



# RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2017**



European Parliament

**EN**

# PARLIAMENTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



The functioning of the European Union is founded on representative democracy.



751 MEPs



Citizens are directly represented at EU level in the European Parliament.

Member States are represented in the European Council by their Heads of State or Government and in the Council by their governments, themselves democratically accountable either to their national Parliaments, or to their citizens.



National Parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union by...



... being informed by the EU institutions and having draft EU laws forwarded to them.



... ensuring that the principle of subsidiarity is respected.



... taking part in the evaluation mechanisms for the area of freedom, security and justice and being involved in the political monitoring of Europol and the evaluation of Eurojust.



... taking part in the revision procedures of the EU treaties.



... being notified of applications for accession to the EU.



... taking part in interparliamentary cooperation between national Parliaments and with the European Parliament.



The European Parliament and national Parliaments shall together determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular interparliamentary cooperation within the EU.



A conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs may submit any contribution it deems appropriate for the attention of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. That conference shall in addition promote the exchange of information and best practice between national Parliaments and the European Parliament.

**Annual report 2017**

**Relations between the European Parliament and EU national Parliaments**

This is a publication of the European Parliament's Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments, which constitutes part of the European Parliament's Directorate-General for the Presidency.

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The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments advises the political bodies, Members and the Secretariat of the European Parliament in their institutional cooperation and legislative dialogue with the national Parliaments. It provides support for interparliamentary activities, contributes to the implementation of the Treaty provisions on interparliamentary cooperation in the European Parliament, and provides expertise on national Parliaments throughout the legislative cycle and other political competences of the European Parliament.

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments acts as a knowledge centre for information about national Parliaments and provides information to the European Parliament's administration on best practices in national Parliaments. It represents the European Parliament in the administrative networks of interparliamentary cooperation. It manages relations with the officials who represent the national Parliaments in Brussels and maintains close links with their administrations.

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## **Preface by the European Parliament's Vice-Presidents responsible for relations with national Parliaments**

As Vice-Presidents with responsibility for relations with national Parliaments, we are pleased to present the 2017 activity report of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments.

This annual report outlines recent activities and developments in the area of interparliamentary cooperation with EU national Parliaments and provides detailed information about those activities and initiatives undertaken last year.

2017 was a year of change in many ways, not least for interparliamentary relations.

We are happy that the engagement between the European Parliament and national Parliaments continues to deepen. Significant progress has been made in developing a solid partnership based on trust and mutual cooperation.

This is the vision that drives our actions. This is what inspires us to grasp new opportunities for formal and informal cooperation and to deploy further efforts to intensify this dialogue.

In 2017, the debates on migration and border controls, Brexit, growth and competitiveness continued. In addition, security, foreign and defence policy, the Economic and Monetary Union, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Digital Single Market, employment and investment all featured high on the agenda of interparliamentary meetings.

European citizens expressed renewed trust in the future of the EU after a low point in 2016.

There is consensus at parliamentary level on the need to pursue efforts to meet today's challenges together and to reinvigorate the debate on a stronger and more united Union. These areas of mutual interest are essential for focusing our interparliamentary cooperation.

On the institutional side, debates focused on the European Commission's Annual Work Programme and on transparency in the EU decision-making process. There was also progress in the discussion on the joint parliamentary scrutiny of Europol, which clearly illustrates the growing importance of parliamentary scrutiny of the EU's executive capacities.

In the ongoing debate on the future of Europe, national Parliaments, which are at the core of democracy in the EU, have a key role to play in engaging with governments to shape and influence this debate. In spite of diverging views, it is important to avoid fragmentation. Effective scrutiny by national Parliaments of their own governments' activities on EU matters is a given and is essential to ensuring a connection between work at Council level and at national Parliament level.

Securing citizens' support for reforms is important and is a challenge that we face together. Parliaments are in a privileged position to empower and enable citizens to take ownership of what the EU represents and to understand the value the EU brings to all our lives. Now more than ever, parliamentarianism should be reinforced. It is essential for national Parliaments and the European Parliament to identify a set of core values to hold onto.

We are now looking ahead to a year of new challenges.

In May 2019, European citizens will vote in the next European election. Parliaments throughout the EU have a common interest in encouraging citizens to actively participate in the democratic life of the Member States and in the EU. We should work together to encourage citizens to exercise their rights and, in particular, their right to vote for representatives in local, regional, national and European elections.

On behalf of all Members and the administration, we thank you for your interest in the European Parliament. We invite you to take time to read this report and to learn about the important work of the dedicated Members and officials of the European Parliament, and of the 41 national Parliaments and Chambers in 28 Member States, as we advance interparliamentary cooperation.

We look forward to another year of excellent cooperation and fruitful discussions, with a view to tackling the challenges ahead together.



Mairead McGuinness  
Vice-President



Bogusław Liberadzki  
Vice-President



## 1. The context of the report

2017 was yet another year of growth and cooperation for the Directorate. Numerous activities, new colleagues and partners, participation at high-level interparliamentary events, stronger ties with other services of the European Parliament (EP) and important milestones have marked this year.

In line with DG Presidency's motto 'Impact through cooperation', the Directorate has continued to provide Members and the secretariat of the European Parliament with the services and advice they have needed to further develop institutional cooperation and legislative dialogue with the national Parliaments.

Given the expanding nature of this field of action, resources were used in a cost-efficient way to successfully respond to the trend of enhanced interparliamentary activities. Interparliamentary conferences, meetings and debates were organised, and a record number of bilateral visits took place. Intensified activities in the administrative networks of interparliamentary cooperation show that there is further scope for expanding exchanges. Providing support for the parliamentary dimensions of the Maltese and Estonian Presidencies was also at the heart of 2017.

This work was conducted under the political leadership and guidance of the EP President, the two Vice-Presidents responsible for relations with national Parliaments, and the Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO), who is one of the Co-Chairs of the EP delegation to COSAC. Our activity was also supported by the excellent relations with the EP's political bodies (Conference of Presidents and the Conference of Committee Chairs), EP Committees and political groups. At the administrative level, the Directorate's activities benefitted from the steering of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the EP, and the full and prompt support of their cabinets. Cooperation with EP's Directorates -General (in particular DG IPOL, DG EXPO, DG EPRS, DG ITEC)<sup>1</sup> and services intensified and is now an established feature of our work. As usual, we could count on the important commitment of our partners within national Parliaments and EU institutions, the network of representatives of national Parliaments, the COSAC Secretariat, the ECPRD Executive Committee and the IPEX Board.

The year 2017 was marked by increasing consistency in the choice of topics of interparliamentary debates. Certain areas of mutual interest were omnipresent on the agenda of interparliamentary fora. The awareness of the need to avoid fragmented approaches led to broader, more structured exchanges and reduced duplication.

The first chapters of this report give an overview of the major topics on the European agenda, which were promptly discussed in various interparliamentary debates and in-depth exchanges throughout 2017. Those debates were conducted in a political context characterised by a more favourable public opinion of the EU. The discussions focused on, namely:

- the role of national Parliaments in the ongoing reflection on the future of the EU and its policies, and on the UK's exit from the EU,
- the role of national Parliaments in the reflection on improving communication with citizens on EU matters,
- the future of the EU as a global player in the context of the current global changes,
- the joint parliamentary scrutiny of Europol: progress on practical arrangements,
- the external dimension of migration,

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<sup>1</sup> Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Directorate-General for External Policies, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services, Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support

- interparliamentary cooperation on institutional matters, such as the scrutiny of the European Commission's Annual Work Programme, the transparency of Council documents and the improvement of the Early Warning Mechanism on subsidiarity.

The following chapters examine from the Directorate's perspective, the activities of interparliamentary bodies (chapter 3), the forms of interparliamentary dialogue (chapter 4), the legislative dialogue (chapter 5), and finally, the administrative networks and tools for interparliamentary cooperation (chapter 6).

2017 laid fertile ground for new interparliamentary debates on strategic matters in the years to come: the future of the Union and its policies, the Enlargement policy, the future Multi-annual Financial Framework, the EU-UK future relations, other aspects of EU Trade Policy, the need to deliver on the migration and security agenda, and the Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence.

This report, as well as further information related to the European Parliament's relations with EU national Parliaments, may be found on the website of the European Parliament: [www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/news](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/news).

## **2. Key developments and trends in interparliamentary cooperation**

National Parliaments contributed substantially to the debates on the most pressing political, legislative, and institutional issues. The year 2017 showed that national Parliaments now take a strategic view in shaping the agenda of interparliamentary cooperation within the existing interparliamentary fora. The wide range of topics pertaining to areas of mutual interest and the constant engagement of EU parliaments is a clear indicator of the variety and quality of debates in the upcoming years.

### **2.1 The role of national Parliaments in the debate on the future of the European Union and the UK's exit from the EU**

The debate on the future of the EU reflects the political commitment to ensure that the European project is in tune with changing geopolitical realities and citizens' expectations. This recalibration of the EU's priorities also entails a stronger sense of solidarity. Solidarity should not only prevail in the definition of priorities and the means of financing new projects, but also in the implementation of the agreed measures at national level. The outcome of the elections in the Netherlands, France and Germany has been perceived as a positive development for European unity.

With the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, the Rome Declaration, marking the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaty, and the 'Leaders' Agenda', the democratic debate on the future of the EU has continued to gain momentum. The Commission contributed to this open-ended discussion by putting forward the White Paper on the future of Europe and the reflection papers on major EU policies, as well as the proposals laid out in the 2017 State of the European Union address.

The European Parliament dedicated several resolutions to the future of Europe. It has decided to invite EU heads of states and governments to the EP to discuss the future of Europe in open debates. The EP approaches these debates with an open and constructive spirit; the discussions on the future of Europe will conclude on May 9, 2019 when an informal meeting of EU leaders will take place in Sibiu, Romania.

In his address to the Extraordinary Conference of the Speakers of EU national Parliaments, organised on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, Mr Antonio Tajani, the President of the European Parliament advocated the need for unity between the European Parliament and national Parliaments. The President highlighted the great responsibility to display strong political will and leadership to enact the common values: 'Europe is a success story when it embodies a dream of progress, prosperity, freedom and peace. It is up to us to change the image of an abstract, inefficient and bureaucratic Union and renew the passion of Europeans for this great project'.

The LVII COSAC plenary, held in Malta in 2017, dedicated a whole session to the role of national Parliaments in the future of the EU. During this session, Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament, argued that national Parliaments should be at the core of European Union decision-making. She called upon national Parliaments to become stronger, both within the EU and in their partnership with the EP, which was ready to engage with them, including at the level of the political families. In the ensuing debate, just as in the 27th COSAC bi-annual report, the majority of delegates argued that improved interparliamentary cooperation and more effective scrutiny throughout the legislative process could further promote the European project.

The Contribution of the LVIII COSAC, adopted under the Estonian Presidency, on the basis of the COSAC plenary discussions and of the findings of the 28th COSAC bi-annual report, recognised that the EU requires determination to maintain unity. COSAC urged that decisions concerning the future of the EU be taken with the highest possible level of engagement of all Member States and citizens.

