



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 28 SEP. 2011
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Dear Ms Zissi,

The Commission would like to thank the Hellenic Parliament for its opinion on the "Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the procedures for the scrutiny of Europol's activities by the European Parliament, together with national Parliaments (COM/2010/ 776 final)".

The Commission issued this Communication, with a view, inter alia, to initiating a debate. In this context, the Commission very much welcomes written contributions from national Parliaments. This reflection process is also taking place in the context of an informal extended dialogue which also includes, alongside representatives of national Parliaments, representatives of the European Parliament, the Council, and Europol.

The Commission welcomes the support of the Hellenic Parliament for the initiative of setting up of an inter-parliamentary forum with the participation of members of national Parliaments and the European Parliament

With regard to the details of the functioning of such a forum, and the participation at the meetings of the interested parties and actors, the Commission considers that it would be premature for it to respond to specific comments, given that the reflection process is still under way and that opinions from other national Parliaments and stakeholders are expected.

Therefore, at this stage, and without prejudice to a further assessment in the light of the ongoing consultation procedures, the Commission would like to limit itself to some preliminary remarks.

The purpose of the permanent inter-parliamentary forum would be to allow an exchange of views with national Parliaments and the European Parliament on the overall scrutiny of the activities of Europol. It would be preferable - for the sake of efficiency - to concentrate the possible questions or clarifications on the activities of the Agency in the framework of the meetings of the forum. Any resulting mechanism should not, however, restrain Europol's ability to operate. In this context, the Commission would also draw a distinction between parliamentary accountability - which is the goal - and "supervision of operations".

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The Commission shares the opinion that the future inter-parliamentary body should not add to the administrative burden, or imply additional bureaucracy. With regard to the shape and content of the mechanism of scrutiny, the Commission is open to the proposals of the national Parliaments and of the European Parliament.

As regards the possibility for the forum to cover other functions as well, namely related to Eurojust, it should be noted that while the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union establishes the involvement of the European Parliament and of the national Parliaments with regard to the evaluation of Eurojust's activities (art. 85), the role of the Parliamentary Assemblies with regard to Europol refers to the scrutiny (art. 88) - and therefore is of a different nature. The Commission has launched a study on the strengthening of Eurojust, the outcomes of which are expected by the end of 2011. This study will also address possible options for the evaluation of Eurojust's activities, as well as the role of the European Parliament and national Parliaments therein.

I am looking forward to continuing our political dialogue in this field.

Yours sincerely,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration*