

Folketingets Europaudvalg

Christiansborg, den 21. maj 2003

Til

udvalgets medlemmer og stedfortrædere

**Rapport af Pat Cox, formand for
Europa-Parlamentet,
om de nationale parlamenter i et udvidet EU**

Vedlagt fordeles til medlemmernes orientering en rapport af 8. maj 2003 udarbejdet af Pat Cox, formand for Europa-Parlamentet, med titlen "European Parliaments in an enlarged Europe: The political and Institutional Dimension".

Rapporten er udarbejdet til brug ved konferencen for Parlamentsformænd i Athen den 23.-24. maj 2003.

Med venlig hilsen

Christian Dubois

Brussels, 8 May 2003

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS
IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE:
THE POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION**

**Report by Mr Pat COX,
President of the European Parliament**

For the Conference of the Presidents of the
Parliaments
of the European Union

(Athens, 22-24 May 2003)

I. INTRODUCTION	page
II. AN ENLARGED EUROPE: WHAT ROLE CAN PARLIAMENTS PLAY IN THE SYSTEM OF EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE?	4
III. A POSSIBILITY TO UPGRADE AND BETTER STRUCTURE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS AND THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS	6
IV. AN ENLARGED EUROPE: WHAT ROLE CAN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS PLAY IN THE SYSTEM OF WORLD GOVERNANCE?	7
V. CONCLUSION	9

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

I. INTRODUCTION

Our meeting in Athens is particularly significant, because it will consider two issues of vital importance to our institutions: their role in the Convention which is now laying the constitutional foundations for the Europe of tomorrow, and their political and institutional role in the enlarged

Europe which will come into being in less than one year's time.

The last few weeks have seen a number of major events: on 9 April the European Parliament gave its consent, by a very large majority, to the Accession Treaty for the 10 new Member States, clearing the way for the formal signing of that Treaty in Athens on 16 April and sending out a strong signal reaffirming our commitment to the reunification of Europe. In that context, as from 1 May representatives of the countries joining the Union have taken up their duties as observers in the European Parliament with a view to gaining an insight into its *modus operandi*.

At the end of last month, in Brussels, I met the Presidents of parliaments of the applicant countries, a meeting which underlined that, for the first time in its history, Europe has an opportunity to build a political order without being compelled to do so by force or an external threat. It can do so by drawing its strength, its resources, its creativity and its dynamism from its internal balance and from the diversity of its peoples and nations.

Against that background, I believe we all feel that the European integration process has reached a decisive turning point. After more than one year of debate in the Convention on the Future of Europe, we are approaching the final stages of a 'constitutional' recasting of the European Union intended to enable us to modernise our joint institutions, with a view to making them more effective, to bring Europe closer to its citizens, and to integrate the applicant countries successfully into the Union.

At the end of the day, public opinion will pass judgement on the outcome of the Convention. Our citizens are scarcely bothered with institutional theory. The mechanisms for decision-making, the nomination procedures, the institutions and their interplay fail to excite. Citizens will judge the final report of this Convention on the basis of very simple questions. Will it work? Will it improve our capacity to deliver? Will it promote prosperity? Will it enhance security? Will it increase our influence in the world? Is it efficient? Is it comprehensible? And, above all, as a Parliamentarian, I am sure citizens will ask: Does it place democracy, legitimacy and transparency at the heart of the European construct?

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

II. AN ENLARGED EUROPE: WHAT ROLE CAN PARLIAMENTS PLAY IN THE SYSTEM OF EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE?

Views and judgements differ on the future of the European project. However, to my mind there is one aim which we all share, that of strengthening the '*parliamentarianism*' of political life in the European Union as a vital contribution to the democratic legitimacy of our joint project.

I am also convinced that we all recognise the crucial roles both national parliaments and the European Parliament have in monitoring governments and EU institutions respectively. This complementarity is very useful, because the right cooperation on our part could lead to elimination of the democ-

matic deficit. Together we represent an unbroken chain of democratic scrutiny and accountability.

Obviously, it is up to each Member State to organise relations between its government and parliament. What works in Athens may not work in Dublin; what works in Warsaw may not work in Tallinn, etc, but an increased exchange of best practice between parliamentarians may be useful, and I applaud the efforts made by the COSAC in this respect, as well as work done by the Convention - which by the way in itself was initiated by the European Parliament as an important means of enhancing parliamentarism.

No new institutions are needed to enhance the role of parliaments and improve democratic scrutiny. We must build on existing structures and strengthen our cooperation, inter alia through rapid and reciprocal information exchange, better joint planning and best practice.

There are also a few policy areas to which we could usefully devote more of our attention in the future. Let me make a few suggestions as to ways of strengthening the democratic scrutiny of Union policy in the following specific areas.

In what areas can cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament as regards the democratic scrutiny of European policy be strengthened?

- Scrutiny of implementation of the Community budget is vital if compliance with the principle of responsibility vis-à-vis the public is to be guaranteed in the European Union.

