



HUNGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF EU PARLIAMENTS

Budapest, 6-7 May 2005

Interparliamentary coordination

Summary report of Mrs Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly

In 2003, the Conference of Speakers formed the Athens Group with the objective of elaborating a more coordinated and structured system for interparliamentary cooperation. On the basis of the results of the Athens Group, in July 2004, the Conference of Speakers adopted the recommendations and guidelines for interparliamentary cooperation. These recommendations and guidelines laid down the principles and the framework for the cooperation among EU parliaments. In this framework, the Conference of Speakers has the responsibility for overseeing the coordination of EU interparliamentary activities, and a particular coordinating responsibility rests with the host of the forthcoming conference.

The Hungarian National Assembly has had the honour to fulfil for the first time the coordination tasks among national parliaments on the basis of The Hague guidelines since July 2004.

Taking into consideration the principles laid down in The Hague, the Hungarian National Assembly's intention was to elaborate the long-term instruments suitable for promoting interparliamentary cooperation.

Instruments for interparliamentary cooperation:

- *The establishment of a well-functioning network of EU contact persons:*

In July 2004, the Hungarian National Assembly initiated the appointment of national EU contact points in each national parliament. The objective was to create a network which not only facilitates the flow of information among national parliaments, but also

helps avoiding both the parallel treatment of the same topics and the loss of information. This network of EU contact persons is suitable for providing preliminary information to each other, and it helps bilateral communication as well. During the coordination period of the Hungarian National Assembly, this system proved to be an excellent tool for regular dialogue.

- *The reform of the language regime of the Conference of Speakers:*

According to the Presidency Conclusions of The Hague meeting of the Conference of Speakers, the Hungarian National Assembly was asked to form a working group with the task of working out the technicalities of a new language regime. The working group operated on the level of officials and by electronic means of communication, which made the participation of each parliament possible. The new language system – which was adopted by the meeting of Secretaries General on 11 February 2005 in Budapest – was based on the following principles:

- The right to speak in one's own language;
- Equality of the languages;
- Equality of Member States;
- Cost-sharing among parliaments;
- Non-discrimination.

The adopted language regime provides a practical and flexible system, as every delegation has the possibility to choose the solution which it finds the best:

- to bring own interpreters;
- to speak one of the languages to be used as base languages for interpretation;
- to ask the host parliament to organize interpretation for their language.

- *The calendar of EU interparliamentary events:*

On the basis of the recommendations and guidelines adopted in The Hague and with the contribution of the EU parliaments, the Hungarian National Assembly compiled the calendar of EU interparliamentary activities which provides the framework for planning and work of the parliaments. This calendar is a guarantee for avoiding unnecessary duplications or parallelism of interparliamentary events. The calendar has been already sent to the EU parliaments. In the future, the compilation of this calendar will be the responsibility of the host parliament of the next Conference of Speakers.

- *Launching of the new IPEX website:*

As The Hague Presidency Conclusions point out on the basis of the recommendations of the Athens Group, IPEX serves as an important tool for the exchange of information, by providing a platform for all kinds of EU-related information. After creating the necessary conditions, it will also provide a forum for exchange of views on subsidiarity control. The Hungarian National Assembly's intention has been to assist the Steering Committee of IPEX led by the Swedish Parliament in order to ensure that a test phase of the new IPEX website could start after the Budapest meeting of the Conference of Speakers. The IPEX system should be fully operational by the time when the Constitutional Treaty comes into effect.

Cooperation with the European Commission

The readiness to provide the necessary information on behalf of the European Commission is indispensable to realize a better and more efficient cooperation among the national parliaments. The letter of President Barroso and Vice-President Wallström to the Speakers of parliaments, the objectives announced by the Commission, and Mrs Wallström's strong commitment to national parliaments reflect that the Commission is determined to intensify its relations with EU parliaments.

In March 2005 Mrs Katalin Szili, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly met Mrs Margot Wallström in Brussels and invited her to the Budapest meeting of the Conference of Speakers, which will provide great opportunity for a personal exchange of views on the possible means of cooperation. In the future, it would be useful to create the framework for a continuous dialogue in this respect.

Areas of future cooperation

The coordinating role and the influence of the Conference of Speakers should be further strengthened within the framework created on the basis of The Hague Guidelines since last July in the following areas:

- Interparliamentary cooperation has to work as a real process, there must be a regular dialogue among parliaments even in the periods between the meetings of the Conference of Speakers. The feedback following the meetings of the Conference of Speakers, the monitoring of the development of recommendations adopted at the meetings are just as important. To ensure the continuity of the cooperation, an informal coordination among the successive (e.g. the former, the actual and the future)

host parliaments of the Conference of Speakers would be advantageous.

- The meetings organized by the EU parliaments and their topics should be better coordinated, thus enhancing the efficiency of the meetings of the sectoral parliamentary committees without the proliferation of different interparliamentary events. In this respect, and in line with The Hague Guidelines, Speakers should have a leading role in defining the priority areas for cooperation.
- It is important to continue the debate on how the EU parliaments may promote a more coordinated and more efficient appearance of the EU on a global scale. Due to the importance and the far-reaching aspects of this subject, it would be useful to put this issue on the agenda of the further meetings of the Conference of Speakers of the EU parliaments as well, and it is worth considering occasionally to pay a special focus on a specific region (as it is the case in Budapest, where there will be a discussion on the EU-Western Balkans relations).
- It would be also useful to examine whether there are possibilities for coordinating the activities of EU parliaments in other interparliamentary organizations outside the EU framework.

The elaborated framework and the outlined proposals may contribute to that EU parliaments, cooperating more efficiently with each other, take a more active part in the European Union's decision making, which would have a greater legitimacy in turn.

Budapest, April 2005