

**COMMUNICATION**

**from the European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council**

**of 4 February 2015**

**to the European Parliament and the Council**

**pursuant to Article 23 f (4) of the Austrian Constitutional Act**

**COUNCIL: CM 4133/14 PUBLIC**

**Friends of the Presidency Group: Improving the functioning of the EU system**

1. The Federal Council welcomes the establishment of the Friends of the Presidency Group as well as the discussions conducted at its meetings on strengthening the role of national parliaments and a greater emphasis on subsidiarity and proportionality.
2. The Federal Council welcomes the intensification of the political dialogue, as announced by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, and, in particular, the intention to ensure a faster response by the Commission to opinions submitted by national parliaments either in the course of subsidiarity checks or within the framework of the political dialogue; intensified direct contacts with national parliaments in the event of a subsidiarity complaint are equally welcomed.
3. Despite the fact that primary law specifies a period of eight weeks for the submission of reasoned opinions on draft legislation, the Federal Council encourages the European Commission to consider submissions by the Member States even after expiry of this deadline by all available means. The European Commission is requested to inform the Federal Council of any possibilities existing in this respect, as this would facilitate a greater involvement of the provincial parliaments in a state with a federal structure.
4. The Federal Council advocates a right of enquiry for national parliaments at EU level. The possibility for national parliaments to submit written enquiries to the Commission should be taken into consideration.
5. The Federal Council would welcome a further improvement of impact assessments in the legislative process. In the event of the negotiations between the Council and the

European Parliament resulting in substantial changes to draft legislation, the European Commission should re-introduce the draft proposal in order to allow its renewed evaluation toward the end of the legislative process.

6. The Federal Council suggests that delegated legal acts should be used more restrictively and greater transparency should be ensured in the elaboration of delegated legal acts, e.g. through publication of drafts by the European Commission. Moreover, national experts should be involved to a greater extent through advisory committees.