



Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments

Luxembourg, 22-24 May 2016

Conclusions of the Presidency

Preliminary remarks

The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments was held in Luxembourg at the European Convention Center Luxembourg on 22-24 May 2016, and attended by the Speakers and Presidents or their representatives of 38 Parliaments/Chambers of 28 Member States as well as by the Vice-President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission. Also taking part were the Speaker of one EU candidate country and other countries attended as observers. The Conference was chaired by Mr Mars Di Bartolomeo, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg.

Recalling paragraph 5.1 of the Stockholm Guidelines, it is recognised that certain Chambers, because of their constitutional position, cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, they recognise on behalf of their Chambers the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.

In his introduction, the Speaker stressed the inestimable added value of the European project, which is a project of peace, freedom, economic and social development based on our core values.

The Conference was divided into four sessions:

- I. “Managing the Migration Flows”. The session began with a keynote presentation by the President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, the Vice-Speaker of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Mr Anastasios Kourakis, the Speaker of the French *Sénat*, Mr Gérard Larcher, and by the Speaker of the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Ms Ankie Broekers-Knol.
- II. “Strengthening the European Union”. The session began with keynote presentations by the Speaker of the Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Ms Laura Boldrini, the Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead McGuinness, the Speaker of the Polish *Sejm*, Mr Marek Kuchcinski, and by the Speaker of the French *Assemblée nationale*, Mr Claude Bartolone.



- III. “The Role of National Parliaments and Interparliamentary Cooperation”. The session began with keynote presentations by the Speaker of the German *Bundestag*, Mr Norbert Lammert, and by the Speaker of the Swedish *Riksdag*, Mr Urban Ahlin.
- IV. “Ensuring the Security of Citizens while Respecting Fundamental Freedoms”. The session began with keynote presentations by the Speaker of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Mr Pietro Grasso, and by the Speaker of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, Mr Eiki Nestor.

Managing the Migration Flows

1. The Speakers acknowledge that the European Union, especially the most affected Member States, is facing a massive influx of refugees and migrants fleeing mostly Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and several African countries.
2. The Speakers are closely following the initiatives taken by the European Commission to address the refugee crisis, especially the adoption of the European Agenda on Migration as well as the efforts to tackle the root causes of refugee and migration flows and the need to implement the short-term and long-term priorities by reinforcing the focus on the external dimension of migration in a spirit of partnership with countries of origin and transit. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that any complex answer to migratory pressure may only be successful if the causes of the crisis are properly addressed at the source of the problem.
3. The Speakers note that following the closure of the Western Balkans route, thousands of refugees and migrants have currently stranded in Greece in extremely difficult conditions. In this context, the Speakers welcome the regulation adopted by the Council on 15 March 2016, setting up an EU emergency support mechanism to help Greece and other Member States overwhelmed by the arrival of large numbers of refugees in consultation with the host Member State. In addition, the Speakers welcome the decision taken by the European Commission on 16 December 2015 to adopt a record EU humanitarian aid budget for 2016, while global humanitarian needs are increasing due to the growing number of refugees and migrants, the increasing impact of natural disasters, climate change, conflicts and instability in the countries of origin and the economic crisis.
4. The Speakers deeply regret the large number of victims and the number of migrants and refugees who risk their lives trying to reach Europe illegally. The Speakers deplore the gravity of the situation that Greece and Italy are facing and note the heavy burden being shouldered by these two countries. They emphasize the need to counter the practices of smugglers and traffickers of human beings over sea and over land, based on the EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling of 27 May 2015, and commend efforts undertaken in the framework of joint operation EU NAVFOR MED-Sofia. The Speakers note with concern that the most vulnerable groups in the



smuggling of migrants are particularly unaccompanied minors and women. Moreover, in the light of a quick return of people who do not have a right to international protection, the adoption of the EU common list of safe countries of origin is urgently needed. The list should be established based on objective criteria as regards the rule of law and respect of fundamental rights.

