

Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

21-22 July 2019, Helsinki

Draft outline of the 32nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC
(as of 27 June 2019)

Chapter 1: Overview of parliamentary activities

The role of national Parliaments in the EU framework is provided by Articles 10 and 12 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

Member States are represented in the European Council by their Heads of State or Government and in the Council by their governments, themselves democratically accountable either to their national Parliaments, or to their citizens (Art. 10 TEU). When deciding on legislation or budgetary issues in the Council, ministers exercise powers that, in their home states, belong to parliaments, which implies a degree of delegation. National Parliaments remain responsible, under national constitutions, for how these powers are exercised.

Article 12 TEU foresees that national Parliaments contribute to the good functioning of the Union through, inter alia, being informed by and supervising their governments in the Council, through subsidiarity checks and by taking part in inter-parliamentary cooperation. In the ten years the Lisbon Treaty has been in force, these practices have evolved considerably.

As 2019 marks a transition to a new institutional cycle, it may be useful to provide an overview of current parliamentary activities and evaluate their effectiveness as regards the European legislative process. The focus is put on scrutiny practices of national Parliaments and on how the EU institutions deal with latter's contributions concerning the substance of proposed legislation.

Chapter 2: Inter-parliamentary cooperation in the 2020s

In past years, numerous inter-parliamentary cooperation vehicles have been introduced covering such fields as Common Foreign and Security Policy, financial stability and police cooperation. In the 2020s inter-parliamentary cooperation will be further extended to enhance the democratic oversight of Eurojust and the evaluation of its activities. Additional cooperation vehicles are being planned or expected to come into force in the coming years.

At the turn of the decade, it may be useful to look back and assess the added value of inter-parliamentary cooperation in order to identify where it can be strengthened. More specifically, this chapter seeks to take stock of Parliaments'/Chambers' views about the existing forms of inter-parliamentary cooperation and gathers their opinions on how it may be further developed in the future.

Chapter 3: Evaluation of the Bi-annual Report

COSAC has acquired a set of skills with regard to the sharing of best practices and exchange of information, one part of which is the Bi-annual Report on EU procedures and practices. The first Bi-annual Report was presented at the XXXI COSAC (Dublin, 19-20 May 2004). Traditionally Bi-annual Reports dealt with benchmarking and best practices. Recently, substantive issues on the Agenda of the upcoming COSAC have also been dealt with. Bi-annual Reports have rarely led to a discussion in the COSAC plenary. After 15 years, it may be time to re-evaluate.

Parliaments/Chambers will be asked whether there is a need to reform or replace the format, frequency and content of the current Bi-annual Report.