

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL
PARLIAMENTS ON EUROPEAN POLICIES



An
Overview

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EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION



European Affairs Committees

The Influence of National Parliaments
on European Policies



'The quality of relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments is of fundamental importance for the overall democratic nature of the Union.

If they became rivals, democracy would definitely suffer. If they recognise that they have a joint mission, democracy will win.'

This paper was prepared by Mr David Travers in collaboration with Mrs Hanneke Coppolecchia and Mr Allan Tomlins. The manuscript was completed in September 2002.

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Publisher: Dick Toornstra
ECPRD
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PREFACE

This paper is the fifth in the current series of publications on issues in parliamentary practice from the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (EPCRD).

European Affairs Committees: An Overview is an examination of the principal means whereby national parliaments exercise scrutiny over their governments' activities with regard to EU issues and legislation. As with the other studies in this series, its purpose is to provide an easy to consult and accessible introduction to a significant facet of parliamentary activity, for both public service practitioners and members of the public alike.

The ECPRD is a cooperative body operating under the aegis of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It is primarily an international network of research and documentation departments, but it also brings together officials responsible for information gathering and dissemination and the preparation of legislation. Its aim is to facilitate contacts and exchanges between the officials of its member parliaments which will be of benefit to them all.

Founded in 1977 by the Conference of Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies who delegated the task of setting up and administering the Centre to the Presidents of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the ECPRD has 45 member countries and 3 guest countries, and thereby covers a total of 59 parliamentary chambers.

The main activities of the ECPRD are seminars hosted by member parliaments on subjects of relevance to

parliamentary officials. In broad terms, the two main emphases in recent years have been the way parliaments should react to the challenges of new technology, and parliamentary management and democratisation. In addition, there are working groups which meet annually to consider the technical aspects of information and communications technology, and macroeconomic policy.

The Secretariat of the ECPRD is based at the European Parliament in Brussels. It is staffed by permanent officials of the Parliament, and acts as a clearing house for requests for information involving comparative research.

It also runs the ECPRD website to be found at <http://www.ecprd.org>.

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Foreword



It has been more than 45 years since the German Bundesrat created the first European Affairs Committee in a national parliament in order to bring greater influence to bear on the federal government's conduct of European policy.

Nowadays there is not a single national parliament that does not have such a committee. Even the countries which have applied to join the European Union have established committees of this kind to assist in preparing their nations for full membership and monitoring the activities of their governments in this matter. Clearer proof of the increasing importance of European Union politics and policies would be hard to find. It is also a sign of the growing awareness amongst national parliamentarians that European policies have an influence on nearly all aspects of daily life and that the room for manoeuvre available to individual nations has been considerably affected by those developments.

Awareness in this context is not, however, necessarily the same as an acceptance that Brussels has become an integral part of domestic politics. There is still a prevailing feeling of *them* and *us* – sometimes forming a deliberate part of party politics, often due to ignorance and an unwillingness to face up to the facts. Yet it is fair to say that never has there been more talk about Europe and its future than in recent times.

The creation after the Laeken Summit meeting in 2001 of a *Convention on the future of Europe* in which all major EU stakeholders are a member, has provided a platform through which fundamental debates are organised on, for example, the role of national parliaments, institutional relationships and the quality of European legislation. Simultaneously COSAC – the cooperation group for European Affairs Committees – has initiated a series of meetings to discuss more par-

ticularly the role of national parliaments in European politics.

In their opinion, democracy in Europe must be given an extra dimension 'that does not undermine the national democracy, but rather which supplements democracy in the Member States and which ensures a well-functioning democratic interplay between the popularly elected assemblies locally, nationally and on a European level. In so doing, the populations and popularly elected parliamentarians will be ensured greater and more direct influence on joint European decisions. With this, the EU will be ensured a democratic anchoring in the Member States and their population so that the scepticism and fear that exist among many concerning their national self-determination, identity, culture, language, etc., gradually being undermined can be overcome¹.

This sentiment is also shared by members of the Convention Working Group on National Parliaments who underlined the need to establish a mechanism to allow national parliaments better supervision of their governments. However, this Group has also clearly indicated that the relationship between national parliaments and the European Parliament should '... not be seen as a plot against the European Parliament or as an attempt to make the national parliaments co-legislators, but as ideas on how to better anchor EU decision-making in the Member States. This is the first time the national parliaments are part of a Treaty revision, and it is a duty to make the absolute best out of it. In this exercise, there is a need for a more formalised and structured approach from the European Parliament as regards its relations with national parliaments, a strategy for formalising and making systematic how the European Parliament contacts, informs, etc., the national parliaments. Having said

¹ Danish chair, COSAC October 2002

that, there is no intention, at least not within the Working Group, to change the basic structure of the EU, i.e. the national parliaments should not become *an institution within the institutions*².

In its final report to the Convention, the Working Group recommends:

- acknowledging the role of national parliaments in the Constitutional Treaty;

- keeping national parliaments more closely informed by obliging the European Commission to forward directly to them and at the same time as they are forwarded to the European institutions, all consultative texts or legislative proposals as well as the annual legislative and strategy programmes. Such direct and exhaustive briefing should enable the national parliaments to monitor the principle of subsidiarity through an early warning mechanism and to carry out more effective scrutiny of European policies;

- closer cooperation and increased exchanges between the national parliaments on the question of their role in European affairs;

- greater involvement of national parliaments in the preparation of broad European policy guidelines.

Another matter which has been substantially debated and which will also strongly affect parliamentary involvement in the drafting of EU legislation has been the issue of simplifying the number of legal instruments and the harmonisation of legislative procedures. The key ideas behind the changes to the current 15 different instruments and nearly 30 various procedures are *simplification, democratisation and specialisation*, with the basic rule being: *one act, one procedure, one name*. This would involve classification of EU acts by function: constitutional, legislative and implementing.

The Convention Working Group on Simplification has proposed that the number of instruments be brought down to six, namely:

- two legislative instruments – laws and frame-

work laws – that would be directly applicable and adopted under co-decision;

- one non-legislative and binding instrument – decisions;

- two non-legislative and non-binding instruments – recommendations and opinions;

- one instrument reserved for the adoption of delegated and implementing acts – regulations – which would be used by the Council as well as the Commission.

According to the Working Group, the incredibly complex and numerous procedures are mainly the consequence of the range of procedures used for consulting various institutions or bodies, plus the two main voting methods in the Council (unanimity or qualified majority). If these factors were disregarded and only the respective roles of the European Parliament and the Council taken into consideration, there would basically be five decision-making procedures – co-decision, cooperation, simple opinion and assent by the Parliament, and decision-making by the Council alone.

It is clear that simplification must be seen as a factor for promoting democracy. Citizens must know and understand not only the scope of an act, but also its legitimacy. In other words, they must know who does what within the European Union. Scrapping unnecessary procedures and/or instruments will hugely affect the role of national parliaments as well. Ideas regarding the consultation process with interested social and business circles including regional and local authorities, the submission of impact assessments, self-regulation and co-regulation are further elements which will influence the future decision and legislative processes in the EU and thus the various parliaments.

From previous studies on the role of national parliaments, it has emerged that there is a wide disparity in the amount of influence they possess. This is due to

² Chair of Convention Working Group IV, October 2002

the different constitutional settings in which parliaments operate and also to the varying parliamentary traditions or the relationship in political terms between a government and a parliament. These differences are sometimes even further accentuated because of strategic objectives and strategies pursued by parliaments. Some national parliaments merely focus on their ability to scrutinise their governments' implementation of EU legislation; others are keen to associate themselves with the overall EU policy agenda and submit their governments to more or less binding instructions; a further, smaller group seems to be keen to get structurally involved in EU law making per se.

Experience in countries where parliaments are the most comprehensively involved in European policies seems to indicate that the government, the parliament and society as a whole have greatly benefited from it.

However, practical experience over recent years has also shown that the development of *peer pressure* practices and other informal, intergovernmental actions are gaining ground over clear decision-making procedures. The subsequent diminution of the power and influence exercised by the formal institutions and the increased importance of technical management committees has adversely affected parliamentary influence over the shaping of the EU.

Parliaments need clear decision-making procedures and transparency in the legislative process to be able to adequately perform their role as representatives of the people.

Obviously, each Member State should be free to organise relations between its own parliament and government. It is nevertheless a definite advantage to parliaments for them to be aware of what is going on in neighbouring countries if similar debates on the same directive have taken place, albeit on the basis of different ministerial statements. EU legislation cannot be a transparent exercise on the parliamentary side and a closed book on the part of ministers when they meet as a Council.

Since EU policies are essentially to be treated as domestic policies, as is currently argued, many parlia-

mentarians are of the opinion that normal standing parliamentary committees should become increasingly involved in EU discussions and not leave this subject to European Affairs Committees. The latter should perhaps continue their activities, but focus more on general, constitutional developments and not on such matters as fisheries, regional funds or industry policy.

This sentiment explains why greater emphasis has recently been put on shifting the formal responsibility for debate from European Affairs Committees to standing committees and why the possibility of convening interparliamentary conferences on key issues has been so fervently advocated by the Convention.

The Speakers of national parliaments have been aware of these changes and as far back as 2000 instructed their Secretaries-General to present plans which would enable national parliaments to intensify their cooperation, and particularly their cooperation on legislative matters. One of their recommendations has been to use the ECPRD for that purpose, by creating a digital platform to enable documents, background and research papers and other material to be shared and used as a basis for the debate on EU legislation. Work is in progress to render such a platform operational in 2003.

Whatever the final outcome of the Convention, the discussion on COSAC reform or the ultimate decision to be taken in 2004 by the Intergovernmental Conference may be, there can be no denying that the role and influence of national parliaments in the making and scrutinising of EU legislation will never be the same again.

Overall parliamentary influence will be strengthened and will be shaped in close cooperation with the European Parliament.

Whatever the bodies concerned, be they standing committees or European Affairs Committees, national parliaments or the European Parliament, the ECPRD will continue to play a constructive role in fostering interparliamentary cooperation.

Dick TOORNSTRA
Co-Director, ECPRD

Introduction



The European Affairs Committees (EACs), as the main bodies within national parliaments concerned with Union level matters, are *the most formalised and possibly the most important link between national parliaments and everyday decision-making in the EU* (Bergman, 1997).

The first EAC was set up in 1957 by the German Bundesrat (the legislative body representing the *Länder*, i.e. the subnational entities). As the European integration process evolved over time, more and more Member States decided to follow suit. All of them now possess their own EAC. The reasoning behind the establishment of the first committee was to enable the Bundesrat to better scrutinise the activity of the German government in EEC affairs. This principle still very much remains the prime concern of each Member State's EAC.

Before contemplating the precise nature of European Affairs Committees, an overview of why national parliaments would want to scrutinise their government over European level matters and, as Bergman's statement suggests, the relationship between national parliaments and their role in EU decision-making is in order.

1.1. European Integration: Reduced Legislative Powers for National Parliaments

The European integration process has implied a shift of competences from the national to the European level. In turn, national parliaments have seen their powers transferred to this supranational body and

experienced a decrease in their legislative capacity.

Prior to entering the EU, there tends to exist a balance in the distribution of powers between a country's government and its parliament. The constitutional relationship between these two branches and the general political traditions clearly play an important role in the level of equilibrium. The balance will thus obviously vary from State to State. Indeed, the relationship between executive and legislative in a political system within which the government is more independent from its parliament will differ from that of a system based on the government being elected by a parliamentary majority. However, in joining the Union, a large amount of a country's legislative powers is transferred to the EU. As a result, the previous balance of powers within the State is changed. Being part of this larger body, it sees the power of its executive grow to the detriment of its parliamentary power.

It is important to note that following the impact of the many stages involved in the European integration process, the reallocation of powers has gradually increased and further limited national parliaments' scope of influence over EU decision-making. The most important change was initiated with the implementation of the internal market project closely followed by the creation of the European Union. The Single European Act conferred more areas of competence to the EEC and qualified majority voting was introduced in the Council of Ministers. The subsequent Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice Treaties further exacerbated these points. Qualified majority as opposed to unanimity voting reduces national parliaments' ability to indirectly influence Council decisions. Indeed, a Member State's position might

not take precedence, since its government's decision can be overruled by a qualified majority. Thus, even if a parliament is able to influence its government, the latter might not be in a position to impose its view. One should also take into account that, prior to 1994, there was no obligation to publish qualified majority decisions taken by the Council of Ministers. Parliaments could be left in the dark as to the stance their government took.

The increased pace, during the post-Single European Act period, in the setting up of new European Affairs Committees or strengthening of the existing ones clearly demonstrates the loss of legislative powers felt by the national parliaments and their will to scrutinise their respective governments. It must nonetheless be acknowledged that parliaments have formally agreed to this transfer of legislative powers as they have the authority to reject new treaties. This weakness of national parliaments in the EU decision-making process is recognised as being a part of the much-discussed 'democratic deficit'.

1.2. National Parliaments and the Democratic Deficit

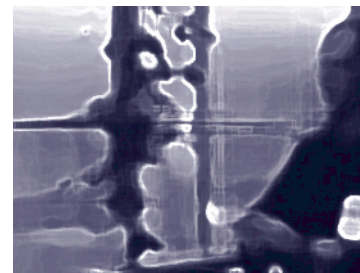
1.2.1. Low parliamentary influence as part of the democratic deficit

It is widely recognised that the European Union suffers from a democratic deficit¹. Although there is no real dispute as to the existence of this problem, differences do persist in its definition and the paths to be

taken in order to solve it. Three common themes – accountability, transparency and influence in decision-making – are however perceived as the central problematic issues.

Within this context, a major problem lies in the fact that the Council of Ministers, in spite of the growing powers given to the European Parliament, still remains the EU's main legislative arm. It claims its legitimacy from having its powers conferred on it by the Member States. Council representatives are thus supposedly accountable to them. Yet, due to various factors such as timing and volume of the elements involved in the decisional process, national parliament oversight is extremely weak. Moreover, the openness of the Council being often restricted emphasises its unaccountability. Furthermore, its members are in no way directly accountable to the citizens. Hence, it is often suggested that, if either the European and/or the national parliaments could scrutinise Council meetings, this accessibility and transparency would greatly improve its democratic accountability.

In order to further clarify the reasons why more involvement of national parliaments can reduce the democratic deficit and render the European Union more legitimate, a short overview of a legitimisation theory is outlined here below.



¹ A broader picture of these issues is presented in, amongst other publications, Haltern U., Mayer F., Weiler J.H.H. (1995), *European democracy and its critique: five uneasy pieces*. EUI working papers. RSC 95/11. And Banchoff, T./Smith M. P. (1999), *Legitimacy and the European Union, The contested polity*. (Ed. by T. Banchoff and M. P. Smith), Routledge.

1.2.2. 'Input-Output' legitimisation theory²

Input and output legitimacy is based on the principle that there are two different dimensions to democratic legitimisation. The input facet is that decision-making is rendered legitimate because it is governed by the citizens; there is a response to popular demand. Referendums would be a good example of input legitimacy. Output legitimacy, on the other hand, is based on the fact that decisions are legitimised because they effectively promote the common interest of the constituency in question. In a nutshell, whilst the input side concentrates on citizen involvement, that of output is interest-based; it must meet public needs and values.

In view of further analysis, it should be pointed out that input legitimacy, since it implies a certain degree of citizen involvement, is gained more easily in contexts where the policy makers are close to their people. The link between the leaders and the led plays a central role. The media, through their educational capacities and public debates, are obviously key features, especially in large societies, since they are the main channels for creating this all-important link.

Finally, one cannot ignore the fact that ways of legitimising the EU are highly contested. Some academics believe that the democratisation of the

European Union is impossible due to its heterogeneous nature. Others claim that a collective identity, based on civic as opposed to ethno-cultural features, renders input legitimacy feasible. The European Union being based on a multi-level governance as opposed to a statal system, also leads to arguments such as input legitimacy being detrimental to the Union, a lesser democracy being preferable to a loss in efficiency. Many authors however agree that a balance needs to be found, that both input and output legitimacy should have their place in the Union.

1.2.3. National parliaments as a means to increase input legitimacy

National parliaments are perceived as having a major role to play in reducing the democratic deficit and in enhancing input legitimacy, and this all the more so in view of the enlargement of the Union. As representatives of the people, they can bring European issues closer to their electors and constitute a channel for incorporating the opinions of EU citizens. In so doing, they provide an invaluable link between the voters and European-level debates. Napolitano³ exemplifies this view through his comment that an increased involvement of national parliaments in the EU is essential to reducing the democratic deficit and making the citizens feel they are properly represented at Union level.

² A wide array of legitimisation theories are available such as Weber's substantive and procedural legitimacy theory, or the civic, responsive and recognition models mentioned by Banchoff. An overview of Scharpf's (1998, *Governing Europe: effective and democratic?*) 'Input-Output' legitimisation theory has been chosen since it offers a good insight into the problematic issues linked to the subject matter. Obviously a simplified overview of the theory is given here. Furthermore, one must acknowledge that both dimensions of legitimacy exist in a democracy.

³ As Committee Chairman during the second meeting with national parliaments on the Future of Europe, 10-11 July 2001. This point is further emphasised in the *Report on relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments in European integration (INI/2001/2023)* drawn up by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, for which G. Napolitano was Rapporteur.

The role of national parliaments and their European Affairs Committees as information media is obviously also of prime importance. Fraga (speaking for the Portuguese European Affairs Committee) illustrates⁴ this point using Bagehot's representative, participative and deliberative theory. In a representative democracy, citizens express their opinions by electing representatives who take decisions on their behalf. A participatory democracy comprises another dimension. Citizens demand to be informed and consulted about decisions that affect their lives. Referendums are the means generally used to do this. Different forms of consultation ranging from hearings to new communication tools such as the Internet can also be employed. The use of this latter method in addition to referendums is known as a deliberative democracy. Fraga emphasises that national parliaments can be *a good forum for implementing this deliberative democracy*. They can create a better link with the citizens and be more effective in informing them about EU-related issues.

Much focus is being placed on the existence of a double democratic deficit, often also referred to as a parliamentary deficit. Nothomb⁵ notes that *the transfer of power from national to the European level has been larger than the strengthening of power of the European Parliament or the supervision by national parliaments of the development of European legislation*. This means a lack of control over the Council from both the European and national parliaments.

More involvement of parliaments in general is therefore considered important. Furthermore, closer cooperation between the European Parliament (EP) and national parliaments is being promoted. The Neyts-Uyttebroeck report highlighted this point stating that: *the quality of relations between the EP and the national parliaments is of fundamental importance for the overall democratic nature of the Union. If they became rivals, democracy would definitely suffer. If on the other hand they recognise that they have a joint mission, democracy will win*. In addition, ways to enhance collaboration between the different national parliaments themselves are also being sought.

The European Affairs Committees, as the ECPRD Seminar (held on 28-29 September 2001)⁶ stressed, are clearly key actors in reducing the democratic deficit. As mentioned previously, they can serve as useful information media and act as a link with EU citizens. Furthermore, *acting as institutions facilitating cooperation, they play an important role in enhancing transparency and democracy regarding EU activities*. Through scrutinising their governments' position in the Council and their general following of EU matters, they not only form a bond between the different national parliaments and governments, but also act as an essential tie with the European Parliament.

⁴ In ECPRD, Report on the Seminar on 'The Role of European Affairs Committees in National Parliaments' held in Riga on 28-29 September 2001.

⁵ Former member of the Council of Ministers.

⁶ ECPRD, Report on the Seminar on 'The Role of European Affairs Committees in National Parliaments' held in Riga on 28-29 September 2001.