More than 80% of Union budget expenditure - expenditure earmarked to finance the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds - is in fact administered by the national and regional authorities of the Member States.

If these policies are implemented by means of a partnership between the Commission and the Member States, the European Parliament and the national parliaments should work together closely to strengthen democratic scrutiny of the transparent and effective use of Community budget resources and the fight against fraud and practices damaging to the financial interests of the European Communities.

The decentralised implementation of the Union budget which is now being advocated should go hand in hand with a strengthening of the procedures for cooperation between the EP's Committee on Budgetary Control and its counter-

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

part committees in the national parliaments - a genuine qualitative step forward.

* *

- European Security and Defence is another area where co-operation could be stepped up to the mutual benefit of all parties. Security and defence issues will in all likelihood continue to be basically intergovernmental affairs, but combined with certain competencies for the community. We could all benefit from being better informed about each others' thinking in this area, which has evolved significantly over the last decade or two, with a new concept of "security". This trend can be expected to continue in the foreseeable future.

* *

The public must be at the heart of the debate on the development of an area

of internal justice and security in Europe.

By placing greater emphasis on fundamental rights and laying down an objective designed to act as a catalyst for the decision-making process (establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice), the Treaty of Amsterdam also pointed the way towards more structured cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments as regards democratic scrutiny of the implementation of that policy.

In that connection, the Protocol to the Treaty of Amsterdam on the national parliaments stipulates that a minimum of six weeks must elapse between the submission of a proposal in all the languages and its inclusion, for adoption, on a Council agenda.

In addition, as a result of the pressure exerted by some national parliaments, in its new Rules of Procedure the Council of Ministers has made a move towards greater openness vis-à-vis those parliaments. The Council Presidency *'will endeavour to ensure that, in principle, the provisional agenda for each meeting of the JHA (Justice and Home Affairs) Council and any documents relating to the items involved reach members of the Council at least 21 days before the beginning of the meeting'*.

This provision should ensure that the national parliaments are properly informed, not only about the basic proposal (which is often overtaken by the negotiations), but also about the definitive texts put to the vote.

Ensuring that this Council undertaking is honoured is an objective shared by the national parliaments and the European Parliament, in an area that is partly intergovernmental and partly a community competence. It should enable us to reduce the 'democratic deficit' which is all the more serious in a field fundamental to the protection of citizens' rights and to the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration and organised crime.

* *

A final, very significant example of an area, which is not subject to adequate democratic scrutiny is that of Economic and Monetary Union.

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

The Treaty on European Union lays down specific rules governing dialogue between the European Central Bank and the European Parliament with a view to the democratic scrutiny of Union monetary policy. The European Parliament therefore holds regular hearings with the European Central Bank and monetary policy debates in which all its Members, and not only those from countries which have introduced the single currency, take part and vote.

The European Parliament also has a duty to scrutinise the far-reaching economic management powers which the Treaty grants to the Council of Finance Ministers.

The Treaty provisions are, however, much less clear when it comes to scrutiny of the coordination of economic policies.

The EU would benefit from a regular and real dialogue on economic policy guidelines, with involvement by all institutions. Such arrangements would also offer broad scope for deepened co-operation with national parliaments. Input from national parliaments would be essential to inform the European Parliament's position.

Cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament has developed quite naturally since the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam. Meetings between European Parliament committees and their counterpart committees from the national parliaments of the Member States have increased fourfold, rising from 10 in 1998 to 40 in 2001 and a similar number in 2002.

Although this cooperation has been welcomed in overall terms, many national parliaments find that the format of these meetings could usefully be revised in certain respects with a view to increasing their effectiveness.

The need for more effective coordination and joint scheduling of meetings, the identification of more specific discussion topics linked to the legislative programme, and arrangements whereby other institutions can take account of conclusions drawn up at the end of a meeting, are all areas where progress could be made to improve the quality of our cooperation. Perhaps we could also seek to ensure better facilities for exchanges between national parliaments and the European Parliament at political group level.

Should we continue to build our cooperation on a practical, pragmatic basis? Or would it be helpful to have a guideline setting certain objectives for this cooperation in some areas? Any guideline should serve a useful purpose, not be a binding, heavy-handed straitjacket for our relations, which are inevitably evolving, but indicate a useful means of deepening our relations. Such a guideline could cover the cooperation between our parliamentary committees, indicating certain subjects, which could be of a priority nature. It could pave the way for a more systematic exchange of information and documentation. It could secure access to each other's libraries and information centres. It could, in particular, cover relations

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

between our respective administrations in the area of interparliamentary cooperation.

Our Constitutional Affairs Committee has put forward some suggestions in the form of a draft interparliamentary cooperation agreement. I know that the general idea was welcomed at the COSAC plenary meeting in Brussels on 27 January of this year.

It might be appropriate for this Conference of Speakers to ask a small group of our Parliaments to work on a possible code or agreement covering these areas of practical cooperation, which could be submitted to our Parliaments for agreement in the near future.

