



NEWSLETTER N° 1 2005

A greater voice to parliaments is a greater voice to Europe's citizens

- Margot Wallström, Vice President of the European Commission -



"Inspired by the strengthened role foreseen for national parliaments within the Constitution, this Commission has set itself the priority of reinforcing its relations with national parliaments... This objective is an integral part of a culture where European institutions at large work together, but also as a communication tool for increasing a shared ownership of the European project by connecting with people and their elected representatives."

These are the first lines of the information note I submitted to the College of Commissioners on 9 February. In that note I presented the ten short term goals we have for the Commission's relations with national parliaments during the coming year. These short term goals take their starting point in three key objectives that I see as the foundation for a new start for our co-operation:

1. **Mutual service - a continuous and open dialogue:** we are interested in and depending on each others views and possibilities in order to perform our respective tasks in an efficient, open and transparent manner;
2. **Concrete networking:** make full use of each others expertise at political as well as administrative level, always in line with current Treaties and constitutions;
3. **Connecting with people and their elected representatives:** a greater voice to parliaments is a greater voice to Europe's citizens.

This newsletter is one of the short term goals for this year, so you can see that we are eager to get started quickly! Among the other goals, I particularly want to mention our ambition to maintain close contacts and exchange information with the existing network of EU affairs liaison officers in the national parliaments and with the national parliaments' permanent representatives in Brussels. Furthermore, I want the already successful organisation by our administration of information meetings for national parliament civil servants on specific (technical) topics to be maintained and increased, if such requests are made.

In addition to that, I will try to visit all the national parliaments during this year. I hope we will have the opportunity to meet them. In the meantime, enjoy this newsletter, and please don't hesitate to give feedback to the editors.

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A propos

Cette première lettre d'information sur les Parlements nationaux ouvre un nouvel espace de communication et de dialogue.

D'abord à usage interne à la Commission et principalement destinée aux coordinateurs en charge des Parlements nationaux dans les Directions générales, cette lettre d'information est ouverte au Parlement européen et aux assemblées nationales.

Les deux premiers exemplaires ont l'ambition simple de faire la lumière sur les principaux acteurs des relations interparlementaires : Vice-présidents du Parlement européen en charge des relations avec les Parlements nationaux, commissions spécialisées dans les affaires européennes des Parlements nationaux, COSAC, représentants permanents des Parlements nationaux, services du Parlement européen, IPEX (interparliamentary EU information Exchange) etc.

Et pour ce faire, nous avons souhaité donner la parole à plusieurs d'entre eux pour leur permettre de présenter leurs projets et visions.

Après la présentation des acteurs viendra, je l'espère, le temps du dialogue sur les grands chantiers lancés par la Commission

Merci à tous ceux qui ont rendu possible cette première Newsletter.





Le 28 février 2005

Philippe GODTS

Coordonnateur

Secrétariat général de la Commission

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M. Pierre MOSCOVICI,

Vice-président du Parlement européen chargé des relations avec les Parlements Nationaux

1. Dans l'article "Les trois ressorts du succès du oui" publié par le Figaro le 24 janvier dernier, vous évoquez les motifs des uns et des autres de voter en faveur de la Constitution européenne. Vous ne dites mot de l'implication des Parlements Nationaux dans la construction européenne. Le rôle des Parlements Nationaux est-il renforcé par la Constitution européenne? Cette question viendra-t-elle alimenter le débat référendaire?

Force est de reconnaître que les Parlements Nationaux ont été des acteurs importants de la construction européenne et notamment de la naissance du Parlement européen puisque les premiers membres de celui-ci étaient des délégués des Parlements Nationaux qui conservaient leurs mandats nationaux tout en consacrant une partie de leurs activités au jeune Parlement européen. Aujourd'hui, le rôle des Parlements Nationaux est complémentaire de celui du Parlement européen et se trouve consacré dans les traités. Lors de la Convention européenne, les parlementaires nationaux ont pour la première fois été associés à la réflexion et à la rédaction du projet de Traité constitutionnel, ce qui a permis d'introduire les thèmes de la subsidiarité et du rôle des Parlements Nationaux au sein des débats.

Le rôle des Parlements Nationaux est ainsi au cœur du débat référendaire sur le Traité constitutionnel. Comme nous avons pu le voir lundi 28 février 2005 lors de l'adoption de la révision constitutionnelle préalable à la ratification du Traité constitutionnel par les députés et sénateurs français réunis en Congrès à Versailles, les Parlements Nationaux continuent de peser sur le processus de construction européenne. Le Traité constitutionnel renforcera d'ailleurs encore ce poids à travers le Protocole numéro 1 sur le rôle des Parlements Nationaux dans l'Union européenne et le Protocole numéro 2 sur l'application des principes de subsidiarité et de proportionnalité.

Le rôle des Parlements Nationaux est ainsi bien renforcé par la Constitution européenne puisqu'ils sont associés directement au contrôle et au respect du principe de subsidiarité: ils disposent de la possibilité de mettre en oeuvre un "mécanisme d'alerte précoce" accompagné d'un avis motivé chaque fois qu'ils estiment qu'une proposition de la Commission ne respecte pas ce principe. Par ailleurs, chaque Etat membre peut transmettre à la Cour de Justice un recours pour violation du principe de subsidiarité au nom du Parlement national. Ils exerceront donc un véritable contrôle politique a priori et dispose d'un mécanisme de saisine indirect, ce qui consacre leur rôle dans le fonctionnement des institutions européennes. Ces dispositions permettent d'associer et de sensibiliser très en amont les Parlements Nationaux à la législation européenne en préparation, ce qui devrait permettre de répondre fermement aux critiques du manque de contrôle démocratique de la construction européenne.

