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An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí an Aontais Eorpaigh

Tuarascáil Taistil, An Cruinniu de Chathaoirligh COSAC

Stócólm 29 – 30 Eanáir 2023

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Travel Report, COSAC Chairpersons' Meeting

Stockholm 29 – 30 January 2023

[33EUA21]

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs



John Brady T.D.

Sinn Féin



Dara Calleary T.D.

Fianna Fáil



Francis Noel Duffy T.D.

Green Party



Seán Haughey T.D.

Fianna Fáil



Brendan Howlin T.D.

Labour

Leas-Chathaoirleach



Marian Harkin T.D.

Independent



Joe McHugh T.D.

Fine Gael

Cathaoirleach



Neale Richmond T.D.

Fine Gael



Ruairí Ó Murchú T.D.

Sinn Féin



Senator Lisa Chambers
Fianna Fáil



Senator Regina Doherty
Fine Gael



Senator Sharon Keogan
Independent



Senator Vincent P Martin
Green Party



Senator Michael McDowell
Independent

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Report on attendance at COSAC Chairpersons Meeting

Under the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, it is outlined that:

“The Joint Committee shall represent both Houses of the Oireachtas at the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) and shall report to both Houses of the Oireachtas thereon.”

COSAC, the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs is the principal forum for co-operation between committees of national parliaments dealing with European Union Affairs. COSAC Chairpersons Meetings are held twice yearly and normally take place in the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The COSAC Chairpersons Meeting marking the Swedish Presidency of the Council took place in Stockholm from 29 to 30 January 2023.

The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was represented by **Senator Sharon Keogan** who was designated as acting chairperson for the purpose of the meeting.

The COSAC Chairpersons Meeting was chaired by **Mr Hans Wallmark**, Chairperson of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Swedish Riksdag.

Invited speakers to the plenary session included:

- **Dr Andreas Norlén**, Speaker of the Riksdag
- **Ms Ylva Johansson**, European Commissioner for Home Affairs
- **Mr Johan Olsson**, Head of National Operations Department, Swedish Police
- **Ms Anna Karin Hildingson Boqvist**, Secretary General, ECPAT Sweden
- **Mr Christian Danielsson**, State Secretary to the Minister for EU Affairs
- **Mr Othmar Karas**, First Vice-President of the European Parliament

Proceedings of the COSAC Chairpersons Meeting

29 January 2023

The delegation attended an official dinner in the National Museum.

30 January 2023

Opening of the COSAC Chairpersons Meeting

The Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the Swedish Riksdag, Mr Hans Wallmark, welcomed delegates and made opening remarks observing that the meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons was the first major event of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Swedish Presidency.

The Speaker of the Riksdag, Mr Andreas Norlén, began by outlining the history of the Parliament and its buildings, noting that it became bi-cameral 1866 and changed to a unicameral system in 1967. After elaborating on the Parliamentary dimension of the Swedish Presidency, Mr Norlén concluded by quoting the famous epic poem *Aniara*, by the Swedish Nobel Laureate Harry Martinson: "There is protection from near everything, from fire and damages by storm and frost, oh, add whichever blows may come to mind. But there is no protection from mankind."

Procedural and other general matters

The agenda for the Chairpersons Meeting was adopted without amendment.

Mr Wallmark outlined to the delegates the agenda for the upcoming plenary meeting of COSAC scheduled for May 2023, comprising sessions on topics including the Swedish Presidency, 30 years of the Single Market, Green Transition, and Ukraine. Mr Smoljak further outlined the 39th COSAC biannual report, which will focus on the role of national parliaments in the handling of the Fit for 55 package.

Mr Wallmark raised two items under any other business. Firstly, a decision was pending at COSAC regarding the old COSAC website that was still active despite the migration to IPEX. The Permanent Member of COSAC recommended that the website no longer be maintained and not to renew annual subscriptions. Mr Wallmark informed the Chairpersons that the Troika adopted the recommendation.