IV. AN ENLARGED EUROPE: WHAT ROLE CAN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS PLAY IN THE SYSTEM OF WORLD GOVERNANCE?

Let me first of all emphasise an idea fundamental to the European integration process: membership of the Union necessarily implies the transfer of some aspects of national sovereignty. There is no contradiction between the preservation of national identity and the implementation of a joint project.

The Community method has proved its worth, providing a means of developing a 'European project', whilst safeguarding the diversity of States, peoples and cultures.

The key to the success of that model has been the willingness to pool sovereignty with a view to exerting political influence in a more effective

Such shared sovereignty is reflected in new responsibilities for the national parliaments in terms of the exercise of democratic scrutiny and an additional area for cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament. I should like our discussions to embrace this aspect of the enlargement process.

Another urgent topic is how the parliaments of the Union can work actively to bring about globalisation with a human face.

Trade issues are too important to leave to government negotiators alone. Demonstrations and critical voices in recent years show that not enough has been done to respond to people's anxieties. We need a thorough discussion in the public domain. There is a gap between what goes on at WTO level and the wider public. That is why active involvement of parliamentarians is crucial. The debate needs to be repossessed by parliamentarians and held in public. Parliamentarians could help spread understanding of the trade agenda and its implications and increase the legitimacy of the international trading system.

In the long run, political systems function best when they are open and transparent, and politics are carried out under the public eye, encouraging the widest possible participation by people involved in policy-making and its implementation. When forming policies at a global level, the task of

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

connecting with the people is particularly challenging, but no less important.

Nowadays, trade is about much more than exports and imports. It is about development, food safety, consumer protection, the environment and economic and social policies. People are affected by these issues in their daily lives, which makes it even more crucial to associate parliamentarians.

In February last, the European Parliament organised a conference, together with the IPU, on the parliamentary dimension of the WTO in Geneva. I know that several parliamentarians from current and future EU Member States took part in that conference. The next opportunity to make further progress will be at Cancun in Mexico on 9 September this year. I hope many parliamentarians will engage in this meeting, which will take place just before the ministerial conference begins.

The United States' delegation normally includes a substantial contingent of legislators. We in Europe should endeavour to match our most important trading partner by engaging parliamentarians to an equivalent degree.

In view of the importance of these matters for the daily lives of our citizens, for our economies and for our global partners, I feel we need to cooperate more closely in setting priorities in the external arena.

I urge you, therefore, to include this issue on the agenda for our discussions, with a view to encouraging an exchange of views on best practice in this area and preparing institutional proposals.

The parliamentary dimension will also play an increased role in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (conversion of the current Forum into a parliamentary assembly), the Stability Pact for the Balkans and the parliamentary institutions of regional groupings, such as the Parliamentary Assembly for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

By fostering the development of a parliamentary dimension to the regional integration processes under way in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, our

parliaments will also contribute to the successful integration of these countries and regions into the world economy, thereby helping to reduce the poverty gap, and, ultimately, supporting a globalisation process based on solidarity and open to all.

The forthcoming enlargement will raise the profile of, and increase the influence exerted by, the European Union – and, hence, the ‘parliamentary component’ – in multilateral and regional international organisations. This calls for greater efforts on the part of the national parliaments and the European Parliament, in order to provide parliamentary representation commensurate with the Union’s international role.

I do not suggest that we should act as a bloc. I do however believe that all sides could benefit from increased coordination and regular investigation of whether there is a basis for enhanced co-operation on a case to case basis.

As regards multilateral parliamentary assemblies, the parliaments of the Union – national parliaments and the European Parliament – will be able to exert greater influence in:

- Fejl! Ukendt argument for parameter. -

- the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – 25 countries out of a total of 43 will be EU Member States;
- the Interparliamentary Union (IPU)
- the ‘*Group of Twelve Plus*’ (which brings together the national parliaments of the Council of Europe, plus New Zealand, Canada, the United States and Australia);
- the possible future parliamentary institutions of the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development).

V. CONCLUSION

The quality of relations between national parliaments and the European Parliament is of importance for the democratic life of the Union as a whole. We have our distinctive roles, but there are overlapping interests and gains to be made from enhanced co-operation. Together we can strengthen the democratic scrutiny, increase transparency and close the gap between the EU and its citizens.

A year has elapsed since the last time we met as a group. In that time considerable progress has been made in increasing the effectiveness of our co-operation within the current institutional framework, i.e. through COSAC. In this respect I would like to pay tribute to the Danish and the Greek Presidencies, which successfully have brought to closure a number of significant reform proposals, notably the new rules of procedure and the decision to set up a COSAC secretariat. I welcome these decisions and can re-confirm that the European Parliament would be ready to host this secretariat on its premises, if the national parliaments should find such a solution helpful.

This report contains a few practical proposals concerning ways to strengthen our cooperation on democratic scrutiny of European as well as world governance. I hope they will provoke some discussion on how we might move forward together.

(Løbenr. 20349)