



Draft outline of the 42nd COSAC Bi-annual Report

Chapter 1:

The state of the European Union in the year of institutional transition and the 15-year application of the Treaty of Lisbon

In the second semester of 2024 the mandates of some EU institutions will be renewed according to the Treaty provisions. On 16 July 2024 a newly elected European Parliament will start its five-year term following the EP elections of 6-9 June 2024.

The European Commission's mandate also comes to an end on 31 October 2024 and the members of the European Council will have to elect a new European Council President as of 1 December 2024. Therefore, this semester is characterised by less legislative activities, but with more political negotiations as well as preparatory and consultative meetings.

The Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on 1 December 2009 and during the past 15 years the relevant stakeholders gained experiences on the practical application of the articles and protocols regarding the role of national Parliaments. Moreover, Article 12 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) provides the catalogue of activities that national Parliaments can carry out for the good functioning of the Union. During the past 15 years, the threshold of the so-called yellow card procedure concerning subsidiarity checks was triggered only in three cases in 2012, 2013 and 2016 respectively. The number of reasoned opinions adopted by the national Parliaments fluctuates from year to year and the European Commission forwards around 100 legislative drafts annually to national Parliaments under Protocol No. 2.

This Chapter will deal with the special characteristic of a transitional semester and provide some overview on the priorities of the next EU institutional cycle. In addition, it will provide a stock-taking about the application of the Treaty of Lisbon, with special attention to the role of national Parliaments in EU affairs.

Chapter 2:

European demographic trends and national and Union responses

The European Commission presented its toolbox entitled Demographic change (hereinafter: the toolbox) in Europe in October 2023 [COM (2023) 577] following the decision of the June 2023 European Council to address demographic challenges and notably their impact on Europe's competitive edge. The toolbox rightly points out that population ageing and a shrinking working-age population are expected to exacerbate labour shortages and increase pressure on public budgets. It is also stipulated that demographic change is primarily determined by life choices that individuals and families make. However, EU and national policies should help ensure that people in Europe can fulfil their aspirations. According to the forecasts of the toolbox, the EU's

population, due to ageing and declining birth rates, will peak around 2026 and gradually shrink over the coming decades.

Demography and family policy issues belong to the core national competence of EU Member States, however the common challenges posed by demographic trends in the fields of competitiveness, labour market or social care do give the discussion on national measures and European initiatives and best practices timeliness and legitimacy.

In addition, the toolbox points to key reforms and investments needed to address and manage demographic change in Europe. As set out above, policy-makers in the Member States should apply them in their national and regional contexts in a whole-of-government approach.

This Chapter will present whether and how national Parliaments have so far dealt with the Commission toolbox. It will also address the relevant measures on the level of Member States or regions that focus on the economic and social aspects of demographic issues. It will also touch upon how Cohesion policy helps Member States to address demographic challenges.

Chapter 3:

The enlargement of the European Union

Article 49 TEU stipulates the conditions and the procedure of the enlargement process. 20 years passed since the historic EU enlargement of 2004/2007, thereby enlarging the EU by 12 new Member States. The European perspective has been offered for the Western Balkans since the EU summit held in Thessaloniki in June 2003. The last EU accession negotiations were completed in June 2011 and currently nine European countries participate in the enlargement process as EU candidate country.

On 20 March 2024, the European Commission adopted the Communication on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews [COM (2024) 146)]. The document intends to contribute to the ongoing discussion process about the internal reforms the EU will need to make to prepare for an enlarged Union. It looks at the implications of a larger EU in four main areas - values, policies, budget, and governance. The document examines the impact of enlargement on EU policies and the need to equip candidate countries and potential candidates with the tools to adapt as well as the EU with tools to be able to match its ambition.

This Chapter will look at EU enlargement, its implications to the spread of stability, peace, security, and economic prosperity across the continent. It will analyse the modalities; whereby Member States and national Parliaments currently address the matter of ongoing EU accession processes.