

**BELGISCHE KAMER VAN
VOLKSVERTEGENWOORDIGERS**

12 juli 2007

BUITENGEWONE ZITTING

**Conferentie van Voorzitters van
de Parlementen van de Europese Unie****Bratislava - Slowakije, 24-27 mei 2007**

Sinds 1975 ontmoeten de voorzitters van de Europese parlementaire assemblees elkaar regelmatig tijdens een interparlementaire conferentie.

Om de twee jaar heeft een conferentie plaats van de voorzitters van de parlementaire assemblees van de lidstaten van de Raad van Europa, alsook van de voorzitters van de assemblees van de Raad van Europa, de West-Europese Unie en het Europees Parlement.

Daarnaast wordt jaarlijks (sedert 1999) ook een Conferentie georganiseerd die speciaal gewijd is aan communautaire vraagstukken en die dan beperkt is tot de parlementsvoorzitters van de lidstaten van de Europese Unie. Deze bijeenkomst heeft tot doel te onderzoeken welke rol de parlementen kunnen spelen bij de uitbouw van de Europese Unie.

Onderhavig verslag heeft betrekking op de activiteiten van deze laatste Conferentie te Bratislava (Slowakije)

**CHAMBRE DES REPRÉSENTANTS
DE BELGIQUE**

12 juillet 2007

SESSION EXTRAORDINAIRE

**Conférence des Présidents des Parlements
de l'Union européenne****Bratislava, Slovaquie, 24-27 mai 2007**

Depuis 1975, les présidents des assemblées parlementaires européennes se réunissent chaque année à l'occasion d'une conférence interparlementaire.

Les présidents des assemblées parlementaires des Etats membres du Conseil de l'Europe, ainsi que les présidents des assemblées du Conseil de l'Europe, de l'Union de l'Europe occidentale et du Parlement européen y participent une fois tous les deux ans.

En outre, l'on organise étalement chaque année (depuis 1999) une Conférence qui est spécialement consacrée à des problèmes communautaires et qui réunit alors uniquement les présidents des parlements nationaux des Etats membres de l'Union européenne. Cette réunion a pour objectif d'examiner le rôle que les parlements peuvent jouer dans la construction de l'Union européenne.

Le présent rapport se réfère aux activités de la dernière conférence qui s'est déroulée à Bratislava (Slovaquie).

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<i>LDD</i>	:	<i>Lijst Dedecker</i>
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<i>PS</i>	:	<i>Parti Socialiste</i>
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INLEIDING

Opening door de heer Pavol Paška, Voorzitter van het Slowaakse Parlement, en de heer Robert Fico, Eerste Minister.

De Voorzitter herinnert eraan dat de parlementsvoorzitters de hoogste grondwettelijke vertegenwoordigers zijn van de «wil van het volk», de belangen van hun land en tegelijk van de EU.

Spreker onderstreept dat Slowakije een groot pleitbezorger is van de Europese integratie. Daarom is Slowakije zeker de gepaste plaats om in deze crisisperiode van de EU, terug de dynamiek te vinden voor de Europese éénmaking.

De nationale parlementen vertegenwoordigen het meest gepaste niveau om op de verwachtingen van de burgers te antwoorden en ze om te zetten in een pan-Europees beleid.

De Conferentie van de parlementsvoorzitters is dus tegelijk het ideale forum om ideeën uit te wisselen en gedeelde opvattingen (problemen) en oplossingen te identificeren.

Tot slot haalt de Voorzitter de woorden aan van de heer Alexander Dubček, uitgesproken ter gelegenheid van de toekenning van de Sakharovprijs voor de mensenrechten in het Europees Parlement: «Laat ons alles nastreven wat de Europese naties verenigt in hun verdere ontwikkeling, eerder dan stil te staan bij wat hen verdeelt».

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* *

In zijn korte openingsrede deelt de Eerste Minister mee dat Slowakije tegen 2009 wil toetreden tot de Eurozone.

Verder pleit hij voor een verdere uitbreiding van de Europese Unie om aldus de democratie te verbreden.

In afwachting hiervan is het nabuurschapbeleid van de Europese Unie van groot belang.

Tenslotte wijst hij op «voorzichtige» rol die de Europese Unie moet spelen bij het uitwerken van het statuut voor Kosovo.

INTRODUCTION

Ouverture de la séance par Pavol Paška, Président du Parlement slovaque, et M. Robert Fico, Premier ministre.

Le Président rappelle que les présidents de parlement sont les plus hauts représentants constitutionnels de la «volonté du peuple», des intérêts de leur pays ainsi que de l'Union européenne.

L'orateur souligne que la Slovaquie est un ardent partisan de l'intégration européenne. C'est pourquoi la Slovaquie est le lieu indiqué pour retrouver, en cette période de crise, la dynamique nécessaire à l'unification européenne.

Les parlements nationaux représentent le niveau le mieux adapté pour répondre aux attentes des citoyens et pour les traduire en une politique pan-européenne.

La Conférence des présidents de parlement est donc par là même le forum idéal pour échanger des idées et identifier des points de vue (problèmes) et des solutions partagés.

Enfin, le Président cite les propos tenus par M. Alexander Dubček à l'occasion de la remise du Prix Sakharov en faveur des droits de l'homme, au Parlement européen: «Recherchons tout ce qui unit les nations européennes dans la poursuite de leur développement plutôt que de s'arrêter à ce qui les divise».

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Dans sa brève allocution d'ouverture, le Premier ministre indique que la Slovaquie souhaite intégrer la zone euro d'ici 2009.

Il plaide en outre pour la poursuite de l'élargissement de l'Union européenne afin d'étendre ainsi la démocratie.

En attendant, la politique de voisinage menée par l'Union européenne revêt une grande importance.

Enfin, il souligne le rôle «prudent» que doit jouer l'Union européenne dans l'élaboration du statut du Kosovo.

I. De toekomst van Europa

De heer Paška, Voorzitter van het Slowaaks parlement, wijst erop dat Slowakije het 3^{de} land was dat de Europese Grondwet aanvaard heeft (oktober 2004).

Wij bevinden ons nu op een kruispunt waarbij de vraag zich stelt waarheen met de Europese Unie.

Het Europees Parlement en de nationale parlementen moeten in dit reflectie- en oriënteringproces een rol spelen.

Een mislukking zal te wijten zijn aan een gebrek aan communicatieve capaciteiten.

Er zal een sui generis oplossing moeten gevonden worden om van de Europese Unie een competitieve economie te maken. Hiertoe dient de Europese Unie een sterke actor te worden.

Spreker hekelt de nationale reflexen.

Het risico de nationale identiteit te verliezen bestaat niet.

De nationale parlementen zijn de hoeders van de democratie (cfr. de subsidiariteitsprocedure).

De Europese Unie moet door haar sociaal model bijdragen tot een grotere solidariteit.

Wij mogen geen schrik hebben van de EU, want de EU: dat zijn wij.

De Europese Unie is er ten behoeve van de burgers.

De heer Dos Santos, Vice-Voorzitter van het Europees Parlement, stelt dat het Constitutioneel Verdrag de hoogste prioriteit heeft voor het Europees Parlement.

De «*Joint parliamentary meetings* Europees Parlement – nationale parlementen» over de Toekomst van de Europese Unie zijn totnogtoe succesvol geweest en verdienen verder gezet te worden.

De consolidering van de Unie is noodzakelijk om de sociale cohesie en de vrede te garanderen. Burgers zouden een mislukking niet accepteren. De versterking van de parlementaire dimensie is nodig.

I. L'avenir de l'Europe

M. Paška, Président du Parlement slovaque, souligne que la Slovaquie a été le 3^e pays à adopter la Constitution européenne (octobre 2004).

Nous sommes aujourd'hui à la croisée des chemins, la question de l'avenir de l'Union européenne est posée.

Le Parlement européen et les parlements nationaux doivent jouer un rôle dans ce processus de réflexion et d'orientation.

Si ce processus ne peut pas être mené à bien, cet échec sera imputable à un manque de capacités de communication.

Il y aura lieu de trouver une solution sui generis permettant à l'Union européenne de devenir une économie compétitive. Pour pouvoir atteindre cet objectif, l'Union européenne doit devenir un acteur fort.

L'orateur fustige par ailleurs les réflexes nationaux.

Le risque de perte de l'identité nationale est inexistant.

Les parlements nationaux sont les gardiens de la démocratie. L'orateur renvoie à cet égard à la procédure de subsidiarité.

L'Union européenne doit contribuer, par son modèle social, à renforcer la solidarité.

Nous ne devons pas avoir peur de l'UE, car nous sommes l'UE.

L'Union européenne a été créée pour les citoyens.

M. Dos Santos, vice-président du Parlement européen, déclare que le Parlement européen accord la priorité absolue au Traité constitutionnel.

Les «*Rencontres parlementaires*» organisées entre le Parlement européen et les parlements nationaux au sujet de l'avenir de l'Union européenne ont jusqu'à présent rencontré un franc succès et méritent d'être poursuivies.

Il est indispensable de consolider l'Union afin de garantir la cohésion sociale et le maintien de la paix. Les citoyens ne toléreraient pas un échec. La dimension parlementaire doit être renforcée.

Binnen enkele weken moeten beslissingen inzake een vereenvoudigd verdrag worden genomen.

De 3-pijlerstructuur is onaangepast om de uitdagingen van de toekomst aan te gaan. Het toekennen van rechtspersoonlijkheid aan de Europese Unie is nodig.

Mechanismen van versterkte samenwerking kunnen de problemen oplossen.

De heer Poncelet, Voorzitter van de Franse Senaat, erkent dat het moeilijk zal zijn om met alle bekommernissen en desiderata rekening te houden.

Het nieuwe verdrag zal in voege moeten kunnen treden tegen 2009 (bij de volgende EP-verkiezingen). Er zal dus een akkoord moeten zijn tegen 2008, gezien de lange ratificatieperiode in de lidstaten.

De Europese Grondwet kan in zijn huidige versie niet behouden blijven.

De krachtlijnen van het nieuwe verdrag moeten anders voorgesteld worden. Daarbij moet uitgegaan worden van de verwachtingen van de burgers. Daarom moeten de sociaal-economische aspecten uit de ontwerp grondwet worden overgenomen (grondrechten; algemene sociale clausule; diensten van algemeen belang; eenheidsmunt).

Inzake veiligheid moet de grensoverschrijdende criminaliteit; gemeenschappelijke rechtshulp; samenwerking op vlak van veiligheid en justitie, centraal staan. Deze aspecten moeten met gekwalificeerde meerderheid kunnen beslist worden.

Op het vlak van buitenlands- en defensiebeleid moet de figuur van een minister voor Buitenlandse Betrekkingen, de cohesie van het beleid garanderen. Tevens dient voorzien in een gemeenschappelijke defensieclausule.

Met het oog op het respect voor het subsidiariteitsprincipe is een duidelijker verdeling van de bevoegdheden noodzakelijk.

Onder deze voorwaarden zal het nieuwe verdrag gemakkelijker aanvaard worden door de bevolking.

De Europese Unie moet dus één fundamenteel verdrag hebben. Er is tijd nodig om hierover te debatteren. De nationale parlementen hebben een rol te spelen.

Men mag zich niet laten meeslepen in pessimisme.

Dans quelques semaines, des décisions relatives à un traité simplifié devront être prises.

La structure à trois piliers ne permet pas de relever les défis de l'avenir. Il est indispensable que l'Union européenne acquière la personnalité juridique.

Les problèmes pourraient être résolus par le biais de mécanismes de coopération renforcée.

M. Poncelet, président du Sénat français, admet qu'il sera difficile de tenir compte de l'ensemble des préoccupations et desiderata.

Le nouveau traité doit pouvoir entrer en vigueur d'ici 2009 (lors des prochaines élections du Parlement européen). Il est donc essentiel de conclure un accord d'ici 2008, eu égard à la longueur des procédures de ratification prévues dans les différents États membres.

La Constitution européenne ne peut pas être maintenue dans sa version actuelle.

Les lignes directrices du nouveau traité doivent être présentées autrement, en partant des attentes des citoyens. Il convient dès lors de reprendre les aspects socioéconomiques prévus dans le projet de constitution (droits fondamentaux; clause sociale générale; services d'intérêt général; monnaie unique).

En matière de sécurité, la criminalité transfrontalière, l'assistance juridique commune et la coopération en matière de sécurité et de justice doivent être prioritaires. Ces aspects doivent pouvoir faire l'objet de décisions à la majorité qualifiée.

Dans les domaines de la politique étrangère et de la politique de défense, la figure d'un ministre des Affaires étrangères doit garantir la cohésion de la politique menée. Il convient également de prévoir une clause de défense commune.

Dans l'optique du respect du principe de subsidiarité, il est nécessaire de procéder à une plus claire répartition des compétences.

Moyennant ces conditions, le nouveau traité sera accepté plus facilement par la population.

L'Union européenne doit donc disposer d'un traité fondamental. Il faut du temps pour en débattre. Les parlements nationaux ont un rôle à y jouer.

On ne peut se laisser gagner par le pessimisme.

In de context van de globalisering is een sterk verenigd Europa nodig. Er is niet alleen de rationalisering van de instellingen, maar er moet vooral de link met de burgers gelegd.

De Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer, Mevr. G. Verbeet, analyseert de oorzaken van het Nederlandse «neen» tegen de Europese Grondwet.

De bevolking wantrouwt de Europese Unie omdat ze geen kennis heeft van de EU-aangelegenheden.

Door politisering moet de kennis van de EU-aangelegenheden opgetrokken worden.

De nieuwe uitdagingen van de Unie (terrorisme; klimaatverandering; energievoorziening) vragen om een gecoördineerde aanpak.

Een groot deel van de bevolking vraagt dat de Europese Unie hierin een rol speelt.

In Nederland zullen in de maand juni hearings georganiseerd worden.

De Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer van Nederland Mevrouw Timmermans, stelt dat de lidstaten bereid zullen moeten zijn hun positie te wijzigen. Een Europa met verschillende snelheden is geen antwoord. Dat is niet in het belang van de burgers.

Nederland is pro-Europees. De Nederlandse regering moet dus vertrouwen winnen. De regering vreest de bevolking, terwijl deze leiderschap verwacht. Het is dus niet voldoende naar de burgers te luisteren.

De nationale parlementen moeten een grotere invloed krijgen op de Europese besluitvorming.

De Griekse Voorzitter herinnert eraan dat 18 lidstaten de Europese Grondwet hebben goedgekeurd en dat dit niet zomaar kan geïgnoreerd worden.

Sir Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker van de House of Commons, wijst erop dat het buitenlands beleid voor de Europese Unie geen prioriteit is.

Er is met betrekking tot de rol van de nationale parlementen nog steeds geen evenwicht tussen het Europees Parlement en de nationale parlementen.

