Furthermore, COSAC supports the promotion of new energy technologies and innovative solutions.

5.6. While advocating plans leading to the protection of the climate and the environment COSAC underlines that a sustainable future for industry and business and fair competition must be ensured. Affordability of energy and the competitiveness of European industry need to be kept in mind. The specific needs of energy-intensive industries must be taken into account.

5.7. COSAC reiterates that the fight against climate change must remain one of the key endeavours in the European Union's environmental policy. At the same time, other causes of pollution of the environment must not be neglected. In this context, COSAC notes that plastics and especially microplastics contribute considerably to pollution, in particular of inland waters and oceans. COSAC attaches importance to stepping up activities against plastic pollution and to stopping the use of microplastics in various product groups. COSAC endorses measures aimed at reducing plastic waste, especially single-use plastics.

5.8. COSAC welcomes the activities of the European Union's LIFE programme which supports climate action and environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU. COSAC underlines the importance of such projects.

6. A transparent European Union closer to its citizens in light of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament

6.1. COSAC underlines the key role of the principle of subsidiarity in bringing the European Union closer to its citizens. Decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely to the citizens

as possible.

6.2. COSAC welcomes the Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and “Doing Less More Efficiently” and the recent Communication from the European Commission “The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality: Strengthening their role in the EU's policymaking” and the included recommendations to make subsidiarity more active and visible.

6.3. COSAC emphasises that the due involvement of national Parliaments in policymaking and legislative processes at European level is of major importance for ensuring a high degree of transparency, efficiency and public acceptance. COSAC encourages the EU's institutions and national and regional Parliaments, regional and local authorities, and civil society to work together in order to improve the exchange of ideas between Parliaments, authorities and citizens across the European Union.

6.4. COSAC welcomes the European Commission's proposals to enhance the communication with regional and local authorities and to take into account their specificities in general consultations. COSAC invites regional and local authorities to intensify their interaction with the European Commission.

6.5. COSAC considers the Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and “Doing Less More Efficiently” and the Communication from the European Commission “The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality: Strengthening their role in the EU's policymaking” a good basis for further discussions. These discussions should cover, inter alia, the possible introduction of a twelve week deadline for the submission of reasoned opinions within the framework of the subsidiarity control mechanism as well as the question of providing national Parliaments with the additional opportunity to express their views about proportionality and the legal basis of a proposed legislation in reasoned opinions, taking into account that certain modifications may require Treaty changes. COSAC reiterates that it appreciates the so called “green card” mechanism as a possible extension of the political dialogue between the European Commission and the national Parliaments.

6.6. With regard to the European Commission's proposal for a mandatory transparency register, COSAC calls on all stakeholders to address the issue in a constructive way.

6.7. COSAC stresses that the representation of the European Union's citizens in the European Parliament must be based on free and fair elections. Political parties at European level serve as a direct link between citizens and the political system, contributing to transparency and a better understanding of the European Union's decision-making processes.

6.8. In view of the upcoming European elections on 23–26 May 2019, COSAC appreciates the EU Institutions' efforts to reinforce democratic resilience in Europe. Securing transparency in online political advertising, fighting disinformation campaigns, improving the rules on European political party funding and boosting cybersecurity are important measures to effectively counter new types of threats to free and fair elections.

6.9. COSAC recalls that every citizen of the European Union shall have the right to participate in the Union's democratic life. National Parliaments and the European Parliament encourage all European citizens to actively use their democratic rights at all levels, including the need to use their right to vote in the upcoming European elections.