

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LI COSAC
Athens, Greece, 15-17 June 2014

IN THE CHAIR: Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS, Deputy Speaker of the *Vouli ton Ellinon* of the Hellenic Republic and Chair of the Special Standing Committee on European Affairs.

AGENDA:

1. Opening and procedural issues

- Welcome address by Mr Vangelis Meimarakis, Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*.
- Opening remarks by Mr Ioannis Tragakis, Deputy Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* and Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs.
- Adoption of the agenda of the LI COSAC.
- Presentation of the 21st Bi-annual Report of COSAC.
- Procedural issues.

2. ‘State of play of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union’

Keynote speaker: Mr Antonis Samaras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic.

3. ‘Sharing a vision on Europe 2025’

Video message by Mr José Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission.

4. ‘Challenges for the EU: the crisis in Ukraine’

Keynote speaker: Mr Elmar Brok, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament.

5. Democratic legitimacy and European leadership: the day after the European elections

Keynote speakers: Mr Constantinos Tassoulas, Minister of Culture and Sports, President of the "Konstantinos Karamanlis" Institute for democracy, Greece, and Mr Carlo Casini, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament.

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

- Debate on the Contribution and Conclusions of the LI COSAC.

7. ‘Addressing the Social Deficit in the EU’

- Rethinking the European Employment Strategy

Keynote speaker: Mr László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

- Investing in European youth: the way out of the economic crisis

Keynote speaker: Mr Paulo Mota Pinto, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Assembleia da Republica, Portugal.

- Youth Guarantee Scheme: Best Practices

Keynote speaker: Ms Silvia Modig, Member of Parliament, Eduskunta, Finland.

- Encouraging Creativity and Young Entrepreneurship

Keynote speaker: Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Saeima, Latvia.

8. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LI COSAC

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening and procedural issues

1.1 Welcome addresses

Mr TRAGAKIS welcomed participants to the meeting of the LI COSAC and especially the new Chair of the Committee on European Affairs of the Romanian *Camera Deputaților*, Mr Radu Bogdan ȚÎMPĂU.

1.2 Opening remarks by Mr Ioannis TRAGAKIS, Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Special Standing Committee on European Affairs of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*

In his welcome speech, Mr TRAGAKIS underlined the crucial period during which the meeting was taking place, following the European elections and just before the election of the new President of the European Commission. Mr TRAGAKIS reiterated that the financial crisis had put in danger both the European cohesion and the Union's accomplishments so far, as well as the survival of the poorest citizens. He mentioned that, although the first signs of recovery were obvious, efforts should continue in order to build a stronger Europe, focusing on democracy, tolerance and justice. Mr TRAGAKIS presented the LI COSAC agenda: Mr BARROSO, President of the European Commission, would share his vision on Europe 2025 in a video message, while Mr Antonis SAMARAS, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, would review the results of the Hellenic Presidency. A discussion on the crisis in Ukraine would follow. Then, the topic of democratic legitimacy, in relation to the results of the European elections, would be addressed in the afternoon session of the first day. Mr TRAGAKIS commented that the rise of parties with an anti-European or xenophobic agenda was a worrying phenomenon that needed to be addressed at a practical level, such as through taking measures to tackle unemployment, which would be the topic of discussion on the second day. Mr TRAGAKIS concluded the introduction of the agenda by reminding that an informal meeting organised by the Dutch Parliament on practices on the accountability of EU funds, as well as the COSAC Women's Forum would also take place.

1.3 Adoption of the agenda and procedural issues

The Chair presented the draft agenda of the LI COSAC which was adopted without amendment.

Mr TRAGAKIS then gave the floor to the Permanent Member of the COSAC Secretariat, Ms Christiana FRYDA, to briefly present the 21st Bi-annual Report of COSAC, consisting of four chapters: 1. The future of COSAC 2. The cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament 3. Developing the social dimension of the EMU: the role of Parliaments 4. Democratic Legitimacy and Accountability in the budget process.

On the first chapter of the report, Parliaments provided an evaluation of a number of tools used by COSAC to stimulate exchange between national Parliaments and with the European Parliament, highlighting networking of members. Responding Parliaments expressed the desire to discuss both policy and institutional issues and to engage in better exchanging information and best practices on the subsidiarity principle checks in the framework of COSAC, and welcomed smaller formal and informal meetings of members of Parliaments submitting contributions to COSAC. The second chapter showed that interparliamentary cooperation appeared to be a generalised practice involving the majority of EU Parliaments. Recent *ad hoc* initiatives taken by the European Parliament, as well as bilateral visits between members of national Parliaments and members of the European Parliament and video-conferencing, were considered useful tools; Parliaments' responses signalled, further, a need to update the Lisbon guidelines for interparliamentary cooperation and suggested how COSAC may provide a useful input to future EU Speakers' Conference. In the third chapter, Parliaments expressed the need to integrate better and more the social dimension into EU policies and the support attributed to social dialogue and active participation of competent social partners in the formulation of policies. In the fourth chapter, most of the responding Parliaments stressed that national Parliaments must ensure the democratic legitimacy of the process of the European Semester at both EU and national level, while almost half believed that the European Parliament

should play a more active role during the European Semester process. Moreover, the vast majority of Parliaments responding stated that macroeconomic adjustment programmes were not characterised by sufficient democratic legitimacy and accountability.

Following Ms FRYDA's presentation, the Chair informed the participants of the results of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC held the previous afternoon. Mr TRAGAKIS announced that further amendments to the draft Contribution and Conclusions, as amended by the Presidential Troika of COSAC the previous day, would be accepted until noon. Mr TRAGAKIS mentioned the letters that the Hellenic Presidency had received.

1.4 Welcome speech by H. E.Vangelis MEIMARAKIS, Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* of the Hellenic Republic

Mr Vangelis MEIMARAKIS welcomed the participants to the LI COSAC, the third COSAC meeting taking place in Athens. He expressed the belief that, even though the Hellenic Presidency took place in a difficult period for Greece, it was a success. The Speaker acknowledged Greek people's sacrifices, as well as the political will of parties of the governing coalition to take difficult but necessary measures in order for Greece to recover from the financial crisis. In this context, he urged the EU to draw lessons from the Greek experience. Referring to the results of the European elections, he stressed that citizens' trust in the EU had fallen to an unprecedented low level, giving rise to radical parties of both the right and the left. This, according to him, reflected a tendency towards euro-scepticism and projected society's call for politics to reconnect to citizens' needs. Mr MEIMARAKIS underlined that the answer to populism should be firm leadership with a clear European vision and policies boosting employment and development. The crisis fatigue should not cancel the accomplishments of the EU and its positive impact on citizens' everyday life. He referred further to the crucial role of members of national Parliaments in communicating citizens' concerns to national governments and the European institutions, as well as to communicating to citizens the added value and ownership of the work that takes place at a European level. Mr MEIMARAKIS highlighted the active role that national Parliaments could play in the legislative process through official or unofficial tools of parliamentary cooperation and within the provisions of the Treaties. What is more, he underlined that the discussion was not just about issuing "yellow cards" or being limited to a ratification role, but about working together and cooperating to promote productive policies for the well-being of citizens. Thereupon, he underlined that cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament could bear fruit. Mr MEIMARAKIS concluded by reminding the strong historical, cultural, geographical and political bonds between Greece and Italy, which would be taking over the rotating Presidency of the EU Council, and recalled that before the forming of the new European Commission, in light of the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy, national Parliaments would have the opportunity to provide an input on the next steps for the EU.

2. State of play of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Keynote speaker: Mr Antonis SAMARAS, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

In his speech, Prime Minister SAMARAS reiterated that Greece had assumed the Presidency of the EU Council at a time, difficult both for the country and the EU, following the economic crisis. He underlined that the basic goals of the Hellenic Presidency were to respond to citizens' needs and to restore EU's credibility and trust towards its citizens. He then reviewed the work of the Presidency, stating that 67 legislative acts had been completed and, in many cases, a political agreement at the Council level had been attained, while significant political documents related to the security and wellbeing of EU citizens had been adopted. The priorities of the Hellenic Presidency were associated with the concerns of EU citizens: the deepening of the EMU with a special focus on the Banking Union were projected to tackle the "construction" deficits of the Union; measures were taken with the objective of boosting development and employment; emphasis was given to

immigration issues and the protection of borders and mobility, while maritime policies of the EU were a horizontal priority of the Presidency, in relation to development, employment and security.

Mr SAMARAS then referred to concrete legislative acts, such as the political agreement on the Single Resolution Mechanism, the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive and Regulation, the Directive on comparability fees of payment accounts, the Regulation on key information documents on packaged retail investment products investors and the new regulation on collective investment in transferable securities.

On enhancing competitiveness and boosting employment and social cohesion, the Prime Minister referred to the own resources package, the financing of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, a number of legislative acts adopted, as well as to the agreement on the participation of the EU in the capital increase of the European Investment Fund and the “Innovation Investment Package.” In the field of telecommunications and infrastructure, Mr SAMARAS mentioned two directives, the one aiming at reducing installation costs of electronic high-speed communications and the second one aiming at developing infrastructures for alternative fuels.