In the session on the future of the European Union, Ms Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, Mr Michel Barnier, EU Chief Negotiator for Brexit, and Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, called for political vision and a positive and proactive agenda which included: strengthening the Eurozone, a deeper Economic and Monetary Union, a real common defence policy, budgetary capacity to react to internal and external threats, a sustainable social dimension of the Single Market, a humane, effective migration policy, and a solid pillar of social rights. The AFCE Chair noted that throughout the EU's evolution, crisis has prompted resolute political action for common undertakings. The Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO) showed that, in spite of their different perspectives, Member States agreed that common actions were necessary to face a common existential threat. Most interventions in the subsequent debates pointed to the need to give the Union its due recognition and to not blame it for the national governments' shortcomings.

In October 2017, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs organised an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM) on the future of Europe, notably on EP proposals and the Commission's White Paper outlining five scenarios for the future of Europe. At the heart of the meeting, there were two thematic panels: the first on Deepening the Economic and Monetary Union, the future of EU finances and the social dimension; and the second on the future of European Defence and harnessing globalisation.

The UK's exit from the EU was part of the broader discussions on the future of the EU. In 2017, the European Parliament adopted three resolutions on the state of play of negotiations with the UK: on 5 April 2017, on 3 October 2017 and on 13 December 2017. The consent of the European Parliament is required under the Treaties as regards the withdrawal agreement and any future UK-EU relationship.

In 2017, the official bilateral visits from EU national Parliaments to Brussels, including the European Parliament, on Brexit matters, continued to outnumber the visits related to other topics. The most visited MEPs were: Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament; Mr Guy Verhofstadt, President of the ALDE group and European Parliament point man for the Brexit negotiations process, and Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament.

Brexit was also debated in 2017 at the different institutional interparliamentary bodies at various conferences including COSAC and the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments. Nonetheless, the reflection on the EU's future became a dominant topic instead of Brexit as such.

## **2.2 The role of national Parliaments in the improving communication with citizens on EU matters**

Parliaments of EU Member States can bring their wealth of experience and insight into the ongoing debate on improving the performance, transparency and communication of the European Union.

The discussion on the future of the EU in the LVII COSAC plenary held in Malta illustrated the need to reaffirm the democratic component of the EU and to ensure that European citizens are well engaged in the discussion on the future of this common project.

The section ‘Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens’ of the LVIII COSAC Contribution, adopted under the Estonian Presidency, emphasised the need for national Parliaments to be included and integrated in the discussions and policy-making process relating to the future of the EU, in order to enhance the democratic legitimacy. National Parliaments were asked to provide for the necessary mechanisms enabling the early consultation and direct involvement of citizens; they were also urged to improve the communication about the EU. COSAC acknowledged that more plenary debates on EU matters raised the visibility of the Union and gave citizens the opportunity to learn more about the agenda of the EU and the positions of political parties on those issues. COSAC also invited national authorities to promote the European elections and political parties to engage in political debates on the key issues prior to the European elections in 2019.

New initiatives have flourished recently, bringing the EU message closer to the citizens. Citizens’ hearings, political debates covered by the national media and special parliamentary committees dealing with the issue of the future of the EU have already been organized in various parliaments. Several bilateral visits dealing with this topic were organised by the EP throughout 2017, notably at the initiative of the French National Assembly.

Bringing the parliamentary agenda closer to citizens in the modern era was also a topic on the agenda of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments held in Slovakia in 2017 (see chapter 3.2).

In the Conclusions adopted by the Conference, the Speakers reaffirmed their commitment to parliamentary openness, ensuring transparency of the legislative process and recognizing public ownership of parliamentary information.

In addition, the Speakers acknowledged that national Parliaments and the European Parliament had a crucial role to play in bridging the gap between citizens and policy-making, and in communicating both European and national policies to the public. Better communication of the many positive results of European policy-making and effective functioning of European institutions in accordance with the Treaties could also counter anti-European attitudes, hate speech, fake news and disinformation.

In the discussions, the European Parliament underlined the importance of active participation of the European citizens in the European Parliament election, which provides a platform for a constructive, informative and inclusive debate on the future of the Union.

### **2.3 The future of the EU as a global player in the context of the current global changes**

In order to succeed in addressing and overcoming current challenges, particularly security threats, the European Union needs to take up its responsibility on the global stage, be a credible and value-based global player, and have the capacity to take action.

In its resolutions, the European Parliament called on the Union to step up its efforts to establish concrete cooperation within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In order to cope with the rising challenges, the EU needs to use the full range of policy instruments available - diplomacy, development cooperation, civilian and economic instruments, crisis prevention and post-conflict

strategies, peacekeeping and peace-enforcing.

In 2017, the European Parliament repeatedly advocated the progressive framing of a common defence policy, the launch of the European Defence Fund and the development of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) within the EU framework. The institution recognised the need to increase the effectiveness of CSDP missions and operations, crisis management and prevention missions, as well as actions for combating international terrorism. It also called for improving cyber security and for reinforcing the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO.

Largely, those topics featured on the agenda of the interparliamentary meetings organised by the European Parliament and the Presidency Parliaments. There was consensus among participants on the need to deploy an ambitious external action agenda.

Discussions took place in the specialized Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (see chapter 4.2) and in the traditional meetings of the responsible committees of the EP. The link between external and internal security, and the external dimension of migration were also explored in ICM debates organised by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) of the European Parliament, while the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments addressed the topical issue of the EU on the global stage. The insights of high-level speakers from EU and international institutions, ministries, national Parliaments and international foundations and research centres were invaluable.

In 2017, the European Commission carried out a comprehensive assessment of the EU security policy, which covered three thematic priorities of the European Agenda on Security; tackling terrorism and preventing radicalisation, disrupting organised crime and fighting cybercrime. At the request of European Commissioner for the Security Union Mr Julian King, the LIBE Committee organized an exchange of views with representatives of national Parliaments and civil society, considering that their input would be a valuable addition to the assessment. The discussion revolved around the effectiveness/ineffectiveness of the existing measures to tackle terrorism, organized crime, their effect on fundamental rights, and the necessary adaptation of the security agenda to emerging trends. At the LVIII COSAC, European Commissioner Mr Julian King, delivered a comprehensive presentation of the state of play of the Security Union and appealed to national Parliaments to transpose legislation within the deadline, stressing the need of political will and real engagement in implementing the agreed solutions. Mr King also promised to continue visiting national Parliaments, but called for a strategic dialogue with them with regard to the wider security landscape.

In the section ‘Building an effective and sustainable Security Union’ of the LVII COSAC Contribution, COSAC clearly expressed its support for the exchange of information and intelligence, the interoperability of information systems, the swift implementation of the measures to combat terrorism, addressing the root causes of extremism, and enhancing security at the external borders.

The Conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments, held in Bratislava in April 2017, reflect the outcome of the high-level debate of the conference on the future of the EU as a global player (see chapter 3.2). The EU Speakers called for enhanced cooperation with global partners and the European Neighbourhood to fight global threats and challenges. They underscored the importance of the transatlantic bond and of closer defence cooperation. Despite existing internal challenges, the Speakers recognized the need to keep the question of enlargement and the neighbourhood of the European Union, a prerequisite for the stabilization

of the region and strengthening of the democratic institutions of these countries, on the agenda.

In its resolutions, the EP also called for promoting stability and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood, through initiatives which foster development, democracy, good governance and the rule of law. For this reason, the EP has supported the idea of moving forward the enlargement negotiation process by strengthening social, political and economic stability and democracy in the candidate countries, without concessions on the Copenhagen accession criteria. The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament (AFET) debated the perspectives of EU integration and the accession process of the Western Balkans in the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting of November 2017, a timely exchange on a topic announced as one of the main priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency.

With a view to making development cooperation policy more effective and ensure coherence and consistency between development and security policies, the EP called for the integration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Policy Coherence for Development in the EU's external and internal policies. The Committee on Development of the European Parliament (DEVE) organised an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the Implementation of the European Consensus on Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The current security environment requires the coherent mobilisation of all EU external action instruments. The EU should be speaking with one voice, act together and focus its resources on strategic priorities. National Parliaments will undoubtedly make clear their voice on these topics in the years to come.

#### **2.4 Joint parliamentary scrutiny of Europol: progress on practical arrangements**

The debates on effective police and judicial cooperation, including timely sharing of information among national authorities through Europol and Eurojust, confirmed the importance and urgency of finalising the discussions on the practical modalities for parliamentary scrutiny of Europol. The year 2017 saw a number of important steps in the setting up of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) of Europol by the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments and the constituent meeting of this new joint body composed of the European Parliaments and national Parliaments on 9-10 October 2017 in Brussels.

Following an extensive consultation process of the national Parliaments by the Presidential Troika, the Speakers of EU Parliaments and the European Parliament, at their meeting of 24 April 2017 the JPSG was established and given a mandate in order to define its precise organisation and Rules of Procedure.

Ahead of its constituent meeting in October 2017 at the European Parliament in Brussels, the Co-Chairs of the JPSG (EP and Estonian Parliament) prepared a set of draft Rules of Procedures open to written amendments. Several national Parliaments tabled amendments to the draft, addressing issues such as the JPSG's decision-making procedures, and the roles of the Presidential Troika and Secretariat.

In light of the fact that Denmark, respecting the outcome of its referendum, has not taken part in the adoption of the Europol regulation, the Danish Parliament was invited to join the constituent meeting as an observer to the JPSG. The European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament however addressed the Co-Chairs ahead of the constituent meeting and re-iterated their wish to join JPSG as a full member.

In an attempt to strike a balance between the different positions presented and to facilitate the possible adoption of the Rules of Procedure, the Co-Chairs revised the draft Rules of Procedure in line with the majority opinions expressed at the meeting.

Despite the fact that the majority of Parliaments were open towards the compromise proposed, no consensus was found on the revised version of the text.

The adoption of the Rules of Procedures was referred to the next meeting.<sup>2</sup>

## **2.5 The external dimension of migration**

Migration has continued to dominate EU policy throughout 2017. The EU has been gradually moving towards a comprehensive and effective approach, which includes both internal and external actions. Recalling the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility in matters relating to migration, the European Parliament repeatedly pointed out that saving lives must be a first priority. At the global level, discussions on the new Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees provided the EU with the opportunity to reflect upon a strategic longer-term vision on migration.

In 2017 interparliamentary discussions focused on the external dimension of migration. In various fora, lively exchanges with parliamentarians, experts and members of the EU and national executives took place.

The Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU made of migration one of its priorities, including as part of its parliamentary dimension. The plenary meeting of the LVII COSAC dedicated a session to migration, with an emphasis on combatting human smuggling and trafficking, as well as establishing a humane and effective return and readmission policy. The discussion was timely, as the Malta Declaration of Heads of State of 3 February 2017 referred to efforts made for the stabilisation of Libya and the capacity building for combatting smuggling and trafficking activities.

The 27th COSAC bi-annual report highlighted that a majority of national Parliaments discussed the EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling (2015-2020) and the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (2012-2016).

In his keynote address, Mr George Vella, the Maltese Minister for Foreign Affairs, explained that the key challenges related to the migration phenomenon were: the emergence of new routes, an increase of young unaccompanied migrants and the mutating business model of human traffickers. He described cooperation with third-countries, especially on return and readmission, as a strategic approach to ensure that migration was managed in a more efficient and humane manner. He also highlighted the need to promote legal migration.

In her speech, Ms Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, Member of the EP LIBE Committee, defended the position of the European Parliament as far as solidarity and respect for fundamental rights were concerned, and the need for Europe to develop a harmonised migration policy guided by the principles of ethics, human rights, and human dignity. She also emphasized the need to promote legal channels for migration and thus effectively act as a deterrent for smuggling.

