

# RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND EU NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

EN



## ANNUAL REPORT 2020



European Parliament

# PARLIAMENTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



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



705 seats\*



Citizens are directly represented at Union 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.



Council of the European Union

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 (COSAC) 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.

\* As from 1 February 2020, the European Parliament has 705 seats following UK's withdrawal from the EU on 31 January 2020.

**DIRECTORATE FOR RELATIONS  
WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

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

This annual activity report of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments gives an overview of all activities and developments in interparliamentary cooperation with national Parliaments in 2020. This cooperation involved 39 national Parliaments and Chambers across the 27 Member States and the European Parliament.

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

In January 2020, the European Parliament was eager to begin its first year of the new legislative term following the 2019 European elections. It was looking ahead and ready to face a multitude of challenges, ranging from planning the budget for the next seven years and designing the EU's future relationship with the UK after Brexit, to developing a sustainable environmental policy and forging relationships with partners around the world.



Ms Dita Charanzová, EP Vice-President and Ms Roberta Metsola, EP First Vice-President, EP premises in Brussels © European Union 2021 – EP/Alain ROLLAND

At that time, no one could have imagined what lay ahead: a pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus that would affect every country around the globe; people hit hard by health and human tragedies, as well as the economic and social crises provoked by lockdowns; the sanitary and health measures necessary to fight the virus. We could not have imagined the degree to which our daily lives, our freedom and our behaviour would change in the space of only a few weeks.

As of March 2020, every Parliament had to react quickly to the new reality of the pandemic. They needed to ensure the health and safety of their Members and staff, as well as the continuity of core functions such as legislation and budgetary decision-making. Interparliamentary networking and the exchange of practices on how to deal with the new situation in terms of both parliamentary and administrative procedures have been efficient and valuable tools in managing the crisis in Parliaments.

Interparliamentary activities were only put on hold at the very beginning of the pandemic. The Speakers' Conference was cancelled, and the Croatian Presidency had to face unprecedented challenges, but brought interparliamentary meetings back on track with the first remotely organised COSAC Chairpersons' meeting in June 2020 and an additional Chairpersons' meeting with Michel Barnier, Chief Negotiator of the EU-UK Trade Agreement. During the German Presidency, interparliamentary activities got back up to speed, with all usual meetings taking place remotely and additional COSAC Chairpersons' meetings even being held with Commissioners.

The European Parliament also had to adapt very quickly to new ways of working and deployed considerable logistical resources to ensure parliamentary (and interparliamentary) business continuity. The European Parliament resumed interparliamentary activities with the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group, this time organised remotely. This event was followed by several remote Interparliamentary Committee Meetings, including the very first on the evaluation of Eurojust and a High-level Conference on Migration and Asylum, organised by the European Parliament together with the Presidency Parliament in cooperation with the other two Parliaments of the Trio Presidency.



The European Parliament cooperated even more closely with the Presidency Parliaments with a view to adapting meeting formats and agendas to the requirements of remote meetings. The commitment and determination of both the Croatian and German Presidencies, and the European Parliament, including all staff, allowed for a return to the usual high-quality and ambitious programme of interparliamentary activities, despite the extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

The EU institutions have been robust and resilient in this crisis. European decision-making at all levels was secured and results were delivered. Decisions on the future EU budget and EU recovery financing have been taken, including provisions for respect for the rule of law, and a viable system of own resources has been established for the future. These topics have also been discussed intensively at interparliamentary meetings.

The Conference on the Future of Europe was another topic debated regularly at interparliamentary meetings; it will certainly be at the core of interparliamentary activities and debates in 2021. National Parliaments will play a key role in the debate on shaping Europe's future.

We welcome enhanced interparliamentary cooperation on issues linked to the external action of the EU. The European Parliament lays emphasis on monitoring the impact of the crisis on democratic institutions across the world. We also look forward to relaunching our traditional transatlantic partnership, to assuming a greater role as global player on the international stage, especially in neighbouring regions, and to developing a new fruitful relationship and enhancing cooperation with the UK Parliament.

2020 has fundamentally changed our way of working and we will need to draw on our experiences during this exceptional year. Overall, technology has worked well and we have enhanced our experience with virtual working methods. However, we feel strongly that interparliamentary relations are largely based on personal relationships and that interparliamentary meetings cannot be replaced by videoconferencing. Meetings in person have a different dynamic and meaning, and we are looking forward to meeting face-to-face again, as soon as this is possible. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that remote meetings may remain in use as an additional meeting format, whenever they prove useful.

We would like to thank Ms Mairead McGuinness, former First Vice-President, for her dedication and input to the European Parliament's relations with national Parliaments up until her election to the European Commission in September 2020.

The European Parliament and EU national Parliaments remain key partners in shaping Europe's future. We are committed to continuing our close cooperation in all areas of common interest and to ensuring the proper functioning of parliamentary democracy at all levels, in Europe and beyond.



Roberta Metsola  
First Vice-President



Dita Charanzová  
Vice-President

# I. THE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

The year 2020 began like any other year, in terms of interparliamentary activities. The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) Chairpersons' meeting took place in January 2020 in Zagreb, opening the cycle of events planned by the Croatian Presidency. In February 2020, the European Parliament welcomed to its premises in Brussels more than 100 parliamentarians from different Member States within the framework of European Parliamentary Week. The Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy in Zagreb (2-4 March) was the last interparliamentary meeting to take place in physical format in 2020.

Very soon after that meeting, the COVID-19 situation began to worsen dramatically in Europe, and exceptional measures were taken everywhere to contain the spread of the virus. In the European Parliament, President David Sassoli announced on 2 March that over 130 events scheduled to take place on the European Parliament's premises, and due to be attended by between 6 000 and 7 000 participants, would be cancelled. The European Parliament would also close its doors to visitors.

The increase in infections was rapid and the epidemic became global. The President's decision not to allow events with external visitors was extended in the following months until the end of 2020. Events of all kinds were cancelled, visits and travel suspended, and staff (and occasionally Members) were asked to work from home<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, all face-to-face interparliamentary meetings organised by the European Parliament between March and December 2020 were either cancelled, postponed or replaced by remote meetings.

Similarly, the EU Speakers' Conference scheduled to take place in Helsinki in May 2020 was cancelled. The meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on Europol, also scheduled for March 2020, was replaced by a written, electronic exchange of information.

However, parliamentary work continued. Although remote sessions remained the exception rather than the rule for national Parliaments, the necessary adjustments were made to enable Members to scrutinise and vote on new laws, many of which related to the health emergency.<sup>2</sup> The European Parliament adopted a revised calendar of sessions, the first of which to deal with urgent legislative issues. MEPs could either be physically present or connected via videoconference. Measures were also put in place to allow voting by email. Social distancing measures applied within the Chamber.<sup>3</sup>

The European Parliament, as well as both the Croatian and German Council Presidencies, adapted their programmes as much as possible. The organisation of interparliamentary events continued at quite an intense pace, especially during the second half of 2020. Business continuity was achieved by adapting meeting formats, agendas and procedures. Written procedures were

1 [https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/226105/WEB\\_No.27\\_National\\_Parliaments\\_procedures\\_following\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/226105/WEB_No.27_National_Parliaments_procedures_following_COVID-19.pdf)

2 Also because of the COVID-19 epidemic, for the first time, a national Parliament met in the European Parliament's hemicycle: the 150 Members of the Belgian Parliament could not meet in their usual hemicycle while respecting social distancing measures. The debate on and ratification of the new government agreement took place in the autumn of 2020 in the premises of the European Parliament.

3 [https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/226110/No.32\\_State\\_of\\_COVID-19\\_measures\\_in\\_Parliaments.pdf](https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/226110/No.32_State_of_COVID-19_measures_in_Parliaments.pdf)

used, and meetings became virtual, shorter and more numerous. The adoption of political texts, which are usually the subject of intense negotiation during meetings, was either abandoned or replaced by other procedures. Whereas cooperation within the framework of COSAC continued remotely, some jointly-agreed flexibility was required regarding the Rules of Procedure, which do not provide for such exceptional circumstances. For example, the Croatian Presidency decided to replace the COSAC plenary meeting with an extraordinary Chairpersons' meeting, and the German Presidency held a fully 'Virtual COSAC' to conclude its Presidency programme. In both cases, limited interpretation was provided owing to the technical limitations of remote meetings, and no texts were adopted. In some cases, political texts were replaced by Conclusions by the Chairs (Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy) or a letter of the Presidency, open for signatures (COSAC).

The political circumstances in 2020 generated more need for urgent debates. Within the frameworks of both COSAC and the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (IPC CFSP/CSDP), initiatives were taken by the German Presidency to add 'urgency debates' (or '*Aktuelle Stunde*' in the Virtual COSAC) to the agenda. The objective was to exchange views more spontaneously in continuously changing political circumstances. Topics often related to EU external policies. This is a trend that may continue.

The European Parliament reinitiated the organisation of interparliamentary activities with the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group, organised remotely in September 2020. This meeting was followed by four remote Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICMs), including the first ICM on the evaluation of Eurojust and a virtual High-level Conference on Migration and Asylum, co-organised by the Presidency Parliament (Germany) in cooperation with the other two Parliaments of the Presidency Trio (Portugal and Slovenia) in November in Brussels.



The same number of ICMs took place as in 2019. This was already slightly lower than usual due to the European elections. It is also worth noting that there was an increase in participation of MPs from national Parliaments in 2020, most likely due to the new remote attendance facilities. Travel restrictions meant that very few bilateral meetings were organised early in 2020, and all bilateral meetings went online after March 2020.

The number of submissions under Protocols No 1 and No 2 was also slightly lower than in a normal legislative year, but still increased from 2019. In several cases, the need to respond quickly to the pandemic meant that the 8-week period reserved for the subsidiarity check could not be respected, and processing of legislative proposals was fast-tracked.

The pandemic has also marked a digital leap forward, not only technically, but also in terms of people's behaviour and attitudes. It has accelerated the availability of solutions for remote meetings and increased the readiness of parliamentarians and high-level speakers to participate remotely. Meetings have also become shorter, and exchanges more focused. Some of these positive experiences may be maintained in the future and could lead to more ad hoc dialogues, for example between rapporteurs in the European Parliament and national Parliaments, or between MEPs and Members of national Parliaments with similar institutional roles, for example Committee Chairs sharing the same portfolios, or Vice-Presidents.

Beside this development at political level, the health crisis has also resulted in increased online and electronic (written) exchange of information between Parliaments, in particular within the framework of the ECPRD and IPEX networks<sup>4</sup>.

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4 European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) and Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX).

## II. KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND MAIN TOPICS ON THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY AGENDA IN 2020

### a. Political framework

The work of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments has been conducted under the political leadership and guidance of Mr David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, Ms Mairead McGuinness, as First Vice-President, together with Vice-President Ms Dita Charanzová, responsible for relations with national Parliaments, and Mr Antonio Tajani, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) and of the Conference of Committee Chairs. As of mid-November 2020, Ms Roberta Metsola was elected First Vice-President of the European Parliament and replaced Ms McGuinness, who became European Commissioner for financial services, financial stability and Capital Markets Union.

2020, the first full year of this legislative term, was set to be a politically challenging year even without the pandemic. Topics to be covered were highly important, linked to the European Council Strategic Agenda and the new Commission's priorities, endorsed by the European Parliament when it confirmed the new Commission late in 2019. Agreement on the MFF with all the legislation linked to it, conclusion of the new partnership between the EU and the UK, the European Green Deal and the digital agenda, as well as the launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe, were already due to figure on the agendas of interparliamentary meetings. The strengthening of the EU's role as a global actor was another important topic set for discussion in many interparliamentary forums.

As of March 2020, the pandemic became an inevitable additional topic in many meetings. Parliaments exchanged their views and experiences on measures to combat the spread of the virus and how to maintain the core functions of Parliaments and parliamentary work during the difficult times brought on by the pandemic.

The rule of law in the EU was another topic on which intensive discussions took place in 2020. This debate was in part linked to the MFF and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, created to mitigate the long-term social and economic effects of the pandemic. Security and migratory challenges were also heavily aggravated by the crisis and were discussed during interparliamentary meetings and exchanges.