2. Quelles sont vos vues s'agissant de la coopération entre PE et PN?

La coopération entre Parlement Européen et Parlements Nationaux ne date pas d'hier.

Dès 1989 à Madrid, la Conférence des Présidents des Parlements des Pays membres de la CEE et du Parlement européen formalise la coopération entre Parlements Nationaux et Parlement européen, elle



garantit l'association des Parlements Nationaux aux travaux des commissions parlementaires compétentes et crée la COSAC (comité des organismes spécialisés dans les affaires communautaires). Depuis lors, la collaboration n'a cessé de s'intensifier, les Parlements Nationaux se sont dotés de commissions spécialisées en affaires européennes en coordination avec les commissions permanentes, les réunions entre Parlement européen et ces mêmes commissions spécialisées se sont multipliées au bénéfice de tous.

Comme je l'ai rappelé précédemment, la Constitution éclaire d'un nouveau jour les relations entre Parlement européen et Parlements Nationaux puisqu'elle reconnaît un rôle précis de ces derniers dans un protocole ad hoc et renforce le principe de subsidiarité sur lequel les PN sont appelés à veiller.

Par là même, la coopération entre les Parlements Nationaux et le Parlement européen à la lumière de la Constitution apporte une amélioration dans la transparence et la démocratisation du processus décisionnel qui permet à la société civile d'agir en interactivité avec ses propres représentants, tant au niveau parlementaire que gouvernemental. Certes, cette coopération ne va pas sans heurts ou frictions qui prennent bien souvent leur origine dans la différence du système institutionnel propre à chaque Etat-membre et à son degré d'intégration européenne.

Par ailleurs la coopération entre parlement européen et Parlements Nationaux a déjà eu l'occasion de se manifester dans le passé non seulement à l'intérieur de l'UE, mais encore à d'autres niveaux. Nous avons un exemple de cette coopération dans le cadre des différentes conférences parlementaires organisées parallèlement au sommet ministériel de l'OMC à l'initiative du PE et de l'UIP (Union interparlementaire) ; de même la création de l'APEM (assemblée parlementaire euro méditerranéenne) a vu le jour grâce à une coopération étroite entre les Parlements Nationaux et le PE.

Toutefois, dans le futur, tant la coopération interparlementaire que le rôle des Parlements Nationaux pourront être améliorés et renforcés par des idées plus adaptées à leurs tâches législatives ou de contrôle.

Pierre MOSCOVICI



M. Pierre LEQUILLER

Président de la Délégation de l'Assemblée nationale pour l'Union européenne

Pourquoi une révision de la Constitution française est-elle nécessaire préalablement à la ratification de la Constitution européenne en France ?

En application de l'article 54 de la Constitution française, le Président de la République a saisi le Conseil constitutionnel de la conformité à la Constitution du Traité établissant une Constitution pour l'Europe, signé à Rome le 29 octobre 2004. Dans sa décision rendue le 19 novembre 2004, le Conseil constitutionnel a estimé que certaines dispositions du Traité constitutionnel, notamment les nouveaux pouvoirs reconnus aux parlements nationaux concernant le contrôle du respect du principe de subsidiarité, nécessitaient une révision de la Constitution (voir sur ce point mon rapport adopté par la Délégation pour l'Union européenne « Le Parlement et l'Europe : un nouvel élan constitutionnel »

<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/europe/rap-info/i2024.asp#TopOfPage>)

La révision de la Constitution doit désormais faire l'objet d'un vote commun de l'Assemblée nationale et du Sénat réunis en Congrès à Versailles, vraisemblablement en mars prochain*.

Ce vote est indispensable pour autoriser la ratification du Traité constitutionnel qui aura lieu, avant l'été par la voie du référendum, conformément au souhait du Président de la République.

Suite à l'adoption de la Constitution européenne, le Parlement français sera-t-il renforcé dans ses missions de contrôle de l'exécutif? Cette question aura-t-elle un impact dans le débat référendaire ?

Le renforcement des droits des parlements nationaux représente un progrès majeur du Traité constitutionnel, vers une Europe plus proche des citoyens.



S'agissant plus précisément du contrôle exercé par le Parlement français sur l'exécutif, la Délégation pour l'Union européenne exerce quotidiennement l'instruction des textes européens soumis par le Gouvernement en application de la Constitution française. L'entrée en vigueur de la Constitution européenne conduira le Parlement français à se prononcer sur l'ensemble des projets d'actes législatifs européens visés dans les deux protocoles, ce qui n'est pas systématiquement le cas aujourd'hui. C'est donc un progrès supplémentaire rendu possible par le vote d'un amendement que j'ai présenté à l'Assemblée nationale lors du débat sur la révision préalable de notre Constitution.

Envisagez-vous une application anticipée des protocoles subsidiarité et parlements nationaux. En ira-t-il d'une application purement individuelle ou collective ?

Sans envisager une application anticipée systématique des protocoles, l'Assemblée nationale – et plus particulièrement la Délégation pour l'Union européenne – se prépare à leur entrée en vigueur. Nous avons examiné dès novembre 2004 un rapport de MM. Jérôme Lambert et Didier Quentin proposant différentes procédures de mise en œuvre du mécanisme de contrôle du respect du principe de subsidiarité.

<http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/europe/rap-info/i1919.asp#TopOfPage>

Pour être efficace, le contrôle du principe de subsidiarité implique le développement d'une mise en réseau des parlements nationaux.

Dans le cadre de la COSAC, la Délégation pour l'Union européenne participe au « test de subsidiarité » engagé par la présidence Luxembourgeoise sur le 3^e Paquet ferroviaire, entre le 1^{er} mars et le 12 avril 2005.

