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Greater transparency in EU affairs will strengthen legitimacy

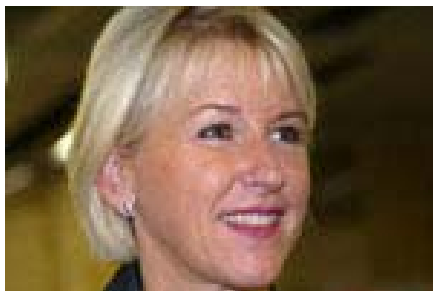
"The public has a right to know" – this is the key message of the Green Paper on a European Transparency Initiative adopted on 3 May 2006 by the European Commission

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Pour une Europe des résultats : la Commission préconise un projet citoyen

Ce 10 mai 2006, la Commission a adopté un ambitieux projet pour les citoyens européens. Cette contribution au Conseil européen, prend en compte les messages reçus dans le cadre du plan D.

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Rapport annuel 2005 sur les relations entre la Commission et les Parlements nationaux

Le 22 mars 2006 la Commission a adopté un premier rapport annuel sur ses relations avec les Parlements nationaux. Elle a fait le point sur la mise en œuvre des 10 objectifs cibles présentés par la Vice présidente, Mme WALLSTRÖM au Collège le 9 février 2005

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Le mot du coordinateur du Secrétariat Général




La relance par les Parlements...

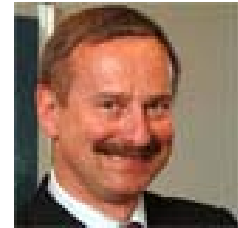
Après le temps de la réflexion vient celui de l'analyse, des propositions, de l'action... Une Europe de la transparence, une Europe des projets, M. BARROSO, Mme WALLSTRÖM et M. KALLAS l'on mis en exergue, doit redonner confiance et permettre de surmonter la crise institutionnelle. Mais cette Europe des projets, est-elle compatible avec celle du grand projet qu'est la Constitution? Préoccupation majeure de la commission des affaires constitutionnelles du PE. Dans la foulée du rapport DUFF/VOGGENHUBER, celle-ci a co-organisé les 8 et 9 mai 2006 avec la Présidence autrichienne un forum interparlementaire avec les PN sur le futur de l'Union. La tonalité positive des débats a rappelé au Président BORELL l'atmosphère de la Convention. L'Union a beaucoup à gagner d'une nouvelle dynamique interparlementaire. La Commission en est persuadée qui a l'intention de transmettre ses propositions directement aux PN et de solliciter leurs avis. Mais le débat sur le futur de l'Union doit encore être approfondi. En décembre 2006, sous Présidence finlandaise, une nouvelle conférence PE/PN en appellera sans doute, une fois encore, à plus d'Europe, à plus de leadership. Pas de relance institutionnelle sans coopération interparlementaire ? A voir ...

Le 29 mai 2006

Philippe GODTS
Secrétariat général de la Commission

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Greater transparency in EU affairs will strengthen legitimacy

"The public has a right to know" – this is the key message of the Green Paper on a European Transparency Initiative adopted on 3 May 2006 by the European Commission. The open public consultations which started this day launched a debate on lobbying, on the introduction of legal obligations for Member States to publish the information about the beneficiaries of funds under shared management, as well as on the Commission's consultation practices.

President Barroso said: "We'll discuss the future of Europe in June. But there is one conclusion we can already draw: we need greater transparency and stronger accountability towards the public if we are to maintain the legitimacy of European decision-making."

For Vice-President Kallas, "In spending EU funds on programs and projects throughout and outside the Union, the EU institutions are accountable to the taxpayer. With the co-operation of the Member states, we can do much better to show how EU funds are spent. Likewise, lobbying is perfectly legitimate. But as the phenomenon grows, we must ensure there is clarity about who the lobbyists represent, what their mission is and how they are funded. I hope all those who care about the EU will look at the questions asked in this Green Paper and share their views by the end of August."