Videoconference meeting of the EP Conference of Presidents and Mr David Sassoli, EP President, with Mr Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the Bundestag, in May 2020 © European Union 2020 – EP/Daina LE LARDIC

## **b. Cross-cutting topics**

Traditionally, interparliamentary cooperation focuses on political and institutional issues and discussions. The Early Warning System, linking national Parliaments to the EU legislative process through the subsidiarity check, has sparked an extensive legislative dialogue that goes well beyond subsidiarity. During recent years, attention has also been given to parliamentary scrutiny and oversight of European executive action and agencies, in particular in the field of justice and home affairs. Parliamentary cooperation is also developing in the field of the EU's external policies, mainly in the framework of CFSP/CSDP, but also in parliamentary diplomacy, democracy support and cooperation in multilateral and even global forums, to defend European values and interests. In 2020, the following recurrent topics were raised in several interparliamentary forums and bilateral discussions:

### **i. The Conference on the Future of Europe**

As early as December 2019, the Commission and the European Parliament proposed to organise a Conference in order to reflect on the role of the EU in a constantly changing international environment and on the adaptations needed to face the realities of the 21st century. The pandemic served to highlight more clearly than ever the urgent need for self-reflection and for discussion on EU reform and renewal.

The European Parliament adopted two resolutions in 2020, in January and in June, on the Conference on the Future of Europe<sup>5</sup>. MEPs asked the Council to be open to Conference-driven reforms, including Treaty changes. The European Parliament made a commitment to start the Conference as soon as possible, and was ready to do so in 2020. MEPs stressed that the health crisis opened more questions for reflection: greater powers for the Union to act in the case of cross-border health threats; new instruments to ensure that in future the Union can act without delay in case of crisis to coordinate, organise solidarity or react to attacks on fundamental rights.

Since 2019, national Parliaments have demonstrated a strong will to be involved in the Conference, and this was underlined on several occasions in 2020, especially in the framework of COSAC. Naturally, national Parliaments have a crucial role to play, both in connecting with citizens, together with the European Parliament, but also formally in the case of Treaty changes. The German Presidency was an advocate of strong national Parliament participation. Both the Croatian and German Presidencies initiated Presidency letters to the EU institutions, co-signed by the majority of the Chairs of the national Parliament delegations. The European Parliament has also expressed its desire for appropriate involvement of national Parliaments and for the Conference to have a genuine parliamentary dimension.

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<sup>5</sup> European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe (texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0010); European Parliament resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European Parliament's position on the Conference on the Future of Europe (texts adopted, P9\_TA(2020)0153).

## **ii. The rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights**

The Commission adopted the rule of law framework to address developments in some EU countries that constitute systemic threats to the rule of law. As respect for the rule of law became a cross-cutting priority in all EU policies, this was also reflected in various interparliamentary debates, including on a bilateral basis.

A special meeting of COSAC was organised to discuss the rule of law with Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová and Commissioner Didier Reynders. Parliamentarians wished to review the topic regularly, for example in the context of the Commission's Annual Rule of Law Report.

On 10 November, Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) organised an ICM on 'The first Annual Rule of Law Report by the Commission and the role of national Parliaments', which enabled parliamentarians to share their experiences on the role of their national Parliaments. The impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights was also discussed, with a particular focus on the scrutiny exercised by national Parliaments during this period.

## **iii. The negotiation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement**

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, and until the end of 2020 a transition period provided for the UK to remain part of the EU's single market and customs union while negotiations on future relations were ongoing. The agreement on future EU-UK relations was only concluded on 24 December 2020. EU-UK relations, and more specifically the negotiation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, were a feature of interparliamentary discussions during the whole of 2020.

The COSAC Chairs had two special meetings with EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier, in June and September 2020. Mr Barnier briefed COSAC Chairs on the latest developments, on both occasions with the participation of the Chair of the European Parliament's UK Coordination Group, Mr David McAllister. In the framework of the 7th meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol, in September 2020, discussion was held about the Brexit-related challenges in view of the future role of Europol and the non-negotiable EU standards in future Europol-UK cooperation. Brexit-related challenges concerning the fight against terrorism and cross-border organised crime were also discussed in the ICM on the evaluation of Eurojust's activities in December 2020.

The UK Parliament/Chambers participated in interparliamentary activities in 2020 (from February on) as third country observers or special guests, in accordance with the rules of the different interparliamentary conferences. The Committees of the European Parliament occasionally invited representatives of the UK Parliament, when appropriate. Many bilateral exchanges with the UK Parliament continued in 2020, especially with the House of Lords.

#### **iv. The EU budget and the recovery plan**

The long-term financial plan for the next seven years, the MFF 2021-2027, was an important topic to be settled in 2020, in addition to the recovery plan for Europe, in response to the health crisis and its heavy impact on the European economy. Interparliamentary debates and exchanges devoted significant time to the topic, which was high on the agenda of both Presidencies in 2020. The Croatian Presidency's letter, co-signed by many COSAC Chairs, called on the EU institutions to adopt the MFF and the recovery plan for Europe in a timely manner.

The majority of Parliaments welcomed the European Council's historic agreement on 21 July 2020 on the MFF and the recovery plan. The decision on the new own resources system had to be ratified by most national Parliaments. The European Parliament used every opportunity during the interparliamentary exchanges in 2020 to stress the urgent need for a smooth ratification process in the Member States, while also defending its own position not to reduce the MFF because of the recovery facility.

Debates at the 15th Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU (IPC SECG), in October 2020, concentrated on the economic consequences of the crisis. The general plea of the Parliaments in these exchanges was that national Parliaments should be involved in establishing and adopting the recovery and resilience plans, not only in scrutinising them. The same message also dominated the COSAC debates.

#### **v. The green and digital transitions**

The green and digital transitions in a changing world are a priority of the Commission headed by President Ursula von der Leyen. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the EU's digital and green goals even more important and showed that digital and green transformations can happen at great speed. The European Parliament is a strong supporter of these EU priorities and has advocated for their adequate financing, which is indispensable to their success.

In February 2020, the IPC SECG also focused on climate change and the role that EU economic, budgetary and social policies can play in this regard. All keynote speakers stressed the importance of immediate action in the fight against climate.

Mr Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the Commission for the European Green Deal, addressed the COSAC Chairpersons in September 2020 and elaborated on the topic and the related challenges. He stressed the importance of the EU's recovery phase and the crucial role of national Parliaments, both with regard to translating the European Council's decisions into concrete measures, requiring ratification in national Parliaments, and in establishing national programmes. He further stressed the importance of assuring adequate budget for a green, resilient and future-proof economy and society.



## **vi. The role of the EU in the world: international relations and multilateralism – migration and asylum**

The need to strengthen the EU as a global player became even more clear to see in 2020, as it faced the multiple and many-faceted challenges of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, tackling climate change, promoting digital transformation, strengthening common security policy and the rules-based multilateral system, and fighting any decline in democratic and human rights standards.

In the framework of IPC CFSP/CSDP, the exchanges focused on the EU's global leadership in an increasingly complex external environment. The urgent need for strategic coordination and more united, proactive external action was highlighted, and particular attention was given to the post-election situation in Belarus.

For the first time, the European Parliament organised a High-Level Conference on Migration and Asylum in November 2020, together with the German Bundestag. This event was supposed to be organised in Brussels and had been planned as part of the Presidency Trio programme of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Parliaments. The High-Level Conference included keynote speeches from the President of the European Parliament, Mr David Sassoli, the President of the European Commission, Ms Ursula von der Leyen, and the Presidents of the German Bundestag, the Portuguese Assembleia da República and the Slovenian Državni zbor.

The COSAC agendas also devoted significant time to discussing external policies, including the role of the EU in Africa and the EU-US relationship, particularly in view of the new US Administration. Many parliamentarians suggested that the European Parliament and EU national Parliaments enhance collaboration and dialogue with their American and African counterparts in the near future. At the same time, it was pointed out that it was equally important to invest in strengthening the EU's own strategic autonomy and its ability to act effectively in the future.

# 1. INSTITUTIONAL INTERPARLIAMENTARY BODIES

## 1.1 Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC)

*COSAC, or 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. A Presidential Troika, of which the European Parliament is a permanent member, supports it. The Presidency relies 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.ipex.eu](http://www.ipex.eu)*



The COSAC Chairpersons' meeting in Zagreb on 20-21 January 2020, the first interparliamentary event in 2020 and the first of the Croatian Presidency, was the only COSAC event that took place in 2020 on-site, with physical presence and as initially planned. It was also the last meeting in which the UK participated as an EU Member State.

The meeting focussed on the Croatian Presidency's priorities: 'a Europe that develops, connects, protects and influences'. The debate among parliamentarians extended to various issues, including enlargement, migration, the multiannual financial framework and the Conference on the Future of Europe, which was meant to be the focus of the plenary meeting in May 2020. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Croatian Presidency focused on the new institutional term of office (new European Parliament and new Commission) and aimed to analyse the ways in which Parliaments conduct their oversight roles and how they cooperate with the various EU bodies. This was the subject of the COSAC bi-annual report prepared by the Croatian Presidency.

In March 2020, it became clear that the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic would not allow the Croatian Parliament to hold the LXIII COSAC Plenary meeting in Zagreb, and the meeting was cancelled. However, the Croatian Presidency, which also suffered from a strong earthquake that hit Zagreb and the Croatian Parliament's premises on 22 March 2020, organised an extraordinary meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons, which took place remotely on 16 June 2020, replacing the COSAC Plenary. This meeting focused, on the one hand, on the EU response to the coronavirus outbreak and the EU budget; and on the other, on the Conference on the Future of Europe.



Family photo, COSAC Chairpersons' meeting, Zagreb, 20-21 January 2020 © Croatian Presidency

The German Presidency inevitably retained the focus on the pandemic and the EU's economic recovery, but also paid the necessary attention to the EU's future relationship with the UK, the European Green Deal, the digital transformation and digital sovereignty, migration issues, the rule of law and foreign policy issues. The German Bundestag and Bundesrat directed the COSAC discussion mainly on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and lessons learned, but also continued the interparliamentary reflection on the future of the EU. In addition, some exchanges were dedicated to external policy topics, namely transatlantic relations and the EU's relations with Africa. The meetings organised during the German Presidency took place with remote participation, both the Chairpersons meeting on 14 September and the 'Virtual COSAC' conference on 30 November and 1 December 2020. The German Presidency confirmed its intention, in agreement with the COSAC Parliaments, to extend invitations for COSAC events to third countries only when the topics to be discussed concerned those countries. At the same time, many parliamentarians expressed a general willingness for COSAC to develop contacts and organise ad hoc meetings with third country Parliaments such as those of the US and African countries.



Virtual COSAC Conference, 30 November - 1 December 2020, hosted in Berlin © German Presidency

Due to the circumstances and the obvious difficulties in negotiating a political text remotely, neither the Croatian nor the German Presidency put forward a COSAC Contribution for adoption. However, both Presidencies addressed letters to the Presidents of the three institutions on the subject of the Conference on the Future of Europe, stressing the importance of moving swiftly towards setting this up and of ensuring a strong role for national Parliaments.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the functioning of COSAC, but overall both the Croatian and the German Presidencies managed very successfully, with the support of the Presidential Troika and the European Parliament, to keep the process going and to guarantee business continuity by adapting their working methods to the situation. This approach also guaranteed the adoption of the two COSAC bi-annual reports in 2020.

In addition, for the first time, a considerable number of additional meetings were organised remotely. Several informal exchanges of views of the COSAC Chairs took place via videoconference with high-level speakers (with the EU-UK Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier on Brexit; with Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová and Commissioner Didier Reynders on the rule of law; and with Commission Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager on European industrial strategy and competition). Also, thanks in part to the flexibility of remote meetings, the preparatory Presidential Troika meetings could be organised well in advance of the main COSAC meetings, rather than just on the evening before. This enabled Troika members to have a deeper exchange regarding decisions that had to be taken by the Presidency, with a longer time frame. In both cases – the informal exchanges with high-level speakers and the separate (or additional) Presidential Troika meetings – it remains to be seen whether they will become permanent features of COSAC in the future.

See Annex I for the COSAC events and meetings.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- COSAC exchanges increased in number in 2020, as several additional informal exchanges of views with high-level speakers (including EU Commissioners and the Chief Negotiator) were organised via videoconference on topical issues.
- While the COSAC Parliaments confirmed their intention to extend invitations for events to third countries only when the agenda topics concerned those countries, parliamentarians did welcome the fact that COSAC develops contacts and organises ad hoc meetings with third country Parliaments.
- Despite the difficulties of this year linked to the pandemic, the European Parliament delegation managed to maintain close relations with the EU Council Presidency Parliaments and cooperation within the Presidential Troika.

## 1.2 Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments (EUSC)

*The Stockholm Guidelines for the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments were adopted in 2010. They provide for one annual meeting of the Speakers, organised by the Member State holding the second semester Presidency in a given year, to take place during the spring Presidency of the following year. This Conference adopts non-binding Presidency conclusions. It also has the task of overseeing the coordination of interparliamentary EU activities.*

*The EUSC agenda is prepared by the Meeting of the Secretaries-General of the EU Parliaments. See [www.jpex.eu](http://www.jpex.eu)*

The EU Speakers Conference (EUSC), scheduled to be held in Helsinki, Finland, in May 2020, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Organising the conference remotely was not a viable option. The EUSC is, by its very nature, a high-level networking event. In addition, the technical facilities needed to host a multilingual conference were not up and running in the spring of 2020.