5. The Speakers welcome that the Conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments 2015, calling for “concrete and immediate action to deal more effectively with the tragedies at sea caused by the increasing migration flows from the southern shores of the Mediterranean as well as to face the problems caused by waves of refugees arriving from eastern borders of the Schengen area”, have been taken into account. In this sense, they particularly welcome the good cooperation between EU and NATO and the work undertaken by NATO in its action, especially in the Aegean Sea concerning the efforts to stem illegal trafficking and illegal migration.
6. The Speakers plead for a strengthening of active and passive solidarity and responsibility within the EU. In this context, they support¹ the statement of the European Council of 7 March 2016 to accelerate substantially the implementation of relocation and resettlement to alleviate the heavy burden that presently weighs on countries particularly affected by the massive influx of refugees and migrants.
7. The Speakers welcome² the Communication from the European Commission on 6 April 2016 in which it presents the process for a reform of the Common European

¹ The Slovak (Národná rada), the Polish (Sejm, Senat), the Hungarian (Országgyűlés) and the Czech (Poslanecká sněmovna, Senát) Chambers express a reservation in respect of the content used in this paragraph. They like to present the following position:

The Speakers plead for a strengthening of solidarity and responsibility within the EU. **In this regard Member States should have the opportunity to take sovereign decisions as regards preferred measures of contribution.** In this context, they support **note** the **decision statement** of the European Council of 7 March 2016 to accelerate substantially the implementation of relocation, **which includes conducting the necessary security checks** and resettlement to alleviate the heavy burden that presently weighs on countries particularly affected by the massive influx of refugees and migrants.

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The Speakers ~~welcome~~ **take note of** the Communications from the European Commission on 6 April 2016 and on 4 May 2016 in which it presents the process for a reform of the Common European Asylum System options (CEAS) and developing safe and legal pathways to Europe. **They underline the need to move quickly towards an asylum system that is truly common in terms of sharing of responsibility and of solidarity.**



Asylum System options (CEAS) and developing safe and legal pathways to Europe and take note of the proposals presented on 4 May 2016. In the context of the proposal on the recast of Dublin Regulation, additional solutions based on solidarity should be considered as possible burden sharing measures. The Speakers reaffirm the need for a more humane, more solidarity-based, fairer burden-sharing and efficient European asylum policy, as well as a better structured legal migration policy. They underline the need to move quickly towards an asylum system that is truly common in terms of sharing of responsibility and of solidarity.

8. The Speakers note with concern that the amalgam between “terrorists” and “refugees” as well as the amalgam between religious fanaticism and religious belief is gaining more and more ground. They highlight that refugees are also victims of the terrorist system and flee among others the massacres and killings of Daesh. They express the need to not stigmatize those under the right to international protection.
9. The Speakers emphasize the need to treat the refugees with humanity and dignity and to support them in their process of integration in their host country. Comprehension, mutual respect as well as the full respect of the rule of law is the fundamental basis of the relationship between refugees and the host society. It is essential to emphasize the importance of proper communication in our societies as well as among migrants and refugees in order to understand both our and their expectations.
10. The Speakers recognize that Turkey is a key partner - and EU candidate country-, particularly regarding cooperation on migration. They underline the efforts of the Turkish population that is hosting 2.7 million refugees living on its territory. However, the Speakers underline that this cooperation on migration is separated from the EU accession negotiation process and that this cooperation is fulfilled while fully respecting the fundamental values and established conditionality of the EU. They also consider crucial that Turkey fulfills its commitments on the protection of fundamental freedoms, including ensuring freedom of expression and media pluralism, and express their concern regarding intimidation as well as legal and administrative proceedings which can be taken namely against journalists, academics and parliamentarians.³
11. The Speakers note the adoption of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan: support of refugees and migration management, activated on 29 November 2015. The Speakers

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emphasize that progress has been achieved, including Turkey's opening of its labour market to Syrians under temporary protection, stepped up security effort by the Turkish coast guard and police and enhanced information sharing.⁴