Les parlements nationaux vont-ils adopter une posture d'opposition aux institutions européennes ou de vigilance constructive ?

Le Traité constitutionnel renforce l'association des parlements nationaux à la construction européenne. L'esprit n'est donc pas de s'opposer à l'Europe mais de nouer entre chaque chambre parlementaire et les institutions de l'Union des relations de confiance qui permettront d'améliorer la qualité de la législation européenne dans le respect du principe de subsidiarité. Notre intervention devra se situer le plus en amont possible et c'est dans un esprit constructif que l'Assemblée nationale française envisage les nouvelles prérogatives qui seront les siennes ; elle s'appuiera à cet effet sur son Bureau de représentation à Bruxelles.

Comment vous positionnez-vous vis-à-vis de l'amendement Balladur et des propositions de M. Lamassoure visant à permettre à la représentation nationale de se prononcer chaque fois qu'une décision européenne a des conséquences budgétaires ?

Notre dispositif constitutionnel de contrôle parlementaire des Affaires européennes (article 88-4 de la Constitution) prévoit d'ores et déjà un contrôle très étendu qui permet, pour autant que nous en exprimions la volonté politique, d'exercer un contrôle approprié, sans bouleverser l'équilibre de nos institutions.

* Ce vote est intervenu le 28/02/2005

Pierre LEQUILLER

Do you know it?



Expérience pilote subsidiarité

La COSAC de Luxembourg (réunion des présidents des délégations) a fixé, le 9 février 2004, les modalités d'une expérience-pilote « subsidiarité » sur le troisième paquet ferroviaire. La Commission a transmis les textes de ses propositions au Secrétariat de la COSAC le 22 février 2005 pour envoi aux Parlements nationaux.



Ms. Inese KRISKANE

Permanent Representative of the *Saeima*

LATVIA

Could you tell us what are the main aspects of your job and mission as a permanent representative of the Saeima?

A key duty is to provide first hand information on all aspects of EU legislation, interparliamentary co-operation etc. to the European Affairs committee at the *Saeima* (the Parliament of Latvia). At the same time I also have to keep my colleagues here in Brussels informed and up-to-date on relevant topical issues in Latvia. In effect, I have to ensure the smooth flow of relevant information both ways. Or as we often say - "to be the eyes and ears" of my parliament at the EU institutions.

The main focus in my everyday work is given over to proceedings at the European Parliament - such as following the legislation process at the various committees and at the plenary. It also involves work with the Commission and the Council. In the case of the latter, I find contacts with my colleagues at the permanent representation of Latvia to the EU very helpful.

A difference from my colleagues at the line ministries is that the scope of the issues I have to deal with tends to be broader. I hardly have enough time to study in-depth every single subject, therefore I have to function more like a generalist and to be able to grasp quickly which issue(s) among all the slew of issues that crop up all the time could be of the utmost interest for my Parliament.

For instance, one of our current priorities is the new neighbourhood policy. The European Affairs committee recently initiated a co-operation and assistance project with Georgia.

Further plans are to start several more projects with Armenia and Ukraine, with the overall goal to share our relevant recent experience and emphasize democratic values.

We also closely follow all big "dossiers", e.g., EU financial perspective, Lisbon strategy, legislation in the services sector, the REACH package, and so forth.

As a part of the European Affairs committee secretariat it is essential that I keep in everyday contact with my



colleagues back in Riga. It is a precondition for being able to prioritise issues and to keep grounded.

Understandably, one cannot know everything, therefore a key skill is to know where and how to seek out and get information. It includes being able to search databases, to maintain a good network of contacts, etc.

In this regard I find very helpful my previous work experience at the *Saeima* EU information centre, which I ran for several years. And of course my prior 3 years' experience in this current position. When I arrived in Brussels to establish an office of the *Saeima* in late 2001 I was the very first representative of the candidate countries' parliaments.

In 2003 a decision was made to establish a second position in Brussels, and there are now two *Saeima* representatives. The European Affairs committee deems that the need for closer cooperation with the EP and the network of the national parliament representatives in Brussels will grow even further with the coming into force of the new Constitutional Treaty.

My colleagues from other national parliaments are extraordinarily helpful. Being all located within the same corridor at the European parliament, life is thus made much easier as we are able to drop in into colleagues' offices next door whenever any situation calls for it. At this time representatives from 15 parliaments are based in Brussels, which allows us to easily set up common meetings and exchange views and information. We regularly meet with officials from the European Commission, from the parliamentary committees of the EP etc.

How does the Latvian parliament monitor EU law? How does it work and which model is it based on? Does it involve any particular committee of your assembly?

The European Affairs Committee was originally set up in 1995 and has been assuming main responsibility for EU issues at the *Saeima* ever since. We've chosen to take an active stance, which stems originally from our Constitution, according to which Latvia is a parliamentary democracy with a strong parliamentary role. Therefore the so called Scandinavian model was chosen as a base for creating the scrutiny system in our parliament, as per Denmark, Finland and Sweden's experiences.

As early as February 2001, the role of the *Saeima* and particularly the role of its European Affairs Committee as regards EU affairs was formulated in the Rules of Procedure. Under these rules, all of the official positions adopted by the Government must first be approved by the European Affairs Committee before they are communicated to the EU institutions. This scrutiny process was first used when the Government's positions in the accession negotiations were examined, and continues to this day in all relevant matters. Recently, this scrutiny process resulted in a mandate being granted to the Government in advance of the meeting of the Council of Ministers. In practical terms this means that each position of the Government is first debated within the European Affairs Committee, after which the Committee grants its mandate.