However, a large amount of background work was accomplished to fulfil the mandate of the previous EUSC.

The Vienna EUSC of April 2019 called on the Finnish Presidency to organise a working group with a view to adapting the Lisbon Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation in the EU to the existing conditions. The Lisbon Guidelines, which provide a general framework for interparliamentary cooperation, were approved in 2008 before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. By 2019, they had become outdated and did not reflect developments in interparliamentary cooperation that had taken place since then.

The working group was invited to prepare a report for the EU Speakers Conference in Helsinki in 2020 on the following subjects:

- Technical adaptation of the Guidelines to existing conditions, including more stringent use of references to the Treaties and a linguistic review of the Guidelines as a whole;
- Inclusion of new conference formats in the Guidelines, such as the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union, the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, and the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol;
- Better use of modern means of communication to facilitate interparliamentary cooperation.

The EUSC also asked the Finnish Presidency to prepare, in a suitable manner, a common understanding on the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting to be organised by the European Parliament on the evaluation of Eurojust, so that the Conference of Speakers in Helsinki would be able to reach conclusions on these matters.

The Finnish Presidency organised a technical working group at staff level, and submitted two draft documents to the Meeting of the Secretaries-General in January 2020: the draft updated Guidelines and a document on modern means of communication. The Presidency also prepared a separate document on the ICM on the evaluation of Eurojust.

The Vienna mandate was carefully followed, with a technical and linguistic draft update of the Guidelines. The post-Lisbon developments, in particular new interparliamentary conferences and joint scrutiny and evaluation in justice and home affairs, are recorded in a coherent manner. The structure of the new draft Guidelines is more informative. References to legal bases and rules of procedure of each interparliamentary body have been added. The updated Guidelines will leave room for further developments.

The Finnish Presidency also prepared a document on modern means of communication, including suggestions on ways and means to enhance and animate interparliamentary meetings using ICT. Some technical (staff) level meetings of the working group preparing the document could be partially replaced by online working tools and videoconferences. Technical developments made during the COVID-19 outbreak mean that some aspects of the document are already outdated.

The Meeting of the Secretaries-General in January 2020 prepared the documents for adoption by the EUSC. Owing to the cancellation of the EUSC in Helsinki, the final adoption of the draft Guidelines is due to take place at the EUSC in Berlin in 2021.

Almost one year on from the application of the Eurojust Regulation, in December 2019, the first Eurojust ICM was organised by the European Parliament in cooperation with the Presidency Parliament, in November 2020 (see chapter 3.2.).

The Meeting of the Secretaries-General in Helsinki also adopted the annual report and conclusions on IPEX, and discussed the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Secretary-General of the European Parliament, Mr Klaus Welle, gave a keynote speech entitled 'The European Parliament after the European Elections 2019'.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- The EUSC did not take place in 2020, owing to the pandemic. However, considerable background work was completed at the level of Secretaries-General. Three draft documents were produced: one an update of the Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation; one on modern means of communication; and one on the ICM on the evaluation of Eurojust.

## 2. INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCES (IPCS)

### 2.1 European Parliamentary Week (EPW), the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU and the European Semester Conference (IPC SECG)

*The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU (established in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union [Fiscal Compact]) provides a framework for debate and exchange of information and of best practices in implementing the relevant provisions and for cooperation between EU national Parliaments and the European Parliament.*

*The European Semester Conference provides an opportunity to exchange information on best practices in implementing the European Semester cycles and to strengthen cooperation in order to scrutinise the actions of the executives at national and European level.*

*Together they make up European Parliamentary Week (EPW), bringing together parliamentarians from all over the EU to discuss economic, budgetary and social matters. The two conferences have earned a regular place in the calendar of interparliamentary activities and are consolidated forums for interparliamentary debate in these important policy areas.*

The 2020 EPW, co-organised by the European Parliament and the Croatian Parliament, took place on 18 and 19 February 2020 in Brussels. This was the ninth edition of the Conference and was attended by 111 Members of 28 Parliaments (34 Chambers) from 25 EU Member States, with observers from Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as special guests from Norway. Yet again, the number of participants was high, indicating the success and relevance of the event, as well as the interest of national Parliaments in discussing and exchanging views on economic, budgetary and social priorities.

Panellists and keynote speakers included the President of the European Parliament, Mr David Sassoli, the Speaker of the Croatian Sabor, Mr Gordan Jandroković, the Chair of the Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) Council, Mr Zdravko Marić, the President of the Eurogroup, Mr Mário Centeno, the Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Valdis Dombrovskis and the Commissioner for Economy, Mr Paolo Gentiloni.

The topics discussed at the European Semester Conference by the Members of EU national Parliaments and of the European Parliament included: completing the banking union and the capital markets union; reforming the economic governance architecture; making economic governance more democratically accountable; and delivering the new budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness, the proposal for a European unemployment benefit reinsurance scheme and the review of the European Semester framework.

The European Semester debate was followed up by three parallel ICMs (organised by the European Parliament's BUDG, ECON and EMPL Committees)<sup>6</sup> that addressed a number of topics, such as an international tax system, the sustainability of finances, a European Child Guarantee, fair minimum wages, the next MFF and new own resources to address global challenges.

<sup>6</sup> The European Parliament Committees on Budgets, on Economic and Monetary Affairs and on Employment and Social Affairs.

In 2020, the IPC SECG had for the first time an environmental aspect and focused on climate change and the role that EU economic, budgetary and social policies can play in this regard. All keynote speakers of the first session stressed the importance of immediate action in the fight against climate change and its impact on the economic, budgetary and social policies of the EU. The European Green Deal would become the driving force behind a new cycle of great change. Nevertheless, it should be seen as a plan for transforming the European economy in such a way as to create a level playing field for all Member States in the process of transitioning to a low carbon economy. This would require large-scale public and private investment to be taken into account in the current negotiations on the new MFF, which provides for the Just Transition Mechanism. These were some of the statements that participants made.

A second session was dedicated to skills and jobs for inclusive growth. Numerous interventions were made arguing that the European Youth Guarantee should be reinforced with a view to promoting employment and inclusion of young people, as well as to the development and adaptability of the workforce to the changing needs of labour markets. Others mentioned that the green and digital transformation is a great opportunity but at the same time a threat, and therefore that adequate education and training systems should be created to harness the potential of this revolution by developing the relevant skills and competences. A competitive labour market for the 21st century must be sustainable and secure in creating inclusive growth.

As is customary in the second half of the year, the 15th IPC SECG took place in Berlin on 12 October 2020. The meeting was organised remotely from the German Bundestag. It brought together 126 Members of national Parliaments and nine Members of the European Parliament.



European Parliamentary Week, 18-19 February 2020, European Parliament, Brussels © European Union 2020 – EP/Emilie GOMEZ

In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference concentrated its debates on the economic consequences of the crisis. Members of the European Parliament and Members of national Parliaments had the opportunity to discuss the interaction between monetary and fiscal policy and the future of the fiscal rules, and to contribute to a targeted approach to the measures to foster Europe's economic recovery. The debate revealed the deep interest of national Parliaments in being closely associated





with the whole process. All Members taking the floor stressed that the July compromise was a historic one and encouraged the co-legislators to adopt it quickly. It also showed the importance of involving national Parliaments and the European Parliament in the process of establishing and adopting the recovery and resilience plans. The Commission's guidance

document shares this view by encouraging Member States to publish their recovery and resilience plans at an early stage with a view to enabling the European Parliament, the other Member States, the European Commission and the general public to have an overview of what the recovery and resilience plans intend to achieve. Members of national Parliaments highlighted the importance of having strong new own resources to stabilise and strengthen the EU budget.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- For the third consecutive year, the programme of the EPW was concentrated into one-and-a-half days, merging the European Semester Conference with the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU. Moreover, this edition became greener, with a focus on climate change and its growing role in the EU's economic, budgetary and social policies.

## 2.2 Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence 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 (AFET) frequently invites national Parliaments to its meetings in Brussels, complementing interparliamentary dialogue in this vital policy area.*

In 2020, the 16th session of the IPC CFSP/CSDP took place in Zagreb (2-4 March) in physical format, while the 17th session was organised remotely in Berlin (4 September). The European Parliament delegations to both meetings were composed of Members of the AFET Committee and of the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence, and were chaired by the Chair of the AFET Committee, Mr David McAllister.

82 parliamentarians from EU national Parliaments attended the IPC CFSP/CSDP in Zagreb. Following the reform proposals made by the Chair of the European Parliament delegation at the previous IPC in Helsinki in September 2019, the Croatian Presidency introduced two innovations that contributed to making the IPC more dynamic and relevant. The Croatian Presidency revived the previous practice of having conclusions adopted by all delegations, and it also introduced an 'urgency debate' to the agenda. The latter allowed the heads of delegations to choose a topic based on recent developments, permitting the delegations to have a say on the agenda and an opportunity to react to current events during the Conference.



Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, 2-4 March 2020, Zagreb © Croatian Presidency

The Conference was divided into three sessions: Global challenges for a resilient and influential Europe; the Western Balkans; and Strengthening European Defence Cooperation and Industry.

Additionally, three workshops were organised:

- The Eastern Partnership after 2020;
- PESCO: the challenge of coherence of EU defence initiatives and the role of European and national Parliaments;
- The role of women in peace and security.

In its conclusions, participants of the IPC noted the importance of EU global leadership in an increasingly complex external environment. They agreed on the urgent need for strategic coordination and more united, proactive external action. They underlined the importance of maintaining an adequate budget to achieve these ambitions. Additionally, they welcomed the Commission's commitment to the accession perspective of the Western Balkans, while noting that the EU needs to continue to encourage democratic consolidation as well as provide support in countering climate and other security threats.

During the second half of 2020, 121 parliamentarians from the national Parliaments of the 27 EU Member States and the European Parliament attended the IPC CFSP/CSDP that was organised remotely in Berlin. Five non-EU Parliamentarian delegations also attended the Conference.

During the first round of the Conference, attendees discussed current foreign policy and security issues with Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, who was in Egypt, Cairo, holding talks with representatives of the Egyptian Government and of the Arab League. A broad array of topics was addressed. However, the debate was mainly dominated by the post-election situation in Belarus. During the second round, Members discussed the paths towards a European Defence Union and the strategic realignment of the EU's security and defence policy. Dr Ronja Kempin from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP<sup>7</sup>) framed the debate by delivering an introductory address.

In their final statement, the Co-Chairs, Mr David McAllister and Mr Dietmar Nietan (Chairs of the European Parliament and German delegations respectively) reaffirmed the need for a stronger and more effective EU foreign and security policy, both structurally and financially, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Additionally the statement expressed concern regarding the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, Lebanon, Turkey, and Libya, the case of Alexei Navalny and the EU's relationships with both China and NATO. They noted that the instruments available need to be used more effectively, that Member States should prioritise unified EU positions and that EU ambitions need to be met with adequate commitment in terms of decision-making processes.

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7 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik.

Mr David McAllister, Chair of the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, speaking at the Interparliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, held remotely on 4 September 2020  
© German Presidency



### Main developments in 2020:

- The addition of the 'urgency debate' to the agenda, allowing the heads of delegations to choose a topic and use the opportunity to react to topical events during the IPC, making it more dynamic and relevant to foreign policy developments.
- Successful development of the remote IPC format, connecting parliamentarians and officials from national Parliaments online from all over Europe in real time. This could be a useful tool for future events, complementing physical meetings.

### 3. INTERPARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT IN THE AREA OF FREEDOM, SECURITY AND JUSTICE

#### 3.1 Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol

*Article 88 of the TFEU allows national Parliaments for the first time to scrutinise jointly with the European Parliament an EU agency operating in the area of freedom, security, and justice. On the basis of the Europol Regulation<sup>8</sup>, the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on Europol was established in 2017 to ensure that Europol is fully accountable and transparent. The main responsibilities of the JPSG are outlined in Article 51 of the [Europol Regulation](#), which defines its role in politically monitoring Europol activities with particular focus on the impact of those activities on the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons.*

*The JPSG is an innovative institutional set-up for parliamentary scrutiny and holds two meetings per year: in the first half of the year, at the Parliament of the country holding the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, and in the second half of the year, at the European Parliament.*



In response to the pandemic, novel and flexible formats were designed for the sixth and seventh editions of the JPSG, enabling it to continue uninterrupted in its exercising of scrutiny.