Concerning management of immigration flows, the Prime Minister referred to the review of the list of third countries of which nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing EU’s external borders, the directives on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer and the agreement reached on establishing rules for the surveillance of the external sea borders in the context of operational cooperation coordinated by FRONTEX. Mr SAMARAS made particular reference to the adoption of guidelines in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. He underlined that the principle of solidarity was the focus; the issue of immigration was linked to the EU external boarder and the development of cooperation with third countries; the principle of conditionality in the EU cooperation with third countries was introduced and the development of effective policies of repatriation in conjunction with the policy on visas and readmission was included.

Concerning EU maritime policies, the Prime Minister expressed the conviction that at the June 2014 European Council, the European Maritime Security Strategy, the first inter-sectoral European strategy, incorporating economic development, the energy and security dimension would be adopted. He also welcomed the agreement of the directive on Maritime Spatial Planning and the regulation on the funding of the European Maritime Security Agency for 2014-2020.

Regarding institutional issues, the Prime Minister mentioned the adoption of the Regulation on the statute and financing of European political parties and foundations. Finally, he made special reference to the enhancement of the principle of solidarity in concrete acts such as the European Solidarity Fund.

The Prime Minister concluded with a reference to the severe repercussions of the economic crisis on Greek economy and to the sacrifices made by Greek people to ensure economic recovery. He resumed the Hellenic Presidency in a few notions: upgrading maritime policies, being open to criticism, which is the essence of freedom, being ready for changes in politics, which is the essence of democracy, being ready to render help in the framework of solidarity, which is the essence of the EU itself and being proud of the accomplishments of the EU so far.

In the debate that followed, 23 participants took the floor.

Mr Alberto COSTA, Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica* called for the establishment of a European instrument that would deal with excessive burdens with satisfactory means to the countries’ economies, combined with development measure.

Mr Richárd HÖRCSIK, Hungarian *Országgyűlés* and Mr Paolo TANCREDI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati* welcomed the finalisation of the Banking Union. Mr HÖRCSIK also expressed his satisfaction for the global and burden sharing approach on migration issues applied by the Hellenic Presidency and made special reference to the migration flows at the land borders of the EU, while Mr TANCREDI mentioned the three priorities of the Italian Presidency: re-launching political integration on a federal basis; making European economy more flexible and able to face up to public financing requirements through structural changes and economic arrangements such as the mutualisation of sovereign debt, an independent budget for the eurozone and Eurobonds to finance major projects with real prospects for growth and jobs; promoting a real policy in migration flows based on burden sharing and solidarity.

Mr Slaven RADUNOVIĆ, Montenegrin *Skupština* and Mr Jordi XUCLÀ, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, referred to the results of the Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees which took place in Montenegro and the accession prospects of the Western Balkans, especially Albania, while Mr Jožef HORVAT, Slovenian *Državni Zbor*, mentioned the need to adopt a reform package for Bosnia Herzegovina.

Mr Lubos BLAHA, Slovakian *Narodna rada*, and Mr Harry VAN BOMMEL, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, expressed their concern about the content of the Transatlantic Trade Agreement negotiated with the USA and Canada and therefore highlighted the initiative taken by the Dutch Parliament concerning the lack of exclusive competence of the EU regarding the issue. They also called on the national Parliaments to sign a letter addressed to the competent Commissioner.

Ms Agnieszka POMASKA, Polish *Sejm*, and Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, underlined the importance of the regulation on the posting of workers. Ms POMASKA also welcomed the visa liberalisation for the Moldovan citizens, while Mr SUTOUR reaffirmed that austerity could not take the place of real policies.

Mr Fidias SARIKAS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, and Ms Danielle AUROI, French *Assemblée nationale*, underlined the need to restore the lost trust of European citizens' and to find ways to connect them with the European institutions, in light of the results of the European elections. Mr Peđa GRBIN, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, emphasised the importance of the European Solidarity Fund on regional stability. Mr Dominic HANNIGAN, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, highlighted the importance of the freedom of movement and the positive effects of internal migration in European economy, noting with concern that not enough was done to defend this principle at a European level. Mr Linas BALSYS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, underlined the importance of continuity of rotating Presidencies' priorities and, drawing the attention to the Commission's recently announced Communication on European Energy security strategy, believed that concrete actions should be taken with no delay and that the European Energy security should be on the agenda of each national Parliament. He urged the Italian Presidency to include the Energy security strategy in its agenda. Mr Paolo GUERRIERI PALEOTTI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, drew attention to three elements for an effective economic recovery: more symmetry in micro-economic adjustment costs between surplus and deficit countries; significant quantity of common investment; the completion of the internal market. Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, referred to the large amount of debt of many countries that resulted in a lack of trust and credibility which needed to be won back. Mr Aleksandar SENIĆ, Serbian *Narodna Skupština*, highlighted the commitment of Serbia to European values that led to the historic start of the accession negotiations for Serbia. Lord Lyndon HARRISON, UK *House of Lords*, asked whether the 50 billion euros provided to resolve a bank under the Single Resolution Mechanism were sufficient; whether there was a role for national Parliaments in holding to account the European Central Bank and whether the Financial Transaction Tax was dead as fewer countries participated in the enhanced cooperation. Mr Jacinto SERRÃO,

Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica*, stated that Europe 2020 policies in relation to poverty did not arrive to the ground and recalled the importance of blue economy.

Dr Mehmet Sayım TEKELIOGLU, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, mentioned that he was hoping for the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 during the Hellenic Presidency and called the EU to draw its attention to Syria and Iraq.

Ms Zoe KONSTANTOPOULOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, mentioned the rise of unemployment amongst young people and women as well as the rise of racism in Greece.

Mr Takis HADJIGEORGIOU, *European Parliament*, stated that competitiveness should not be capitalised over the diminishing salaries of European workers to compete with the salaries of workers in China and emphasised that major political issues such as the Cyprus issue should be addressed by rotating Presidencies.

The Chair then gave the floor to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, charged with the organisation of the Hellenic Presidency, Mr Dimitris KOURKOULAS, to answer, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the questions put forward. Mr KOURKOULAS firstly thanked the Greek public administration which entirely assumed the task of organising the Hellenic Presidency at a minimum cost. He then referred to the management of excessive debt, especially in the case of Greece. Following the haircut of the debt, important steps had been made to guarantee that as soon as a primary surplus was achieved, additional measures would be taken to strengthen the sustainability of the Greek debt.

In this regard, Mr KOURKOULAS reiterated the need for a balanced approach on budgetary adjustment and growth policies and competitiveness. He reaffirmed the support of Greece in the enlargement policy in the Western Balkans which was initially launched in 2003 in Thessaloniki and had been taken forward by the Hellenic Presidency with the start of accession negotiations with Serbia, as well as the possible decision in the June European Council on Albania's candidacy. He also underlined that Greece was in favour of progress in the case of Bosnia Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as long as Skopje would prove its willingness for good neighbouring relations on European standards. On the reservations expressed for the Free Trade Agreement with the USA and Canada, Mr KOURKOULAS called for a balanced agreement with a positive impact on both sides negotiated in full transparency and said that, depending on the content of the agreement, ratification by national Parliaments might be needed. Mr KOURKOULAS mentioned that there had been attempts to introduce restrictions to the free movement of workers based on alleged abuse of social benefits, but he reaffirmed that, even though there might have been certain cases of abuse, free movement of workers was both beneficial to the country of origin and of employment. The Deputy Minister referred to concrete developments in energy security such as the connecting pipelines between Greece, Bulgaria and other countries, as well as the pending agreement on the Trans-Asiatic Pipeline and underlined the importance of energy security in light of the geopolitical developments in Eastern Europe. On the continuity of the rotating Presidency priorities, Mr KOURKOULAS mentioned that, within the framework of inter-institutional cooperation, as well as due to the common agenda, the Hellenic Presidency had been in close contact with the Italian Presidency. On the lack of trust and credibility in certain countries' economies, Mr KOURKOULAS answered that the allegations of a possible exit of Greece from the Eurozone led to unwillingness to invest in the country and therefore prolonged the crisis. The Deputy Minister stated that the Single Resolution Mechanism was a framework to restore trust in the banking system. He also stated that Greece supported the Financial Transaction Tax, even though there were difficulties in its adoption. On the Europe 2020 Strategy he underlined that additional measures should be adopted to deal with the consequences of the crisis and that the social dimension of European policies formed part of the effort to restore competitiveness of the Union.

Finally, Mr KOURKOULAS reaffirmed that the Greek government had taken active measures to achieve political isolation of fascist groups in Greece.

3. 'Sharing a vision on Europe 2025'

Keynote speaker: Mr José Manuel Durão BARROSO, President of the European Commission (via a recorded speech).

Mr José Manuel Durão BARROSO, President of the European Commission, emphasised that the painful efforts and sacrifices made by Member States, and the necessary measures implemented by European institutions to fight the economic and financial crisis, such as fiscal consolidation, correcting macro-economic imbalances, and ensuring financial stability, had started to pay off.

Mr BARROSO cautioned that Europe's economic recovery still remained too slow, fragile and uneven, and that the social cost of the crisis was very high. Compared to 2008, there were 6.6 million more people at risk of poverty or social exclusion; unemployment, especially among young people, remained at unacceptable levels. The President pointed out that the outcome of the European elections showed that European citizens mostly wanted growth and jobs, social fairness and a better quality of life.

Mr BARROSO welcomed the fact that social concerns were at the centre of the meeting. He stressed that the main political priority was to fully deliver on the reforms which had been pledged to. The President warned that the external conditions were much more challenging and that global competition would probably increase in the future. He pointed out that reinforcement of Europe's competitiveness and improvement of productivity were the only ways to keep the social market economy and welfare systems functioning in Europe.