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<sup>2</sup> The meeting took place on 18 and 19 March 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria, and concluded with the successful adoption of the Rules of Procedure.



Mr Lucio Romano, Vice-Chair of the Committee on European Affairs Policies of the Italian Senate, presented the outcome of the visit of a COSAC delegation to the hotspot in Pozzallo, Sicily, organised on 5-6 May 2017 at the initiative of the Italian Parliament. The visit which constituted an unprecedented activity for COSAC, aimed at enhancing the awareness of national parliamentarians on the challenge of migration and the need of a pan-European approach, applying the values of solidarity and human rights. Twenty-eight parliamentarians from 18 Member States participated in the visit. There were also several MEPs, the Speakers of four Regional councils on behalf of all Italian Regions, and 11 Italian parliamentarians.

Building on the exchanges held in Malta, the Estonian COSAC Presidency, included in the agenda of the LVIII COSAC plenary, the session entitled ‘The external dimension of migration – preventing and combating irregular migration’.

The outcome of the discussion and the findings of the 28th COSAC bi-annual report were reflected in the Contribution of the LVIII COSAC. In the section on migration, the COSAC Contribution stressed the importance of: the development assistance to countries of transit and origin, the need for Member States to strengthen the EU Trust Fund for Africa, the new External Investment Plan and the support for the EU’s action on combating criminal activity by smugglers and traffickers. In addition, it highlighted the need for a compromise concerning on the Common European Asylum System, the need to strengthen the EU’s return policy mechanism and to ensure a full and non-discriminatory implementation of EU Readmission Agreements with third countries. Furthermore, the importance of legal pathways, as alternatives to irregular and dangerous journeys, was underlined.

The Interparliamentary Conference for Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy also tackled the external dimension of migration.

The Conference which was held in Malta in the first semester of 2017, debated the European response to the instability and threats in the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The session brought together the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Executive Secretary of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law Foundation. One of the conference’s workshops was entitled ‘EU’s Migration Policy in 2017 and beyond’.

In a similar fashion, the Estonian edition of the Interparliamentary Conference for CFSP/CSDP discussed migration-related issues in the session entitled ‘State of play beyond the EU borders’, where Mr Sven Mikser, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, was the keynote speaker. The outcome of the discussions fed into the specific sections of the Maltese Conclusions and Estonian Presidency summary adopted at the end of the Conferences.

In February 2017, in the context of its work on the reform of the common European asylum system, the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs organised the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting ‘The third reform of the common European asylum system: up for the challenge’. The meeting provided a forum in which fruitful exchange among members of the European Parliament and national Parliaments as well as experts could take place. Several sessions and parallel workshops focused on the fair distribution of asylum seekers, the concepts of safe country of origin and safe third country, administrative cooperation under Dublin and the protection of children in migration.

## **2.6 Interparliamentary cooperation on institutional matters**

In 2017, the EU Parliaments made sustained efforts to identify possible improvements to cooperation on institutional matters, in addition to that on political and legislative files. Interparliamentary cooperation on the European Commission's Annual Work Programme (CWP) and on the transparency of the decision-making process were high on the agenda.

Building on the outcome of exchanges held in previous years, those discussions led to concrete cooperation initiatives.

### **2.6.1 Interparliamentary cooperation on the European Commission's Annual Work Programme (CWP)**

In line with the suggestion included in the LV COSAC Contribution, in April 2017, the Maltese COSAC Presidency submitted a combined list of priorities to the Commission, which was drawn up based on national Parliaments' input.

One of the sessions of the COSAC Chairpersons' meeting held under Maltese Presidency was dedicated to interparliamentary cooperation on the 2017 European Commission's Annual Work Programme and the discussion offered insight from both the European Parliament's and the national Parliaments' perspectives.

In his address, Mr Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Dutch Senate, presented the procedure of selecting priorities set up in the Dutch Senate and the potential for interparliamentary cooperation on the CWP. In his view, selecting priority proposals for scrutiny resulted, amongst others, in an increased focus on the work of committees, emphasis on proposals at an early stage of the legislative process, automatic inclusion on the committees' agenda resulting in time gain, which was crucial in case of subsidiarity checks, and the possibility for stakeholders to give input at an early stage. National Parliaments were invited to act collectively through coordination on the CWP, and thus contribute to reinforcing the democratic legitimacy of the EU.

Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament and Co-Chair of the EP delegation to COSAC, presented the EP stance and acknowledged the importance of the interinstitutional framework for joint work on EU's priorities and the much-needed involvement of national Parliaments. She posited that the European Commission's Annual Work Programme must be seen in the framework of the multiannual programme and monitored as a cycle from the preparation to the implementation phase. The sound interinstitutional cooperation, which started to develop with the introduction of the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making, and the joint declaration on the EU legislative priorities, could become the set-up for future discussions on EU's priorities. Chair Hübner called on national Parliaments, to decide how to influence the CWP based on their experience, mentioning their unique capacity of influencing both their respective governments and the European Commission. Her keynote address was an opportunity to affirm the availability of the European Parliament to bring national Parliaments' political messages to the European level.

### **2.6.2 Interparliamentary cooperation on transparency of the EU decision-making process**

Practical cooperation of national Parliaments with the European Parliament and among themselves featured on the agenda of the plenary meeting of the LVIII COSAC. In the session 'Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens', the issue of access to information seen as a

prerequisite for empowering citizens to exercise their right to participate in the democratic process was discussed at length. Mr Pieter Omtzigt, Member of the Dutch Parliament, delivered a well-received address on the need to improve the transparency of the EU's political decision-making. This would not only benefit citizens, but also their representatives who could better perform their scrutinising role.

He argued that by not granting members of national Parliaments sufficient access to documents and voting records, the Council of the EU violated EU transparency regulations. The negotiations on the EU budget, on Brexit or the decisions of the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Stability Mechanism proved, that the 'decision-making process of Member States was opaque, which hindered scrutiny'. A position paper on EU transparency, outlining measures likely to make the EU's legislative process more accessible, was shared by the delegations of the Dutch Parliament with the COSAC participants. Following the Dutch initiative, 26 Parliaments/Chambers signed a joint letter on transparency of the EU political decision-making addressing recommendations to the EU institutions.

This initiative echoes the concerns that led to the inquiry opened in March 2017 by the European Ombudsman, in which specific questions were put to the Council, a public consultation was launched, Council files were inspected and ultimately recommendations were made on how to improve the transparency of the Council's legislative process.

In the Presidency Conclusions of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments held in Bratislava in 2017, the Speakers reaffirmed their commitment to parliamentary openness ensuring transparency of the legislative process and recognizing public ownership of parliamentary information.

### **2.6.3 The implementation of the Treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments**

Interparliamentary cooperation has enhanced the ability of national Parliaments to monitor national Governments and has proved to be an important tool for qualitative and in-depth involvement of national Parliaments in the EU decision-making process. The positive engagement of the national Parliaments in EU affairs is very much welcomed by the European Parliament. Their primary role is to keep national governments accountable and scrutinise their national policy in the EU Council. They can also provide a platform for genuine national debate - public and transparent - concerning their countries' EU policies and communicate with their citizens.

Almost a decade after the signing of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs considered timely to draw up an own-initiative implementation Report entitled 'The implementation of the Treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments' (Rapporteur Paulo Rangel).

The aim of the Report is to assess the use of current mechanisms for national Parliaments' participation in the European political process. The Report looks into possible improvements to those mechanisms, in order to bring national Parliaments closer to the EU project. The Report also assesses the political structured debate established between the European Commission and national Parliaments.

After a series of workshops, studies, contributions from national Parliaments, missions and an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting with the participation of national Parliaments held in April, and a vote in the AFCO Committee the resolution was adopted in EP's plenary in April.

### 3. Institutional parliamentary bodies

#### 3.1 The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC)

*COSAC, the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs, was established in November 1989 in Paris. It is unique in that it is the only interparliamentary forum enshrined in the Treaties (Protocol No 1 on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union). The national Parliament of the Member State holding the rotating Council Presidency plays a leading role in defining the direction and work of COSAC. It is supported by a Presidential Troika of which the European Parliament is a permanent member. The Presidency can also rely on the organisational backing of a small secretariat, hosted by the European Parliament and led by an official seconded from a national Parliament ('Permanent Member'). See [www.cosac.eu](http://www.cosac.eu)*

2017 was a special year for COSAC as far as its Presidencies were concerned. In the first semester of the year, the Maltese COSAC Presidency was impacted by the decision of the government to call for snap elections thus dissolving the parliament. Besides, the decision of the UK government to trigger Article 50 of the TEU following the result of the June 2016 referendum, affected directly the work of COSAC. The UK decided to renounce to the Council Presidency in the second semester of 2017 and Estonia anticipated its own Presidency.

In spite of the practical implications on the organisation of the parliamentary body's work, the organ kept all its meetings on track and the debates maintained a high level of intensity and commitment.

The themes chosen by the presidencies varied from the blue economy to the digital single market and the security union. However, the three main areas of concern were: Brexit, the future of the EU and the multifaceted question of migration and asylum policies.

National Parliaments clearly expressed their wish to be kept properly informed about the state of negotiations on Brexit. In this respect, the EP delegation also contributed to the continuous flow of information. Its Co-Chairs, Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament, and Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, have extensively explained the position of the European Parliament concerning the decision of the UK to leave the EU and the fundamental criteria for the conduct of negotiations. The regrettable result of the June 2016 referendum and the resulting costs for both sides were acknowledged. In their interventions on the matter the Co-Chairs stressed the essential goals and benchmarks: the defence of the EU's fundamental values and freedoms, the safeguard of the rights of the EU's citizens living in the UK as well as those of the UK citizens living in the EU, and, last but not least, the obligation to avoid any disruption to the peace process in Northern Ireland. National Parliaments could also exchange views with the EU Chief Negotiator on Brexit, Mr Michel Barnier, who has attended all COSAC plenary meetings since the UK Referendum in June 2016.

The future of the EU also occupied a considerable amount of time during the debates. The awareness of the need to bring the EU citizens closer to the institutions of the Union and to their action started to be addressed in terms of a common responsibility. This is a result that owes a lot to the relentless engagement of Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament, *vis à vis* National parliaments. The atmosphere of renewed trust allowed a significant deepening of the exchanges. In this context the most substantial debate took place during the LVIII Plenary meeting in Tallinn, where the President of Estonia, Ms Kersti Kaljulaid,

Mr Michel Barnier and Ms Danuta Hübner all highlighted the remarkable achievements of the European project, its shortcomings, the reasons why certain issues had not been met with appropriate preparedness, while stressing the added value of acting together if the objective was the solution of global issues.

Perhaps, the issue where a more positive atmosphere did not equate important development in terms of possible solutions, is the question of migration. No doubt, the tone of the debate has receded from the harshest cords of the previous two years, but without too many signs of convergence regarding a common long-term solution. The realistic approach, sometimes minimalistic in the view of the European Parliament, can explain the angles chosen by the presidencies: the external dimension of migration and the aspect of security.

That being said, the improved atmosphere has allowed richer and more concrete discussions. As a consequence, COSAC as a common forum of all EU Parliaments has been enriched.

