

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TROIKA OF COSAC
Zagreb, Croatia, 19 January 2020

PRESENT AT THE MEETING

CHAIR: Mr Domagoj Ivan MILOŠEVI , Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*.

Mr Domagoj HAJDUKOVI , Deputy Chairman of the European Affairs Committee, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*; Ms Satu HASSI, Chair of the Grand Committee, Finnish *Eduskunta*; Mr Gunther KRICHBAUM, Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs, German *Bundestag*; Mr Guido WOLF, Chairman of the Committee on European Union Questions, German *Bundesrat*; Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, First Vice-President, European Parliament; Mr Antonio TAJANI, Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament.

AGENDA

- 1. Adoption of the agenda of the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC**
- 2. Approval of the draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC**
- 3. Debate on the draft programme of the LXIII COSAC**
- 4. Approval of the outline of the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC**
- 5. Letters received by the Presidency**
- 6. Any other business**

PROCEEDINGS

1. Adoption of the agenda of the Meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC

Mr MILOŠEVI welcomed the delegations of the Presidential Troika of COSAC (hereinafter referred to as "the Troika"), and outlined the agenda of the meeting of the Troika, which was adopted without amendment.

2. Approval of the draft programme of the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC

Mr MILOŠEVI outlined the topics on the programme of the meeting that would take place the following day.

The first session would focus on the “priorities of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union” and would be presented by Mr Andrej PLENKOVI , Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

The second session would deal with the European Union, national Parliaments and COSAC in the context of the new institutional term of office, with Ms Dubravka ŠUICA, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of democracy and demography, and Ms Mairead McGUINNESS, First Vice-President of the European Parliament in charge of relations with National Parliaments, as keynote speakers.

The Chair noted one change: Ms Ursula von der LEYEN, President of the European Commission, would not be attending, and Ms ŠUICA would join on behalf of the European Commission.

The draft programme of the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC was approved without amendment.

3. Debate on the draft programme of the LXIII COSAC

Mr MILOŠEVI informed the Troika members that the LXIII COSAC would take place on 24 – 26 May 2020 in Zagreb. The Chair outlined the four sessions of the draft programme.

The first session would be presented by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs in the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Mr Gordan GRLI RADMAN, and would focus on the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the results of the EU-Western Balkans Summit; the second session would deal with the Transformation of the Labour Market and the management of demographic imbalances and labour mobility in the European Union; the third session would address the distributive effects of the EU budget; the fourth session would tackle the integrated maritime policy; whereas the fifth and final session would look into the digital rights and responsibilities in terms of reconciliation of privacy and accountability.

Ms McGUINNESS thanked the Chair for the warm welcome. She noted that there may be a need for a session on the future of Europe in the COSAC plenary, as it would be timely. With regard to the item on the budget and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), Ms McGUINNESS noted that it would be great to have a speaker from the European Parliament. The European Parliament had a position on migration, which could be an item integrated in the session on the labour market as well as the budget, so a contribution from the institution would be ideal.

Ms HASSI agreed that the session on the labour market could integrate an item on migration. She also proposed to look at the climate economy of Europe, as this too was linked to many items on the agenda, including the aforementioned session on labour market, but also linked to the EU budget and to maritime policy. It would therefore be good to consider the transformation into a green economy and integrate this topic in the agenda.

Mr MILOŠEVI agreed with this, and added that even the Western Balkans could be linked to climate issues.

Echoing Ms McGUINNESS, Mr KRICHBAUM stressed that the Conference on the Future of Europe should not be underestimated, and noted that it would probably also feature on the agenda of the meeting of the Chairpersons in Berlin.

Regarding the Hellenic proposal to put migration on the agenda,¹ Mr KRICHBAUM said this topic might also be on the German Presidency's agenda, but in that case it would go beyond the figures and look at the reasons why people were migrating. Mr KRICHBAUM said that this too was connected with climate change, as people moved to other regions following the desertification of certain areas.

¹ Cf. Letter from Mr KAKLAMANIS, Chairman of the Special Standing Committee on European Affairs, to the Presidential Troika, dated 13 November 2019.

Mr MILOŠEVI acknowledged the link between the movement of people and climate change and agreed that the topic should be addressed in the future.

Mr HAJDUKOVI proposed to include the Council of Europe in the Conference on the Future of Europe especially in regards to migration, as the Council of Europe's committee on migration, and their special representative, dealt with issues such as the dangerous crossings of the Mediterranean or combatting human trafficking.

