



**Tithe an
Oireachtais**
**Houses of the
Oireachtas**

An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí an Aontais Eorpaigh

Tuarascáil Taistil - Cruinniú Iomlánach LXIX COSAC

Stócólm 14 - 16 Bealtaine 2023

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Travel Report - Stockholm, LXIX COSAC Plenary

Stockholm 14 – 16 May 2023

[33EUA22]

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs



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Senator Sharon Keogan
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REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AT COSAC PLENARY 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. COSC Meetings are held twice yearly and normally take place in the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The LXIX COSAC Plenary took place in Stockholm, Sweden from 14-16 May 2023

The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was represented by **Deputy Colm Brophy** (Committee Cathaoirleach and Head of Delegation), **Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú**, and **Deputy Robert Troy**. The delegation was accompanied by Barry Kavanagh, Clerk to the Committee. Paul Conway, the Houses of the Oireachtas Permanent Representative in Brussels also attended.

The COSAC Plenary Meeting was chaired by Mr Hans Wallmark, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag.

Invited speakers to the plenary session included:

- **Dr Andreas Norlén**, Speaker of the Riksdag
- **Ms Matilda Ernkrans**, Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag
- **Ms Jessika Roswall**, Minister for EU Affairs
- **Mr Salvatore De Meo**, Chairperson of the European Parliament Committee on Constitutional Affairs

- **Mr Othmar Karas**, First Vice-President of the European Parliament
- **Ms Kerstin Jorna**, Director-General
- **Ms Věra Jourová**, Vice-President of the European Commission
- **Mr Maroš Šefčovič**, Vice-President of the European Commission
- **H.E. Mr Václav Bartuška**, Ambassador-at-large for Energy Security of the Czech Republic
- **Mr Tomáš Pojar**, Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic on Security and Foreign Affairs Issues
- **Ms Ivanna Klymush-Tsintsadze**, Chairperson of the *Verkhovna Rada* (Ukrainian Parliament) Committee on EU Integration
- **Mr Mirek Topolánek**, Former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic
- **Ms. Ursula von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission (video message).

Proceedings of the COSAC Plenary meeting

15 May 2023

Opening of the LXIX COSAC

The LXIX COSAC plenary began with opening remarks from Dr Andreas Norlén, Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Hans Wallmark, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the *Riksdag*, and Ms Matilda Ernkrans, Deputy Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the *Riksdag*.

Dr Norlén stated that the Swedish *Riksdag* was an active Parliament in EU matters and expressed his wish for more frequent exchanges among national parliaments on subsidiarity reviews. Dr Norlén noted that Sweden had taken the Presidency of the Council at a difficult moment, highlighting the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis and high inflation. Mr Wallmark and Ms Ernkrans welcomed three new colleagues from national parliaments who were attending the COSAC Plenary for the first time, including Deputy Colm Brophy, Chair of the EU Affairs Committee of the *Houses of the Oireachtas*.

Adoption of Agenda and Procedural Issues

The plenary agenda was adopted without amendment. Mr Wallmark outlined that the proposed conclusions and contributions would be discussed at the Chairpersons' meeting and that he hoped the texts would be agreed by consensus.

Mr Bruno Dias Pinheiro, the Permanent Member of the COSAC secretariat, presented the results of the 39th COSAC biannual report. The report summarised approaches taken by national parliaments in the handling of the Fit for 55 package; the role of parliaments in the accelerated decision-making processes in the response to crises; and the best practices for information exchange between parliaments, including the use of IPEX.

Keynote Video Message

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, addressed the plenary by video message. President von der Leyen expressed gratitude to the Swedish Presidency. She outlined three current tasks of great importance for the

EU. Firstly, the European security order, secondly, the global race for the clean and digital technologies of tomorrow, and thirdly, the need to better protect European democracies.

Plenary Session 1

Keynote speaker Ms Jessika Roswall, Minister for EU Affairs, stated that the Presidency's busiest period was currently taking place and that it was working day and night to deliver a safer, greener and more secure Europe.

Czech Minister for European Affairs, Mikuláš Bek, reflected on the Czech Republic's journey as an EU member state since its last Presidency in 2009 and its accession in 2004, noting that enlargement was a priority for the Czech Presidency. The Minister outlined the importance of supporting Ukraine; mentioning humanitarian aid, post-war reconstruction, sanctions, and a strengthened Common Foreign and Security Policy. Minister Bek outlined EU actions in relation to energy security, digital transformation, the Fit for 55 package, and media freedom.

Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú highlighted the benefits of EU accession and remarked on the many benefits that membership provides. Deputy Ó Murchú spoke about the importance of the rule of law and ensuring that those seeking membership of the EU understand those requirements. He also mentioned the importance of a roadmap for membership for the applicant states.