Het is niet nodig het nieuwe verdrag in alle lidstaten te onderwerpen aan een referendum. Het zijn vooral de

Une Europe unie forte est nécessaire dans le contexte de la globalisation. Il faut non seulement procéder à une rationalisation des institutions mais aussi et surtout établir le lien avec les citoyens.

La Présidente de la «Tweede Kamer» des Pays-Bas, Mme G. Verbeet, analyse les causes du «non» néerlandais à la Constitution européenne.

La population se méfie de l'Union européenne parce qu'elle ne connaît pas les matières relevant de l'Union européenne.

La politisation doit permettre d'accroître la connaissance des matières relevant de l'Union européenne.

Les nouveaux défis à relever par l'Union (terrorisme, changement climatique, approvisionnement énergétique) nécessitent une approche coordonnée.

Une grande partie de la population souhaite que l'Union européenne y joue un rôle.

Des auditions seront organisées aux Pays-Bas dans le courant du mois de juin.

La Présidente de la «Eerste Kamer» des Pays-Bas, Mme Timmermans, indique que les États membres devront être disposés à modifier leur position. Une Europe à plusieurs vitesses n'est pas une solution. Cela irait à l'encontre des intérêts des citoyens.

Les Pays-Bas sont pro-européens. Le gouvernement néerlandais doit donc gagner la confiance. Le gouvernement craint la population, alors que celle-ci attend qu'on la dirige. Il n'est donc pas suffisant d'écouter les citoyens.

Les parlements nationaux doivent avoir une influence accrue sur la prise de décision européenne.

Le Président grec rappelle que 18 États membres ont approuvé la Constitution européenne et que cela ne peut être ignoré.

Sir Haselhurst, Deputy Speaker de la House of Commons, souligne que la politique étrangère ne constitue pas une priorité pour l'Union européenne.

En ce qui concerne le rôle des parlements nationaux, l'orateur constate que l'équilibre entre le Parlement européen et les parlements nationaux n'a toujours pas pu être trouvé.

Il n'est pas nécessaire de soumettre le nouveau traité à un référendum dans tous les États membres. Ce sont

ationale parlementen die de teksten grondig moeten onderzoeken.

De Voorzitter van de Poolse Sejm (Kamer) waarschuwt dat de stemprocedure in het ontwerp van Europese Grondwet onvoldoende garanties biedt voor de gelijkheid tussen de lidstaten.

De heer Gama, Voorzitter van het Portugese parlement, vraagt de nodige flexibiliteit voor de nieuwe verdragsonderhandelingen.

Voor hem zijn er de volgende sleutelpunten:

- een duidelijke besluitvorming waarin de nationale parlementen een rol moeten spelen (het Protocol in de ontwerp Europese Grondwet met betrekking tot de nationale parlementen) moet verbeterd worden
- een eenheidsmarkt
- de eenheidsmunt en een onafhankelijke centrale bank
- een sociaal en regionaal cohesiebeleid
- hervorming van het GLB
- research en ontwikkeling
- Europese begroting (her-evaluatie van de eigen middelen van de Europese Unie)
- ratificatie van het nieuwe verdrag via de nationale parlementen en desgevallend referenda.

Voorzitter Gama besluit voorts dat de Europese Unie zich moeilijk aanpast aan de mondialisering.

Daarom moeten geprivilegieerde relaties worden ontwikkeld met Zuid-Amerika; Azië en Rusland. De relaties met Rusland moeten uit de sfeer van de koude oorlog gehaald.

De heer Cukjati, Voorzitter van de Sloveense Tweede Kamer (Drzavni zbor) dringt erop aan dat de nationale parlementen bij de verdragsonderhandelingen moeten geconsulteerd worden. Voor hem moet het Charter van de Grondrechten opgenomen worden in het nieuwe verdrag.

Hij stelt zijn volste vertrouwen in het Portugese Voorzitterschap voor de uitwerking van het nieuwe verdrag.

De Voorzitter van het parlement van de Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia deelt mee dat 90% van de bevolking gunstig stemt tegenover de toetreding tot de Europese Unie.

surtout les parlements nationaux qui devront procéder à un examen approfondi des textes.

Le président du Sejm polonais (Chambre) attire l'attention sur le fait que la procédure de vote prévue dans le projet de Constitution européenne n'offre pas suffisamment de garanties en termes d'égalité entre les États membres.

M. Gama, président du parlement portugais, demande que l'on fasse preuve de la flexibilité requise pour les nouvelles négociations relatives au traité.

Il énumère les points qui lui paraissent essentiels:

- un processus décisionnel clair et plus efficace dans le cadre duquel les parlements nationaux ont un rôle à jouer (le Protocole du projet de Constitution européenne relatif aux parlements nationaux)
- un marché unique
- la monnaie unique et une banque centrale indépendante
- une politique de cohésion sociale et régionale
- la réforme de la PAC
- la recherche et le développement
- le budget européen (réévaluation des ressources propres de l'Union européenne)
- la ratification du nouveau traité par les parlements nationaux et, le cas échéant, par le biais de l'organisation de référendums.

L'orateur souligne ensuite que l'Union européenne s'adapte difficilement à la mondialisation.

Il est donc nécessaire de développer des relations privilégiées avec l'Amérique du Sud, l'Asie et la Russie. Les relations avec la Russie doivent quitter la sphère de la guerre froide.

M. Cukjati, président de la Deuxième chambre slovène (Drzavni zbor), insiste pour que les parlements nationaux soient consultés dans le cadre des négociations relatives au traité. Il estime que la Charte des droits fondamentaux doit être intégrée dans le nouveau traité.

L'orateur fait entièrement confiance à la présidence portugaise en ce qui concerne l'élaboration du nouveau traité.

Le président du parlement de l'ex-république yougoslave de Macédoine indique que 90% de sa population est en faveur de l'adhésion à l'Union européenne.

Hij bevestigt dat belangrijke stappen zijn gezet in de toetredingsprocedure.

De heer Sobotka, Voorzitter van de Tsjechische Senaat, waarschuwt voor het gevaar van bureaucratisering van de Europese Unie die evolueert los van de realiteit. Hij herinnert aan het zgn. «realistische socialisme» vóór de val van het communistisch regime.

Mevrouw Prammer, Voorzitter van de Oostenrijkse Nationalrat, zou de reductie van de Europese Grondwet een slechte keuze vinden. Oostenrijk heeft de Europese Grondwet geratificeerd. De mensen willen geloofwaardigheid van de Europese Unie.

De nationale parlementen moeten de link tussen de Europese Unie en de burgers verstevigen.

Mevrouw Szili, Voorzitter van het Hongaars parlement, vraagt zich af hoe de samenleving vertrouwen kan hebben in de Europese Unie terwijl de politici zelf sceptisch staan ten opzichte van de Europese Unie.

Een compromis zal nodig zijn.

De waarden uit de Europese Grondwet moeten behouden blijven.

Er dient ruimte te zijn voor gemeenschappelijke acties.

Een nieuw verdrag is hoognodig vóór de EP-verkiezingen van 2009.

Het klimaatbeleid moet expliciet een beleidsdomein worden van de Europese Unie.

De Voorzitter van het Cypriotisch parlement, de heer Christofias, hoopt dat de Europese Unie een katalyserende rol kan spelen bij het oplossen van het Cypriotisch probleem.

De heer Šeks, Voorzitter van het Kroatische parlement, stelt dat 2009 de nagestreefde datum is voor toetreding tot de Europese Unie.

II. Interparlementaire samenwerking

De Voorzitter licht het rapport van de Werkgroep ter zake toe (zie Bijlage I).

Deze werkgroep had tot taak een rapport voor te bereiden over volgende vragen:

Il confirme que des démarches importantes ont été entreprises dans le cadre de la procédure d'adhésion.

M. Sobotka, président du Sénat tchèque, met en garde contre le risque de bureaucratisation de l'Union européenne. L'évolution de l'UE ne tient pas compte de la réalité. Cela lui rappelle le «socialisme réaliste» qui prévalait avant la chute du régime communiste.

Mme Prammer, présidente du Nationalrat autrichien, estime qu'une réduction de la Constitution européenne constituerait un mauvais choix. L'Autriche a ratifié la Constitution européenne. La population veut que l'Union européenne soit crédible.

Les parlements nationaux doivent renforcer les liens entre l'Union européenne et les citoyens.

Mme Szili, présidente du parlement hongrois, se demande comment la société pourrait avoir confiance en l'Union européenne alors que les politiques se montrent eux-mêmes sceptiques vis-à-vis de celle-ci.

Il faudra trouver un compromis.

Les valeurs inscrites dans la Constitution européenne doivent être maintenues.

Il faut laisser la possibilité d'élaborer des actions communes.

Il est absolument indispensable d'adopter un nouveau traité avant les élections du Parlement européen (2009).

La politique climatique doit devenir explicitement un domaine d'action de l'Union européenne.

Le président du parlement chypriote, M. Christofias, espère que l'Union européenne pourra jouer un rôle de catalyseur dans la résolution du problème chypriote.

M. Šeks, président du parlement croate, indique que la Croatie ambitionne d'adhérer à l'Union européenne en 2009.

II. Coopération interparlementaire

Le président fournit des précisions sur le rapport du groupe de travail créé en la matière (voir Annexe I).

Ce groupe de travail était chargé de préparer un rapport relatif aux questions suivantes:

- kunnen de Richtlijnen van Den Haag versterkt worden?

- kan de coördinatie tussen de verschillende vormen van interparlementaire samenwerking verbeterd worden en hoe?

- kunnen de nationale parlementen de samenwerking tussen de nationale parlementen, het Europees Parlement en de Europese Commissie versterken?

- kan het huidige toewijzingsprincipe voor het Voorzitterschap van de Conferentie van de Parlementen worden verbeterd?

Voor de antwoorden op deze vragen zij verwezen naar het rapport van de Werkgroep IPC (*Interparliamentary Cooperation*).

Met betrekking tot het principe voor de toewijzing van de Conferentie van Voorzitters van de parlementen in de Europese Unie werd beslist dat de Lidstaat die het EU-Voorzitterschap heeft in de tweede helft van het kalenderjaar, de Conferentie van de Parlementsvoorzitters organiseert in het daaropvolgende jaar.

Tijdens de gedachtewisseling heeft mevrouw Szili (Hongarije) de Conclusies van de Werkgroep onderschreven. Ze wijst er evenwel op dat de Richtlijnen van Den Haag de laatste 3 jaar niet werden toegepast.

De krachtlijnen van de interventies komen hierop neer dat coördinatie en rationalisering van de IPC (*Interparliamentary Cooperation*) nodig is. Dit mag evenwel ook niet overgeformaliseerd worden.

De coöperatie tussen nationale parlementen en Europees Parlement mag niet al te zeer gejuridiseerd worden.

Men acht de COSAC niet het geëigende orgaan om de IPC in het algemeen te coördineren.

Gewezen wordt op de toenemende rol van de parlementaire diplomatie als pendant van de gouvernementale diplomatie.

De meerderheid van de interveniënten onderschrijft de Conclusies van de Werkgroep IPC.

- les directives de La Haye peuvent-elles être renforcées ?

- la coordination entre les différentes formes de coopération interparlementaire peut-elle être améliorée et, dans l'affirmative, de quelle façon ?

- les parlements nationaux sont-ils en mesure de renforcer la coopération avec le Parlement européen et la Commission européenne ?

- le principe d'attribution appliqué actuellement en ce qui concerne la présidence de la Conférence des parlements peut-il être amélioré ?

Pour les réponses à ces questions, on se reportera au rapport du Groupe de travail Coopération interparlementaire.

En ce qui concerne le principe de l'attribution de la Conférence des présidents de parlement au sein de l'Union européenne, il a été décidé que l'État membre exerçant la présidence de l'Union européenne au cours du second semestre de l'année civile organiserait la Conférence des présidents de parlement l'année suivante.

Au cours de l'échange de vues, Mme Szili (Hongrie) a souscrit aux Conclusions du Groupe de travail. Elle souligne toutefois que les Lignes directrices de La Haye n'ont pas été appliquées durant ces trois dernières années.

Les lignes de force des interventions soulignent la nécessité d'une coordination et rationalisation de la Coopération interparlementaire. Il ne faut toutefois pas formaliser cet aspect à l'excès.

La coopération entre les parlements nationaux et le Parlement européen ne peut pas être trop juridisée.

On juge que la COSAC n'est pas l'organe approprié pour coordonner la Coopération interparlementaire de manière générale.

On souligne le rôle croissant de la diplomatie parlementaire comme pendant de la diplomatie gouvernementale.

La majorité des intervenants souscrit aux Conclusions du Groupe de travail Coopération interparlementaire.

III. Aanwakkeren van het Europees bewustzijn

De Voorzitter stelt dat een algemeen model niet kan opgelegd worden. De initiatieven hiertoe kunnen verschillen van parlement tot parlement.

De burgers moeten in elk geval beter en meer geïmplieerd worden in het Europees besluitvormingsproces.

Een concrete actie in de nationale parlementen wordt gevormd door de controle op het subsidiariteits- en proportionaliteitsprincipe en de implicatie hierbij van de vaste commissies.

Interveniënten merken op dat de Europese Unie de noden en verwachtingen van de burgers moet beantwoorden.

Hierbij dienen de principes solidariteit en duurzaamheid centraal te staan.

Alleen Europese integratie kan de uitdagingen van de globalisering aan.

De burgers moeten begrijpen dat de Europese integratie er is voor hen. Het EU-beleid moet dichterbij de burgers gebracht via onder meer de nationale parlementen.

De lidstaten moeten over de Europese Unie spreken in «wij»-termen, veeleer dan in «zij»-termen.

De heer Dos Santos van het Europees Parlement herinnert aan de grote inspanningen die de Europese Unie levert om met de burgers te communiceren.

Er is een grote kloof tussen de burgers en de politieke elites.

Het EU-beleid moet tastbare resultaten opleveren; zoniet ontstaat er een deficit.

Ook moeten de Europese instellingen transparant zijn: zij moeten verantwoording afleggen aan de bevolking.

Het Europees bewustzijn kan maar groeien door een betere communicatie en dit via een verbetering van de kwaliteit van de wetgeving.

Vervolgens geven een aantal parlementsvoorzitters verslag over initiatieven ter zake in hun parlementen.

III. Attiser la prise de conscience européenne

Le Président indique qu'un modèle général ne peut être imposé. Les initiatives en ce sens peuvent différer d'un parlement à l'autre.

Les citoyens doivent en tout cas être impliqués mieux et davantage dans le processus décisionnel européen.

Le contrôle du principe de subsidiarité et de proportionnalité et l'implication des commissions permanentes dans celui-ci constituent une action concrète au sein des parlements nationaux.