Developing the Role of National Parliaments

2.1. The European Union and Increased Input Legitimacy

European integration has very much been based on a functional approach, i.e. on performance and necessity, on output legitimacy as opposed to European citizens' desires per se. However, there came a point, around the time of the Maastricht Treaty, when European leaders realised that more citizen involvement and thus input legitimacy was required for European integration to survive and flourish. (Indeed, this is still a central issue of EU debates.) Means to increase this legitimacy were thus implemented. The European Parliament saw its legislative powers gradually enhanced over the years, mainly during the period that followed the Single European Act. It was however with the entering into force of the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties that the EP saw its powers significantly increased: more involvement with regard to the formation and dismissal of the Commission, more weight also in the decisional process. The Parliament can now in some areas reject legislation through co-decision, and through cooperation amend it in others. This power increase is not only important in the sense that the EP as direct representative of the people has gained more weight in some areas of EU decision-making, but also as a means of enhancing that all-important link with the citizens. Indeed, in gaining more influence, the EP attracts more media coverage.

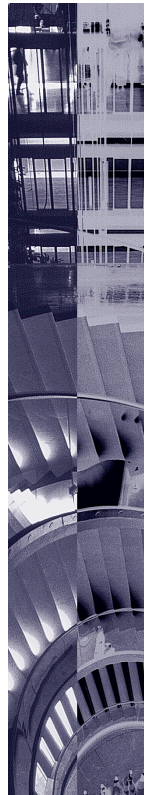
As described in the next section, since Maastricht, national parliaments have also grown as input legitimacy bases through their capacity to scrutinise EU decision-making, and their role in the EU's decision process and its democratisation is a high priority on the Union's agenda. The Treaty of Nice, for one,

pursued this theme. Its Declaration 23 calls for the question concerning *the role of national parliaments in the European architecture* to be further addressed, an issue which is currently being tackled by the Convention on the future of the European Union, as initiated by the 2001 Laeken Summit.

2.2. Maastricht and Amsterdam: Enhancing National Parliaments' Ability to Exercise Scrutiny over their Governments in EU Decision-Making

2.2.1. The Maastricht Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) negotiations

The negotiations leading to the Maastricht Treaty took place in a period of public scepticism and disenchantment towards the European integration process. The general atmosphere surrounding the IGC certainly had an effect on the negotiations and led to some parliaments taking a first major stance on increasing their role in the EU decision-making sphere. A couple of them made constitutional reforms on their role in European Affairs a precondition to their ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. They requested enhanced powers vis-à-vis their governments in scrutinising European legislation mainly through improved rights to receive information. The French, German and Portuguese parliaments, for example, were granted these enhanced powers through constitutional amendments. Others established practices that provided them with improved access to EU information. The pre-Treaty negotiations were thus beneficial per se and looked like they could induce a promising Treaty.



2.2.2. The Maastricht Treaty

Whether the Maastricht Treaty, which entered into force on 1 November 1993, proved to be of significant importance with regard to the role of national parliaments is debatable. It did include two Declarations: Declarations 13 and 14. However, since Declarations have no force in law, they can only be viewed as an acknowledgement of the issues at hand. Many did nonetheless perceive these two Declarations as a step in the right direction. The first centres on improving national parliaments' effectiveness in scrutinising their governments' EU-related decision-making. The second puts an emphasis on the collective role of parliaments, i.e. the national parliaments and the EP.

Declaration 13

The Conference considers that it is important to encourage involvement of national parliaments in the activities of the European Union.

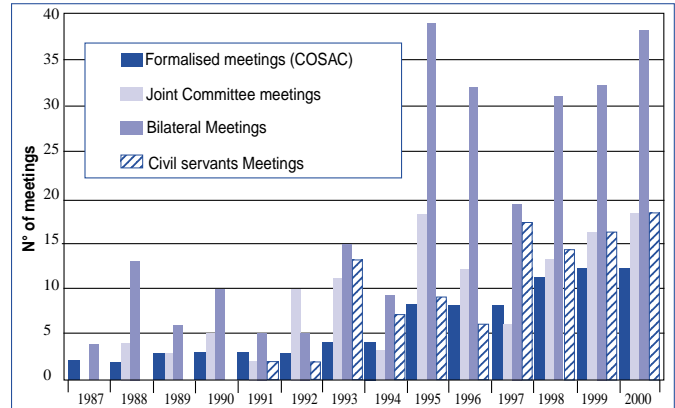
To this end, the exchange of information between the national parliaments and the European Parliament should be stepped up. In this context, the governments of the Member States will ensure, inter alia, that national parliaments receive Commission proposals for legislation in good time for information or possible examination.

Similarly, the Conference considers that it is important for contacts between the national Parliaments and the European Parliament to be stepped up, in particular through the granting of appropriate reciprocal facilities and regular meetings between members of parliament interested in the same issues.

Declaration 13 highlighted the desire for national parliaments to be more involved in EU activities. It considers the importance of national parliaments' access to information, and their need to receive documents 'in good time', but remains devoid of any time limit definition or foreseen sanctions for non-delivery. The final paragraph encourages the development of relations between the national parliaments and the European Parliament.

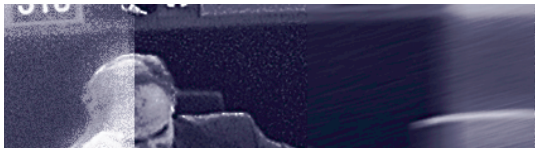
Although legally non-binding, Declaration 13 did nonetheless represent a political breakthrough in its recognition of national parliaments' right to monitor the proceedings leading to EU legislation. As the following chart demonstrates, it *provided a fresh momentum for restructuring interparliamentary cooperation at the level of committees and civil servants*⁷.

Interparliamentary Cooperation 1987-2000



Source: Maurer, Andreas: *Parlamentarische Demokratie in Europa*, Gießen; calculations made on the basis of the internal databases of the EP's Division for relations with national parliaments.

⁷ Maurer, A./ Wessels, W. (eds.) (2001), *National Parliaments on their Ways to Europe: Losers or Latecomers*, Schriften des Zentrums für Europäische Intergrationsforschung der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. All further statements, unless otherwise specified, refer to this publication.



Declaration 14

Declaration 14 proposed a possible development of the 'Assises', a meeting that brings the EP and national parliaments together as a '*Conference of Parliaments*'. It specifies that these Assises are to '*meet as necessary*' and '*be consulted on the main features of the European Union*'. The first Assises meeting, and to date the last, was held in 1990 (before the Maastricht IGC). It cannot be said, however, that it was considered a great success.

2.2.3. The Amsterdam Intergovernmental Conference negotiations

Many suggestions regarding the institutionalisation of national parliaments' role in the EU were put forward during the Amsterdam IGC. However, most Member States rejected the proposals and the focus turned more to the strengthening of national parliaments' scrutiny powers over their respective governments. In this context, two promising elements were highlighted in the White Paper on the governments' approach to the IGC: integrating Maastricht's Declaration 13 into the Treaties so as to give it a legal foundation and including a minimum period for legislative documents to be examined by national parliaments.

2.2.4. The Amsterdam Treaty

In incorporating the two key aspects emphasised by the White Paper, the Amsterdam Treaty, which entered into force on 1 May 1999, proved to be a considerable improvement when compared with the Maastricht Declarations. A Protocol was annexed to the Treaty, providing the first legally binding text on the role of national parliaments. The Protocol,

commonly referred to as the PNP, follows the structure of the Maastricht Declaration in the sense that it comprises two parts. The first entitled '*Information for national Parliaments of Member States*' relates to national parliaments' access to information. The second focuses on the Conference of the European Affairs Committees, also known as COSAC⁸.

COSAC was established in 1989 at the initiative of Mr Laurent Fabius, the then President of the French National Assembly. It brings together delegations from the various national parliaments' European Affairs Committees (six members per country) and six members of the European Parliament (normally including the Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee and the Vice-Presidents responsible for relations with national parliaments). Since 1994, it also invites up to three observers from the applicant countries' parliaments. It holds its meetings twice yearly in the Member State holding the Council Presidency and takes its decisions by consensus. Although the meetings are informal in nature since the COSAC lacks any formal decision-making powers, they can provide a useful forum for open discussions. As such, they are considered an important platform for the exchange of experience and good practices between national parliaments that are effective in scrutinising their governments on European affairs and the less able ones.

Institutionalising the COSAC has been an issue often brought to the discussion table. Some Member States, particularly the Southern ones, would like to see its role strengthened and its decisions formalised. Suggestions to do so were already formulated during the Amsterdam IGC, and at the present time, the European Convention's Working Group on National Parliaments has put forward some proposals for strengthening COSAC.

⁸ The acronym COSAC comes from the French name for this body: Conférence des Organes Spécialisés dans les Affaires Communautaires.

Specifically the Protocol on national parliaments states:

I. Information for national parliaments of Member States

1. All Commission consultation documents (green and white papers and communications) shall be promptly forwarded to national parliaments of the Member States.

2. Commission proposals for legislation as defined by the Council in accordance with Article 151.3 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, shall be made available in good time so that the Government of each Member State may ensure that its own national parliament receives them as appropriate.

3. A six-week period shall elapse between a legislative proposal or a proposal for a measure to be adopted under Title VI of the Treaty on European Union being made available in all languages to the European Parliament and the Council by the Commission and the date when it is placed on a Council agenda for decision either for the adoption of an act or for adoption of a common position pursuant to article 189b or 189c, subject to exceptions on grounds of urgency, the reasons for which shall be stated in the act or common position.

Part I defines the type of information to be forwarded to the national parliaments and lays down a minimum six-week time frame for national parliaments to examine the documents (from the submission of a proposal to 'the date when it is placed on a Council agenda for decision').

From a parliamentary point of view, the Protocol is not however without flaws. Firstly, although the Protocol indicates that documents are to be forwarded to the national parliaments within a specific time frame, it also states that '*the Government of each Member State may ensure that its own national parliament receives them as appropriate*'. Hence the Protocol neither explicitly stipulates by whom the documents are to be forwarded, nor how the time frame is to be respected. Whether the governments are obliged to send all legislative documents to their national parliaments, and whether they are constrained by the six-week period remains unclear. It is thus still up to *parliaments and their governments to negotiate on the content and the procedures to be applied for the implementation of the PNP*. Secondly, with Maastricht and Amsterdam, new fields, i.e. EMU, CFSP and JHA⁹ (the last two also respectively known as the EU's second and third pillars) have been incorporated in the Treaties. Decisions in these areas are however taken on an intergovernmental level. Parliaments have no decision-making powers in these fields; their capacity to scrutinise these issues will thus be highly dependent on the level of competence national governments give to them.

II. The Conference of European Affairs Committees

4. The Conference of European Affairs Committees, hereinafter referred to as COSAC, established in Paris on 16-17 November 1989, may make any contribution it deems appropriate for the attention of the EU institutions, in particular on the basis of draft legal texts which Representatives of Governments of the Member States may decide by common accord to forward to it, in view of the nature of its subject matter.

⁹ Acronyms respectively for European Monetary Union, Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Justice and Home Affairs

5. COSAC may examine any legislative proposal or initiative in relation to the establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice which might have a direct bearing on the rights and freedoms of individuals. The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall be informed of any contribution made by COSAC under this paragraph.

6. COSAC may address to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission any contribution which it deems appropriate on the legislative activities of the Union, notably in relation to the application of the principle of subsidiarity, the area of freedom, security and justice as well as questions regarding fundamental rights.

7. Contributions made by COSAC shall in no way bind national parliaments or prejudge their position.

Part II recognises COSAC and its role in European affairs, thus emphasising the need for interparliamentary cooperation and COSAC's effectiveness as a body dealing in such matters.

The second part of the Protocol proved to a certain extent to be a compromise between those Member States that wanted a more formalised body and those that preferred it to maintain its informality. Although decisions remain non-binding and meetings thus informal: they *'shall in no way bind national parliaments or prejudge their position'*, the PNP does provide COSAC with a legal character. It stipulates that COSAC *'may make any contribution it deems*

appropriate for the attention of the EU institutions', as well as specifying three main areas of activity opened to deliberation by COSAC, some of which are areas over which the first part of the Protocol does not specifically confer any scrutiny powers to the national parliaments taken as individual bodies. The three specified areas are as follows:

- the legislative activities of the Union, notably in relation to the application of the principle of subsidiarity¹⁰,
- an area of freedom, security and justice, and
- questions regarding fundamental rights.

In addition to the Treaties, one cannot overlook the fact that developments in various forms of practical interparliamentary cooperation have also taken place at a great pace. Bilateral and multilateral meetings are now organised between the EP and national parliaments. Rapporteurs from the EP are invited to national parliament committee meetings and vice versa. Cooperation is also maintained on various levels: meetings are held between the various European Affairs Committees, as well as between more specialised standing committees or political groups, for instance. These meetings are invaluable channels for information exchange. Indeed, committees dealing within the same fields of expertise can, for instance, gain much needed information on specific matters which in other circumstances would be hard to acquire.

The Conference of Presidents and Speakers, established in 1963, which meets biannually bringing together the Presidents and Speakers of the European

¹⁰ In essence, the subsidiarity principle states that the Community should not take it upon itself to regulate matters upon which national or regional entities can perform more efficiently. It should be noted that not all areas are subject to the subsidiarity principle; the Community does have areas of exclusive competence.

and of national parliaments, has for one been very active in this respect. Its Conference in Rome on 22-24 September 2000 emphasised the need for rapid information exchange tools (using new technologies), as well as enhanced networks of and coordination in research and documentation activities. The ECPRD, as a network for parliamentary documentation and research departments, was highlighted as a potential means of revolutionising the exchange of information between parliaments. A motion to revitalise this ECPRD function was put forward and, in this general context, the Conference requested feasibility studies on various ways of promoting data transfers (particularly with regard to EU legislative information). Subsequently, with these aims in mind, a Working Group has, since March 2001, been studying and proposing various measures for improved information exchange between parliaments, particularly through use of the ECPRD website.

One must acknowledge that, since Maastricht, national parliaments' ability to scrutinise has not only been dealt with by the Treaties, but has also been at the heart of many debates. Prodi's¹¹ speech¹² to the EP Constitutional Affairs Committee and national parliaments is a good illustration of this point. He said that *at national level, we need to examine whether the various mechanisms by which national parliaments control governments meeting in the Council of Ministers are adequate and fully meet the requirements of democracy or whether they need strengthening*. More definite ideas were suggested in December 2002 in the Commission's Communication on the Institutional Architecture (COM(2002)0728). The role of national parliaments in EU decision-making is thus still far from being settled. As mentioned at the beginning of

this section, the Nice Declaration highlighted *the role of national parliaments in the European architecture* as one of the prime matters for consideration. It made an appeal for pan-European discussion on how this role might be defined. The Laeken Declaration tackled these issues once again and decided to convene the Convention on the Future of Europe to formulate definite proposals.

In pursuance of its aim to enhance the Union's legitimacy and bring it closer to the citizen, the European Convention set up a working group devoted to the role of national parliaments. This working group has actively examined the key issues of the debate whilst concentrating, for example, on areas such as the examination of best practices in parliamentary scrutiny, the possibility of establishing guidelines or benchmarking. Possible role(s) and form(s) of multilateral mechanisms involving national parliaments and the European Parliament are examined in its final report to the Convention on 22 October 2002 (http://european-convention.eu.int/doc_wg.asp?lang=EN)¹³.

The outcome of the Irish referendum on the draft Nice Treaty has paved the way for completing the ratification procedures and enabling the Treaty to enter into force in early 2003.

The Convention will, in principle, conclude its deliberations before the summer of 2003 after which a new Intergovernmental Conference will be convened to prepare formal decisions to be taken in early 2004. In all likelihood, major modifications with regard to the role of national parliaments will thus be formalised within the next two years.

¹¹ President of the European Commission.

¹² Delivered on 20 March 2001.

¹³ Link to the latest documents published by the various Convention working groups.

European Affairs Committees: A Comparative Study



As already described in the previous section, through the Treaties national parliaments have seen an increase in their legal powers to scrutinise their governments over EU decision-making. Furthermore, enhanced interparliamentary cooperation has provided them with more means to gather information. This obviously does not imply that the scrutinising process will be identical in all Member States. Indeed, constitutional set-ups vary and it is still up to the States to decide on the scrutiny arrangements. Since each parliament acts within the limits of its competency when establishing a European Affairs Committee, these bodies will also be subject to variations.

3.1. A Scheme for Evaluating National Parliaments' Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Scrutinising Process

In order to pinpoint some of the differences between the Member States' European Affairs Committees, and to better understand their importance in the EU decision process, an overview of the national parliaments' capacity to effectively influence their government in the Council of Ministers will serve as a starting point.

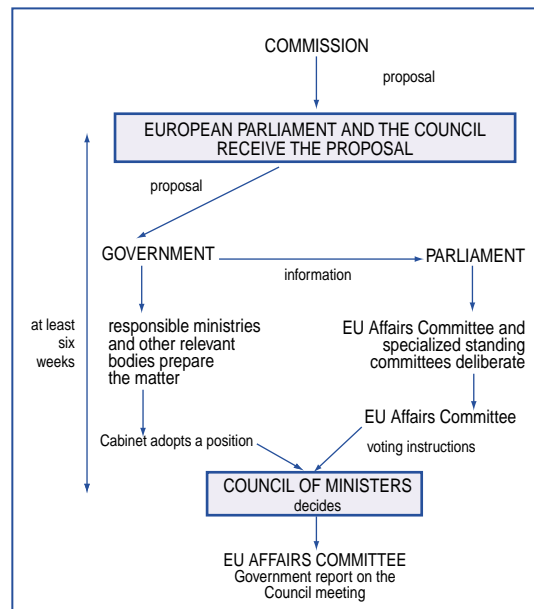
The Swedish Report¹⁴ on Future Issues facing the EU points out that the notion of influence over decision-making is rather vague. Different connotations can be attributed to this concept. In the EU context, the verb 'to influence' may comprise such elements as:

- formulating an opinion,
- having the right to take an initiative,
- or even decision-making itself.

With the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty,

the process by which national parliaments can influence their governments' standpoint in the Council of Ministers should roughly follow the lines set out in the figure below.

Parliamentary Oversight of EU Legislation at the National Level



Source: Raunio, T. (1999), *Always one step behind? National Legislatures and the European Union*, Government and Opposition, 34/2; p. 192.

Three key factors enabling the enhancement of national parliaments' influence can be derived from this figure: availability of information and of time, as well as parliamentary ability to bind their governments' position in the Council of Ministers. These constitute the core of the three categories¹⁵ used in a study of parliamentary influence:

¹⁴ Swedish Parliament, *Excerpts from the Report on the Future Issues facing the EU of the Joint Committee on the Constitution and Foreign Affairs*, 26 April 2001, doc. 2000/01:KUU1.



- the scope of parliamentary scrutiny,
- the timing of parliamentary scrutiny, and
- the impact of parliamentary scrutiny.

Dealing with access to information is obviously a precondition to any ability to effectively influence EU decision-making.

Before developing the scope of parliamentary scrutiny over information, it must be acknowledged that, in addition to the information channels stemming from interparliamentary cooperation and the implementation of the PNP, other information sources are available to parliaments such as:

The Commission's annual legislative programme. This programme drawn up by the Commission in collaboration with the EP contains a detailed list of legislative proposals. It enables the national parliaments to be forewarned as what proposals will be put before the Council during the year.

The EP's legislative observatory and its OEIL database. The OEIL database enables the parliaments to monitor the development of proposals. It offers, *inter alia*, an opportunity to follow each stage of a legislative text in the deliberative procedure, and provides forecasts of the forthcoming phases.

The PreLex and EurLex databases. These databases follow the major stages of the decision-making process and monitor the work of the various institutions involved. PreLex follows all Commission proposals and communications from their transmission to Council or Parliament. Currently, national parliaments thus have a certain degree of access to information. Nevertheless, some national parliaments adopt a more proactive stance as to its gathering than others and have, for example, appointed their own parliamentary contact and liaison officers in Brussels. In influencing EU-level decisions,

the scope of parliamentary scrutiny over information, conferred on parliaments by their governments, will nonetheless remain the predominant factor.