Mr BARROSO called on members of national Parliaments to contribute to a public consultation on the Europe 2020 mid-term review, until the end of October. The President highlighted the importance of strengthening the role of national Parliaments in the decision-making process at EU level. He called members of national Parliaments to reinforce responsibility and solidarity within the EU.

4. 'Challenges for the EU: the crisis in Ukraine'

Keynote speaker: Mr Elmar BROK, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament.

Mr Elmar BROK, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, mentioned his recent visit to Teheran and the discussions on nuclear issues, the potential cooperation between Iran and the USA, the changing policy toward Iraq. He expressed concerns over the developments in the Middle East (9 million refugees from Syria) and remarked on Member States' concerns about migration issues. He stressed the need to ensure a sustainable Neighbourhood Policy that could protect human rights. He also pointed out that a more cohesive external policy of the EU must be implemented and that Member States should pull up together their sovereignty to this end. The Eastern Partnership should be part of this thinking, Mr BROK underlined.

Mr BROK supported the view that good relations with Russia should remain a priority for the EU, because this would guarantee stability and economic progress for both partners. He underlined that the Agreement with Ukraine was not meant to isolate or encircle Russia. The EU was ready to negotiate an Association Agreement with Russia, and visa facilitation was also discussed, but the negotiations stopped with the annexation of Crimea, noted the Chair. He reminded that the Ukrainian political forces called for the Association Agreement to be concluded as the Ukrainian

goal was to be in the EU, which was being supported by all political parties and groups from 2007 to 2012, and that there were no complaints from Russia then. The Chair highlighted that there was no EU strategy for granting EU membership and NATO membership to Ukraine, and that the narrative presented by Russia was not reflecting the political reality. Mr BROK remarked that the EU's position was based on the Helsinki Accords under which every country had the right to make decisions on treaties in a sovereign fashion and no other country could interfere.

Mr BROK stressed that Russia had changed its strategy during the last year and a half, possibly because it failed to become an economic power. The Chair remarked that in Russia living standards had not improved during the last 25 years, internal freedom was pushed back, and citizens were less free than 25 years ago. He believed that the authorities tried to compensate the lack of economic stability and social security by drawing on national sentiments.

Mr BROK summed up recent events in Ukraine and noted that Ukrainian citizens fought for democracy, free decisions and the rule of law. The Ukrainian Parliament was legitimate, the Constitution of 2004 was restored, the turnout at the 25 May 2014 presidential election was high, and the vast majority of citizens voted for a pro-European electoral program, he pointed out.

Mr BROK stressed that what Russia had done was the first annexation in Europe since 1945, which violated the principles of the Budapest Memorandum providing assurances of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty. He noted that three arguments were presented to justify the annexation - 'historical reasons', 'protection of minorities' and 'a guarantee of security'. The Chair warned that there were about several hundred regions in Europe where the same arguments could be used to undertake annexation. He reminded that, according to the agreements, borders should not be changed in Europe.

Mr BROK expressed deep concern about the recent events in Eastern Ukraine, where weapons were coming across the border, the situation was beyond control, a frozen conflict was being developed by the Russian side, and *de facto* the country or a part of it was deprived of sovereignty. He called for diplomatic measures which could prevent a war. Mr BROK said that the intention of Ukraine's leaders was to hold an open dialogue with Russia, to announce amnesty, to decentralise the country, to ensure external and internal security, to reform the system of education and to carry out other reforms. He warned against the risk of decentralisation on weakening the central government; he also stressed that there was no case of discrimination of Russian minorities brought before the European Court of Human Rights and the protection of language and culture in Ukraine went beyond the requirements of the documents of the Council of Europe.

Mr BROK called for the Geneva negotiations to continue. He reminded that Georgia and Moldova would sign the Association Agreement on free trade in Brussels on 27 June and stated that the future would show the consequences of this situation, which might be complex. The Chair stressed that the Baltic countries' concern with their security was understandable. He underlined that any action would mean the activation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty and the violation of European territory. He noted that all Member States should have the same security guarantees and that the same principle of territorial sovereignty should be applied to all the regions of the EU, otherwise the very core of the EU would be undermined.

Mr BROK concluded by saying that the principles of solidarity and sovereignty should be respected and that the future of Ukraine could be decided neither in Brussels, nor in Moscow, but by Ukraine only. Mr BROK said that peace, stability and prosperity should be guaranteed for future generations.

In the debate which followed, 31 speakers took the floor.

Ms Zanda KALNINA-LUKAŠEVICA, Latvian *Saeima*, and Mr Juan MOSCO DEL PRADO, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, stressed the need to keep the situation in Ukraine high on the agenda of COSAC and to adopt a clear resolution about the position of the EU and the role of national Parliaments concerning the crisis. Ms KALNINA-LUKAŠEVICA, Latvian *Saeima*, underlined that Russia's steps, such as providing terrorists in Ukraine with arms or using the monopoly situation in the gas sector, affected not only the situation in Ukraine, but the security of some Member States too. Ms Liisa-Ly PAKOSTA, Estonian *Riigikogu*, proposed to recognise that the annexation of Crimea was fully illegal. Ms Athina KYRIAKIDOU, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, reminded that 40% of Cyprus territory was occupied by a third country, Turkey, and urged to avoid double standards, supporting the idea of calling for respect of territorial sovereignty of all countries in COSAC's Contribution. Ms Vilija ALEKNAITĖ ABRAMIKIENĖ, Lithuanian *Seimas*, said Russia's behaviour was based not only on military power and energy policy measures, but also on its specific ideology, she stressed. She noted that France and Germany should terminate their military cooperation with Russia.

Ms Daniel AUROI, French *Assemblée nationale*, proposed to draw lessons from the crisis in Ukraine and to approve as quickly as possible the EU's new independent strategy for energy policy so that it would not depend on one supplier, to promote a real dialogue between Ukraine and Russia, and to ensure peaceful and respectful debates between the EU and Russia. Mr Lubos BLAHA, Slovak *Národná rada*, Mr Joan SABATÉ, Spanish *Senado*, and Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, called for a dialogue of the EU with Russia, ensuring stability, peace and security. Ms Ingrid ANTIČEVIĆ-MARINOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, asked not to escalate the conflict and to look for positive actions.

Mr Andrej GAŁAŻEWSKI, Polish *Sejm*, did not agree with the above, saying that Russia was testing a new type of war in Ukraine. A number of speakers stressed that the EU's common defence and security policy and energy policy should be considered and a proper budget for that should be ensured.

A number of speakers said that the role of the EU should be to protect the basic values of the EU such as solidarity, cooperation, protection of minorities, and to ensure a proper balance in relations between Ukraine and Russia. Mr Rene VAN DER LINDEN, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, noted that Russia would be important for the future and for Europe's stability, suggesting not to impose any more sanctions and proposing that the Council of Europe should play a bigger role in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Mr Eric BYRNE, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, and Lord Timothy BOSWELL, UK *House of Lords*, believed the strategic mistakes of the EU policy on energy, on relationships with Russia and on long term perspective of Ukraine should be acknowledged. They called on the EU to rethink its positions, to take intensive diplomatic steps and to strengthen its humanitarian measures.

Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, German *Bundestag*, warned about Russian's propaganda machine and suggested all Member States should put common efforts to ensure implementation of measures needed against it.

Mr Igors PIMENOV, Latvian *Saeima*, reminded that the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act would be marked the next year and suggested that it could be a good reason to initiate a peace conference 'Helsinki+', where creative revision of the ten famous principles could be done to prevent conflicts in Europe in the future.

Mr Afif DEMIRKIRAN, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, referred to the possibility of opening the Chapter on energy in Turkey's negotiations with the EU in order to open the way to the diversification of routes and sources of energy for Europe. He also expressed his concern about the situation of the Tatar community in Crimea.

Mr BROK, responding to a question by Sir William CASH, UK *House of Commons*, as to whether Crimea would remain a legal part of Ukraine under the Association Agreement, said that the breach of international law could not be acceptable, and that the improvement of economic conditions and ensuring freedom to the citizens of Ukraine were the main priorities at the moment.

Mr BROK mentioned financing of Ukraine to implement structural reforms and expressed his belief that Ukraine would follow the difficult but successful path of the reforms implemented in Poland, in the Baltic States and other countries during the process of joining the EU.

The Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament agreed with the parliamentarians who said that the EU should develop a new energy policy, because Russia used energy and gas as a political and economic weapon. He said that a new common strategy of the European defence policy was needed to tackle the challenges of the globalised world and encouraged Member States to pull their efforts and to show solidarity in this area.

Mr BROK said that Turkey could be integrated in the common market and could get the position Norway had. He believed that Turkey could be more involved in the European security policy and that the Chapter on energy could be opened. If a solution on the nuclear issue could be found, Iran could become a partner in the oil sector, and the EU would need Turkey's support in the negotiations.

Mr BROK believed the important measures needed to be implemented to deal with Russia's new ideology. He firmly supported the necessity to adopt a new Neighbourhood Policy, which could ensure opportunities of free and peaceful development for the neighbours in the South and in the East.

Mr BROK concluded by saying that the Helsinki Accords had a big potential, and a joint debate concerning important aspects of territorial integrity, sovereignty and human rights could be organised in the European Parliament with the participation of national Parliaments the following year.