How to better promote transparency in the relations between EU institutions and lobbyists

The Commission considers that lobbying is a legitimate part of the democratic system. At the same time, certain standards must apply when lobby groups seek to contribute to EU policy development. In particular, it must be clear to the general public which input they provide to the European institutions, who they represent, what their mission is and how they are funded. The Commission is therefore proposing a voluntary registration system, run by the Commission, with clear incentives for lobbyists to register. This system would consist of:

- a web-based voluntary registration system for all lobbyists who wish to be consulted on EU initiatives ;
- A common code of conduct for all lobbyists, or at least common minimum requirements, which should be developed by the lobbying profession itself ;
- A system of monitoring and sanctions in case of incorrect registration and/or breach of the code of conduct; It would be necessary to create a new, inclusive external watchdog to monitor compliance.

Offering better information on the benefits of EU funds to the general public

The Commission discloses the beneficiaries of funding that it manages directly. The question has been raised as to whether Member States should be legally obliged to disclose the beneficiaries of EU funds under programmes where the Commission and the Member States share management (75,7% of the EU Budget). This question is raised in the consultation.

Interested parties are invited to submit their comments during the public consultation which started on 3 May 2006 and ends on 31st of August 2006. Details about the consultation process, background information and documents are available on a dedicated website

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eti/index.htm>

Feedback on the Commission's minimum standards for consultation

The Commission's consultation standards and practices have now been applied for over three years. It is time to take stock and seek external feedback.

In accordance with the provisions of the Protocol on National Parliaments annexed to the Treaty, the EC has transmitted the Green Paper on a European Transparency Initiative to the National Parliaments.

Do you know it? 

Visits of the President & Commissioners February – May 2006

Who	When	Where
 Président BARROSO	14/02/2006	meeting with the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament (DK)
	01/03/2006	address to the Slovenian National Assembly ; visit to Slovenia (SI)
	10/04/2006	visite au Conseil national de Slovaquie (SK)
	11/05/2006	visit to the Austrian Bundesrat and Nationalrat (AT)
	19/05/2006	visite au Parlement danois (DK)
 Vice-présidente WALLSTRÖM	01/03/2006	visit to the Slovenian National Assembly (with President BARROSO and Commissioner POTOČNIK) (SI)
	23/03/2006	meeting with the Finnish Parliament's Grand Committee (FI)
	27/04/2006	meeting with the Cypriot NP Speaker (CY)
	19/05/2006	visite au Parlement danois (avec le Président BARROSO et la Commissaire FISCHER BOEL); réunion avec le Comité des affaires européennes et débat avec les membres du Parlement (DK)
	22/05/2006	visit to the Latvian Parliament (LV)
 Vice-président VERHEUGEN	30/03/2006	rencontre avec le Président de la Chambre de députés tchèque (CZ)
	31/03/2006	rencontre avec le Comité des Affaires européennes et avec le Président du Sénat tchèque (CZ)
	02/05/2006	discours devant le Comité d'avis fédéral chargé de Questions européennes (Chambre des Représentants et Sénat) (BE)



Vice-président **BARROT**

08/05/2006

rencontre avec les « coordinateurs Lisbonne » de la Chambre des députés espagnole **(ES)**

23/01/2006

réunion avec le Comité transport et le Comité des affaires européennes du Parlement slovène **(SI)**

09/02/2006

Commission transport et affaires européennes, Bundestag **(DE)**

09/02/2006

réunion avec le Président et les coordonnateurs du Comité pour les affaires européennes, Bundestag **(DE)**

17/02/2006

intervention devant le Parlement finlandais **(FI)**

17/03/2006

Commission transport et affaires européennes, Parlement danois **(DK)**



Vice-président **FRATTINI**

07/03/2006

Commission d'enquête sur l'immigration clandestine, Sénat français **(FR)**



Commissioner **REDING**

05/04/2006

meeting with Members of the Dutch Parliament **(NL)**

16/05/2006

meeting with Members of the Dutch Parliament **(NL)**



Commissioner **ALMUNIA**

03/03/2006

meeting with the parliamentary Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs of the Slovenian National Assembly **(SI)**