Mr TAJANI stressed that the MFF was central to all these issues, because money was necessary to work on migration, climate change, and terrorism. The budget was the picture of the European strategy, and a debate on the subject would therefore be crucial for all parties, including national Parliaments.

Mr MILOŠEVI explained these issues would certainly be covered; he reminded colleagues that Commissioner Johannes HAHN (Budget and Administration) would be present at the meeting, and added that projections on the effect of cohesion funds on each Member State would be obtained through Commissioner Paolo GENTILONI (Economy).

Ms McGUINNESS noted that Brexit was also important, and perhaps could be linked to the Budget.

Mr KRICHBAUM agreed with Mr TAJANI and hoped to finalize the MFF negotiations within the Croatian Presidency.

The draft programme of the LXIII COSAC was then approved without amendment.

4. Approval of the outline of the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC

Mr MILOŠEVI outlined the structure of the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC noting that it would be divided in three chapters, with the first chapter focussing on the upcycling of the input provided by Parliaments/Chambers in their responses to the questionnaire for the previous report; the second chapter analysing and contextualising the ways in which national Parliaments set their priorities and cooperate with Union institutions, advisory bodies and agencies; and, finally, the third chapter would be dedicated to the role national Parliaments played when contributing actively to the good functioning of the Union.

The questionnaire would be circulated in the first half of February, with replies expected by March 9th.

The outline of the 33rd Bi-annual Report of COSAC was thus approved.

5. Letters received by the Presidency

Mr MILOŠEVI referred to the following letters received:

- Letters requesting invitation to attend the COSAC meetings were received from Ms Sigríður Ásthildur ANDERSEN, Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Icelandic *Althingi*; Mr Hans-Peter PORTMANN, President of the Swiss EFTA-EU delegation, Swiss *Assemblée fédérale*; Mr Tone Wilhelmsen TRØEN, President of the Norwegian *Stortinget*, and Mr David SONGULASHVILI, Chairman of the Committee on European Integration, Parliament of Georgia. Mr MILOŠEVI explained the invitations were sent to all four parliaments.

- Letter from Lord KINNOULL, UK *House of Lords*, requesting a timeslot during the meeting to briefly address colleagues on the occasion of the last time the UK delegation would be participating at a COSAC meeting as an EU Member State.
- Second letter from Lord KINNOULL announcing the commitment of the UK *House of Lords* to contribute to the co-financing mechanism up until the end of 2020, as well as its wish to attend future COSAC meetings.

6. Any other business

Mr MILOŠEVI proposed an exchange of views on two topics: possible change and updates of the COSAC meetings to, among other things, involve and engage with citizens, and the voting procedure used for the adoption of contributions and conclusions of COSAC.

He proposed the idea of having parallel meetings during the conference, and floated the idea of having town hall visits with citizen involvement, which would also provide better media coverage.

As to the voting procedures, Mr MILOŠEVI explained that the main issues to be resolved were the majority adoption of individual amendments, and identifying what exactly should be put to vote (i.e. amendments only or the compromise text).

Ms McGUINNESS, Ms HASSI and Mr KRICHBAUM agreed with the need to clarify the voting procedure, and underlined the importance of refreshing the format of the COSAC meetings and enlivening the debates.

Ms McGUINNESS explained that she would be mainly interested in just clarifying the current rules. Ms HASSI agreed, adding that it would be more practical to just have the compromise text voted on, but would be more logical to vote with a simple majority on each individual amendment and then vote with a qualified majority on the whole text.

Mr KRICHBAUM noted how COSAC could at times be perceived as being too institutional with discussions not always being fruitful, especially when delegations read out texts. Therefore, encouraging free speech and real discussion was important. Mr KRICHBAUM was open to the “town hall” idea, and extending the discussions beyond the plenary hall. He also called for shorter contributions and conclusions to ensure shorter but more fruitful discussion, while also reminding colleagues that a two-thirds majority was also an option when it came to voting. Mr TAJANI underlined that while it was important to involve citizens, it should not threaten Europe’s model of democracy, which was first and foremost that of a representative democracy.

Mr KRICHBAUM suggested adding the language of the Presidency to the three working languages of the European Union to side sessions of COSAC and anywhere outside the plenary where there was no complete translation regimen. He also suggested to look into alternative forms of discussions, such as, for instance, the fishbowl arrangement.

Before concluding the meeting, Mr MILOŠEVI announced the Croatian Presidency’s wish to finalise the migration of the COSAC web site to the IPEX platform, and added that an action plan would be circulated within the Troika.