The sixth edition was cancelled and replaced by a written, electronic exchange of information. In an effort to ensure the continued good functioning of the JPSG and provide all JPSG members with the possibility to fully participate in its work, all keynote speakers initially invited to participate in the JPSG meeting in Zagreb were asked to make available to the members the written reports and submissions that had been due to be presented in the meeting.

Contributions were received from the Executive Director of Europol, the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, the Europol Management Board, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the Europol Cooperation Board. JPSG delegates were invited to send further requests for clarification or input and, as a follow-up, the keynote speakers provided a consolidated reply to the additional requests for information. The reports and contributions were distributed by e-mail and published on the JPSG IPEX dedicated area and on the website of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Croatian Presidency. The outcome of this active electronic exchange was presented with a report at the 7th meeting of the JPSG by the Head of the Croatian delegation, and while the inherent limitations were acknowledged, delegates deemed the exchange very successful and useful.

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<sup>8</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/794 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)



Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar, Co-Chair of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group and Chair of the EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, during the video conference of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol © European Union 2020 – EP/Daina LE LARDIC

The European Parliament resumed the organisation of interparliamentary meetings, holding the 7th meeting of the JPSG on Europol as a remote online event based in Brussels. The pandemic had an impact on both its substance and form. The meeting, co-organised by the European Parliament and the German Parliament, was held on 28-29 September 2020. It was co-chaired by Mr López Aguilar, LIBE Chair and Head of the European Parliament delegation, Ms Susanne Mittag, Head of the German Bundestag delegation and Mr Boris Pistorius, Head of the German Bundesrat delegation. In-person participation at the European Parliament was envisaged only for the members of the LIBE delegation to the JPSG.

Only the most prominent regular agenda items, stemming from Article 51 of the Europol Regulation, were subject to presentations and in-depth exchanges of views: the report by Europol's Executive Director on the agency's

latest activities and the report of the European Data Protection Supervisor. The presentations had a special focus on the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis, as criminal activity surged during the pandemic.

Given the technical and time constraints related to sanitary measures, there was no debate after the presentation of the Multiannual Programming Document 2021-2023; it was replaced by a subsequent written exchange with the agency on this important topic, at the core of the JPSG's scrutiny role. The Chairs of the Europol Management Board and of the Europol Cooperation Board had to submit only written contributions.

The thematic debate dealt with the fight against right-wing extremism and terrorism and there was a session on the future role of Europol and Brexit-related challenges.

The discussions which followed the presentations were lively, with calls for proactive and constructive solutions. Some of the issues raised were complex and time was limited, but the keynote speakers who answered questions vowed to pursue dialogue on those matters. High-level speakers included the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ms Ylva Johansson, and Germany's Federal Minister for the Interior, Building and Community, Mr Horst Seehofer. Members of the UK's House of Commons and of House of Lords briefly intervened in the discussion on Brexit.

Delegates were informed of the Troika's decision to establish a working group on pending matters, subject to a possible further revision in the JPSG Rules of Procedure<sup>9</sup>. The working group's mandate would be limited to finding consensual solutions to the question of the JPSG representative to Europol's Management Board meetings and the revision clause in the Rules of Procedure.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- Ensuring business continuity of the JPSG on Europol: unburdened by discussions on procedure, the JPSG asserted itself in 2020 as a demanding and engaged partner, committed to supporting the agency's efforts towards sound law-enforcement.
- Adapting the agenda to reflect latest developments (pandemic, Brexit): designing suitable formats for exchanges and remote meetings and ensuring the proper follow-up.

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<sup>9</sup> The constituent meeting of the Working Group took place on 10 December 2020, in remote format.

### 3.2 Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the Evaluation of Eurojust

*Since its creation in 2002, Eurojust has become a central player in judicial cooperation in criminal matters. In line with Article 85 of the TFEU, the EU regulations governing Eurojust must also 'determine arrangements for involving the European Parliament and national Parliaments in the evaluation of Eurojust's activities'. In 2018, the European Parliament and the Council adopted a new [Regulation on Eurojust](#)<sup>10</sup> with a view to providing a single, renewed legal framework for a new fully-fledged Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust).*

*In order to increase the transparency and democratic oversight of Eurojust, the regulation provides for a mechanism for the joint evaluation of Eurojust's activities by the European Parliament and EU national Parliaments<sup>11</sup>. The evaluation should take place within the framework of an interparliamentary committee meeting (ICM) organised by the European Parliament on its premises in Brussels, with the participation of members of the competent committees of the European Parliament and of EU national Parliaments.*

The first ICM on the Evaluation of Eurojust's activities was held on 1 December 2020 at the European Parliament in Brussels. The European Parliament's LIBE Committee, in cooperation with the German Parliament, invited national Parliaments to the first edition of this annual event, almost one year on from the application of the Eurojust Regulation on 12 December 2019. The legal and logistical issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other relevant developments in the area of judicial cooperation, such as radicalisation, terrorism and cybercrime, were further compelling reasons to hold the ICM.



The 1st Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the evaluation of Eurojust activities, 1 December 2020, EP premises in Brussels © European Union 2020 – EP

The remotely organised meeting was chaired by LIBE Chair, Juan Fernando López Aguilar and consisted of three sessions, followed by rounds of questions and answers. These covered current and future activities of Eurojust, especially in the current pandemic; future cooperation between Eurojust and the newly created European Public Prosecutor's Office; cooperation with third countries; and Brexit-related challenges concerning the fight against terrorism and cross-border organised crime. High-level speakers included Mr Didier Reynders, Commissioner for Justice.

As the latest addition to the landscape of interparliamentary oversight activities in the field of justice and home affairs, this forum promises to forge an alliance between supportive and engaged partners sharing the goal of protecting European citizens and making Europe safer.

10 Regulation (EU) 2018/1727 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 on the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and replacing and repealing Council Decision 2002/187/JHA (OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 138).

11 Regulation (EU) 2018/1727 deals with those arrangements in pt. 62 of its preamble and in Article 67.





Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar, Chair of the EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, chairing the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on Eurojust © European Union 2020 – EP/Alexis HAULOT

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- Launching the ICM on Eurojust in 2020 was a significant achievement, almost one year after the entry into force of the Eurojust Regulation, and in spite of the pandemic situation. The document of the Finnish Presidency on a common understanding on the ICM, and the progress made at the Meeting of the Secretaries-General of EU Parliaments, provided the European Parliament with the grounds to organise the first ICM on the evaluation of Eurojust in a suitably technical format, in cooperation with the German Presidency.

### 3.3 The European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG)

*The EBCG Regulation<sup>12</sup>, proposed by the European Commission in 2018 and adopted in 2019, is an important element of the EU's comprehensive approach to migration and border management. The regulation aims to address migratory challenges and potential future threats at the external borders and to ensure a high level of internal security, while safeguarding the free movement of persons within the Union.*

Interparliamentary cooperation on the scrutiny of the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG) is the most recent development in parliamentary relations in the field of justice and home affairs. The EBCG is composed of national authorities and of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. National Parliaments have the power of scrutiny over the competent national authorities, as assigned to them by the national constitutional systems of the Member States. The European Parliament is responsible for scrutinising the EBCG Agency, in line with the Treaties.

Article 112 of Regulation (EU) 2019/1896, which deals with interparliamentary cooperation, provides that:

- 1. In order to address the specific nature of the European Border and Coast Guard, in that it is composed of national authorities and the Agency, and to ensure that the scrutiny functions of the European Parliament over the Agency and of the national parliaments over their respective national authorities are effectively exercised, as provided for in the Treaties and by national law respectively, the European Parliament and the national parliaments may cooperate in the framework of Article 9 of Protocol No 1 on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union annexed to the Treaties<sup>13</sup>.*
- 2. When invited by the European Parliament and the national parliaments meeting within the context of paragraph 1, the executive director and the chairperson of the management board shall attend such meetings.*
- 3. The Agency shall transmit its annual activity report to the national parliaments.'*



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The interparliamentary cooperation envisaged for the EBCG has a different, narrower scope than the JPSG on Europol or the ICM for the evaluation of the activities of Eurojust. The scope and nature of the various forms of interparliamentary cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs are quite different. Practical arrangements, adapted to the specificity of each mandate, will ensure that the scrutiny provisions are fully enforced with the effects intended by the co-legislators.

#### Main developments in 2020:

- The pandemic situation did not allow for any EBCG-related events to take place.

<sup>12</sup> [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations \(EU\) No 1052/2013 and \(EU\) 2016/1624 \(OJ L 295, 14.11.2019, p. 1\).](#)

<sup>13</sup> Article 9 of Protocol (No 1) to the Treaties on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union reads: 'The European Parliament and national Parliaments shall together determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular interparliamentary cooperation within the Union.'

## 4. INTERPARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND OTHER INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

### 4.1 Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICMs)

*Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICMs) are the standard type of meeting organised by the European Parliament for focused exchanges between sectoral committees on key legislative and political issues under Articles 9 and 10 of Protocol 1 to the Treaties. The calendar of ICMs is transmitted by the President of the European Parliament to the Speakers of all national Parliaments each semester.*

*The committees of the European Parliament organise up to 20 ICMs per year, inviting the corresponding committees of the EU national Parliaments to engage in focused debates. ICMs have proven to be a valued way for Members of the European Parliament to share views with their national counterparts. ICMs are not only a forum for exchange on legislative issues, thereby contributing to better law making, but also a platform on which to discuss political issues of common interest and to meet with Commissioners and the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. ICMs are co-organised on the initiative of one or more committees of the European Parliament with the support of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments.*



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In 2020, seven ICMs were co-organised by six different parliamentary committees, providing for debates between 302 Members of national Parliaments and 177 Members of the European Parliament.

Three ICMs on the economy, the budget and employment were organised in the framework of European Parliamentary Week (EPW). As EPW took place in February, these were the only ICMs in 2020 where the Members of national Parliaments were able to be physically present<sup>14</sup>.

14 More information about the EPW is available in Chapter 2.1.

The ICM related to International Women's Day, planned for 5 March, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This occasion has also been envisaged as a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The other ICMs scheduled for the first semester of 2020 were also postponed or cancelled<sup>15</sup>. In the second semester, ICMs were organised remotely<sup>16</sup>.

On 27 October, the European Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) co-organised an ICM entitled 'Better Law Making from a digital perspective'. The meeting focused on the role that digitalisation plays in the legislative process and how to ensure that new legislation meets modern requirements.

On 10 November, the LIBE Committee organised an ICM entitled 'The first Annual Rule of Law Report by the Commission and the role of national Parliaments', with the participation of Mr Didier Reynders, Commissioner for Justice. This meeting was dedicated to sharing views and experiences on the role of national Parliaments in the context of EU efforts to protect and enforce the Union's values. Furthermore, the aim of the meeting was to assess the first Annual Rule of Law Report adopted by the Commission on 30 September 2020. The impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights was also discussed, with a particular focus on the scrutiny exercised by national Parliaments during this period.

On 1 December 2020, the first Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the evaluation of Eurojust was organised by the LIBE Committee<sup>17</sup>.



Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on Eurojust, 1 December 2020, Brussels – video link with Emma Bonino from the Italian Senate © European Parliament

15 [Calendar of interparliamentary activities with national Parliaments 2020: First semester \(https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/232558/Calendar\\_1st\\_semester\\_2020\\_-\\_COP\\_adopted\\_marked\\_030620\\_\(003\).pdf\)](https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/232558/Calendar_1st_semester_2020_-_COP_adopted_marked_030620_(003).pdf).

16 [Calendar of interparliamentary activities with national Parliaments 2020: Second semester \(https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/232557/Calendar\\_2nd\\_semester\\_2020\\_updated\\_18November.pdf\)](https://europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/232557/Calendar_2nd_semester_2020_updated_18November.pdf).

17 More details are available in Chapter 3.2.

The AFET Committee organised an ICM on 2 December with the participation of Mr Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement. The meeting consisted of two parts; the first was dedicated to the Western Balkans, 25 years after the Dayton Peace Agreement; the second to a united EU response in support of democratic change in Belarus.

Participation in the ICMs of Members of national Parliaments increased from 232 parliamentarians in 2019 to 302 in 2020. There was also a slight increase in participation among Members of the European Parliament.

The higher participation seems to have been largely enabled by the new facilities for participating in remote meetings without the need to travel. This might give rise to further reflection on the organisation of ICMs in the post-COVID-19 era.

A list of the ICMs organised by European Parliament Committees in 2020 and more detailed statistics can be found in Annex II.



Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the European Child Guarantee with the EP Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, 18 February 2020, Brussels © European Union 2020 – EP/Didier BAUWERAERTS

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- In 2020, ICMs scheduled in the first semester were either cancelled or postponed and only three were organised before the outbreak of the pandemic. In the second semester, they were organised remotely.
- The participation of national MPs in ICMs increased significantly, most likely as a consequence of the possibility for remote participation.