The LVII COSAC in Valletta did not adopt a political Contribution due to the absence of a politically mandated Presidency delegation.

Some of the issues covered in the COSAC debates in Valletta were included by the Estonian Presidency in the LVIII COSAC Contribution adopted by very large consensus amongst the delegations, by acclamation.

### **3.2 The annual and informal Conferences of Speakers of EU Parliaments (EUSC)**

*The annual Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments (EUSC) is based on the Stockholm Guidelines adopted in 2010. They provide for one annual meeting, organised by the Member State holding the second semester Presidency in a given year so as to take place during the spring Presidency of the following year. The Conference adopts non-binding Presidency Conclusions. It also has the task of overseeing the coordination of interparliamentary EU activities. Extraordinary EUSC meetings can be convened, but in 2017 this format was replaced by an informal Speakers' Summit. See [www.ipex.eu](http://www.ipex.eu)*

The annual Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments was held in Bratislava on 23-24 April 2017. It was chaired by Mr Andrej Danko, Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

The Conference was divided into two sessions: one, on the future of the EU as a global player and the role of national Parliaments; and another, on sharing best practices about bringing parliamentary agenda closer to citizens. Nonetheless, the most concrete issue for this Conference was the agreement on the modalities of setting up the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on EUROPOL, which was not a separate agenda item of the Conference. The decision on joint EUROPOL scrutiny was annexed to the Conclusions, agreed by consensus and without need of a debate at the Conference Plenary.

On the EU's future, in the context of the current changing international geopolitical landscape, the Speakers stressed the need for a stronger EU on the global stage, which required well-balanced relations based on international rules and standards, as well as common effort and enhanced cooperation with global partners and the European Neighbourhood to fight global threats and challenges. The Speakers recognised that could be achieved only if the EU acted together. In that regard, the Speakers took note of the efforts by some Member States to engage in closer defence cooperation, a topic which would feature on the agenda of the 2018 EUSC.

On bringing the parliamentary agenda closer to citizens, the Speakers recognised that citizens' engagement and participation in political life was a cornerstone of democracy, and that national Parliaments and the European Parliament had a crucial role to play in bridging the gap between citizens and policy-making. The Speakers considered that more needed to be done on all institutional levels, whether national or European, in order to bring Europe closer to its citizens in an understandable and engaging manner emphasising common history and shared values. The Speakers considered that strengthening the social dimension of national and European policies might contribute significantly to this end.

### **Extraordinary EUSC for the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome**

Against the backdrop of Brexit and the several crisis the EU was facing in 2016, the Speakers of EU Parliaments met in an extraordinary Conference, in view of commemorating the signing of the Treaties of Rome 60 years ago, and as an act of unity. The extraordinary Conference took place in the premises of the Italian Chambers, under the aegis of the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Ms Laura Boldrini, and the President of the Italian Senate, Mr Pietro Grasso.

The European Parliament was represented by its newly elected President Mr Antonio Tajani, who was also a keynote speaker. He stressed that the focus must be on reforming the European Union in order to improve it and make it more democratic and capable of delivering on the expectations of our citizens.

Other speakers for this solemn occasion included Mr Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission; Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council; Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission; Mr Giorgio Napolitano, President Emeritus of the Italian Republic; Mr Mario Monti, former European Commissioner and former President of the Council of Ministers; and Mr Paolo Gentiloni, President of the Italian Council of Ministers.

## **4. Interparliamentary dialogue**

### **4.1 European Parliamentary Week and the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (IPC SECG)**

*Article 13 of the so-called Fiscal Compact provides for the establishment of an interparliamentary conference to discuss budgetary policies and other issues covered by the Agreement. The Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments adopted the rules of procedure of the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (IPC SECG) in 2015. The conference comprises all the national Parliaments and the European Parliament. The member parliaments are free to choose the size and composition of their delegations. See [www.ipex.eu](http://www.ipex.eu)*

The European Parliamentary Week (EPW) and the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union have earned their regular place in the calendar of interparliamentary cooperation and have emerged as a true forum for interparliamentary debates in these increasingly important policy areas.

The 2017 edition of the European Parliamentary Week took place from 30 January to 1 February 2017 at the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels. Similar to previous years, two events took place within the framework of the European Parliamentary Week 2017:

- The European Semester Conference, organised by the European Parliament. It provided an opportunity to exchange information on best practices in implementing the Semester cycles, and to strengthen cooperation in order to scrutinise the actions of the executive at national and European levels, within the framework of the European Semester cycle.
- The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union, co-hosted and co-chaired over by the House of Representatives of Malta and the European Parliament. The conference is the forum for fruitful debates and exchange of best practices in implementing the Treaty provisions for the cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament. Furthermore, it aims at ensuring the democratic accountability in the area of economic governance and budgetary policy in the EU, particularly in the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), taking into account the social dimension and without prejudice to the competences of EU Parliaments.

EPW brought together more than 100 Members of national Parliaments from all over the European Union and Members of the European Parliament to discuss economic, budgetary and social matters.

Within the framework of the Estonian EU Council Presidency, the Estonian Parliament hosted the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union from 29 to 31 October 2017 in Tallinn. The IPC focused on the exchange of views on the following four topics: future of the EMU, measures for stimulating economy and financial assistance, budgetary challenges of the European Union, and efficient tax collection. Mr Eiki Nestor, President of the Estonian Parliament, and Mr Remo Holsmer, Deputy Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Estonian Parliament, hosted 172 Members of Parliaments representing 26 Member States, the European Parliament, the European Commission, Norway, and Montenegro during the three-day conference.

## 4.2 Interparliamentary cooperation on foreign and security policy (IPC CFSP/CSDP)

*Established by a decision of the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in 2012, the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (IPC CFSP/CSDP) is the interparliamentary platform for debate on the EU's foreign, security and defence policy. Organised twice a year by the Parliament of the EU Member State holding the rotating Council Presidency in close cooperation with the European Parliament, the Conference is regularly attended by Parliamentarians from across the EU. In addition, the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs frequently invites national Parliaments to its meetings in Brussels, complementing the interparliamentary dialogue in this vital policy area. See [www.ipex.eu](http://www.ipex.eu)*

In 2017, the 10th and 11th Interparliamentary Conferences for CFSP/CSDP took place in Malta (26-28 April) and Tallinn (2-4 September). The European Parliament delegations to both meetings were composed of Members of the Committee of Foreign Affairs and the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence and were chaired by Mr David McAllister, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

During the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy organised within the framework of the Maltese EU Council Presidency discussions focused on: the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the European response to the instability and threats in the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Separate workshops were dedicated to EU's Migration Policy in 2017 and beyond; Fighting Propaganda and Information Warfare; the European Defence Action Plan and EU-NATO relations. The Conference adopted comprehensive conclusions with concrete recommendations on all those topics.

During the second half of 2017, at the initiative of the Estonian Parliament, the Conference chose to discuss and exchange information on questions such as: Europe in the global context; invigorating the unity of the West and transatlantic relations; the priorities of the EU in the area of CFSP/CSDP; the state of play beyond the EU borders; ways to strengthen European defence and practical aspects of the hybrid world including the cyber sphere and strategic communication. During the conference, specific seminars were dedicated to the borders of the European Union, focussing on the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership and Russia.

In their joint statement, the Co-Chairs confirmed that the biannual conference enabled national and European parliamentarians to coordinate their political positions on key security and defence issues with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of national and EU-level policy-making in tackling those global challenges.



### 4.3 Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICMs) and other interparliamentary meetings

*In addition to the two regular Interparliamentary Conferences, the European Parliament Committees organise annually up to 20 Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICMs) inviting the corresponding committees of the national Parliaments to engage in focused debates. Other types of interparliamentary meetings are organised on a more ad hoc basis, often by the Presidency Parliament.*

Relations between the European Parliament and national Parliaments have deepened considerably in recent years. ICM discussions provide a platform for parliamentarians to hold more specific and focused exchanges on key legislative and political issues of common interest. ICMs now constitute a dynamic element of the interparliamentary cooperation and feature on the annual agenda of the committees of the European Parliament. National Parliaments' constant high level of attendance and involvement, prompted an ongoing reflection at the EP level on how to best ensure meetings are mutually-beneficial and fit for purpose.

Fifteen Interparliamentary Committee Meetings were organised in 2017, most in the traditional format of Interparliamentary Committee Meetings, but also as exchanges of views. The meetings were organised in Brussels on the initiative of one or more committees of the European Parliament and with the support of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments. The particularly high number of meetings and the final choice of topics was the result of a complex exercise of balancing the legislative and political priorities of EU Parliaments and those dictated by international developments. In 2017, 450 Members of national Parliaments met with 400 Members of the European Parliament, in meetings organised by nine different parliamentary committees. Three committees organised more than one event involving national Parliaments: the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) organised three, while the Committee on Constitutional affairs (AFCO) and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) each organised two ICMs.

The European Parliament ensured that a number of meetings feature regularly in the calendar of interparliamentary activities. These are: the European Parliamentary Week (see chapter 4.1), an annual exchange of views on the cycle of the European Semester, the biannual meetings of the Committees on Foreign Affairs in the Interparliamentary Conference for CFSP/CSDP (see chapter 4.2), and the meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality marking International Women's Day on 8 March.

In 2017, in addition to the March ICM on Women's Economic Empowerment, the FEMM committee marked the International Day for the elimination of violence against women by holding an ICM entitled 'The Istanbul Convention: combating violence against women at national and EU level'.

Throughout 2017, the Committees of the European Parliament have actively and substantially contributed to the ongoing debate on the future of Europe, by making concrete proposals for reforming its policies and institutions. Whenever possible, committees invited national Parliaments to discuss them during ICMs.

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs organised an ICM on the third Reform of the Common European Asylum System, and another one on the Establishment of an EU Mechanism on Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights. LIBE also held an

exchange of views with national Parliaments and civil society on the ‘Comprehensive Assessment of EU’s Security Policy’.

The Committee on Constitutional affairs invited national Parliaments to the ICM entitled ‘The Future of Europe: Perspectives on the European Parliament’s proposals and the Commission White Paper’. As a preparatory step in drawing its report ‘The implementation of the treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments’, AFCO held a dedicated ICM where parliamentarians and experts provided the rapporteur and the committee with direct insight on the topic.

The Committee on Regional Development put the focus on the future of Cohesion Policy post 2020. The EP Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) debated the perspectives of EU integration and the accession process of the Western Balkans, a timely exchange of views on a topic announced as one of the main priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency. National Parliaments joined in the debate on the role of the EU on the global scene, in the ICM on ‘The Implementation of the European Consensus on Development and the Sustainable Development Goals’, which was organised by the Committee on Development.

A high point of 2017 was the co-organisation by LIBE and the Estonian Presidency of the Constituent meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol. It was the result of a laborious process of consultation and exchange (see chapter 2.3).

A recent trend in the interparliamentary cooperation was the invitation addressed to national Parliaments to participate in High Level conferences held at the initiative and under the auspices of the President of the European Parliament. The first High Level conference dealt with migration management and took place on 21 June 2017. It was followed by similar events dealing with: tourism (27 September 2017), clean energy financing (7 November 2017) and a renewed partnership with Africa (22 November 2017). The High Level conferences brought together members of national Parliaments, of the European Parliament, and a variety of stakeholders. This new format offered a wide range of perspectives on those topics, contributing to more informed parliamentary debates.