Plenary Session 2 – Part I

Othmar Karas, First Vice-President of the European Parliament addressed the plenary on the topic of 30 years of the Single Market. Mr Karas noted it was the longest standing part of the European project but that it should not be taken for granted and that its benefits should be maximised. Mr Karas highlighted that the Single Market represented the largest internal market in the world, including 450 million people. Mr Karas mentioned the crises the internal market had recently faced (Brexit, the pandemic, inflation, energy crisis and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine) and noted that the EU is now stronger internally.

Kerstin Jorna, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, welcomed the discussion as an opportunity to

celebrate the achievements of the Single Market. Ms Jorna then presented her four perspectives of the relevance of the Single Market for today: firstly, the Single Market gives tangible benefits, secondly, the Single Market enables cooperation to solve major problems, made clear by the EU reaction to the pandemic. Thirdly, the Single Market is a geopolitical tool. And, finally, it is a Single Market.

Deputy Ruairí Ó Murchú expressed his belief that the Single Market has played an important role in the success of the Irish economy and in the softening of the Irish border. Deputy Ó Murchú commented that resilience in various sectors, including semi-conductors and energy, was required but that it could not be done by protectionism. Deputy Ó Murchú pointed to the response to the pandemic as evidence of the benefits of state intervention and this could be replicated in areas such as energy.

Plenary Session 2 – Part II

Katarina Areskoug Mascarenhas, Chair of the Board of the Centre for European Studies, Lund University, addressed the plenary on 30 years of the Single Market (continued). Ms Areskoug Mascarenhas outlined the benefits of the Single Market and the effect on EU cooperation, benefitting citizens and companies. She recalled that the aim of the European project was to make war “not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible”. Ms Areskoug Mascarenhas claimed that although the Single Market was a success, it needed to be constantly renovated and checked.

Anna Stelling, Deputy Director General, International and EU Affairs, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, focused on two issues. The first was the importance of the Single Market, “the crown jewel” of European integration. Secondly, Ms Stelling said that the European Commission should be empowered to remove obstacles to the Single Market, via regulation to guarantee healthy competition and innovation, and via a competitiveness check on every regulation proposed by the Commission.

Therese Svanström, President of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (CTO), stressed the need for social partners to be involved so they feel

secure enough to embrace changes. Ms Svanström explained that there is nothing more competitive than a strong Single Market where social partners are involved.

Deputy Robert Troy outlined how the Single Market has transformed the Irish economy. Deputy Troy explained that harmonised regulation, and the free movement of goods and services, have allowed Ireland's small open economy to flourish. Deputy Troy said that the EU needs to be careful not to just look within for improvements as that can lead to protectionism. Deputy Troy stated that it was important that we enable SMEs and the service industry to take advantage of the Single Market.

Meeting of COSAC Chairpersons

Deputy Colm Brophy, as Committee Cathaoirleach, represented the delegation at this meeting which voted on wording of final Conclusions and Contribution of the LXIX COSAC.¹ The Oireachtas delegation secured unanimous agreement on an amendment that specified that support to Ukraine's military effort should be with respect to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States.

Official Dinner

The delegation attended a formal dinner hosted by Mr Hans Wallmark, Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Riksdag, at the Junibacken.

¹ See "Outcomes" chapter for full conclusions and contributions.

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>(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) 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>(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> |

Appendix 2: Contribution and Conclusions of COSAC

Contribution

Stockholm, 14 – 16 May 2023

UKRAINE

(1) COSAC welcomes the prompt support and unwavering solidarity shown by the international community for Ukraine since February 2022 when Russia upscaled its unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine to a full-scale invasion, and the strong unity shown by the European Union in this regard.

(2) COSAC calls on the EU and its Member States, to continue to provide political, financial, technical, military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, while respecting the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States. COSAC acknowledges the continuous security threats in the Black Sea region, and help strengthening societal resilience in the Republic of Moldova.

(3) COSAC condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which is a blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It also condemns Belarus' involvement in Russia's military aggression. COSAC underlines that the EU sanctions policy remains an effective measure of deterrence towards both Russia and Belarus.

(4) COSAC confirms its unyielding support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.

(5) COSAC reiterates the contribution of the LXVIII COSAC in Prague and calls for the immediate and unconditional termination of Russia's illegal military actions and withdrawal of all Russian forces and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine.

(6) COSAC stresses the importance of the UN General Assembly resolution on the Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, with full respect for Ukraine's independence and territorial sovereignty.