12. With regard to the statement reached between the EU and Turkey on 18 March 2016, the Speakers stress that the implementation of this statement must be fully in line with international and EU law relating to access to asylum and international protection and the implementation of fundamental rights and procedural guarantees. The Speakers recognise that the way the agreement is going to be implemented is crucial and it is important to respect the principle of non-refoulement. In addition, the Speakers emphasize that refugees require EU protection and an attitude of rejection is not the solution to this problem.
13. The Speakers thank and support humanitarian organisations, including the United Nations agencies, NGOs and organizations of the Red Cross for their commitment in aiding refugees and migrants.
14. The Speakers acknowledge that the free movement of people is one of the EU main successes as well as the essential and fundamental value of the EU. The Speakers support the European Commission in its efforts deployed in the roadmap for restoring a fully functioning Schengen system. In order to achieve that, Member States must give full effect to existing European and Schengen legislation. The Speakers agree that the unity of the European Union depends on ensuring the full control over the external borders of the Schengen area. The Speakers are aware that restoring the normal functioning of the Schengen system must be combined with the full support towards Member States facing difficult circumstances. In the light of this, they welcome the proposal of the European Commission for a new Emergency Assistance instrument for faster crisis response within the EU. The Speakers note diverged views on the reform of the "Dublin regulation" issued by the European Commission.
15. The Speakers recognize that the need to strengthen the control of EU external borders goes along with increased support to Syrian refugees, to neighbouring countries of Syria as well as to Member States most affected by this crisis. The European Union must play a proactive role in implementing the peace and development process in this unstable region. The Speakers follow closely the set of measures proposed by the European Commission to secure the EU's external borders and look forward to the quick adoption by the Council and the European Parliament of the proposal establishing the European Border and Coast Guard. The Speakers emphasize the fundamental role of Frontex, whose competences and operational capabilities have to be strengthened and made durable, as well as the

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importance of cooperation with third countries, namely through the establishment of readmission agreements.

16. The Speakers welcome the revised draft regulation for establishing an Entry/Exit System (EES) included in the package of measures on “smart borders”. They are convinced that this Entry/Exit System will modernise the management of external borders by improving the quality and effectiveness of controls and help Member States deal with the increased volume of travellers entering and leaving the EU.
17. The Speakers underline that migration flows from Africa to Europe are largely attributable to economic reasons related to issues of development. Therefore, they insist on an ambitious European development policy.

Strengthening the European Union

18. The Speakers note that the “Rome Declaration”, signed on 14 September 2015 by 4 Speakers as well as, in the meantime, by 11 additional Speakers of national parliamentary assemblies, supported by the Speakers of two candidate countries and still open for signature by the Speakers of all national parliamentary assemblies, calls for significantly greater political integration within the EU.
19. All the Speakers acknowledge that national Parliaments should play a greater role in the decision-making process within the EU in accordance with the European Treaties.
20. The Speakers take note of the Declaration “Europe of Solidary States”-security, borders, renewed institutions of 15 April 2016 proposed by the Marshal of the Polish *Sejm*.
21. The Speakers claim that a new impetus of the European integration involves that the EU pursues its efforts to review its modus operandi in order to concentrate on areas in which it can bring a real “added-value”, to constantly monitor the simplification of its modes of action and to make the EU policies understandable and accessible to European citizens.
22. The Speakers emphasize that the EU must insist on the preservation and promotion of its founding values - human dignity, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights - and that these values must never be questioned. In this sense, the Speakers underscore that the EU Member States must ensure the respect of their common values on which the EU is founded.
23. The Speakers note that following the consequences of the financial and economic crisis, the social dimension of the EU needs to be strengthened. In the light of this, they highlight the need to further align the economic policies to social policies and to achieve a balance between economic and budgetary equilibrium and social



equilibrium. The Speakers also recognize the need to strengthen the social dimension of the European Semester.