A list of all interparliamentary meetings organised by European Parliament committees in 2017, as well as more detailed statistics, are available in Annex II.

#### **4.4 Bilateral visits from EU national Parliaments to the European Parliament**

*A constantly evolving tool and format for interparliamentary dialogue are the bilateral visits which individual national Parliaments pay to the European Parliament, often combined with visits to the other EU institutions. This format provides a highly focused, tailor-made and flexible, cost- and time-efficient framework for discussions on issues of concern to one national Parliament in particular.*

The purpose of bilateral visits is to foster and strengthen relations between parliaments at both the political and administrative level. Their number is on the rise, a recent trend that is set to continue.

A record number of visits were organised in 2017: 85 in total. The highest number of requests for visits were received from both Houses of the UK Parliament, the French National Assembly and the Norwegian Parliament. The visits of the UK Parliament naturally focused around the exit of the UK from the EU. French visits were mainly launched to support the French major

parliamentary reform process. The Norwegian activity can partly be explained by the Brexit, too, since the ‘Norwegian model’ figured as one credible option for the future EU-UK relations still in 2017. As mentioned in the chapter on the future of the EU, the UK’s exit from the EU and bringing citizens closer to the EU were high on the agenda of these meetings.

Specific visits for parliamentarians and experts are organised for the parliaments of the countries holding the Presidency of the EU for the first time, under the Presidency Parliament Support Programme (see chapter 6.3). The EP is occasionally, upon request, organising visits of parliamentary staff of Chambers who are in the process of adapting or modernizing their organization and express interest in the EP’s functioning.

A detailed list of all visits, including videoconferences, from national Parliaments to the European Parliament that were organised in 2017, with the support of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments, is available in Annex III.

## **5. The ‘early warning mechanism’ and ‘informal political dialogue’ - Protocols No 1 and No 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon**

*Protocol No 2 to the TFEU sets out a review mechanism, the so-called ‘early warning mechanism’, involving national Parliaments. Under this mechanism national Parliaments may review EU draft legislative acts, and if they see a breach of the principle of subsidiarity may send a ‘reasoned opinion’ within eight weeks of transmission to the issuing institution. The Protocol provides a procedure for a review and even a compulsory review (known as the ‘yellow card’ and ‘orange card’, respectively) when the number of reasoned opinions exceeds specific thresholds. This formal role for national Parliaments has promoted a higher level of cooperation with the European Parliament, and led to a review and modification of the latter’s Rules of Procedure and administrative structures aimed at a further improvement of inter-parliamentary relations.*

See [www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/connect/welcome.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/connect/welcome.html)

### **5.1 Early warning mechanism**

With regard to the early warning mechanism, submissions of national Parliaments are considered under the following categories<sup>3</sup>:

1. ‘reasoned opinion’ if received within the eight-week deadline referred to in Article 6 of Protocol No 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>4</sup>, and raising the non-compliance with the principle of subsidiarity;
2. ‘contributions’ if they do not fulfil the above mentioned criteria.

Within the European Parliament the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) is responsible for monitoring compliance with the principle of subsidiarity<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See Conference of Committee Chairs document of 15 December 2010: ‘Common approach for the treatment at committee level of national Parliaments’ reasoned opinions and all other contributions of national Parliaments’.

<sup>4</sup> Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, Article 6: ‘Any national Parliament or any chamber of a national Parliament may, within eight weeks from the date of transmission of a draft legislative act, in the official languages of the Union, send to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission a reasoned opinion stating why it considers that the draft in question does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity. It will be for each national Parliament or each chamber of a national Parliament to consult, where appropriate, regional parliaments with legislative powers’.

<sup>5</sup> Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament; Annex V, paragraph XVI, 1.: ‘The Committee on Legal Affairs is responsible for the interpretation, application and monitoring of Union law and compliance of Union acts with primary law, notably the choice of legal bases and respect for the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality’.

In 2017, the European Parliament formally received 421 submissions from national Parliaments under Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. 49 of those were reasoned opinions whilst the other 372 were contributions (submissions not raising issues related to the subsidiarity compliance).

Since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (1 December 2009), 2799 submissions were sent by national Parliaments. Of those, only 429 (15 %) were reasoned opinions alleging a breach of the subsidiarity principle, while the vast majority (about 85 %) were contributions that dealt with the substance of the proposals.

This demonstrates that national Parliaments have not used this mechanism to stall the legislative process at EU level. So far, only a few national Parliaments have sent large numbers of reasoned opinions. In 2017, 18 out of 41 chambers issued reasoned opinions. The most active were: the French *Sénat* with eight, the German *Bundestag* and the Austrian *Bundesrat* with 6 reasoned opinions each.

Since the introduction of this mechanism, the threshold required to trigger the ‘yellow card’ review procedure has been reached only three times so far, most recently in May 2016 with regard to the proposal for a revision of the Directive on the Posting of Workers. The Commission decided to maintain its proposal, given that in its opinion it did not infringe the principle of subsidiarity<sup>6</sup>. Many of the national Parliaments participating in this third ‘yellow card’ continued to express their disappointment on the outcome throughout 2017.

National Parliaments have used Protocol No. 2 as a means to express their views on the substance of the proposals rather than on subsidiarity. This reflects their wish to be involved more closely in the substantive legislative process.

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments provides Members (in particular rapporteurs), political bodies and services of the European Parliament with specific expertise and briefings on national Parliaments submissions throughout the legislative cycle.

In this context, the Directorate maintains the database CONNECT which includes all documents received from national Parliaments since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. CONNECT has been upgraded in early 2017 to include a number of search important functions and statistical tools. It is now available on the website of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments: [www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/connect/welcome.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/connect/welcome.html)

This upgrade also led to including that information directly in the common working space of DG IPOL/EXPO eCommittee. Like all other committee documents and information related to a legislative file, national Parliaments’ submissions are included directly under the file they relate to. This applies not only to reasoned opinions, but also to all contributions received from national Parliaments.

Another service provided by the Directorate is the monthly *State of Play Note on reasoned opinions and contributions*. The note is composed of two sections: one giving an overview of all submissions received since the previous note, and another one making reference to all legislative files on the agenda of the respective plenary session. It is prepared for the meeting of the Conference of Committee Chairs on Tuesday of each Strasbourg session and is part of the official

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter 2.2 of the Mid-term report 2016 Relations between the European Parliament and EU national Parliaments, Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments.

meeting file. The *State of Play Note* is also made available on the website of the Directorate and distributed ahead of each plenary session to all Members/assistants and representatives of political groups, the Legal Service and DG IPOL, DG EXPO, the EP liaison offices as well as the Commission and Council services in charge of relations with national Parliaments.

## **5.2 Informal Political Dialogue**

Protocol No 1 to the TFEU allows national Parliaments to comment on legislative files falling under the exclusive competence of the European Union and a large variety of non-legislative documents, for example relating to ongoing debates at European level, Green/White Papers or Communications from the European Commission. Comments on these documents are quite numerous and fall under the so-called 'Informal Political Dialogue'.

In 2017, national Parliaments continued to make active use of this tool by sending 199 contributions<sup>7</sup>. In this context, the three most active chambers were the Romanian Chamber of Deputies with 30, the Czech Senate with 28 and the Italian Chamber of Deputies with 27 contributions in 2017.

Since 2009, the European Parliament has received around 1900 contributions from national Parliaments; these are also published in the above-mentioned database CONNECT.

Detailed statistics for the reasoned opinions and contributions received under the early warning mechanism in 2017 are available in Annex IV.

## **5.3 Principles of subsidiarity and proportionality revisited**

The Commission's closer engagement and dialogue with the national Parliaments continued in 2017. National Parliaments increasingly invite Commissioners to their debates, cooperate on jointly selecting priorities for scrutiny in the European Commission's Annual Work Programme, and make suggestions for legislative initiatives.

Over the years, national Parliaments undertook a common reflection on possible practical improvements within the framework of the Treaties in order to give the fullest effect to the objectives of the principle of subsidiarity. In its adopted contributions, COSAC repeatedly made recommendations, which concern mainly the exclusion of various recess periods from the counting of the deadline for the submission of reasoned opinions; an internal eight-week deadline for the Commission's replies to national Parliaments' reasoned opinions; the clarification in the explanatory memorandum of new proposals replacing acts that triggered a significant number of reasoned opinions on how the known subsidiarity concerns have been accommodated; and the inclusion in the explanatory memoranda of further elements of the impact assessments, in particular the analysis relevant for the appraisal of the compliance of the act with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.<sup>8</sup>

Improving the subsidiarity control and the political dialogue within the current treaty framework was discussed at the LVII COSAC plenary held in Malta in the session 'The role of national

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<sup>7</sup> Just like under Protocol 2, submissions sent within the remits of the informal political dialogue are called 'contributions'.

<sup>8</sup> A comprehensive summary of the COSAC recommendations was made available in a Paper presented to COSAC by the delegation of the Czech Senate; it was intended as a contribution to the works of the *Task force on subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently*. The document is available at: [www.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/parliaments/institution/czsen.do](http://www.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/parliaments/institution/czsen.do)

Parliaments in the future of the EU'. Parliamentarians intervening in the debate reiterated the above-mentioned proposals calling also for more precise and substantiated replies, the continued implementation of the 'green card', seen as a positive channel for national Parliaments' contributions. Several Chambers, notably the countries from the Visegrád Group, have been favourable to the introduction of the so-called 'red card', which would enable Parliaments' veto-right to Commission's proposals.

The European Parliament's work on the evaluation of the implementation of the Treaty provisions relating to national Parliaments has been mentioned in chapter 2.6.3.

National Parliaments welcomed the establishment of the '*Task force on subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently*' on 14 November 2017 by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. The Task Force will report to the President by 15 July 2018, making recommendations on how to better apply the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, on policy areas where work could be re-delegated or definitely returned to Member States, as well as on ways to better involve regional and local authorities in EU policy making and delivery.

The European Parliament's Conference of Presidents declined the invitation to send representatives to the Task Force respecting the well-established principle, that the Members of European Parliament cannot take part in advisory fora or working groups set up by the European Commission.

The Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC held in Tallinn state that national Parliaments are represented in the Task Force by the members of the national Parliaments in COSAC presidential Troika (representatives of the Estonian, Bulgarian and Austrian Parliaments). COSAC asked the Commission to expand the number of representatives of the national Parliaments in the Task Force in order to achieve a broader representation and a wider range of expertise. The proposal was not accepted by the Commission.

As a result, and with a view to widen the debate among all national Parliaments and coordinate their efforts to represent the interests of the European citizens, a COSAC working group was established in which all national Chambers are represented.

## 6. Tools for exchanging information and networking

### 6.1 European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)

*Managed jointly by the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ECPRD counts 66 parliamentary chambers (including 41 in the European Union) from 54 countries and European institutions as members. Almost 120 Correspondents and Deputy Correspondents represent their respective parliament in the network and contribute to main ECPRD activities, which consist of an intense exchange of information and best practice. See [ecprd.secure.europarl.europa.eu/ecprd/public/page/about](http://ecprd.secure.europarl.europa.eu/ecprd/public/page/about)*

In 2017, the ECPRD celebrated its 40th anniversary. The European Parliament jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe organised the Annual Conference of Correspondents in the *Palais de l'Europe*, in Strasbourg. It was a moment to take stock of the past achievements and to discuss future opportunities. The conference started with a keynote speech on the relevance of information in parliaments and for parliamentarians. It was followed by a historical look-up on how the ECPRD had become a model for the exchange of information and best practices. The day was concluded with two presentations outlining the challenges for research services and libraries in parliaments.