What could be the impact of the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality on the inter-parliamentary co-operation after the entry into force of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe?

A new protocol on the "Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality" among other things sets out a so-called early warning mechanism enabling national Parliaments to be directly involved in monitoring EU legislation compliance with the subsidiarity principle.



At this time each parliament is working on establishing their own system to monitor compliance, and it is up to them to decide if and how far to hew to the principles laid down in this protocol. In any event, there still will be 25 national parliaments with different systems, mechanisms, traditions, and approaches.

At the same time I would think that inter-parliamentary co-operation will become much closer. We can already observe this process taking place. One of the reasons why is the necessity to exchange information among parliaments, who want to actively monitor the subsidiarity principle fast and comprehensively.

Do you think the role of Saeima in the European affairs will be strengthened as a result?

I would think so. First, we have to rethink our existing parliamentary scrutiny system, which ought to be improved after we became a full-fledged Member State.

As time constraints for monitoring the subsidiarity principle are tight, we must find the best and most efficient model for working within the Parliament. Although such a system is not yet in place, most likely the European Affairs Committee would be the responsible body or the umbrella for monitoring compliance with the subsidiarity principle.

One of our goals would be to try and involve the specialised committees of our parliament in this work. Second, we can achieve better results through close dialog with the relevant governmental institutions and through this process we can establish solid and constructive relationships with the government, which is easier said than effectively done.

In summary, good coordination between the government and the parliament as well as proper coordination of the legislative agenda within the *Saeima* are a crucial precondition so as to not jeopardise the quality of the legislation work, such as owing to stress and time constraints.

And, finally, when we succeed in establishing and putting into practice an efficient scrutiny mechanism, and make use of all the new rights given to the national parliaments at the EU level, then inevitably the role of the *Saeima* will become stronger.

Inese KRISKANE

Do you know it?



Réunions avec les représentants permanents des Parlements nationaux

La Commission a pris part à des réunions d'information avec les représentants permanents des Parlements nationaux :

<i>Date</i>	<i>Sujet</i>	<i>En présence notamment de :</i>
✓ le 10 juin 2004	REACH	M. WILLMOTT (DG ENV)
✓ le 9 juillet 2004	Directive services	M. BERGEVIN (DG MARKT) M. D'ACUNTO (DG MARKT)
✓ le 28 juillet 2004	Mécanismes de scrutiny	M. GODTS (SEC GEN)
✓ le 17 janvier 2005	Prise de contact à propos de la nouvelle Commission	M. GODTS (SEC GEN)
✓ le 31 janvier 2005	Programme stratégique et Programme de travail 2005 de la Commission	M. SLEATH (SEC GEN)
✓ le 14 février 2005	La Stratégie de Lisbonne	M. HERVAS SORIANO (SEC GEN)
✓ le 28 février 2005	Les perspectives financières	Mme MONTAGNON (DG BUDG)

NB : D'autres demandes d'information ont été formulées par les représentants permanents des Pn : sur le pacte de stabilité et de croissance, les propositions à venir en JLS suite au programme de La Haye, une actualisation des dossiers REACH et services etc



COSAC

Morten Knudsen : permanent official in the Secretariat of the COSAC

Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union

Could you, please, tell us briefly what COSAC is exactly? Where does it hold its meetings and who attends?

COSAC is a co-operation between committees of the national parliaments dealing with European affairs as well as representatives from the European Parliament. At the biannual meetings of COSAC, six members represent each parliament. In addition, the national parliaments from the Candidate Countries are invited to participate with three observers each.

COSAC meetings normally take place in the capital of the country holding the EU-presidency. The next meeting will be in Luxembourg on 17-18 May 2005. The presidency of COSAC rotates between the national parliaments and is held by the parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the Council of Ministers.

When was COSAC created?

COSAC was created in May 1989 at a meeting in Madrid, where the speakers of the parliaments of the EU member states agreed to strengthen the role of the national parliaments in relation to the community process by bringing together the European Affairs Committees. The first meeting of COSAC took place in Paris in November 1989 under joint chairmanship of the presidents of the delegations for European affairs in the French National Assembly and the Senate, Mr. Charles Josselin and Jacques Genton.

COSAC was formally recognised in a [protocol to the Amsterdam Treaty](#) in June 1997. The protocol came into force 1 May 1999.

According to this protocol COSAC is allowed to address to the EU institutions any "contributions" which it deems necessary."

What is the added value of COSAC in comparison with the meetings with national Parliaments organized by the European Parliament?

Both COSAC and the meetings organised by the European Parliament are very useful for national parliaments and the European Parliament. Such meetings have an important role in anchoring European decisions in the national parliaments, while

at the same time raising awareness in the European Parliament of particular national problems or issues.

Both types of inter-parliamentary meetings have distinct roles, but complementary functions, sharing as they do the common objective of enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the EU. While the meetings organised by the European Parliament's committees offer a good opportunity for members of national parliaments' sector committees to feed into the legislative process by presenting their views on EU proposals on an ad-hoc basis, COSAC provides a forum for a more regular exchange of information and best practises between national parliaments' European affairs committees. The principal business at every COSAC meeting is derived from COSAC's role as a body for exchanging information, in particular on the practical aspects involved in carrying out effective parliamentary scrutiny.



Can you give us an example?

A recent example includes the exchange of views that took place at the latest COSAC plenary in The Hague in November 2004, where national parliaments' delegations had the opportunity to present their preliminary thinking on how to establish their national "subsidiarity check". The subsidiarity check has been introduced by the Constitutional Treaty to empower national parliaments to monitor the EU-institutions' application of the subsidiarity principle. In The Hague it was also agreed to launch a pilot-project on the "third railway-package" to make a first

test of the early warning system to see how it might work in practice. The intention is then to have an exchange of views between delegations on experiences from the pilot project at the Luxembourg COSAC in May.

