

Dear Chairman,

Dear colleagues and friends,

Thank you for the kind invitation to this meeting.

It is indeed a crucial moment for the EU as it faces many political challenges. Both the EU's institutions and interparliamentary dialogue need to be adapted in order to address these challenges efficiently.

I am grateful, in this regard, that the EP wants to involve national parliaments in an enhanced political dialogue, especially as both Mrs Bresso and Mr Brok's Working document and Mr Verhofstadt's report, as well as a new Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making are under discussion.

Our enhanced political dialogue is essential for two reasons.

Firstly, both the EP and national parliaments are confronted with the fact that Treaty change does not realistically appear to be possible in a near future.

But we all know at the same time that there are many reasons to improve the functioning of the European institutions and the implementation of EU law.

Secondly, and most of all, I think we all agree that the role and the implication of parliaments, both the EP and national parliaments, should be strengthened rather sooner than later.

This is why the political dialogue as such, as well as political dialogue *between* the EP and national parliaments are more important than ever.

We must enhance our cooperation in view of a better scrutiny of the executives at the national level and at the level of the Council.

If there should of course be no mix of competences, there are also many *overlaps, common challenges and opportunities for cooperation* between the EP and national parliaments.

This is more specifically what I would like to dwell into today as I am convinced that the cooperation between national parliaments and the EP can make a substantive contribution toward a more legitimate European Union.

I have always been doubtful that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit. However, there is a clear need to bring it closer to the citizens; and that's where national parliaments can also help.

This is also the reason why there should be a better cooperation between the EP and national parliaments.

During our presidency, we took and still take our active involvement in European affairs seriously and our cooperation with the EP has been most fruitful.

A proof that national parliaments also take their European role seriously, are the initiatives taken under the Luxembourgish EU presidency in order to deepen the political dialogue and to enhance the role of national parliaments with regard to the subsidiary procedure.

Two COSAC meetings have already dealt with these institutional matters in July and October, when a working group on the "yellow card" and the "green card" took place. Our third COSAC meeting in a little bit more than a week will again deal with these institutional questions.

I am also very glad that under our presidency, the Rules of Procedure of the Article 13 Conference on European economic governance have been adopted.

Regarding the improvement of the « yellow card » procedure, the two COSAC meetings showed that most parliaments consider that the «yellow card » procedure needs improvement without Treaty change.

Moreover, I am convinced that the European Commission has to strengthen efforts to ensure better quality and more timely responses to reasoned opinions.

Regarding the introduction of “green cards” and its scope in the framework of enhanced political dialogue it will be important to proceed in a flexible way concerning procedural issues, when it will come to suggest introducing new EU legislation.

Let me remind you of three “green card” initiatives already launched this year. The first one from the House of Lords on Food waste which collected the support of 17 out of 41 parliamentary chambers, the second one by our Latvian colleagues on the Audio-visual services directive and the third one on the social and environmental responsibility of enterprises have just been presented and will be analysed by parliaments.

There should also be a minimum threshold, a deadline and a timeframe for participation in a « green card ».

These matters will again be discussed by the next COSAC, which will take place in Luxembourg from 29 November 2015 to 1 December 2015.

Let me add that, regarding the green card, it would actually be very useful to involve the EP as much as possible.

Of course, the EP already has under article 225 of the Treaty, the right to ask the Commission to submit a legislative proposal.

But, any green card also supported by the EP would certainly have a greater impact.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would also like to salute Mrs Bresso’s and Mr Brok’s efforts regarding their Working document and say a word about the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making.

The Working document clearly recognizes the need for a deepening of the EU’s functioning as the EU is faced with so many challenges, ranging from migration, security issues, climate change to dealing with the financial and economic crisis through the enhancement of economic governance, including its social dimension.

I welcome the ambition to find ways to make the EU evolve without treaty changes, although I am not sure whether certain proposals might not need a treaty change nevertheless.

Anyhow, all these proposals need to be reflected on. It’s important to start now and to find solutions wherever we can, as soon as possible, to make the EU fit in order to face its main challenges.

This is especially important regarding the challenges that I already mentioned, but also with regard to areas involving the national parliaments, for instance the European semester and the better implementation of EU directives and policies.

When it comes to economic governance, national parliaments have the same problem as the EP.

We are often sidelined or forgotten by the executives, especially through the adjunction of intergovernmental bodies outside of the EU frame. For instance, the ESM and the Fiscal Compact should indeed quickly be incorporated into EU law for that very reason, as the Working document suggests.

I am aware that the Working document will only be presented in a few minutes, but I do already have a request regarding the role of national parliaments.

Regarding, point 9 of the Working document, I would be most grateful, if the role of national parliaments with regard to the Lisbon Treaty, which is enshrined in the articles 5 and 12, as well as in Protocol 1 and 2 of this treaty, could be mentioned. COSAC's role should also be mentioned explicitly in this context.

On interparliamentary cooperation, regarding this point, as well as point 10, which states that "there should be no joint parliamentary decision-making bodies", it would maybe be best to have a debate, maybe even a prior debate, in forums where parliaments deal with those questions, in particular the EU Speakers' Conference, which oversees the coordination of inter-parliamentary EU activities, so that all the parliaments of the EU could exchange on these issues openly.

Our debate today will certainly not be sufficient, especially since the national parliaments did not have a lot of time – hardly ten working days – to analyse the Working document as it now stands either at committee or at plenary level, in order to properly contribute to the debate we have been invited to.

AFCO's non paper regarding the new Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, which has been transmitted to President Schulz by Danuta Hübner on the 22nd of April this year, takes a positive stance regarding the relationship between the EP and national parliaments.

Here, I agree that there should be no interference with respect to competences.

I agree that the Commission must provide a more detailed justification of subsidiarity.

I agree that common criteria for the monitoring of the respect of the principle of subsidiarity would be most welcome.

I agree that there needs to be a discussion whether or not, the Inter-institutional Agreement is the right place to decide over the enhancement of the participation of national parliaments.

And I agree, that we should analyse together how to deepen our political dialogue – just as we do today – a dialogue, which could maybe also be mentioned in the Working document.

Enhancing our political dialogue is indeed of outmost importance to national parliaments. In the Chamber of Deputies, we would like to play a more positive role in the process leading to the adoption of European legislation.

After an initial period of enthusiasm regarding the Lisbon Treaty, we, as well as many other national parliaments rapidly felt that the subsidiarity procedure, despite its importance, might give the impression that the role of national parliaments is merely limited to holding back European integration.

In contrast, deeper, more coordinated political dialogue and a green card would enable national parliaments to play a distinctive role in deepening integration. In this respect, I am also looking forward to cooperating with the EP.

This is what matters to the Luxembourgish presidency; this is what matters to the Chamber of Deputies. Thank you very much for your attention.