3.1.1. The scope of parliamentary scrutiny

This will depend not only on the type and amount of documents forwarded by governments to their parliaments, but also on the latter's scrutinising ability once they have received the documents. It thus entails two stages. Firstly, in the forwarding stage, some national parliaments might not receive all the different types of documents produced by various bodies and institutions (European Parliament, Council standing committees and so forth). Indeed, some governments could be more restrictive in their definition of the information to be provided. Secondly, once the documents are in the hands of the parliaments, *the general orientation of and ideas associated with the parliament's scrutiny function*, as well as its general resources, are of importance. What capacity does the parliament have to examine the texts transmitted to it? What type of document will a parliament decide/ be given the right to examine, and how able is it to sift the data in the best way? On this last point, it has often been noted that more time and resources would greatly enhance the efficiency of EACs. Indeed, overall, they tend to suffer from too great a workload.

A special mention must be made of those issues falling within the EMU, CFSP and JHA fields. Since they remain matters dealt with at intergovernmental level, the scrutiny rights that governments confer on their parliaments over these issues will be of particular importance. Legal interpretation and semantic differentiation can also be played upon. For example, some governments did not forward documentation leading up to the Maastricht Treaty since legally speaking these were matters for the intergovernmental arena.

¹⁵ Based on the criteria used by Maurer in Maurer, A./Wessels, W. (eds.) (2001), *National Parliaments on their Ways to Europe: Losers or Latecomers*, Schriften des Zentrums für Europäische Integrationsforschung der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn.

TABLE 1 – Scope of Information for National Parliaments



<i>Member State</i>	<i>European Community Treaty</i>	<i>EMU</i>
Austria Nationalrat	All EU proposals and other documentation on the decision-making process, such as agendas, committee meeting documents.	
Austria Bundesrat	idem.	
Belgium	Draft regulations and directives, other normative acts which have a bearing on matters within Federal competences. Explanatory information from the Government.	
Denmark	All Commission documents (COM and SEC), documents of the Council. Factual notes from the Government.	
Finland	Comprehensive information on the drafting of EU policy, on request and where needed.	
France	All EC draft acts including provisions of a legislative nature pursuant to Articles 88-4 and 34 of the Constitution; Council agendas. At regular intervals, notes from the Government on the French position.	
Germany Bundestag	All EU proposals pursuant to Article 23 of the Basic Law; progress reports prepared by Council working groups; views of the Government.	Consultation required prior to any decision by the Council of Ministers under Articles 121(3) or (4) EC Treaty.
Germany Bundesrat	All Commission and Council documents, reports of the working groups. Additional information from the Government on negotiations in progress. All documents about EU affairs which could be of interest to the <i>Länder</i> .	
Greece	All Commission draft proposals. Government submits a report on developments in EC affairs at the end of each parliamentary session.	
Ireland	Commission drafts; agendas and documentation concerning upcoming European Council; explanatory memoranda from the Government.	

<i>Common Foreign and Security Policy</i>	<i>Justice and Home Affairs</i>
.....
Analogous to first pillar.	Analogous to first pillar.
Only if the competences of the <i>Bundesländer</i> are affected.	Only if the competences of the <i>Bundesländer</i> are affected.
Traditional instruments: hearings, written and oral questions.	Traditional instruments: hearings, written and oral questions.
Analogous to first pillar; internal cooperation between EU Affairs and Foreign Affairs Committees.	Analogous to first pillar; internal cooperation between EU Affairs and Internal Affairs Committees.
Analogous to first pillar, but executed through the Committee for Foreign Affairs.	Analogous to first pillar.
Analogous to first pillar.	Analogous to first pillar.
Yes, in general through the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union and the Committee for Foreign Affairs.	Analogous to first pillar.
No duty to forward proposals, but right to receive information.	Analogous to first pillar. Special consultation procedure for 'framework decisions' under Article 34(2) b) TEU.
Progress reports.	Progress reports.
All documents which are legally binding on Ireland.	All documents which are legally binding on Ireland.

<i>Member State</i>	<i>European Community Treaty</i>	<i>EMU</i>
Italy Camera dei Deputati	All Commission legislative proposals and other documents (White Papers, etc.); annual Government report.	
Italy Senato	All Commission legislative proposals and EU legislation.	
Luxembourg	Draft regulations and directives, documents arising out of the 'Commitology' decisions of the Commission. Additional information from the Government.	
Netherlands Tweede Kamer	All Commission draft proposals and communications. Additional fact sheets from the government.	Parliament was required to give its approval to the position adopted by the Government on the assessment of the four convergence criteria.
Netherlands Eerste Kamer	Draft acts arising from EC directives which have to be transposed into national law.	
Portugal	Draft secondary legislation of a binding nature, draft agreements and conventions, other important drafts of non-binding acts.	
Spain	All legislative proposals of the Commission, information on the state of negotiations, brief reports from the Government.	
Sweden	All Commission draft proposals, communications, Council agendas. Background information on all important issues and on the preliminary position of the Government.	
United Kingdom	All proposals for legislation by the Council of Ministers, any document related to the European Council, any document forwarded by one EU institution to another. Explanatory memorandums from the Government.	Parliament is required to give its approval on: (1) the Government's intention to move to the third stage, (2) on the annual report of the Governor of the Bank of England, (3) on the Government's assessment under Art. 99 and 104 EC Treaty.

<i>Common Foreign and Security Policy</i>	<i>Justice and Home Affairs</i>
Legislative proposals (though primary responsibility rests with the committees concerned).	Analagous to second pillar.
Documents forwarded on request (though responsibility rests with the committees concerned).	Analagous to second pillar.
No.	At the Government's discretion.
Yes, through the Committee for Foreign Affairs.	Yes, because Parliament's assent is required.
No.	
At the Government's discretion.	At the Government's discretion.
At the Government's discretion.	At the Government's discretion.
Analogous to first pillar.	Analogous to first pillar.
All texts of CFSP statements, declarations, common positions and joint actions once they are agreed. CFSP documents submitted by one Community institution to another. Other documents at the Government's discretion. Scrutiny of proposals which may require national legislation	Analagous to second pillar.

Adapted from: Maurer A., *National Parliaments after Amsterdam: Adaptation, Re-Calibration and Europeanisation by Process*, Paper for Working Group Meeting, XXIVth COSAC, 8-9 April 2001, p. 1.

3.1.2. The timing of parliamentary scrutiny

The cooperation procedure allowing the EP to amend Council decisions, as well as the sporadic nature of Council decision-making itself – meeting agendas being susceptible to change up until the last minute – make it essential for the parliament to be kept up to date on the latest developments. The six-week time period offered by the PNP can thus prove useful in following the various changes on the Council's agenda.

The time span national parliaments are given to sift documents will clearly be of significance. Obviously, the earlier national parliaments receive legal proposals, the more time they have to examine them. Early reception of information can thus render national parliaments more effective and proactive in influencing their governments and EU decision-making. Ideally, these documents should reach both government and parliament at the same time, and in the official language(s) of the Member State. Having to rely on translations before being able to effectively examine proposals can seriously reduce the available time frame. The enlargement of the Union could well exacerbate this problem.

Internal management may also evidently act as a factor affecting the timing of scrutiny. A less obvious factor, however, is a parliament's right to bind its government. Indeed, variations will exist between parliaments which have the power to bind their governments' decisions in the Council of Ministers and those that do not. A government bound by its parliament, in order to give the latter a sufficient period to examine proposals, will be politically obliged to respect a certain time frame. Finally, the meeting

frequency of the actors involved in the sifting process and thus mainly that of the EACs must also be considered. As many authors argue, the more an EAC meets, the more effective it is.

3.1.3. The impact of parliamentary scrutiny

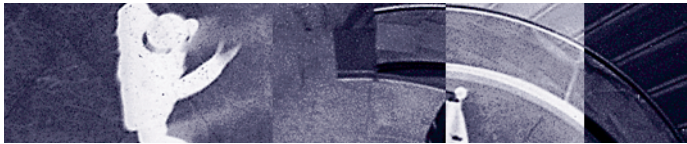
The degree to which a parliament can bind its government's stance in the Council of Ministers will clearly play a major role in its influence over European-level decision-making. In the EU context, national parliamentary scrutiny of governments varies from informal arrangements to a straightforward ability to impose a binding position. This degree of influence will also vary with the different areas of competence conferred on parliaments. In fact, as noted earlier, they do not all enjoy the same weight in the intergovernmental fields.

It has been pointed out that, even in cases where parliaments directly mandate their governments, the latter must still enjoy a certain degree of leeway since, the Council being a forum for negotiation, some initial negotiations may well fail. On the other hand, given that all the Member States' parliaments have the power to unseat their governments, they can apply pressure on their governments and thereby bind them to a certain extent. Ignoring parliamentary views on a regular basis could therefore be politically risky.

Maurer¹⁶ proposes three types of parliaments according to their policy-making strengths to help evaluate national parliamentary impact on governments: policy-making, policy-influencing and weak parliaments. He defines them respectively as follows:

¹⁶ In Mauer A., *National Parliaments after Amsterdam : Adaptation, Re-Calibration and Europeanisation by Process, Paper for Working Group meeting, XXIVth COSAC, 8-9 April 2001.*

- *parliaments possessing strong policy-making power, which is based on the power of veto and the possibility of modifications or compromises in the course of the policy process.*
- *parliaments with modest policy-making power, which is characterised by the right to modify (but not to reject) policy proposals, and*
- *parliaments having little or no policy-making power and which thus cannot modify or reject proposals issued by the executive.*



3.2. Comparing EAC Variations

3.2.1. The European Affairs Committees of the EU Member States

3.2.1.1. Comparative overview

To keep up with and engage in EU affairs, national parliaments have been obliged to set up committees. Since parliamentary structure and influence in the Member States vary in accordance with their particular political cultures and history, it should come as no surprise that the European Affairs Committees differ too. When it comes to explaining these variations, constitutional rules, by inducing different relationships between parliament and government, will obviously spring to mind. Other criteria¹⁷ such as public opinion on European integration or party positions have also been put forward. However, it must

be noted that many academics and members of various European Affairs Committees do point out that a scarcity in empirical data subsists in this field. Although hypotheses may be formulated, they are not always clearly confirmed by empirical data. This is a point that many authors attribute to the fact that explanatory variables tend to be interdependent and differ from State to State.

With regard to differences per se, the criteria used in the evaluation of national parliaments' scrutinising ability serve as a good basis. The most significant variations, i.e. size and composition, competency, and meeting frequency, will nonetheless be recapped below. One should also note that the number of committees in a country differs; there may be one or two depending mainly on the parliamentary structure being of a uni- or bi-cameral nature.

Size and composition obviously differ according to the various Members of Parliament (MPs) involved in these committees. Furthermore, although in most cases MEPs can attend European Affairs Committees by invitation only, in some countries they play a much more active role. They are for instance full members in Belgium's *Chambre des Représentants*, and in Greece's EAC they enjoy the same voting rights as MPs. They are also represented in the German *Bundestag*. However, in this case, they do not possess the right to vote.

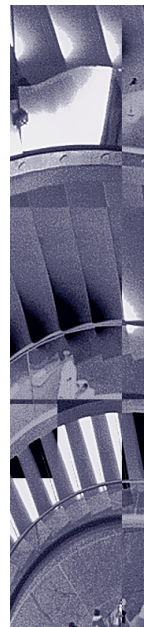
It has been previously pointed out that the various EACs enjoy different levels of competency and ability to influence their governments. They vary from mere information exchange bodies, such as those of Ireland, Spain or Italy, to entities which have the

¹⁷ A good starting point for a more comprehensive picture can be found in Bergman, T. (1997), *National Parliaments and EU Affairs Committees: notes on empirical variation and competing explanations*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4/3 : 373-87.

power to bind their government's position in the Council of Ministers; the Danish and Austrian Committees are good examples of this latter case. Areas over which they have competence have also been highlighted as being of importance and subject to differences. All EACs have competency over European Community matters. However, when it comes to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) issues, jurisdictional powers are limited to only approximately half of all the Member States' EACs.

Bodies more concerned with information exchange simply pass on documents deemed relevant to specialised standing committees, leaving the latter with the more reflective tasks. Others, such as Denmark or Austria, take a much more predominant role in the whole scrutiny process. Many authors conclude that whilst the first group tends to concentrate on issues relating to the EU's long-term agenda, the second, having to analyse each incoming proposal, will unavoidably be subject to a higher meeting frequency. This frequency will also be dependent on the stage at which committees consider the EU policy cycle. Committees which enter this cycle at an early stage, playing a proactive role by anticipating EC/EU legislation, will meet more frequently than those which remain more reactive and deal mainly with legislation already adopted.

The following table (Table 2) based on the categories studied to assess scrutiny efficiency illustrates the differences in parliamentary involvement in EU decision-making. In so doing, it reflects EAC variations and thus provides a broad basis for comparing these differences. The degree of impact gives an idea of the extent to which an EAC can bind its government. The level of meeting frequency is described. A column entitled 'scope of information (EU area)' illustrates the degree to which EACs receive information on intergovernmental fields. However, neither size and composition nor competency over the areas of CFSP and JHA are covered. Size and composition (which ranges from 13 to 42 members) are dealt with in Table 3. As for areas of competency, it should be noted that the Member States in which EACs have jurisdiction over the CFSP and JHA fields are: Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.¹⁸



¹⁸ Source: Raunio, T. and Wiberg, M. (2000). *Does Support Lead to Ignorance? National Parliaments and the Legitimacy of EU Governance*. Acta Politica 35 (2), p. 151.

TABLE 2 – Types of Parliamentary Involvement in EU Decision-Making

	Scope of information			Meeting Frequency	Impact		
	EC area	EU area	Information transfer dependent on government		Weak	Policy influencing	Policy making
Austria	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Very low	High		X	X
Belgium	Comprehensive	Limited	Low	Low	X		
Denmark	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Very low	High			X
Finland	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Very low	High		X	X
France	Comprehensive	Limited	High	High		X	
Germany	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Very low	High		X	X
Greece	Limited	Limited	Very high	Low	X		
Ireland	Limited	Limited	High	Low	X		
Italy	Limited	Limited	High	Low	X		
Luxembourg	Limited	Limited	High	Low	X		
Netherlands	Comprehensive	Limited	Low	High		X	
Portugal	Limited	Limited	Very high	Low	X		
Spain	Limited	Limited	Very high	Low	X		
Sweden	Comprehensive	Comprehensive	Very low	High		X	X
UK	Comprehensive	Limited	Low	High		X	

Extracts from Maurer's 'Types of parliamentary involvement in EU decision-making'. Adapted from table in Maurer A., *National Parliaments after Amsterdam: Adaptation, Re-Calibration and Europeanisation by Process*, Paper for Working Group Meeting, XXIVth COSAC, 8-9 April 2001, p. 24.

TABLE 3 – Composition of the Member States' European Affairs Committees

Austria Nationalrat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 permanent members (reflecting proportionate strengths of the groups); absent members may be represented by an alternate; • Subcommittee has 14 members and 13 alternates.
Austria Bundesrat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 members and 15 alternates.
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 members (10 members from the Senate, 10 from the Chamber, 10 from the European Parliament), reflecting the proportionate strengths of groups as determined by the elections to each assembly; • 10 alternates from the Senate, 15 from the Chamber, 15 from the European Parliament.
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 members, 11 alternates (reflecting the political parties' relative strengths in the plenary); • alternates may attend meetings at any time.
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 full members and 13 deputy members (reflecting proportionate strengths of the groups in Parliament); • 1 seat is reserved for a representative of the Åland Islands.
France Assemblée Nationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are appointed by the National Assembly from among its members in such a way as to ensure proportional representation of political groups and balanced representation of standing committees; • 36 members (since 1990).
France Sénat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are appointed by the Senate, reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups represented in the Senate; • 36 members (since 1990).
Germany Bundestag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects the current proportionate strengths of the groups in the Bundestag and – though they have no vote – of the German Members in the groups of the European Parliament. • 33 Members of the Bundestag, who are also members of other specialist committees; • 14 German Members of the European Parliament, appointed by the President of the Bundestag on a nomination by their parties (MEPs have no vote); • an equal number of alternates for each Member of the Bundestag and each MEP. • an equal number of alternates for each Member of the Bundestag and each MEP.
Germany Bundesrat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 Members (each Land appoints 1 member; no weighting of votes as in the plenary). • The <i>Länder</i> are represented by Members of the <i>Land</i> governments who are responsible for European questions, though mostly at civil servant level (officials specialising in EU affairs).

Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 members; • Greek MEPs may attend meetings and express their views and opinions.
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 members (11 members from Dáil Éireann and 6 members from Seanad Éireann), reflecting size of different political groups in Parliament; • Minister for Foreign Affairs is an <i>ex officio</i> member of the Committee.
Italy Camera dei Deputati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 members (reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups).
Italy Senato della Repubblica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 members (reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups).
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 chairman, 2 vice-chairmen & 13 members reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups in Parliament.
Netherlands Tweede Kamer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 full members & 25 alternates reflecting the strength of the groups in the Chamber.
Netherlands Eerste Kamer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 members (all groups must be represented) & 11 alternates.
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 members.
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportional representation reflecting the balance of the groups in Parliament; each group and parliamentary group must be represented. No MEPs as members of the Committee. • 47 voting members, 26 from Congress and 21 from the Senate; • 8 spokesmen (two Senators), 2 alternates; • Bureau: 1 chairman, 2 vice-chairmen and 2 secretaries (4 Deputies and 1 Senator); • 7 Members of Parliament as alternates; • Subcommittees: 13 members each.
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 members, 29 alternates (proportional representation of all groups); • no MEPs on the Committee.
United Kingdom House of Commons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually 16 members (reflecting the strengths of the groups represented in the House).
United Kingdom House of Lords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 members, 56 co-opted members.

3.2.1.2. Detailed information

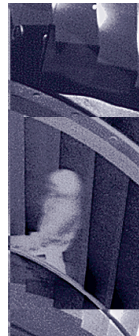
The information for each Member State has been divided into eleven categories:

1. Legal basis;
2. Powers and responsibilities;
3. Procedures;
4. Parliamentary scrutiny of government in EU policy fields;
5. Information provided by government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars;
6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law;
7. Relations with other committees of its national parliament or of other national parliaments;
8. Participation in activities at European level;
9. Composition;
10. Frequency of meetings;
11. Accessibility of work to the public.

It seemed appropriate to include in this list the EACs' general powers and responsibilities, participation by them in the transposition of directives, and their participation in activities at European level. This paper has focused on European Affairs Committees as scrutinisers of their governments in EU decision-making and, in a sense, on their involvement in the formulation of national policy on European legislation. However, in the EU framework, national parliaments and consequently their EACs have two other main¹⁹ roles²⁰:

- Treaty ratification (Art. 52 TEU), approval of Treaty modification and amendments (Art. 48 TEU), and consent as to new Member States joining the Union (Art. 49 TEU).
- Transposition of EC directives (secondary law) into national law (Art. 249 EC Treaty).

One should note that, in their contribution to national policy formulation on European legislation, most parliaments have a voice in the area of international agreements. They also have power of consent over any EU budgetary resource modification.



¹⁹ The Commission Report for the Reflection Group (1995: 27) states that the national parliaments are involved in nine types of EU decision.

²⁰ The Treaties do not formally recognise the national parliaments as the actors having authority in these roles. They confer these functions on the 'national authorities' 'in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements'. However, in practice, this does imply the national parliaments.

AUSTRIA

I. Parliament (www.parlinkom.gv.at)

- A. **Nationalrat** (National Council);
- B. **Bundesrat** (Federal Council), the Chamber which represents the interests of the various *Bundesländer* (Federal States).

II. European affairs committees

- A. Nationalrat: **Hauptausschuss** and **Ständiger Unterausschuss für Europäische Angelegenheiten** (Main Committee and Standing Subcommittee on European Affairs) (www.parlament.gv.at/pd/pm/XXI/au/aumg_gm.html)²¹;
- B. Bundesrat: **EU-Ausschuss** (EU Committee) (www.parlament.gv.at/pd/pm/BR/au/aumg_gm.html)²¹

A. **Hauptausschuss** and **Ständiger Unterausschuss für Europäische Angelegenheiten**

1. Legal basis

Article 23e of the Federal Constitution Act (B-VG).

