



25 October 2005

Dear Colleague,

At the meeting of the Conference of Speakers in Budapest it was decided to welcome the “declaration on the role of National Parliaments in the European debate: Raise national European awareness” adopted by the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).

According to the COSAC declaration (ANNEX 1) a coinciding debate should take place in all the national parliaments on the Annual Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission (LWP). The objective of such a debate is to encourage parliaments to place European issues on their agenda and thus bring citizens and civil society closer to Europe.

With regards to the implementation of the declaration, the conclusions of our meeting in Budapest (ANNEX 2) called upon the Folketing to implement the initiative and to subsequently prepare a report on the declarations implementation to the Conference in Copenhagen.

At a meeting in Copenhagen on October 12 2005, the Danish, Hungarian and Slovakian Parliaments – which make up the troika of the Conference of EU Speakers - discussed the implementation of the initiative “Raising European Awareness”<sup>1</sup>. In order to ensure a timely and relevant debate, we decided to recommend the commencement of the project this year.

Due to time constraints and possible scheduling problems in the plenary and with respect for the different legal frameworks and traditions in the national parliaments, it may not be possible for all parliaments to prioritize this event during the current year. I would therefore suggest that this first exercise be considered a

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<sup>1</sup> The Danish Parliament has also conducted consultations with all national parliaments through a questionnaire sent out during third quarter of 2005. The findings of the questionnaire highlighted the difficulties in planning a simultaneous debate in the national parliaments. In particular, it was determined that it would not be possible to plan a debate in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2006 in the national parliaments before mid March – at which time the LWP will have been in affect for almost three months. Furthermore the questionnaire demonstrated that the national parliaments have diverging opinions concerning the duration of the “event”. Although a small majority of Parliaments favour the exercise to be held during the same week, most Parliaments recognised the fact that organising such an event will be very difficult, and therefore reported that a “flexible approach” ought be considered.

“pilot project”, with the results of the exercise forming the basis of a report that will include a proposal on how to make the initiative a permanent fixture in EU parliaments.

### **Recommendation from the Danish Parliament**

- EU parliaments are encouraged to debate the LWP during the fourth quarter 2005. The European Parliament has scheduled its debate on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2005<sup>2</sup>, and therefore, in keeping with the original proposal “Raising European Awareness”, the national parliaments should strive to commence their debates following the debate of the European Parliament, preferably finalizing the exercise by 16 December 2005.
- Following the debate, all EU parliaments are encouraged to send a brief summary of the debate (along with any formal resolutions etc.) to the Danish Parliament which will publish the results of the exercise on the Conferences website – [www.eu-speakers.org](http://www.eu-speakers.org). A formal report on the results of the pilot project will be prepared by the Danish Parliament and will be put on the agenda of the Conference of Speakers 29 June - 2 July 2006<sup>3</sup>.
- As stated in the conclusions of the XXXIV COSAC, national parliaments are encouraged to inform the COSAC Presidency of the proposals they wish to be subject to the subsidiarity and proportionality check within two weeks following the initiative “Raising European Awareness” (See ANNEX 3).

Some parliaments might not be able to conduct plenary debates. However it should be noted that our conclusions from Budapest state that “...National Parliaments (are called upon) to hold a debate *preferably* in plenary session each year on the LWP...” It is therefore inferred that alternative “forms” of debate in the national parliaments are possible. I would also like to encourage those Parliaments that are unable to conduct a debate during the fourth quarter 2005 to send the results of their debate to the Danish Parliament.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting in Copenhagen on 29 June – 2 July 2006 and in the meantime, should you have any queries about this recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Christian Mejdahl

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<sup>2</sup> The European Commission has announced that the LWP will be published on the 25 October 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Representatives from the Danish, Hungarian and Slovakian Parliaments will produce a joint summary of the debate in the European Parliament, which will be published on [www.eu-speakers.org](http://www.eu-speakers.org) within a few days of the debate.