## 4.2 High-Level Conference on Migration and Asylum

*Refugee movements and migration are at the centre of global attention, and have come to be seen as one of the major challenges facing the EU in recent years. The continued arrival of migrants and asylum seekers in the EU has exposed a series of deficiencies and gaps in EU policies on asylum, external borders and migration. The aim of this High-Level Conference was to initiate a parliamentary discussion and to promote a broad dialogue on all aspects of migration.*

The Presidents of the European Parliament and the German Bundestag invited Members of national Parliaments and the European Parliament to a High-Level Conference on Migration and Asylum, which took place on 19 November 2020 in the European Parliament in Brussels, under the auspices of both the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission. This meeting, attended by nearly 150 participants, was co-organised by the European Parliament and the German Bundestag in co-operation with the Portuguese and Slovenian Parliaments, the other two Parliaments of the Trio Presidency.

The conference opened with keynote speeches by European Parliament and Commission Presidents Mr David Sassoli and Ms Ursula von der Leyen, and the Presidents of the German Bundestag, Mr Wolfgang Schäuble, of the Portuguese Parliament, Mr Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, and of the Slovenian Parliament, Mr Igor Zorčič.



EP President Mr David Sassoli © European Union 2020 – EP/Daina LE LARDIC

The High-Level Conference brought together political leaders, policymakers and practitioners and addressed responsibility sharing among Member States, protecting the external borders and tackling the root causes of migration, as well as ensuring a stable and prosperous socio-economic environment in non-EU countries. The new Pact on Asylum and Migration proposes to balance the needs to welcome refugees, fight smugglers, and ensure integration and appropriate treatment for everyone, including those who cannot remain in Europe. Several speakers made the point that migration is a

global phenomenon to which the EU must respond in a manner that upholds its founding values. Participants welcomed the new Pact with high expectations, as the current asylum system has shown too many weaknesses in recent years. In their interventions, Members expressed their hopes that the EU would be able to create an efficient common framework, taking into account the situation of each Member State. They argued that transit countries should not be left alone to manage large numbers of refugees and migrants, and that in order to prove effective, the new EU migration and asylum system should be developed in accordance with certain principles. Interventions raised the need for a fair division of responsibility for the reception of people, for identification operations, the examination of asylum requests and the reception of refugees, and for carrying out repatriation. This implies a greater commitment to the relocation of refugees within the Union and the resettlement of refugees from third countries. A request for a more coordinated approach between the police and juridical services was also part of the debate with a view to dismantling the networks of criminal traffickers for which a human life is only worth the price paid to them. Another aspect mentioned by the participants was the opening of legal channels for immigration to fill the needs of the labour markets in the EU's ageing society. Three words were repeated frequently during the debates: humanity, solidarity and responsibility.

In the closing session, the Presidents of the co-organising Parliaments, Mr Sassoli and Mr Schäuble expressed their hope that the EU was ready to cooperate and take its action on migration and asylum to the next level. The President of the Portuguese Parliament, Mr Ferro Rodrigues, invited a follow-up on these important topics during the second High-Level Conference, to be organised in 2021 under the Portuguese Council Presidency.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- The aim of this High-Level Conference to initiate an interparliamentary discussion on all aspects of migration was achieved. Future High-Level Conferences on the subject will be part of the interparliamentary agenda for 2021.

### 4.3 Interparliamentary cooperation in the field of EU external action and multilateral parliamentary assemblies

*The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments has regularly provided support and facilitated relations with EU national Parliaments in the field of EU external action for specific multilateral parliamentary assemblies and events. In 2020, no major political events took place in this field. However, the European Parliament assumed the Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean, under the leadership of President Sassoli, with the objective of relaunching its activities after a long deadlock. The enlargement process in the Western Balkans was given new impetus through the adoption of the 'new approach' and the opening of negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. 2020 was a time to develop frameworks of staff level cooperation in various fields of EU external action, in particular in democracy support and capacity building, parliamentary diplomacy, and multilateral forums.*

Cooperation in the field of EU external action has for a number of years been an element of the interaction between the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the EU, reaching beyond the consolidated exchanges in the framework of the CFSP/CSDP. The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments offered its support and expertise whenever the European Parliament's political instances participated in multilateral forums and events alongside national Parliaments. Such events included Ukraine Week (2016), the 10th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP 10, 2018), the High-Level Conference on the Future of International Election Observation (2018), the Parliamentary Dimension of the G7 Summit (2019) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (2019). Based on these experiences, the Directorate started to analyse ways in which it could contribute to more structured and continuous cooperation between the services of the European Parliament and their counterparts in national Parliaments.

The purpose was to bring certain activities and methods that were already being applied successfully in political and institutional cooperation, legislative dialogue and parliamentary scrutiny to the areas of parliamentary diplomacy, democracy support and capacity building, and human rights actions. These include a successful use of staff level networks, online platforms for exchange of information and documents and the experience in engaging with national Parliaments in different forums which already adopt political texts.

The exercise met equal interest in the Directorate-General for External Policies (DG EXPO) of the European Parliament, where parallel reflections on best practices for engagement with national Parliaments had also been launched. To this end, the Directorate organised a virtual workshop for national Parliament representatives with Mr Pietro Ducci, Director-General of DG EXPO, in June 2020.

On 22 September 2020, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments, along with DG EXPO, hosted a videoconference for colleagues from national Parliaments on democracy support and capacity building. On 23 September, DG EXPO's Directorate for Regions presented the objectives and plans of the European Parliament's Presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean to the representatives of national Parliaments.



On 30 October 2020, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments was invited to DG EXPO's 'Friday Talks'. The meeting took place via videoconference and was entitled 'National Parliaments – Partners, not Rivals'. The core aim of the initiative is to release the full potential of national Parliaments in their contributions to DG EXPO's work in the field of external policies.

2020 saw the foundations of this new cooperation being laid, and the first concrete results in these fields are expected soon. The network on Democracy Support, Human Rights and Capacity Building will come into operation, supported by a dedicated subsection on the new IPEX platform. Other advancements should concern mainly the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean and multilateral interparliamentary forums such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The objective is to bring the EU's geo-political agenda into parliamentary cooperation as a means to more effectively promote and strengthen European positions, values and interests.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- Development of new fields of cooperation between DG EXPO and the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments in the field on non-committee-based activities and events.
- Creation and launch of a structured network and communication between the administrations of the European Parliament and national Parliaments on democracy support, to increase the impact and efficiency of parliamentary diplomacy, especially in our immediate neighbourhood in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries, and even in Africa.

## 4.4 Bilateral visits from EU national Parliaments to the European Parliament and other bilateral exchanges

*Bilateral visits from EU national Parliaments to the European Parliament are a constantly evolving tool and format for interparliamentary dialogue. This format is highly focused, tailor-made, flexible, and cost- and time-efficient. It allows for discussions on issues of concern to individual national Parliaments.*

*In addition, other bilateral exchanges of views can be a useful form of small-scale interparliamentary cooperation when parliamentarians need to initiate collaboration, concentrate on specific topics, or deepen collaboration in concrete areas of mutual interest.*

Bilateral visits are traditionally an important form of interparliamentary cooperation. Meetings take place at various levels and in various formats, from the highest-level political discussions to technical staff level study visits. As planned, these exchanges got off to a running start in early 2020, with a total of 16 visits organised during the first two months. One last visit took place during the first week of March 2020. A detailed list of the visits and the topics they covered can be found in Annex III.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, no incoming or outgoing delegations or visits have taken place. Dozens of planned and prepared visits were cancelled or put on hold during the first weeks of the pandemic.

However, this did not put a stop to bilateral contacts. During the spring of 2020, bilateral contacts were actively pursued, first by telephone calls, then in an evolving manner via videoconferencing. It was noteworthy that the Parliaments that had previously been eager to visit were also active in telephone and virtual meetings. This applies in particular to the UK Parliament.

Later, in the second half of the year, bilateral videoconferences started becoming a standard feature, in particular for administrative level preparations of meetings between the European Parliament and the Presidency Parliament, but also at political level. Videoconferences are a very cost-effective meeting format for focused discussions, for example between the European Parliament Vice-Presidents and the Chairs of national Parliaments' EU affairs committees, between committee Chairs or between rapporteurs and national Parliament committee Chairs.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- Bilateral visits decreased from 62 in 2019 to 17 in 2020, because of the pandemic.
- Videoconferencing became a standard tool of direct, focused bilateral exchanges, on top of the normal interparliamentary meetings. These replaced the 'networking function' efficiently. One can assume that this will remain as part of the post-COVID-19 legacy in interparliamentary cooperation.

## 5. LEGISLATIVE COOPERATION WITH EU NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

### 5.1 Early Warning System and Protocol No 2 to the Treaties

*Under the principle of subsidiarity (enshrined in Article 5 of the TEU), in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence the Union must act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, but can be better achieved at Union level. Under the principle of proportionality, the content and form of Union action must not exceed what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties.*

*National Parliaments ensure compliance with the principle of subsidiarity in accordance with the procedure set out in Protocol No 2 to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. This Protocol sets out a review mechanism, the Early Warning System (EWS). Under this mechanism national Parliaments may, within eight weeks from the date of transmission of a draft legislative act, send to the Presidents of the institutions a reasoned opinion stating why they consider that the draft in question does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity.*

#### 5.1.1 Early Warning System

With regard to the EWS, submissions from EU national Parliaments are considered under the following categories<sup>18</sup>:

1. Reasoned opinion: if submitted under that heading and received within the eight-week deadline referred to in Article 6 of Protocol No 2 to the Treaties<sup>19</sup>, and raising the issue of non-compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.
2. Contribution: where the submission does not fulfil the above criteria.

When reasoned opinions represent at least one third of the votes allocated to the national Parliaments, the draft legislative act must be reviewed (yellow card). The institution that produced the draft act may decide to maintain, amend or withdraw it, giving reasons for that decision. For draft acts relating to police cooperation or judicial cooperation in criminal matters, the threshold is lower (one quarter of the votes).

If, in the context of the ordinary legislative procedure, national Parliaments with at least a simple majority of the votes challenge the compliance of a legislative proposal with the principle of subsidiarity, the Commission must review its proposal and decide whether to maintain, change or withdraw it. If it decides to maintain its proposal, the matter is referred to the legislator (the European Parliament and the Council) and the Commission must justify its decision (orange card procedure). If

<sup>18</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>19</sup> Article 6 of Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality: '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.'

the legislator considers that the legislative proposal is not compatible with the principle of subsidiarity, it may reject it subject to a majority of 55 % of the Members of the Council or a simple majority of the votes cast in the European Parliament. To date, the yellow card procedure has been triggered three times<sup>20</sup>, while the orange card procedure has never been triggered.

Within the European Parliament, the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) is the committee responsible for monitoring compliance with the principle of subsidiarity of reasoned opinions<sup>21</sup>. Every six months a member of the committee is appointed as standing rapporteur for subsidiarity on the basis of rotation among the political groups.

Mr Gilles Lebreton (ID) and Ms Karen Melchior (RE)<sup>22</sup> fulfilled the role of standing rapporteur for subsidiarity for the year 2020. The JURI Committee also regularly draws up a report on the Commission's annual report on subsidiarity and proportionality.

### 5.1.2 EU national Parliaments' submissions

In 2020, the European Parliament received 124 submissions from EU national Parliaments under Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. 13 submissions were reasoned opinions and 111 were contributions.

In 2019, the European Parliament received 63 submissions, all of which were contributions and none reasoned opinions.

This near 50 % increase in the number of submissions received between 2019 and 2020 may be explained by the fact that in 2020 the European Parliament was, notwithstanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, working at its full legislative capacity, unlike in 2019, which was an election year.

