



EDUSKUNNAN PUHEMIES

DER DEUTSCHE BUNDESTAG



REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
Parlament

Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles
President of the European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels
BELGIUM

Vienna, 16 January 2006

Dear Mr. President,

Having received the latest draft for a report on the period of reflection, which shall be voted on by the European Parliament this week, we would like to communicate to you our opinion on those articles which refer to the national parliaments.

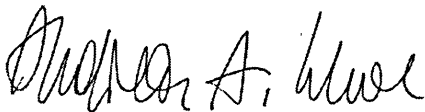
First of all we would like to thank the European Parliament for all its initiatives to promote the European dialogue on the future of the Union. We also highly appreciate that the European Parliament seeks the cooperation with the national parliaments with regard to the reflection period.

However, in article 13 of the draft it is proposed that "the European Parliament and national parliaments jointly organise conferences – Parliamentary Forums - in order to stimulate the debate and to shape, step by step, the necessary political conclusions". In this regard we are not in a position to commit national parliaments to such a series of conferences or parliamentary fora. Due to the fact that 13 countries have already ratified the constitutional treaty and 12 countries have not, the national parliaments have very different approaches towards the debate on the future of Europe and there is neither a need nor a mechanism to find a joint strategy of national parliaments on how to engage in a lasting debate. Furthermore national parliaments do not have the resources to engage in such a broad and long lasting process of a series of conferences and parliamentary fora, and they would not like to be seen just as an appendix to the European Parliament in such a process.

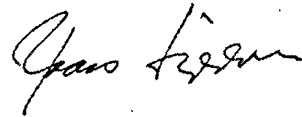
Concerning article 16, where a first parliamentary forum shall be convened in the spring of 2006, we agree that such a conference of members of the European Parliament and members of national parliaments be held on 8/9 May 2006 as previously discussed. This shall be a single interparliamentary conference, aiming at an exchange of views on the status quo and the perspectives for the debate on the future of Europe. But we do not see any institutional or legal basis for drawing "comprehensive conclusions to the European Council". Therefore, we can not commit national parliaments to enter in such a decision making process. As concerns further interparliamentary conferences, this shall be decided after the Spring conference and after the European Summit in June, possibly in the frame of the Conference of Presidents of Parliaments to be held in Copenhagen from 29 June to 1 July 2006.

Dear Mr. President, we attach great importance to this interparliamentary conference in spring 2006, and we very much appreciate the European Parliament's readiness to cooperate with the national parliaments in the debate on the future of Europe. Finally, we would like to reassure you that we fully respect the complete autonomy of the European Parliament in adopting a report on the period of reflection, however, we wanted to let you know our opinion on the issues concerning national parliaments.

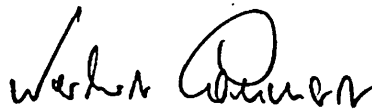
With best regards,



Andreas Khol
President of the *Nationalrat*



Paavo Lipponen
Speaker of the *Eduskunta*



Norbert Lammert
President of the *Bundestag*