2. Powers and responsibilities²²

- exercises responsibilities in European Union affairs, particularly through the Subcommittee (Article 23e B-VG);
- agrees Austria's position, with the Federal Government, on the appointment of members of the Commission, Court of Justice, Court of First Instance, Court of Auditors and Board of Governors of the European Investment Bank;

- delivers opinions on European Union proposals;
- holds prior consultations on any calls for a referendum.

3. Procedures

- the Federal Government forwards European Union proposals to the Committee, which scrutinises them;
- the National Council or a member of the Committee may also refer a matter to the Committee;
- if Government deviates from the opinion expressed by the Committee, it must refer the matter back to the Committee.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- drafts, documents and reports are forwarded; the appropriate member of Federal Government must inform the National Council at once of all EU proposals and give it the chance to express an opinion. If the proposal falls within the area of Federal legislative responsibility, the Federal Government is bound by the opinion of the National Council and may only deviate from it for compelling reasons of foreign or domestic policy;
- on decisions regarding appointments of EU personnel, the Federal Government must reach agreement with the Main Committee and inform it of Government's intended decision;
- deviation from Committee's opinion is only possible where this would mean changes to existing Federal constitutional law and where the Committee has at least raised no objection within a reasonable period of time.

²¹ Information available in German only.

²² Under Art 23e (6) of the Federal Constitutional Act, only the Federal Council has the right to give a binding opinion.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- report following vote in the European Union, where Main Committee has delivered an opinion on the matter.

Second and third pillars:

- for both pillars, the Rules on Procedure and responsibility for the first pillar (Article 23f B-VG) apply in respect of opinions of and referral to the National Council; comprehensive information must thus be provided.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Requests for opinions must indicate the type of transposition.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- active participation in COSAC meetings;
- sharing of information with other committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- Austrian MEPs may attend Committee meetings in an advisory capacity; they may also express brief opinions;
- Federal Government's position on the appointment of members of the Commission must first be agreed with the Main Committee;

9. Composition

- 28 permanent members, absent members may be represented by an alternate; composition reflects proportionate strengths of the groups;
- Subcommittee has 14 members and 13 alternates.

10. Frequency of meetings

Twice monthly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings usually open to the public, unless EU rules require confidentiality;
- documents, general information and minutes of meetings available on the Parliament (and Committee) website.

B. EU-Ausschuss

1. Legal basis

Article 23e of the Federal Constitution Act.

2. Powers and responsibilities²³

- may deliver opinions on European Union affairs or recommend specific positions to the Federal Council;
- takes action on the initiative of the Federal Government, the Federal Council or a member of the Committee.

3. Procedures

- normally opinions are delivered by the National Council itself. The Committee then drafts a report;

²³ Under Art 23e (6) of the Federal Constitutional Act, only the Federal Council has the right to give a binding opinion.

- at the beginning of meetings, the Federal Minister concerned may give a report and outline the Government's position;
- opinions are communicated to Ministers, the Federal Chancellor and Government.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- where the National Council has delivered an opinion on a proposal which must be transposed by a Federal constitutional act, Government is bound by that opinion;
- the Federal Government is bound by opinions expressed uniformly by all the *Länder*, unless compelling foreign or integration policy interests permit deviation from them.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

The Federal Government notifies the *Länder* of all European Union proposals of relevance to *Länder* responsibilities and interests, and gives them an opportunity to express an opinion.

First pillar:

- decisions of the European Council on integration require a decision by the National Council;
- Commission proposals must be forwarded by Government at once.

Second and third pillars:

- proposals must be notified as soon as Member States have agreed a common position or joint action.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

No direct influence, except in the pre-decision process.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- active involvement in COSAC meetings;
- any member of the Federal Council may attend meetings in an advisory capacity;
- opinions are forwarded to all members of the Federal Council and National Council.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- Austrian MEPs may attend meetings in an advisory capacity;

9. Composition

- 15 members and 15 alternates.

10. Frequency of meetings

Convened as required and on request.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings usually open to the public, unless EU rules require confidentiality; audio and film recording may be permitted;
- minutes, some documents, the Rules of Procedure and general information available on the Parliament (and Committee) website; views of the *Länder* are published online in '*Parlamentskorrespondenz*'.

BELGIUM

I. Parliament (www.fed-parl.be)

Belgium's parliament consists of two elected Houses:

- A. **Chambre des Représentants/Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers** (Chamber of Representatives), the lower House (www.lachambre.be);
- B. **Sénat/Senaat** (Senate), the upper House (www.senate.be).

II. European affairs committees

(www.senate.be/www/?MIval=/WieIsWie/LijstVanCommissies&M=1&LANG=fr)²⁴

The two Houses have a joint Committee for European Union Affairs:

Comité d'Avis fédéral chargé des Questions européennes / Federaal Advies-Comité voor Europese aangelegenheden

1. Legal basis

- precursors in both Houses since 1985;
- joint body since 1995; covered by Rule 100 of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Representatives and Rule 85 of the Senate's Rules.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- scrutinises legal issues arising in connection with European affairs;
- compiles own-initiative reports and delivers opinions on European issues;

- coordinates parliamentary scrutiny of the European decision-making process;
- consults with Government before and after meetings of the European Council on agendas and conclusions;
- delivers opinions on legislative proposals put forward by the Commission;
- compiles an annual report on the work of Government in the field of European affairs;
- monitors transposition of EU legislation into national law;
- coordination of and participation in interparliamentary cooperation (COSAC, Conference of Speakers, cooperation with EP);
- monitors institutional reform of the EU (IGC, Convention).

3. Procedures

- traditional parliamentary procedures (written and oral questions to the Government, interpellation in the Chamber which has to be concluded by a vote of confidence in the Government);
- procedures of the Advisory Committee:- ad hoc procedures under which Government informs the Advisory Committee to allow it to exercise the powers and responsibilities listed in point 2 above. The Advisory Committee acts as an interface between EU institutions and the Government on the one hand, and select and standing committees in Parliament on the other.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- may express an opinion on European issues;
- under Article 168 of the Constitution, Parliament is informed by Government of the beginning of negotiations concerning any revision of EU Treaties;

²⁴ Information available in French and Dutch only.

- may ask Government for further information on EU issues and may hold hearings;
- Government is not obliged to consult Parliament before adopting a common position of the Council.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

There are no pillar-specific information procedures. See information under point 3.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- produces reports on the transposition of EU law into national law, but has no active involvement;
- delivers an opinion on any EU Treaty ratification.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- the Advisory Committee acts as an interface between EU institutions and Government on the one hand, and select and standing committees in Parliament on the other ;
- cooperation with equivalent committees in other national parliaments;
- attendance at and participation in COSAC meetings.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- normally, any Belgian MEP may take part in an advisory capacity in meetings of standing committees of the Chamber and the Senate (when bills/legislative proposals are being debated);
- Belgian MEPs may submit written questions to Government; replies are published in the annex to the Chamber of Representatives' Bulletin of Questions and Answers;

9. Composition

- 30 members (10 from the Senate, 10 from the Chamber, 10 from the European Parliament), reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups as determined by the elections to each assembly;
- 10 alternates from the Senate, 15 from the Chamber, 15 from the European Parliament.

10. Frequency of meetings

Usually weekly, when Parliament is in session.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Meetings are open to the public; agendas and a number of documents, such as reports on COSAC meetings, are available on the Parliament (and Committee) website.

DENMARK

I. *Parliament* (www.folketinget.dk)

Denmark's unicameral parliament is the **Folketing**.

II. *European affairs committee*

(www.eu-oplysningen.dk/denmark/euu)

Europaudvalget (*European Affairs Committee*).

1. Legal basis

Since Denmark's entry, the Accession Act of 1972 (Section 6, Subsection 2) provides the Committee with power to scrutinise Government involvement in European affairs. However, the decisive provision, which defines the Committee's competence is laid down in the EEC Committee Report of 29 March 1973.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- can stipulate the terms of the negotiating mandate which Government must follow in meetings of the Council;
- enjoys responsibility for all major European issues, including proposals for directives and regulations; The Committee also has the responsibility for issues related to the WTO;
- acts as coordinator for EU affairs;
- receives from Government all opinions, 'letters of formal notice' and 'writs' pertaining to Denmark's dealings with the European Court of Justice.

3. Procedures

- Commission and Council proposals are forwarded to the Committee in writing, with comments, by the Foreign Affairs Ministry;

- prior to Council meetings, the Government forwards a topical memorandum describing the issues to be dealt with at the Council meetings;
- the Committee puts EU-related questions to the Government in writing;
- holds combined hearings and readings of Commission Green and White Papers, after which a statement is drafted;
- Government forwards basic memoranda on all new draft directives and Green and White Papers.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- after Council meetings, Minister responsible lays a summary of the Government's analysis of the meeting before Parliament;
- the Committee also receives Council statements to the press; it can thus check that a Minister has kept to the terms of his mandate; the Minister may be called before the Committee to answer questions on specific subjects.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- comprehensive duty to provide information and hold hearings.

Second pillar:

- the Committee is kept informed of progress on the negotiations.
- Government lays relevant proposals before Parliament; debated by European Affairs Committee after Legal Affairs Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee.

Third pillar:

- as second pillar.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Mostly transposed as regulations, so no direct involvement of Parliament; but receives information on how they are implemented.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- Committee documents and reports are referred on to appropriate specialist committees, which debate the item and may make a statement or recommendation to the European Affairs Committee;
- the Committee decides on response to invitations from EP or Member States; participants are given a summary of the positions they must uphold;
- hearings on Commission Green and White Papers are held jointly with other specialist committees;
- close cooperation and sharing of information with other national committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- Danish MEPs may take part in Committee meetings only if they are also members of the national parliament and elected members of the Committee. (However, for cooperation's sake, the agenda and documents of the Committee are forwarded to Danish MEPs) ;
- the Committee defines a position for the Danish Government ahead of important Council meetings;

- the Permanent Representative of the Danish Parliament in Brussels acts as information source and point of contact with the Commission, European Parliament and ECJ;
- meetings in Brussels twice a year with EP, Commission and other representatives to discuss European issues;
- COSAC meetings twice a year.

9. Composition

- 17 members, 11 alternates (reflecting the political parties' relative strengths in the plenary);
- alternates may attend meetings at any time.

10. Frequency of meetings

- weekly on Fridays, except in August, otherwise throughout the year (even when Parliament is not sitting);
- extraordinary meetings are mandatory if, during a Council meeting, a compromise requires the Government to deviate significantly from its previous position.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- the Government publishes reports on Council meetings;
- special minutes of Committee meetings are published after Council meetings (showing *inter al.* which parties have supported the Government's negotiating mandate);
- meetings themselves not held in public;
- more than 95% of the notes received by the Committee are available to the public. Information on the Committee's work is available on the Parliament (and Committee) website; some hearings are open to the public.

FINLAND

I. Parliament (www.eduskunta.fi)

Finland has a unicameral parliament, the **Eduskunta** or **Riksdag**.

II. European affairs committee

(www.eduskunta.fi/efakta/vk/suv/suv.htm)

Suuri valiokunta / Stora utskottet
(Grand Committee).

1. Legal basis

The basic rules are provided for in Chapter 8, sections 93-97, of the Constitution (1 March 2000).

2. Powers and responsibilities

The Grand Committee is the main committee in the Finnish Parliament and deals primarily with European Union matters. The Grand Committee

- ensures that Parliament's influence is felt in EU decision-making;
- coordinates EU matters;
- participates in and scrutinises a range of legislative procedures;
- formulates and represents Parliament's views on the Union;
- drafts proposals for decisions;
- formulates opinions on EU matters for Government, though these are not legally binding.

3. Procedures

- so-called 'U-matters' (proposals for EU decisions falling within Parliament's area of responsibility) are laid before appropriate specialist committees and in particular the Grand Committee;
- these committees report on them (specialist committees doing much of the preparatory work);
- the Grand Committee formulates its opinion on the basis of the reports, and the opinion is politically (though not legally) binding on Parliament.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Government has a constitutional duty to provide comprehensive information;
- Government must explain and substantiate EU policy;
- negotiations with the EU Council must be postponed if the Committee has not yet completed its work of scrutiny;
- if Government wishes to deviate from the Parliament's opinion, this must be explained to Parliament;
- Ministers responsible report to the Committee on Council meetings, and may be questioned about the meetings and decisions taken.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- duty to provide comprehensive information on the drafting of EU policy, on request and where needed.

Second pillar:

- area of responsibility of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Third pillar:

- duty of information as for first pillar.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Transposition often requires new legislation or amendments to existing legislation.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- referral of reports to specialist committees which may express an opinion;
- reports may be commissioned on specific topics from specialist committees;
- Ministers attend meetings of the Committee;
- representatives of other parliaments, particularly those of the applicant countries, invited for talks.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- opinions presented to Government, for negotiations;
- regular attendance at and participation in COSAC meetings;
- statements obtained from the European Union on the state of negotiations;
- Committee members take part in meetings of the European Parliament.

9. Composition

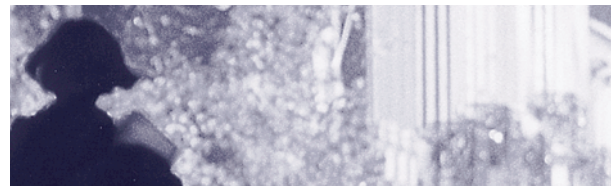
- 25 full members and 13 deputy members (reflecting proportionate strengths of the groups in Parliament);
- one seat on the Committee is permanently reserved for a representative of the Åland Islands constituency.

10. Frequency of meetings

Twice a week (Wednesdays and Fridays).

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- documents and minutes of meetings are normally published after the event;
- meetings are not open to the public;
- agendas and press reports are available on the Parliament (and Committee) website.



FRANCE

I. Parliament

France has a bicameral system.

- A. **Assemblée Nationale** (National Assembly), the lower House of directly-elected members. (www.assemblee-nat.fr);
- B. **Sénat** (Senate), a permanent upper Chamber with legislative powers, representing the interests of the individual *départements*. (www.senat.fr/europe)

II. European affairs committees

Each Chamber has its own European affairs committee. Since the 1958 Constitution provides for just six committees, non-constitutional committees set up in the two Chambers are called 'delegations'.

- A. Assemblée Nationale: ***Délégation de l'Assemblée Nationale pour l'Union européenne*** (National Assembly Delegation for the European Union) (www.assemblee-nationale.fr/english/8an.asp)
 - B. Sénat: ***Délégation du Sénat pour l'Union européenne*** (Senate Delegation for the European Union). (<http://www.senat.fr/europe/broch.html>)²⁵
- A. ***Délégation de l'Assemblée Nationale pour l'Union européenne***

1. Legal basis

Law of 6 July 1979 as amended by the Laws of 10 May 1990 (No 90-385) and 10 June 1994 (No 94-476):

- the Law of 10 May 1990 doubled the number of Delegation members from 18 to 36;
- one effect of the Law of 10 June 1994 was to change the name of the Delegation from *Délégation pour les Communautés européennes* to *Délégation pour l'Union européenne* in line with the Treaty of Maastricht.

The legal basis of the Delegation is a legislative rather than a constitutional one inasmuch as the 1958 Constitution limits the number of standing committees to six.

2. Powers and responsibilities

The Delegation has the dual role of briefing the National Assembly and scrutinising the Government on European affairs.

- Article 88-4 of the Constitution provides for mandatory scrutiny of proposals and drafts of Community acts of a legislative nature forwarded by Government. These amount to some 200 documents per year. The Delegation may adopt conclusions or motions for resolutions on texts it considers important.
- The Delegation also receives all the other documents issued by European institutions (proposals and drafts of Community acts of a non-legislative nature, White and Green Papers, Commission communications, work programmes, European Parliament reports, etc.). It may adopt an information report on any subject of its choosing.

3. Procedures

Article 88-4 of the Constitution was introduced in 1992 at the time of France's ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union. Its scope was widened in

²⁵ Information available in French only.

1999 in connection with the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam. Under this provision, the Delegation receives proposals and drafts of Community acts of a legislative nature under the three pillars of the European Union and also a significant number of consultation documents issued by European institutions.

The Delegation's work is underpinned by the 'parliamentary scrutiny reservation' (*réserve d'examen parlementaire*) procedure applied to texts forwarded under Article 88-4 of the Constitution. The Government has undertaken to allow Parliament to state its position on these proposals and drafts prior to their adoption by the European Union's Council of Ministers. A Prime Ministerial circular provides the Delegation with a minimum guaranteed period of one month in which to issue its opinion. This period of one month must be combined with the six weeks provided for under the Protocol on the role of national parliaments appended to the Amsterdam Treaty.

Several options are open for dealing with the texts submitted for Delegation consideration under Article 88-4 of the Constitution:

- the Delegation may decide to take no action, in which case it will waive the parliamentary scrutiny reservation;
- it may choose to act in a more informal way by adopting conclusions under its own responsibility which do not bind the National Assembly as a whole;
- it may maintain the reservation in order to obtain additional information;
- if the reservation has been prompted by opposition or objections to the text, the Delegation may adopt a motion for a resolution which is then referred to the responsible standing committee for final adoption either in committee or during a public sitting.

NB Any Member of the Assembly may table a motion for a resolution directly on any European text forwarded under Article 88-4.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Article 88-4 of the Constitution requires the Government to forward to Parliament proposals and drafts of acts comprising provisions of a legislative nature of the European Communities and the European Union as soon as they are submitted to the Council of the European Union. Government may also submit other drafts and proposals and any other document from an institution of the European Union (White Papers, Green Papers, communications, etc.);
- the Delegation may hold hearings of Ministers and other figures;
- parliamentary scrutiny of European affairs also takes the form of question time to the Government. One period each month is now devoted solely to European matters;
- debates in public sitting may be organised with reference to topical European issues (particularly to coincide with meetings of the European Council).

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- mandatory: all proposals and drafts of a legislative nature under the first, second and third pillars. The Council of State will decide whether a text is legislative or non-legislative;
- optional: other, mostly consultative texts (White Papers, Green Papers, Communications, etc.).

In a circular dated 13 December 1999, the Government undertook to submit all documents to Parliament belonging to the first, second and third pillars, including those for which forwarding is 'optional'.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Existing texts do not confer any specific power on the Delegation for the European Union in the process of transposing directives.

Practice may be about to change, however. Several measures were announced by the Government during the parliamentary debate on the ratification of the Treaty of Nice in June 2001:

- when a Community measure is being prepared, it is planned that each text forwarded to Parliament under Article 88-4 should henceforth be accompanied by a simplified impact assessment drawn up by the ministry responsible stating the purpose of the proposed act and mentioning the internal legislation which would be affected;
- at the transposition stage, it is planned to supply Parliament with a table summarising the progress made in effecting transpositions every quarter. The table will also mention any procedures for failure to act taken by the Commission before the Court of Justice.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- participation in COSAC;
- organisation of regular joint meetings with delegations from member and applicant countries' European Affairs Committees;
- joint meetings with the Senate's Delegation for the European Union and the specialist committees of the National Assembly.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- meetings with representatives of the European Parliament and other European institutions;
- creation of an office of permanent representation to the European Union as from September 2003.

9. Composition

The Delegation for the European Union is made up of 36 members appointed to reflect the relative strengths of the political groups. There must also be balanced representation of the 6 standing committees.

10. Frequency of meetings

The Delegation for the European Union meets once or twice a week whilst Parliament is in session. It meets as and when necessary during the recess.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- Delegation meetings are not normally open to the public; some hearings may, however, be made open to the press on the initiative of the Delegation's chairman;
- every month, the Delegation publishes a selection, plus comments, of the most significant European documents. These documents and reports on the Delegation's activities (meetings, hearings, topical issues) can be read online on the 'Europe' page of the National Assembly's Internet site (www.assemblee-nationale.fr/europe);
- moreover, as part of the national debate on the future of Europe, the Delegation is holding a series of meetings and debates with civic organisations. The *Assises* on the future of Europe, for example, brought together almost 1000 members of the public at the National Assembly on 7-8 November 2001.

