



Mr. Dominic Hannigan TD
Chairman of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European
Union Affairs

Houses of the Oireachtas, Leinster House,
Dublin 2
IRELAND

Norwegian Parliament

Date: 14 January 2013

Our ref.:

Your ref.:

Dear Mr. Hannigan,

I am addressing you in your capacity as the Chair of the EU Conference of Community and European Affairs of the Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).

As you may be aware, the Chair of the European Consultative Committee of the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) has for a number of years, and at the discretion of the COSAC Chair, regularly been invited as a "special guest" to the meetings of COSAC. This practice was introduced during the Finnish EU Presidency in 1999 and has later been adopted by most COSAC Chairs. This has proven to be an arrangement of common value.

Though not a member of the European Union, Norway is closely associated with the EU through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. The agreement extends the Single Market of the EU to the three EEA EFTA Countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The EEA Agreement also ensures our participation in EU's programmes. Moreover, Norway is a fully-fledged member of the Schengen cooperation and is through bilateral agreements taking part in a wide range of other EU activities including on crime prevention, migration and asylum.

The Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the parliamentary dimension in the cooperation within the European Union, including the co-operation between the European Parliament and National Parliaments. This development adds to the importance of maintaining close contacts also with National Parliaments of countries closely associated with the EU. The possibility to be present in a meeting like COSAC would obviously facilitate this as well as contribute to the broader European agenda.

In this context, I would also refer to the agreement reached last year by the speakers of the European Union Parliaments on the format of the new Inter-Parliamentary conference on parliamentary control of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. As you know, European NATO members have been granted observer status at this conference.

The next meeting of COSAC is taking place in Dublin 23 – 25 June 2013. In my capacity as Chair of the European Consultative Committee of the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget), I would highly appreciate if you could consider inviting Norway as a special guest to this meeting.

Furthermore, I am aware that the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC is taking place in Dublin 27 – 28 January. Based on the experience from attending, as special guest, the meetings of the former Chairs of Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the European Union (COFACC), I believe that these Chairpersons' meetings, involving a smaller number of participants, allow for more focused deliberations. If at all possible, I would therefore highly appreciate if you could also consider inviting the Norwegian Parliament to this meeting.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success with the EU presidency of Ireland this spring.

Looking forward to hearing from you on this matter, I remain,

Yours sincerely



Ine M. Eriksen Søreide
Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
Chair of the European Consultative Committee