The conference was also the moment to present a *Festschrift* in which correspondents from around 40 parliaments described from their perspective the state of the art of parliamentary research and the importance of the ECPRD to meet the information needs of Members and parliamentary bodies.

Last but not least, version 5 of the ECPRD website was launched short before the conference. The internal structure was completely refurbished after almost two years of intensive work. A new 'responsive' design allows now a smooth usage no matter if it is on a smartphone, a tablet or the classical PC. It should be highlighted again that the cooperation with DG ITEC continued to be highly effective.

The Directorate and the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) organised successfully an ECPRD seminar entitled '*The future of parliamentary research services and libraries in an era of rapid change: Optimising quality, service, delivery and relevance*'. The event attracted 73 participants from 36 parliamentary chambers. So-called 'breakout groups' constituted a new promising feature at an ECPRD seminar. Participants had the opportunity to discuss methodological issues and challenges in three parallel workshops: on Brexit, the circular economy and the migration policy in Europe. A special session was devoted to regional initiatives of cooperation between parliamentary research services in Nordic Countries, South-East Europe and the Visegrád Group. This session, but also contributions made in the workshops, revealed a broad interest to engage in more information exchange between services.

As regards the comparative requests, 2017 brought a new all-time high with in total 337 requests which is a significant increase by comparison to 2016 where 273 requests were submitted to the network. At first glance this is a very positive message because it underlines impressively the appreciation and importance of the ECPRD for the parliaments. On the other hand, each request stands for high expectations to receive the required information not only in terms of numbers of replies but also in terms of quality. It is therefore obvious that preparing the replies to such a high amount of requests results in a significant workload. Fortunately until now there are no indications that this ECPRD activity might become a victim of its own success, but a certain awareness about this potential risk remains necessary.

As a facilitator, the European Parliament's Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments provides support to the respective EP services. In 2017, on behalf of other services in the European Parliament, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments transmitted six requests to the ECPRD network. Furthermore, it coordinated 31 replies to requests from other ECPRD parliaments.

### **Spotlight on Parliaments in Europe**

The note '*Spotlight on Parliaments in Europe*' summarizes information on selected topical matters exchanged between Parliaments in the network of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD).

In 2017, the Directorate prepared five new issues of the *Spotlight* note on a broad variety of topics.

An overview of the issues on which the European Parliament consulted the ECPRD network, of the requests to which the EP provided replies, a detailed list of ECPRD seminars and statutory meetings, and a list of the editions of the '*Spotlight on Parliaments in Europe*' issued in 2017 are available in Annex V.

## **6.2 Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX)**

*The objective of the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX) is to support interparliamentary cooperation by providing a platform for the electronic exchange of EU-related information between Parliaments in the EU. IPEX was launched as an initiative of EU national Parliaments and was developed with the technical assistance of the European Parliament. Today, 41 Chambers of 28 national Parliaments and the European Parliament are using IPEX in their daily activities. IPEX is subject to continual improvement to meet the changing needs of its users. See [www.ipex.eu](http://www.ipex.eu)*

2017 saw the adoption of two important documents. The *IPEX Digital Strategy (DS)* was approved by the Secretaries General of EU Parliaments at their meeting in Bratislava on 21 February. It is a comprehensive plan regarding the future development of IPEX. The Digital Strategy also outlines the strategic approaches for achieving and implementing the IPEX goals. Furthermore, while defining the guiding provisions on the short-term maintenance and upkeep of the website, it identifies ways to actively involve the National Correspondents of IPEX in the achievement of the DS goals, describes relations with other actors and platforms in the framework of EU information exchange and, finally, identifies the relevant actions for the promotion of IPEX and for further development of communication.

Meeting in Bratislava on 19 May 2017, the IPEX Board adopted a *Work Programme 2017-2020* meant as an implementing tool for the Digital Strategy. The three-year Work Programme is addressed to the Slovak (2017-2018), Estonian (2018-2019) and Austrian (2019-2020) IPEX Chairmanships. The Programme includes the following priority objectives: promoting IPEX, enhancing the IPEX network, and improving the IPEX database.

To carry out the Work Programme the Board decided to set up three working groups, each charged with the execution of one priority objective.

The European Parliament actively supported the adoption of both documents. The official responsible for IPEX in DG ITEC and the Institutional Cooperation unit of the Directorate for



Relations with National Parliaments contributed to that endeavour. The renewed support of the European Parliament to IPEX is witnessed by the attention paid by Mr Paulo Rangel while drafting his Report on the implementation of the Treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments. In several visits to national Parliaments, the rapporteur constantly referred to the importance of the platform and made proposals on its possible developments.

Although IPEX is not the only platform for the exchange of EU related documents, for the European Parliament it is clear that the platform has the potential to become the main channel of communication between the EU institutions and national Parliaments.

While 2017 was for IPEX a year of intense and deep reflection and renewal as far as its role and ambitions were concerned, the platform kept carrying out its consolidated functions. It currently publishes almost 88.000 pages from national Parliaments and the European Union institutions, holding scrutiny related information in 12.500 documents produced by the EU institutions and linked to over 10.000 dossiers. In 2017, the total number of legislative and non-legislative documents recorded in IPEX, was 1053 (2016: 1064; 2015: 805; 2014: 933).

In 2017, the IPEX website was visited by 307.737 unique visitors, a considerable increase in line with the general growing trend of previous years. The number of pages viewed – almost 6 million – is within a pattern seen for the past 3 years.

### **6.3 Other networks and tools**

#### **National Parliaments' representatives in Brussels**

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments welcomes and hosts the administrative representatives designated by the EU national Parliaments/Chambers to the European Parliament. Since 1991 (2016 marked the 25th anniversary of the arrangement) and with a view to strengthening interparliamentary cooperation within the EU, the European Parliament has offered representatives complimentary office and other in-house facilities upon request, on its Brussels and Strasbourg premises.

Over time, all EU national Parliaments have sent a national official to Brussels to facilitate relations with the EU. Currently 55 persons, from 40 Chambers, are occupying 37 offices. The representatives work in the same European Parliament building that houses the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments. This creates numerous synergies and promotes easy exchanges.

These representatives are national officials whose role is administrative and neutral: their task of mutual information (as a two-way flow between the European Parliament and the national Parliaments) is a key factor in EU affairs, because the ultimate goal of these exchanges is very concrete, namely to find common responses at parliamentary level to the many challenges facing the European Union.

An updated list of representatives is available at:  
[www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/about/contacts](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/about/contacts).

#### **Presidency Parliament Support Programme**

Interparliamentary cooperation and exchanges are intensified in the preparatory phase of the parliamentary dimension of each EU Presidency. Where the Parliament of a country that is holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU for the first time requests the assistance

of the European Parliament for preparing the activities of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency, the European Parliament may contribute to the cost of the programme on a shared basis with the corresponding parliament. Within this programme, the European Parliament strives to offer tailor-made support based on the Presidency's needs and priorities.

Following changes to the calendar of the Presidencies of the Council of the EU, an unprecedented sequence of Member States found themselves at the helm of the EU for the first time: Slovakia, Malta, Estonia and Bulgaria. The Parliaments of these countries all benefitted from the EU Presidency Support Programme.

At the initiative of the Maltese Parliament, a visit to Malta was organised for the preparation of the parliamentary dimension ahead of the Presidency. The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments was represented to a seminar on subsidiarity held on that occasion.

In 2017, the Directorate successfully organised several study visits and information sessions for experts of the Estonian and Bulgarian Parliaments, within several committees and services of the European Parliament. A similar programme is foreseen for the Romanian Parliament.

Participants in the programme confirmed that thorough early exchanges were particularly useful in better planning of the parliamentary dimension. Networking with all relevant interlocutors (Members of European Parliament, European Parliament's officials, national Parliaments' representatives, the IPEX Officer, the COSAC Secretariat, interparliamentary conference project teams) and sharing lessons learnt from recent experiences were highly appreciated. The transfer of expertise and the constant communication also ensured the consistency of the work within the parliamentary dimension of various presidencies.

### **Weekly agenda of activities involving national Parliaments**

The Directorate publishes a wide-spread information on the events relating with or involving national Parliaments through its *Weekly Agenda*. The aim is to increase transparency and visibility of the numerous interparliamentary activities undertaken. The *Weekly Agenda* is sent to all members and to most services of the European Parliament. It includes the events of the two upcoming weeks.

## 7. ANNEXES

### ANNEX I - COSAC meetings - Topics and keynote speakers 2017

| <b>COSAC event</b>  | <b>Topics</b>  | <b>European Parliament's keynote speakers/panellist</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| Meeting of the Chairpersons<br>Malta, 22-23 January, 2017             | I Reflection on Malta's EU<br>Presidency<br>II Discussion on the European<br>Commission's 2017 Annual<br>Work Programme  | Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the<br>Committee on Constitutional<br>Affairs of the European Parliament<br>(AFCO)   |
| Plenary Meeting of the LVII<br>COSAC Malta, 28-30 May 2017            | I Reflections on the Maltese<br>Presidency<br>II The role of national Parliaments<br>in the future of the EU<br>III Outcome of the UK<br>referendum - State of play.<br>IV Expanding the Blue Economy -<br>Towards a more sustainable EU<br>Integrated Maritime Policy<br>V Migration - Combatting human<br>smuggling and trafficking and<br>establishing a humane and<br>effective return and readmission<br>policy | Ms Mairead McGuinness, First<br>Vice-President of the European<br>Parliament<br><br>Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the<br>Committee on Constitutional<br>Affairs of the European Parliament<br>(AFCO) |
| Meeting of the Chairpersons<br>Tallinn, 9-10 July 2017                | I Priorities of the Estonian<br>Presidency<br>II From start-ups to scale-ups -<br>EU's unused potential  |   |
| Plenary Meeting of the LVIII<br>COSAC Tallinn, 26-28 November<br>2017 | I The future of the European<br>Union<br>II Bringing the European Union<br>closer to its citizens - what are the<br>best practices of national<br>Parliaments?<br>III Digital Single Market: current<br>developments of e-services<br>IV Building an effective and<br>sustainable Security Union<br>V The external dimension of<br>migration: preventing and<br>combating irregular migration                        | Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the<br>Committee on Constitutional<br>Affairs of the European Parliament<br>(AFCO)   |

For a more detailed information concerning the agenda of COSAC meetings as published by the presidencies, please consult the COSAC website: [www.cosac.eu](http://www.cosac.eu)

