



PARLIAMENT
OF ESTONIA

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Chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee
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Austrian Parliament

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Austrian Parliament

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your kind invitation to participate in the Plenary Meeting of the LX COSAC that will be held in Vienna on 18 – 20 November. The agenda promises a very interesting meeting, and I look forward to a fruitful debate.

On behalf of the Chairpersons of the Committees on European Affairs of the National Parliaments of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, who recently met in Tallinn, discussing *inter alia* the agenda of the upcoming COSAC Plenary Meeting, I would like to propose amendments for the COSAC Contribution for your and Troika's consideration under the topics Climate policy and Energy Union, and Brexit.

As Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland agreed at the aforementioned meeting, bringing Eastern Partnership countries closer to the EU through encouraging and supporting of reforms, and contributing to improving their citizens' quality of life and security should be a high priority for the EU. We know how difficult it is to implement large-scale reforms. Significant reform steps have already been taken, but much remains to be done. Particular attention shall be given to the Associated Eastern Partners (Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova) and adequate assistance to them to ensure swift and effective implementation of Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. Taking into account a number of important elections in the Eastern Partnership region that are upcoming, we must reaffirm our firm support to their European choice and aspirations, as well as comprehensive reforms that are being implemented in these countries.

Let us also recall the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that will dramatically change the gas supply map of Europe by eliminating Ukraine as a major gas transit country and bypassing most of Central and Eastern Europe. The project will leave Ukraine in a vulnerable international and financial position.

Furthermore, we believe that all energy infrastructure projects must comply with the principles of European Energy Union: contribute to EU's energy independence, diversify energy sources

and routes, and ensure energy security in Central and Eastern Europe. In this regard, we expect the new Gas Directive to extend the rules of the EU energy law also to gas pipelines from third countries (including NS2). It is important to establish clarity and ensure equal treatment of all pipelines operating in the EU gas market. We would like to see fast progress on the directive in the Council of the EU. We appreciate the work done so far by different Presidencies, but keeping in mind the tight timeframe due to European Parliament elections in May 2019, we suggest calling upon all the institutions involved in the examination of the proposal to demonstrate proactivity and reach tangible results.

Taking into account the above, we kindly suggest the following paragraphs to be considered and included in the COSAC Contribution text:

“COSAC emphasizes that the success of the Eastern Partnership could only be achieved by joint efforts of all EU institutions, EU Member states and the Eastern Partner states themselves. It is in the interests of the EU to have stable, economically strong and pro-European Eastern Neighbours. COSAC reaffirms its support to the Eastern Partnership countries, particularly to the Associated Eastern Partnership states (Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova), and calls on the EU institutions and EU Member States to ensure adequate financial support to the implementation of Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. The EU has to avoid undermining the commitments taken and reforms carried out in the Eastern Partnership countries.”

“COSAC acknowledges the work of the EU institutions in delivering the ambitious Energy Union. COSAC supports and is committed to the promotion of energy security and diversification of sources, suppliers and routes. While Russia will continue to play an important role in Europe’s energy supplies, the EU needs to further diversify its energy imports, and all infrastructure projects must fully comply with the EU law, especially with the provisions of the Third Energy Package. However, it is important to apply the rules of the EU energy law to already existing gas pipelines from third countries. It is essential to establish clarity and treat all pipelines operating in the EU gas market equally.”

COSAC therefore calls upon the European Parliament and the Council to make fast progress in the modernisation and revision of the Gas Directive to ensure that all import pipelines on the EU territory and in the EU economic zone are subject to the principles of the Energy Union – transparency, reliability and accessibility. COSAC urges the EU institutions to do everything possible to achieve tangible progress in this field. COSAC emphasizes that infrastructure projects incompatible with EU energy legislation and the Energy Union principles undermine the unity of the EU, which is based on the principle of equality and respect for the national interests of all member states.”

Concerning the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, we would like to emphasize that the withdrawal agreement has to be in full compliance with the interests of Ireland. We propose to include a paragraph on the Irish border question in the text of the COSAC Contribution. At our meeting, we all agreed that everything possible has to be done to avoid physical border on the island of Ireland to safeguard the principles of the Good Friday Agreement. It is in the interests of the EU and the UK to find solutions for both sides.

I do hope that you will be able to consider our proposals as they are of great importance for all Europeans.

I am looking forward to the upcoming COSAC meeting, where we will have a chance to openly debate on highly important topical matters.

Yours sincerely,



Toomas Vitsut
Chairman

European Union Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu

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