Why was the secretariat established in January 2004 and how is it organised?

The agreement to establish the COSAC secretariat was taken in October 2003 in Rome during Italian presidency. The secretariat consists of a maximum of five officials. Four are rotating officials seconded for a period of 18 months from the parliaments on the Troika, which includes three national parliaments and the European Parliament. The fifth, more permanent member of the secretariat was appointed for a period of two years by the chairpersons of the European affairs committees of national Parliaments at a meeting in Rome in November 2003.

The secretariat works under the responsibility of the Presidency and the Presidential Troika and acts in close and permanent liaison with the national parliaments' representatives in Brussels.

What are the functions of the secretariat?

The secretariat has five main tasks.

First and foremost it must assist the Presidency in the preparation, convocation and organisation of all COSAC meetings. It is responsible for drawing up reports of the meetings and ensures publicity of these.

In particular, the secretariat compiles a biannual report on EU-procedures and practises in order to provide the basis for debate in COSAC. These reports, which are an interesting innovation, cover developments in both procedures and practises in national parliaments on scrutiny and in the EU-institutions. The scrutiny systems of the 10 new Member States were for example described in the first biannual report of May last year. The third biannual report will be ready in May this year before the XXXIII COSAC in Luxembourg and will focus on developments in the scrutiny procedures of the national parliaments, including their plans for monitoring the subsidiarity principle.

The COSAC secretariat is also responsible for updating the COSAC website. This website, which was modernised 11 months ago, is updated on a daily basis and provides information relevant not only to the participants in COSAC, but also to the general public. For instance, you can find there up-to-date information on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in the 25 Member States and on the planned systems in the national parliaments for the “subsidiarity check”.

What impact could application of protocols on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union and on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality have on the functioning of COSAC?

The “Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union” annexed to the Constitutional Treaty extends the role and functions of COSAC into two new areas compared with the Amsterdam-protocol currently in force.

Firstly, it has been confirmed that COSAC shall play a role in *promoting the exchange of information and best practice between Member States' Parliaments and the European Parliament*, including their *special committees*. How this exactly is going to evolve still remains to be discussed.

Secondly, COSAC is encouraged to *organise inter-parliamentary conferences on specific topics*, in particular to debate matters of common foreign and security policy and of common security and defence policy.

The Constitutional Treaty’s protocol on the on the application of the principles of subsidiarity doesn’t provide any specific role for COSAC. Nonetheless, as the protocol is of concern for the Members of COSAC, the subject is discussed at COSAC meetings, with the purpose of exchanging best practise. The COSAC website contains a section where national parliaments can compare the mechanisms by which other national parliaments intend to implement the protocol. However, COSAC does not have a role in coordinating the actions of national parliaments.

If I want to know more about the work of COSAC, where do I go?

My reply to this question is always; first try the COSAC website: www.cosac.org. A great deal of information concerning COSAC and the activities of national parliaments in European affairs is available here. It gives access to all the basic documents on the role of national parliaments in the EU and much more.

If you can’t find the information you are looking fore here, you are welcome to contact the COSAC secretariat with any questions.

Morten KNUDSEN

Do you know it?

 ***Parlements nationaux : quelques dates clés au Parlement européen***

Date	Lieu	Organisme/ Organisateurs	Evènements
14/03/2005	Brussels		Hearing on immigration, asylum and development Organised jointly by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Development
16 & 17/03/2005	Bruxelles	Steering Group Stratégie de Lisbonne	REUNION PARLEMENTAIRE - Stratégie de Lisbonne
4 & 5/04/2005	Bruxelles	TEMP	Rencontre avec les Pn organisée par la « commission temporaire sur le défi et les moyens budgétaires de l’Union élargie 2007-2013 »
25/04/2005	Bruxelles	ECON	Rencontre avec les Pn organisée par la commission économique et monétaire sur les « les grandes orientations des politiques économiques et le pacte de stabilité »



FINLAND

Could you, please, tell us about the different aspects of your job and your mission as a permanent representative of Eduskunta (Finnish parliament) to the European Union?

The office of a Permanent Representative of the *Eduskunta* was opened in Brussels in 1996 and is at the service of the Parliament of Finland in matters concerning the European Union. *Eduskunta* was indeed the second National Parliament after the Danish *Folketinget* to set up an office in Brussels. I was actually already the third Representative of the *Eduskunta* when I started here in Brussels in June 2000.

My task is to represent the *Eduskunta* in the European Union institutions and supply the legislature with material and documents relating to the EU. In concrete terms this means drafting reports and reviews, which are available to all parliamentarians and officials, on themes of topical relevance. My weekly newsletters are also published on the website of the *Eduskunta*. The weekly EU newsletters are intended to provide basic abilities to deliberate and grasp Union affairs of current interest. The special reports clarify the backgrounds to and factors underlying individual issues.

Because the Council of State (Government) is required by the Constitution to submit for the deliberation of the *Eduskunta* all matters which would otherwise be included in the legislature's sphere of competence, I try to follow the Commission's legislative initiatives at as early a stage as possible, thereby facilitating work scheduling in the *Eduskunta*. A second area of emphasis is monitoring the work of the European Parliament.

Very important part of my work is also contacts with my colleagues, the other National Parliament representatives, here in Brussels. Recently more and more National Parliaments have decided to set up an office in Brussels. When I started here in June 2000, I had colleagues from Denmark, France, Italy and UK. Currently there are 15 National Parliaments represented in Brussels and three more National Parliament offices are due to be set up during this spring.