Secondly, Mr Wallmark reminded the Chairpersons of the procedure for co-financing the Permanent Member and the costs of running the office of COSAC.

Session 1

The meeting was addressed by Ms Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, on the topic of organised crime. Commissioner Johansson underlined Europe's strong unity, commitment, and support for Ukraine. Commissioner Johansson suggested that, just as Vladimir Putin was the greatest external threat of the EU, the single greatest internal threat is organised crime. After outlining incidents that occurred in the EU, Commissioner Johansson emphasised the need for EU level agreement on new legislations on e-evidence, underlined the importance of cooperation between national police and Europol and stressed the need for Artificial Intelligence tools to process data.

Commissioner Johansson cited information on child sexual abuse and concluded that the EU is a regulatory superpower in the protection of privacy online but emphasised that the vulnerable people and children needed to be better protected.

Mr Johan Olsson, Head of National Operations Department at the Swedish Police, began his remarks by highlighting the worrying rise in fatal shootings in Sweden over the past year, resulting in 60 deaths. He commented that all member states had an issue with organised crime. He also noted that organised crime's influence on democratic society was unacceptable and that it had become a challenge for the EU. Mr Olsson concluded that the EU is essential in combating organised crime and that the need for balanced regulation of the digital world was one of the main challenges for law enforcement today.

Ms Anna Karin Hildingson Boqvist, Secretary General, ECPAT Sweden explained the children's rights organisation's work and their preventive actions around child exploitation. In the ensuing debate, parliamentarians elaborated on the need to enhance the transnational cooperation of law enforcement while supporting Europol in facilitating collaboration between national police in transnational investigations. Members also called for sound European policies or/and the adoption of an appropriate legal framework at EU level to combat organised crime.

Following the debate, the keynote speakers made their final remarks.

Session 2

The second session focussed on the priorities of the Swedish Presidency of the European Council. Mr. Christian Danielsson, State Secretary to the Minister of EU Affairs, began his remarks by highlighting several important events that had already taken place: The European Commission's college had visited Kiruna in north Sweden; in mid-January the Prime Minister had presented the Presidency priorities at the European parliament; the Minister for EU affairs also took part in Plenary sessions in the European Parliament; and several ministers had presented the Presidency's ambitions at different Committees. Mr Danielsson noted that Sweden had taken over the Presidency at a time of historic challenges. He noted the European unity across institutions, bodies and Parliaments when it came to supporting Ukraine. A key priority for the Presidency was to maintain that unity.

Mr Danielsson said that the Swedish Presidency would advance the work in the Council of the EU and in negotiations with the European Parliament based on four priorities: security, competitiveness, green and energy transition, and democratic values and the rule of law.

Mr Othmar Karas MEP, First Vice President of the European Parliament, stated that Europe faces multiple crises. He added that challenges should be embraced with courage for action, for greater seriousness, and for unity. Mr Karas outlined the importance of progress in implementing the outcomes of the Conference on the Future of Europe and noted the European Parliament's support for a European Convention. Mr Karas outlined the foundation found within the EU legal framework to defend democratic values. He concluded by saying that putting the priorities of the Swedish Presidency into practice was key to making the EU stronger, greener, digital and more competitive.

In the debate that followed, 34 speakers took the floor.

Closing remarks

Mr Wallmark closed the meeting, mentioning his three wishes for the coming months: the first being that Europe would become as strong and successful as it deserved to be, the second wish was that Sweden and Finland would become members of NATO and, thirdly, Mr Wallmark expressed his desire that a free Ukraine could be possible again soon.

Mr Wallmark then closed the meeting.