5. 'Democratic legitimacy and European leadership: the day after the European elections'

Keynote speakers: Mr Constantinos TASSOULAS, Minister of Culture and Sports, former President of the "Konstantinos Karamanlis" Institute for democracy, Greece and Mr Carlo CASINI, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament.

Mr Constantinos TASSOULAS, Minister of Culture and Sports, former President of the "Konstantinos Karamanlis" Institute for democracy, reminded the audience that the major financial crisis and the uneasy initial reaction of the Union changed the political situation in the EU in quantitative and qualitative terms. The result of elections, in particular in the UK and in France, strengthened parties that he preferred calling "anti-European" rather than "Eurosceptic", but that did not change the balance of forces, as the two large traditional political groups (EPP and S&D) retained the majority of seats. He argued that in Europe there were currently two major political groupings: the ones who knew what they would not like and the ones who knew what they did like and wanted. The recent elections strengthened the positions of the former, while the latter were hesitant in supporting the claims of the peoples of Europe and not vigorous enough to express their support for the Europe they would like.

He referred to Winston Churchill's conclusion after his failure in the 1889 by-election, when he did not support the unpopular decisions of the government: supporting a party means also not being afraid to defend unpopular measures. The Minister used this example to illustrate that the forces that support the present European policies were hesitant, unlike those who attacked Europe, claiming that a better Europe was possible without policies of budgetary discipline, of tackling deficits and their side effects. Describing the difficult situation of EU citizens, in particular Greek citizens, he stressed that Europe did not send the right messages and did not implement policies that could be understood by its citizens. The consequences of these policies were the results of elections and the rise of extremism in Greece and other countries. This protest vote was due to the significant worsening of living conditions.

He expressed the belief that there was a danger that the “EU of meetings and conferences” pushed people towards parties of extreme right and left, because it was unable to explain its policy and present its targets. In his view, citizens showed more responsibility and did not react as violently as one could have expected in reaction to EU's policies, supporting the EU even more than politicians, which made it necessary for pro-European politicians to respond to the message of the elections and improve their work. The path to follow was helping EU countries that had difficulties, rather than thinking they should be punished for not having been virtuous in their budget. He added that the bet towards the European project could not be won through promises, but by showing that solidarity, balanced growth all over Europe and convergence should be EU's the basic aims.

He argued that support to extremist parties could be reversed, but that the important message sent by people was a warning, that should be comprehended and reacted to through growth; he concluded by calling on those who wanted Europe and who knew what they wanted to express their support to the EU.

Mr Carlo CASINI, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, stated that democratic legitimacy was based on three interlinked principles: majority, which was the entry gate for democracy, justification, even for unpopular actions, and the dream or what could be called messianic democracy, namely projecting the welfare of the people into the future. When one of these elements was weakened, the others could strengthen it and reconstruct democracy. Throughout the years, although the turnout to the elections was going down, democratic legitimacy was safeguarded by democratic procedures which were currently removing citizens' positive opinion of the EU; therefore messianic democracy should be strengthened and offer people a greater involvement in building the EU. Recent elections were a major opportunity to refresh the democratic conviction of the EU and move away from debating, even during the campaign for the European elections, national realities. Designating the head of list candidate for the President of the European Commission was an attempt “to put a face on political differences” and encourage a genuine debate about Europe. The results of the elections were however the expression of feelings that encouraged a return to the nationalist past and anti-European feelings: fear and anger translated in votes for the extremist left and right wing, Eurosceptic parties, rage and anger against a Europe unable to provide responses to citizens' needs.

However, he continued, between 1979 and today the constant decrease in the reduced turnout had been stopped. The EU overall turnout of 43, 09% was with 0, 09 % higher than the one of the last elections. Despite the slight reversal of the trend, these disconcerting figures and the lack of interest in Europe, particularly in recent Member States, should be given consideration.

Mr CASINI underlined the need to overcome the dangerous mix of lack of communication and lack of enthusiasm and to persuade people that the future of Europe really was in their hands. In his view, designating candidates for the President of the European Commission was a sensible political

expedient against this backdrop; he warned that, if the indications that millions of citizens gave by voting for a political party and a particular head of list were not to be respected in the ultimate appointment this would increase distrust.

He emphasised the importance of the fact that 73% of the Parliament was still composed of forces which continued to believe in Europe and progress towards the future. He stated that eurosceptical elements should not be considered invincible opponents, but a constant challenge, calling on parliamentarians to reflect on how to regain citizens' support. The question of democratic legitimacy was part of a debate about the ability of the political institutions in Europe to respond effectively to citizens' problems; citizens complained that the EU did not solve the crisis and protested against EU institutions which were unable to meet their requirements, witnessing a political class unable to make decisions in the European Parliament and in national Parliaments. National Parliaments, he added, needed to think more in European terms, as they were the highest expression of democratic legitimacy and needed to safeguard democracy.

In Mr CASINI's view, because the EU was a structure in the process of being constructed, there was no democratic deficit. He agreed that European Parliament's powers should be increased, arguing that it should be maybe given the power of legislative initiative, that national Parliaments' monitoring of the Council should be constant and more persistent, while cooperation between the European Parliament and national Parliaments should have open and more flexible channels; he explained that the rigidity of the "state element" in both Commission and Council should be reduced both in terms of majorities rules and in terms of their respective powers. In his view, the alleged democratic deficit was more a matter of appearance rather than substance.

He mentioned the work of the AFCO committee on Regulation 211/2001 on the European Citizen's Initiative, an instrument aiming to reduce the democratic deficit. Out of the 26 Citizens' Initiatives registered so far, the Commission decided to follow up just one. Instead of bringing citizens closer to the Union, ignoring or overturning these initiatives had the opposite effect. In his view, in the case of European Citizens' Initiatives a debate and a vote in the European Parliament should be made compulsory, as in the case of regular petitions lodged with the European Parliament, possibly by the mid-term amendment of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

He stated that the divisions from the past were overcome by achievements that fed courage to proceed with the greatest project of all times, stressing that an EU that spread peace, respect for democracy and the rule of law could only inspire truly European feelings and pride in its citizens. Current events at the EU borders showed that stating that peace is EU's main achievement was not mere rhetoric, but a fact. Building an effective external dimension of the Union was the challenge which was up to the height of EU's ambition and abilities. He further mentioned the need to react to the humanitarian emergency of irregular immigration. Solidarity was needed in Europe whose ultimate purpose was to be a peaceful and a peace-making continent. It was EU's task and interest to bring peace to Africa, and this objective called for a single, strong and authoritative voice.

He concluded reminding that the Treaty of Lisbon was a stage in the process of the EU's evolution and that in order to overcome fear and anger against the political class, leaders must recognize that this was the horizon to work towards, which explained the role of the 'messianic Europe', a 'Europe of dreams' that needed to be fed with results and prosperity, and above all, a Europe that was given a target that could bring enthusiasm and hope.

Twenty-one speakers took the floor in the subsequent debate.

Mr René LEEGTE, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, presented the report "Ahead in Europe" on the role of the Dutch House of Representatives and national Parliaments in the EU. The report, for which Mr

LEEGTE was a rapporteur, was the result of an inquiry in the Dutch Parliament on how the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and Parliaments in the Member States could have more influence on European decision-making and its most important conclusion was that better cooperation between Parliaments and the Member States could lead to more effectiveness and better quality of European decision-making. He mentioned that all Parliaments often dealt with more or less the same issues at the same time and that the number of dossiers that concerned common European affairs was constantly increasing. Improving cooperation between national Parliaments was hence the key to scrutinise and monitor these dossiers.

The title of the report, Mr LEEGTE explained, spoke of the report's ambition for national Parliaments to work together with each other and with the European Parliament; but what was needed, he added, was "to be early, work together and work well". In order to be able to intervene effectively in the initial phase, it was necessary to know which ideas were being discussed, who was involved in developing them, and what procedures existed to be able to intervene in practice. The report was an open source report and all national Parliaments could add contributions; working together would allow achieving a great deal at Green Paper stage, at consultation stage and at finding out the views of national Parliaments on these. The Dutch Parliament believed that even at Green Paper stage a subsidiarity check could already be carried out along with the verification of compliance with the principle of proportionality. Mr LEEGTE underlined that the European Commission should not ignore national Parliaments' objections to its proposals and that newly elected MEPs should take that message to the new European Commissioners. Mentioning that the Bi-annual Report of COSAC contained many useful ideas for better cooperation, he listed the main recommendations of his report: improved cooperation through a "Group of 41", a list of each national Parliament's contact details of representatives of the European Affairs committees for exchanging information and ideas, which was proposed in an amendment tabled by his Chamber; working together in clusters of interest in which various Parliaments could work up suggestions for legislation, a sort of a "green card" to help recommend legislation; taking the initiative to improve the "yellow card" by considering the Commission's Working Programme and discussing its priorities, and making joint suggestions to the Commission, that would be coordinated by the COSAC Secretariat; establishing a standard format of reasoned opinions; supporting the Danish parliament initiative and asking the European Commission to set up a working group and implement national Parliaments' stronger role. He invited all Parliaments to The Hague as a "cluster of interest" and find out more about the ideas for this working group the outcome of this "cluster of interest" could be used to improve the interparliamentary working groups. He concluded by inviting all national Parliaments to cooperate.