B. *Délégation du Sénat pour l'Union européenne*

1. Legal basis

Standing committee 1979, competence widened in 1990 and 1994. Has no constitutional status.

2. Powers and responsibilities

Delegation deals with all European affairs.

- briefs Senate on all European affairs and pre-selects important European documents in view of their significance for France;
- subsequent to the Constitutional Act of 25 June 1992, scrutinises proposals for European legislation in accordance with Article 88-4 of the Constitution, i.e. proposals in French legislative areas;
- Delegation may adopt motions for resolutions and transmit them to the appropriate committee for final consideration;
- drafts background reports and opinions.

3. Procedures

- on receipt, proposals for European legislation are debated and checked, divided into categories of importance and allocated to the next stage of processing;
- a report is drawn up on proposals categorised as important;
- after reading the document, the Delegation may decide to take no action;
- if Delegation adopts a draft resolution, it is referred to the appropriate committee;
- after consideration and vote in the committee responsible, the resolution is either deemed adopted by the Senate, or is placed on the agenda of the plenary;

- the Delegation may send Government a letter or final statement;
- texts are forwarded to Government and published on the website and in the periodical, '*Actualités de la Délégation*';
- Government is not legally bound by resolutions of the Parliament, however.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- under Article 88-4 of the Constitution, Government must forward proposals for EU acts of a legislative nature to the Parliament (Senate and National Assembly). This practice was extended in 1998 to many other documents from EU institutions (White Papers, Green papers, ...);
- 'Parliamentary scrutiny reservation':- Government has a duty to insist that the Council of the European Union allow the French Parliament the right to exercise parliamentary scrutiny for a period of six weeks after transmission and if it wishes to address a specific matter;
- Ministers (of European affairs and others) may be asked to attend hearings;
- question time and oral questions to the Government.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

All draft documents of the European Union, plus agendas of the Council and European Council, are laid before the Delegation.

First, second and third pillars:

- all legislative proposals from the Commission and all documents of EU institutions are forwarded

by the Government, together with information on ongoing negotiations.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Responsibility for the transposition of directives into national law does not lie with the Delegation, but rather with the six standing committees.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- regular attendance at COSAC meetings (three Delegation members) and regular cooperation with other national parliaments;
- Delegation chairman attends Senate Conference of Presidents;
- joint meetings with the Delegation of the National Assembly, with other specialist committees of the Senate, or with committees of other national Parliaments.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- hearings with representatives of EU institutions or MEPs;
- Delegation members attend meetings of European Parliament committees (when invited).

9. Composition

- Members are appointed by the Senate to reflect the proportionate strengths of the groups represented in the Senate.
- 36 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly whilst Parliament is in session (as often as necessary).

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are not open to the public (except some hearings);
- information such as agendas and working documents and reports are available on the www.senat.fr/europe website;
- publication of a regular report on the Delegation's work, '*Actualités de la Délégation*'.



GERMANY

I. Parliament

The Federal Republic of Germany has a bicameral system, comprising

- A. the **Bundestag**, the parliamentary assembly (www.bundestag.de);
- B. the **Bundesrat** (Federal Council) through which the *Länder* have a voice in the processes of national legislation and administration and in European Union affairs (www.bundesrat.de).

II. European affairs committees

The Bundestag and Bundesrat each have a European Union affairs committee:

- A. Bundestag: *Ausschuss für die Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union*, or *EU-Ausschuss* for short (Committee on the Affairs of the European Union/EU Committee) (www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/orga/03organs/04commit/02commper/comm7.html) (www.bundestag.de/gremien/a22/index.html)²⁶
- B. Bundesrat: *Ausschuss für Fragen der Europäischen Union* (Committee on European Union Affairs).

A. The Bundestag's EU-Ausschuss

1. Legal basis

Created as a constitutional entity on 15 December 1994 during the 13th legislative term under Articles 23 and 45 of the Basic Law. The history of the EU

Committee is that of a development from a dependent, relatively powerless body of the Council of Elders during the 4th and 5th legislative terms over several immediate stages into a committee mentioned in the Constitution with special constitutional privileges.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- is the centre of European policy-making in the Bundestag (debates on amendments to the Basic Treaties, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Agenda 2000, Reform of EU institutions, EU enlargement, Common Foreign and Security Policy, policy on the Balkans, European Convention);
- is a cross-cutting committee (where European initiatives impact on more than one policy area, Committee acts as starting and coordination point);
- is able to take decisions in lieu of the plenary in order to influence the Brussels decision-making process in a prompt and flexible manner (e.g. decision of 29 September 1999 which enabled the Committee to give the Federal Government the Bundestag's opinion in good time before the European Council in Tampere, namely that a Convention to draw up a EU Charter of Fundamental Rights should be made up of a majority of parliamentarians);
- formulates recommendations for decision to the Bundestag (during the 14th legislative term there were recommendations on such matters as Agenda 2000, the Treaty of Nice, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and EU enlargement);
- has conducted public hearings in relation to the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), EU enlargement and the reform of EU institutions;

²⁶ A link which provides more comprehensive and updated information in German, English and French.

- has the Europe Office to organise the scrutiny of Union documents in the Bundestag (the Europe Office supports the Chairman of the Committee in his task of submitting a referral proposal to the President of the Bundestag in coordination with the specialist committees for formally transmitted Union documents and for those declared to be agenda items by committees).

3. Procedures

- is empowered by the Bundestag to exercise the Bundestag's rights in relation to the Federal Government and, after hearing other specialist committees involved, to deliver opinions;
- delivers opinions, without being expressly empowered by the Bundestag, by taking decisions in lieu of the plenary (during the 14th legislative term Committee exercised this privilege three times: on 29 September 1999 before the European Council in Tampere in order to demand a Convention made up of a majority of parliamentarians; on 22 May 2000 before a meeting of the ECOFIN Council, the Committee stated its position on behalf of the plenary of the Bundestag concerning the future reporting practice and further development of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF); on 4 July 2001 the Committee advocated the formation of a Convention composed of a majority of parliamentarians to prepare the Intergovernmental Conference 2004 and work out a draft European Constitution);
- receives all agendas and reports of all meetings of the Council of the European Union;
- tables amendments in the plenary even after a debate has been held and the committee responsible has made its recommendations for a decision;
- concludes internal debate with presentation of a consultation document and a recommendation for a decision.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- states substantive positions;
- is informed by representatives of the Federal Government at spokespersons' meetings or at briefings about upcoming meetings of the Council and can contribute a parliamentary dimension to the formulation of the Federal Government's opinion;
- can examine the extent to which its deliberations have been taken into consideration, since Federal Government has the duty to inform the Committee about the results of Council meetings;
- is mandatorily informed in advance of European Council meetings by the Federal Chancellor.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

The Federal Government has a duty, under Article 23 of the Basic Law, to inform Parliament 'comprehensively and at the earliest possible time' to enable it to influence the decision-making process.

First pillar:

- information, plus an opportunity to respond to legislative proposals.

Second pillar:

- all meetings on subjects in this area must be attended by representatives of the Federal Government.

Third pillar:

- informing the Committee.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- is informed by the Federal Government delivering a brief opinion on all items of proposed European legislation published in the Official Journal of the EC;
- deals with the state of transposition of directives into national law twice a year;
- is informed by the Federal Government having an additional duty to report if the deadline for transposition is exceeded by more than six months.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- close cooperation with other specialist committees in the Bundestag and in the Bundesrat (joint hearings and consultations);
- regular contacts with the EU affairs committees of the Member States and applicant countries;
- delegations to visit the Parliament of the incoming EU Council Presidency;
- visits to all countries applying for accession in order to provide firsthand impressions of the state of preparation for EU accession in each country and to fill out the picture received from the Federal Government;
- maintains a dialogue between the Committees on EU affairs of the so-called Weimar Triangle, i.e. the French Assembly, the Polish Sejm and the German Bundestag.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- COSAC (attends half-yearly meetings to exchange information and experience, participates in the drafting of non-binding opinions);
- delegations to COSAC conferences have increasingly succeeded in using this alliance at European

level to promote the main concerns of the Bundestag with regard to integration policy;

- attends EP meetings, particularly meetings of EP committees;
- is regularly briefed by European Commissioners and MEPs.

9. Composition

- reflects the current proportionate strengths of the groups in the Bundestag and – though they have no vote – of the German Members in the groups of the European Parliament;
- 33 Members of the Bundestag, who are also members of other specialist committees;
- 14 German Members of the European Parliament, appointed by the President of the Bundestag on a nomination by their parties (Members of the EP have no vote);
- an equal number of alternates for each Member of the Bundestag and each MEP.

10. Frequency of meetings

- weekly whilst the Bundestag is in session (approximately 21 times a year), every Wednesday afternoon;
- in addition, meetings can be convened when the Bundestag is not sitting, if urgent action is needed.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are not usually open to the public, although 26 meetings were held in public during the 14th legislative term (1998-2002), thus being the committee which most often holds public meetings;
- public hearings have related, for instance, to the draft EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the process of EU enlargement, a draft EU

Constitution, and the transfer of the Schengen *Acquis* into the EU framework;

- public hearings are also held jointly with other Bundestag or Bundesrat committees on specific specialist issues such as the effects of EU enlargement on the Common Agricultural Policy and the regions, and the strengthening of democracy in Europe - the capacity to act and decide in an enlarged European Union;
- briefing the public on the Committee's work through the Bundestag's Internet homepage (www.bundestag.de/gremien/a22/index.html): agendas, Committee recommendations for decisions, the final report in German, English and French relating to the 14th legislative term (1998-2002).

B. *The Bundesrat's Ausschuss für Fragen der Europäischen Union*

1. Legal basis

Precursor set up in 1957. Since 1993 the Bundesrat has had a constitutional right to a say in European Union affairs under Article 23 of the Basic Law. Further provisions included in the Act on Cooperation between the Federation and the *Länder* in European Union Matters of 12 March 1993 (EUZBLG).

2. Powers and responsibilities

- selects and debates European Union documents received from Federal Government;
- with the help of specialist committees of the Bundesrat, formulates recommendations for opinions to be delivered to Federal Government;
- checks whether Federal Government has to take account of the Bundesrat's opinion in deciding its negotiating position (in the case of a matter covered at domestic level by *Land* legislation);

- checks whether the mandate to negotiate in forums of the European Union should be delegated to a representative of the *Länder* (especially where the *Länder* have exclusive legislative powers).

3. Procedures

- under Article 23 II of the Basic Law in conjunction with para. 2 of the EUZBLG, the Federal Government lays all documents received from the Commission or Council before the Bundesrat and notifies the Bundesrat in good time of EU matters of relevance to the *Länder*;
- reports by Government representatives on participation in negotiations;
- reports by representatives of the *Länder* on meetings of Council and Commission bodies;
- main responsibility for drafting recommendations for the Bundesrat;
- Bundesrat votes on recommendations in the plenary; in urgent cases the 'Europakammer' (Chamber for European Affairs) is convened, whose decisions count as decisions by the Bundesrat;
- delegate of the *Länder* to the European Union, appointed by the *Länder*, informs the *Länder*, monitors compliance with Bundesrat demands, and represents the interests of the *Länder* on the ground.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- establishing Federal Government's mandatory negotiating positions, where Bundesrat's opinion has to be taken into account, and monitoring compliance with its requirements;
- Committee may require Government representatives to attend its meetings.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- Federal Government has a duty to inform Parliament under Article 23 of the Basic Law; forwarding of Commission proposals and other documents; notification of timetable for deliberations in the Council of the European Union and indication of cut-off date for consideration of opinions.

Second pillar:

- no duty to forward proposals, but right to receive information.

Third pillar:

- forwarding of legislative proposals and Council documents.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- no involvement in transposition which is the province of the individual specialist committees;
- work focuses on the formulation of recommendations to ensure that the interests of the *Länder* can be catered for in a legislative process that is still ongoing in Brussels.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- close cooperation with other specialist committees of the Bundesrat;
- cooperation and organisation of joint hearings with the Bundestag's EU Committee;

- regular contacts with European Affairs Committees of Member States and applicant countries.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- attendance at COSAC meetings;
- representatives of the *Länder* are sent as delegates to Council or Commission bodies, when interests of the *Länder* are involved;
- negotiations in the Council conducted by a Minister, when the exclusive legislative powers of the *Länder* are involved.

9. Composition

- 16 members (each *Land* appoints one member; no weighting of votes as in the plenary).
- the *Länder* are represented by Members of the *Land* Governments who are responsible for European affairs; contacts are held at civil servant level (officials specialising in EU affairs).

10. Frequency of meetings

Every three weeks (except when Parliament is not in session); special meetings possible in certain circumstances.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- not usually open to the public;
- public hearings held jointly with the Bundestag on specific specialist topics; general information on the Bundesrat available on the www.bundesrat.de website.

GREECE

I. *Parliament* (www.parliament.gr)

Greece's elected parliament, the **Vouli ton Ellinon** (Hellenic Parliament), is the repository of legislative power together with the President.

II. *European affairs committee*

(www.parliament.gr/english/organwsh/epitropes/Frame.asp?title=Committees&page=epitropes)

Epitropi Evropaikon Ypothesseon
(*European Affairs Committee*).

1. Legal basis

Articles 32 A and 41 B of Standing Orders. The EAC was first established in 1990 by decision of Parliament.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- has sole responsibility for European affairs, including matters covered by the second and third pillars;
- drafts reports and opinions for Parliament and Government;
- has responsibility for the scrutiny of institutional questions;
- examines proposals for EU legislation.

3. Procedures

- matters are referred to the Committee by its Chairman, by the Speaker of Parliament, standing committees, individual members of the Committee itself or MEPs;

- proposals for regulations, directives, decisions, etc. under the TEU must be laid before Parliament for an opinion;
- Committee prepares reports on matters it has examined, and forwards these to the Parliament or to the Government.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- presentation of a report to Parliament on application of the TEU and Greece's relations with the EU;
- Ministers responsible may be heard by the Committee before and after meetings of the Council;
- Parliament may put down written and oral questions.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- Government must report on progress of EU work;
- Government must forward Commission proposals.

Second and third pillars:

- information on progress of policy under Titles V and VI of the TEU.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Not available.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- attendance at COSAC meetings;
- cooperation with specialist committees, when a specialist area has implications for the policy of European integration.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- continuous contact with the EP through Greek MEPs; MEPs have the same speaking rights as Members of the Greek Parliament;
- Committee is responsible for relations between the Greek Parliament and the EP.

9. Composition

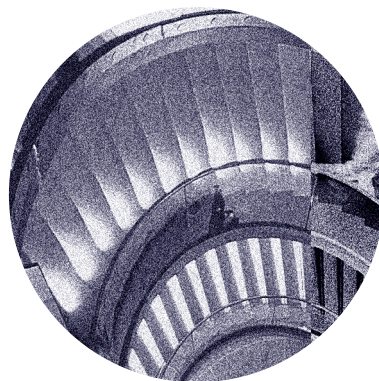
Consists of 31 members (all Members of Parliament): the President (Chairman) who is one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Parliament's Bureau, 2 Vice-Chairmen, 1 Secretary and 27 members. The 2 Vice-Chairmen and the Secretary are elected from among the 30 members of the Committee. The Greek Members of the European Parliament have the right to attend the meetings of the EAC and express their views and opinions.

10. Frequency of meetings

Held at irregular intervals. However, at least twice a month.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Meetings open to the public; documents, minutes and information on Parliament available on the www.parliament.gr website; some material in English.



IRELAND

I. *Parliament* (www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas)

The Irish Parliament, the Oireachtas, consists of two Houses:

- A. **Dáil Éireann**, the Chamber of elected parliamentarians;
- B. **Seanad Éireann**, composed of 60 Members (Senators). Senators are (i) nominated by the Taoiseach (the Prime Minister), (ii) elected by five panels representing vocational interests, (iii) elected by graduates of two universities.

II. *European affairs committee*

(www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/Committees-29th-Dail/EuropeanAffairs.htm)

Since 1997 both Houses have one joint committee:

Joint Committee on European Affairs / An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí Eorpacha

1. Legal basis

The power to establish the Committee exists under the Standing Orders of both Houses.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- examines EU Treaties (e.g. Treaty of Nice);
- considers general European matters;
- examines Commission guidelines and programmes as well as other proposed acts of the Council of Ministers as a basis for possible legislative action and other EU-related proposals as the Committee deems necessary;
- considers acts of EU institutions;

- Committee can report on the affairs it has examined;
- can discuss and draft proposals;
- subcommittees are appointed;
- an annual report concerning the Committee's work, the operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act, its meetings and planned future work are drawn up for both Houses.

3. Procedures

- matters can be referred to the Committee by the Parliament and/or on its own initiative;
- a subcommittee has been established to examine draft EU legislation;
- legislative proposals are referred to the Committee for debate and an opinion is delivered in the form of a report to the Houses.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- all international agreements to which Ireland is party are laid before Dáil Éireann (Article 29(5)(1) of the Constitution);
- Ministers can be requested to appear before the Committee in order to discuss current policies;
- officials may attend meetings and provide non-confidential information;
- Ministers are called upon to discuss proposals for legislation prior to approval by Government;
- the subcommittee on European scrutiny scrutinises draft legislation and delivers an opinion.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- reports relating to Ireland's EU membership are referred to the Committee;

- drafts of European Council legal acts are forwarded;
- agendas and documentation concerning upcoming European Council meetings are provided by the relevant Government department;
- Government departments must provide explanatory memoranda on EU proposals and legislation.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Directives are incorporated into national law through the passage of a bill by Parliament or by way of a statutory instrument.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- other Member States' MEPs can be invited to attend meetings;
- represents the Houses of the Oireachtas at COSAC;
- exchanges of information with other committees, including visits to other parliaments or reception of delegations from other parliaments.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Irish Members of the European Parliament and of the Irish Delegation to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly can attend and participate in its meetings without, however, possessing any voting rights.

9. Composition

- 17 members (reflecting size of different political groups in Parliament);
- 11 TDs and 6 Senators;
- Minister for Foreign Affairs is an *ex officio* member of the Committee.

10. Frequency of meetings

Both the Joint Committee and the Subcommittee meet fortnightly, in alternate weeks.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- in order for all views to be considered with regard to the Treaty of Nice, public/civil society written submissions were requested;
- meetings are organised in public session, proceedings can be televised;
- information concerning the Parliament and its work available under www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm.

ITALY

I. Parliament

- A. **Camera dei Deputati** (Chamber of Deputies), the lower House. (www.parlamento.it);
- B. **Senato della Repubblica** (Senate of the Republic), the upper House. (www.senato.it)

II. European affairs committees

The Chamber of Deputies and the Senate each have their own European Union affairs committee:

- A. Camera dei Deputati: **Commissione Politiche dell'Unione Europea** (Committee on European Union Policies) (www.camera.it/index.asp?content=/attivita/lavori/02.commissioni/14.unioneuropea.asp)²⁷;
- B. Senato della Repubblica: **Giunta per gli affari delle Comunità europee** (European Communities Affairs Committee). (<http://www.senato.it/att/affint/home.htm>)²⁷

A. **Commissione Politiche dell'Unione Europea**

1. Legal basis

- precursors since 1990;
- standing committee since 1996; governed by ordinary law and the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies.

2. Powers and responsibilities

Has general responsibility, in principle, for all aspects of EU work and the transposition of EU legislation (with the exception that the Foreign and

European Community Affairs Committee has responsibility for ratifying the Treaties):

- sets guidelines and monitors Government activity, where this is relevant to Committee's own areas of responsibility;
- delivers opinions on legislative proposals concerned with the application of EU law and the Treaties and the conformity of these legislative proposals with EU law;
- conducts hearings with responsible Ministers and representatives of the Government administration;
- prepares Government reports for Parliament and, together with other committees, delivers its own opinion on them.

