

Draft letter 11 June 2014

On the establishment of a Commission working group on the role of national parliaments in the EU

Dear Mr./Mrs President

Firstly we would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the European Commission.

We are confident that under your presidency, the European Commission will continue to be a positive force for developing the European Union's democratic legitimacy and not least for the political dialogue with Member State national parliaments.

Democratic legitimacy is crucial for the European Union. But in the wake of the economic and financial crisis, there are signs of fading democratic legitimacy of the EU. Europe needs a new relationship of cooperation between the union and its member states. Only together we can rebuild trust in the European project.

We – the signatories of this letter - therefore call on the new European Commission to set up a working group to include national parliamentarians and representatives of the EU institutions to look at the role of national parliaments in the EU. The task of the working group should be to draft an action plan on how to strengthen the role of national parliaments in the European Union.

Legitimacy and support for European decision-making must be established bottom-up from citizens' level. The European Parliament is an important voice for European citizens and plays its part extremely well. But national parliaments and the European Parliament each have their own distinct roles, and they have a joint responsibility to ensure that the European Union becomes truly accountable and democratic.

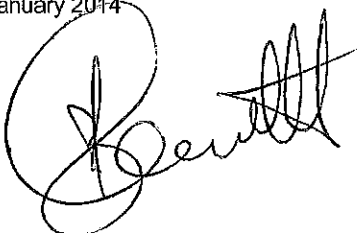
Effective involvement of national parliaments is fundamental to ensuring accountability, and legitimacy, for the actions of the European Union. A stronger and more direct say for national parliaments in European decision making will encourage national MPs to engage more in European affairs and to take responsibility for policy output. National ownership of European decisions is vital for increasing citizens' faith in European policy solutions.

It is generally agreed that national parliaments have an important role in scrutinising their national governments in European Affairs, and another as guardian of the subsidiarity principle. Scrutiny procedures must be continuously reviewed and improved. Likewise, improvements in the subsidiarity and proportionality procedures are indeed needed.

Meanwhile, there is a growing consensus among national parliaments who find that their role in European affairs must go beyond monitoring the principle of subsidiarity and national scrutiny. National parliaments must play a more pro-active role in European decision-making.

To this end a number of proposals have been put forward by the Dutch Tweede Kamer, The UK House of Lords and the Danish Parliament.¹ These proposals are all designed to respond to questions such as:

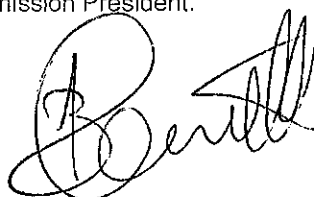
¹ Tweede Kamer: *Democratic legitimacy in the EU and the role of national parliament. A position paper of the Dutch House of representatives.* November 2013
Folketinget: *Twenty-three recommendations to strengthen the role of national parliaments in a changing European governance.* January 2014



How can we design a democratic framework that matches the European Union's increased role and powers regarding economic governance while still respecting the prerogatives of national parliaments? How can national parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the EU? And how can we ensure that European citizens do not consider themselves alienated to the European decision-making?

These questions could be among the topics addressed by the proposed working group.

We wish you every success in your new responsibility as Commission President.
Please accept the assurance of our highest consideration.



Best regards,

Eva Kjer HANSEN,
Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament

Raymond KNOPS
Chair of the standing committee on European Affairs of the Netherlands House of Representatives

Allan WIDMAN
Chair of the Committee on European Union Affairs of the Swedish Parliament

Lord Timothy BOSWELL OF AYNHO
Chair of the EU Select Committee of the UK House of Lords

William Cash
Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee of the UK House of Commons²

Dominic HANNIGAN
Chairman of the joint Committee on European Union Affairs of the Irish Oireachtas

Richárd HÖRCSIK
Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Hungarian National Assembly

Edmund WITTBRODT
Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Polish Senate

Gediminas KIRKILAS
Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Lithuanian Seimas

Radu Bogdan TIMPAU
Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies

House of Lords, European Union Committee, 9th report of session 2013-14: *The Role of National Parliaments in the European Union*. March 2014

² The United Kingdom doesn't have a written Constitution, but has its own Constitutional Arrangements, which differ from the other 27 EU Member States.

Anca Daniela BOAGIU
Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Romanian Senate

Miroslav KREJCA
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Chairman of the EU Committee of the Austrian Federal Council

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Josef HORVAT
Chairman of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Slovenian National Assembly

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PEDA GRBIN
Chairman of the Committee on the Constitution, Standing Orders and Political System of the Croatian Parliament

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