

Inledningsanförande ”Role of the parliaments in the monitoring of Europol”

Mr. Westerberg, Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag.

Dear Colleagues,

Dear friends,

I would like to begin with a thank you to our Belgian hosts for this well-organized conference and for this opportunity to introduce the debate on the Role of Parliaments in the Monitoring of Europol.

Evaluation and monitoring in the area of freedom, security and justice were on the agenda of our meeting in Stockholm last year. In the conclusions from the Speakers' Conference in Stockholm, a request was made for dialogue between national parliaments and EU institutions when drafting and negotiating regulations dealing with parliamentary supervision of Eurojust and Europol.

Since then the matter concerning scrutiny of Europol by national parliaments has also been discussed by COSAC, at an interparliamentary meeting organised by the European Parliament and at an informal meeting organised by the European Commission.

In addition, the Commission has responded to requests for dialogue and presented a communication on the procedures for the scrutiny of Europol activities.

I am glad that, here today, we have an opportunity to further debate this issue.

Monitoring of this kind is particularly important because this type of activity often impinges on the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, for example the protection of personal privacy.

Hence the importance of ensuring that a balance between measures intended to protect citizens and measures intended to protect the privacy of the individual is maintained.

When we met in Stockholm last year we talked about how national parliaments should actively contribute to the smooth functioning of the Union in ways that

included keeping themselves informed on developments and participating in the political monitoring of Europol and the evaluation of Eurojust's activities in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty.

There are four main issues I would like to emphasise:

1. The issue of parliamentary scrutiny is important because we need to ensure that a balance is maintained between measures intended to protect citizens and measures intended to protect the privacy of the individual.
2. There is also the importance of political legitimacy. The Commission writes that parliamentary monitoring of activities directed towards combating crime is essential.
3. National parliaments should be involved at an early stage. Both in the process of discussing different forms of cooperation for parliamentary control (for which there is already a legal basis) and by becoming involved in the process of drafting new legal regulations.
4. The scrutiny should primarily focus on following up results and strategies, rather than on monitoring individual decisions. Consequently it is necessary that representatives of all the national parliamentary committees in the European Parliament participate in parliamentary scrutiny on the same terms.

Dear colleagues,

In accordance with the conclusions from the conference in Stockholm last year we also believe that parliamentary control should be simple, rapid and concrete and that no new authorities need be established for this purpose.

Control should primarily focus on following up results and strategies, rather than monitoring individual decisions.

Consequently it is necessary that representatives from all the national parliamentary committees that are responsible for monitoring issues, as well as representatives from the corresponding committees in the European Parliament and representatives from the corresponding committees in the European Parliament, are included.

The Swedish Parliament does not object the Commission's proposal to establish an interparliamentary forum. However, it is important that the national parliaments and the European Parliament participate on the same terms and that

the forum can be used jointly by all parliaments. Establishing a new forum does not necessarily mean creating a new institution. For example, we know that members from committees dealing with home affairs already meet twice a year.

A forum of this kind would, in our opinion, also be an excellent arena for the discussions proposed by the Commission on Europol's multi-year strategy and its activity plan. According to the Lisbon Treaty, such a forum may be established today with the support of the EU's institutional framework.

I hope that we can share our views on these issues, but also exchange expectations for future cooperation and address the challenges found in that context.