24. The Speakers are concerned about the alarming rates of youth unemployment in the EU and desire that the EU becomes synonymous of opportunity for young Europeans to ensure that there is no lost generation.
25. The Speakers are closely following the package of proposals of the European Parliament for a reform of the EU electoral law and underline that, whereas the necessary provisions are determined at the level of the EU, the organisation of elections is first and foremost the competence of the Member States. The Speakers point out that the reform of the electoral law of the EU is examined by the national Parliaments under the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The Role of National Parliaments and Interparliamentary Cooperation

26. The Speakers emphasize the general willingness of national Parliaments to play a more active role in the European Union. They also welcome the wish of national Parliaments to be more involved in the debates around the European Semester and the National reform programs.
27. The Speakers of the national Parliaments stress that the free trade agreements TTIP and CETA should be considered as mixed agreements and insist that national Parliaments have to give their consent. They reiterate the need for national Parliaments to have access to information relating to ongoing trade negotiations, so that the possibility to express their views and concerns would not be restricted to the ratification procedure. They welcome as a first step the newly established reading room for TTIP consolidated text by Member States and invite the European Commission to further facilitate the access to these documents for national Parliaments.
28. The Speakers believe that the “green card” (enhanced political dialogue) would be, in addition to existing forms of parliamentary control and involvement, a practical tool for willing national Parliaments to play a proactive role and to contribute further to the good functioning of the EU. They also recognize that some national Parliaments would not be able to use the “green card” (enhanced political dialogue) because of internal constitutional traditions.
29. The Speakers welcome the efforts initiated under the three pilot projects as well as by the COSAC on introducing a “green card” (enhanced political dialogue), while noting that some questions related to the “green card” (enhanced political dialogue) remain open. In this sense, they welcome the decision of the Dutch Presidency to put this topic on the agenda of the LV COSAC, to be held in The Hague on 13-14 June 2016. They also look forward to the 25th Bi-Annual Report of COSAC that will present a



follow-up work on this topic and encourage COSAC to continue discussions on the introduction of a “green card” (enhanced political dialogue).

30. The Speakers reiterate that the “yellow card” procedure needs improvement without Treaty change. In this sense, the Speakers support the COSAC in its demands to the Commission to strengthen efforts to ensure better quality and more timely responses to reasoned opinions.
31. The Speakers take note of the referendum in the UK on its membership of the EU planned on 23 June 2016 and on the agreement reached by the 28 countries of the European Union concerning a new settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union. In this context, the Speakers take note of the “red card” mechanism that would enable national Parliaments to request the Council Presidency to include the item on the agenda for comprehensive discussion and afterwards to discontinue the consideration of the draft legislative act, unless the draft is amended to accommodate the concerns expressed in the reasoned opinions. In this context, the Speakers take note of the supplementary mechanism agreed concerning the application of the subsidiarity principle.
32. The Speakers welcome the new Europol regulation, adopted and signed on 11 May 2016, which will enhance Europol’s mandate to ensure that it is fully equipped to counter the increase in cross-border crimes and terrorist threats. They remind that the entry into force of the Europol regulation is foreseen for the 1st May 2017.
33. The Speakers call on Member States to fully implement the instruments provided by the Europol regulation and remind that the efficiency of Europol is directly linked to the quantity and quality of information and intelligence provided by the Member States to Europol.
34. The Speakers reaffirm that pursuant to Article 88 of the TFEU the scrutiny of Europol’s activities shall be carried out by the European Parliament together with national Parliaments. According to the new Europol regulation, they shall constitute a Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG), established jointly by national Parliaments and the competent committee of the European Parliament. The Speakers emphasize that the objectives and missions of this scrutiny group have been defined by the new Europol regulation, whereas modalities of parliamentary scrutiny of Europol’s activities must be defined by the European Parliament, together with national Parliaments, while stressing that the European Parliament and national Parliaments are on equal footing.



35. In order to define the modalities of the JPSG, the Speakers propose to adopt a step by step approach and to ask a Working Group, comprising the troika⁵ of the Conference of Speakers to consider scrutiny mechanisms and to present a draft proposal, after consulting and involving other Parliaments/Chambers. This Working Group would send this preliminary draft to all Parliaments/Chambers before the interparliamentary meeting organised by the LIBE committee at the European Parliament in autumn 2016. Thus, the Parliaments/Chambers have the chance to discuss and comment on this preliminary draft. Finally, based on the preliminary draft and the ensuing discussions, the Working Group will prepare and submit a draft text by 16 December 2016, allowing Parliaments/Chambers to amend the text until February 2017 ahead of the next Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments, so that it can be adopted then.