Des intervenants observent que l'Union européenne doit répondre aux besoins et attentes des citoyens.

Les principes de solidarité et de durabilité doivent occuper une place centrale à cet égard.

Seule l'intégration européenne est en mesure de relever les défis de la globalisation.

Les citoyens doivent comprendre qu'ils sont les bénéficiaires de l'intégration européenne. La politique menée par l'Union européenne doit être rapprochée des citoyens par l'entremise des parlements nationaux, notamment.

Les États membres doivent parler de l'Union européenne en disant «nous» plutôt qu'«ils».

M. Dos Santos du Parlement européen rappelle les efforts considérables déployés par l'Union européenne pour communiquer avec les citoyens.

Il y a un abîme entre les citoyens et les élites politiques.

La politique de l'Union européenne doit déboucher sur des résultats tangibles, faute de quoi il y a un déficit.

Les institutions européennes doivent aussi être transparentes: elles doivent rendre des comptes à la population.

Le développement de la conscience européenne passe par une meilleure communication, et ce, par le biais d'une amélioration de la qualité de la législation.

Un certain nombre de présidents de parlement font ensuite rapport sur les initiatives prises en la matière au sein de leur assemblée.

De Ierse parlamentsvoorzitter (*Dáil Éireann*) stelt vast dat de burgers niet de link zien tussen de Europese Unie en hun dagelijks leven.

De nationale parlementen vormen dus het brughoofd om de burgers te sensibiliseren en te informeren.

In Ierland werd hiertoe een Europees Forum gecreëerd (NGO's; *civil society*; academische wereld).

Het Italiaans parlement heeft verscheidene parlementaire sessies over de EU gehouden die via TV zijn uitgezonden.

In Slovenië werden Rondetafels georganiseerd om de burgers te informeren.

Het nationaal parlement heeft dus verscheidene communicatievormen aangewend om de burgers te sensibiliseren (TV; publieke debatten; bezoeken van delegaties aan de Europese Unie; e.d.).

De Europese Unie wordt ook tastbaar en zichtbaar gemaakt via de projecten van de Structuurfondsen.

De Voorzitter van de Nederlandse Eerste Kamer herinnert eraan dat het idee van de «*European Awareness*» door de Nederlandse delegatie werd gelanceerd tijdens de Europese Conventie (2002-2003). De bedoeling is dit in het kader van de COSAC te stimuleren op basis van de APS (*Annual Policy Strategy*).

Een ander voorbeeld van actie in dit kader was het debat over de Europese Unie met een 400-tal studenten (9 maart 2007).

IV. Bijstand voor parlementen in nieuwe opkomende democratieën

In Athene (2003) werd voor het eerst gesteld dat de externe activiteiten van de nationale parlementen moesten gecoördineerd worden.

Door de Italiaanse *Camera dei Deputati* werd in 2005 het initiatief genomen om te onderzoeken hoe hier synergieën tot stand kunnen komen. Een werkgroep werd hiertoe opgericht en heeft in 2006 hierover verslag uitgebracht naar aanleiding van de Conferentie van de Voorzitters in Kopenhagen.

De werkzaamheden van deze werkgroep werden verder gezet door een *Task force* van het Italiaanse, het Deense en het Slowaakse parlement.

Le président du parlement irlandais (*Dáil Éireann*) constate que les citoyens ne voient pas le lien entre l'Union européenne et leur vie quotidienne.

Les parlements nationaux constituent dès lors les têtes de pont permettant de sensibiliser et d'informer les citoyens.

Un Forum européen a été créé à cet effet en Irlande (ONG, société civile, monde académique).

Le parlement italien a consacré plusieurs sessions parlementaires à l'Union européenne, qui ont été diffusées par la télévision.

En Slovénie, des Tables rondes ont été organisées pour informer les citoyens.

Le parlement national a donc utilisé différentes formes de communication pour sensibiliser les citoyens (télévision, débats publics, visites de délégations à l'Union européenne, etc.).

Les projets des Fonds structurels contribuent également à assurer la tangibilité et la visibilité de l'Union européenne.

Le président de la Première Chambre néerlandaise rappelle que l'idée de la «*European Awareness*» a été lancée par la délégation néerlandaise lors de la Convention européenne (2002-2003). Le but est de la stimuler dans le cadre de la COSAC sur la base de l'APS («*Annual Policy Strategy*»).

Le débat sur l'Union européenne avec quelque 400 étudiants (9 mars 2007) est un autre exemple d'action prévue dans ce cadre.

IV. Assistance aux parlements des nouvelles démocraties émergentes

C'est à Athènes (2003) que l'on a déclaré pour la première fois que les activités externes des parlements nationaux devaient être coordonnées.

En 2005, la *Camera dei Deputati* italienne a pris l'initiative d'examiner comment développer des synergies en la matière. Un groupe de travail a été créé à cette fin et a présenté un rapport y afférent en 2006, à l'occasion de la Conférence des Présidents de Copenhague.

Les activités de ce groupe de travail ont été poursuivies par une *Task force* des parlements italien, danois et slovaque.

In Bijlage II wordt het ontwerp van rapport van deze Task force gepresenteerd. Hierin wordt onder meer voorgesteld dat de informatie over de projecten inzake parlementaire bijstand ook zou worden verspreid via IPEX.

Tijdens de gedachtewisseling hebben een aantal parlementsvoorzitters enige bijstandprojecten – ondernomen door hun parlement – toegelicht.

Uitgangspunt hierbij is dat deze parlementaire bijstand moet gebaseerd zijn op een partnership (*learning & sharing*) in plaats van *teaching*.

Er wordt onder meer ook gewezen op het gevaar van misbruik van fondsen en de overlappingsen van projecten.

V. Oekraïne, de Oostelijke buur van de Europese Unie

Uiteenzetting door de heer Oleksandr Moroz, Voorzitter van de Supreme Council van Oekraïne

De heer Moroz zegt dat Oekraïne gedoemd is te kiezen tussen een goede samenwerking met de Europese Unie of met Rusland.

Een duidelijke positie van de Europese Unie zou Oekraïne bij deze keuze kunnen helpen.

Hij is ervan overtuigd dat Oekraïne ooit lid zal zijn van de Europese Unie. Daarvoor wordt geijverd.

De bevolking steunt deze keuze.

Andere landen uit het EU-naberschap gaan in dezelfde richting, eventueel via alternatieve integratiemechanismen, maar wel gericht op definitieve integratie.

Spreker klaagt de misstanden aan in Oekraïne, in het bijzonder de dreiging van de antidemocratische krachten.

De Voorzitter van de Poolse Sejm steunt de heer Moroz in de visie op de relatie Oekraïne – Europese Unie.

Oekraïne moet duidelijke perspectieven krijgen in verband met de toetreding tot de Europese Unie. Dit is ook in het belang van de Europese Unie zelf, onder meer voor de energievoorziening.

Le projet de rapport de cette Task force est présenté en Annexe II. On y propose notamment que les informations relatives aux projets en matière d'assistance parlementaire soient également diffusées par le biais de l'IPEX.

Lors de l'échange de vues, plusieurs présidents de parlement ont commenté un certain nombre de projets d'assistance entrepris par leur parlement.

Le principe qui sous-tend ces projets est que cette assistance parlementaire doit se baser sur un partenariat (*learning & sharing*) au lieu de *teaching*.

L'attention a notamment aussi été attirée sur le risque d'une utilisation abusive des fonds et sur les chevauchements entre les projets.

V. L'Ukraine, le voisin de l'Est de l'Union européenne

Exposé de M. Oleksandr Moroz, Président du Supreme Council d'Ukraine

M. Moroz déclare que l'Ukraine est condamnée à choisir entre une bonne collaboration avec l'Union européenne ou avec la Russie.

Une position claire de l'Union européenne pourrait aider l'Ukraine dans ce choix.

Il est convaincu que l'Ukraine sera un jour membre de l'Union européenne. Tel est l'objectif qu'elle poursuit.

La population soutient ce choix.

D'autres pays voisins de l'Union européenne vont dans la même direction, éventuellement par le biais de mécanismes d'intégration alternatifs, mais axés sur une intégration définitive.

L'orateur dénonce les situations inacceptables qui prévalent en Ukraine, en particulier la menace émanant des forces antidémocratiques.

Le Président du Sejm polonais soutient M. Moroz dans sa manière de concevoir les relations entre l'Ukraine et l'Union européenne.

L'Ukraine doit avoir des perspectives claires en ce qui concerne l'adhésion à l'Union européenne. C'est également dans l'intérêt de l'Union européenne même, notamment pour l'approvisionnement énergétique.

Ook de heer Lammert, Voorzitter van de Duitse Bundestag deelt deze visie. Toch voegt hij daaraan twee opmerkingen toe:

- de vraag stelt zich ook voor andere buurlanden van de Europese Unie: er kan geen duidelijk tijdsschema zijn voor Oekraïne en niet voor de andere nabuurschapslanden

- in verband met de staat van de Europese Unie: de toekomstige uitbreiding hangt af van twee voorwaarden:

- de absorptiecapaciteit van de Europese Unie
- de toestand van het land zelf ten aanzien van de toetredingscriteria

Zolang er geen nieuwe verdragsrechtelijke basis is, kan er geen nieuwe uitbreiding zijn.

Wijziging van de structuren intern in de landen en van de Europese Unie zelf is dus nodig.

M. Lammert, Président du Bundestag allemand, partage également ce point de vue. Il formule toutefois deux observations en la matière :

- la question se pose également pour d'autres pays voisins de l'Union européenne : on ne peut prévoir de calendrier clair pour l'Ukraine sans en prévoir un pour les autres pays voisins

- en ce qui concerne l'état de l'Union européenne l'élargissement futur dépend de deux conditions :

- la capacité d'absorption de l'Union européenne
- la situation du pays même par rapport aux critères d'adhésion

Tant qu'il n'y a pas de nouvelle base conventionnelle, il ne peut y avoir de nouvel élargissement.

Il est dès lors nécessaire de modifier les structures internes des différents pays ainsi que celles de l'Union européenne même.

VI. Conclusies van het voorzitterschap (in het Engels)

VI Conclusions de la Présidence (en anglais)



CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF EU PARLIAMENTS

PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary remarks

The National Council of the Slovak Republic hosted the annual Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments on 24 - 27 May 2007. The Speakers or their appointed designates from 44 parliamentary chambers from 27 member states of the European Union, as well as the Speakers from Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine, and the Vice-President of the European Parliament participated in the Conference. The Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Pavol Paška, chaired the proceedings.

The Future of Europe, Interparliamentary Cooperation, Raising National European Awareness and Assistance to Parliaments of New Emerging Democracies were the key topics on the Conference agenda.

The Future of Europe was discussed by - among others - Mr. Norbert Lammert, President of the German Bundestag, Mr. Manuel dos Santos, Vice-President of the European Parliament, Mr. Christian Poncelet, President of the French Senate, Mrs. Gerdi Verbeet, President of the Dutch House of Representatives, and Mrs. Yvonne Timmerman-Buck, President of the Dutch Senate.

The EU Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, Mr. László Kovács, presented a report on the topic of Raising National European Awareness.

The President of the Supreme Council of Ukraine, Mr. Oleksandr Moroz, presented a report on Ukraine, the Eastern Neighbour of the European Union.

Conclusions of the Presidency

The Speakers welcome among themselves Bulgaria and Romania as full-fledged Member States and express their support for their endeavour to actively participate in the activities of the European Union as well as in this Conference. At the same time they reassure candidate countries of the European Union's common approach to the enlargement process on the basis of a renewed institutional framework.

Concerning the future of Europe

The Speakers acknowledge the initiative of the German Council's Presidency, particularly the Berlin Declaration adopted on 25 March 2007 for revival of the process of institutional reform and its vital contribution to the solution to the questions concerning the future of Europe, including the firm stance taken by the Presidency in favour of reaching a new institutional settlement before the European elections in 2009.

The Speakers request that the incoming Portuguese Presidency summarises the views and proposals of national parliaments on the future development of the European Union and communicates them to the Presidency of the Council in office, the European Parliament and the European Commission to be duly taken into account in the future processes of institutional reform. The Speakers at the same time call on the European Institutions to take into account the importance of the role of the national parliaments in the European integration and policy formulation and insist on their role staying at least equal in strength to the one foreseen in the Constitutional Treaty.

The Speakers express their common interest that in June 2007 the European Council will find a consensus on a renewed common basis for the European Union.

Concerning interparliamentary cooperation

The Speakers welcomed the Report of the Working Group on Interparliamentary Cooperation and acknowledged its eminent contribution to the improvement of interparliamentary cooperation within the European Union. The Speakers call on all concerned parties to take forward the practical suggestions and proposals of the Report in order to reach better coordination of interparliamentary work in the EU as well as better planning and cohesion in work and agendas and avoiding duplication of effort.

The Speakers welcomed the new scheme of appointing the Speakers' Conference presidency as most of the parliaments see it as a necessary step towards better coordination between the Speakers' Conference and the

parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the EU Council. According to the new scheme the parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the EU Council in the second half of a calendar year would normally hold the presidency of the Speakers' Conference and organise the actual meeting in the following calendar year.

The Speakers gave also their support to the proposal on arrangements concerning the new scheme of Presidency appointment:

- the Conference shall decide about two years in advance, which parliaments will assume the EUSC Presidency;
- the Secretaries General shall come with necessary proposals in such situations where, for example, because of elections held in the Chamber concerned, the Presidency cannot be assured according to the agreed new scheme.

The Speakers welcomed the willingness of the Portuguese parliament to implement the new scheme already for the next Conference and take over the Presidency for the Conference in 2008 and France as the next parliament hosting the Conference in 2009.

The Speakers welcomed the proposal of the Working Group to reduce the costs of the parliament hosting the Speakers Conference by each parliament covering all accommodation costs concerning its participation at the Secretaries General meeting and the EU Speakers' Conference itself. The Speakers call on the incoming Presidency to make necessary arrangements in order to implement the decision.

The Speakers called on the incoming Presidency to promote the work of the Working Group on Interparliamentary Cooperation in order to conclude its work so as to strengthen the Hague Guidelines reflecting the recent development of interparliamentary cooperation and to present the result before the next meeting of the Secretaries General.

The Speakers welcomed the Working Group's idea of a yearly timeframe of interparliamentary cooperation and called for the continuation of the discussion on this issue.

Concerning IPEX

The Speakers welcomed the successful launch of the IPEX website, and noted that a majority of the national parliaments are actively contributing information concerning their parliaments' EU scrutiny. In order to improve the exchange of information even further, the Speakers encourage national parliaments to include English or French summaries of important decisions on IPEX.

The Speakers invite COSAC and IPEX to enhance their cooperation as a means to eliminate duplication of work, and as a means to ensure that the information provided by IPEX, is relevant for the end-users of EU information in the national parliaments. The Speakers also invite COSAC and IPEX to take whatever action they may deem appropriate in order to minimise duplication of work with regards to the calendars on the two websites.