Commissioner **HÜBNER**

02/05/2006

réunion avec le Sénateur, Président de la délégation pour l'Union européenne M. HAENEL ;
meeting with the rapporteurs on the Structural Funds at the Delegation of the Senate for the European Union, Paris **(FR)**



Commissioner **BORG**

15/03/2006

meeting with the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the Maltese House of Representatives (**MT**)



Commissioner **GRYBAUSKAITE**

22/05/2006

visite en Lituanie, réunion avec le Président adjoint du Parlement (**LT**)



Commissioner **POTOČNIK**

01/03/2006

visit to the Slovenian National Assembly (with President BARROSO et Vice-President WALLSTRÖM) (**SI**)

07/04/2006

speech in front of the National Assembly's Committee on EU Affairs and the Economic Affairs Committee, Ljubljana (**SK**)



Commissioner **FIGEL'**

15/03/2006

visite au Bundestag – réunion avec la Commission de l'éducation (**DE**)

23/03/2006

visite au Sénat, France (**FR**)

10/04/2006

visite au Conseil National de Slovaquie (avec le Président BAROSSO) (**SK**)



Commissioner **REHN**

24/02/2006

meeting with the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Grand Committee of the Eduskunta (Finish parliament) (**FI**)



Commissioner **MICHEL**

21/03/2006

visite au Sénat belge sur le programme législatif et de travail de la Commission pour 2006 (**BE**)



Commissioner **FISCHER BOEL**

10/05/2006

intervention devant le Parlement irlandais (**IE**)

19/05/2006

visite au Parlement danois (avec le Président BARROSO et VP WALLSTRÖM) (**DK**)



Commissioner **ŠPIDLA**

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 04/02/2006 | Prague Summit of the Heads of Parliaments of the V4 Group in the Czech Senate (CZ) |
| 06/04/2006 | visite au Parlement néerlandais sur la libre circulation des travailleurs (NL) |
| 09/05/2006 | meeting with the EU Committee of the Czech Senate followed by a « Europe for People » conference in Senate within the Schumans' day celebration (CZ) |



Commissioner **PIEBALGS**

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 20/03/2006 | meeting with the House of Lords EU Committee (GB) |
| 21/03/2006 | meeting with the Upper and Lower house of the Irish Parliament (IE) |

Do you know it?



COSAC

A l'occasion de sa réunion des 22 et 23 mai 2006, la COSAC a chaleureusement accueilli l'annonce faite par la Commission de son intention de transmettre ses propositions aux PN tout en les invitant à réagir afin d'améliorer le processus d'élaboration des politiques. La COSAC demande à la Commission de tenir compte des commentaires des parlements nationaux – notamment en ce qui concerne les principes de subsidiarité et de proportionnalité – d'accuser réception et d'offrir une réaction motivée dans un délai raisonnable.

La COSAC se réjouit de l'inauguration officielle du site web IPEX par les Présidents des parlements nationaux et du PE à l'occasion de leur prochaine conférence à Copenhague, du 29 juin au 2 juillet 2006, qui devrait permettre aux parlements nationaux de mieux coordonner leurs activités et d'avoir un échange des meilleures pratiques dans le cadre de la COSAC.

La COSAC réclame au Conseil européen du 17 juin 2006 de présenter une feuille de route relative aux mesures à prendre, en particulier au sujet de l'avenir du processus de ratification en général, et de soumettre des propositions spécifiques susceptibles d'améliorer le fonctionnement de l'Union.



Ms. Miriam LEXMANN

**Permanent Representative of the
National Council of the Slovak Republic.**

You have been appointed as the Permanent Representative of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Why did your assembly take this decision? What are the principal aspects of your job and mission?

The National Council of the Slovak Republic has always followed the European agenda very closely. Before the accession it was the Committee on European Integration which followed the implementation of the "acquis communautaire" and monitored the accession process. Due to the entry of the Slovak Republic to the EU a new Committee on European Affairs was established on 29 April 2004 and the Committee on European Integration ceased its works. Since this new Committee became the central parliamentary body for EU legislative proposals scrutiny, it became vital to have a direct link to the EU institutions and a source of information there. As a result from 1 November 2005 the National Council has created an office in Brussels and nominated me as the first Permanent Representative.

