

CONTRIBUTION OF THE XLVII COSAC
Copenhagen, 22-24 April 2012

1. Re-launching the Single Market

- 1.1. COSAC recognises that for the last 20 years the Single Market has been a key driving force in European integration that has facilitated free movement of goods, persons, services and capital and stimulated economic growth and employment in Europe as well as in other parts of the world.
- 1.2. The Single Market, together with the social cohesion policies and democratic participation of people, is an essential element in fighting the effects of the current financial and economic crisis within the “Europe 2020 strategy”. COSAC therefore welcomes the European Commission’s Single Market Act, which seeks to revitalise the Single Market that has a key role to play in fostering growth and employment in Europe.
- 1.3. COSAC notes that the political consideration of initiatives in this field may raise substantive discussions in national Parliaments and the European Parliament.
- 1.4. COSAC believes that the 12 priority key actions of the Single Market Act will be crucial to support growth and employment in Europe.
- 1.5. COSAC therefore urges the Council and the European Parliament to bring the 12 priority key actions of the Single Market Act to a successful conclusion as soon as possible, without prejudice to the principle of subsidiarity, with the aim of creating new momentum and dynamism in the European economy.
- 1.6. COSAC however notes that the Single Market still has untapped potential and therefore welcomes the Commission’s plan to further deepen the Single Market by taking stock of progress achieved with the Single Market Act before the end of 2012 with the aim of launching a comprehensive set of new proposals for priority actions.
- 1.7. COSAC calls on national Parliaments and the European Parliament to consider how to improve citizens’ confidence and consumer opportunities in the Single Market and make them more aware of the opportunities it offers to them.
- 1.8. COSAC underlines the importance of the social dimension of the Single Market with the overall objective of achieving a strong Single Market that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

2. A Single Market for Services

- 2.1. COSAC emphasises that a well-functioning Single Market in services is an important prerequisite for generating growth and jobs in Europe. COSAC therefore calls on all EU Member States to ensure full and complete implementation of the Services Directive.

- 2.2. COSAC furthermore welcomes the Commission's proposal to extend an improved European standardisation system to services and thereby making standardisation procedures more effective, efficient, timely and inclusive.
- 2.3. COSAC looks forward to the presentation of the Commission's report on the Services Directive in June at the European Council.

3. Sustainable growth and green economy

- 3.1. COSAC welcomes the EU's objective of promoting the transition to a resource efficient and green economy in Europe. COSAC supports the creation of a sustainable Single Market through the development of an inclusive, low-carbon, green knowledge-based economy.
- 3.2. COSAC welcomes the Commission's roadmap to a resource efficient Europe which builds on many existing instruments such as waste legislation, green public procurement, research programmes and eco-design, and calls for continuous actions on ambitious and comprehensive EU energy policy, targeted at the creation of the integrated energy infrastructure and single energy market, which takes into account the resources and economic situation of each Member State.

4. The Digital Single Market

- 4.1. COSAC underlines the need to complete a truly single and secure Digital Market by 2015, estimated by the Commission to be worth 110 billion Euros a year, to facilitate cross border use of on-line services, secure on-line payments and introduce an effective dispute settlement mechanism.
- 4.2. In order to deploy the full potential of the digital economy COSAC calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure a rapid implementation of the Commission's action plan on e-commerce to remove the obstacles which slow down development of Europe's Internet economy.
- 4.3. COSAC looks forward to the submission of a new proposal on e-signature and on agreement of rules on online dispute resolution and on roaming by June 2012.

5. Transposition and enforcement

- 5.1. COSAC welcomes the Commission's 2011 "Governance Check-up" that for the first time presents an integrated view of the various tools used in a "Single Market governance cycle", including the internal Market Scoreboard, Solvit annual report and "Your Europe" website. However COSAC notes that there is a need for closer monitoring of the application of Single Market legislation. COSAC therefore welcomes the Commission's commitment to continue improving governance aspects of the Single Market with the aim of reducing the number of infringements proceedings.

- 5.2. COSAC calls on Member States to improve their transposition and application of EU legislation to ensure a level playing field for all in the Single Market. COSAC regrets that 16 Member States did not meet the 1% transposition deficit target in 2011 set by the European Council. COSAC therefore supports the Commission's efforts in trying to get Member States to bring down the transposition deficit below the 1% target and reduce transposition delays.
- 5.3. COSAC takes note of the numerical targets limiting the transposition and compliance deficit for national legislation to 0.5%, as outlined by the Commission in its communication on the Single Market Act.
- 5.4. COSAC welcomes that the Commission will present a report to the European Council in June on possible means to enhance the implementation of Single Market legislation and improve its enforcement.
- 5.5. COSAC calls for an intensified dialogue on how to improve Member States' implementation and enforcement of Single Market legislation.