The Speakers call on IPEX to create a common portal for the various interparliamentary websites, as a means to facilitate the exchange of parliamentary EU information.

The Speakers call on the European Commission and the Office of Official Publications to cooperate with IPEX with a view to improve the transmission of Commission documents to IPEX.

Concerning cooperation between the various forums/parties of interparliamentary cooperation

The Speakers noted that even after the new rotation scheme of appointing the Presidency, the presidencies of the Speakers' Conference and COSAC will not fully coincide. For these reasons and in order to reach better coordination between the two conferences, the Speakers called on the presiding parliaments of both conferences to find ways of better coordination, mainly in terms of agendas, communication of conclusions of each conference to the presidency of the other and timing of meetings in order to strengthen parliamentary participation in EU policy formation.

Concerning the cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Commission

The Speakers welcomed the implementation of the European Commission's commitment to transmit directly all new legislative proposals and consultation papers to national parliaments, as a mean of increasing parliamentary scrutiny in particular with regard to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles and contributing to the transparency of EU decision-making and thus improving the process of policy formulation within EU.

The Speakers call on the European Commission to facilitate the publication of the Commission's responses to the opinions of the national parliaments on EU legislative and non-legislative documents on the IPEX Website.

Concerning the cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament

The Speakers support the evolving cooperation of national parliaments and the European Parliament, which is exercised within the different levels of interparliamentary cooperation, such as the Joint Parliamentary Meetings,

Joint Committee Meetings and the cooperation on IPEX, and welcome the steps taken by the European Parliament together with the parliaments of the countries holding the EU Council Presidency in order to make this cooperation more efficient.

The Speakers thank the European Parliament for its invaluable contribution to IPEX through its contribution to the development of the IPEX website. The Speakers call on the European Parliament to monitor and improve the performance of the website in order to secure a high level of service for the users of IPEX.

Concerning Raising national European awareness

With regards to and in spite of the different EU scrutiny models exercised by national parliaments, the Speakers welcomed the fact that national parliaments have succeeded to reach in certain domains, such as subsidiarity and proportionality checks examination conducted under the co-ordination of COSAC, more active and efficient participation and at the same time enhanced the role of national parliaments in the EU processes. In this context the Speakers encouraged national parliaments to further intensify the co-operation, and invited COSAC to continue to play its coordinating role, including fully using the facilities of IPEX.

The Speakers took note of the Information on parliamentary discussions related to the European Commission Annual Policy Strategy and Legislative and Work Programme that was elaborated by the Slovak Presidency. The aforementioned Information presents a useful source on the EU national parliaments' scrutiny and provides a comprehensive review of national parliaments' debates on the European Commission Annual Policy Strategy and Legislative and Work Programme. Moreover, the aforementioned Information provides an overview of particular actions taken by different parliament/parliamentary chamber in 2006 in order to bring the EU closer to its citizens.

In this light, the Speakers encouraged parliaments to discuss, in the form they find most appropriate, the Legislative and Work Programme and to make the best possible use of the aforementioned Information in order to further develop and improve the quality and content of their debates.

The Speakers expressed their appreciation of the activity of COSAC in order to promote an exchange of information regarding the different debates in national parliaments on the Annual Policy Strategy of the Commission and the presentation of the document made by the Commission followed by a debate at the latest meeting in Berlin on 14 – 15 May 2007.

Concerning assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies

The EU Speakers applaud the efforts done and results achieved by the Slovak Presidency in implementing the objective set out by the Speakers Conference in Copenhagen concerning the improvement of the cooperation of EU Parliaments with Parliaments of the New and Emerging Democracies (NEDs).

The EU Speakers welcome the commitment expressed by the European Commission for a better cooperation among the EU Parliaments and the Commission on NEDs and underline the need to strengthen the programmes of cooperation between Parliaments in the framework of the initiatives managed by the European Commission for providing assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies.

The EU Speakers agree with the actions proposed by the Slovak Presidency for ensuring the follow-up of the initiatives and projects undertaken up to now and mandate the Task Force to keep on its activities under the authority of the incoming Presidency Parliament.

The Speakers note that the parliaments of Central Europe have much to offer in the area of assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies as a result of the 15 years of transformation processes, during which they effectively implemented the achievements of the 50 years of European integration in their political, social and economic systems.

The EU Speakers recommend the incoming Presidency with the support of the Task Force to:

- continue its cooperation with the European Commission focusing on the development of following issues:
 - a procedure for consultation with the representatives of the parliamentary administrations when drafting programmes, projects and strategies for technical assistance that involve parliamentary assistance;
 - the exchange of information with EU parliaments about programmes, calls for tender, requests for parliamentary assistance submitted directly to the national parliaments;
 - possibilities of access to European Community funding for Member States' Parliaments in the framework of EU external assistance schemes.
- follow-up the work on the implementation of a database on assistance to NEDs within the IPEX Website – including information from EU parliaments and the European Commission;

- take the appropriate initiatives for extending the coordination and the exchange of information on NEDs beyond the EU. To this end the incoming Presidency could:
 - ask the Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the Council of Europe to assess the possibility of using the ECPRD (European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation) for setting up a project – in cooperation with the IPEX - with the purpose of ensuring the exchange of information on NEDs Europe-wide;
 - ask the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) to assess the feasibility of a global information network on assistance to NEDs, preferably in cooperation with IPEX and ECPRD. The cooperation with ECPRD and IPU would be useful in collecting information on the beneficiaries' needs as well.

Concerning Ukraine the Eastern Neighbour of the European Union

The Speakers confirmed that in order to support the momentum of the European project, it is of vital importance to encourage the contacts and ongoing communication with the EU neighbour countries so as to promote the continuing process of reforms, which may one day lead to the Ukraine's EU membership. The Speakers, following the country's overall progress and recognizing the development of the civil society and democracy, expressed support to the integration ambitions of Ukraine, appreciating that the Ukrainian integration ambitions go beyond the framework of cooperation laid down in the European Neighbourhood Policy and that the European Union has extended to Ukraine the most important offer – the European prospect.

The Speakers called on the Ukrainian political leaders to resolve the current political situation in a manner consistent with standard democratic principles and thereby avoid potential radicalization in the society.

Transmission of the Conclusions

The Speakers called on the Slovak Presidency to publish the Presidency conclusions on the Speakers' website and to transmit them to the President of the European Commission, the President in office of the Council and to the COSAC Troika.

BIJLAGE I
ANNEXE I

VERSLAG WERKGROEP
« *Verbetering interparlementaire samenwerking* »

RAPPORT GROUPE DE TRAVAIL

**« *Amélioration de la coopération
interparlementaire* »**



REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON IMPROVING INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

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Other relevant documents

Discussion Paper by the WG IPC, Draft revision of The Guidelines for
Interparliamentary Cooperation in the European Union

Introduction

The Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments, meeting in Copenhagen on 29 June – 2 July 2006, mandated the incoming Presidency to establish a Working Group to examine how to improve interparliamentary cooperation.

The working group was invited to prepare a report for the next Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments in Bratislava on the following subjects:

- Can the Hague Guidelines be strengthened?
- Can the coordination between the various forums for interparliamentary cooperation including The Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments, COSAC, meetings of parliamentary sectoral committees and Joint Parliamentary Meetings hosted by the European Parliament and the national parliament of the member state holding the Presidency of the Council, be improved, and if so how?
- Can national parliaments strengthen cooperation between national parliaments, the European Parliament and the European Commission?
- Can the current scheme of appointing the Presidency of Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments be improved?

The enlarged Troika meeting on 7 November 2006 to which the Slovak Presidency invited the Secretaries General of the parliaments of Denmark, Finland, France and Germany, decided to include the topic of coordination of the three existing websites dealing with interparliamentary cooperation, namely the websites of the Speakers' Conference, IPEX and COSAC.

The National Council of the Slovak Republic, the parliament holding the presidency of the Speakers' Conference, with the support of the Enlarged Troika Parliaments took the responsibility for convening the Working Group and providing the support for its work. (A list of the WG IPC members is in Annex)

The work of the Working Group on Interparliamentary Cooperation (WG IPC) was based on input provided by the participating parliaments on the basis of a questionnaire distributed by the Slovak Parliament in February 2007. The WG IPC held one formal meeting. The National Council of the Slovak Republic prepared and distributed the questionnaire after consulting with the parliaments of Denmark, Germany and Finland as agreed at the enlarged Troika meeting.

Of the 27 Member States of the European Union, 14 have a unicameral parliament and 13 have a bicameral parliament. Due to this mixture of bicameral and unicameral systems, there are 40 national parliamentary chambers in the 27 Member States.

In total, answers have been received from 34 national parliamentary chambers in 24 Member States. The parliaments of the candidate states were also included in the work

of the WG IPC with observer status. Two chambers of the candidate states have answered the questionnaire. The European Parliament also answered the questionnaire.

At its meeting on 1 March 2007 the WG IPC discussed the draft report prepared by the team of rapporteurs on the basis of the answers provided by national parliaments and the European Parliament to the questionnaire.

Report Summary

I. The members of the WG IPC consider that the most important element of the report relates to better coordination of interparliamentary work in the EU; that is, better planning and cohesion in work and agendas and avoiding duplication of effort. To this end, the WG IPC in its report proposes two main lines of action based on the answers parliaments have given in the questionnaire and the discussion of the WG IPC at its meeting:

- a) Proposals for various practical improvements in the different forms and forums of interparliamentary cooperation; these proposals are stated in the Conclusions section at the end of each chapter.
- b) A draft revision of the Hague Guidelines, adapting those elements of the Guidelines that have been overtaken by developments since 2004 as proposed by parliaments in their answers. Since the WG IPC so far did not reach consensus on the draft, the document is tabled only as a separate consultation document the WG IPC will continue its work on (For further consultation, please see Discussion Paper by the WG IPC, Draft revision of The Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation in the EU)

II. The WG IPC discussed proposals to improve the coordination and functioning of various interparliamentary meetings. The WG makes proposals for better coordination between the Speakers' Conference and COSAC, and improved organisation of Joint Parliamentary Meetings (JPM) and Joint Committee Meetings (JCM). The WG also discussed a proposal for improving coordination by introducing a yearly framework timetable that would synchronise the various interparliamentary forums' debates on the political priorities of EU and the Union's work schedule. The members of the WG IPC in general agree that a more structured interparliamentary calendar would be beneficial and support the idea to continue the discussion on finding an appropriate yearly timeframe for the interparliamentary cooperation. However, WG IPC sees implementing the new system of appointing Speakers' Conference presidencies as a first priority that itself will contribute to better coordination. When there is some experience of the effects of the new presidency rotation, the need for further coordination should be studied in cooperation with other concerned bodies.

III. The WG IPC studied ways to develop cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament. The WG notes that there is a need for more cooperation that is practical and demand-driven. What is wanted is further exploration of recent forms of cooperation rather than the creation of new ones. This is explained by the limited capacity of national parliaments to manage and absorb more activities. Thus the focus should be on the qualitative development of current cooperation rather than any quantitative increase.

IV. The WG IPC notes that national parliaments are generally satisfied with the European Commission's initiative to send legislative proposals and consultative documents to national parliaments and to invite their comments. The WG makes some suggestions for improving the transparency and effectiveness of the Commission's interaction with national parliaments.

V. The WG IPC has studied how to assure a more stable and certain rotation of the presidency of the Conference of Speakers, bringing it more closely into line with the rotation of the EU Council's presidency. The WG came with two proposals to be chosen from. The WG further proposes sharing the costs of the presidency of the Speakers' Conference, suggesting that accommodation costs should be borne by each participating parliament.

VI. The WG IPC makes proposals for consolidating the work of IPEX in order to allow its efficient response to the recent demands and expectations of national parliaments. The WG also proposes that the IPEX Board and the COSAC Secretariat be invited to discuss how to eliminate certain overlapping functions on their websites, notably concerning the interparliamentary calendars.

Conclusions

The final draft of this report was consulted by the Secretaries General at their meeting on March 15-16, 2007 in Bratislava. The Secretaries General welcomed the report and acknowledged its eminent contribution to the improvement of interparliamentary work. Having in mind the different opinions raised during the meeting and the Conclusions of the Secretaries General meeting the WG IPC supports the decision of the Secretaries General to give their priority to the presidency rotation system in which the parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the EU Council in the second half of a calendar year would hold the presidency of the Speakers' Conference and organise the actual meetings in the following calendar year.

Since there was a clear consensus reached by the Secretaries General on the results of the examination of different aspects of interparliamentary cooperation made by the WG IPC and the suggestions and proposals for various practical improvements in the different forms and forums of interparliamentary cooperation as well as conclusions stated by the WG IPC in this report but one aspect, the revision of the Hague Guidelines, the WG IPC would be happy to receive an endorsement by the Speakers to the Report clearly stating, that the WG IPC is willing to continue its work on the revision of the Hague Guidelines in order to conclude its mandate under the coming presidency. Doing so the WG IPC is also ready to continue the discussion in order to find an appropriate yearly timeframe for the interparliamentary cooperation.

I. The Hague Guidelines

The Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments at its meeting in The Hague, 2 -3 July 2004, agreed upon guidelines, the so-called Hague Guidelines,¹ as a base for interparliamentary cooperation in the EU. Since some aspects and features of the interparliamentary cooperation within the EU over the past years have changed or developed, the question has been raised whether the current Hague Guidelines remain an appropriate framework for interparliamentary cooperation today. This is why the Speakers of EU Parliaments at their meeting in Copenhagen made assessing the Hague Guidelines a task of the WG IPC.

The current Presidency was asked to examine in what way the Hague Guidelines should be amended and whether national parliaments support the idea of strengthening the Hague Guidelines, and if so in what terms.

According to the responses to the questionnaire a large number of the participating chambers indicated that they would like to see a general strengthening of the Hague Guidelines. At the same time a significant number of parliamentary chambers found that the current framework in the Hague Guidelines no longer provided an accurate and up-to-date presentation of the actors involved in interparliamentary cooperation. The reasons were different, as can be seen from the detailed answers to the questionnaires. However, when it came to the objectives of the Hague Guidelines, parliaments were generally satisfied. Thus, the number of chambers that found it necessary to expand the objectives of the Guidelines was clearly smaller than the number opposed. Parliaments were divided when it came to the question whether all necessary fields of cooperation are listed in the current Hague Guidelines.

On the basis of these contributions from parliaments, the WG IPC decided that the most adequate response would be to start working on a moderate revision of the existing guidelines, retaining the balance of the Hague text, but taking into account subsequent developments and the remarks made by national parliaments during this exercise. At the same time, the WG IPC calls for parliaments to pay more attention to the implementation of the Guidelines.