**ANNEX II - Interparliamentary meetings organised by the European Parliament's committees in Brussels<sup>9</sup> in 2017**

| EP committee               | Event  | Participation of                   |           |                          |   |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|---|
|                            |  | National Parliaments <sup>10</sup> |           |                          | EP  |
|                            |  | Members                            | Countries | Parliaments/<br>Chambers | Members   |
| <b>ECON/BUDG/<br/>EMPL</b> | 30 January – 1 February<br><b>European Parliamentary Week:</b><br>The European Semester Cycles 2016-2017<br>The Interparliamentary Conference under art. 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union | <b>98</b>                          | <b>24</b> | <b>30</b>                | <b>90</b><br><b>ECON/<br/>PANA<br/>ICM - 49<br/>EMPL<br/>ICM - 12<br/>BUDG<br/>ICM - 29</b>                 |
| <b>LIBE</b>                | 28 February<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘The third Reform of the Common European Asylum System - Up for the Challenge’  | <b>46</b>                          | <b>18</b> | <b>21</b>                | <b>40</b>   |
| <b>FEMM</b>                | 8-9 March<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>Women’s Economic Empowerment: ‘Let’s Act together’  | <b>25</b>                          | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b>                | <b>19</b>   |
| <b>AFCO</b>                | 2 May<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘The implementation of the treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments’<br>Rapporteur: Paulo Rangel   | <b>11</b>                          | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b>                 | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>LIBE</b>                | 11 May<br><u>Exchange of Views between the European Parliament, national Parliaments and Civil Society: Comprehensive Assessment of EU Security Policy</u>   | <b>13</b>                          | <b>9</b>  | <b>9</b>                 | <b>16</b>   |
| <b>LIBE</b>                | 22 June<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘Establishment of an EU Mechanism on Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights’   | <b>25</b>                          | <b>15</b> | <b>18</b>                | <b>22</b>   |
| <b>LIBE</b>                | 9-10 October<br>Constituent meeting of the ‘Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on Europol’  | <b>69</b>                          | <b>26</b> | <b>34</b>                | <b>29</b><br><b>9 October 2017 (12)</b><br><b>Full members of JPSG: 10</b><br><b>Substitutes of JPSG: 1</b> |

<sup>9</sup> Unless specified otherwise, all meetings are Interparliamentary Committee Meetings.

<sup>10</sup> EU Member States, candidates countries, potential candidate countries, Switzerland and Norway

|              |  |            |           |           |   |
|--------------|--|------------|-----------|-----------|---|
|              |  |            |           |           | <b>Other<br/>MEPs: 1<br/>10 October<br/>2017 (17)<br/>Full<br/>members<br/>of JPSG: 12<br/>Substitutes<br/>of JPSG: 2<br/>Other<br/>MEPs: 3</b> |
| <b>ECON</b>  | 10 October<br><u>Exchange of Views</u> between the European Parliament and national Parliaments on ‘Country specific Recommendations and Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base’ | <b>29</b>  | <b>18</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>24</b>   |
| <b>AFCO</b>  | 11 October<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>The Future of Europe: ‘Perspectives on the European Parliament’s proposals and the Commission White Paper’         | <b>25</b>  | <b>16</b> | <b>19</b> | <b>11</b>   |
| <b>DEVE</b>  | 21 November<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘European Consensus on Development and the Sustainable Development Goals’   | <b>23</b>  | <b>22</b> | <b>26</b> | <b>27</b>   |
| <b>AFET</b>  | 21 November<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘EU accession process of the Western Balkans’   | <b>33</b>  | <b>25</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>63</b>   |
| <b>FEMM</b>  | 21 November<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘The Istanbul Convention: combating violence against women at national and EU level’                              | <b>31</b>  | <b>15</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>17</b>   |
| <b>REGI</b>  | 22 November<br><u>Interparliamentary Committee Meeting:</u><br>‘The Current Key Topics Of Cohesion Policy And The Future Of 2020’  | <b>22</b>  | <b>13</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>33</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |  | <b>450</b> |           |           | <b>400</b>  |

**ANNEX III - National parliaments'<sup>11</sup> visits to the European Parliament (including videoconferences) 2017**

| <b>Date</b>   | <b>Country / Chamber</b>                  | <b>Committee / Other</b>   |
|---------------|---|--|
| 09/01/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | Reform of the EU emissions trading system  |
| 12/01/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | Mr Claude Bartolone, President of the French National Assembly with delegation (MPs, officials, members of cabinet)  |
| 17-19/01/2017 | UK - House of Lords                       | European Union Select Committee  |
| 25/01/2017    | UK - House of Lords                       | EU Financial Affairs Sub-Committee   |
| 25/01/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | Visit on the common agriculture policy   |
| 25/01/2017    | DK - Folketinget                          | Working visit of officials   |
| 31/01/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament                 | Standing Committee on Transport and Communication of the Norwegian Parliament  |
| 06/02/2017    | NL - Tweede Kamer                         | Member of the Dutch House of Representatives   |
| 06-07/02/2017 | BG - Narodno Sabranie                     | Visit of officials   |
| 08/02/2017    | IR - Oireachtas                           | Joint Committee on European Union Affairs  |
| 08-09/02/2017 | NO - Norwegian Parliament                 | Working visit by the Norwegian Parliament  |
| 27/02/2017    | UK - House of Commons                     | Welsh Committee  |
| 28/02/2017    | EE - Riigikogu                            | Meeting with COSAC CO-Chairs and Commissioner Avramopoulos   |
| 02-03/03/2017 | EE - Riigikogu                            | Visit Secretary General and officials  |
| 03/03/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament                 | Visit of the Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence  |
| 07/03/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | Working visit of officials   |
| 09-10/03/2017 | EE - Riigikogu                            | Visit of officials   |
| 20/03/2017    | DK - Folketinget and Icelandic Parliament | Working visit of Members and officials   |
| 23/03/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament                 | Presentation to the leaders of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health  |
| 23/03/2017    | DK - Folketinget                          | Meeting of Foreign Affairs Committee and European Affairs Committee MPs, including one party leader and several former ministers, with Mr Guy Verhofstadt, President of the ALDE group, European Parliament's point man for the Brexit negotiations process, and Ms Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament |
| 23/03/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | Officials meeting officials of the EP committee secretariats ENVI, ITRE  |
| 28/03/2017    | UK - House of Commons                     | House of Commons Exiting Committee   |
| 28-30/03/2017 | BG - Narodno Sabranie                     | Visit of officials   |
| 29/03/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | ECON secretariat.  |
| 29/03/2017    | UK - House of Lords                       | Dialogue on Brexit   |
| 30/03/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                  | Working visit of officials   |
| 20/4/2017     | AT - Austrian Parliament                  | DG COMM, DG INLO   |
| 25/04/2017    | UK - House of Commons                     | Select Committee   |
| 26/04/2017    | DK - Folketinget                          | EU Affairs Committee   |
| 26-28/04/2017 | BG - Narodno Sabranie                     | Visit of officials   |
| 03/05/2017    | UK - House of Commons                     | Select Committee   |

<sup>11</sup> EU national Parliaments; Norwegian Parliament; Nordic Council.

|               |  |   |
|---------------|--|---|
| 03/05/2017    | UK - House of Lords                                    | Dialogue on Brexit  |
| 04/05/2017    | UK - House of Lords                                    | Dialogue on Brexit  |
| 09/05/2017    | GR - Hellenic Parliament                               | Visit of the President of the Hellenic Parliament   |
| 30/05/2017    | IT - Camera dei Deputati                               | Committee on Xenophobia, Racism and Hate Phenomena (Jo Cox Committee) chaired by Laura Boldrini, Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and IT MEP Cécile Kashetu Kyenge, Co-Chair of the EP Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) (Videoconference) |
| 06/06/2017    | UK - House of Commons                                  | Study visit of officials  |
| 07/06/2017    | EE - Riigikogu   | Visit of the Chairmen from Foreign Affairs and National Defence Committee   |
| 07-08/06/2017 | EE - Riigikogu   | Visit of officials  |
| 07/06/2017    | DE - Bundestag   | Group of students from Humboldt University  |
| 08/06/2017    | ES - Cortes Generales                                  | Las Cortes Generales de España meeting with EP President, Mr Antonio Tajani   |
| 08/06/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament                              | Visit of employees of Statnett  |
| 09/06/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament                              | Interns of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  |
| 26/06/2017    | NL - Tweede Kamer                                      | EU Affairs Committee  |
| 26/06/2017    | NL - Tweede Kamer                                      | Visit of Sven Koopmans, rapporteur on 'European Electoral Law'  |
| 27-28/06/2017 | LT - Seimas  | Delegation of the Lithuanian Parliament   |
| 04-05/07/2017 | UK - House of Commons                                  | Working visit of officials  |
| 10/07/2017    | IR - Houses of the Oireachtas                          | Visit of officials  |
| 10/07/2017    | NL - Tweede Kamer                                      | Delegation of the Dutch House of Representatives  |
| 10-13/07/2017 | UK - House of Commons                                  | 1 Member and 1 official   |
| 12/07/2017    | UK - House of Lords                                    | Brexit  |
| 04/09/2017    | UK - House of Commons                                  | Visit of MP Hilary Benn   |
| 05/09/2017    | SV - Riksdag   | Committee on Industry and Trade   |
| 12-13/09/2017 | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Committee on European Affairs   |
| 21/09/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Study visit by officials  |
| 20/09/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Study visit by officials  |
| 22/09/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Study visit by officials  |
| 25/09/2017    | NL - Eerste Kamer                                      | EU Affairs Committee  |
| 25/09/2017    | UK - House of Commons<br>IE - Houses of the Oireachtas | EU Affairs Committee of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)   |
| 27/09/2017    | IT - Camera dei Deputati                               | Members of the Committee on and Italian MEPs of the PECH Committee (Videoconference)  |
| 28/09/2017    | DK - Folketinget                                       | Working visit by officials  |
| 04/10/2017    | FI - Eduskunta   | Committee for the future - 'Scientific foresight'   |
| 10-11/10/2017 | LT - Seimas  | Visit of Viktoras Pranckietis, Speaker, and Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament   |
| 11-12/10/2017 | RO - Senate  | MP Radu Oprea   |
| 12/10/2017    | IT - Senate  | Delegation of the Italian Senate  |
| 12/10/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Mr Damien Pichereau   |
| 13/10/2017    | SV - Riksdag   | Study visit from the Swedish Parliament Administration (EU Coordination Unit) to meet with i.e. EP committee staff.   |
| 20/10/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament                              | Presentation to employees of the Mission of Norway to the EU.   |
| 30/10/2017    | DK - Folketinget                                       | Committee clerks from our sectoral committees   |
| 06/11/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Working visit of officials  |
| 06-09/11/2017 | BG - Narodno Sabranie                                  | Visit of officials  |
| 07/11/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Bilateral meetings on the scrutiny procedure in the EP  |
| 08/11/2017    | UK - House of Lords                                    | The EU policy-making landscape  |
| 08/11/2017    | UK - House of Commons                                  | Committee on Exiting the European Union   |
| 16/11/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale                               | Working visit by officials  |

|               |                               |  |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 20/11/2017    | FI - Eduskunta                | Grand Committee  |
| 20/11/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale      | Working visit by officials   |
| 22/11/2017    | EE - Riigikogu                | The Secretary General of the Riigikogu                                     |
| 23/11/2017    | UK - House of Commons         | Visit to the INTA Committee  |
| 27/11/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale      | Working visit by officials   |
| 29/11/2017    | DK - Folketinget              | European Affairs Committee   |
| 01/12/2017    | NO - Norwegian Parliament     | Working visit by officials   |
| 04/12/2017    | NL - Tweede Kamer             | Standing Committee on Finances of the Dutch House of Representatives       |
| 04-05/12/2017 | IE - Houses of the Oireachtas | Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine                        |
| 05/12/2017    | FR - Assemblée nationale      | MPs and officials meeting with Mr Bernd Lange, Chair of the INTA Committee |
| 07-08/12/2017 | BG- Narodno Sabranie          | Visit of officials   |