6. Proposal for strengthening the political dialogue with the European Commission

- 6.1. COSAC urges the Commission to develop further the existing political dialogue between national Parliaments and the Commission. In particular it would be desirable to strengthen this dialogue on the European Semester and on the enforcement and implementation of Single Market rules.
- 6.2. COSAC considers that interparliamentary cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament constitutes one of the essential instruments in the process of exchanging best practices at the European level. For example recent meetings on the European Semester have allowed the development of this cooperation in the field of budgetary, economic and employment policies within the EU.
- 6.3. Regarding the European Semester it could be envisaged that a Member of the Commission or by agreement a senior official appears before the competent committee of national Parliaments to respond to questions on the Commission's Annual Growth Survey or the Commission's Country-Specific Recommendations that are made on the basis of the National Reform Programmes and the Stability and Convergence Programmes submitted by Member States.
- 6.4. COSAC calls on the Commission to give national Parliaments the opportunity to submit enquiries in writing to the Commission on legislative proposals and consultation documents (including the European Semester) and on the enforcement and implementation of Single Market rules.
- 6.5. COSAC believes that the opportunity (under the political dialogue) for national Parliaments to feed views into the pre-legislative phase of the EU proposals is particularly important and therefore invites the Commission to alert national Parliaments to all public consultations when they are launched and to make public contributions received from

national Parliaments regarding consultation documents. COSAC notes the important role of national Parliaments in forming Member States' opinion on EU affairs.

- 6.6. COSAC invites the Commission to make contributions received from national Parliaments public under a specific heading of the Commission website where the results of consultation are summarised. COSAC also invites the Commission to ensure that, where appropriate, national Parliament contributions on consultations are explicitly referred to in the explanatory memorandum accompanying any subsequent Commission proposals. Such reference would highlight the particular value of contributions from national Parliaments within the framework of the political dialogue.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE XLVII COSAC

Copenhagen, 22-24 April 2012

1. Bi-annual Report

- 1.1. COSAC welcomes the 17th Bi-annual Report prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and thanks the Secretariat for its excellent work. The Report provides comprehensive information on the information flow to and from parliaments as far as EU documents are concerned and on the involvement of national Parliaments in the re-launch of the Single Market.

2. Access to EU and EU related documents by national Parliaments

- 2.1. COSAC notes that the exchange of information between Parliaments is becoming increasingly common and indeed essential, as a result of the strengthened role of Parliaments in the Treaty of Lisbon.
- 2.2. COSAC emphasises that access to EU documents and EU related documents produced by Governments is essential to ensure that national Parliaments can properly carry out their scrutiny functions.
- 2.3. COSAC notes the frequent and varied use made of the documents transmitted directly by the European Commission to national Parliaments and welcomes the formalised transmission arrangements included in the Treaty of Lisbon.
- 2.4. COSAC acknowledges it is for each Member State to independently determine arrangements for Parliamentary access to EU and EU related documents. As far as access to Council documents is concerned, COSAC notes that 28 national Parliaments/Chambers have access to Limited documents, this amounts to 70% of all Parliaments/Chambers - a significant proportion. It also notes that 17 out of 40 national Parliaments/Chambers have access to EU Restricted documents and eight Parliaments/Chambers have access to EU Confidential documents.
- 2.5. COSAC highlights that a number of Parliaments have access to Council documents and/or EU related documents through a database but notes that the majority of Parliaments/Chambers continue to be sent documents by their Government.

3. Exchange of information between Parliaments

- 3.1. COSAC welcomes that IPEX is being used by staff from a large majority of Parliaments on a daily or weekly basis.
- 3.2. COSAC recognises that the most commonly used sources of information from other Parliaments are the network of national Parliament Representatives based in Brussels and the IPEX database.

- 3.3. COSAC takes note that although a number of Parliaments consider IPEX to be reliable or very reliable, slightly more believe that IPEX, though a valuable tool, needs improvement. To improve the reliability of IPEX, COSAC encourages national Parliaments to upload more comprehensive information to IPEX in a timely manner and to use the IPEX symbols correct.
- 3.4. COSAC is pleased to note that an overwhelming majority of Parliaments/Chambers provide translations or summaries of important decisions in English and/or French and welcomes this development. COSAC thanks the European Parliament for its work in translating reasoned opinions into 21 EU languages.
- 3.5. COSAC considers it beneficial that reasoned opinions are uploaded onto IPEX within one or two days of adoption by a large majority of Parliaments/Chambers. It calls on all Parliaments/Chambers to follow this example of best practice.
- 3.6. COSAC welcomes the extensive use made of additional parliamentary networks sources of information such as ECPRD and additional sources such as the COSAC website and considers all attempts made to exchange information between Parliaments as constructive and helpful for enhancing Parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs.