

Statement by Mr Henrik Hololei
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on the Role of National Parliaments

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is easy to see that today we are discussing one question where we all stand united – how to involve the people better in the European decision-making. It is clear that the European integration cannot continue deepening without popular support. Over the last decades it has been evident that contrary to some expectations, we have not been witnessing the development of a European political community. The allegiances of people, their attention and participation still belong to the national political systems. Thus in order to involve the people we have no other means but to give a better defined and more visible role to national parliaments.

In my opinion the working group under the chairmanship of Mrs. Stuart has done a good job. In broad terms my government agrees with the principal conclusions of the report. Especially I would like to agree with the principle that the involvement of national parliaments should not lead to further complication of the decision-making process of the Union. It has been our position right from the beginning of the debates that no new institutions or bodies should be created and this principle has been well observed in the paper, especially on the issue of monitoring the application of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles.

In my opinion the mechanisms designed in the report for involving the parliaments are both useful and applicable. Informing the parliaments in a centralised manner about upcoming draft proposals and involving them in a debate over the very need for action on European level can serve to alleviate the fears of people over too rapid integration, but also as a useful side-effect involve more politicians, interest groups, the media and the people in a debate about European issues. This is the only way for bridging the gap between “European” and “national” politics.

The same leading idea of simplicity and applicability is also visible on the part of the report dedicated to national scrutiny systems. While ensuring democracy is our common task, we still have to master it on our own. Each state has its own constitutional mechanisms for the regulating the relations between the parliament and the government and there can be no scope for prescriptions here.

However, the same strictness has not been applied to topic of cooperation between national parliaments. While I can agree that the exchange of best practices is in the best interests of everyone, further institutionalisation of COSAC, setting up of a “Congress” composed of representatives of national parliaments and the European Parliaments may

lead us to an institutional structure too difficult to comprehend for an ordinary person. (In addition this would alter the current institutional balance.)

The same actually applies to the institutionalisation of the Convention. In my opinion the Convention has served its task well – it has brought the attention of the public to the issues of the future of Europe. But while we try to create a body which would represent everyone, we could end up with one representing noone. The Convention has been created for accomplishing a specific task and upon fulfilling its task it should take its honourable place in history.