Mr SUTOUR, French *Sénat*, stated that the European elections had unfortunately led to a rise in the number of populist and extremist representatives, which was the expression of concern of the European citizens regarding the European project, showing their lack of trust in the EU. The EU needed to respond to unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, and to create the pre-conditions for sustainable growth. EU's reaction was necessary so that the European project could regain its legitimacy.

EU Parliaments had a vital role to play in monitoring the principle of subsidiarity, he said, in monitoring the work of the European Commission and reining it when it went too far, as was the case with the Monti II package. The debate in the Council on this file showed that the approach taken by national Parliaments was not in vain and that they were listened to. National Parliaments must be vigilant to the way in which EU legislation was developed. He focused on the specific procedures of delegated acts and implementing acts, clarifying that there was no opposition to the idea of powers being delegated to the Commission, which in certain cases was desirable in order to guarantee the proper implementation of EU legislation, but that the delegation of powers had to be moderate. An increase of delegated acts in the European Commission's proposals was registered, a

trend that had been criticised by national Parliaments and on which the European Parliament had also expressed its concerns. In the French Parliament, concerns about delegated acts were expressed in a document, available also in English, which contained examples of abuse of power within legislative files in various fields. In terms of procedure, he conceded it was often difficult to distinguish between what were the essential and non-essential elements. In his view, the European Parliament and the Council did not have sufficient time to oppose, while national Parliaments had been excluded from the decision-making process. He also stressed that delegated acts were not subjected to subsidiarity check, as national Parliaments required, and that experts, working to support the European Commission, did not represent Member States as such and, in some cases were from outside the EU. According to him, EU legislation should limit the use of delegated acts to the absolute minimum and examine carefully the scope of delegated acts. The European Commission must be prepared to modify its proposals on the use of delegated acts and respect the principle of designation of competences as outlined in the Treaties. This was important for the trilogue process in which the Commission participated. He added that the composition of expert committees should also be considered, as it was important for guaranteeing pluralism.

In the subsequent debate, Ms Zoe KONSTANTOPOULOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, underlined that the positive side of European elections' results was that the European left had increased its strength which would allow to go back to the Europe of societies and democracy and end the adjustments programs and memoranda. These policies, she argued, endangered democracy and the Troika was a breach of democratic traditions and parliamentary democracy. She concluded that austerity and budgetary discipline were not values, unlike democracy and prosperity.

Mr Giovanni MAURO, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, expressed his appreciation for the Casini report on relations between the European Parliament and national Parliaments¹ and fully supported the idea of more "Europe of people", where people could feel themselves more in the lead; he stated it was necessary to give consideration to those who wanted to replace existing structures with new ones, but also to bring the message to people in the most popular ways; he mentioned that regarding the issue of migratory flows and political refugees, in a moment of crisis, it could be shown that supranational democracy could achieve a common external policy which could reduce problems that should no longer be regarded as transient emergencies; the fundamental point for EU's future was, in his opinion, supranational democratic coordination.

Mr António RODRIGUES, Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica*, argued that Europe's citizens showed the "yellow card" partly because of the crisis which built on more fundamental causes. He mentioned that politicians focused on the effectiveness of the European decision-making process and mentioned it should be avoided to introduce too much small-minded policy. In order to win back trust in politicians, improving the elections was one of the fundamental points and the head of list system for the President of the Commission should be considered essential and the current commitment pushed through. There was a need to find against abstention, as a Europe for all cannot be achieved in the absence of at least 50% of the electorate. He argued that Europe could not remain in the hands of national ideas and interests.

Mr Yiannos LAMARIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, mentioned that the more significant abstention due to people's disappointment by the course of the European project and the increase of extreme right wing and xenophobic parties were the results of policies that had been implemented; these parties did not want a better Europe and instead promoted hatred, racism and discrimination and their presence on the EP should be considered frightful. Through the decisions taken, Europe not only did not manage to close the gap of inequalities, but had also brought more unemployment, poverty and exclusion. In the future, transparency and democracy should be the targets, through an

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2014)0430

upgrading of the European Parliament which was a necessary condition, but also through more participation of national Parliaments on the basis of subsidiarity.

Mr Michael STUEBGEN, German *Bundestag*, stressed the need to examine the conditions in which the European elections were held, namely the worst crisis the EU had ever faced. In light of that, the results were positive and an example of EU's stability, as more than 2/3 of the MEPs elected were very much pro-EU and wanted to continue to build the European project. In the future it would be important to make sure that the political groups in the European Parliament were much more visible as political groups and, in the next term, they needed to be able to agree on a single European electoral law.

Ms Marianne MIKKO, Estonian *Riigikogu*, argued that the results of the elections showed that the number of sceptics and extremists had increased because of low participation, but also because, as results in Estonia showed, people were unhappy about politicians' actions; a protest vote was cast even by the electorate opting usually for traditional parties. She agreed with Mr CASINI on the need to listen to citizens and take their views into account, adding that the EU should be an example for the world in terms of transparency, peace, stability and competitiveness and that this should be everyone's focus within the European Parliament and national Parliaments.

Ms Catherine NOONE, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, stated that the elections had resulted in the growth in the number of independents and those of the far right, some of whom were engaged in a battle to destroy the EU from within; she cited the example of the UK that had seen the emergence of independents at local level, partly because of the austerity measures, and she shared the view regarding citizens' disappointment as they considered the EU responsible for the policies in many cases. She recalled that the mainstream pro-European parties had retained more than 72% of the seats in the European Parliament.

Ms Mihaela POPA, Romanian *Senat*, underlined that the results of the elections reflected a positive thing, namely that in Romania there was no vote for the eurosceptics, but also a negative one, which was the lack of participation of young people who showed disinterest in Europe. As a former MEP, she tabled an amendment on the importance of studying European history in schools; she also mentioned that the neighbourhood policy should be extended and focused on youth. Another issue mentioned was the speed of EU's enlargement and the need to decide whether enlargement to Moldova and Ukraine was desirable.

Sir William CASH, UK *House of Commons*, mentioned that he had warned as early as the 90s, during his campaign against the Maastricht treaty, against massive high unemployment, street protests and the rise of the far right which he deplored. He said the UK should be associated, but not absorbed into the EU institutions. He contested Minister TASSOULAS' statement that euroscepticism meant being anti-European, arguing that it was not anti-European to be pro-democracy, nor to be sceptical about the EU. He totally rejected President BARROSO's assertion that only the European Parliament was the Parliament for the EU, as it simply did not work and needed radical reform.

Mr Jožef HORVAT, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, stated that the EU was an eminent political institution that should be led by those who were supported by voters as their credible counterparts in Europe. His party, New Slovenia (Christian-Democrats), cooperated with the EPP and supported the idea that the President of the Commission should be the person who won the most votes in the elections. He believed, that with the proposed solution, the Commission would lose its status of bureaucratic machine, remote from voters.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Austrian *Bundesrat*, underlined the positive elements of the elections, namely the European parties and the European lead candidates which proved to be a success; the intention was now to implement a 'Europe of citizens' and to guarantee a democracy of Parliaments, not a democracy of governments. He expressed the wish that in the future the Commission would deal with key themes, such as youth unemployment, tax harmonization, ending tax avoidance, giving serious consideration to the Citizens Initiatives. Referring to the Dutch initiative, he recalled that, in the last three years, it had been reiterated within COSAC that COSAC was not fulfilling its mandate as provided by the Treaties and called for its works to move beyond the retrospective assessment of the work accomplished by the Presidency.

Mr Krzysztof SZCZERSKI, Polish *Sejm*, argued that the most important thing in the result of the election was the call for reform of the EU, as citizens wanted to influence the decision-making process and contribute more. On the Citizens' Initiative, he added that only one had been processed so far, but it was rejected by the Commission, which should not be the case as it was a petition of over 1 million citizens. He cited the case of the Proposal for a Council Regulation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office² as another example of initiative rejected by Commission.

Replying to the first round of questions, Minister TASSOULAS stated that it was clear that the European Parliament was still a buttress of democracy in Europe and that the message of the vote concerning who would be the President of the Commission had to be heard. According to him, the European Parliament expressed indirectly national Parliaments and, if it managed to make the voice of people heard, citizens would be convinced that there was more democratic legitimacy in the Union. Democracy and prosperity were the two reasons why supraplates existed, he stressed; if there was not enough of these elements scepticism and opposition would grow. He expressed the hope that the elections' message would be received.

Mr CASINI expressed his appreciation for the Dutch and French interventions, with which he partly agreed, notably with the fact that the European Parliament together with the European Commission should have a general power of initiative; he stated that the various cards were good provided the activities of national Parliaments were an added force and a stimulus for the European Parliament's work. He called for more effective communication channels which were technically more effective and also more European thinking on the part of national Parliaments were needed. On delegated and implementing acts, he mentioned that the European rules provided that the European Parliament could already change or revoke its delegation of powers, which could be useful to national Parliaments as well. On austerity not being a European value, he mentioned that paying debts so that they are not a burden for children was a family value. He expressed his deep regret that the only initiative on an electoral reform had not gone through because Member States did not want to give up their national systems and called for a new attempt for a single electoral system. He mentioned that the EU could not be defended as a fortress, because it was an expansive Union, and that its enlargement policy should defend its long-term interests and those of the world. He stated that the current times were an opportunity for Europe to deepen its roots, as it had happened after the Second World War. It was now necessary to strengthen enthusiasm and strive for more integration, opting for solidarity rather than national interests.