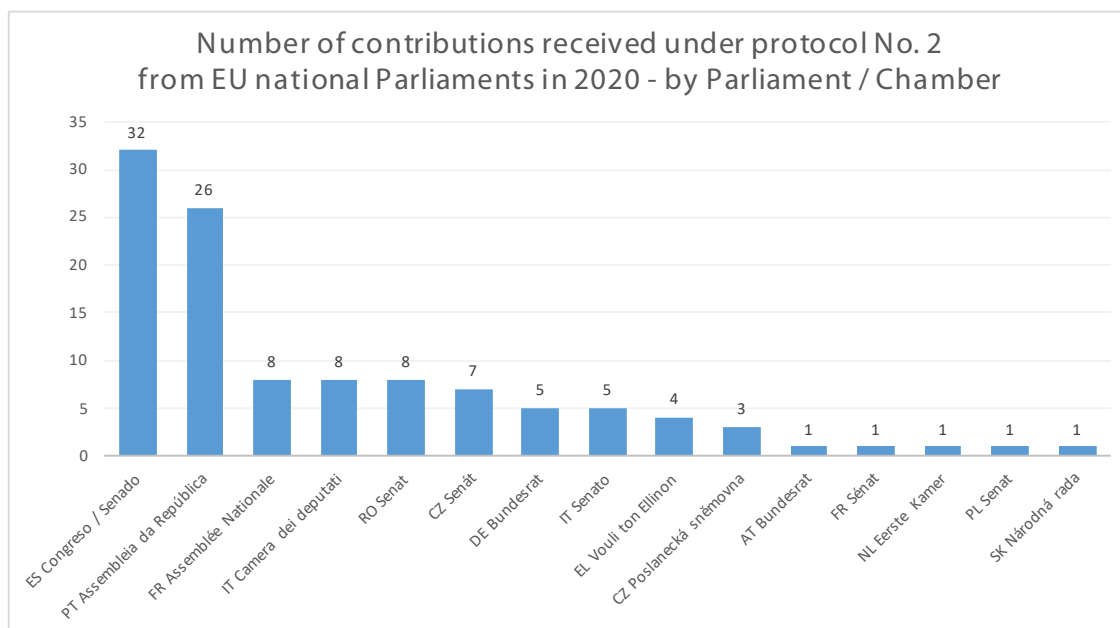
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20 The yellow card procedure was used in 2012 with regard to a Commission proposal for a regulation concerning the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services ('Monti II'). The Commission ultimately withdrew its proposal, though it took the view that the subsidiarity principle had not been infringed. It was used again in 2013 following the submission of the proposal for a regulation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office. The Commission decided to [maintain the proposal](#), arguing that it was in line with the subsidiarity principle. It was further used in 2016 against the [proposal for a revision of the Directive on the Posting of Workers](#). The Commission gave extensive [reasons](#) for maintaining its proposal, given that it did not infringe on the principle of subsidiarity, the posting of workers being, by definition, a transnational issue.

21 Paragraph XVI of Annex VI to the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament stipulates that 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'.

22 'Identity and Democracy' and 'Renew Europe' are political groups in the European Parliament.

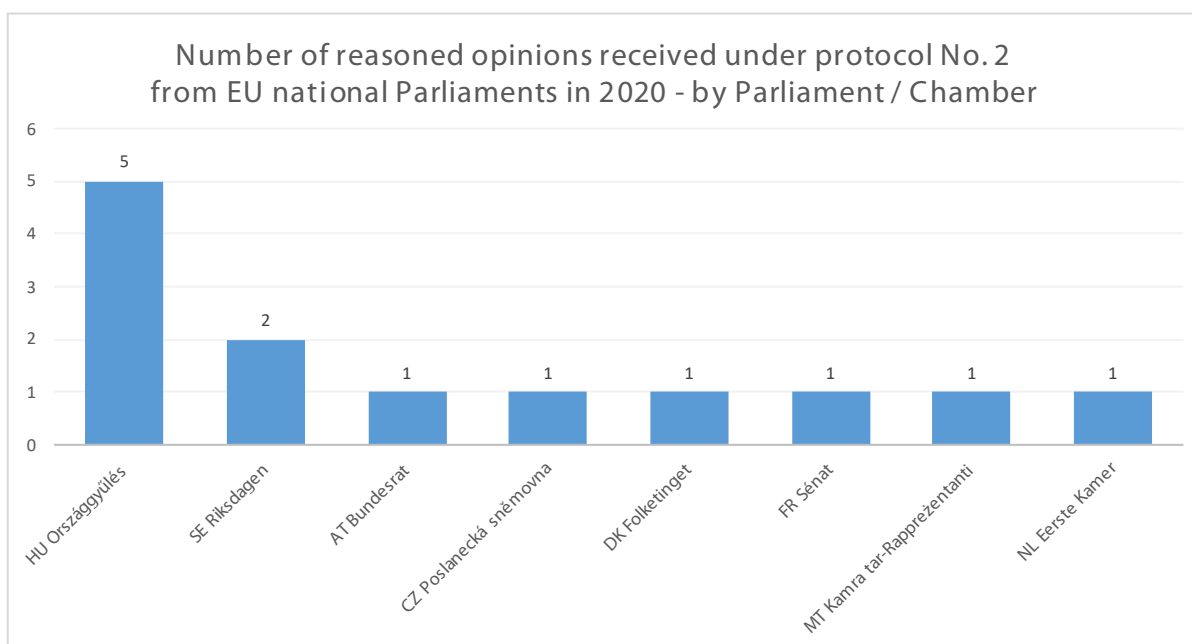
Contributions by Parliament/Chamber:



A total of 111 contributions received in 2020, graph showing submissions by Parliament/Chamber.

In 2020, eight out of 41 Parliaments/Chambers (including the two UK Chambers) submitted reasoned opinions and 15 submitted contributions. The most active Parliaments in sending reasoned opinions were the Hungarian Parliament, with five reasoned opinions, and the Swedish Parliament, with two. As for contributions, the most active Parliaments/Chambers were respectively: the Spanish Parliament, with 32 submitted contributions, and the Portuguese Parliament, with 26. See the statistics for 2020 in Annex IV.

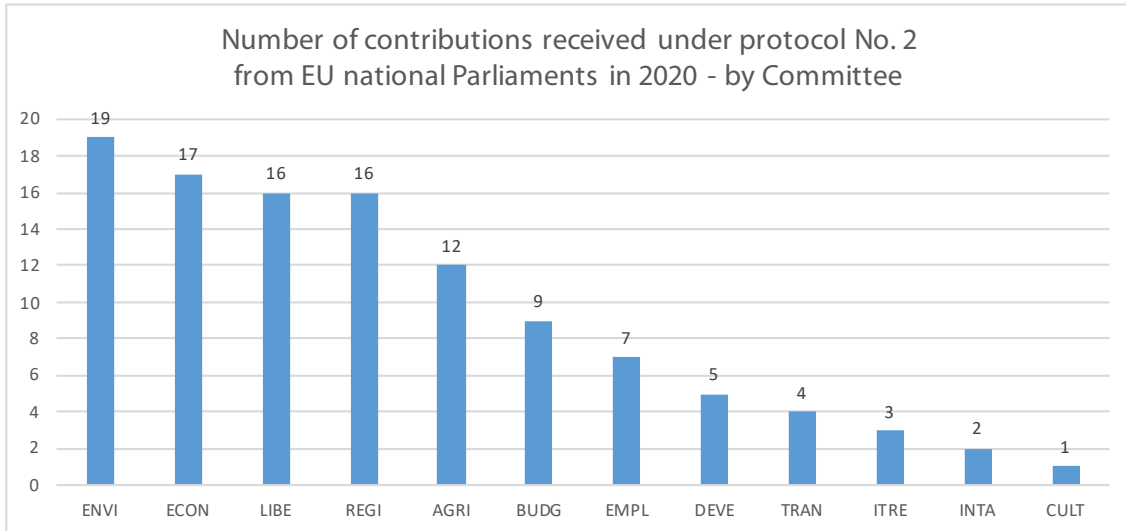
Reasoned opinions by Parliament/Chamber:



A total of 13 reasoned opinions received in 2020, graph showing submissions by Parliament/Chamber.

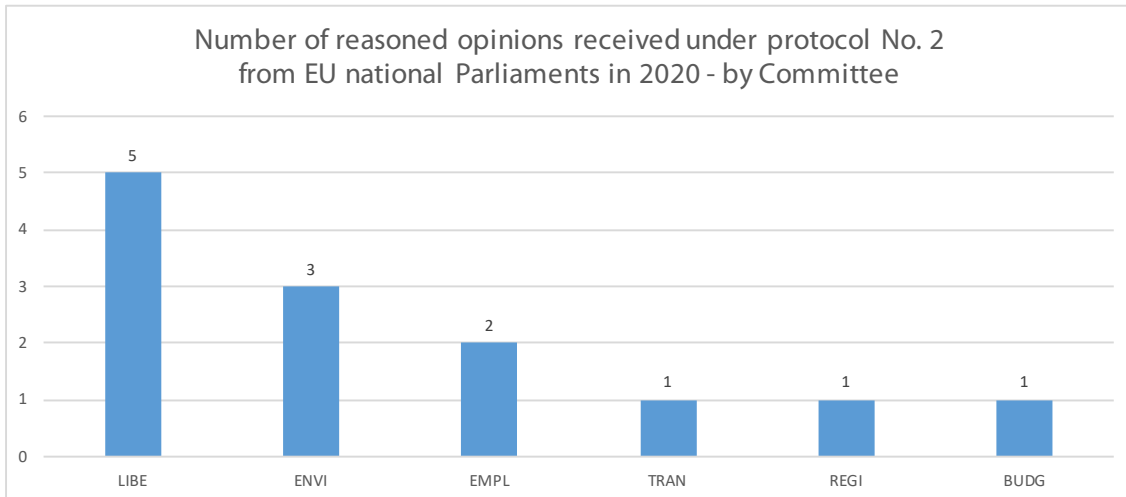
The committees that received the most submissions were the Committee on Environment (three reasoned opinions and 19 contributions), the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (17 contributions) and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (five reasoned opinions).

Contributions by committee:



Number of contributions received in 2020, by committee.

Reasoned opinions by committee:



Number of reasoned opinions received in 2020, by committee.

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, a total of 981 draft legislative acts have been transmitted to national Parliaments for examination under the terms of Protocol No 2. In response, the European Parliament has received 3 460 submissions from national Parliaments. Out of these, 487 are reasoned opinions (14 %) while the remaining 2 973 are contributions (86 %).

These statistics confirm that EU national Parliaments use Protocol No 2 as a means to express their views on the substance of proposals more often than on subsidiarity. This could reflect their wish to be involved more closely in the substantive legislative process.

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments ensures that all submissions transmitted by national Parliaments are made available to Members, political bodies and European Parliament services and provides them, in particular rapporteurs, with specific expertise and briefings on EU national Parliaments' submissions throughout the legislative cycle, which have been used as input for drafting committee reports and for trilogue negotiations with the Council. The Directorate also provides facts, figures and statistics on the number and nature of these documents and manages the CONNECT database<sup>23</sup>, which contains all reasoned opinions and contributions received from national Parliaments.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- COVID-19 influenced the number and policy areas of proposals and shortened the legislative cycle to allow to EU to respond in a timely manner to the spread of the pandemic. In this regard, some laws were adopted in a fast-track procedure where the eight-week consultation period could not be maintained given the urgency of the health situation in all Member States.

### **5.1.3 Monthly State of Play Note**

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments produces a monthly State of Play Note on reasoned opinions and contributions submitted within the scope of Protocol No 2. This Note, transmitted to Members, the relevant services of the European Parliament and national Parliaments, gives an overview of all submissions received since the previous Note and refers to all legislative files which are on the agenda of the upcoming European Parliament plenary session. The Note is also included in the meeting file for the European Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs. The State of Play Note is also published on the Directorate's website ahead of each European Parliament plenary session.

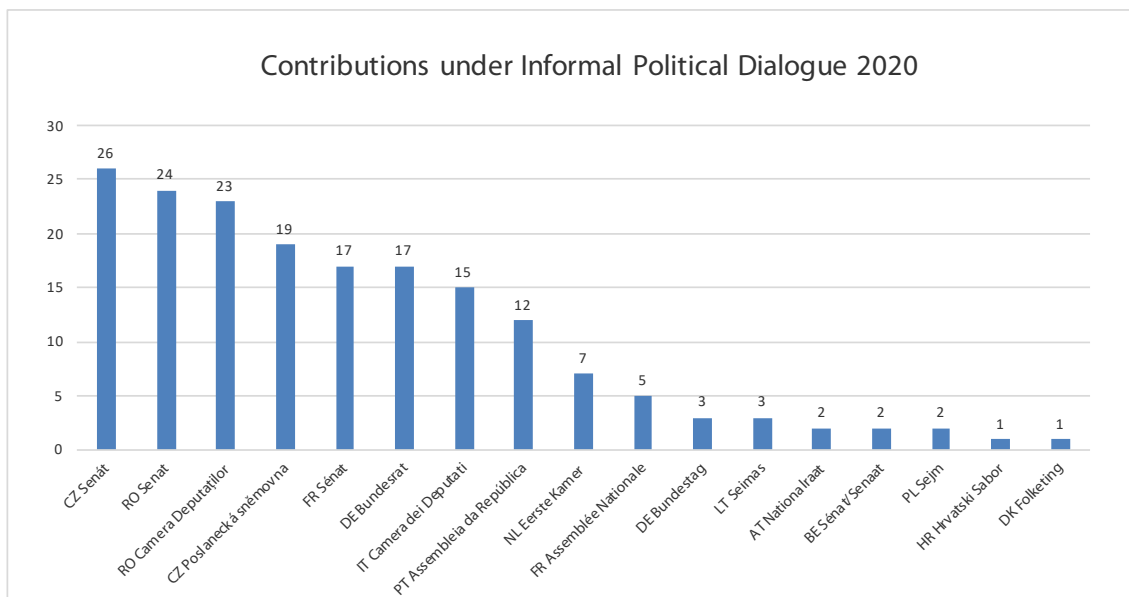
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<sup>23</sup> See more under Chapter 7.2.