3. Procedures

- in February 2000 the Chamber introduced a new procedure for the scrutiny of documents in accordance with the European legislative programme: each standing committee examines the Commission's programme and the objectives which come under their respective areas of responsibility;
- legislative proposals are referred to committees and debated, after which reports are drawn up and opinions delivered;
- Government's annual report on EU law and Italy's participation in the legislative process is scrutinised jointly with other committees before being laid before the Chamber;
- following debate the Chamber adopts a resolution addressed to Government.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Committee scrutinises the reports presented by Government, compiles its own reports on these

²⁷ Information available in Italian only.

for the Chamber and examines opinions of the other committees consulted;

- resolutions addressed to Government may be adopted.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- annual Government report to Chamber on progress of the integration process, Italy's contribution to the EU legislative process and current economic and social issues;
- forwarding of all Commission legislative proposals and other documents (White Papers, etc.).

Second pillar:

- forwarding of legislative proposals relating to the CFSP, though primary responsibility rests with the committees concerned.

Third pillar:

- likewise, forwarding of proposals for EU legislation under Title VI of the TEU.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Responsible for scrutinising items of draft EU legislation, which stipulate procedures and timetable for transposition. In the late Eighties a specific procedure was introduced for the transposition of European legislation which envisages the presentation to Parliament by Government, and in particular by the Minister for Community Policies, of an annual bill (the so-called Community bill) whereby the

national legislative system is periodically adjusted so as to make it consistent with the European system.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- relations with other States are handled primarily through the Foreign and Community Affairs Committee;
- joint discussion, together with other national committees, with the Minister responsible.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- subject to approval by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, meetings may be held with the participation of delegations from the EP or individual MEPs;
- subject to approval, Italian MEPs or EU Commissioners are invited to brief the Committee;
- half-yearly meeting in the Council at the end of the presidency with EP delegation (members of the EP Bureau and chairman of a committee or group);
- delegations from the Committee regularly attend COSAC.

9. Composition

42 members (reflecting proportionate strengths of the groups).

10. Frequency of meetings

Two to three times a week.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- documents, meeting documents and agenda available on the www.parlamento.it website;
- meetings can be viewed on cable television.

B. Giunta per gli affari delle Comunità europee

1. Legal basis

- precursors since 1968;
- governed by Rules 23 and 142-144 of the Senate's Rules of Procedure; rights strengthened in 1988.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- has general responsibility for matters directly concerning the EU and the application of agreements concluded by the EU, and for EU legislative proposals;
- may adopt resolutions within its area of responsibility; broad lines of European policy are formulated by reference to these;
- at the request of Government or eight Senators, Committee may decide, in the presence of the Minister responsible, to initiate a debate on all Commission proposals including those not yet published; this item may then be placed on the agenda of a committee;
- if other committees take no action and do not deliver an opinion, Committee may deliver an opinion on its own initiative and submit a report to the Senate

3. Procedures

- in the first instance, specialist committees scrutinise and debate laws and legislative proposals published in the Official Journal of the EU or received from Government, and deliver opinions on how to proceed further;
- the Foreign Affairs Committee and the European Community Affairs Committee must then deliver their opinions which are appended to the other opinions;

- Government's annual report on EU law and Italy's participation in the legislative process is scrutinised jointly with other committees before being laid before the Senate.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Committee scrutinises the reports presented by Government, compiles its own reports on these for the Senate and examines opinions of the other committees consulted;
- resolutions addressed to Government may be adopted;
- Committee cannot block Government work on EU matters.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- all Commission legislative proposals and EU legislation are forwarded to the Senate;
- report to Senate on conformity of Italian law with EU law.

Second pillar:

- documents forwarded on request, responsibility rests with the committees concerned.

Third pillar:

- as second pillar.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- delivers opinions on all proposals for national law based on European law, in the same way as on national regulations;
- delivers opinions on national laws which might clash with European law;
- delivers opinions chiefly for other specialist committees concerned.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- specialist committees scrutinise documents and proposals for EU legislation before they reach the Committee;
- regular sharing of information and consultation with standing committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- Italian MEPs may be invited to brief the Committee, but only one MEP per group;
- regular attendance at and participation in COSAC meetings;
- attendance at special meetings of the EP;
- meetings with delegations from other national parliaments on specific topics.

9. Composition

24 members, reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups.

10. Frequency of meetings

Held at irregular intervals, convened when required.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Guaranteed by the Rules of Procedure; meetings themselves not open to the public, but may in some cases be viewed on cable television; information and Committee documents available on the Senate (and Committee) website.

LUXEMBOURG

I. Parliament

Luxembourg's parliament is the elected **Chambre des Députés** (Chamber of Deputies) (www.chd.lu).

II. European affairs committee

(www.chd.lu/fr/seances/commissions/detail.jsp?code=5&des=Commission%20des%20Affaires%20étrangères%20et%20européennes%20et%20de%20la%20Défense)²⁸

The committee responsible for European affairs is the:

Commission des Affaires étrangères et européennes et de la Défense

(Committee for Foreign and European Affairs and Defence).

1. Legal basis

Rule 16 ff. of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies; since 1989.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- has the right of initiative and investigates matters it deems important;
- scrutinises draft laws and other documents of EU relevance;
- compiles reports after scrutinising proposals;
- categorises documents after scrutiny is requested (*Variant A*) or delivers an opinion (*Variant B*);

- may put forward proposals and amendments of its own on documents laid before it;
- on matters of importance, reports are used to prepare for a public debate.

3. Procedures

- the Chamber of Deputies or individual Members may refer issues to the Committee;
- after its work of scrutiny, Committee produces a report; experts may be heard before the report is drawn up.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- members of the Government may be invited to Committee meetings;
- before an opinion is drawn up, members of the Government may be heard regarding the impact which a proposal may have on national law;
- in the case of Variant A, the Minister responsible is contacted; in the case of Variant B, the Committee's opinion is sent to Government sufficiently promptly to ensure that the timetable for negotiations at European level is adhered to;
- if Committee so requests, Government must give an account to Parliament of the state of progress in negotiations on legislative proposals.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Foreign Minister delivers annual report to Parliament on foreign affairs and Government's EU policy.

²⁸ Information available in French only.

First pillar:

- before and after ministerial meetings at EU level, Committee is notified of the agenda, policy decisions proposed by Government and impact at national level;
- Commission proposals and decisions must be passed on;
- Foreign Minister notifies Committee of timetable for EU legislation and amendments tabled by the EP.

Other pillars:

- no duty to inform.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- no direct involvement; merely communication of documents on the basis of secondary legislation ('commitology' decisions);
- Government provides information about the impact of European legislation on national law;

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- attendance at COSAC meetings;
- regular meetings of standing committees of the Chamber of Deputies, to debate EU issues.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- Luxembourg MEPs may attend meetings of the Committee in an advisory capacity;
- members of the Chamber of Deputies attend meetings of EP committees at the EP's invitation.

9. Composition

1 chairman, 2 vice-chairmen & 13 members reflecting the proportionate strengths of the groups in Parliament.

10. Frequency of meetings

Does not meet regularly, only when important Council meetings are imminent.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings not open to the public, though Committee may allow this;
- some documents and information on Chamber of Deputies available in French on the Parliament website; Government website (www.gouvernement.lu) contains a number of documents and Government annual reports; public debates prepared on important issues.



I. Parliament (www.parlement.nl)

The parliament of the Netherlands is bicameral.

- A. **Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal** (Second Chamber) is the directly-elected lower House (www.tweedekamer.nl).
- B. **Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal** (First Chamber) is the upper House, made up of indirectly-elected Members representing the 12 Provinces (www.eerstekamer.nl).

II. European affairs committees

- A. Tweede Kamer: **Vaste Commissie voor Europese Zaken**
(Standing Committee on European Affairs);
(www.tweede-kamer.nl/applicaties/commissies/index.jsp)²⁹
- B. Eerste Kamer: **Vaste Commissie voor Europese Samenwerkingsorganisaties**
(Standing Committee on European Cooperation Organisations).
(www.eerstekamer.nl + Search tool)²⁹

A. **Vaste Commissie voor Europese Zaken**

1. Legal basis

Rule 15 ff. of the Rules of Procedure of the Tweede Kamer; organised as a General Committee since 1994.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- principal remit is to inform, advise and support the other standing committees on EU-related matters;

- coordinates action on European issues, where these fall within the area of responsibility of more than one committee;
- draws up reports after scrutinising a legislative proposal; Committee may add amendments and resolutions for consideration by Parliament;
- meetings of the Tweede Kamer with members of Government or Ministers in connection with general matters, documents or a draft law.

3. Procedures

- in the case of legislative proposals, Government notifies Committee of its response to Committee's report; proposal is then examined in Parliament;
- documents of the Commission and other institutions are sent to the Tweede Kamer every week in the internal bulletin of information; from this, Committee selects topics and refers these to the committees responsible. Standing committees may then pass on the 'fiches' received to the Minister responsible, with a request for further information.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- since the Maastricht Treaty, Government must refer every draft which will subsequently be binding to the Tweede Kamer, for a decision under the third pillar;
- Tweede Kamer must give its assent before Netherlands representatives can endorse a decision in the Council under Title VI of the TEU; if Parliament does not take up a position, it is deemed to have given its assent;
- weekly consultations with Government by the General Committee and other committees responsible;
- General Committee may consult the Foreign Minister and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on general European issues.

²⁹ Information available in Dutch only.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Under Article 4 of the Act giving assent to the TEU, Government must inform the Tweede Kamer at once, attaching the relevant documents, if the Council wishes to address a recommendation or official complaint to the Netherlands under Articles 99(4) and 104(7) of the TEU.

First pillar:

- all Commission proposals are forwarded after publication;
- further information every month on new Commission proposals, listing possible impact on national law ('fiches');
- agendas for all Council meetings communicated in advance; thereafter a brief report.

Second pillar:

- no duty to consult, except in connection with third pillar.

Third pillar:

- prior to meetings of the Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, agenda, relevant documents and Government opinion are forwarded;
- draft decisions communicated as part of the assent procedure.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- No 'parliamentary scrutiny reservation'.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- attendance at COSAC meetings;

- regular joint meetings with other responsible national committees;
- meetings with European Affairs Committees of other Member States on specific topics.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- regular meetings with Dutch MEPs;
- consultations with the appropriate Ministers ahead of meetings of the European Council and Council of Ministers;
- Dutch MEPs may attend hearings and may also speak.

9. Composition

25 full members & 25 alternates reflecting the strength of the groups in the Chamber.

10. Frequency of meetings

- weekly, sometimes jointly with another committee concerned;
- monthly, to take decisions on procedures and discuss documents received.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- weekly meetings normally open to the public, but may be held in camera; monthly meetings not open to the public;
- Parliament website provides general information and access to documents, some material also in English, German and Spanish.

B. *Vaste Commissie voor Europese Samenwerkingsorganisaties*

1. Legal basis

Rules of Procedure of the Eerste Kamer; since 1970.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- preparatory work on all EU-related matters for meetings of the Chamber;
- ensuring that Parliament is informed of EU matters;
- written preparation of debates in the plenary;
- once a year, Europe Debate on European integration;
- scrutiny of European agreements requiring ratification.

3. Procedures

- after legislative proposals have cleared the Tweede Kamer they are passed to the Eerste Kamer and then sent to the committees;
- if proposals are deemed to need scrutiny, Committee reports on them;
- Eerste Kamer must also give its assent before Netherlands representatives can endorse a decision in the Council under Title VI of the TEU; if Parliament does not take up a position, it is deemed to have given its assent.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Committee may question and consult with State Secretaries in the Foreign Affairs Ministry;
- written questions to Government, partly with a view to obtaining further information (though scrutiny of Government is essentially the job of the Tweede Kamer).

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- forwarding of Commission proposals, when they are to be transposed into national law.

Second pillar:

- no provision for any special consultation.

Third pillar:

- prior to meetings of the Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, agenda, relevant documents and Government position are forwarded;
- draft decisions communicated as part of the assent procedure.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- principal task of the Eerste Kamer is to scrutinise proposals for national legislation deriving from the transposition of directives into national law;
- transposition requires the assent of the Eerste Kamer.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- attendance at COSAC meetings;
- joint meetings with other responsible committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Dutch MEPs may attend hearings and may also speak.

9. Composition

13 members (all groups must be represented) & 11 alternates.

10. Frequency of meetings

Approximately 12 times a year.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Meetings not open to the public; documents, general information and reports on topical issues available on the Parliament website with brief summaries in English.

PORTUGAL

I. Parliament (www.parlamento.pt)

Portugal's parliament is the **Assembleia da República** (Assembly of the Republic).

II. European affairs committee

(www.parlamento.pt/ingles/cons_leg/law20_94/index.html)

Comissão de Assuntos Europeus e Política Externa

(European and External Affairs Committee)

1. Legal basis

Articles 178 and 179 of the Constitution, Standing Orders of the Assembly and Law No 20/94 of 25 June 1994; since 1987.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- has general responsibility for European Union affairs; refers issues to different specialist committees;
- promotes Assembly's participation in work of the EU institutions;
- compiles a report for Government (alone or with the help of specialist committees);
- report may lead to a resolution which must be considered by the plenary (other specialist committees do not have this power);
- any citizen may be questioned by the Committee (Article 178(4) of the Constitution);
- appoints Portugal's delegates to COSAC;
- has introduced a public debate on the future of the Union and the significance of the Treaty of Nice.

3. Procedures

- Government lays Council proposals before the Assembly;
- requests and proposals to the Assembly are forwarded for scrutiny to the Committee which allocates them to the specialist committees;
- specialist committees make their views known to the Committee, which then compiles its report to Government;
- legislative proposals scrutinised at the request of Government or of the Assembly or as part of the debate on Portugal's role in the building of Europe.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Committee exercises general scrutiny over Government's European policy; topics of general interest may be scrutinised jointly with other committees;
- Assembly scrutinises draft EU legislation, policy guidelines and initiatives; assessment of Portugal's position on these, and mandatory discussion of them with Government;
- assessment of financial planning for further development of the EU.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

First pillar:

- forwarding of proposals relevant to relations with Member States of the EU;
- forwarding of documents of interest to Portugal and relevance to social and economic policy.

Second and third pillars:

- no duty to provide information, but Government forwards a report at the start of the year on Portugal's participation in the work of the EU;
- topics and opinions on debates in EU institutions are also forwarded where these are matters for which the Portuguese Parliament has responsibility.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Government forwards proposals for secondary legislation, but not general administrative decisions based on the EU Treaties.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- meetings held jointly with other committees in the Assembly;
- attendance at COSAC meetings and evaluation of results of these meetings;
- occasional meetings with committees in other national parliaments to discuss specific topics, usually with the appropriate EP committee taking part;
- Autonomous Regions must be included if their regional interests are at stake; the Regions may themselves ask to be included.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- regular meetings with Portuguese MEPs;
- attendance at meetings with specialist committees of the EP;
- promotion of exchanges between Assembly and EP on the holding of regular meetings.

9. Composition

33 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings not usually open to the public, though press may ask to be admitted;
- minutes, information on Parliament and documents available on the Parliament website; some material also in English and French; Journal of the Assembly of the Republic only published in Portuguese.

I. Parliament

Spain has a bicameral parliament.

- A. Members of the **Congreso de los Diputados** (Congress of Deputies) are directly elected (www.congreso.es);
- B. The **Senado** (Senate) represents the autonomous regions in the legislative process (www.senado.es).

II. European affairs committee

(www.congreso.es/ingles/organos/orga_compo.jsp?orga=318&leg=7)³⁰

One committee for both Chambers: **Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea** (Joint European Affairs Committee).

There is also a *Subcomisión seguimiento Conferencia Intergubernamental 2004* and a *Subcomisión procesos ampliación de Unión Europea* (Subcommittee for the 2004 Intergovernmental Conference and a Subcommittee on EU Enlargement).

Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea

1. Legal basis

- since 1985, under Law No 8/1994 (dated 1994) and acts of parliament;
- subcommittees since April 2001.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- has sight of laws enacted on basis of European secondary legislation (Article 3 of Law No 8/1994);
- scrutinises and ranks legislative proposals put forward by the Commission according to relevance;
- debates individual legislative proposals; may ask Congress President for a debate in the plenary with a representative of Government present;
- asks for individual committees to be given specific information;
- produces report on European Union issues deemed to be important.

3. Procedures

- Congress President forwards all legislative proposals put forward by the Commission;
- brief report from Government on the substance of proposals; additional information if requested;
- half-yearly report to both Chambers on developments in the European Union ahead of every meeting of the European Council;
- request to the President of a Chamber for a plenary debate on a specific legislative proposal, which may be concluded by adoption of a motion;
- Government, plenary or Conference of Presidents may also request a debate on important documents.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- motions to Government for adoption of a position in the Council of Ministers;
- participation in debates on legislation to transpose European law.

³⁰ Information available in Spanish only.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- notification of legislative proposals of the Commission and all activities of European Union bodies;
- notification of the basis for policy decisions by Government and decisions of the Council of Ministers;
- after approval of a legislative proposal or following other initiatives of the Council of Ministers, report on the process and outcome.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- tabling of motions and debate before adoption of a directive;
- participation in debates on legislation to transpose European law.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- regular attendance at and participation in COSAC meetings;
- forging of cooperative ties with committees in other national parliaments and the European Parliament;
- continuous sharing of information on specific subject areas with appropriate specialist committees of the Congress.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- joint meetings with Spanish MEPs;
- Spanish Members of Parliament attend meetings of EP committees.

9. Composition

Proportional representation reflecting the balance of the groups in Parliament; each group and parliamentary group must be represented.

No MEPs as members of the Committee.

- 47 voting members, 26 from Congress and 21 from the Senate;
- 8 spokesmen (two Senators), 2 alternates;
- Bureau: Chairman, 2 Vice-Chairmen and 2 Secretaries (4 Deputies and 1 Senator);
- 7 Members of Parliament as alternates;
- Subcommittees: 13 members each.

10. Frequency of meetings

Monthly, dates irregular.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Press admitted to meetings; information on the work of the two Chambers and agendas of meetings available on the Parliament website.

SWEDEN

I. *Parliament* (www.riksdagen.se/eu)

Sweden's unicameral parliament is the **Riksdag**.

II. *European affairs committee*

(www.riksdagen.se/english/eu/advisory_committee.asp)

EU-nämnden

(Advisory Committee on EU Affairs).

1. **Legal basis**

The Riksdag Act, Chapter 10, Articles 4-10.

2. **Powers and responsibilities**

- all European issues dealt with in the Council;
- does not deal with proposals for parliamentary decisions;
- consultation on important issues or at Committee's instigation;
- mandatory (not formal) function.

3. **Procedures**

- access to all Commission documents (including communications, White Papers) which are forwarded to Parliament;
- prior to Council meetings, Government provides agenda with commentary, and on wide-ranging and important issues a Council report (with *inter alia* an assessment of implications for Swedish law, first opinion);
- if a minority of at least 5 members of the Committee requests a hearing, Committee must hold one, unless a hearing would mean significant delays;

- Government must draw up a 'memorandum' on relevant Commission initiatives.

4. **Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields**

- Committee must be heard before Government attends Council meetings;
- Committee may ask Government for further information on Council meetings;
- Committee holds hearings on specific topics, even if these are not yet being dealt with at Council meetings;
- Ministers are heard and questioned about Government's position at meetings of the Committee;
- amendments or additions relating to Government's negotiating position are forwarded to Government (which is obliged, though not formally, to follow them).

5. **Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars**

Background information on next Council meeting must be provided as basis for discussion and consultation. No difference between matters falling under the three pillars.

6. **Role in the transposition of directives into national law**

No direct involvement in transposition, but Committee can be heard on EU matters; if Parliament is involved, appropriate specialist committee is given responsibility for transposition.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- close cooperation with other committees, reciprocal transmission of relevant documents;
- regular meetings with committees of other national parliaments.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- Swedish MEPs may attend meetings of the Committee, if the Committee so decides;
- regular attendance at and participation in COSAC meetings;
- study tours to European institutions and to Member States and applicant countries.