## ANNEX 1

### **Draft letter addressed to the Presidents of the national parliaments, concerning the "declaration on national awareness: Presented at The Hague, November 23, 2004**

#### CONCEPT

Dear President, Speaker of Parliament,

Only very recently our leaders of government have signed the new constitutional treaty for the European Union. A quantum leap that will hopefully strengthen the European Union and the integration process. As national parliaments of the European Union, we also need to implement the treaty within our parliamentary procedures.

The treaty offers an excellent opportunity for a strengthened role, a stronger democratic process and involvement of the national parliaments in the European integration process. The parliaments should use this reinforced role also as an instrument to raise the national European awareness.

In order to realise this objective, the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) has adopted the "declaration on the role of national parliaments in the European debate: Raise national European awareness". The declaration commissions a coinciding debate in all the national parliaments on the Annual Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission in the same week as this debate will be scheduled in the European Parliament.

By putting this initiative in practice we will bring our citizens and civil society closer to Europe which will hopefully result in more direct involvement. It will encourage our parliaments to place European issues more prominent on the agenda and moreover will help us to preliminary check the compliance with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality.

With this writing the COSAC calls for your support to not only proclaim this declaration in your parliament, but to promote to have the debate on the Annual Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission in the national parliaments in the same week as the European Parliament. In order to realise this effectively, we would like to ask the Conference of Speakers to put forward a proposal, in consultation with the European Parliament, on this specific week during the first Conference of Speakers every year.

On behalf of COSAC,

René van der Linden

Sharon Dijksma

Chairman

*[A link to the document to the European Convention received from Mr René van der Linden and Mr Frans Timmermans, members of the Convention - "Declaration on the role of national parliaments to raise national European awareness" – can be found at the following address:*  
<http://www.cosac.org/en/meetings/previous/Haag2004/ordinary/europeanawareness/>

## ANNEX 2

### **Excerpt from the Presidency Conclusions, Budapest 6 -7 May 2005 concerning “Raising European Awareness”.**

*4. The Conference welcomes the “declaration on the role of National Parliaments in the European debate: Raise national European awareness” adopted by the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC). The Conference calls upon the National Parliaments to hold a debate preferably in plenary session each year on the annual legislative and work programme of the European Commission with due respect for their internal work programme, legal framework and traditions. The Conference requests the incoming Presidency of the Conference to make the necessary consultations to find an appropriate timeframe for the implementation of the declaration, and report back to the Conference on the experience with the implementation of the declaration.*

Source: [http://www.eu-speakers.org/en/conferences/budapest/con\\_budapest/](http://www.eu-speakers.org/en/conferences/budapest/con_budapest/)

## ANNEX 3

### **Excerpt from the Conclusions of the XXXIV COSAC concerning subsidiarity and proportionality**

2. The XXXIV COSAC, recalling the existing scrutiny role of national parliaments, the provisions on subsidiarity in the Amsterdam Treaty and the fact that the Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments gives COSAC a role specifically in relation to subsidiarity, decided to encourage national parliaments to conduct a subsidiarity and proportionality check on a forthcoming EU legislative proposal or proposals. The check should be carried out with due respect for national parliaments' internal work programmes, legal frameworks and traditions. COSAC agreed that, for those national parliaments which wish to participate, the check should operate as follows:

- i. Within two weeks after the examination by national parliaments of the European Commission's annual work programme, as envisaged in the initiative "Raising European Awareness", participating national parliaments should inform the COSAC Presidency of the proposals they wish to be subject to the subsidiarity and proportionality check; they may also make additional proposals at any time; the Presidential Troika should designate the most frequently mentioned proposals to be subject to the check; the list will be distributed to the national parliaments and the European Parliament;
- ii. the IPEX database should, if possible, be used in connection with the subsidiarity and proportionality check;
- iii. participating national parliaments should seek to complete their scrutiny within a six-week period;
- iv. the six-week period should begin when the proposal has been published in all languages;
- v. participating national parliaments or chambers should send any comments on subsidiarity or proportionality directly to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council within the six-week period, copying those comments to the COSAC Presidency; and
- vi. it would be helpful if national parliaments could indicate clearly whether their comments relate to subsidiarity or proportionality.