In the second round of interventions, Ms Ingrid ANTIČEVIĆ-MARINOVIĆ, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, mentioned the common agreement of previous speakers on the need to strengthen democratic legitimacy and closer involvement of the citizens, especially at EU level, the partial agreement on how to emerge from crisis, and the lack of discussion on the responsibility for the crisis. In her opinion, more or less Europe was a false dichotomy, and it should be considered in which areas

² COM(2013)0534 final

more or less Europe was necessary. It was obvious that more Europe was necessary in terms of security, including physical and economic security; the message emerging from the elections was that citizens wanted the European project and asked for jobs, health and education. For citizens, the EU would either have a social dimension or would cease to exist; therefore more solidarity and greater participation were necessary. Policies needed to be changed, as banks were given free reign, while burdens kept being imposed on citizens.

For Mr Paolo TANCREDI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, democratic legitimacy was the core issue and he agreed with Mr CASINI on the need to move forward along the lines of the Lisbon Treaty, namely towards a greater role for the European Parliament, more parliamentary accountability for the Council and the Commission's acts, more dialogue between the European Parliaments and national Parliaments, more attention to European Citizens' Initiatives and to EU's external dimension. The novelty in appointing the President of the Commission from the major political families was appreciated by citizens and denying this would mean taking a step backwards in terms of democratic legitimacy and undermining the credibility of major political families.

Mr Pierre LEQUILLER, French *Assemblée nationale*, commented the results in France mentioning that he was not proud of them. According to him, citizens who knew what they wanted often kept quiet and used Brussels as a scapegoat, not allowing it to glorify its successes. In France, the vote was against the French President as was the vote for municipal elections. Parliamentarians had the responsibility to share the message on EU's achievements without waiting for the next elections. He agreed with Mr CASINI on the need for more enthusiasm.

Mr Edmund WITTBRODT, Polish *Senat*, mentioned the low turnout in Poland despite provisions in the Lisbon treaty meant to increase democratic legitimacy; he emphasised that national Parliaments played a key role and valued the European Citizens' Initiative and the relationship with the European Parliament. Education in society was, in his view, fundamental to solve these problems and to better prepare a democracy involving the majority of the population.

Mr James CLAPPISON, UK *House of Commons*, stressed that it would be a mistake to interpret the result of the elections as a message that all was well. In the UK, the majority of the electorate voted for parties who wanted fundamental reforms or for the UK to leave the EU. He argued that labelling people who wanted change as eurosceptics was not an acceptable answer, nor was telling them their vote did not count. In his view, several of the parliamentarians' interventions supported a doctrine that citizens could only vote for proved candidates or parties. He concluded inquiring whether the parliamentarians present were prepared to concede anything at all in reform in order to satisfy that electorate that had shown it wanted reform and change.

Mr Jakob PRESEČNIK, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, argued that turnout was not as bad as predicted, being a bit higher than 2009. He added that in Slovenia the turnout was one of the lowest in EU (around 22%), while in Slovakia and the Czech Republic it was even lower. The high percentage of seats of sceptics and extremists was not always a sign of lack of agreement on policies adopted at national or European level.

Mr Gerald HÄFNER, European Parliament, stated that, in the aftermath of the elections, the EU was moving into a new phase and he recalled that several colleagues called for a fundamental reform in the EU towards more democracy, more participation, and clear definition of competences. Despite recent progress, on some issues, solutions were found only on the fringes of the Lisbon Treaty. As former rapporteur of the report on Citizens' Initiative, he mentioned the restrictions imposed by the Treaty itself and the need, in the framework of these, to change the Treaties to respond to criticisms expressed. He called on the European Parliament and national Parliaments to

work together in order to introduce reform and a new kind of European document which guaranteed that the institutions could work more transparently.

For Mr Jérôme LAMBERT, French *Assemblée nationale*, the political difficulty of a Europe trapped by austerity, with dubious economic policies, showed the institutional limits and the fact that the European citizens considered MEPs too far away from them and the institutions inefficient; it was vital to guarantee regular consultations with citizens, so that national Parliaments could make their contributions.

Mr Takis HADJIGEORGIOU, European Parliament, mentioned that the results of the elections showed a split between left and right and the lack of a common target, adding that Brussels appeared to be "on another planet"; the solution for the EU was to spend the billions aimed at making it a strategic global player on growth for its citizens.

Mr Karlheinz KOPF, Austrian *Nationalrat*, stressed that for more participation in the EU more democracy was needed as stressed by Mr Tancredi. He mentioned there were still too many intergovernmental decisions and that legislation being taken without involvement of the European Parliament should not be taken up. In his view, the European Parliament should have the right of initiative in the future. He stressed the need for coordination on subsidiarity and thanked for the Dutch initiative, adding that the Chairs of the European affairs committees in national Parliaments should meet more often to discuss specific EU legislative proposals. In light of the crisis, he said that election results were more than acceptable and supported Mr Jean-Claude Juncker as the *Spitzenkandidat* for the EPP.

Mr Mehmet Sayım TEKELIOGLU, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, recalled that the rise of extremism and euroscepticism were the main problems for EU Parliaments and leadership. The increase of islamophobic, xenophobic, racist and anti-immigration parties was not critical only for Turkey, but also for all European countries. Enlargement policies required peace, stability, prosperity, democracy and the rule of law; lack of strong leadership prevented EU from involving in solving regional and global problems. He called on the newly elected European Parliament to simplify the negotiation process for Turkey.

In reply to the interventions, Minister TASSOULAS mentioned that the major issue discussed was identifying who was to blame for the distancing from the EU and whether austerity was a principle of the EU. In Greece, the two biggest parties (New Democracy and PASOK) had a cumulative percentage of the votes of 85% for 35 years, while today it was less than 35%. He mentioned positive examples of achievements due to EU funding; at the same time, the EU imposed measures on Greece which triggered unemployment and hardships, which did not feed gratitude for those achievements. In his view, economic and financial stability were necessary, but should not undermine political stability. He deplored the adoption of abrupt, short-term measures for short-term results which would lead to political instability and would destroy attempts to maintain financial stability. Disappointed citizens voted for extreme parties not because they accepted their ideas but for protesting against the abrupt worsening of their living conditions. Therefore, politicians should be measured in their actions in order to obtain growth.

Mr CASINI referred to a constructive debate held by the AFCO Committee with a delegation from the UK *House of Lords*. He mentioned there was a communication problem and quoted a recent study on the cost of non-Europe recently estimated at 800 billion euros, presenting the figures for digital market, the Single Market, CSDP, research and innovation, the Erasmus training programme, the part of the budget foreseen for the regions, companies, farms and adding that the EU saved national governments 7 billion euros. Since 2012 national budgets have increased by 62% and the EU budget only by 37%. In order to have citizens on board, these realistic figures were

important. He underlined that responding to the competition with new economic powers was an emergency and that overcoming the crisis required joint cooperation.

6. Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

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

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

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

7. 'Rethinking the European employment Strategy'

Keynote speaker: Mr Lászlo ANDOR, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Commissioner Lászlo ANDOR noted that social policies and instruments had played a key role in promoting convergence in the EU since its inception, but because of the crisis, this convergence process had slowed down and even gone into reverse in parts of Europe.

In that respect, the Commissioner underlined that the European Employment Strategy was a core convergence instrument for more and better jobs throughout the EU. The four tools provided by the Treaty (the Employment guidelines; the Joint Employment Report; the National Reform Programmes and the Country-Specific Recommendations issued by the Commission) were integrated into the European Semester for policy coordination and part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The Commissioner pointed out that, in the context of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Employment Strategy should be discussed.

After mentioning data concerning the pre-crisis trends and the impact of euro-area crisis on employment in 2011-12, the Commissioner focused on the Employment Package put forward by the Commission in April 2012. This package put greater focus on measures stimulating the demand for labour, on the need for balanced labour market reforms and for securing employment transitions. It also emphasised the need for a balanced approach in terms of wage developments and for the first time addressed the role of a minimum wage to fight in-work poverty and inequalities. The Employment Package also stressed the need to continue investing in skills and tackling labour-market mismatches and to reinforce the cooperation of public employment services.

Stressing the link between the Employment package and the European Semester, the Commissioner recalled the Country-specific Recommendations proposed by the Commission on 2 June and pointed out the attention paid by the Commission to active labour market policies, Public Employment Services, as well as to shifting taxation away from labour. He noted, in this regard, that wage increases had been recommended in surplus countries.

Turning to the measures adopted against youth unemployment, the Commissioner focused on the Youth Employment Package and recalled the Youth Employment Initiative, a financial instrument dedicated to helping in financing the Youth Guarantee. The Commissioner urged Member States to

submit their operational programmes relating to the Youth Employment Initiative as a matter of priority and pointed out that the Youth Guarantee was also monitored in the context of the European Semester. Mr ANDOR recalled that 8 Member States had received draft Country-specific Recommendations on this subject in 2014.

After mentioning the growing divergence in Member States' economic, employment and social situations and the increase of the poverty rate in the euro-area periphery, the Commissioner emphasised the need of reforming the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) at a faster pace and bolstering its social dimension. On this aspect, Mr ANDOR recalled the scoreboard of five key employment and social indicators used for the first time this year under the European Semester. For the future, he expressed the need to develop policy benchmarking and social standards, which should be reflected in the future Employment Guidelines. Concerning social dialogue, the Commissioner mentioned the Communication on the Social dimension of the EMU and underlined that existing EU *fora* should be used more effectively so as to better involve social partners in reforming the EMU, the EU economic governance and the European Semester.