Ms. Sarita KAUKAOJA

Permanent representative in *Eduskunta*



Having colleagues from other National Parliaments on the same corridor here on the premises of the European parliament has indeed strengthened the co-operation and information exchange between the National Parliaments. We are organising weekly meetings with colleagues to discuss what is going on in our respective parliaments in order to find out about common interests and maybe also to learn from each others experiences. We are using these meetings also to invite civil servants from the Commission and the European parliament to give us more background information of decisions taken or upcoming legislation proposals.

I am also in close contact with the Finnish members of the European Parliament and I supply them with copies of the reviews and other material I produce. In addition, it has been the custom for the members of the Grand Committee (the EU-affairs Committee in *Eduskunta*) as well as the Foreign Affairs Committee to meet the Finnish MEPs at half-yearly seminars to discuss topical issues.

My duties also include assisting with official visits to Brussels by parliamentarians. This aspect of the work has assumed greater prominence in recent years, because contacts between national parliaments and relations with the European Parliament have become closer. Committees of the European Parliament often, almost every week in fact, invite members of National Parliaments to their meetings to discuss topical themes.

We would like to know more about debates on the subject of REACH and services directive which have been lately points of interests for your assembly?

Both files have been subject for extensive debates in the *Eduskunta*. We attach great importance to the Lisbon agenda, and these two proposals are an important and integral part of that strategy. REACH file also has a certain particular interest due to the fact that the Chemicals Agency will be established in Helsinki.

In our system the specialised committees have an important role to play in the substantive preparation of the position of *Eduskunta*. The REACH has been debated in four specialised committees (Economic, Environment, Social Affairs/Health and Labour Affairs). The Services Directive has been in thorough handling in no more than six specialised committees (Economic, Social Affairs/Health, Culture/Education, Transport/Telecommunications, Labour Affairs and Administration).

The Grand Committee has in both cases laid down the initial position of *Eduskunta*. On REACH the position was adopted in June 2004 and on Services in October 2004.

The initial position of Parliament gives mandate and guidelines for Government action in the Council. The Government has no power to make decisions, which would be binding on Finland before the Parliament is re-consulted in the light of the latest developments in the institutions.

As far as the contents of the positions are concerned, an enlightened reader would find no major surprises. The Finnish Parliament endorses both proposals, but has certain reservations, which are common for many national parliaments and the European Parliament.

In REACH the focus has been in finding the proper balance between environmental and public health aspects and economic considerations. The impact of the regulation on SMEs has been a concern. Already in June last year the *Eduskunta* gave its green light for OSOR-approach (one substance, on registration).

The Draft Services Directive is considered as necessary for the completion of internal market and Lisbon Strategy, but its acceptance is conditional upon some changes required in the field of social and health services. Also the familiar questions and problems relating to Country of Origin principle can be found in the position of the *Eduskunta*.

Could you tell us about the possible impact of protocols on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union and on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality attached to the Constitutional Treaty on the mechanisms of scrutiny applied currently in Eduskunta?

An ad hoc committee of senior MPs and civil servants was set up in November 2003 to look into the matter. Its conclusions will be published now in Mid-February. The intention is that the necessary adaptations of the *Eduskunta's* rules of procedure will be adopted at the same time as the Constitutional Treaty is approved.

The protocols will have little effect on the Finnish scrutiny system. Under the Finnish system, the *Eduskunta* controls the Finnish national position on the substance of EU proposals that are of interest to our parliament. Subsidiarity is only a small part of the substance of any legislative proposal. We have carried out a subsidiarity test since the Maastricht treaty introduced the subsidiarity principle. Our experience is that while subsidiarity is important in principle, cases of infringement of this principle are extremely rare. It is also noted that the wording of the protocols does not allow the early warning mechanism to be invoked when the issue is proportionality rather than subsidiarity.

The proposal is that our national scrutiny system will remain unchanged. The *Eduskunta* will continue to devote most of its efforts to formulate national positions to be represented in the Council and its working groups. From our point of view subsidiarity control contains little real influence for national parliaments, and is seen as only a supplementary task.

The early warning system introduced by the protocols will be added to existing Finnish procedures: Legislative and other documents received from the EU institutions will be forwarded for information to the members of the Grand Committee, the relevant sectoral committee and to the Åland regional parliament. These documents will not be formally tabled unless this is requested by one of the sectoral committees or the Åland assembly, or the Grand Committee decides (by a simple majority) to study the document. The Grand Committee will carry out the examination of subsidiarity. If the GC finds that a statement should be made on subsidiarity grounds, it will submit the issue to the plenary session, which makes the final decision. The general assessment is that the *Eduskunta* will rarely exercise the subsidiarity control foreseen in the protocols.

Sarita KAUKAOJA

Do you know it?



Vice-president WALLSTRÖM's visits

17/01/2005	Visit by Folketing's EU Affairs Committee (DK)
20/01/2005	Address at Riksdag seminar, Stockholm (SE)
24/01/2005	Visit by Riksdag's Speaker (SE)
09/02/2005	Address at COSAC Chairpersons meeting in Luxembourg
10/02/2005	Congress and Senate (ES)
02/03/2005	Visit by Hungarian Speaker (HU)

Already scheduled

	10/03/2005	Visit to the Irish Parliament (IE)
(to be confirmed)	21/04/2005	Visit to the Dutch Parliament (NL)
	06/05/2005	Address at EU Speakers Conference, Budapest (HU)