My principal role as the National Council representative is to act as an observer of the EU institutions and provide relevant information to the National Council – primarily to the Committee on European Affairs and its secretariat, but also to my colleagues from other departments dealing with the European agenda and to other committees and their secretariats. I act as well as a contact and liaison person in Brussels for different EU institutions who are interested in receiving information about the

work of the National Council, or who have questions about scrutiny procedure on a particular EU legislative proposal. I also co-operate closely with the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU as well as with the Slovak Members of the European Parliament.

Another important dimension of my work is the daily co-operation and exchange of information among colleagues from other national parliaments. This co-operation covers the agenda of COSAC and the Conference of the Speakers of the European Union Parliaments, where the National Council will take over the presidency in July this year. This will result in presidency agenda issues coming to me. One of my duties will be to inform other national parliaments representatives on the different issues related to the Conference of the Speakers, and to assist in the coordination of exchange of information.

I also co-operate closely with the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU as well as with the Slovak Members of the European Parliament.

How does the Slovak Parliament currently monitor the EU law? Does it involve any particular committee(s) of the assembly?

The Slovak Constitutional Law grants the National Council the power of parliamentary control of the Government. The Slovak Parliament holds the strong position through its authority to approve binding positions of the Slovak Republic in respect of different EU legislative and non-legislative proposals. Ministers have to follow and adhere to these positions in their work in the Council of Ministers. The National Council authorized by law the Committee on European Affairs to exercise this power.

The Government provides the Committee with a preliminary assessment of each draft of European legislation, from the point of view of their anticipated effects for the Slovak Republic within three weeks of receipt. The Government is furthermore obliged to inform the Committee regularly about the issues discussed and debated in

the bodies of the European Union. The Committee is also given the power to request from other parliamentary committees, depending on concrete issues in question, their own assessment of the draft before it is debated by the Committee itself.

As it is almost impossible for Parliament to participate effectively in all EU decision-making processes, ministries have to define priority issues from the Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission (based on the assessment of their effects for Slovakia), which are then subject to close scrutiny and debate in the Committee.

Members of the European Parliament elected in the Slovak Republic have the right to actively participate in Committee sessions without the right to vote.

Due to the complex nature of its agenda and legal implications of its decisions for the work of ministers, the Committee on European Affairs meets in general more frequently in comparison with other Committees and its sessions takes greater amount of time.

The Committee is staffed by 8 members from the Department of European Affairs. The Department

How is the Slovak Parliament involved in the debate in the framework of the period of reflection initiated by Heads of State and Government at the EU summit in last June?

The Slovak Parliament welcomed the period of reflection which provided Europe with time to strengthen ties with its people.

The main contribution of the National Council to the Future of Europe debate is a Parliamentary forum project providing an internet forum, where well known experts in various fields (political, cultural, journalists, and NGOs) and the public participate in different discussions on relevant EU topics. These include: the main aim of the EU; the role of Europe in the world; the future of European social and economic model in the context of globalisation; the definition of EU borders; and the perspectives of the areas of freedom, security and justice. The site contains also general information on the EU. We are happy to see that members of Parliament used the offered opportunity to communicate their expert and political position on current EU related issues. The Government has also indicated an interest to deliver different ministers' opinions to the public.

<http://www.euroforum.nrsr.sk>

Currently we are encouraging various universities to get involved in the project. Since universities form future thinkers as well as politicians, civil

servants and civil society representatives, it is important for the Slovak Parliament to hear their opinion. There are plans to publish results of the parliamentary web forum, after the web site has been in use for several months.

This website also promotes the idea of the National Convention on Europe, which gives professionals, journalists, civil society representatives and academics possibility to debate current European issues in person.



Does your assembly intend to take part in the subsidiarity check to be conducted under the auspices of the COSAC?