9. Composition

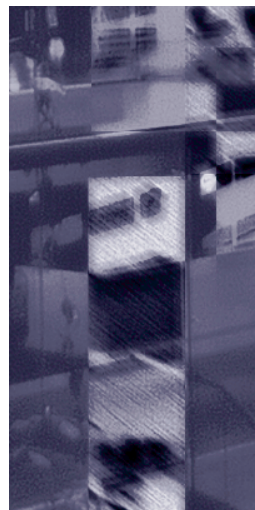
- 17 members, 29 alternates (proportional representation of all groups);
- no MEPs on the Committee.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly (Fridays, sometimes other weekdays), except in August.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings not open to the public; other persons may attend if the Committee so decides (MEPs, civil servants in the special committees etc.);
- minutes of meetings with Ministers are published; descriptions of EU-related and Committee work available on the Parliament (and Committee) website; all meeting documents available on the website as well as information to the media before and after Committee meetings. Pamphlets available also in English, German and French.



UNITED KINGDOM

I. *Parliament* (www.parliament.uk)

- A. **House of Commons**, the directly-elected lower House;
- B. **House of Lords**, the upper House. Its Members, 'peers', are not elected. They are either life peers (Lords Temporal), hereditary peers or bishops of the Church of England (Lords Spiritual). The overwhelming majority of them are life peers.

II. *European affairs committees*³¹

Each Chamber has its own committee for European Union affairs:

- A. House of Commons: ***European Scrutiny Committee*** (www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/eurohome.htm);
- B. House of Lords: ***European Union Committee*** (www.parliament.uk/parliamentary-committee/lords_eu-select-committee.htm).

A. *European Scrutiny Committee*

1. Legal basis

Standing Orders of the House of Commons (especially SO No 143); in existence since 1974, a number of amendments in 2001.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- scrutinises documents of the European Union;
- delivers opinions on the political and legal significance of documents;
- makes recommendations for further action on these documents (selection for debate);
- occasionally reviews legal, procedural and institutional developments in the EU and publishes reports;
- publishes regular reports in which documents scrutinised are categorised and discussed.

3. Procedures

- Government forwards documents, Committee decides which are important and has sight of all texts received (must be forwarded within two working days of receipt by Government);
- Committee may request any additional information it needs from Government.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- all documents which must be referred are scrutinised;
- Parliament is kept constantly informed of negotiations; significant changes must be notified to Parliament in a supplementary memorandum; if the Committee recommends a debate, a debate must be held;
- debates are concluded with a resolution;
- coverage is wide, including any document submitted by one EU institution for submission to another (around 1200 documents a year).

³¹ A detailed description of the handling of EU affairs by UK parliamentary committees can be found in <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/fs56.pdf>

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

The Government must provide an 'explanatory memorandum' on all documents deposited (whether first, second or third pillars), and has undertaken to do so within 10 days of deposit. Contents of EMs include the implications for the UK and what the Government's policy will be on the proposal.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

No role. Monitoring of transposition is the responsibility of the specialist committees.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- meetings held jointly with the House of Lords European Union Committee;
- attendance at and participation in COSAC meetings;
- informal sharing of information with other committees in the House of Commons and other States.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- public meetings with representatives of the Commission or EP;
- the Committee also goes twice a year to the countries holding the EU Presidency;
- House of Commons has a National Parliament Office (with 2 staff) in the EP as a direct liaison point;
- the Committee can invite anyone it chooses to attend meetings.

9. Composition

Usually 16 members (reflecting the strengths of the groups represented in the House).

10. Frequency of meetings

- weekly (Wednesdays, whilst Parliament is in session);
- extraordinary meetings may be held when deemed necessary.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- hearings open to the public, but other meetings are not;
- all reports and minutes published on the Parliament (and Committee) website.

B. European Union Committee

1. Legal basis

Standing Orders of the House of Lords (S.O. No 64); since 1974.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- scrutinises and reports on proposals for European policy and law;
- prepares reports which are debated in the House of Lords or used simply for information;
- the Committee may communicate its views direct to Government.

3. Procedures

- Government forwards proposals and other European documents to the Committee;

- Committee chairman divides proposals into two categories (require or do not require closer scrutiny);
- proposals are forwarded to subcommittees which decide whether or not a report is needed;
- scrutiny of Commission's Annual Work Programme;
- some proposals taken forward by correspondence with Ministers;
- before subcommittees deliver opinions, the views of Government, EU institutions and other bodies are sought.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- Government must give a response to reports;
- before Government gives its assent to a proposal in the Council, it must have been considered by the Committee (formal requirement since 1999 on the basis of a House of Lords resolution).

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Documents forwarded are accompanied by a Government memorandum.

First pillar:

- scrutiny of documents relating to European legislation;
- scrutiny of basis for debate, White Papers, Green Papers, etc. (all 'European Community Documents').

Second pillar:

- scrutiny of proposals which may require national legislation, and other documents.

Third pillar:

- as second pillar.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

No direct influence, but opinions may be delivered.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

Sharing of information with other committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Active participation in COSAC meetings.

9. Composition

- 20 members, 56 co-opted members; these do most of the policy work in the 6 subcommittees:
 - A) Economic and Financial Affairs, Trade and External Relations
 - B) Energy, Industry and Transport
 - C) Common Foreign and Security Policy
 - D) Environment, Agriculture, Public Health and Consumer Protection
 - E) Law and Institutions
 - F) Social Affairs, Education and Home Affairs
- appointed every year at the start of the parliamentary term.

10. Frequency of meetings

- Committee meets twice monthly;
- subcommittees meet weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- hearings, but not meetings, open to the public;
- reports and general information available on the Parliament website;
- reports and evidence published.



3.2.2. The European Affairs Committees of the applicant countries

3.2.2.1. Comparative overview

European Affairs Committees are not exclusive to the EU Member States. Most countries which are members of the ECPRD have their own Committees in order to follow EU matters and thus remain well informed of EU affairs. The objectives of these EACs obviously vary in accordance with their relationship with the EU. The Member States' EACs will be more involved in dealing with democratic deficit issues and thus the scrutiny of their government. In non-

applicant countries, the focus tends to be placed on foreign affairs, whilst in the applicant countries matters relating to their EU accession take precedence. The latter are preparing the incorporation of the *acquis communautaire* and experiencing *several structural changes which require active participation of the Parliaments*³². Informing citizens on EU affairs with a view to the referendum to be held on their accession will also be of concern. Inkens (Chairman of the Latvian European Affairs Committee)³³ sees the latter as being his Committee's central task and states that *all media will be utilised – the Internet, Radio, TV and newspapers* – in order to do so.

The detailed information section will provide data under the same headings as those used for the Member States' EACs. The 'Accessibility of work to the public' and 'Relations with other committees in the national parliament or in other national parliaments' categories are of particular interest. To provide an overview of the differences between the applicant countries' EACs, a table is provided on page 100. Since the applicant countries are not, as yet, actors in the EU decision-making process, the criteria chosen for the comparative overview are:

- composition,
- powers and responsibilities,
- frequency of meetings.

³² A. Fraga (Member of the Portuguese EAC) in ECPRD, Report on the Seminar on 'The Role of European Affairs Committees in National Parliaments' held in Riga on 28-29 September 2001.

³³ ECPRD, Report on the Seminar on 'The Role of European Affairs Committees in National Parliaments' held in Riga on 28-29 September 2001.

BULGARIA

I. Parliament (www.parliament.bg)

Bulgaria has one Chamber of directly-elected members called the **Narodno sabranje** (National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria).

II. European affairs committees

Komisija po evropejska integracija
(Committee on European Integration)

1. Legal basis

Constitution, Rules of Procedure and Organisation of the National Assembly. In existence since 1996.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- competence for monitoring and assessing the Government's integration strategy;
- hearings on the EU's common policies;
- study of European integration policy reports issued by Government;
- monitoring of Government's participation in meetings of the Council of Ministers;
- delivers opinions and deliberates on bills included in the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis and all relevant draft resolutions and declarations;
- supplies the National Council with appropriate information for the preparation of Bulgaria's accession to the EU, including the National Assembly's activities on European affairs;

- preliminary scrutiny of relevant legislation going through Parliament.

3. Procedures

- Government or the National Assembly make referrals to the Committee;
- Committee can set its own agenda;
- adoption of recommendations of a general nature or relating to particular pieces of legislation (not binding);
- in some cases, the Committee can decide to reopen plenary debates.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- monitoring of all Government activities on EU integration through hearings, reports and non-binding recommendations;
- oversees the Council for European Integration;
- hearings with Government officials.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Information on developments in European law through Government officials' reports and hearings.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Preliminary scrutiny of relevant legislation relating to EU integration.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- joint meetings with other committees;
- relations with delegations from other national parliaments and delegations.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- participation in COSAC meetings;
- discussions on the integration process with delegations from EU institutions and delegations;
- if invited, Members of Parliament participate in European Parliament committee meetings;
- members of the Committee take part in conferences on integration;
- two members of the Committee are the Bulgarian representatives in the European Convention and one is an alternate member.

9. Composition

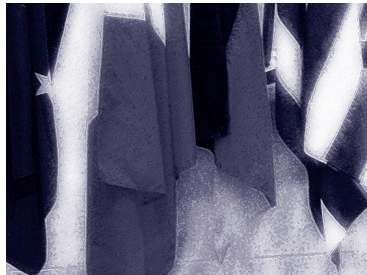
- 24 members, reflecting proportionate strengths of the groups;
- decisions are taken by consensus and each parliamentary group/faction has one vote;
- no alternate members;
- half of the members of the EU-Bulgaria Joint Parliamentary Committee are members of the Committee;
- parallel membership in two other parliamentary committees is authorised.

10. Frequency of meetings

- once a week;
- extra meetings may be held at the request of the President of the Assembly, the Committee chairman or one third of its members.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings (except on sensitive matters) are generally open to public;
- press conferences to inform the public about its work;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.parliament.bg Internet site (part of which is translated into English).



I. *Parliament* (www.parliament.cy)

One House: the **Vouli Antiprosopon** (Cyprus House of Representatives).

II. *European affairs committee*

Committee on European Affairs

(Standing Committee)

1. **Legal basis**

Constitution, House's Rules of Procedure.

2. **Powers and responsibilities**

- Committee on European Affairs is the main body dealing with European matters, especially since the accession negotiations began; the Committee may sometimes consider it expedient for a harmonisation bill to be examined by the parliamentary committee that would normally examine law bills of similar substance;
- regular meetings with the Chief Negotiator of the Government to whom the Committee expresses its opinion;
- studying and suggesting adoption of necessary harmonisation bills;
- Committee may forward bill proposals to competent committees which examine them in accordance with normal adoption practice;
- report to the plenary, through which recommendations for acceptance, rejection or amendment are issued.

3. **Procedures**

- all bills are first forwarded to the plenary, which forwards them to the competent committees;
- after examination of a draft bill, a committee publishes a report which is forwarded to the House.

4. **Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields**

- hearing of Government officials and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the context of related matters to provide any requested information;
- Committee sends notices to the Government if the latter does not fulfil its obligations concerning the accession negotiations and the harmonisation of Cyprus's legislation.

5. **Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars**

- ministries forward, of their own accord or at the House's request, written information/documents covering all three pillars;
- all harmonisation bills are forwarded to the Committee;
- Ministers and other Government officials can be asked to attend Committee meetings covering all pillars for information purposes.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- each ministry bears responsibility for drafting harmonisation bills and regulations;
- the legal vetting of these bills is the responsibility of the Law Office of the Republic. Once such bills of law and regulations are approved by the Council of Ministers, they are submitted to the House by the Minister of Foreign Affairs whom the Council has duly empowered to do so;
- Committee examines the bills and issues voting recommendations to the plenary in the form of a report;
- Committee is to ensure the best transposition practices in accordance with Cyprus's obligations in the accession negotiations.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- information exchange and visits between national EACs;
- cooperation with the European Affairs Committees of the first-wave applicant countries through meetings organised every six months;
- participation in COSAC meetings.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- consultation of officials and specialists from international organisations;
- delegations can meet Members of the European Parliament either in Brussels/Strasbourg or in Cyprus;
- chairman of the Committee is also chairman of the delegation of the House to the EU-Cyprus Joint Parliamentary Committee;
- participation in EP committees when they relate to enlargement process issues.

9. Composition

14 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

Frequency varies according to the amount of work to be carried out.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are open to the public; members can decide to hold them in camera;
- information is available on the www.parliament.cy Internet site; an English version is under construction;
- the House of Representatives' European Service (vouli@parliament.cy) provides information.

I. Parliament

The Czech Parliament consists of two Houses:

- A. **Poslanecká sněmovna** (Chamber of Deputies) (www.psp.cz);
- B. **Senát** (Senate), which represents the regions (www.senat.cz)

II. European affairs committees

Both Houses have their own committee on European Integration. Both entitled: *Výbor pro evropskou integraci*

A. *The Poslanecká sněmovna's Výbor pro evropskou integraci*

(Standing Committee)

1. Legal basis

The Chamber of Deputies' Rules of Procedure; in existence since 1995; legal basis amended in 2002.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- competence to discuss policy matters and legislative texts;
- monitors all the aspects of the integration of the Czech Republic into EU structures (e.g. harmonisation of legislation, accession negotiations, economic and social aspects of integration, pre-accession EU programmes, foreign policy aspects of integration, pre-accession communication strategy ...);
- non-binding resolutions submitted to the Chamber of Deputies.

3. Procedures

- Committee deals with matters that may be referred to it by the Chamber, or on its own initiative;
- preliminary consultations concerning selected bills transposing EC legislation in accordance with a Resolution of the Czech Government since 2000.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- hearings with Ministers;
- MPs can question Government members on issues connected with European integration.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Government forwards information on developments in European law.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

During the preliminary consultations, the Committee provides Government with its opinion on the compatibility of a bill with EU law.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

Regular meetings and consultations with the European Affairs Committees of both Member States' and applicant countries' parliaments.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Members can take part in EP sessions.

9. Composition

19 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

- regular meetings in committee weeks;
- ad hoc meetings.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are held in public;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.psp.cz Internet site (parts of which are available in English, French and German);
- Committee secretariat able to provide all the necessary information (e-mail: adamcovao@psp.cz, koubova@psp.cz).

B. *The Senát's Výbor pro evropskou integraci*

(Standing Committee)

1. Legal and constitutional basis for its activities

Senát's Rules of Procedure; in existence since 1996.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- general policy questions and legislative texts;
- centralising work on European affairs;
- monitoring the realisation of the European integration strategy;
- non-binding resolutions can be passed.

3. Procedures

- Committee deals with matters that may be referred to it by the Senát or on its own initiative;
- no consultation before adoption of parliamentary decisions.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- monitoring of EU-related foreign policy;
- hearings with Government officials.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Government forwards information on developments in European law.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Not available.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- participation in COSAC meetings;
- as a centralising body, enjoys a close relationship (information exchanges) with the other committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Relations with EU institutions.

9. Composition

8 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.senat.cz Internet site (parts of which are available in English).

ESTONIA

I. Parliament (www.riigikogu.ee)

One House since 1992: the **Riigikogu**.

II. European affairs committee

Euroopa asjade komisjon (EAK)

(European Affairs Committee)

1. Legal basis

- EP cooperation group since 1995;
- Riigikogu Procedure Act; Committee established in 1997 and re-established in 1999 after general elections.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- attaining the goals of Estonia's Europe Agreement;
- information to public on enlargement progress;
- contribution at parliamentary level to the achievement of association objectives;
- information to Riigikogu about its activities in the Joint Parliamentary Committee;
- approval of negotiating positions before their approval by Government (no mandate, but information and opinion of the Committee),
- regular information and guidelines for members of the Convention.

3. Procedures

Not available.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- hearings with Government officials, civil servants and administration experts;
- recommendations to Government.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Not available.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

No direct role since it is a select committee.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

Members of the Committee are members of Riigikogu standing committees; COSAC, Luxembourg Group Chairmen's meetings; Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia Chairmen's meetings.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- meetings with EP delegations to discuss process;
- participation in interparliamentary meetings with EP;
- EU-Estonia Joint Parliamentary Committee, founded in the EP in 1997, maintains contact with the Riigikogu.

9. Composition

13 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

Once or twice a week (as required).

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings open to public (by agreement with the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee);
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are available (in English) at www.riigikogu.ee/englishindex.html.



HUNGARY

I. Parliament (www.mkogy.hu)

One House: the **Országgyűlés** (National Assembly).

II. European affairs committee

One standing committee:

Európai Integrációs Ügyek Bizottsága, EIÜB.

(Committee on European Integration Affairs, CEIA)

(16 standing committees have established a subcommittee on European integration)

1. Legal basis

Constitution and Standing Orders of Parliament; established in 1992, has standing status since 1994.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- monitoring the harmonisation of EU law;
- preparation for EU membership;
- examination of matters concerning Hungary's relations with the EU;
- can initiate bills;
- coordination of EU subcommittees' work;
- enlargement meetings once a month with Ministers of Foreign Affairs;
- hearing of experts, Government members and officials (those whose presence is requested are obliged to appear before the Committee).

3. Procedures

- meeting draws up work plans every six months;
- National Assembly and Committee members can refer matters to the Committee;
- non-binding opinion on the appointment of Ministers and State Secretaries.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

Monitoring of Government's work through its initiation, proposal, commenting and decision-making processes.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Government forwards information about integration and all European issues, including the *acquis communautaire*.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- all harmonisation of law and draft versions are forwarded to specialised committees; the same procedure is followed for their transposition;
- most of EC law goes to Parliament, the rest is transposed by Government decree;
- Parliament transpositions are done on a package basis (no bill is modified individually);
- consultation meetings in view of approximating Hungarian legislation with the *acquis communautaire*.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- joint meetings with other committees to review issues related to integration;
- meetings with delegations of other national parliaments and ambassadors;
- at the end of every Presidency, ambassadors of the Presiding State are invited to attend sessions and debates;
- initiates parliamentary debates in combination with other committees;
- VISEGRAD: regular meetings with EU Committees of Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- discussions on the integration process with delegations from the EP, other EU institutions or delegations;
- Hungarian side of the EU-Hungary Joint Parliamentary Committee;
- participation in COSAC meetings;
- initiation of plenary debates on European issues.

9. Composition

- 21 members;
- no alternates;
- parallel membership of other committees is authorised.

10. Frequency of meetings

- meetings are held every week (full-day meeting);
- extraordinary meetings are frequently organised during session periods.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings (except on sensitive matters) are generally open to public;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.parlament.hu and www.mkogy.hu Internet sites (parts of which are available in English);
- members of the Committee often organise or take part in integration conferences; they are responsible for conveying information about the EU to the public.



LATVIA

I. Parliament (*www.saeima.lv*)

One House: the **Latvijas Republikas Saeima** (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia).

II. European affairs committee

Eiropas lietu komisija

(European Affairs Committee)

1. Legal basis

Established 1995, in accordance with Constitution and Saeima's Rules of Procedure.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- review of general policy or legislative texts relating to European affairs;
- training programme on EU matters for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff;
- preparation of charts showing the advancement of the most important EU-related draft laws in Parliament;
- participation in Government's EU accession negotiations and monitoring of negotiation chapters prepared by Government;
- coordinating EU-Latvia Joint Parliamentary Committee activities;

3. Procedures

- review of papers to be adopted by Government;
- Committee deals with matters referred to it by the Government, the House, or on its own initiative.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- parliamentary scrutiny of Government in relation to EU integration;
- regular meetings with Ministers to discuss progress of EU integration;
- Committee opinion is required; Legal notes on all draft legislation are written in cooperation with the European Integration Bureau which checks their compliance with EU norms.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Ministers provide an overview of recent meetings with EU officials.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- coordination of approximation of legislation to EU norms;
- promoting adoption of important draft laws in the context of European integration; in case of conflict, referral is made to the European Integration Bureau.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- cooperation with Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform legislative committees on the integration process;
- cooperation with the EACs of EU Member States and applicant countries;
- participation in COSAC meetings.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- contact with EP representatives;
- representation of Parliament via contacts with EU institutions.