## ANNEX IV - Early warning mechanism data

The Committee on Legal Affairs, which is responsible for issues in relation to compliance with the principle of subsidiarity within the European Parliament, has provided the following definitions for submissions from national Parliaments:

- **'Reasoned opinions'** are submissions which indicate the non-compliance of a draft legislative act with the principle of subsidiarity and have been communicated to the European Parliament within the eight week deadline referred to in Article 6 of Protocol No 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon.
- **'Contributions'** indicate any other submissions which do not fulfil the criteria listed above for a reasoned opinion.

| <b>Submissions received by national Parliaments in 2017</b> |                           |                          |                      |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
|   |                           | <b>Reasoned opinions</b> | <b>Contributions</b> |
| <b>Member State</b>   | <b>Parliament/Chamber</b> | <b>2017</b>              | <b>2017</b>          |
| Austria   | Nationalrat               | 0                        | 0                    |
| Austria   | Bundesrat                 | 6                        | 9                    |
| Belgium   | Chambre des Représentants | 0                        | 3                    |
| Belgium   | Sénat                     | 0                        | 0                    |
| Bulgaria  | Narodno Sabranie          | 0                        | 0                    |
| Croatia   | Hrvatski Sabor            | 0                        | 2                    |
| Cyprus  | Vouli ton Antiprosópon    | 0                        | 4                    |
| Czech Republic  | Poslanecká sněmovna       | 1                        | 18                   |
| Czech Republic  | Senát                     | 1                        | 45                   |
| Denmark   | Folketinget               | 0                        | 8                    |
| Estonia   | Riigikogu                 | 0                        | 0                    |
| Finland   | Eduskunta                 | 0                        | 0                    |
| France  | Assemblée Nationale       | 2                        | 0                    |
| France  | Sénat                     | 7                        | 19                   |
| Germany   | Bundestag                 | 6                        | 4                    |
| Germany   | Bundesrat                 | 3                        | 28                   |
| Greece  | Vouli ton Ellinon         | 0                        | 2                    |
| Hungary   | Országgyűlés              | 2                        | 0                    |
| Ireland   | Houses of Oireachtas      | 2                        | 1                    |
| Italy   | Camera dei deputati       | 0                        | 24                   |
| Italy   | Senato                    | 1                        | 42                   |
| Lithuania   | Seimas                    | 0                        | 0                    |
| Luxembourg  | Chambre des Députés       | 0                        | 0                    |

|                 |                          |           |            |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Latvia          | Saeima                   | 0         | 0          |
| Malta           | Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti | 0         | 0          |
| The Netherlands | Tweede Kamer             | 2         | 6          |
| The Netherlands | Eerste Kamer             | 2         | 2          |
| Poland          | Sejm                     | 2         | 1          |
| Poland          | Senat                    | 4         | 5          |
| Portugal        | Assembleia da República  | 0         | 64         |
| Romania         | Camera Deputaţilor       | 1         | 10         |
| Romania         | Senat                    | 2         | 24         |
| Spain           | Cortes                   | 1         | 46         |
| Sweden          | Riksdagen                | 4         | 0          |
| Slovenia        | Državni Zbor             | 0         | 0          |
| Slovenia        | Državni Svet             | 0         | 0          |
| Slovakia        | Národná rada             | 0         | 3          |
| United Kingdom  | House of Commons         | 0         | 2          |
| United Kingdom  | House of Lords           | 0         | 0          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    |                          | <b>49</b> | <b>372</b> |

This table only lists national Parliaments' documents that were sent in response to draft legislative acts falling under Protocol 2 of the Lisbon Treaty. It does not include documents that were sent in reaction to non-legislative consultation documents, Green Papers or White Papers (the so-called 'Informal Political Dialogue').

## **ANNEX V - European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)**

### **A. Issues on which political bodies and administrative services of the European Parliament consulted the ECPRD network in 2017 through comparative requests on:**

- 3525 Best practices and innovative actions to promote gender equality in the Parliaments' administration
- 3488 Allowances to members of national Parliaments
- 3458 Organisation of hearings in Parliaments
- 3436 Electronic signature in the legislative cycle
- 3368 Waste sorting in the offices of Parliaments

### **The European Parliament provided replies to following requests from other ECPRD Parliaments:**

- 3597 Independent impact assessment (ex-ante) of draft legislation: methods, costs and means
- 3606 Youth Programmes in Parliaments
- 3568 Online communication strategy
- 3563 Health - medical services department (doctors) in Parliament
- 3554 IT resources at the Parliament
- 3578 Voting devices used in Parliaments
- 3549 Translation service in the Parliament
- 3511 Crèche (Kindergarten) in parliamentary facilities
- 3514 IT Centralization in Parliaments: Operating System Updates and Security Patches
- 3528 Setting up the Committee on petitions in parliaments
- 3505 Parliamentary activities and UN Sustainable Development Agenda
- 3444 Questionnaire for the ECPRD Seminar on 'Parliaments dealing with financial markets' issues' (Athens, 5-6 October 2017)
- 3487 Sharing research papers
- 3476 User satisfaction survey
- 3453 Libraries and Research Services
- 3452 Inclusive language in the drafting of normative acts
- 3445 Use MPs' private cars for parliamentary purposes
- 3442 Diplomatic passports for MPs
- 3402 MPs' personal data sheet
- 3421 Museum of Parliament
- 3401 Parliamentary assemblies budget growth
- 3376 Libraries, research and documentation services in Parliaments: experiences, trends and perspectives (Survey for the ECPRD Seminar Rome on 8-9 June 2017)
- 3358 Questionnaire on the material situation of deputies
- 3383 Practice of using preambles in texts of legal acts
- 3361 Participation of Parliaments in foreign policy
- 3352 Questionnaire for the ECPRD Seminar 'Parliaments' legitimacy and the new supervisory instruments'
- 3372 Foresight activities in Parliaments
- 3354 Staff in Parliamentary libraries, research services, records management units and archives

- 3344 Implementation in Parliaments of the EU-Regulation 2016/679 on the Protection of Personal Information
- 3326 How do Parliaments Consult with Citizens and Stakeholders?
- 3314 Parliamentary Research Services

## B. ECPRD seminars and statutory meetings in 2017

| <b>Seminars</b>  |                          |                 |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Seminar ‘Parliaments’ legitimacy and the new supervisory instruments’ (Area of Interest Parliamentary Practice and Procedure)  | Lisbon                   | 8-9 May         |
| Seminar ‘Libraries, research and documentation services: experiences, tendencies and perspectives in comparison’ (Area of Interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives)                                      | Rome, Senate and Chamber | 8-9 June        |
| Seminar ‘The implications of budgetary pressures on investment in ICT services in Parliaments’ (Area of Interest ICT in Parliaments)   | Valetta                  | 14-15 September |
| Seminar ‘The future of parliamentary research services and libraries in an area of rapid change: Optimising quality, service, delivery and relevance’ (Area of Interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives) | Brussels, EP             | 21-22 September |
| Seminar ‘Parliaments dealing with financial markets’ issues’ (Area of Interest Economic and Budgetary Affairs)   | Athens                   | 5-6 October     |
| <b>Statutory Meetings</b>  |                          |                 |
| Meeting of Executive Committee   | Vienna                   | 9-10 March      |
| Meeting of Executive Committee   | Stockholm                | 28-29 September |
| Annual Conference of Correspondents<br>40 Years of ECPRD   | Strasbourg, EP and PACE  | 19-21 October   |

## C. Spotlight on Parliaments in Europe

- Nr 14 - Member States: No special constitutional provisions for the withdrawal from the EU
- Nr 15 Recruitment of family members as parliamentary assistants
- Nr 16 Spreading hate speech through social networks
- Nr 17 Measures to reduce the consumption of plastic bags and disposable tableware
- Nr 18 Criminal penalties in EU Member States’ legislation on irregular entry and stay

# NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF THE EU MEMBER STATES

March 2018



directly elected



indirectly elected / appointed / other

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  <b>Belgique/België/<br/>Belgien</b><br>BELGIUM<br>Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/ Chambre des représentants/ Abgeordneten-kammer<br>150 <br>Senaat/ Sénat/ Senat<br>60  |  <b>България</b><br>BULGARIA<br>Народно събрание (Narodno sabranie)<br>240 <br>  |  <b>Česká republika</b><br>CZECH REPUBLIC<br>Poslanecká sněmovna<br>200 <br>Senát<br>81   |  <b>Danmark</b><br>DENMARK<br>Folketinget<br>179   |
|  <b>Deutschland</b><br>GERMANY<br>Deutscher Bundestag<br>709 <br>Bundesrat<br>69    |  <b>Eesti</b><br>ESTONIA<br>Riigikogu<br>101   |  <b>Éire/Ireland</b><br>IRELAND<br>Dáil Éireann<br>158 <br>Seanad Éireann<br>60           |  <b>Ελλάδα</b><br>GREECE<br>Βουλή των Ελλήνων (Vouli ton Ellinon)<br>300   |
|  <b>España</b><br>SPAIN<br>Congreso de los Diputados<br>350 <br>Senado<br>208 <br>58  |  <b>France</b><br>FRANCE<br>Assemblée nationale<br>577 <br>Sénat<br>348  |  <b>Hrvatska</b><br>CROATIA<br>Hrvatski sabor<br>151    |  <b>Italia</b><br>ITALY<br>Camera dei Deputati<br>630 <br>Senato della Repubblica<br>315 <br>5  |
|  <b>Κύπρος</b><br>CYPRUS<br>Βουλή των Αντιπροσώπων (Vouli ton Antiprosopon)<br>56    |  <b>Latvija</b><br>LATVIA<br>Saeima<br>100   |  <b>Lietuva</b><br>LITHUANIA<br>Seimas<br>141    |  <b>Luxembourg</b><br>LUXEMBOURG<br>Chambre des Députés<br>60    |
|  <b>Magyarország</b><br>HUNGARY<br>Országgyűlés<br>199   |  <b>Malta</b><br>MALTA<br>Il-Kamra Tad-Deputati<br>67    |  <b>Nederland</b><br>THE NETHERLANDS<br>Tweede Kamer<br>150 <br>Eerste Kamer<br>75  |  <b>Österreich</b><br>AUSTRIA<br>Nationalrat<br>183 <br>Bundesrat<br>61   |
|  <b>Polska</b><br>POLAND<br>Sejm<br>460 <br>Senat<br>100    |  <b>Portugal</b><br>PORTUGAL<br>Assembleia da República<br>230   |  <b>România</b><br>ROMANIA<br>Camera Deputatilor<br>329 <br>Senat<br>136            |  <b>Slovenija</b><br>SLOVENIA<br>Državni zbor<br>90 <br>Državni svet<br>40    |
|  <b>Slovensko</b><br>SLOVAKIA<br>Národná Rada<br>150   |  <b>Suomi/ Finland</b><br>FINLAND<br>Eduskunta<br>200    |  <b>Sverige</b><br>SWEDEN<br>Riksdagen<br>349    |  <b>United Kingdom</b><br>UNITED KINGDOM<br>House of Commons<br>650 <br>House of Lords<br>785   |



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