In particular, important developments in interparliamentary cooperation over the past years seem to justify a review of the Hague guidelines bringing them into conformity with current practice. Also, the European Commission's May 2006 initiative, encouraging national parliaments to be involved to a greater extent in the development and performance of the EU's policies, and the subsequent conclusions of the June 2006 European Council, require an adequate response.

Finally, it would appear that most EU parliaments support the broad purpose of the Hague Guidelines, which is to make interparliamentary cooperation within the European Union more effective, orderly and coherent. There is, however, a reluctance to introduce elements that may be construed as institution-building or as limiting the ability of individual parliaments to act proactively and independently on matters of importance to them.

¹ <http://www.eu-speakers.org/upload/application/pdf/a8670b7d/guidelines.pdf>

Conclusion

There is strong support for maintaining the achievements of the Hague Conference of Speakers, while at the same time making those adaptations of the text that have become necessary because of developments in interparliamentary cooperation within the EU. There is less support for changing fundamentally the objectives of the Guidelines.

The WG IPC proposes that the new Guidelines accommodate the amendments that are necessitated by developments since 2004 without fundamentally changing the structure or objectives of the Hague Consensus.

The WG IPC proposes that the Speakers' Conference calls on the incoming presidencies to promote actively the implementation of the Guidelines by all participating parliaments.

Because the WG IPC is not able to reach a clear consensus on the last draft revised version of the Hague Guidelines before the actual meeting of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments during the current presidency, the WG IPC declares its will to continue the work on the revision of the Hague Guidelines under the next presidency of the Speakers' Conference. From this reasons the draft of the revised text of the Hague Guidelines is tabled only as a Discussion Paper for further consultation and shall be understood only as a point of reference for the continuation of the work of the Working Group and not as the final draft to be approved by the Speakers.

The last proposal of the WG IPC is tabled as a separate document (Discussion Paper by the WG IPC, Draft revision of The Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation in the EU) together with an analytical comparison with the original Hague Guidelines.

II. Improved coordination between the various forums for interparliamentary cooperation

Interparliamentary cooperation within the European Union has undergone rapid development over the past years and become more complex. This includes the growth in the number of different interparliamentary forums in particular the so-called Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings organised jointly by the European Parliament and the parliament of the member state holding the Council Presidency, as well as different interparliamentary meetings and meetings of sectoral committees organised by the parliament of the member state holding the Council Presidency.

In the meanwhile the IPEX-website (Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange - www.ipex.eu) has been created as a tool to facilitate an increased information exchange between national parliaments and the European institutions.

Finally, the evolution of the role of COSAC, following the encouragement of the June 2006 European Council to strengthen cooperation within the framework of COSAC when monitoring subsidiarity, has to be mentioned.

The Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Copenhagen therefore invited the WG IPC to examine whether the coordination between the various interparliamentary forums and structures could be improved, and if so in what ways.

According to the responses to the questionnaire, national parliaments generally feel that there is a need to improve the coordination and cooperation between the different interparliamentary forums in order to reach a higher efficiency of work.

II.1. Cooperation between the Speakers' Conference and COSAC

A significant number of chambers see a need for improving the coordination of the activities of the Speakers' Conference and those of COSAC.

The WG IPC is of the opinion that there is a need for a functional coordination of interparliamentary activities in general. Better coordination will help to avoid duplication of work, further strengthen interparliamentary cooperation and facilitate better achievement of shared aims and objectives. With this in view, parliaments want better practical coordination in terms of timing and agendas and ensuring that important political issues are dealt with in appropriate ways. Concerning the agendas, a large number of parliaments support the idea of better coordination between the agendas of the Speakers' Conference and COSAC. That is why the WG IPC calls on both conferences to take more notes of each other's conclusions. In this regard, the WG IPC suggests that the presidency of each conference should communicate the conclusions of each conference to the presidency of the other.

The WG IPC believes that new arrangements for a rotation of the Presidency of the Conference of Speakers that is more aligned to the Council Presidency will by itself contribute to better cooperation with COSAC. The two Troikas will, at least in part, bring together parliamentarians and staff from the same parliaments. In short, better communication will resolve many of the current problems of coordination.

Conclusion

In view of the different legal bases, roles and aims of the Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments and of COSAC, the WG IPC proposes that the Speakers' Conference notes that formal, institutionalised cooperation between the two institutions is not necessary at the moment. Also, the different legal bases of the two conferences raise technical and legal issues that cannot be resolved within the time available.

The WG IPC strongly supports the idea of changing the current scheme of appointing the presidency of the Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments, as most of the parliaments see it as a necessary step towards better coordination between the two conferences, the Speakers' Conference and COSAC. Observing that, even after a new rotation is adopted for the Presidency of the Speakers' Conference, the presidencies of the two conferences may not fully coincide, the WG IPC calls on the presiding

parliaments of both conferences to find ways of better coordination, mainly in terms of agendas, communication of the conclusions of each conference to the presidency of the other and timing of meetings in order to strengthen parliamentary participation in EU policy formulation.

II.2. Cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament: Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee Meetings

Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings have today become a regular form of cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament.

Joint Parliamentary Meetings (JPM) are meetings on broad political topics, which are organised and chaired jointly by the parliament of the country holding the EU Presidency and the European Parliament. *Joint Committee Meetings* (JCM) are meetings on specific political sectors and issues. They are organised and chaired jointly by the relevant sectoral committee or committees of the parliament of the Member State holding the EU Presidency and the relevant committee of the European Parliament.

Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings are different from interparliamentary meetings organised by committees of the parliament of the Member State holding the EU Presidency. They should also not be confused with hearings or other meetings organised by the European Parliament, where representatives from the national parliaments are occasionally invited.

Chapter Five of the 6th bi-annual report of the COSAC Secretariat (November 2006) examined the organisation of these meetings, on the basis of responses sent in by EU Committees participating in COSAC. Issues addressed included the added value of such meetings, the topics, number and frequency of such meetings and their further development. The report states that the national parliaments find the number of these meeting sufficient and that more frequent meetings could affect the work of national parliaments.

In their replies to the WG IPC's questionnaire, national parliaments have broadly confirmed the conclusions in COSAC's 6th bi-annual report. The content of recent JPMs and JCMs has generally met with approval. The same applies to meetings organised by national parliaments holding the presidency. National parliaments usually consider that the current frequency of such meetings is sufficient and note that any increase in frequency would be difficult to absorb.

According to the responses to the questionnaire there is broad agreement that the structure of JPMs and JCMs needs to be standardised and made more transparent. In particular, national parliaments note the need for transparency in setting agendas and goals of such meetings. The equality of participants (speaking time, access to particular parts of debates) is cited as a problem by some national parliaments.

There is also broad agreement that the coordination of interparliamentary meetings continues to need improvement. It still happens that JPM agendas overlap with those of, e.g. COSAC.

While there is agreement on the need for coordination at the practical level, national parliaments are not in accordance on how this should be done. The right of each national parliament and the European Parliament to be proactive is affirmed in several replies. In particular those parliaments not holding the Presidency have a legitimate need for a flexible and generally acknowledged way to introduce new, topical subjects for interparliamentary discussion.

Conclusion

The WG IPC notes that there is broad agreement among parliaments that the structure, timing and content of interparliamentary meetings can and should generally be improved. The structure and procedures of interparliamentary meetings are traditionally decided by the parliament hosting the meeting. The WG IPC sees no need to change this approach now.

However, the WG IPC believes that the problems that some national parliaments raise with regard to Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings could be resolved if the European Parliament adopted standardised procedures for such meetings. Obviously, when first introduced, such procedures should be discussed with national parliaments and should be open for amendment when needed.

The WG IPC notes with satisfaction that the European Parliament is preparing a *vademecum* for Joint Parliamentary Meetings and Joint Committee Meetings and hopes that national parliaments will be consulted during the drafting process.

III. Improved cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament

Since the Joint Committee Meetings and the Joint Parliamentary Meetings have increased the interaction between national parliaments and the European Parliament, the WG IPC feels a need to develop the cooperation and interaction between the members of the European Parliament and members of national parliaments also outside these meetings. Nevertheless, it is broadly understood that this increased cooperation should not have any organised form and should stay exclusively within the organisation of individual parliaments and the European Parliament when it is in their mutual interest. Some parliaments propose developing networks allowing more exchange among civil servants of the European Parliament and national parliament.

The WG IPC also recognises the need expressed by some parliaments to explore new mechanisms for more sustained exchanges of information and views between the "corresponding committees" in national parliaments and the European Parliament. Some parliaments propose setting up a mixed committee of MEPs and MNPs to secure parliamentary control of Europol (i.e. resuming the meetings of Parlapol).

Conclusion

Most national parliaments support further development of the cooperation of national parliaments with the European Parliament. It is clear, though, that what is wanted is further exploration of recent forms of cooperation rather than the creation of new ones. This is explained by the limited capacity of national parliaments to manage and absorb more activities. Thus the focus should be on the qualitative development of current cooperation rather than any quantitative increase.

The WG IPC suggests that the present forms of cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament should be better explored, coordinated and planned instead of creating new forums and structures. Better awareness among MEPs and EP staff about national parliaments' scrutiny of EU legislation and policies will contribute to better cooperation. IPEX has an important role to play in this context.

The WG IPC notes that there is some demand for more interparliamentary interaction in certain policy fields in addition to the Joint Committee Meetings and the Joint Parliamentary Meetings. The WG IPC finds it important that new forms of cooperation should not be institutionalised and should remain demand-driven and flexible. Cooperation is based on the equal and voluntary partnership of national parliaments and the European Parliament.

IV. Cooperation between national parliaments and the European Commission

The European Commission took an important step in developing its relations with national parliaments when Commission President José Manuel Barroso in a communication on 10 May 2006 encouraged national parliaments to be involved to a greater extent in the development and performance of the EU's policies. The Commission called upon national parliaments to submit contributions in connection with the Annual Policy Strategy, the Legislative and Work programme, and other consultation documents such as green papers and white papers. The Commission indicated that it was prepared to respond to statements from national parliaments regarding Commission documents.

The Conference of EU Speakers in Copenhagen welcomed the Commission's initiative and responded to it by asking the WG IPC to consider whether cooperation between national parliaments and the Commission could be strengthened.

IV.1. Transmission of Commission documents to national parliaments

The WG IPC notes a large appreciation among the national parliaments of the implementation of the European Commission's commitment² to transmit directly all new legislative proposals and consultation papers to national parliaments. It was generally felt by the national parliaments that this initiative has increased parliamentary scrutiny and contributed to the transparency of EU decision-making and tends to improve the process of policy formulation within EU.

Some parliaments also expressed that this initiative has helped to facilitate the handling of EU documents within parliaments. On the other hand, parliaments need more time to integrate this initiative into their internal work-flow. For many parliaments it is still too early to give a proper assessment of the initiative at this stage. They therefore propose a more in-depth evaluation after the new initiative is more established. At the same time, some parliaments welcome a more intensive exchange of best practices in terms of this new initiative in order to improve their scrutiny of EU proposals in national parliaments.

² *The COSAC's 6th bi-annual report already provided an overview on the measures national parliaments have taken with regard to the reception of and response to documents sent by the Commission.*

The COSAC's 7th bi-annual report is providing a follow-up on the procedures applied by national parliaments and has a closer look on the experience parliaments have gathered especially with regard to the Commission's reactions towards their statements.

In order to avoid duplication of work between the Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments and COSAC the working group was not dealing very closely with an assessment of this initiative and its impacts but rather collected some general remarks and comments from the national parliaments. COSAC's 7th bi-annual report will be published on: www.cosac.eu.

National parliaments also broadly welcome the European Commission's call for comments on its proposals and its commitment to take into account the views expressed as well as to provide a written reply to the different comments received from national parliaments.

Despite the parliaments' appreciation of the initiative the WG IPC also notes some suggestions for technical and practical improvements. Some parliaments call for a standardised procedure for the presentation of the Commission's consultation documents, as the Commission uses a number of different types of documents for consultations with different stakeholders, which makes it very difficult for national parliaments to identify the relevant documents. Others call on the Commission to improve its impact assessments and forward information to national parliaments on the outcome of the weekly meetings of the College of Commissioners.

Many parliaments observe that simultaneous transmission of Commission documents in all national languages should be the norm. Even though the statutory time limit for comments by national parliaments begins to run only when the last language version has been delivered, the current practice is not consistent with the principle of equality of Member States.

It was observed by some parliaments that the Commission could be more active in visiting national parliaments, in particular when new, major initiatives are introduced. National parliaments should be better able to draw on the resources of the Commission for factual information.

Some parliaments proposed that the Commission should make public the input of national parliaments on different legislative proposals and consultation papers as well as its responses.

Conclusion

Parliaments in general support the idea of further development of cooperation with the European Commission, with emphasis to be put on the quality of this interaction.

The WG IPC notes parliaments' widespread appreciation of the Commission's initiative to transmit directly its legislative proposals and consultation documents to national parliaments.

The WG IPC proposes that the Commission, on its part, should develop its participation in the consultation process it has created, in particular by making its responses to the input of national parliaments public, as well as by being more active in visiting national parliaments, in particular when new major initiatives are introduced.

In order to improve the transparency of parliaments' comments to the Commission's proposals and the Commission's reactions to them, the WG IPC, agreeing with the request presented at the COSAC chairpersons meeting in Berlin on 13 February 2007, calls on national parliaments and the European Commission to provide parliamentary input and Commission responses to the COSAC secretariat as well as to the IPEX database.

The WG IPC proposes that the next Conference of EU Speakers should invite the Speaker of the Slovak parliament to make the necessary contacts with the President of the Commission in order to enhance cooperation between the IPEX-board and the Commission.

IV.2. Cooperation on the Commissions' Legislative and Work Programme and Annual Policy Strategy

Among the chambers responding to the WG IPC's questionnaire, a large number consider that the Commission's Legislative and Work Programme (LWP) is most appropriately dealt with by Parliaments acting individually. For the Annual Policy Strategy (APS), a significant number of chambers favour a collective approach. Many parliaments observe, however, that this is not an either/or question but that both approaches have merit in particular circumstances.

A significant number of chambers see COSAC as the most appropriate forum for any collective discussion of the LWP and APS.. Unlike the Speaker's Conference or a Joint Parliamentary Meeting, COSAC has the statutory power to adopt political conclusions and address these to the EU Institutions. The existence of a COSAC Secretariat and the timing of COSAC conferences make this organisation best placed to adopt a coordinating role for parliaments acting individually, and for organising collective actions linked to these Commission documents.

Conclusion

The WG IPC proposes that the Speakers' Conference takes note of the state of opinion of participating parliaments that the examination and debate of the European Commission's annual Legislative and Work Programme is primarily the task of individual parliaments, applying their internal procedures.

