

Relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments

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The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Carlo CASINI (EPP, IT) on relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

Almost five years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, and with a view to future Conventions, **relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments need to be continually developed** in the light of new challenges.

National parliaments and the Union's democratic legitimacy: Members welcomed the Treaty provisions giving the national parliaments a range of rights and duties allowing them to contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union.

Pointing out that the twofold democratic legitimacy of the Union, as a union of citizens and of Member States, Members considered that the stances taken by national governments in the Council should take due account of the views of their national parliaments, thereby reinforcing the democratic nature of the Council.

Members recommended the national parliaments to take steps to:

- improve their guidance and scrutiny procedures with a view to achieving greater consistency;
- provide ministers and national governments with prior guidance on their work within the Council and the European Council;
- scrutinise the stances taken by ministers and national governments within the Council and the European Council;
- play an effective role in providing guidance on and scrutinising the implementation of directives and regulations;
- **encourage the Council to improve the transparency of its deliberations on legislative acts**, in particular during the preparatory stage of the legislative process, in order to reduce the information asymmetry between the European Parliament and the Council.

According to Members, they took the view that the monitoring of compliance with the subsidiarity principle by the national parliaments and the European institutions should be seen not as an undue restriction, but as a mechanism for guaranteeing the competences of the national parliaments.

The early warning mechanism should be viewed and used as one of the tools for ensuring effective cooperation between European and national institutions with a view to improving the quality of EU legislation by ensuring, in particular, that the EU operates within its competences.

The Commission is called upon to reply promptly and fully to reasoned opinions and contributions sent in by the national parliaments.

Interparliamentary relations and the European integration process: Members reiterated that EU interparliamentary cooperation does not take the place of the normal parliamentary scrutiny exercised by the European Parliament in accordance with the competences conferred on it by the Treaties. They viewed interparliamentary meetings as **places where EU and national policies come together and feed off each other**, to the benefit of both. They believed that a key function of such meetings is to allow the national

parliaments to take account of the European perspective in national debates, and the European Parliament to take account of the national perspective in European debates.

The report welcomed the actions that have been taken – in accordance with the recommendations of the steering group on relations with the national parliaments – since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon to intensify cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament, in particular as regards the **planning of interparliamentary committee meetings**. It stressed that interparliamentary meetings need to be organised in close cooperation with the national parliaments.

With a view to cutting costs and increasing effectiveness, Members called for **greater internal and external coordination** between the programme put forward by the parliament of the Member State holding the Council Presidency and the work programmes of the European Parliament's committees. Welcoming the effectiveness of interparliamentary committee meetings, they called for **closer cooperation between rapporteurs on specific legislative issues**. Members believed that COSAC could serve as a forum for discussion of the general state of the integration process.

Developments and proposals: Members proposed that **an understanding** be developed between the national parliaments and the European Parliament, which could form the basis for efficient cooperation pursuant to Article 9 of Protocol No 1 to the Lisbon Treaty and Rule 130 of its own Rules of Procedure. They called for **regular, thematically structured and effective meetings** between political groups and European political parties to be held in the framework of EU interparliamentary cooperation.

Lastly, the report stated that **COSAC** should: (i) remain the forum for a regular exchange of views, information and best practice regarding practical aspects of parliamentary scrutiny; (ii) take a detailed look at the difficulties experienced by the national parliaments in exercising the prerogatives conferred on them by the Lisbon Treaty.