The National Council considers the initiatives of COSAC concerning subsidiarity check to be very important. The Committee on European Affairs took part in the previous subsidiarity check exercise on the third railway package. In January 2006 the Committee on European Affairs discussed the Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission and came up with three proposals for subsidiarity and proportionality checks. These proposals have been handed to the COSAC secretariat. The Committee is ready to discuss proposals chosen by the COSAC for this round as regards their conformity with subsidiarity and proportionality principles.

Miriam LEXMANN

Do you know it?

After the French National Assembly (see « Newsletter n 4 »), the House of Lords European Union Committee has launched a monthly e-newsletter.

The pilot edition is available on the Committee's homepage:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/lords_eu_select_committee.cfm

If you would like to receive automatic notice of work of the Committee, please subscribe to email alerts on the homepage.

The Committee would welcome any feedback you have on the newsletter.



Photo Parlement européen

Forum interparlementaire sur le futur de l'Union européenne Bruxelles, les 8 et 9 mai 2006

Plus de 200 parlementaires (+/-70 membres du PE et +/-130 des PN) se sont réunis ces 8 et 9 mai à Bruxelles pour débattre du futur de l'Union européenne.

Après les discours d'introduction des co-présidents : M. BORELL (PE), Mme ROTH-HALVAX, Présidente du Bundesrat (AT) et M. KHOL, Président du Nationalrat (AT), les députés se sont réunis, le lundi 8 mai en quatre groupes de travail concernant respectivement l'UE dans le monde et les frontières de l'Union, la globalisation et le modèle économique et social européen, les perspectives dans le domaine justice, liberté, sécurité et les ressources financières de l'Union.

Le mardi 9 mai a été consacré à un débat général en plénière, en présence de tous les chefs de groupe du PE, débat introduit par les rapporteurs des 4 groupes de travail, puis à un jeu de questions réponses à l'attention du Chancelier SCHÜSSEL et du Président de la Commission, M. BARROSO.

De manière générale, les intervenants qu'ils soient membres du PE ou d'un PN, en ont appelé à plus d'Europe, plus d'audace et de leadership à l'occasion de débats qui ont fait dire au Président BORELL qu'il s'agissait d'un remake de la Convention.

Le Président d'EDUSKUNTA (Parlement Finlandais), M. LIPPONEN a annoncé son intention de présider une conférence d'un format similaire, en décembre 2006.

MM. SCHÜSSEL et BARROSO ont insisté sur la nécessité de redonner confiance dans l'Union par le développement d'une Europe des projets, et ce, afin de créer un climat de nature à résoudre la question institutionnelle. M. BARROSO a annoncé l'intention de la Commission de transmettre directement aux PN les propositions de la Commission, les invitant à réagir afin d'en améliorer la formulation.





Rapport annuel 2005

sur les relations entre la Commission et les Parlements nationaux

MARGOT WALLSTRÖM
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

B-1049 BRUSSELS

26 AVR. 2006
Brussels,
SR/is D(2006)940

Dear

Little over a year ago I presented to the College of Commissioners a set of concrete targets for the Commission's relations with the national parliaments. One of the reasons for this was the clearly set objective of this Commission to connect with people and their elected representatives – a greater voice to parliaments is a greater voice to Europe's citizens.

I and my colleagues are very grateful for the positive reactions and comments we have received from many of the national parliaments, as well as for all the productive and pleasant contacts we have had during the year.


One of the targets I presented last year was an undertaking to issue an annual information report, with an account of what had been achieved during the year, as well as perspectives and planning for the year ahead. This report was adopted by the College of Commissioners on 22nd March 2006.

As you can see from the report – which it is my pleasure to hereby transmit to you – 2005 was a very active and dynamic year. For example, I and my colleagues had the pleasure of meeting with Members of the national parliaments no less than around 100 times.

Even with this good result, we will not rest on our laurels during 2006; rather the contrary. The period of reflection and the implementation of Plan D make our joint efforts even more important, and there are still many areas where the Commission would benefit from an enhanced co-operation with the national parliaments, just as I hope the Commission will be able to contribute to the national parliaments' work.

In that spirit I am very much looking forward to the contacts we will have also during 2006.