If deemed useful by parliaments, the LWP may be discussed in COSAC or at another inter-parliamentary meeting in autumn. National parliaments can also organise simultaneous national debates on the LWP. Such debates can be promoted and coordinated by the presidency of either COSAC or the Conference of Speakers. This presidency, or the COSAC secretariat, may also coordinate the exchange of information about the subjects from the LWP that have been identified as suitable for scrutiny to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The WG IPC proposes that the Speakers' Conference invites COSAC to give consideration to how examination and debate of the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy might usefully be included in COSAC's work programme.

The WG IPC also proposes that the Speakers' Conference invites national parliaments to share their experiences of dealing with the LWP and APS, and remains open to including this topic on its own agenda, when appropriate. In order to prepare the practical background of such an initiative the WG IPC finds it appropriate to continue the discussion on the elaboration of a yearly timeframe for interparliamentary cooperation.

V. Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments

The Presidency Conclusions from the Copenhagen meeting (July 2006) indicate a need to improve the current scheme of appointing the Presidency of the Conference of the Speakers of EU Parliaments, in order to guarantee better coordination with the presidencies of the Council and gives a mandate to the WG IPC to come up with proposals for a new system.

A significant number of parliaments support the idea of a presidency assumed by one of the two parliaments of the Member States holding the presidency of the EU Council in the same calendar year. Many parliaments were strictly against shared presidencies involving two parliaments, as they found this might lead to confusion and harm coordination.

The WG IPC suggests that the two parliaments decide between themselves which of them actually holds the presidency and hosts all of the meetings. The new arrangement would begin in 2009.

The WG also discussed arguments against this system for appointing Presidencies. Hosting the Speakers' Conference during or in the same year as a Council presidency was viewed as an excessive burden by some, but by no means all, chambers. Others felt that the Speaker's Conference is merely an incremental addition to the typically 6 – 12 large conferences organised by parliaments during a Council presidency. It was also pointed out that the alternative solution (below) raises similar issues, including the need to retain additional logistical and staff resources beyond a Council presidency.

The WG IPC gave second priority to a model in which the parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the EU Council in the second half of a calendar year would hold the presidency of the Speakers' Conference and organise the actual meetings in the first half of the following calendar year. This model could be put into practice in time for the Conference in 2009.

The Slovak Presidency will propose an arrangement for assuring the Presidency in 2008 after the decision has been taken on the new model of Presidency appointment as from 2009.

Conclusion

The WG IPC is strongly of the opinion that the system of appointing Speakers' Conference Presidencies must be reliable, simple, and calculable; thus, a volunteer-based system is no longer adequate. A fixed rotation will provide continuity and improve coordination of interparliamentary work.

To this end, the WG IPC, noting the support of a significant number of parliaments for the idea, proposes that the presidency should be assumed by one of the two parliaments of the Member States holding the presidency of the EU Council in the same calendar year. The two parliaments would decide between themselves which of them should actually arrange the meetings relating to the presidency.

As an alternative, the WG IPC proposes, as its second priority, a model in which the parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the EU Council in the second half of a calendar year would hold the presidency of the Speakers' Conference and organise the actual meetings in the first half of the following calendar year.

As under the present practice, the WG IPC proposes that the meeting of Secretaries General should formally take note, about two years in advance, of which parliament will assume the presidency of the Speakers' Conference. The Secretaries General should also make necessary proposals in situations where, for example because of elections, the presidency cannot be assured according to the above proposals.

The WG IPC suggests that the costs to the parliament hosting Speakers' Conferences should be reduced. The WG IPC notes the proven success of cost sharing in the language regime of the Conference of Speakers, and suggests that cost sharing should be applied to accommodation costs as well. All participating parliaments should bear their own accommodation costs, as for any other interparliamentary meeting. The new regime could be implemented from 2008.

VI. Improved coordination between the websites dealing with interparliamentary cooperation

The enlarged Troika of the Conference of Speakers meeting on 7 November 2006 raised the question whether it would be possible to combine the information provided by the websites of the Speakers Conference, COSAC and IPEX. It was therefore agreed to invite the WG IPC to include this topic in its report.

A large number of parliaments favour improved coordination between the three websites. Several parliaments stress the need a common access point to parliamentary information – and possibly the creation of a common portal to parliamentary EU information. It was suggested that IPEX could be used to eliminate overlapping questionnaires sent out from various parliamentary forums.

The Conference of Speakers decided in The Hague on 3 July 2004 to facilitate more effective planning of interparliamentary meetings by establishing a Calendar for interparliamentary meetings, which should be hosted on the IPEX-website. Guidelines for this calendar were adopted by the Conference of Speakers on 29 June – 2 July 2006 in Copenhagen. The websites of COSAC and the Conference of Speakers host similar interparliamentary calendars.

Conclusion

The WG IPC welcomes increased cooperation between the IPEX Central Support and the COSAC Secretariat with a view to ensuring that information made available on the IPEX-website is relevant for the end-users of EU information in the national parliaments.

The WG IPC calls on the IPEX Board to take the necessary steps to facilitate the creation of a common portal for the various interparliamentary websites (i.e. links to the various websites). Such a portal could be hosted on the IPEX website.

The WG IPC calls on IPEX to finalise the tasks already set out, and to facilitate an increased information exchange between the national parliaments and the European institutions – including the publication of the Commission's responses to the opinions of the national parliaments on EU legislative and non-legislative documents.

The WG IPC proposes that the Speakers' Conference invites the IPEX Board and the COSAC Secretariat to take whatever action they may deem appropriate to minimise duplication of work with regard to the calendars on the two websites allowing the Calendar of Interparliamentary Cooperation hosted on the IPEX-website to provide the overview of the broader range of interparliamentary activities.

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DISCUSSION PAPER
BY THE WORKING GROUP ON
IMPROVING INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

DRAFT REVISION OF THE GUIDELINES FOR
INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN
UNION

DRAFT REVISION OF THE GUIDELINES FOR INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Explanatory memorandum

The Conference of EU Speakers agreed in Copenhagen on 29 June – 2 July 2006 to establish a Working Group to examine the possibilities to strengthen the Hague Guidelines. The Slovak Presidency invited the parliaments present at the enlarged Troika meeting, namely the parliaments of Denmark, Finland, Germany and France to contribute to a team of rapporteurs that would prepare a report of the Working Group. The parliaments of Finland and Denmark offered to assist the Presidency.

The Presidency distributed in February 2007 a questionnaire to all national parliaments and the European Parliament, inviting them to indicate whether they found it necessary to revise the Hague Guidelines. A large number of parliaments stated in their replies to questionnaire that they found such a revision necessary. Furthermore, a significant number of parliaments found that the current framework of the Hague Guidelines was inaccurate and no longer up to date.

In addition, a number of important aspects and features of interparliamentary cooperation within the EU have developed over the past years, necessitating an adaptation of the Guidelines.

On this basis, the Presidency decided to draft for the Working Group's consideration a moderate revision of the guidelines. This draft was discussed by the WG IPC at its meeting where all possible amendments were integrated. The new draft went through a second amending round after the meeting. Since there are still some parliaments who call for more time for the final proposal, the WG IPC decides to declare its will to continue the work on the revision of the Hague Guidelines under the coming presidency. The text below shall be understood only as a point of reference for the future continuation of the work of the WG IPC.

Draft, 7 May 2007

Guidelines for

INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Introduction

The Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments,

having regard to:

- the Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers adopted on 22 September 2000,
- the Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union - annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam, 1 May 1999,
- the Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union – annexed to The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, agreed in July 2004 calling on the European Parliament and national parliaments together to determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular interparliamentary cooperation within the European Union,
- the Presidency conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments in Athens, 24 May 2003, The Hague, 2-3 July 2004, Budapest, 6-7 May 2005 and in Copenhagen, 29 June – 2 July 2006,
- the Conclusions of the European Council on 15-16 June 2006,

agreed in on.....to adapt the Guidelines adopted by the Conference of Speakers in the Hague in 2004 as a base for interparliamentary cooperation on European Union matters, to read as follows:

I. Objectives

The main objectives of interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union are to:

- a) promote exchange of information and best practices between national parliaments of the European Union and the European Parliament with a view to reinforcing parliamentary scrutiny and influence at all levels,
- b) ensure effective exercise of parliamentary competences in EU matters in particular in the area of monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in the area of transposition of EU law, and
- c) further increase democratic legitimacy of the EU

The autonomy of each parliament shall be respected. The degree of involvement in interparliamentary cooperation is decided by each parliament in the context of its particular parliamentary convention and tradition.

Interparliamentary cooperation is based on the principle of national parliaments and the European Parliament being on equal footing and having complementary roles in the European Union architecture.

II. Framework:

Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union is performed within the following framework:

Conference of Speakers of European Union parliaments

An annual Conference is organised between the Speakers of the parliaments of the EU Member States and the President of the European Parliament. The Conference of Speakers of European Union parliaments has a responsibility for overseeing the coordination of interparliamentary activities of the European Union. The organisation of the Conference is conducted in accordance with the “Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers” adopted at the Conference in Rome on 22 - 24 September 2000.

Meetings of sectoral committees

Meetings of sectoral committees are organised by a national parliament or the European Parliament with the objective of discussing European Union topics within their fields of competence.

COSAC

COSAC (The Conference of European Affairs Committees) enables a regular exchange of information on best practices and views on European Union matters between European Affairs Committees of national parliaments and the European Parliament. COSAC conducts its activities also in accordance with the “Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union” annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings

Joint Parliamentary meetings on specific topics of broad interest and Joint Committee meetings are organised and co-chaired by the Parliament of the country holding the EU-Presidency in cooperation with the European Parliament. Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with a vademecum.¹

¹ The European Parliament has committed itself to draft a vademecum covering the practical, organisational and formal aspects of Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings. The document will be put into Annex X of these Guidelines as soon as the European Parliament has completed this work

Secretaries General

Secretaries General of national parliaments and the European Parliament or other officials appointed by the respective Speaker convene regularly in order to prepare the agenda and the debates of the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments and settle any other business deemed necessary. The meetings are prepared by the Secretary General of the host parliament after having consulted a Troika consisting of the Secretaries General of the parliaments of the incumbent Presidency, the preceding and the next Presidency. The Secretary General of the host parliament may invite colleagues from other member parliaments to assist in the Troika's deliberations. The Secretaries General, as the senior officials of participating parliaments, supervise the preparation and implementation of interparliamentary work within the EU. The meetings of the Secretaries General and the Troika are chaired by the Secretary General of the Parliament hosting the Conference of Speakers.

Representatives of national parliaments to the EU

National parliaments' representatives contribute to the reinforcement of interparliamentary cooperation by facilitating a regular exchange of information among national parliaments and the European Parliament as well as by close cooperation with the COSAC Secretariat.

IPEX

The objective of IPEX is to support interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for electronic exchange of *information related to parliamentary scrutiny of EU draft legislation and other EU initiatives*. *IPEX shall inter alia facilitate an exchange of information between parliaments with regard to EU draft legislation.*

Planning of interparliamentary meetings

National parliaments and the European Parliament liaise to ensure appropriate and efficient planning of their respective interparliamentary meetings. They inform each other in a timely fashion about these meetings. Formal invitations are sent to the Speakers of all national parliaments and the President of the European Parliament with a copy to the Secretaries General. A rolling, long term, meeting calendar of interparliamentary meetings of the European Union is made available on the IPEX-website. The calendar is updated by the IPEX Central Support.

III. Fields of cooperation:

Interparliamentary cooperation is of particular value in the following fields:

Exchange of information and best practices:

National parliaments and the European Parliament exchange information and best practices in all policy-fields covered by the Treaties of the European Union and the European Communities. Special emphasis is put on the exchange of information and best practices with regard to procedures for parliamentary scrutiny of European Union matters.

The Commission's Annual Policy Strategy and Annual Legislative and Work Programme:

The Commission's Annual Policy Strategy is discussed at an interparliamentary meeting in the spring. The Commission is invited to present the Annual Policy Strategy at this meeting. If deemed necessary by parliaments, the Commission's Annual Legislative and Work Programme may be discussed at an interparliamentary meeting in the autumn.

National Parliaments can organise simultaneous debates on the Commission's Annual Legislative and Work Programme. The parliament hosting the next Conference of Speakers of European Union parliaments promotes such debates and coordinates the exchange of information and best practices between the parliaments.

Monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality:

National parliaments have a key role to play in monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

In order to facilitate effective scrutiny of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, national parliaments are encouraged to promote a better exchange of information regarding EU draft legislation and its compliance with the two principles.

At the political level, national parliaments cooperate, inter alia, within COSAC when monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. IPEX provides the platform for the electronic exchange of information between parliaments in this field.

The political priorities of interparliamentary cooperation

Political priorities of interparliamentary cooperation are set out by national parliaments and the European Parliament in accordance with the rules governing the different parliamentary forums. Thus there is a particular need for enhanced coordination between the parliament of the country holding the EU-Presidency, the parliament hosting the next Conference of EU Speakers and the European Parliament.

Annex I:

ANNOTATED DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Guidelines of The Hague as agreed of 3 July 2004	Revised draft guidelines as of 12 March 2007	Explanatory statements to new or amended draft text
GUIDELINES INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION <u>Introduction</u> With reference to: - The Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers, article 2 p.2: “To this end the Conference is a forum for the exchange of opinions, information and experiences, as well as for the promotion of research activities and common action, among the Speakers, on topics related to the role of parliaments and the organisation of parliamentary functions, also with respect to the forms and tools of Interparliamentary cooperation”.	<i>Revised version of GUIDELINES on</i> INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION <u>Introduction</u> The Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments, - having regard to: - the Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers, adopted on 22 September 2000, Deleted	Editorial adjustment

New paragraph is added to ensure a reference to the protocol on the role of national parliaments of the Amsterdam Treaty, which is a key document when it comes to the role of national parliaments and the functions of COSAC.

The amended paragraph takes recent developments in the context of the Speakers Conference and the European Council into account. Like when the European Council encouraged national parliaments in its conclusions of June 2006 to strengthen cooperation within the framework of COSAC when monitoring subsidiarity.

The two first paragraphs of section 1 on the objectives have been moved to the last part of the section in an adjusted form.

- the Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union- annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam, 1 May 1999,
 - the Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union – annexed to The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, agreed in July 2004 calling on the European Parliament and the national parliaments together to determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular interparliamentary cooperation within the European Union,
 - the Presidency conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments in Athens, 24 May 2003, The Hague, 2-3 July 2004, Budapest, 6-7 May 2005 and in Copenhagen, 29 June – 2 July 2006,
 - the Conclusions of the European Council on 15-16 June 2006,
- agreed in to adapt the Guidelines adopted by the Conference of Speakers in the Hague in 2004 as a base for interparliamentary cooperation on European Union matters, to read as follows:

I. Objectives

Deleted

- The Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union – annexed to The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, article 9 ;
“The European Parliament and the national parliaments shall together determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular Interparliamentary cooperation within the European Union.”