Appendix I: Committee Terms of Reference

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| <p>(1) Go gceapfar Roghchoiste, dá ngairfear an Roghchoiste um Ghnóthaí Eorpacha, ar a mbeidh 9 gcomhalta de Dháil Éireann, chun breithniú a dhéanamh ar cibé nithe a éiríonn—</p> <p>(a) as ballraíocht na hÉireann san Aontas Eorpach, agus</p> <p>(b) as Éirinn do chloí leis an gConradh ar an Aontas Eorpach agus leis an gConradh ar Fheidhmiú an Aontais Eorpaigh,</p> <p>a roghnóidh sé agus nach bhfuil tarchurtha chuig aon Choiste eile.</p> <p>(2) Gan dochar do ghinearáltacht mhír (1), breithneoidh an Roghchoiste—</p> <p>(a) cibé Billí a bpléann an Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus an Roinn Cosanta leis an dlí reachtach ina leith,</p> <p>(b) cibé tograí a bheidh in aon tairiscint, lena n-áirítear aon tairiscint de réir bhrí Bhuan-Ordú 220, agus</p> <p>(c) cibé nithe eile,</p> <p>a tharchuirfidh an Dáil chuige.</p> | <p>(1) That a Select Committee, which shall be called the Select Committee on European Union Affairs, consisting of 9 members of Dáil Éireann, be appointed to consider such matters arising from—</p> <p>(a) Ireland's membership of the European Union, and</p> <p>(b) Ireland's adherence to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,</p> <p>as it may select and which are not referred to any other Committee.</p> <p>(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Select Committee shall consider such—</p> <p>(a) Bills the statute law in respect of which is dealt with by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defence,</p> <p>(b) proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 220, and</p> <p>(c) other matters,</p> <p>as shall be referred to it by the Dáil.</p> |
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| <p>(3) Beidh an tAire Gnóthaí Eachtracha (nó comhalta den Rialtas nó Aire Stáit a ainmneofar chun gníomhú ina áit nó ina háit chun na críche sin), ina chomhalta nó ina comhalta <i>ex officio</i> den Roghchoiste chun na nithe atá leagtha amach i mír (2)(a) agus (b) a bhreithniú agus beidh sé nó sí i dteideal vótáil in imeachtaí an Roghchoiste.</p> | <p>(3) The Minister for Foreign Affairs (or a member of the Government or Minister of State nominated to act in his or her stead for that purpose) shall be an <i>ex officio</i> member of the Select Committee for the purpose of consideration of the matters outlined at paragraph (2)(a) and (b) and shall be entitled to vote in Select Committee proceedings.</p> |
| <p>(4) Beidh ag an Roghchoiste na cumhachtaí a mhínítear i mBuan-Ordú 96, seachas míreanna (6) go (10).</p> | <p>(4) The Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 96, other than paragraphs (6) to (10).</p> |
| <p>(5) Déanfar an Roghchoiste a chomhcheangal le Roghchoiste arna cheapadh ag Seanad Éireann chun bheith ina Chomhchoiste um Ghnóthaí Eorpacha, agus, gan dochar do ghinearáltacht mhír (1), déanfaidh an Roghchoiste an méid seo a leanas a bhreithniú—</p> | <p>(5) The Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann, to form the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, which, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), shall consider—</p> |
| <p>(a) doiciméid phleanála straitéiseacha an Choimisiúin Eorpaigh lena n-áirítear Clár Oibre an Choimisiúin,</p> | <p>(a) the European Commission's strategic planning documents including the Commission Work Programme,</p> |
| <p>(b) forbairtí beartais tras-earnála ag leibhéal an Aontais Eorpaigh,</p> | <p>(b) cross-sectoral policy developments at European Union level,</p> |
| <p>(c) nithe a liostaítear lena mbreithniú ar an gclár gnó i gcomhair cruinnithe de Chomhairle (Airí) Gnóthaí Ginearálta an Aontais Eorpaigh agus toradh cruinnithe den sórt sin.</p> | <p>(c) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the General Affairs Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,</p> |
| <p>(d) cibé rialacháin faoi Achtanna na gComhphobal Eorpach, 1972 go 2009 agus ionstraimí eile arna ndéanamh faoi reacht agus is gá de dhroim na n-oibleagáidí a ghabhann le ballraíocht san</p> | <p>(d) such regulations under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009 and other instruments made under statute and necessitated by the obligations of membership of</p> |