(7) COSAC welcomes and gives its support to the work of all actors contributing to the restoration, recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine. COSAC welcomes the work being conducted regarding the use of Russian frozen and immobilised assets in order to support the reconstruction of Ukraine.

(8) COSAC calls on all relevant actors involved to incorporate a gender equality perspective in all reconstruction, peace and security efforts.

(9) COSAC underlines the crucial importance of the continued strengthening of the pluralistic and inclusive parliamentary democracy, the respect for human rights, including the rights of national minorities, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

(10) COSAC emphasises the importance of holding everyone to account who has ordered, committed or participated in war crimes or other extremely serious crimes in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and fully supports the International Criminal Court investigation in Ukraine.

(11) COSAC welcomes efforts to establish a suitable judicial mechanism to investigate and prosecute people who have participated in crimes of aggression in Ukraine. In this regard, COSAC welcomes the start of operations of the Core International Crimes Evidence Database (CICED), and the establishment of a new International Centre for Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) at Eurojust. COSAC supports in the Member States the full implementation of the principle of universal jurisdiction, aiming at reinforcing our common values that condemn human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

(12) COSAC condemns the deportation of Ukrainian children by the Russian Federation. It also condemns the violation of the right of deported Ukrainian children to preserve their identity, as defined by Article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the practice of forced acceptance of Russian citizenship.

(13) COSAC welcomes and supports the ongoing enlargement process for the Ukraine, Western Balkans, Moldova and in perspective Georgia, based on the

fulfilment of set criteria. COSAC underlines that the stability in the EU neighbouring countries is crucial for the stability and prosperity of the entire Europe.

.ON ORGANISED CRIME AND CORRUPTION

(14) COSAC underlines the importance of increased cooperation and information exchange at the EU level in the fight against cross-border, organised crime. COSAC welcomes the coordinative role of Eurojust in this respect and calls for the strengthening of cooperation with third countries.

(15) COSAC welcomes the initiatives taken by the co-legislators to prevent and fight cross-border organised crime, and emphasises the importance of their timely implementation.

(16) COSAC calls for enhanced and effective action against migrant smugglers and trafficking in human beings which pose a major humanitarian and security challenge for the Union.

(17) COSAC welcomes new initiatives to fight corruption in all areas. Corruption must be regarded as organised crime.

(18) COSAC underlines the importance of working to combat corruption at both the national and the EU level, as well as cooperation with third countries.

THE SINGLE MARKET

(19) COSAC agrees with the Commission that the single market is one of EU's greatest achievements and underlines its importance for the development and prosperity of the EU over the past 30 years.

(20) COSAC stresses that people's wellbeing of people is dependent on well-functioning essential services such as energy, water and health provision, transport and telecommunications. Focus on the removal of barriers in the single market should remain, especially in the services sector.

(21) COSAC underlines that a good supply of skills is important for the Union's competitiveness. COSAC therefore welcomes that 2023 has been designated as the "European Year of Skills".

(22) COSAC welcomes measures that can further promote the green and digital transitions and can strengthen the EU's competitiveness, while ensuring its open strategic autonomy, on the global arena. COSAC welcomes in particular measures taking into account small and medium-sized enterprises.

(23) COSAC emphasises that the single market has been exposed to various crises in recent years. Disruptions to global value chains during the pandemic led to shortages of important products. Russia's war in Ukraine is exacerbating the challenges to the single market. The war has led to an extensive energy crisis which, in turn, has led to higher prices in most areas.

(24) COSAC underlines how important it is that the EU and the Member States, also in times of crisis, continue to remove obstacles, lessen bureaucracy, implement and apply existing legislation and adapt the single market to today's modern and digital society in order to meet the expectations of the citizens and of companies. The single market must continue to adapt to new challenges, while extending the Schengen area to Romania and Bulgaria to consolidate furthermore EU's cooperation and economic resilience. These are strongly interdependent with strengthening the external borders.

GREEN TRANSITION

(25) COSAC welcomes efforts to realise all the various elements of the Fit for 55 package. The EU has ambitious climate goals which are necessary in order to meet the challenges of the future.

(26) COSAC welcomes work with the green transition and emphasises that a holistic approach is required in order to create a sustainable world.

(27) COSAC stresses that the EU has a central role in the green transition and needs to be at the forefront of global climate efforts, while recognising the

importance of cooperation with third countries as climate change is a global challenge that knows no borders.

(28) COSAC stresses that the green transition is a necessary step in reducing the EU's energy dependence, while respecting the energy mix of each Member State, and that the transition must be accelerated.

(29) COSAC notes that the green transition involves both challenges and opportunities at all levels of society, and calls for it to be accompanied by appropriate social and economic support.