9. Composition

- 21 members (from all political parties represented in Saeima).
- largest standing committee.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- all meetings are held in public;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are available on the www.saeima.lv Internet site;
- EU Information Centre provides information.

I. Parliament (www.lrs.lt)

One House: the **Seimas**.

II. European affairs committee

Europos reikalų komitetas

(European Affairs Committee)

1. Legal basis

Standing Orders of the Seimas; established in 1997.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- examining major issues, within the competence of the Seimas, relating to EU policy;
- submission of conclusions and recommendations to the Seimas;
- coordination of committees' activities pertaining to integration issues;
- submission of recommendations to the Government.

3. Procedures

- matters can be referred by the Government or the Seimas;
- consultation on matters of major interest.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- monitoring of EU Accession Partnership Strategy;
- deliberations on Government provisions relating to negotiation preparations;
- parliamentary scrutiny of Government authorities when entering negotiations: all draft negotiating positions are discussed by the Committee prior to final adoption by the Government.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- hearings on integration issues;
- information on developments in the negotiation process concerning relevant issues prepared by the Government, as well as from other sources.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- the European Affairs Committee is mainly a non-legislative committee; however, some major EU-related draft laws are discussed by the Committee;
- monitoring transposition of legislation necessary for Lithuania's EU membership. A list of EU-related priority legislation is submitted to the Seimas at the beginning of every parliamentary session.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- exchange of information with EACs of EU Member States' and applicant countries' parliaments;
- meetings with other Seimas committees when issues of EU interest are considered.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- participation in COSAC meetings;
- 18 out of the 24 members of the Committee are also members or alternates of the EU-Lithuania Joint Parliamentary Committee;
- the representative of the Seimas at the European Parliament.

9. Composition

- 24 members;
- 3 advisers, 2 assistants, 1 secretary.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are open to public;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.lrs.lt Internet site (also in English).



I. Parliament

(<http://parliament.magnet.mt>)

One House: The **House of Representatives**.

II. European affairs committee

European Affairs Committee

1. Legal basis

Standing Orders of the House of Representatives; established in 1997.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- examining major issues, within the competence of the House, relating to EU policy;
- coordination of the Committee's activities pertaining to integration issues;
- submission of recommendations to the Government.

3. Procedures

Not available.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- monitoring of EU Accession Partnership Strategy;
- parliamentary scrutiny of Government authorities when entering negotiations.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- Information on developments in the negotiation process concerning relevant issues prepared by Government, as well as from other sources.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Not available.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- exchange of information with EU committees of EU Member States' and applicant countries' parliaments;
- meetings with other national committees when issues of EU interest are considered.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- participation in COSAC meetings;
- EU-Malta Joint Parliamentary Committee.

9. Composition

Not available.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are not open to public;
- documents, laws and information concerning the Parliament are published on the <http://parliament.magnet.mt> Internet site (an English version is available); general information is published on the Government website (www.magnet.mt/info/general.html).

I. Parliament

- A. **Sejm**, the lower House (www.sejm.gov.pl)
- B. **Senat**, the representation of the regions. The Senate comprises 100 elected Senators and participates in legislation (www.senat.gov.pl).

II. European affairs committees

- A. Sejm: **Komisja Europejska** (European Committee);
- B. Senat: **Komisja Spraw Zagranicznych i Integracji Europejskiej** (Committee for Foreign Affairs and European Integration)

A. **Komisja Europejska**

1. Legal basis

Established 2001 (merger of former European Integration Committee and the Committee for European Legislation); Rules of Procedure of the Sejm.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- scrutiny of the implementation of the National Programme of Preparations for Membership of the EU;
- scrutiny of any Governmental activity concerned with preparations for EU accession, including PHARE, ISPA & SAPARD;
- holding a debate on bills adapting Polish legislation to the *acquis communautaire*;
- opinions on conformity of parliamentary bills with EU legislation.

3. Procedures

- Committee deals with matters that may be referred to it by the Sejm, or on its own initiative; Government may not bring a matter before the Committee directly;

- all bills tabled must come with a statement confirming their compliance with EU law; Committee may be requested to give its opinion;
- resolutions are referred to the plenary; if voted, they become binding.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- vote on Government's annual report regarding harmonisation and integration strategies;
- hearing of Government officials on EU integration matters;
- communication of non-binding opinions to Government Ministers;
- issuing requests ('dezyderat') which are to be answered by the Government.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- information on developments in membership preparations and negotiations, as well as on the Government's use of pre-accession aids;
- information on European law developments.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- dealing with all Government bills adapting Polish legislation to the *acquis communautaire*;
- monitoring the process of law harmonisation;
- opinions on conformity of parliamentary bills with EU legislation.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- participation in COSAC meetings;
- information exchange with other national parliaments' EU committees;
- requesting opinions from and delivering opinions for other committees;
- other MPs may attend committee meetings.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- informal participation in EP meetings;
- chairman co-chairs the Joint Parliamentary Committee;

9. Composition

- 50 members (proportional to the strengths of political groups in the Chamber);
- subcommittees created ad hoc.

10. Frequency of meetings

According to the needs, at least twice monthly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are not generally open to the public; guests and accredited press may be present;
- general information is published on the www.sejm.gov.pl website (parts of which are available in English).

B. *Komisja Spraw Zagranicznych i Integracji Europejskiej*

1. Legal basis

Senate's Rules of Procedure.

2. Powers and responsibilities

European affairs, foreign political affairs:

- interparliamentary relationships, international trade relations;
- suggestions for Senate decisions within the legislative procedure;
- meetings with other committees, hearings of specialists;
- preparation of Senate meetings.

3. Procedures

- analysis of law proposals;
- drawing up of short reports for individual meetings.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

Not available.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Not available.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Not available.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- meetings with other committees which deal with similar issues (overlapping competences);
- Senators from other committees can take part in meetings.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Participation in EP meetings by invitation (information exchange).

9. Composition

17 members.

10. Frequency of meetings

Not available.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings usually open to public; press permitted, television can make reports;
- general information is published on the www.senat.gov.pl Internet site (parts of which are available in English).

ROMANIA

I. Parliament

Romania has a bicameral parliamentary system:

- A. **Camera Deputaților** (Chamber of Deputies) (www.cdep.ro);
- B. **Senat** (www.senat.ro)

Both elected Houses have the power to initiate bills; competences are almost equal.

II. European affairs committee

The two Houses have one joint committee on European affairs.

Comisia Parlamentului României pentru Integrare Europeană

(Romanian Parliament Committee on European Integration)

1. Legal basis

Committee Rules and Regulations adopted by the two Houses in 1995.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- preparation of proceedings;
- approval of the EU-Romania Joint Parliamentary Committee's final documents, oversees implementation of its recommendations;
- information on EU-related topics by organising round tables;
- discussion on general policy and legislative texts;
- examination of draft legislation transmitted through the Standing Bureaux of the Houses;
- consultation of specialists, academics and non-government officials.

3. Procedures

- Committee deals with matters that may be referred to it by Government, the two Chambers or on its own initiative;
- no consultation prior to the adoption of parliamentary decisions.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

Hearing of Government officials on topics related to the integration process.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Information on European law developments.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Checks draft legislation going through Parliament for compliance with EU norms.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

Exchange of information with/visits to other Romanian Parliament, EU and applicant countries' national parliaments' committees.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Committee members are also part of the EU-Romania Joint Parliamentary Committee.

9. Composition

23 members: 16 MPs and 7 Senators.

10. Frequency of meetings

Weekly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are not generally open to the public; however, the Bureau of the Committee can decide to invite media and other civil society representatives;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its works are published on the www.cdep.ro and www.senat.ro Internet sites (which are available in English or French).



SLOVAK REPUBLIC

I. Parliament (*www.nrsr.sk*)

One House: the **Národná rada Slovenskej republiky** (National Council of the Slovak Republic).

II. European affairs committee

Výbor pre európsku integráciu

(Committee for European Integration)

1. Legal basis

National Council's Rules of Procedure.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- monitoring of agreements and framework texts, such as the Republic's strategy;
- can issue non-binding resolutions on draft legislation;
- consultation of specialists;
- Chairman takes part in meetings of the Government's Council for European Integration; reports on its conclusions.

3. Procedures

- Committee deals with matters that may be referred to it by the Government, the House or on its own initiative;
- evaluation of the impact of European legislation on legal, economic and social conditions (ex-post) and of regulations implementing European legal norms (ex-ante).

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- monitoring the use of PHARE funds;
- transposition of EU law into national legislation in coordination with the Government's Advisory Council for Integration and other Ministers.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

- information concerning developments in European law;
- hearing of Government officials.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Approximation of Slovak legislation to EU law.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- participation in COSAC meetings;
- exchange of information with other national parliaments' EU committees;
- information on material discussed in the Government Council forwarded by the Vice-Chairman to all Members of Parliament.

8. Participation in activities at European level

Monitoring the dialogue between representatives of the Republic and EU representatives.

9. Composition

- 17 members;
- Members can stand in different committees;
- some of its members are also representatives on the JPC.

10. Frequency of meetings

Monthly.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- meetings are not open to public;
- documents and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.nrsr.sk Internet site (an English version is available).

I. Parliament

The Slovenian Parliament consists of two Chambers:

- A. **Državni zbor Republike Slovenije** (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia) (www.dz-rs.si);
- B. **The National Council** (Državni Svet), which represents social, economic, professional and local interests. So far there is no specialised committee on European affairs as such: however, a commission for international relations and European affairs has been established in order to get acquainted with issues relating to Slovenia's EU integration (www.ds-rs.si).

II. European affairs committee

Komisija za evropske zadeve

(Commission for European Affairs)

1. Legal basis

Decree on the establishment of the Commission for European Affairs of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- discusses general affairs concerning European integration;
- coordinates the work of the parent working bodies in connection with European integration and provide them with opinions, recommendations and warnings;

- analyses the consequences of the integration strategy on Slovenia and prepares overall reports;
- monitors the accession strategy of the Republic of Slovenia and its implementation;
- monitors the implementation of the harmonisation of Slovene legislation with the *acquis communautaire*;
- cooperates with institutions in Slovenia, the European Union and other countries in connection with integration issues;
- organises presentations of public opinion on integration issues;
- compiles and stores EU-related information;
- monitors the use of EU funds;
- performs other tasks related to European affairs which do not fall within the competence of other working bodies.

3. Procedures

- Assembly votes on reports drawn up by the Commission;
- EU official documents are provided by the Government; however, the value added by the staff of the Commission for European Affairs is substantial and significant.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- analysis of the consequences of Slovenia's integration strategy and preparation of general reports;
- monitoring Slovenia's EU accession strategy and its implementation (consultation after Government decisions);
- monitoring the implementation of Slovene legislation to harmonise with the *acquis communautaire*;

- recommendations of the Commission for European Affairs do not bind the Government; however, the Government has to obtain preliminary approval for its negotiating position from the National Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee each time before going to Brussels.

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Most information on developments in European law is provided by an online service.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

Commission monitors compliance of draft legislation with EU law, and is generally responsible for the compliance of Slovene legislation with the *acquis communautaire*.

- Government adopts decisions concerning EU secondary legislation;
- Government then forwards EU-related bills to the National Assembly's standing working bodies;
- standing working bodies then discuss the bills in question;
- National Assembly adopts the act during its plenary session.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

- joint sessions take place with other National Assembly committees;
- participation in COSAC meetings;
- participation in meetings with the Chairmen of the Cyprus, Czech, Estonian, Hungarian and

Polish European Affairs Committees;

- occasional bilateral meetings with national parliaments from all over Europe.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- representatives of other countries or international institutions can be invited and vice-versa (informal);
- participation in EP public hearings.

9. Composition

- 10 members;
- some Commission members are also representatives of the EU-Slovenia Joint Parliamentary Committee.

10. Frequency of meetings

Meetings take place during the first two weeks of the month.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

- under the Rules of Procedure, meetings are normally open to public. The media are granted access. When dealing with special issues, members can vote for meeting to be held behind closed doors;
- documents, the Rules of Procedure and information concerning the Parliament and its work are published on the www.dz-rs.si Internet site (which is available in English).

TURKEY

I. Parliament

(www.tbmm.gov.tr)

One House: the **Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi** (**Turkish Grand National Assembly**), the directly-elected Parliament.

II. European affairs committee

Türkiye-AET Karma Parlamento Komisyonu

(Turkey- European Union Joint Parliamentary Committee)

(http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/ul_kom/kpk/english.htm)

1. Legal basis

The Turkey-European Union Joint Parliamentary Committee was established in accordance with the European Parliament decision of 14 May 1965, the Turkish Grand National Assembly decision of 22 June 1965, the Republic Senate decision of 14 July 1965 and the decision taken by the Turkish-EEC Council of Association.

2. Powers and responsibilities

- scrutinises subjects relating to the execution and application of the Ankara Agreement signed on 12 September 1963 in Ankara between Turkey and the European Economic Community;
- the Committee can also scrutinise every kind of subject within the terms of reference set by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the European Parliament;

- the Committee may submit draft decisions to the Turkish Grand National Assembly or the European Parliament.

3. Procedures

Not available.

4. Parliamentary scrutiny of Government in EU policy fields

- all documents which must be referred are scrutinised;
- the Committee can scrutinise every kind of subject within the terms of reference set by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the European Parliament;

5. Information provided by Government on matters falling under the first, second and third pillars

Not available.

6. Role in the transposition of directives into national law

- Committee may scrutinise text, but has no direct influence;
- drafting and transposition are the responsibility of the various specialist committees, or Government promulgates secondary legislation.

7. Relations with other committees in national parliament/in other national parliaments

Committee may question other committees and request reports within the terms of reference set by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the European Parliament.

8. Participation in activities at European level

- relations with European Parliament;
- Members of the Council of Association, Members of the EU Commission and Council, Representatives of the Government of Turkey and Representatives of the Governments of the EU Member States, representatives of other EU organisations and other related persons may be invited to attend and speak at meetings.

9. Composition

- 24 members;
- equal number of Members of Turkish Grand National Assembly and European Parliament.

10. Frequency of meetings

Normally three times a year.

11. Accessibility of work to the public

Meetings are not normally open to the public, unless the Committee decides otherwise.



TABLE 4 – Overview of Applicant Countries' European Affairs Committees

<i>Composition</i>	<i>Powers and responsibilities</i>	<i>Meeting frequency</i>
BULGARIA		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence for monitoring and assessing the Government's integration strategy; • hearings on the EU's common policies; • study of European integration policy reports issued by Government; • monitoring of Government's participation in meetings of the Council of Ministers; • delivers opinions and deliberates on bills included in the NPAA and all relevant draft resolutions and declarations; • supplies the National Council with appropriate information for the preparation of Bulgaria's accession to the EU, including the National Assembly's activities on European affairs; • preliminary scrutiny of relevant legislation going through Parliament. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly; • extra meetings when President of the Assembly or the Committee chairman or one third of its members call for them.
CYPRUS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee on European Affairs is the main body dealing with European matters, especially since the accession negotiations began; the Committee may sometimes consider it expedient for a harmonisation bill to be examined by the parliamentary committee that would normally examine law bills of similar substance; • regular meetings with the Chief Negotiator of the Government to whom the Committee expresses its opinion; • studying and suggesting adoption of necessary harmonisation bills; • Committee may forward bill proposals to competent committees which examine them in accordance with normal adoption practice; • report to the plenary, through which recommendations for acceptance, rejection or amendment are issued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency varies according to the amount of work to be carried out.

CZECH REPUBLIC Poslanecká Sněmovna

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 19 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competence to discuss policy matters and legislative texts;• monitors all the aspects of the integration of the Czech Republic into EU structures (e.g. harmonisation of legislation, accession negotiations, economic and social aspects of integration, pre-accession EU programmes, foreign policy aspects of integration, pre-accession communication strategy ...);• non-binding resolutions submitted to the Chamber of Deputies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular meetings in committee weeks;• ad hoc meetings. |
|--|---|---|

CZECH REPUBLIC Senát

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General policy questions and legislative texts;• centralising work on European affairs;• monitoring the realisation of the European integration strategy;• non-binding resolutions can be passed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly. |
|---|--|---|

ESTONIA

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attaining the goals of Estonia's Europe Agreement;• information to public on enlargement progress;• contribution at parliamentary level to the achievement of association objectives;• information to Riigikogu about its activities in the Joint Parliamentary Committee;• approval of negotiating positions before their approval by Government (no mandate, but information and opinion of the Committee),• regular information and guidelines for members of the Convention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once or twice a week (as required). |
|--|---|---|

HUNGARY

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21 members, no alternates | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring the harmonisation of EU law;• preparation for EU membership;• examination of matters concerning Hungary's relations with the EU;• can initiate bills;• coordination of EU subcommittees' work;• enlargement meetings once a month with Ministers of Foreign Affairs;• hearing of experts, Government members and officials (those whose presence is requested are obliged to appear before the Committee). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings are held every week (full-day meeting);• extraordinary meetings are frequently organised during session periods. |
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LATVIA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of general policy or legislative texts relating to European affairs;• training programme on EU matters for Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff;• preparation of charts showing the advancement of the most important EU-related draft laws in Parliament;• participation in Government's EU accession negotiations and monitoring of negotiation chapters prepared by Government;• coordinating EU-Latvia Joint Parliamentary Committee activities; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly. |
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LITHUANIA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examining major issues, within the competence of the Seimas, relating to EU policy;• submission of conclusions and recommendations to the Seimas;• coordination of committees' activities pertaining to integration issues;• submission of recommendations to the Government. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly. |
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MALTA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examining major issues within the competence of the House relating to EU policy;• coordination of Committees' activities pertaining to integration issues;• submission of recommendations to the Government. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly. |
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POLAND Sejm

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scrutiny of the implementation of the National Programme of Preparations for Membership of the EU;• scrutiny of any Governmental activity concerned with preparations for EU accession, including PHARE, ISPA & SAPARD;• holding a debate on bills adapting Polish legislation to the <i>acquis communautaire</i>;• opinions on conformity of parliamentary bills with EU legislation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to needs, at least 2 per month. |
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POLAND Senate

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interparliamentary relationships, international trade relations;• suggestions for Senate decisions within the legislative procedure;• meetings with other committees, hearings of specialists;• preparation of Senate meetings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A |
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ROMANIA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 23 members (16 MPs, 7 senators). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation of proceedings;• approval of the EU-Romania Joint Parliamentary Committee's final documents, oversees implementation of its recommendations;• information on EU-related topics by organising round tables;• discussion on general policy and legislative texts;• examination of draft legislation transmitted through the Standing Bureaux of the Houses;• consultation of specialists, academics and non-government officials. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly. |
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SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring of agreements and framework texts, such as the Republic's strategy;• can issue non-binding resolutions on draft legislation;• consultation of specialists;• Chairman takes part in the meetings of the Government's Advisory Council for European Integration; reports on its conclusions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly. |
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SLOVENIA

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discusses general affairs concerning European integration;• coordinates the work of the parent working bodies in connection with European integration and provide them with opinions, recommendations and warnings;• analyses the consequences of the integration strategy on Slovenia and prepares overall reports;• monitors the accession strategy of the Republic of Slovenia and its implementation;• monitors the implementation of the harmonisation of Slovene legislation with the <i>acquis communautaire</i>;• cooperates with institutions in Slovenia, the European Union and other countries in connection with integration issues;• organises presentations of public opinion on integration issues;• compiles and stores EU-related information;• monitors the use of EU funds;• performs other tasks related to European affairs which do not fall within the competence of other working bodies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings take place during first two weeks of the month. |
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TURKEY

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scrutinises subjects relating to the execution and application of the Ankara Agreement signed on 12 September 1963 in Ankara between Turkey and the European Economic Community;• the Committee can also scrutinise every kind of subject within the terms of reference set by the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the European Parliament;• the Committee may submit draft decisions to the Turkish Grand National Assembly or the European Parliament. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normally three times a year. |
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³⁵ To which this publication owes a lot.