

**Opening Address Delivered by István Jakab, Deputy Speaker
of the Hungarian National Assembly at the
Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC
(Budapest, House of Parliament, 29 July 2024)**

Distinguished Mr Chair,
Distinguished Mr Minister,
Distinguished Mr Commissioner,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to our first conference in the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2024, the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC.

Thank you for accepting our invitation. As Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly, I have the honour to hold the opening of the meeting and to welcome you to the House of Parliament on behalf of László Kövér, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly.

Some of you may have already been here in 2011, when Hungary held the Presidency for the first time and the Hungarian National Assembly organised the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC in February 2011.

The Hungarian National Assembly already paid special attention to strengthening interparliamentary cooperation then, and it continues to focus on it now, with the EU Presidency Parliamentary events being the main arena.

Among these, the significance of COSAC, the longest-standing permanent interparliamentary conference recognised and named in the EU's founding treaties is prominent.

Overall, the Hungarian National Assembly's aim remains to give national parliaments, as the custodians of popular sovereignty, a greater role in influencing EU policies, and to promote the application of and respect for the principle of subsidiarity in the EU, and COSAC plays a key role in achieving that.

Allow me to briefly inform you about our interparliamentary events related to the Hungarian Presidency.

In 2024, we shall organise a total of six interparliamentary events: five will be hosted by the House of Parliament and one will take place in Brussels.

Among the events in Budapest, the LXXII COSAC Plenary Meeting will take place between 27 and 29 October at the House of Parliament.

In the second half of the year, the Hungarian National Assembly, as the national parliament of the country holding the presidency of the Council, will hold the so-called coordinating presidency for a year, supporting the cooperation between the EU's parliamentary speakers.

As part of that, we will organise the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments in May 2025.

We have already informed your Parliaments of the dates of our events, and updates are available on the National Assembly's EU Presidency website, where you can follow the conferences live.

Dear fellow Members of Parliament,

At today's conference, Minister János Bóka will first inform you about the seven priorities and the programme of the Hungarian Presidency.

Afterwards, you will have the opportunity to discuss the current issues of the Western Balkans and Eastern enlargement, which are of particular importance for Hungary and the European Union as a whole, with Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi and State Secretary Péter Sztáray.

This year is particularly significant as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the accession of Hungary and nine other countries to the EU.

I trust that the Hungarian Presidency will succeed in giving the enlargement process a boost and that the European Union will be able to welcome new members in the upcoming period.

Dear Colleagues,

I myself am an agronomist, therefore, allow me to share with you a few thoughts on the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency in relation to the priority of a *farmer-centred EU agricultural policy*.

European agriculture has perhaps never faced so many challenges as it does today.

Extraordinary weather conditions caused by climate change, increased input costs, imports from third countries and over-ambitious tightening of production regulations have severely eroded the competitiveness of the sector and, combined, these factors are now threatening the livelihoods of European farmers.

Agriculture should not be seen as the cause of climate change, but as part of the solution, and the farming community in Hungary and in Europe has already done a lot in this respect.

Adaptation has become more important in a rapidly changing environment, but it is impossible without modern tools.

I believe that farmers should be encouraged to adopt more sustainable production practices and that EU agricultural policy should be made farmer-oriented.

Our farmers provide essential public goods for all EU citizens by guaranteeing food security, and therefore guaranteeing food sovereignty and food security must be part of the EU's strategic autonomy.

A competitive, crisis-resilient, sustainable, farmer-friendly and knowledge-based European agriculture is needed to shape the post-2027 EU agricultural policy.

A balance must be struck between the strategic objectives of the European Green Deal, stabilising agricultural markets and ensuring a fair standard of living for the farming population. This is reflected in the objectives of the Hungarian Presidency.

One of the biggest problems I see is the extraordinary administrative burden associated with the agricultural subsidy system, and it is no coincidence that the demands of the farmers' protests include cutting red tape. Developing a farmer-friendly EU regulatory environment is essential.

Encouraging generational renewal and preserving Europe's traditional rural way of life must also be a priority, as a prerequisite for our future plans, for sustaining agricultural production and for preserving liveable rural areas.

In addition to that, we must also take further measures to reduce food waste. That is also one of the main tasks of the Hungarian EU Presidency.

It is vital that the EU is able to provide healthy food for its population and maintain its role in feeding the world.

We must continue to stand up for GMO-free and fight to restore balanced and fair market competition across Europe.

In that respect, I believe it is essential that food from outside the EU must also comply with the same conditions as products produced in the EU.

That is the only way to protect the competitiveness of Hungarian and European farmers, and we cannot compromise on that.

In the next six months, the Hungarian Presidency will work to ensure that the Council provides political guidance to the incoming European Commission on the post-2027 rules for EU agricultural policy, in order to create a competitive, crisis-resilient and farmer-friendly European agriculture.

I am confident that we can count on the support of your parliaments in establishing a farmer-centred EU agricultural policy and in implementing the other priorities of the Presidency.

I wish you a meaningful exchange of views.

Thank you for your kind attention.