Turning to the labour mobility, which could help to tackle existing mismatches between people's skills and employers' needs, the Commissioner mentioned the proposal for a Regulation on a European network of Employment Services and a new Commission's initiative, called "Your first EURES job", which was being tested. It was a job-mobility scheme aimed at supporting young people to find a job, a traineeship or an apprenticeship in another Member State. Then the Commissioner mentioned the new Commission proposal, aimed at ensuring better application of EU citizens' right to work in another Member State at national level and facilitating mobility within the EU labour market.

Regarding the process of reviewing the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Commissioner stressed that the uneven progress on Europe 2020 targets should not prompt EU leaders to water down or abandon the Strategy as such, but to step up the policy responses. In this context, serious reform of the EMU was a precondition for ensuring sustained recovery and the workability of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

After mentioning the public consultation opened by the Commission to gather opinions and ideas for the post-crisis period, the Commissioner stressed the importance of COSAC's contribution in the review process.

In the debate that followed, 16 speakers took the floor.

Mr Paolo GUERRIERI PALEOTTI, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, underlined that it was necessary to put greater focus on the internal demand, fostering public investments and to link macro and micro-policies. The need of increasing the consumers' demand and fostering investments was stressed also by Mr Bruno ROSSMANN, Austrian *Nationalrat*, who also underlined the importance of more steps towards a minimum wage and asked the follow-up of the European unemployment benefit system. The Commissioner answered that increasing the consumers' demand was not only the role of public investments, but it was equally important to support private investments and to stabilise the banking system. However, the Commission proposed many measures for boosting public investments, including capital increase of the European Investment Bank and the launch of project bonds. With regards to the question on a European insurance scheme, the Commissioner mentioned several public events on this subject and an informal Council in Milan during the Italian Presidency, which would have an impact on this debate in terms of political proposals.

Ms Aleksandra OSTERMAN, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, mentioned the drop of the unemployment rate in Slovenia and underlined two things so far neglected: the need of a reaction of the society to the development of technology and the quality of jobs. Concerning working conditions, the Commissioner recalled the Quality Framework for Traineeships and the new 7-year strategy on occupational safety and health (focusing on new health risks - such as work-related psycho and social problems - and on the need to help SMEs to complain with the legislation).

Ms Catherine MORIN-DESAILLY, French *Sénat*, noted that the employment strategy required a review of the EU digital strategy. The EU must be more effective, through industrial and research policies modified to the new realities. On the Information and Communication Technology jobs, the Commissioner underlined the lack of skilled job and the needs of investments in better training and a better orientation of students.

Ms Marina BERLINGHIERI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, pointed out that the Italian Parliament and Government considered a radical rethinking of the EU employment as a priority of the Italian Presidency. Europe needed three urgent interventions: active labour measures, with a life-long learning strategy; rethinking the European frame of the budget policy, with more flexible budget restraints; the review of the Lisbon Strategy, with a more effective convergence of employment policies.

Mr Alexander ULRICH, German *Bundestag*, noted that, looking at European elections, citizens felt that Europe reduced their working conditions. This was related to the policies which had been adopted in recent years. Focus should not be placed only on austerity measures, it was necessary to invest and guarantee not only jobs, but good jobs, a minimum wage and fewer short term contracts. With regard to Germany, he did not understand the criticism addressed by the European Commission, taking into consideration that Germany had improved the pension system. In this respect, the Commissioner noted that Germany should invest more for boosting internal demand and that the enormous surplus was a problem not only for Germany, but also for the rest of the Euro area. The criticisms addressed to Germany in the area of pensions were related to the fact that, in recent years, there had been progress in all countries to link the retirement age with the life expectations and countries should not reverse this trend.

Mr Afif DEMIRKIRAN, Turkish *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, asked when Chapter 19 on Social policy and Employment was going to be opened, taking in consideration the progress made in Turkey in that field. The Commissioner noted that it was true that Turkish legislation on that field had improved, but that there were still major problems on industrial relations and on the right of assembly. Discussions should restart from a basic level with the new Commission. The Commissioner underlined the Commission's openness and availability to discuss the content and the entry criteria of the Chapter 19 with the involvement of the International Labour Organization which had a crucial role in that matter.

Mr Konstantinos TRIANTAFYLLOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, noted that the European Commission, via the Troika, participated in decisions which increased unemployment and created social problems. He underlined the need for programmes in the real economy, including private workers, for strengthening the social chapters in the European Semester adding more indicators on sex equality, poverty and decent work, and for interventions on the cost of the access to credit. On real economy, the Commissioner underlined the need of revitalising the banking system by completing the Banking Union.

Ms Zoe KONSTANTOPOULOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, said that there could not be democracy and social rights in Europe as long as the policy of memoranda and troika supervision were maintained and noted that the Troika, of which the European Commission was part, was pushing

for more job losses. The Commissioner pointed out that in 2010 there were no EU mechanisms allowing to lend countries, hence the presence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the Troika which originated from the situation of some countries which had failed to finance themselves in the financial market, a situation behind which there were many domestic factors. He added that the Commission had been calling for a proper social dialogue in order to decide sustainable labour market reforms and the role of Commission had been to ensure that those countries were able to get funding from official resources. In his view, what needed to be reconsidered was the conditionality of lending.

Mr Carlos SÃO MARTINHO, Portuguese *Assembleia da Rep blica*, noted that Portugal succeeded in the adjustment programme, which, however, represented a big sacrifice with strong social and unemployment consequences. He considered, as central point, that citizens should have more trust in the EU.

Mr Lubos BLAHA, Slovak *Nrodn rada*, emphasised the importance of the social economy (consisting of cooperatives, social enterprises and non-profit organisations) for growth and social justice. The Commissioner highlighted the support of the Commission for the social economy and encouraged who would take over to go on in this field.

Mr Simon SUTOUR, French *Snat*, said that we had to focus on the digital sector, energy efficiency, completing the EMU, and on a specific budget for the Eurozone, including measures for job creation and for a European benefit system. The Commissioner pointed out that the discussion in this area would be intensified and that the voice of national Parliaments would be very important, also in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy review.

Baroness Rosalind SCOTT, UK *House of Lords*, after expressing concerns on the practice of zero-hours contracts, noted the public sector was the major employer and traditionally took the lead on improving the employment practice, particularly the women participation in the work forces. She underlined the danger of competitive tenders coming from companies which kept the cost down using these practises and that the good employers (particularly social enterprises and charities) were driven out of the market. The Commissioner expressed, as well, concerns for the zero-hour contracts and for the so called "mini-jobs", but he pointed out that the legislation on this matter was in the hands of Member States.

Ms Roberta Alma ANASTASE, Romanian *Camera Deputailor*, pointed out the need to internalise the employment strategy in each country, to link the education system to the labour market and to create an environment favourable for the SMEs, particularly to get credit and the need for fiscal stimulation.

Mr Svein Roald HANSEN, Norwegian *Storting*, underlined that, in the sound situation in Norway, the high participation of women in the labour market had played an important role. This was the result of many years of gender and family-friendly measures, providing high education to women, equality at work and at home, Kindergarten, parental leaves. He stressed that these policies were not expensive and that they required political will rather than money.

Mr Kimmo SASI, Finnish *Eduskunta*, pointed out that increasing the internal demand was not the solution, and that a more flexible labour market and better education were necessary in Europe. The Commissioner noted that, since 2012, when the European Central Bank shifted away from its restrictive policy, there had been a reconsideration of the fiscal and monetary policy and a more pro-recovery counter cycle approach. He added that working on the individual competitiveness and devaluating competitiveness of the EU members was the way to push the EU economy in a

negative spiral. He urged Finland to participate in discussions on the Monetary Union and not to advocate micro-level solutions.

8. Investing in European youth: the way out of the economic crisis

Keynote speaker: Mr Paulo MOTA PINTO, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*.

Youth Guarantee Scheme: Best Practices

Keynote speaker: Ms Silvia MODIG, Member of the Finnish Eduskunta.

Encouraging Creativity and Young Entrepreneurship

Keynote speaker: Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Latvian *Saeima*.

Mr Paulo MOTA PINTO, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, pointed out that the current youth unemployment was the result of a complex interaction of economic, social, demographic, geographic, cultural and social factors and, therefore, the solution should equally be multidimensional and complex taking into account all these factors, as well as the specific nature of each country. He stressed that the youth unemployment trend and its structural causes already existed before the crisis. He added that youth unemployment was a problem at both EU and national level, affecting the economic performance of the whole EU, and needed a solution with a European approach.

Mr MOTA PINTO identified the key challenges to be faced: the mismatching between skills and labour market; the transition from school to the employment market; the frustration produced by long-term unemployment; the inadequacy between the skills and geographical availability of young people. He underlined the need for a constant and detailed monitoring of the Youth package and of an ambitious implementation of the Communication on the Social dimension of the EMU.

Mr MOTA PINTO stressed the two pillars on which solutions could be found: the constant and dynamic engagement among the various key players involved and a change in the practices and also of mentalities at various levels. In concrete terms, he highlighted the need for: the modernisation of education and training system; the acquisition of specific and cross-cutting skills; practical learning programmes, along with systems of transition from school to the labour market; encouraging SMEs to take part in the Youth Guarantee; promoting youth entrepreneurship; discouraging youth migration outside EU.