Commissioners' visits

<i>Who</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Where</i>
● Commissioner ALMUNIA	4/02/2005	Seimas (LT)
● Commissioner BARROT	3/02/2005	Sénat (FR)
● Commissioner FISCHER BOEL	20/01/2005	Bundestag - Agriculture and European Union joined committee (DE)
● Commissioner FRATTINI	4&15/02/2005	Bundestag – Représentants de la Commission des Affaires européennes, des représentants de la commission juridique et de la commission de l'intérieur (DE)
● Commissioner HÜBNER	25/11/2004	The Grand Committee of Eduskunta (FI)
	17-18/02/2005	Mr Arturas Paulauskas, Chairman of the Lithuanian Seimas (LT)
	04/03/2005	Presidium of the European Union Committee of the Polish Sejm (PL)
● Commissioner MANDELSON	7/02/2005	International Development Committee of House of Commons (UK)
● Commissioner MICHEL	7/12/2004	Senate (BE)
● Commissioner POTOCNIK	1&7/02/2005	National Assembly of Slovenia (SI)
● Commissioner REDING	10/03/2005	Planned visit to the Bundestag (DE)
● Commissioner REHN	04/02/2005	Grand Committee in Helsinki (FI)
● Commissioner VERHEUGEN	16/02/2005	Ausschussitzung des Europaausschusses des deutschen Bundestages in Berlin (DE)



Mr Bo Manderup JENSEN

Director in the EP responsible for relations
with national parliaments

Why do we need inter-parliamentary cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments?

Inter-parliamentary cooperation is essentially about extending democratic control and accountability over decisions at the EU level and ensuring more transparency and openness in the decision-making process.

In its resolution of 7 February 2002, the European Parliament expressed the view that it "does not see itself as the exclusive representative of the citizens and guarantor of democracy and that the role of the national parliaments is very important".

The European Parliament's role as a continental scale legislator for EU25 will increase with the extension of co-decision powers over EU legislation in the new Draft Constitutional Treaty. In addition, the EP's role as authorising environment for the Commission and as budgetary control authority has increased, in particular over the last 5 years.

The role of the national parliaments is set to increase as well with the new Draft Constitutional Treaty through the Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union and the Protocol on the application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality.

A number of policy areas will, however, remain "in between" EU and inter-governmental cooperation. In those areas in particular there is a need for a more structured and coherent cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

Based on the complementary nature of the responsibilities of the European Parliament and the national parliaments, the objective of the European Parliament is to develop overlapping networks in order to promote more parliamentary accountability and transparency and handle efficiently its links with national parliaments.

It is important to underline that the inter-parliamentary cooperation should not compromise the independence and integrity of each individual parliament.

EP should play a constructive role as innovator and "facilitator" in its relations with the national parliaments.

Does the new EP Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments (whose director you are) have a program for co-operation between the European Parliament and national parliaments?

Yes, the programme has five parts, which are carried out under the responsibility of the two EP Vice-Presidents, Mr. Edward McMillan-Scott and Pierre Moscovici.

1. Cooperation and Exchange Programme

We have developed a new programme called the Cooperation and Exchange Programme (the COX-Programme) which has been initiated as a tool for a better and more efficient, direct, contact between the EP and the national parliaments.

The Programme is conceived as a flexible tool with essentially four, sometimes overlapping, elements.

The first element is a seminar, primarily for parliamentary staff of the national parliaments, containing two parts: 1) What is the role of the EP in the decision making process in the EU and 2) how does the national parliament, hosting the seminar, organise its EU scrutiny process. Such seminars have proved to be a great success as we have visited all the national parliaments of the 10 new member states by the end of February 2005.

The second element is an opportunity to deal with particular subjects in more detail e.g. the organisation of the legislative process in co-decision in the EP and its relations to the EU scrutiny in the national parliaments. This may take the form of a visit by staff of the EP to the parliament in question or visit by them to the EP.



The third element is a possibility to organise, at the level of elected members, visits to the national parliaments. Such visits may cover a large number of subjects e.g. the rapporteurs from the EP on the Draft Constitutional Treaty visiting the national parliaments to engage in a dialogue with their national colleagues. It could also be meetings, suggested by individual, sectoral, committees in national parliaments with EP rapporteurs on a specific subject.

The fourth element is visits of the national parliaments to the EP. In fact, the national parliaments, on a regular basis, visits the EP e.g. the EU Affairs Committee and / or a small delegation of officials.

2. Joint Parliamentary Meetings

With the aim of facilitating an inter-parliamentary dialogue between the elected representatives of the EP and the national parliaments, the EP invites colleagues from national parliaments to meetings in the EP on a large number of different subjects.

The individual parliamentary committees may take an initiative to host a joint parliamentary meeting and consequently invites colleagues from their corresponding committees. It may also be a meeting at a broader level, e.g. on the Lisbon Strategy. Such joint parliamentary meetings may be co-chaired by the national parliament, representing the parliament of the EU Presidency.

Particular emphasis and priority is given to the policy issues where the EU at present does not legislate, but nevertheless takes important decisions. The common foreign, defence and security policy, the macro-economic and monetary policy coordination and areas of freedom, security and justice cover such issues.

The aim is not to arrive at common positions between the representatives of national parliaments and the EP but to establish better parliamentary oversight and control with intergovernmental and non-legislative decisions taken at the EU level.

Inter-parliamentary meetings, on particular subjects, are also organised by national parliaments.

3. Inter-parliamentary fora

The EP continues to be an active partner in the inter-parliamentary cooperation, at the multilateral level, in the Permanent Conference of EU Affairs Committees (COSAC) and the Speakers' Conference of presidents of national parliaments as well as in other inter-parliamentary assemblies, where the EP is a member.

In addition, the EP continues to work with inter-parliamentary delegations with third countries composed of members from the national parliament and the EP.