## 5.2 Informal Political Dialogue and Protocol No 1 to the Treaties

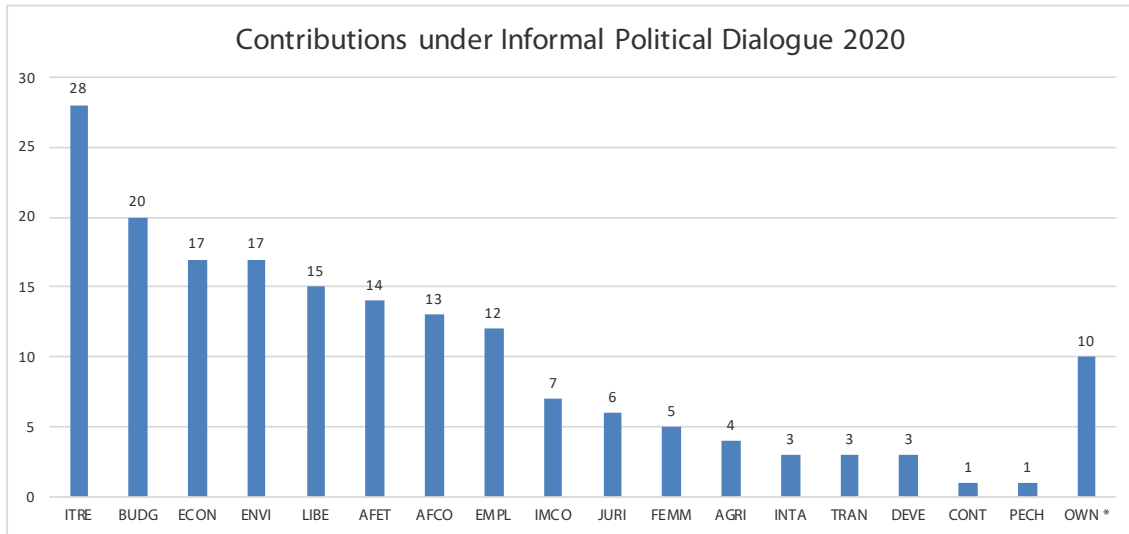
*Protocol No 1 to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that EU national Parliaments may comment on legislative files falling under the exclusive competence of the EU as well as on non-legislative documents, for example relating to ongoing debates at European level, Commission Green/White Papers or communications from the Commission. These contributions are handled under the Informal Political Dialogue (IPD).*

In 2020, EU national Parliaments continued to make active use of this tool, submitting 179 contributions. In this context, the three most active Parliaments/Chambers in 2020 were the Czech Senate (26), the Romanian Senate (24) and the Romanian Chamber of Deputies (23).



The four committees that received the most IPD contributions were the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), with 28, the Committee on Budgets (BUDG), with 20, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), with 17, and the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), also with 17.





10 own-initiative opinions (OWN) from national Parliaments were not assigned to European Parliament committees. For the full list of European Parliament committees and their abbreviations see <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/about/list-of-committees>.

Since 2009, the European Parliament has received 2 444 contributions from EU national Parliaments under Protocol No 1, which have been published in the CONNECT database<sup>24</sup>. Detailed statistics on the contributions received under the IPD in 2020 are available in Annex V.

### Main developments in 2020:

- The number of contributions submitted under the Informal Political Dialogue has increased by 55 %, from 115 in 2019 to 179 in 2020. This increase is most likely due to the fact that 2020 was the first year following the European elections. Negotiations on the new MFF also took place in 2020.
- National Parliaments frequently provide a summary in English with their submissions in their national language under both Protocol No 2 and Protocol No 1. This facilitates the work of the legislators.

24 <https://europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/subsidiarity-and-ipd/informal-political-dialogue>

## 6. NETWORKS AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

### 6.1 Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX)

*The objective of the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX) is to support interparliamentary cooperation by providing a platform and a network 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, 39 Chambers of 27 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. The ultimate goal is to make IPEX 'the one stop shop' for interparliamentary activities.*

*IPEX has been characterised variously as a 'tool', a 'platform' and a 'network'. These three definitions are testament to the evolution of the instrument. Its transition from a tool to a network has been slow but is now coming to fruition.*

2020 began with a very positive development for IPEX. At the IPEX Board meeting in Vienna and subsequently at the meeting of EU Secretaries-General, the European Parliament announced that it is able



to carry out the required IT development for the new, long-planned IPEX website v3. This ushered in the final phase of the IPEX 2017-2020 Work Programme.

Constant development has been a feature of IPEX since its creation. The preparation of the new IPEX platform (IPEX v3) and the adoption of a second multiannual work programme therefore represented a very ambitious project and a demanding workload for all actors involved in the IPEX experience.

The production and realisation of the new platform was carried out by the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Innovation and Technical Support (DG ITEC). The work continued throughout the year, even if the priorities of DG ITEC changed dramatically due to the pandemic and the digital leap it required. The original schedule for the launch of the new website in December could not be met, but this slight setback received the unanimous understanding of all Parliaments.

The different IPEX bodies (Board, Working Groups, Chairs) dedicated their only physical meeting (Vienna, 17 January, under Austrian Chairmanship) and the various remote meetings (5 June, 15 October, 26 November, under Finnish Chairmanship), to a thorough revision of the work performed during the three previous years, and to building up a new work programme for the coming three years. IPEX too needed to look back in order to prepare for the future.

Partly because the envisaged developments of IPEX represent a considerable enlargement of its scope of activities, the formal adoption of the new work programme was left pending decision in the Board meetings of 2021. This delay stems from a shared sense of ownership of IPEX and from the shared concern that it should continue to be used to the best of its capacity. The new network, together with the new website, is destined to broaden the functionality of the IPEX network far

beyond that of a subsidiarity check tool and repository of documents for interparliamentary meetings and conferences. The Finnish Chair of IPEX aimed to have a 'Rolling Work Programme' that could be reviewed at any time during its execution, if the Board so decided. Discussions showed a consensus that the technical accuracy of the database, as well as the utility, accessibility and reliability of the entire IPEX network, needed to be kept as top priorities of the Rolling Work Programme.

At the same time, thanks to the advanced functions enabled by the new digital system, IPEX will offer Parliaments strengthened capacity to exchange every kind of parliamentary document and information. IPEX must therefore be open for new interparliamentary initiatives and developments, including the reinforcement of inter-parliamentary thematic networks (notably the one on democracy support, and possibly those on the European Semester and on environment management).

The new functions included in the IPEX v3 platform require the new work programme to dedicate consistent attention to training activities with a view to ensuring accurate input from a network of dedicated correspondents and to enhancing the usefulness of IPEX to both internal and external users.

The website's new tools will play an important role also in the promotion of parliamentary and interparliamentary activities on European affairs. The IPEX website should be considered as the place to go for information about national Parliaments' EU related activities, documents, and the IPCs. These developments would also allow IPEX to aim at addressing users other than the national correspondents, and in a broader way. This approach creates new opportunities to enlarge the potential audience of IPEX and thus make it more visible.

IPEX statistics<sup>25</sup>: IPEX currently publishes more than 112 000 pages issued by national Parliaments and the EU institutions, holding scrutiny-related information in almost 84 000 documents produced by national Parliaments and linked to some 12 000 dossiers. In 2020, the total number of legislative and non-legislative documents recorded in IPEX was 1 092 (2019: 812; 2018: 1053; 2017: 1064; 2016: 805).

In 2020, 426 136 unique visitors landed on the IPEX website, confirming the general upward trend of recent years (2019: 342 355; 2018: 285 881; 2017: 307 737; 2016: 253 264; 2015: 234 480). The number of page views – 25 383 775 – although lower than the record of 2019, is still well above the figures for the previous years (2019: 43 097 236; 2018: 15 939 723; 2017: 5 736 506).

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- The European Parliament started the development of the new IPEX v3 platform. An ongoing, as yet incomplete, process of adopting an IPEX Rolling Work Programme for the next three years of activity has begun.

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25 Statistics of 15 January 2021.

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

*Managed jointly by the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the ECPRD counts 66 parliamentary Chambers (including 39 in the European Union) from 54 countries and EU institutions among its members. Almost 120 correspondents and deputy correspondents represent their respective Parliaments in the network and contribute to the main ECPRD activities, which consist of an intensive exchange of information and best practice.*

During the health crisis, the ECPRD network has been very active and has continuously exchanged information and experiences on how Parliaments have responded to the challenges of the pandemic. The COVID-19 outbreak obviously had a profound impact on parliamentary work and numerous requests were sent to find out how other



Chambers were dealing with the situation (see also Annex VI). In response to the vast amount of information gathered, a special new COVID-19 page was created on the ECPRD website. This proved useful and very successful as it greatly facilitated access to shared data.

The health crisis and the inability to organise the ECPRD's regular statutory meetings and seminars in person also made it necessary to innovate by using videoconferencing technologies to maintain essential activities. One of the primary objectives of the ECPRD meetings is to maintain a network of personal contacts between colleagues from national Parliaments in order to promote the exchange of information, ideas, experiences and good practices. Nevertheless, the webinars organised in the second half of the year had the particular merit of enabling greater participation of colleagues, some of whom would not have been able to travel. It is therefore highly likely that this practice will develop in the years to come, at least for some meetings.

The year 2020 has also served to enhance the added value and effectiveness of the ECPRD. In particular, special attention was paid to making the large flow of information resulting from replies to comparative requests more visible. This was achieved mainly by modifying the website and encouraging the publication of more final summaries, which can be shared more widely with the various parliamentary services concerned.

### i. Comparative requests

In 2020, ECPRD member Parliaments submitted 326 comparative requests to the network and 8 475 replies, an increase in comparison to the 2019 figure of 306 requests and 7 310 replies.

Unsurprisingly, since March 2020, the ECPRD network has received many requests related to COVID-19: almost one third of the total number of requests in April and May. There was a clear need to exchange information on how other Parliaments reacted and to learn from each other's experience.

Considering the growing flow of requests and answers, the ECPRD Secretariat decided in April 2020 to create a special COVID-19 page on the ECPRD website in order to organise the significant flow of information.

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments also provided support to European Parliament services by facilitating and transmitting their requests to the ECPRD network. In total, the European Parliament submitted 12 requests to the ECPRD network in 2020. This represents a slight fall from 2019, which saw 16 European Parliament requests. Nevertheless, the European Parliament provided 81 replies to requests from other ECPRD Parliaments, a significant increase compared to the 29 replies it provided in 2019, and the 31 in 2018.

#### ii. Final summaries

Solutions to encourage the drafting of final summaries have long been under consideration, but no solution has been found. In August 2020, a large majority of correspondents' replies to request 4 475 on ECPRD efficiency confirmed the need to agree on a methodology and common guidelines to harmonise final summaries and to improve their visibility.

In this regard, the new version of the ECPRD website, put online in October 2020 with the support of the European Parliament's IT services, aimed to modify the correspondents' dashboard in order to invite them to submit their final summaries and to give visibility to those loaded on the ECPRD website. Following this reflection, in 2020, the ECPRD final summary rate increased considerably, with 28.8 % of requests leading to the publication of a reply analysis (compared to 16 % in 2019 and 11.3 % in 2018).

#### iii. Statutory meetings

The Executive Committee meeting scheduled to be held in Strasbourg in March was cancelled owing to the coronavirus outbreak. Executive Committee meetings were organised remotely on 26 May and 1 July from PACE in Strasbourg and on 25 September from the Parliament of Finland. The main objective of these meetings was the preparation of the forthcoming Annual Conference.

The Executive Committee welcomed the special section on the ECPRD website devoted to all requests and replies from Parliaments in the context of COVID-19. It stressed that, during this period of confinement, the ECPRD played an important role in the exchange of information and best practices, and that it had demonstrated its relevance and effectiveness. The Executive Committee also launched a reflection on the ECPRD's workflow efficiency.

