

Reply of the European Commission
to the Contribution of the XLVIII COSAC
Nicosia, 14-16 October 2012

1. From words to action: Making More Europe a reality

As the COSAC, the Commission believes that the reinforcement of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) through a fiscal, economic and banking union should be pursued in line with the principles of democratic legitimacy and accountability. The Commission therefore fully supports the cooperation fora and procedures to be set up to ensure democratic oversight of the new economic governance structures.

The Commission is fully aware of the complexity of the ongoing debate on the deepening of the EMU and supports the cooperation between the European Parliament and national Parliaments in this respect. Concrete proposals, in accordance with Protocol N° 1 of the EU Treaties and Article 13 of the TSCG, are thus very welcome, even though inter-parliamentary cooperation is not in itself sufficient to ensure the democratic legitimacy of decisions taken at EU level.

Such proposals should feed in to a pan-European political debate in the lead up to the 2014 European elections, as proposed by President Barroso in his State of the Union speech on 12 September 2012. In this context, the Commission believes that the presentation by all European political parties of their candidate for the post of President of the European Commission would make the choice clearer for the electors.

Regarding the steps required for the strengthening of the EMU, the Commission has recently set out its views in the form of a Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine EMU with the aim of launching a European debate on this important topic. The Commission will carefully analyse reactions from the European Parliament and national Parliaments to this Blueprint.

2. Single Market Governance

The Commission welcomes the support expressed by the COSAC for the Commission's Communication of 4 June 2012 on Better Governance for the Single Market, where it urges Member States to join forces to ensure the swift transposition and effective implementation of rules in those sectors with the greatest growth potential.

Close cooperation with both the European Parliament and national Parliaments is essential from the Commission's point of view. In particular, oversight by national Parliaments of the timely preparation of correct transposition measures would be very useful in order to avoid late and/or incorrect transposition of European directives.

The Commission is fully committed to monitoring implementation and enforcement of Single Market rules and is working to improve the existing records especially in the framework of the key sectors as identified in the Communication on Better Governance.

3. Europe 2020 Strategy – Recovery from the economic crisis

The Commission welcomes the COSAC's encouragement to national Parliaments to increase efforts to monitor progress in meeting the Europe 2020 strategy goals and in particular through the implementation and scrutiny of Country Specific Recommendations addressed to the individual Member States in the framework of the European Semester.

In this context, the Commission has repeatedly underlined its commitment, as part of the European semester, to engage in a constructive dialogue with national Parliaments, in particular following the adoption of the Annual Growth Survey and the Country Specific Recommendations.

This complements the stronger involvement of the European Parliament at different stages in the European Semester, starting with the "European week" at the beginning of the year, which the Commission of course welcomes and supports. As highlighted in the Commission's above-mentioned blueprint on EMU, while practical measures are needed under current Treaty framework to further foster parliamentary debate and oversight, more far reaching steps, including strengthened European Parliament's participation on integrated guidelines, would also need to be considered beyond that framework.

4. Political dialogue

The Commission notes that difficulties in respecting systematically the self-imposed 3-month deadline in replying to national Parliaments have occurred in the context of a rapid increase in the number of Opinions received. The Commission nonetheless reiterates its firm commitment to respecting the deadline and is taking steps to minimise delays in the future.

While fully understanding the expectation of national Parliaments to be informed about the concrete follow-up given to the Opinions received, the Commission would, however, like to note that it may not always be possible to give a definitive answer in the written response to the Opinion, either because the Commission has not yet taken a decision on the content of a proposal and/or because inter-institutional negotiations are still on-going. The Commission conducts its political dialogue with national Parliaments in full respect of the prerogatives of the EU institutions and when the Commission decides formally to modify its position, this is generally the result of a combination of factors. National Parliaments' opinions directly feed into this wider assessment but given the complexity of the process, it is often difficult to inform about the impact of a specific national Parliament's Opinion on the outcome of the overall legislative process.

On the proposal for a Regulation on the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services, the Commission withdrew the proposal after having thoroughly analysed the state of play of the discussions and among relevant stakeholders, including the reasoned (and other) opinions received from national Parliaments. In particular, having regard to the procedural requirements, the Commission concluded that while the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality had been respected, the proposal was unlikely to gather the necessary political support in the Council and the European Parliament. The European Commission outlined its reasoning for withdrawing the proposal in its 12 September 2012 letters to the EU legislator and national Parliaments. In response to the COSAC's request, the Commission will further provide individual responses to the reasoned opinions received from national Parliaments on this issue.

Concerning the COSAC's request for the Commission to further enhance the political dialogue by paying more visits to national Parliaments and taking a tailored approach to the needs of each Parliament or Chamber, the Commission confirms its full commitment to developing and intensifying its cooperation and its contacts with national Parliaments, taking into account the available human and financial resources.