Ensuring the Security of Citizens while Respecting Fundamental Freedoms

36. The Speakers strongly condemn the heinous and cowardly terrorist attacks perpetrated in recent months in Europe and in many other countries in the whole world, and they express their condolences to the victims and their families. These deadly attacks are targeting the European values of freedom, democracy and the respect for human rights and the rule of law. In this sense, the Speakers confirm that the best answer to terrorism is that of freedom and the rule of law.

37. The Speakers underscore that the EU itself is a symbol of rights and freedoms and is a reference model for the protection of fundamental rights and respect for fundamental liberties not only towards EU citizens but also to those living within its borders.

38. The Speakers reaffirm the added value of a “European Union of security” and the need to employ in a coordinated way the framework and the instruments put in place by the institutions of the European Union.

39. The Speakers emphasize that the EU must fight against terrorism, radicalisation leading to terrorism and recruitment as well as financing linked to terrorism while safeguarding the solidarity and the unity between Member States. In this sense, they follow with particular interest the development of the European Agenda on Security for the period 2015-2020. In addition, the Speakers look forward to the new “EU Global strategy on foreign and security policy” which will be presented by the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica Mogherini in June 2016. They recall that national Parliaments have submitted proposals on the Common Security and

⁵ The troika will be composed of the Parliaments of Luxembourg, Slovakia, United Kingdom and the European Parliament.



Defence Policy (CSDP) as well as on the issue of migration as their contribution to the preparation of the “EU Global Strategy”.

40. The Speakers are closely following the implementation of the Joint Action on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2015-2019, adopted by the Council on 20 July 2015, which reaffirms the EU’s commitment to promote and protect human rights and to support democracy worldwide.
41. The Speakers note with concern the security threats posed by terrorism and highlight the need to improve the cooperation among European intelligence services, national experts on fight against terrorism and other authorities. They also invite all Member States to share information with Europol and Eurojust in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. The Speakers recognize that substantial progress has already been made at Member State and EU level to enhance the collective ability to combat terrorism. In this sense, they take note of the directive on Passenger Name Records (PNR), adopted during the European Parliament plenary session on 14 April 2016. While regretting the delay in the adoption of an essential device for the security of European citizens, the Speakers underline the urgency of its transposition into national law and its operational implementation. As highlighted in the “Paris Declaration”, adopted on 30 March 2015 by several Parliaments/Chambers, the Speakers call on the EU to rapidly adopt measures that will strengthen the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism at European level, as the directive on firearms, to improve the functioning of European files, such as Eurodac, and to strengthen Europol and Eurojust.
42. The Speakers note with concern the growing phenomenon of “foreign terrorist fighters” and highlight that priority should be given to preventing radicalization and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organizations. In addition, the Speakers stress the need to ensure that those already radicalized follow deradicalization programs and cannot convey terrorist propaganda messages or hate speech. In this sense, the Speakers look forward to the code of conduct against hate speech online developed by the European Commission and reaffirm the need to proactively exchange information about those people most at risk of being radicalized.

IPEX (Interparliamentary EU information exchange)

43. The Speakers welcome the conclusions on IPEX adopted at the Meeting of the Secretaries General of European Union Parliaments held in Luxembourg on 14-15 February 2016.
44. The Speakers note with satisfaction that, during these last years, IPEX has become a reliable and effective tool to exchange documents and information relevant for



interparliamentary cooperation, thanks to the continuous commitment of the European Parliament and the national Parliaments contributing to IPEX.

45. The Speakers thank the Italian Presidency for its work and results produced during the year of the Italian Chairmanship of the IPEX Board, in particular in their efforts to implement the new guidelines, adopted in Rome on 13 March 2015. The Speakers also would like to thank the Austrian Parliament for hosting the annual meeting of the IPEX correspondents, the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg and the European Parliament for hosting the Board meetings, the Belgian Senate for its availability to formally employ the IPEX information officer and the European Parliament for providing logistics and the infrastructure.
46. The Speakers call on the Luxembourg Presidency to continue the discussions on a Digital Strategy, meant to provide IPEX with a comprehensive and efficient strategy with the view of a mid-term work programme to be carried out by the rotating presidency.