Yours sincerely,



Margot Wallström

Le 22 mars 2006 la Commission a adopté un premier rapport annuel sur ses relations avec les Parlements nationaux (SEC(2006)350). Elle a fait le point sur la mise en œuvre des 10 objectifs cibles présentés par la Vice présidente, Mme WALLSTRÖM au Collège le 9 février 2005 en insistant sur deux éléments cardinaux de son approche à l'égard des Pn :

- respect de l'équilibre institutionnel européen et
- des diversités constitutionnelles dans les Pn.

Pour 2006, les objectifs cibles et globaux seront maintenus ainsi notamment des visites dans les Pn.

A noter qu'en 2005 les Commissaires ont rendu visites aux assemblées nationales à plus de 100 reprises.

Pour une Europe des résultats : la Commission préconise un projet citoyen

Ce 10 mai 2006, la Commission a adopté un ambitieux projet pour les citoyens européens. Cette contribution au Conseil européen, prend en compte les messages reçus dans le cadre du plan D. Il est temps que le dialogue débouche sur des résultats.

"Il faut renouveler notre engagement en faveur de l'Europe. Pour renforcer la confiance du citoyen en l'Europe, nous devons produire des résultats. C'est ainsi que nous pourrions créer les conditions propices à l'adoption d'un règlement institutionnel" a déclaré le Président Barroso. "Même si leurs sentiments sont partagés quant à l'appartenance à l'UE ou à la manière dont elle fonctionne, les citoyens souhaitent que l'Union ait un rôle moteur" a précisé la Vice présidente Mme Wallström.

La Commission retient 12 propositions d'action parmi lesquelles : un réexamen du marché unique, un projet sur la solidarité, la création d'une carte de droits pour tous les citoyens, une amélioration des procédures décisionnelles notamment dans le domaine de la justice, de la liberté et de la sécurité.

La Commission annonce également de nouvelles propositions afin d'alléger les formalités

administratives, d'améliorer la transparence mais aussi de renforcer ses relations avec les Parlements nationaux en leur envoyant directement toutes ses propositions. Ce message a été fermement communiqué par le président Barroso lors du forum interparlementaire sur le futur de l'Union coorganisé par le PE et la présidence autrichienne ce 9 mai au PE mais aussi lors des visites du Président au Parlements autrichien (11.05.06) et danois (19.05.06).



Photo Parlement européen

Débat sur le projet citoyen et la période de réflexion au PE le 16 mai 2006, à Strasbourg

Même si la plupart des intervenants ont soutenu la Commission notamment pour la réalisation de projets concrets, des voix se sont élevées, pour critiquer le manque d'ambition du Collège s'agissant de la défense de la Constitution. Ainsi en a-t-il été des interventions de MM.SWOBODA, CARNERO GONZALES et LAMBRINIDIS pour le groupe socialiste. M. VOGGENHUBER a considéré pour les Verts l'attitude de la Commission comme en faveur de l'approche intergouvernementale. M. MENDEZ DE VIGO a suggéré au nom du groupe PPE le lancement d'une étude sur le coût de la non Constitution.

Internet Discussion Forum on the Future of Europe

The European Commission has launched the Internet Discussion Forum on the Future of Europe in all 20 official languages. All EU citizens are invited to take part in it. This initiative is part of the Commission's "Plan D" for Dialogue, Debate and Democracy. There are three subjects of the discussion: Europe's economic and social development; Feeling towards Europe and the Union's tasks; Europe's borders and its role in the world. The feedback will be taken into consideration in the Commission's report from the period of reflection, which will be submitted to the European Council meeting in June. The address of the Discussion Forum is: <http://europa.eu.int/debateurope/>



FLASH NOTES



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>
✓ 06/03/2006	Etat des relations entre la CE et PN	M. GODTS (SG)
✓ 20/03/2006	EU and the Western Balkans	Mr. WALLDEN (DG ELARG)
✓ 24/04/2006	Common Corporate Consolidated Tax Base	Mr. Mr. AUJEAN, NEALE (DG TAXUD)