In conclusion, he emphasised that public policies that encouraged the EU competitiveness and economic growth were, indeed, also policies for combating youth unemployment and stressed that investing in youth was not a question of choice, but an unavoidable option for getting out of the crisis.

Ms Silvia MODIG, Member of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, presented the Finnish Youth Guarantee Scheme. Ms MODIG pointed out that the Finnish Youth Guarantee, launched in 2013 for the first time, put together a large package of measures. In addition, Finland adopted other tools in the field of social services and health matters, such as young workshops and an outreach program.

In the Finnish scheme, every single young person under the age of 25 and every graduate under the age of 30 was offered a job, a traineeship, a study place, a place in a workshop no later than 3 months after he registers as unemployed. The Government had spent 60 million per year. Since 2013, 24.000 young people have found a job and 3.400 an apprenticeship. Ms MODIG stressed the importance of giving subsidies to the employers of young people (700 euro per month for maximum 10 months; for apprenticeships, 800 euros per month in the first year; 500 euros in the second year and 300 euros in the third year). The initiative had been successful, especially in the municipalities

with a well established network of youth services based on the 4 P (Private, Public, People, Partnership). However, the system had to be improved especially in some municipalities, where the demand was too great, also because of the cuts in their budget. Ms MODIG explained the system of workshops and the outreach program, aimed at helping young people who risked to be socially excluded. The workshops were conducted by trained workers on a one-by-one basis and the outreach program was directed to tracking down people who had dropped out of the system.

Ms MODIG noted that in Finland, in the first quarter of 2014, the unemployment rate had increased in comparison with the same period of last year (+1%), because jobs had decreased. However, without youth unemployment measures, the situation would have been much worse. Ms MODIG pointed out that currently Finland should pay more attention on preventing measures, addressed to the most vulnerable groups, including housing and mental healthcare. She also mentioned the ongoing debate on increasing the age of compulsory school (from 16 to 17) and the need to improve communication between employment offices and other services involved in the youth guarantee implementation. In conclusion, she underlined the need of a system of "one-shop stop", by designating a contact point person, in order to avoid that young persons, seeking for help, had to explain their situation to different services.

Ms KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA, Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Latvian *Saeima*, focused on the measures adopted in Latvia for encouraging creativity and young entrepreneurs. She mentioned the increase in the percentage of youngsters ready to start a business in 2014 (27%) in comparison with 2011 (17%). According to national surveys, youngsters were discouraged more by the lack of skills and mentorship than the lack of funding. They needed to be advised and motivated. From 2012 to 2014, Latvia had implemented support programs for businnes. In 2010 Latvia introduced a new type of limited liability company, the microcompanies subjected to simplified tax rules. For this initiative, in 2013 Latvia received the European Enterprise Promotion Award. Ms KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA mentioned the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Initiative in Latvia (with a budget, for the next 7 years, of 70 million euros, 1,5 million for youngsters), which provided support for launching business. She also underlined the efforts made for reducing the administrative burdens (12,5 days for starting a business in 2011, in comparison with 15,5 days in 2011). Ms KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA noted that great accessibility to modern tecnologies and the expansion of vocational and life-long learning programs had encouraged Latvia to develop creative businesses.

She concluded by focusing on digital economy, which had an enormous potential to create new job and sustainable growth and was especially appealing for young people. Digital economy, along with jobs and growth were going to be the priorities of Latvian Presidency in 2015.

In the following debate 25 speakers took the floor.

Ms Jana JENKO, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, referred to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Slovenia and presented other measures in favour of the unemployed under 30 (tax relief measures for the employers, work trials and youth mentoring).

Ms Anne LOUHELAINEN, Finnish *Eduskunta*, mentioned the high percentage of young NEET ("Not in Education, Employment, or Training") in Finland and pointed out that the Finnish Youth Guarantee had not yielded the expected results. She underlined the need of paying more attention on preventive measures.

Mr Demetris SYLLOURIS, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, underlined that Europe did not need new ideas, but successful implementation of existing policies. In particular, he focused on the lack of results in the countries under a macroeconomic adjustment programme.

Mr Heinz-Joachim BARCHMANN, German *Bundestag*, referred to best practices in Germany and to the importance of an alliance for training and of looking after trainees without apprenticeship.

Ms Zoe KONSTANTOPOULOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, expressed her surprise in relation to Commissioner ANDOR's replies regarding employment of young people in the EU and presented the difficult situation in Greece, pointing out the high unemployment of the Greek youth. She called on European parliamentarians to act effectively and promptly to address the situation.

Ms Michaela POPA, Romanian *Senat*, presented Romania's efforts to reduce social spending and support small businesses for young people. She supported the idea of appointing a Commissioner for Youth.

Mr Edgar MAYER, Austrian *Bundesrat*, referred to the programmes in Austria along the Finnish example, emphasising the need to teach the youth how to deal with all materials and to introduce workshops for apprenticeship in relation to the first job and the subsequent ones.

Lord Lyndon HARRISON, UK *House of Lords*, stressed the need to address the issue of overqualified young persons in the wrong areas. He referred to the House of Lords' report on youth unemployment published in April 2014.

Ms Catherine MORIN-DESAILLY, French *Sénat*, underlined the need to acknowledge the crisis also in education and training, emphasising that students needed to acquire digital skills. Access to education was also stressed by Ms Sylvi GRAHAM, Norwegian *Storting*, who emphasised the importance of the Erasmus Plus programme.

Ms Marina BERLINGHIERI, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, identified, amongst others, the lack of resources for the Youth Guarantee Scheme suggesting an increase of these proposed in the mid-term review.

Some speakers underlined the importance of the digital market, while Mr Peter FRIEDRICH, German *Bundesrat*, stressed that, in addition to this, attention should be focused also on culture and Europe's cultural diversity.

Ms Marit MAIJ, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, linking the situation of women and unemployed youth, supported the view that women and young people have some common challenges to face.

Mr Konstantinos TRIANTAFYLLOS, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, and Mr Francis ZAMMIT DIMECH, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, stated that it was important that innovation and creativity had been mentioned.

The three keynote speakers took the floor and replied to the interventions. Ms MODIG, Finnish *Eduskunta*, said that the most important was to invest in youngsters at risk of being excluded. In this regard, she added that guiding and counselling were important. She emphasised the role of entrepreneurship and, agreeing with the Greek parliamentarian, considered austerity measures a reason for being in this situation today. She underlined the need of introducing measures to bring economy back in track. Mr MOTA PINTO, Portuguese *Assembleia da Republica*, referred to encouragement schemes enabling the employment of young people, entrepreneurship schemes and specific schemes for unqualified young people that were in place in Portugal. Ms KALNINA-LUCAŠEVICA, Latvian *Saeima*, amongst others, referred to three types of schemes in Latvia: the first in relation to professional education and traineeship, the second in relation to involving young

people in the labour market enabling them to get a first job and the third in relation to entrepreneurship through which educated young people are supported to establish companies.

9. Adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LI COSAC

The Chair, Mr TRAGAKIS, informed that the Presidency had tried to incorporate almost all of the amendments tabled by Friday, 13 June 2014, in the draft text of the Contribution and Conclusions of the LI COSAC and that the Troika had adopted a single text at its meeting on Sunday. He added that more amendments had been tabled the previous day, which had been discussed at the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC. He presented the final table of proposed amendments to the draft Contribution and Conclusions, reflecting the lively discussion in the Chairpersons meeting, and proposed to discuss the text paragraph by paragraph.

Ms Marie GRANLUND, Swedish *Riksdag*, appreciated the work of the secretariat and the Chair in producing a current text, but stressed that the process, the way of work and the content of the documents must be urgently reviewed. The delegations, she added, should be working on the original draft, not the Troika draft. Ms GRANLUND added that written comments would be prepared.

Mr KIRKILAS, Lithuanian *Seimas*, informed that the Lithuanian delegation supported the part on Ukraine in the draft Contribution as it was agreed at the Troika meeting.

Mr Nico SCHRIJVER, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, and Ms Agnieszka POMASKA, Polish *Sejm*, expressed their support for the final draft of the Contribution and the Conclusions.

The final draft of the Conclusions, as proposed after the Chairpersons meeting, was adopted without amendment.

Regarding the draft Contribution, Ms Zoe KONSTANTOPOULOU, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, requested that her objection on four issues be included in the minutes. Objecting to the amendment of paragraph 2.2, she insisted on its original formulation. Furthermore, she abstained from supporting paragraph 4.2. She further proposed adding, in paragraph 6.2, that the repeated violations of international law on asylum and international humanitarian law were taking place at the European border because of the practice of *refoulement*. Her proposal was rejected. Ms KONSTANTOPOULOU finally requested that a general reservation on paragraph 8.8 be included in the minutes.

The final draft of the Contribution was adopted, as amended by the Chairpersons and the Plenary of COSAC.

Finally, Mr MAURO, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, thanked for the Greek hospitality and congratulated Greece on a very successful Presidency. He confirmed Italy's readiness to take over the Presidency of the EU Council and announced that the next meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons would take place on 17-18 July 2014 and that the LII COSAC plenary meeting would take place on 30 November - 2 December 2014 in the premises of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* in Rome.