



Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas
Chair of the Committee of European Affairs
Seimas of the republic of Lithuania

Gedimino ave. 53,
Vilnius

Norwegian Parliament

Date: 24 April 2013
Our ref.:

Your ref.:

Dear Mr. Kirkilas,

I am addressing you in your capacity as the incoming Chair of the EU Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).

As you may be aware, the Chair of the European Consultative Committee of the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) has for a number of years, and at the discretion of the COSAC chair, regularly been invited as a “special guest” to the meetings of COSAC. This practice was introduced during the Finnish EU Presidency in 1999 and has later been adopted by most COSAC chairs. During the Irish presidency, the Norwegian Parliament was also invited to the COSAC chairpersons meeting, which proved especially fruitful. I believe participation in these meetings has proven to be an arrangement of common value to all of us.

Though not a member of the European Union, Norway is closely associated with the EU through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. The agreement extends the Single Market of the EU to the three EEA EFTA Countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The EEA Agreement also ensures our participation in EU's programmes. Moreover, Norway is a fully-fledged member of the Schengen cooperation and is through bilateral agreements taking part in a wide range of other EU activities including on crime prevention, migration and asylum. With the EU and Norway so deeply integrated, we all share a common interest in increased cooperation and knowledge sharing. Participation in meetings like the COSAC meetings provides an opportunity to this end.

The Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the parliamentary dimension in the cooperation within the European Union, including the co-operation between the European Parliament and National Parliaments. This development adds to the importance of maintaining close contacts also with National Parliaments of countries closely

associated with the EU. The possibility to be present in a meeting like COSAC would obviously facilitate this as well as contribute to the broader European agenda.

In this context, I would also refer to the agreement reached last year by the speakers of the European Union Parliaments on the format of the new Inter-Parliamentary conference on parliamentary control of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. As you know, European NATO members can be represented as observers at the conference.

I am aware that during the Lithuanian presidency a COSAC Chairperson meeting is taking place in Vilnius 7 – 8 July 2013 and a COSAC plenary meeting is taking place in Vilnius 27 – 29 October 2013. I would highly appreciate if you could consider extending an invitation to the Norwegian Parliament to these meetings.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success with the EU presidency of Lithuania this spring.

Looking forward to hearing from you on this matter, I remain,

Yours sincerely



Ine M. Eriksen Søreide

Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence
Chair of the European Consultative Committee