- The Presidency conclusions at the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments in Athens, 24 May 2003,

The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments at its meeting in The Hague 2-3 July 2004 agreed upon the following guidelines as a base for Interparliamentary cooperation in the EU field.

I. Objectives

The autonomy of each parliament shall be respected. The degree of involvement in Interparliamentary cooperation is decided by each parliament.

Taking into account the principle of Interparliamentary cooperation is based on the principal of national parliaments and the European Parliament being on equal footing and having complementary roles in the EU structure, the main objectives of interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union should be:

- a) To provide information and strengthen parliamentary scrutiny in all areas of competence of the EU.
- b) To ensure the efficient exercise of parliamentary competences in EU matters, in particular in the area of subsidiarity control by national parliaments.

II. Framework:

The cooperation is performed within the following framework:

The main objectives of interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union are to:

- a) promote exchange of information and best practices between national parliaments of the European Union and the European Parliament with a view to reinforcing parliamentary scrutiny and influence at all levels,
- b) ensure effective exercise of parliamentary competences in EU matters in particular in the area of monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in the area of transposition of EU law, and
- c) further increase democratic legitimacy of the EU.

The autonomy of each parliament shall be respected. The degree of involvement in interparliamentary cooperation is decided by each parliament in the context of its particular parliamentary convention and tradition. Interparliamentary cooperation is based on the principle of national parliaments and the European Parliament being on equal footing and having complementary roles in the European Union architecture.

II. Framework:

Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union is performed within the following framework:

In addition the section has been amended in order to accommodate wishes from a number of national parliaments.

Firstly, a reference to the principle of proportionality has been included in indent b of the paragraph together with a reference to ensuring effective exercise of parliamentary competences in the area of transposition of EU law.

Secondly the aim of contributing to the democratic legitimacy in the EU has been established as a third objective to interparliamentary cooperation.

These two paragraphs have been moved from the beginning of the section.

Finally it is proposed to insert 'in the context of its particular parliamentary convention and tradition' in the last paragraph of the section on the objectives.

Conference of EU Speakers

The Conference has a responsibility for overseeing the coordination of interparliamentary EU activities. A particular coordinating responsibility rests with the host Parliament for the forthcoming Conference.

Meetings of sectoral committees

Meetings of sectoral committees organised by national parliaments or by the European Parliament constitute one of the long-established modes of Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union.

COSAC

COSAC (*The Conference of European Affairs Committees*) handles the cooperation between EU Affairs Committees.

Conference of Speakers of European Union parliaments

An annual Conference is organised between the Speakers of the parliaments of the EU Member States and the President of the European Parliament. The Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments has a responsibility for overseeing the coordination of interparliamentary activities of the European Union. The organisation of the Conference is conducted in accordance with the "Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers" adopted at the Conference in Rome on 22 - 24 September 2000.

Meetings of sectoral committees

Meetings between sectoral committees are organised by national parliaments or the European Parliament with the objective of discussing European Union topics within their fields of competence.

COSAC

COSAC (The Conference of European Affairs Committees) enables a regular exchange of information on best practices and views on European Union matters between European Affairs Committees of national parliaments and the European Parliament. COSAC conducts its activities also in accordance with the "Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union" annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam.

The revised paragraph makes reference to the Guidelines of Presiding Officers, which is where the internal rules of the Conference of Speakers are laid down.

The adjusted paragraph primarily takes note of the current practices of organising meetings between sectoral committees of national parliaments in the European Union. The paragraph covers first and foremost the meetings of sectoral committees, which are organised by the parliaments of the Member State holding the Council Presidency.

The adjusted paragraph on COSAC brings the wording of the paragraph into conformity with the actual current functions of COSAC and the Protocol on the role of national parliaments of the Amsterdam Treaty.

Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings

Joint Parliamentary meetings on specific topics of broad interest and Joint Committee meetings are organised by the Parliament of the country holding the EU-Presidency in cooperation with the European Parliament. Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with a vademecum.

The new paragraph enshrines Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings into the Hague guidelines, which are two new important types of interparliamentary meetings not mentioned in the current guidelines. The paragraph consolidates the current practise that Joint Parliamentary meetings and Joint Committee meetings are organised jointly by the European Parliament and the Parliament of the country holding the EU-Presidency.

Simultaneous debates in interested parliaments

Interested parliaments can promote simultaneous debates on the EU legislative programme or on the main issues of European policies.

The paragraph on the simultaneous debates in national parliaments is deleted from section II on the Framework and moved to section III on the fields of cooperation in a slightly amended version.

Deleted

Secretaries General:

The Secretaries General or other officials appointed by the Speaker should take the lead in preparing the Interparliamentary EU work. A particular responsibility for coordination rests with the Secretary General in the host Parliament for the forthcoming Conference. Here close contacts with national parliaments in the Member States holding the EU Presidency are necessary.

Secretaries General:

Secretaries General of national parliaments and the European Parliament or other officials appointed by the respective Speaker convene regularly in order to prepare the agenda and the debates of the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments and settle any other business deemed necessary. The meetings are prepared by the Secretary General of the host parliament after having consulted a Troika consisting of the Secretaries General of the parliaments of the incumbent Presidency, the preceding and the next Presidency. The Secretary General of the host parliament may invite colleagues from other member

The modified paragraph consolidates existing practises. This includes among other things the mentioning that the meetings of Secretaries General are prepared by the Secretary General of the host parliament after having consulted a Troika.

parliaments to assist in the Troika's deliberations. The Secretaries General, as the senior officials of participating parliaments, supervise the preparation and implementation of interparliamentary work within the EU. The meetings of the Secretaries General and the Troika are chaired by the Secretary General of the Parliament hosting the Conference of Speakers.

Permanent Representatives of national parliaments

When having a national parliament representative based in Brussels, the permanent representative participates in the regular exchange of information between the EU parliaments, as well as with the COSAC secretariat in Brussels, and in coordination on a practical level.

IPEX:

The objective of IPEX (Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange) is to support Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for electronic exchange of EU-related information between parliaments in the Union including a calendar of meetings and forums for exchange of views on subsidiarity control. Each parliament/chamber has an IPEX correspondent to represent the parliament.

Representatives of national parliaments to the EU

National parliaments' representatives contribute to the reinforcement of interparliamentary cooperation by facilitating a regular exchange of information among national parliaments and the European Parliament. National parliaments' representatives work closely together with the COSAC Secretariat.

IPEX:

The objective of IPEX (Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange) is to support Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for electronic exchange of information related to parliamentary scrutiny of EU draft legislation and other EU initiatives. IPEX shall inter alia facilitate an exchange of information between parliaments with regard to EU draft legislation.

The amended paragraph stresses that national parliaments' representatives have a positive effect on interparliamentary cooperation by facilitating a more regular exchange of information among national parliaments and by promoting closer bonds to the European Parliament.

The purpose of the amended paragraph is to clarify that the objective of IPEX is to promote exchange of information, which is related to parliamentary scrutiny.

The reference to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in the current paragraph has been moved to the paragraph in section III on monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

This new horizontal paragraph aims at

Planning of interparliamentary meetings

National parliaments and the European Parliament liaise to ensure appropriate and efficient planning of their respective interparliamentary meetings.

They inform each other in a timely fashion about these meetings. Formal invitations are sent to the Speakers of all national parliaments and the President of the European Parliament with a copy to the Secretaries General.

A rolling, long term, meeting calendar of interparliamentary meetings of the European Union is made available on the IPEX-website. The calendar is updated by the IPEX Central Support.

establishing more efficient planning of interparliamentary meetings by encouraging parliaments to liaise more closely. Furthermore it is proposed that information about coming meetings is submitted to parliaments in a timely fashion and that formal invitations are sent to the Speakers of national parliaments, the President of the European Parliament and their Secretaries General.

If a new arrangement for conducting the Presidency of the Conference of Speakers is finally agreed, the working group suggests enshrining it in the "Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers". Finally it is noted that the calendar hosted on IPEX website is updated by the IPEX Central Support.

The paragraph on subsidiarity control has been moved to the end of section III in a modified version.

III. Fields of cooperation:

Interparliamentary cooperation is of particular value in the following fields:

Subsidiarity control

Each EU parliament is recommended to inform the other parliaments on its activities concerning subsidiarity control. IPEX provides electronic tools for this exchange of views and serves as a means of communication between national parliaments with regard to proposals, which are thought to offend against the subsidiarity principle.

Deleted

Exchange of information and best practices

Exchange of information and documents should be promoted on all levels and between different committees and services within the framework. Electronic information emanating from different channels should be structured within the IPEX and EPCRD networks in order to avoid confusion and duplication of work.

Exchange of information and best practices

National parliaments and the European Parliament exchange information and best practices in all policy-fields covered by the Treaties of the European Union and the European Communities. Special emphasis is put on the exchange of information and best practices with regard to procedures for parliamentary scrutiny of European Union matters.

The amended paragraph identifies the fields of cooperation for interparliamentary cooperation to be all policy-fields covered by the Treaties of EC and EU. The amended paragraph stresses the need to put stronger emphasis on the aspect of parliamentary scrutiny of EU-matters.

Conferences and other events

Interparliamentary meetings, be they as hoc or within the framework of a regular exchange between Speakers, sectoral committees or within COSAC, constitute one of the recommended methods of Interparliamentary cooperation in the Union. They are usually organised by national parliaments or the European Parliament.
See annex for practical recommendations.

This paragraph is deleted because it is already covered by the various paragraphs in section II on the framework of interparliamentary cooperation.

Political areas

Every year the Conference of EU Speakers may indicate priority areas for Interparliamentary cooperation.

The paragraph is deleted and replaced by a new paragraph at the end of section III.

A new paragraph on the European-

Deleted

Deleted

The Commissions Annual Policy Strategy and the Annual Legislative Work Programme

The Commission's Annual Policy Strategy is discussed at an interparliamentary meeting in the spring. The Commission is invited to present the Annual Policy Strategy at this meeting. If deemed necessary by parliaments the Commission's Annual Legislative Programme may be discussed at an interparliamentary meeting in the autumn.

National Parliaments can organise simultaneous debates on the Commission's Annual Legislative and Work Programme. The parliament hosting the next Conference of Speakers of European Union parliaments promotes such debates and coordinates the exchange of information and best practices between the parliaments.

Monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality

National parliaments have a key role to play in monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

In order to facilitate effective scrutiny of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, national parliaments are encouraged to promote a better exchange of information regarding EU draft legislation and its compliance with the two principles.

At the political level national parliaments cooperate inter alia within COSAC when monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. IPEX provides the platform for the electronic exchange of information between parliaments in this field.

Commission's APS and the LWP is created in this section with the aim of describing the different types of parliamentary scrutiny of the APS. It includes both the possibility to discuss the APC and LWP collectively and the possibility for national parliaments to organise simultaneous debates on the Commission's LWP. As far as the first option is concerned it is suggested that parliaments give priority to a debate on the APC in the Spring at an interparliamentary meeting in order to get as early into the decision-making-process as possible. It is finally acknowledged that the Commission should be invited to present the APC at the meeting.

A new paragraph establishes that national parliaments should have an important role when it comes to monitoring the subsidiarity principle. With this aim the paragraph enshrines the conclusions of the European Council as of June 2006, which encourage national

parliaments to strengthen cooperation within the framework of COSAC when monitoring subsidiarity. Secondly it adds the task of monitoring the principle of proportionality to the

*paragraph.
Finally it maintains that IPEX should be used as a platform for electronic exchange of information between parliaments in this field.*

The new paragraph takes note of the current practise that political priorities and agendas are set out by the different interparliamentary forums themselves in accordance with their different tasks. At the same time it is recognised that there is need for improved coordination between the different forums in this regard. Therefore the Parliament of the country holding the EU-Presidency, the Parliament holding the next Speakers Conference and the European Parliament are encouraged to coordinate there activities better.

The political Priorities of Interparliamentary cooperation

Political priorities of interparliamentary cooperation are set out by national parliaments and the European Parliament in accordance with the rules governing the different parliamentary forums. Thus there is a particular need for enhanced coordination between the parliament of the country holding the EU-Presidency, the Parliament hosting the next Conference of EU-Speakers and the European Parliament.

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BIJLAGE II
ANNEXE II

RAPPORT VAN HET VOORZITTERSCHAP
betreffende de bijstand van parlementen
in nieuwe opkomende democratieën
(+ speech van de Voorzitter)

RAPPORT DE LA PRÉSIDENCE
concernant l'assistance aux parlements
des nouvelles démocraties émergentes
(+ speech du Président)

Conference of the Speakers of EU parliaments

PRESIDENCY REPORT CONCERNING ASSISTANCE TO PARLIAMENTS OF NEW AND EMERGING DEMOCRACIES

In accordance with the conclusions of the Speakers Conference in Copenhagen the Slovak Presidency established and guided a task force composed of representatives of the Slovak, Danish and Italian Parliaments in order to explore the ways for improving the coordination among different Institutions within the EU concerning cooperation programmes with Parliaments of New and emerging democracies (NEDs).

The Task Force performed its mandate with a pragmatic and effective approach focused on the accomplishment of the objectives set out in the conclusions of the Speakers Conference in Copenhagen.

Firstly, the Task Force assessed how to improve the coordination and the coherence among the programmes of assistance managed by the European Commission and those promoted by the EU Parliaments.

To this end, the Task force strengthened the relations with the European Commission and got a very positive outcome.

Three "baskets" of possible cooperation measures were identified by the Task Force and the representatives of the European Commission. They focus on exchange of information regarding implementation of external assistance, on consultation on planned Commission external assistance measures, and on possibilities of access to European Community funding for Member States' Parliaments in the framework of EU external assistance schemes.

While there is now a better understanding of the possible scope of cooperation between the European Commission and Member States' Parliaments, there is still a need to discuss the practical measures in more detail in order to be able to determine the formal framework, under which cooperation between the European Commission and Member States' Parliaments will develop in the future.

Secondly, the Task Force established a close cooperation with the Board of IPEX (*Inter-Parliamentary EU Information Exchange*) and with the European Parliament in order to set out an effective exchange of information on NEDs among the EU Parliaments and Institutions.

In such framework, the IPEX Board agreed to collect and update the existing information on the assistance of the EU Parliaments to the NEDs, and to develop a database on this issue within the IPEX website - including information from EU Parliaments and the European Commission. The database will be developed as soon as the necessary technical requirements are fulfilled – probably by the beginning of 2008.