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| <p>Aontas Eorpach a roghnóidh an Coiste,</p> | <p>the European Union as the Committee may select,</p> |
| <p>(e) fógraí arna dtarchur ag an Dáil faoi Bhuan-Ordú 134(1)(a),</p> | <p>(e) notifications referred by the Dáil under Standing Order 134(1)(a),</p> |
| <p>(f) fógraí i dtaobh tograí chun na Conarthaí a fuarthas ón gComhairle Eorpach de bhun Airteagal 48.2 den Chonradh ar an Aontas Eorpach a leasú,</p> | <p>(f) notifications of proposals for the amendment of the Treaties received from the European Council pursuant to Article 48.2 of the Treaty on European Union,</p> |
| <p>(g) fógraí i dtaobh iarratais ar bhallraíocht san Aontas Eorpach a fuarthas ón gComhairle Eorpach de bhun Airteagal 49 den Chonradh ar an Aontas Eorpach, agus</p> | <p>(g) notifications of applications for membership of the European Union received from the European Council pursuant to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, and</p> |
| <p>(h) cibé nithe eile a tharchuirfidh an Dáil chuige ó am go ham.</p> | <p>(h) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.</p> |
| <p>(6) Tabharfaidh an Comhchoiste tuarascáil do dhá Theach an Oireachtais ar oibriú Acht an Aontais Eorpaigh (Grinnscrúdú), 2002.</p> | <p>(6) The Joint Committee shall report to both Houses of the Oireachtas on the operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002.</p> |
| <p>(7) Beidh ag an gComhchoiste na cumhachtaí a mhínítear i mBuan-Ordú 96, 133 agus 135 agus beidh aige an chumhacht chun moltaí a chur faoi bhráid an Aire Gnóthaí Eachtracha (nó faoi bhráid Aire Stáit) i dtaobh nithe a bhaineann leis an Aontas Eorpach.</p> | <p>(7) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 96, 133 and 135 and shall have the power to make recommendations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (or Minister of State) on European Union matters.</p> |
| <p>(8) Féadfaidh na daoine seo a leanas freastal ar chruinnithe den Chomhchoiste agus páirt a ghlacadh in imeachtaí gan ceart vótála a bheith</p> | <p>(8) The following may attend meetings of the Joint Committee and take part in proceedings without having a</p> |

acu ná ceart tairiscintí a dhéanamh ná leasuithe a thairiscint:

right to vote or to move motions and amendments:

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| <p>(a) Comhaltaí de Pharlaimint na hEorpa arna dtoghadh ó thoghcheantair in Éirinn,</p> <p>(b) Comhaltaí de thoscaireacht na hÉireann chuig Tionól Parlaiminteach Chomhairle na hEorpa, agus</p> <p>(c) ar chuireadh a fháil ón gCoiste, Comhaltaí eile de Pharlaimint na hEorpa.</p> | <p>(a) Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,</p> <p>(b) Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and</p> <p>(c) at the invitation of the Committee, other Members of the European Parliament.</p> |
| <p>(9) Déanfaidh an Comhchoiste ionadaíocht do dhá Theach an Oireachtais ag Comhdháil na gCoistí um Ghnóthaí Comhphobail agus Eorpacha de chuid Parlaimintí an Aontais Eorpaigh (COSAC) agus tabharfaidh sé tuarascáil ar an gcéanna do dhá Theach an Oireachtais.</p> | <p>(9) The Joint Committee shall represent both Houses of the Oireachtas at the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) and shall report to both Houses of the Oireachtas thereon.</p> |
| <p>(10) Beidh Cathaoirleach Roghchoiste na Dála ina Chathaoirleach nó ina Cathaoirleach ar an gComhchoiste freisin.</p> | <p>(10) The Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be the Chairman of the Joint Committee.</p> |