4. Relations with the candidate states and neighbouring countries

The directorate is also responsible for relations with the national parliaments in the candidate states and neighbouring countries.

This element of our programme covers the organisation of seminars and colloquia for members and officials from these countries.

5. Development of a unique internet portal

At present, a number of internet-based services, which all aim to support inter-parliamentary cooperation exist: the COSAC web-site, IPEX (*Inter-parliamentary EU Information Exchange*) and ECPRD (*European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation*). All national parliaments continue to develop their own

websites as do the Directorate.

I believe, that a single, easily accessible, internet-portal should be established based on the creation of a user-friendly navigation framework. A unique internet portal would not compromise the integrity of the individual web-sites and databases, but would make it much easier and more efficient to find your way around in the inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Has the phase of confrontation, visible during assizes in Rome in the beginning of the nineties, disappeared or is the climate of mistrust still there?

The inter-parliamentary meeting in Rome was, and is recognised, as such by all parties involved, not a success. I think that the understanding, and acceptance, of the complementary roles of the EP and the national parliaments has matured considerably since that meeting.

Only if we accept and respect the integrity and tasks of respectively the EP and the national parliaments are we able to improve the democratic legitimacy, quality and efficiency of the legislative process at the EU level.

The programme outlined above reflects an honest wish of engagement with our colleagues in the national parliaments.

Judging from the positive response we have received from the national parliaments, I think cooperation has replaced distrust.

What is the added value of your directorate in the European Parliament in comparison with COSAC?

COSAC continues to be an indispensable tool for inter-parliamentary cooperation. It is a treaty-based cooperation between the national parliaments of the EU25 and the EP.

COSAC, as mentioned earlier, is reserved for the inter-parliamentary cooperation of the EU Affairs Committee of the national parliaments and the EP. It now has a small secretariat, which is hosted in the EP.

However, it is clear from the developments, in particular in view of the provisions of an "Early Warning System" in the Draft Constitutional Treaty, that the EU scrutiny process in the national parliaments will be enlarged to include other parliamentary committees as well.

Consequently, the inter-parliamentary cooperation must respond to these new developments. In this respect it is also important that the Commission becomes a partner in order to ensure the efficient operation of this new system.

The presence of permanent representatives of the national parliaments within the EP, of which we today have 16 countries represented (some with two chambers and representatives) underlines the wish of the national parliaments to extend the inter-parliamentary cooperation and relations to cover those wider aspects.

Not only do these representatives constitute an asset to their national parliaments with regard to quick and timely information about the legislative agenda of the EP, but for the directorate the representatives, which are equally hosted by the EP, is a considerable improvement in the possibility for a much closer, day to day, contact with the national parliaments.

Bo Manderup JENSEN

Do you know it?



La Commission s'organise

Le Collège a demandé le 9 décembre 2004 aux Directions générales de désigner un fonctionnaire responsable des relations avec les Parlements nationaux.

Par ailleurs, il a également été suggéré que les visites des Commissaires dans les Parlements nationaux soient précédées d'une information interne.

Le 9 février, la Vice-présidente, Mme Wallström, a communiqué au Collège ses objectifs à court terme pour les Parlements nationaux. Elle a, notamment, demandé la pleine disponibilité de tous les Commissaires et services en vue de répondre aux demandes d'information des Parlements nationaux.

Calendar of EU Interparliamentary events 2005

COUNCIL PRESIDENCY IN 2005-03-02

January – June
July – December

Luxembourg
United Kingdom

INTERPARLIAMENTARY COORDINATION

July 2004 – May 2005-03-02
May 2005 – May 2006

Hungary
Denmark

I. POLITICAL LEVEL MEETINGS

Speakers

Conference of EU Speakers

6 & 7 May 2005

Budapest

COSAC

COSAC

17 & 18 May 2005

Luxembourg

COSAC Chairpersons' meeting

17 & 18 July 2005

London

COSAC

9 – 11 October 2005

London

Other Committees

Meeting of the Chairmen of the Foreign
Affairs Committees

14 & 15 March 2005

Luxembourg

Meeting of the Chairmen of the Foreign
Affairs Committees

30 October – 1
November 2005

London

Meeting of Defence Committees

7 & 8 November 2005

London

Meeting of Agriculture Committees

21 & 22 November 2005

London

Meeting of Home Affairs Committees

24 November 2005

London

Meeting of International Development
Committees

28 November 2005

London

Other EU related meetings

Joint meeting on the parliamentary dimension of
The Lisbon Strategy

16 & 17 March 2005

Brussels

Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
Plenary Session

12 & 15 March 2005

Cairo

Parliamentary meeting on Immigration

15 June 2005

Luxembourg

Conference : A Parliamentary review on the first year after
the EU Enlargement with Ten New Members*

First semester 2005

Bucharest

Some other non-EU interparliamentary meetings

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

25-29 April 2005
20-24 June 2005
3-7 October 2005

Strasbourg

WEU Parliamentary Assembly

13-15 June 2005
5-7 December 2005

Paris

NATO Parliamentary Assembly

27-31 May 2005
11-15 November 2005

Slovenia
Denmark

OSCE Parliament Assembly

1-5 July 2005

USA

7th Conference of the Association of European Senates

1-3 September 2005

Germany

SEECP (South East European Cooperation Process)

Early 2005-03-02

Bucharest

II. OFFICIALS' LEVEL MEETINGS

Secretaries general

Meeting of Secretaries General

10 & 11 February 2005

Budapest

Liaison officers

Liaison officers' meeting

April 2005

Brussels

ECPRD

ECPRD Correspondents' meeting

October 2005

Bucharest