Furthermore, the Task Force – with the fundamental contribution of the European Parliament – has explored the possibility to cooperate with the ECPRD (*European Center for Parliamentary Research and Development*) in view of preparing an appropriate agreement between the EU Speakers Conference and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The results we have achieved up to now are very important but there is a need to keep on working in all the above-mentioned areas.

I would therefore propose that EU Speakers mandate the Task Force to keep on its activities under the authority of the incoming Presidency Parliament.

In particular, the incoming Presidency - with the support of the Task Force – is recommended to continue the contacts with the European Commission focusing on the development of following issues:

- a procedure for consultation with the representatives of the parliamentary administrations when drafting programmes, projects and strategies for technical assistance that involve parliamentary assistance;
- the exchange of information with EU parliaments about programmes, calls for tender, requests for parliamentary assistance submitted directly to the national parliaments;
- the possibility of issuing invitations to tender concerning technical assistance to NEDs which would be restricted to parliamentary administrations and which could possibly be less burdensome in terms of procedures, administration etc. for the national parliaments;
- the possibility that the participation of EU Parliaments in Twinning programmes – when two or more are involved – be based on an equal footing in decision-making and equal sharing of the intellectual and professional capacities;
- to explore if and how the national parliaments can be considered as eligible partners under the financial regulation.

I would also propose that the EU Speakers mandate the incoming Presidency with the support of the Taskforce to:

- follow-up the work on the implementation of a database on assistance to NEDs within the IPEX Website – including information from EU parliaments and the European Commission.
- take the appropriate initiatives for extending the coordination and the exchange of information on NEDs beyond the EU. To this end, the incoming Presidency could:
 - ask the Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the Council of Europe to assess the possibility of using the ECPRD (European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation) for setting up a project – in cooperation with the IPEX - with the purpose of ensuring the exchange of information on NEDs Europe-wide;
 - ask the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) to assess the feasibility of a global information network on assistance to NEDs, preferably in cooperation with IPEX and ECPRD. The cooperation with ECPRD and IPU would be useful in collecting information on the beneficiaries' needs as well.

SPEECH

By Pavol Paška, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic

Bratislava, May 26, 2007

Assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies

My dear colleagues,

The next topic is not new to you. The truth is that in the last few years some of you have already witnessed this matter being discussed several times within this honorable Conference. It was in Athens in 2003 when you heard of the importance of improving the coordination of the external activities of the EU parliaments and the best ways of doing so. Effective coordination must serve to better promote our common interests.

Based on the initiative of the Italian Camera dei Deputati in 2005, under the Danish presidency, our parliaments started to examine how to create and use a synergic effect arising from the international presence of the EU parliaments. Under the principle of voluntary participation, a well functioning working group was created which was able to deliver the results of its work in Copenhagen last year. However, the work on such an extensive issue cannot be allowed to end just by producing a report. It is necessary to transform the findings into concrete actions and results.

For this we may rely on the always fully engaged Italian Chamber of Deputies and the hard working Danish Folketing. On this occasion I would like to

thank the Task Force formed by the two aforementioned parliaments and supplemented by the Slovak Národná rada for their continuous work, which has really proved that the Conference of the EU Speakers functions as a working process and not just as a few-days meeting once a year. But, whatever the results of the Task Force are, they would not be implementable without our political support, and the willingness of our partners to coordinate our parliaments' activities in the international field.

Now let me explain to you why I deemed it necessary to put this topic on our agenda again. If a Parliament is the central institution through which the will of the people is expressed, laws are passed and government is held to account, then we, Speakers of the EU Parliaments, have a huge responsibility to promote the role of our parliaments and help other parliaments to follow a good example. We do not want to export our traditions, procedures and approaches and apply them insensitively wherever in the world. As parliamentarians we are elected by our people, and are here in these rows only due to the will of those people. So we need to be sensitive to what they say. We are also listening to people in other countries where they elect our fellow colleagues. All these people, and common sense, are saying that it is best if the specific circumstances and conditions of given parliaments are taken into regard while any discussions are taking place. I am therefore of the opinion that it is better to have fewer projects, but of a higher standard and respecting these local particulars, than to compete amongst each other as to who can implement the most projects which in the end might not even satisfy the recipient parliaments. Simply put, we should be striving for quality rather than sheer quantity.

As you might have noticed, esteemed colleagues, I have not mentioned the title of this block at all. The reason why this is so is that I cannot identify this topic with the term “assistance”. Technical assistance usually implies exchange of experience, parliamentary procedures, organization, techniques, and communication with the media in the form of meetings, trainings, seminars, or studies. These always happen within a process involving at least two parliaments - donor and recipient. It is always a two way communication. The feedback from the recipient parliaments makes us see our strengths and weaknesses and we evolve through the process of delivering our experience further. But we cannot exclude bilateral meetings. It is often at bilateral meetings that we learn about an opportunity as how to make our work better. So now I take the liberty to propose that we should talk further of the **exchange of best practices**, involving the exchange of experience and the transfer of know-how and techniques. Only if we talk about Parliament-to-Parliament communication in a very practical sense can we achieve concrete results and contribute to our aim, which is spreading democracy in the world.

Now I would like to highlight some of the achievements of the Task Force, which will contribute to the better coordination and exchange of information on what the EU parliaments are doing in this field. The Task Force, in cooperation with the Board of IPEX, assessed the Feasibility Study of the possible development within the IPEX web site of a database on the exchange of best practices between the EU parliaments. Based on the study, we can expect a database available within the IPEX system in autumn/winter 2008. Afterwards we can establish a more formalized and intensive cooperation with the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Development, and the Interparliamentary Union. Working more closely with both these bodies will allow us to exchange the information amongst

more parliaments, and collect valuable information on the needs of potential beneficiaries.

It is crucial that through a coordinated approach we spend resources coming from our budgets wisely and effectively. There are some parliaments, which are very active in the field of spreading best practices and promoting democracy in the world, and some have a specific budget line for these projects.

Now let me inform you that Slovak National Council has also prepared a strategic material on **Interparliamentary Cooperation**. This development plan for 2007 – 2008 defines the basic principles, forms and aims the Slovak Parliament will seek to implement in cooperation with other parliament, with the document being revised every two years. It is the first time in the history of the Slovak Parliament that Interparliamentary Cooperation will have its own specific separate budget item within the overall state budget. So for 2008 I am ready to fight fiercely for the finances necessary to be allocated within this budget line.

Whilst talking of financial resources I must not forget the European Commission. The Commission represents the Union in the world and manages the common budget. The combination of these two factors makes the Commission an ideal partner for EU parliaments in exchanging best practices. I would like to appeal to the Commission to commit themselves to help parliaments in this matter. Consulting in advance with the representatives of the parliamentary administrations when drafting programmes, projects, and strategies for technical assistance would result in a greater involvement of the EU parliaments. We need to be informed about the Commission's programmes, calls for tender and any other relevant documentation and procedure for assistance.

Availing myself of the presence of Commissioner Mr. László Kovács, who I cordially welcome among us today, I want to call on the European Commission to take a political commitment to work with the EU parliaments along the lines that have been described by us in previous correspondence. I have to inform you, dear colleagues, that to this date, the Commission has not officially reacted to any of the letters sent to Mr Barroso in this respect. The exchange of information on projects and calls for tender, advance information and consultation with the EU parliaments on national actions plans, how to make it easier for the EU parliaments to access the EU funding when involved in bilateral capacity building projects with third country parliaments - all must become of importance for the Commission when it comes to implementing the External Relations policy of the EU.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank each Parliament and each parliamentarian that is involved in spreading the democratic practices and know-how of a well functioning parliament. It is not an easy task and means an incredible additional workload alongside everyday duties. However, I believe that by approving the report prepared by the Task Force, this hard work will be rewarded and we will contribute to this agenda being brought to a higher political level in a concrete form.

Thank you.

BIJLAGE III
ANNEXE III

**CONCLUSIES VAN DE VERGADERING
VAN DE SECRETARISSEN-GENERAAL
(15 - 16.3.2007)**

**CONCLUSIONS DE LA RÉUNION
DES SECRÉTAIRES GÉNÉRAUX
(15 - 15.3.2007)**

CONCLUSIONS
MEETING SG BRATISLAVA, 15-16/03/2007

Meeting of Secretaries General of the EU Parliaments Bratislava, Slovak Republic 15 – 16 March 2007

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In his opening welcome note, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Pavol Paška, called on Secretaries General to find a functioning mechanism of the EU Speakers' Conference Presidency appointment.

Secretary General of the host parliament, Viktor Stromcek, introduced the Program and Agenda of the Meeting. Afterwards, the organization and practical information concerning of the Bratislava Conference, were presented.

I. Future of Europe

The Secretaries General welcomed their colleagues from the new European Union Member States – Bulgaria and Romania.

In further, Secretaries General welcomed and appreciated an address by Bo Manderup Jensen, Principal Advisor to the President of the European Commission on the Future of Europe.

It was underlined in the discussion that national parliaments should also be involved in debates on the future of the EU and participate at the exchange of opinions relating to the topic. At the same time, it is important to take into consideration the constitutional arrangements of individual member states, which form the basis for how to solve the EU questions.



II. Interparliamentary Cooperation

The Secretaries General welcomed the Report of the Working Group on Interparliamentary Cooperation and acknowledged its eminent contribution to the improvement of interparliamentary cooperation within the EU.

After studying different suggestions and conclusions of the Working Group, the Secretaries General called on the Working Group to continue its work on reviewing the Report in order to reach a higher accord on the text to be presented to the Speakers.

The Secretaries General agreed on passing their mandate to the members of the WG to implement the given suggestions and make the final changes in the Report. The Working group shall continue its work primarily by using electronic means and hold the meeting only in the case that these will no longer be sufficient for reaching an agreement on the final text. The Secretaries General agreed to follow the final work of the Working group in order to be able to give their formal endorsement at their morning meeting prior to the opening of the Bratislava Conference of the EU Speakers on 25 May 2007.

In order to strengthen the Hague Guidelines, the Secretaries General recommended to the EU Speakers to call on the incoming presidencies to promote actively the implementation of the Hague Guidelines by all participating parliaments.

After discussing the proposal made by the Working Group on the new scheme of appointing the EUSC Presidency, the Secretaries General were of the opinion that the proposed change of the current scheme of appointing the Presidency would extensively contribute to better coordination among the different forums of interparliamentary cooperation.

The Secretaries General gave their priority to the proposal, in which the parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the EU Council in the second half of a calendar year would hold the presidency of the Speakers' Conference and organise the actual meetings in the following calendar year.

The Secretaries General agreed also on the following arrangements concerning the new scheme of appointing the EUSC Presidency:

- the Secretaries General should formally take note about two years in advance, which parliaments will assume the EUSC Presidency;
- the Secretaries General should come with necessary proposals in such situations where, for example, the Presidency cannot be assured according to the agreed new scheme because of elections held in the Chamber concerned.

The Secretaries General welcomed the proposal of the Working Group to reduce the costs of the parliament hosting the Speakers Conference by implementing the same approach as decided for the language regime, i.e. each parliament covers all accommodation costs concerning its participation at the Secretaries General meeting and the EU Speakers' Conference itself. They suggested that the EU Speakers will approve the proposal and call on the incoming Presidency to make necessary arrangements in order to implement the decision.

Concerning the cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament, the Secretaries General agreed that the structure, timing and content of interparliamentary meetings should generally be improved. The Secretaries General expressed their belief that this problem could be resolved if the European Parliament adopted standardised procedures for such meetings. That is why the Secretaries General call on the European Parliament to come up with a proposal of such *vademecum* that shall be open to comments and amendments from national parliaments preceding its implementation.

III. First year of IPEX

Regarding the IPEX website, the Secretaries General took note of the oral report on IPEX by Peter Juul Larsen, Head of the EU Department of the Folketing, and the work of the IPEX Board. The Secretaries General acknowledged the importance of a reliable IPEX website and the need - at the present - to retain the webmaster by financial contributions from parliaments in the Board.

The Secretaries General re-appointed the members of the IPEX Board with a mandate extending to the forthcoming Meeting of Secretaries General in 2008. The Board consists of parliaments of Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, UK and the European Parliament. In addition, ECPRD and COSAC are associate Board members. The Secretary General of the Danish Parliament, Henrik Tvarnø was also appointed as chairman of the IPEX board for the duration of the current mandate of the IPEX Board.

The Secretaries General approved of the IPEX Board decision to encourage national parliaments to cooperate with their respective regional parliaments and to publish relevant regional documents on the existing pages. They asked the IPEX Board to provide for a viable solution for the publication of EU relevant information from regional parliaments.

The Secretaries General welcomed the initiative of the IPEX Board that is to be implemented by the EUSC Presidency to send a letter to the President of the European Commission concerning an improvement of the cooperation between IPEX and the Commission including a request to transfer appropriate meta-data to IPEX.

The Secretaries General welcome the Draft Presidency Conclusions concerning IPEX noting that the Draft Conclusions will be put on the agenda at the meeting of the IPEX Board in the beginning of May 2007.

IV. Report of Task Force on assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies

With respect to the technical assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies, the Secretaries General underlined the need to ensure the exchange of information between the National Parliaments, the European Parliament and the European Commission in view of their capacity as donors.

The Secretaries General mandated the Task Force in cooperation with the IPEX Board to continue with its work, which should contribute to a better coordination for the individual national parliaments' assistance.

The Secretaries General mandated the Slovak Parliament with the support of the Danish and Italian Parliaments to continue its talks with the European Commission on the following issues:

- a procedure on how to advance consultation with the representatives of the parliamentary administrations when drafting programmes, projects and strategies for technical assistance that involve parliamentary assistance;
- the exchange of information with EU parliaments about programmes, calls for tender, requests for parliamentary assistance submitted directly to the national parliaments etc.;
- the possibility of issuing invitations to tender concerning technical assistance to NEDs which would be restricted to parliamentary administrations and which could possibly be less burdensome in terms of procedures, administration etc. for the national parliaments.

The Secretaries General recommended that the Speakers' Conference take the appropriate initiatives to obtain a commitment by Mr Barroso to this respect.

V. Raising national European awareness

The Secretaries General welcomed the presented Information on discussions related to the European Commission's Annual Policy Strategy and Legislative and Work Programme and acknowledged a right of the EU parliaments to apply their own constitutional, parliamentary and traditional practices when discussing both documents.

The Secretaries General invited COSAC to play a coordination role when discussing the European Commission's Annual Policy Strategy and Legislative and Work Programme. Time framework to debate both documents should be 6 to 8 weeks following the publication of the documents in all language versions.

The Secretaries General recommended that a member of the European Commission, if possible the President himself, presents both documents at an interparliamentary meeting.

The Secretaries General expressed their hope that Mrs. Margot Wallström would be able to come and present the Annual Policy Strategy at the May Conference in Bratislava.