Given the uncertainty concerning the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel and meeting restrictions taken in each Parliament, the Annual Conference of ECPRD Correspondents took place remotely via Skopje (North Macedonia) in October 2020. In order to increase the efficiency of the ECPRD network, the Annual Conference of Correspondents approved the conclusions on 'ECPRD efficiency' prepared by the Executive Committee and considered that the drafting of final summaries needed to be strongly recommended, encouraged, and supported by technological means. Regarding networks of EU National Parliaments (IPEX, national Parliaments' Representatives

to the European Parliament, COSAC), ECPRD EU Correspondents are encouraged to exchange information with all their colleagues involved in interparliamentary relations. It was also suggested that the European Parliament should examine possible links with IPEX and national Parliaments' Representatives in order to avoid parallel inquiries.

#### iv. Seminars

In 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak dramatically affected the organisation of ECPRD seminars. At the beginning of the lockdown, the decision was taken to cancel or postpone all meetings. As the pandemic continued, the possibility of holding seminars remotely during the second semester was considered. However, many seminars were postponed until 2021, as good networking among the participants would be hindered by the physical distance and the short duration of a virtual meeting.

Despite the extraordinary circumstances, the annual seminar in the framework of the ECPRD Area of Interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives (LRA), hosted by the European Parliament, took place on 12 and 13 November 2020, as an online event. This remote seminar attracted 50 participants from 23 parliamentary Chambers and international organisations and offered a forum for exchange among parliamentary research services, libraries and documentation services on how the coronavirus crisis has affected working methods, products, services and resources and what kind of transformations and innovations had been promoted in order to ensure business continuity.

Ms Dita Charanzová, Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for relations with National Parliaments, Mr Rainer Wieland, Vice-President of the European Parliament, and Mr Klaus Welle, Secretary-General of the European Parliament, addressed the seminar, giving their own views on how the European Parliament had continued its work during the pandemic. The ECPRD Secretariat was also involved in the organisation of two other webinars from Vienna in the area of interest 'Parliamentary Practice and Procedure', in close cooperation with the Austrian Parliament: one on 6 June entitled 'parliamentary privilege and the General Data Protection Regulation', and one on 12-13 November entitled 'parliaments, constitutional law and constitutional change'.

#### **Main developments in 2020:**

- Various changes were introduced in 2020 on the ECPRD website. The most important ones concern improvements to increase the visibility of final summaries.
- Increased participation in webinars.

### 6.3 Presidency Parliament Support Programme

*The European Parliament has constantly promoted close cooperation between its own administration and those of national Parliaments, in particular in the preparatory phase of the parliamentary dimension of each EU Council Presidency. The European Parliament offers each incoming Presidency Parliament the opportunity to participate in a programme organised for staff in Brussels with a view to preparing activities in the context of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency. The European Parliament can provide the Presidency Parliament with a tailor-made support programme, on the basis of specific requests, needs and priorities. This initiative offers an opportunity to network and build personal contacts with all those involved and allows for the effective sharing of information and expertise, thus facilitating further work and ensuring consistency. The European Parliament may contribute to the cost of the programme on a shared basis with the corresponding national Parliament.*

In recent years, a number of EU Member States have held the EU Council Presidency for the first time. Parliaments from these countries were particularly interested in the European Parliament's Presidency Parliament Support Programme. The Croatian Presidency brought an end to the list of EU countries leading the EU Council Presidency for the first time after their EU accession. Nevertheless, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments decided to extend the Presidency Parliament Support Programme to all future Presidencies, because it proved a helpful tool during the Presidencies' preparatory phase and because there are continuous developments in interparliamentary cooperation. In recent years, EU Council Presidencies have laid extra emphasis on and invested more in the parliamentary dimension, to increase the number of events, meetings and initiatives they hold during their Presidency semester, as compared to a decade ago.

As a result, one study visit was organised in Brussels in January 2020 for 20 officials of the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* who would be responsible for the preparation of the parliamentary dimension of the Portuguese Presidency during the first semester of 2021. This tailor-made programme involved contacts with relevant European Parliament committee secretariats, the Protocol Service and the policy departments. The objective of the meetings was to exchange experiences and best practices with regard to the organisation of major interparliamentary meetings and conferences, such as the IPC on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU, the IPC on CFSP/CSDP and the meetings of the JPSG on Europol. The Portuguese officials had the opportunity to build personal contacts with their interlocutors from the European Parliament, contacts that helped to facilitate the organisation of the parliamentary dimension of the Portuguese Presidency.

The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments worked on adapting the Presidency Parliament Support Programme to the particular circumstances under which travel and in-person meetings were restricted, and prepared to offer 'virtual visits' to the interested upcoming Presidencies, for as long as was necessary. Preparations to launch the programme for the Slovenian Parliament Presidency early in 2021 had taken place during the last trimester of 2020.

#### **Main developments in 2020:**

- In 2020, the Croatian Presidency was the last of the EU countries to take on the EU Council Presidency for the first time after its EU accession. The Presidency Parliament Support Programme was extended to all future Presidencies.

## 6.4 Network of EU 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, with a view to strengthening interparliamentary cooperation within the EU, the European Parliament has offered representatives complimentary office space and other in-house facilities upon request, in its Brussels and Strasbourg premises.*

EU national Parliaments send national officials to Brussels to facilitate relations with the EU. Currently, 56 staff<sup>26</sup> from the 27 national Parliaments of the EU are occupying 36 offices in the European Parliament's premises<sup>27</sup>. These national officials, in addition to administrative assignments, are tasked with mutual information sharing (in a two-way flow between the European Parliament and the EU national Parliaments), as a key factor in EU affairs.

The representatives work in the same building that houses the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments. This creates numerous synergies and promotes easy exchanges. In 2020, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Directorate and the representatives successfully moved to a predominantly teleworking scheme, as did most of the European Parliament's administration, following instructions by the President of the European Parliament and its Secretary-General. Many of the representatives returned to their own countries and teleworked from there. National Parliaments' representatives had to follow the same restrictions regarding working at the office as the other staff working in the European Parliament. Consequently, certain services were extended to cover them, such as access to the COVID-19 test centre in the European Parliament.

Since physical meetings were no longer possible, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments organised several virtual workshops and presentations with the representatives during the second part of the year, notably in the field of the European Parliament's external relations, with colleagues from DG EXPO.

### Main developments in 2020:

- The challenges caused by the pandemic affected the work of national Parliament representatives strongly and many of them teleworked from their own countries. The representatives who worked from the European Parliament's premises had to follow the same restrictions as Parliament's own staff, but for this reason they were also able to use certain services such as the COVID-19 test centre.
- Physical meetings or workshops with the representatives were interrupted. The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments introduced several virtual workshops and presentations, notably on external relations, with colleagues from DG EXPO.

26 A list of the national Parliaments' representatives is available at: <https://europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/networks/representatives-of-national-parliaments>

27 Situation as of 15 January 2020, including COSAC secretariat and IPEX information officer.



## 6.5 Staff seminars

*Since 2019, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments has organised a series of seminars for staff from EU national Parliaments/Chambers. Their aim was to bring together staff from national Parliaments and the European Parliament in order to present and discuss relevant European topics, learn from each other and exchange best practices. This is in line with the European Parliament resolution on the implementation of the Treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments<sup>28</sup> which suggests that 'better interaction and improved exchange of information between MEPs and MPs and also between national Parliaments' civil servants could help to improve scrutiny of the European debate at national level and thus foster a genuinely European parliamentary and political culture.'*

In addition to interparliamentary cooperation at political level, an important development in recent years was the organisation of staff seminars in order to facilitate technical exchanges at staff level. Staff seminars provide an important platform for Parliaments' administrations to hold more specific and focused exchanges on areas of common interest. They constitute a dynamic element of the work of both the European Parliament and EU national Parliaments.

On 16 and 17 January 2020, the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments, together with the Economic Governance Support Unit (EGOV) in the Directorate-General for Internal Policies, organised a staff seminar entitled 'The launch of the 2020 European Semester cycle', bringing together 44 members of staff from national Parliaments/Chambers. The Seminar focussed on sharing the latest information on the European Semester, including the new economic priorities, and on strengthening cooperation and improving understanding of the new European Semester cycle through knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices.

Another staff seminar planned for 23-24 April, on the topic of global dialogue on post-legislative scrutiny, co-organised by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) and the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments in cooperation with the OECD and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, was cancelled due to the pandemic. It was hoped that it could be reorganised in 2021.

A virtual staff seminar was organised by DG EXPO on 22 September to launch a network for colleagues working in the fields of democracy support and capacity building. This seminar gathered 46 participants from 26 Chambers of national Parliaments. It was facilitated by the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments.

The Environmental Exchange Network, composed of administrative entities responsible for environmental management of Parliaments, organised a virtual seminar on 27 November 2020. The seminar was co-organised by the European Parliament's EMAS Unit and the Chancellery of the Austrian Parliament.

A staff seminar was also initially scheduled for the medical services of EU national Parliaments, but this initiative was overtaken by events.

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28 [European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2018 on the implementation of the Treaty provisions concerning national Parliaments.](#)

**Main developments in 2020:**

- Despite the challenges raised by the pandemic, a number of staff seminars were organised, mostly in virtual format.
- A staff seminar handbook was finalised in order to facilitate the organisation of staff seminars in the future.

## 7. TOOLS AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

### 7.1 Organisation of remote meetings and videoconferencing

*Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Parliament had used videoconferencing as a tool to facilitate interparliamentary cooperation. For a long time, the European Parliament has possessed technical solutions to enable videoconferencing with very high image and sound quality, as well as interpretation into several languages. However, the use of videoconferencing was limited. During the health crisis, the need to adapt the way of working and of cooperating led to a huge digital and technical leap in the organisation of remote parliamentary meetings, as explained in various parts of this report<sup>29</sup>.*

The European Parliament, because of its specific composition of Members from 27 different countries, has long been aware of the benefits of videoconferencing: it enables more regular contact between parliamentarians while reducing travel time, mission costs and carbon footprint. All in all, videoconferencing is a cost-effective and environmentally friendly tool for organising meetings, so adequate resources were invested in supporting it. In relation to interparliamentary cooperation, the working group constituted under the Finnish Presidency to update the Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation in the EU reported that better use of modern means of communication could further facilitate interparliamentary cooperation, both in bilateral and multilateral contexts. Nevertheless, in 2019 only three videoconferences were organised in the context of interparliamentary cooperation. It appears that this was due also to several limitations and technical constraints, and a lack of adequate or compatible equipment in some national Parliaments.

The COVID-19 outbreak and the travel and movement restrictions it brought forced all Parliaments to make special efforts to keep their core functions running in 2020. For many Parliaments, this meant accelerating the roll-out of technical solutions to support remote meetings. Parliamentary and interparliamentary cooperation suffered a setback at the beginning of the pandemic, but quickly adapted to new realities. Exchange of information, exchanges of views and parliamentary meetings have been relaunched remotely.



Ms Roberta Metsola, EP First Vice-President, and Ms Dita Charanzová, EP Vice-President, speaking remotely at the Virtual COSAC Conference, hosted in Berlin © German Presidency

29 See for example section I on 'The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on interparliamentary cooperation'.

The European Parliament used a platform enabling multilingual meetings with a full interpretation regime for Committee meetings and interparliamentary conferences. It organised several interparliamentary meetings at committee level remotely in 2020, namely the JPSG on Eurojust, the High-Level Conference on Migration and 4 ICMs, including the one on the evaluation of Eurojust.

Remote meetings have also proven to be particularly efficient formats for informal briefings, ad hoc meetings and targeted exchanges with high-level speakers.

### **Main developments in 2020:**

- Remote meetings via videoconferencing, still very limited in 2019, became standard communication channels in 2020, ranging from informal bilateral video meetings to complex high-level conferences with numerous participants.
- A higher number of MPs and MEPs participated in the remote meetings, as did many high-level speakers who were, it seems, more readily available for remote meetings than for face-to-face ones.
- The European Parliament made a huge leap in gaining technical expertise and the relevant resources to run remote meetings.

## 7.2 CONNECT – the European Parliament’s database of national Parliaments’ submissions

*The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments provides MEPs (in particular rapporteurs) and political bodies and services of the European Parliament with specific expertise on national Parliaments’ submissions under Protocol Nos 1 and 2 throughout the legislative cycle. In this context, the Directorate manages the CONNECT database, which includes all documents received from national Parliaments since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty under Protocol Nos 1 and 2. Reasoned opinions related to the Early Warning System are available in all EU official languages.*

As of 2017, the CONNECT database can be consulted on the Directorate’s website<sup>30</sup>. All information in CONNECT, including reasoned opinions and contributions received from national Parliaments, is directly available in e-Committee, the common working space of DGs IPOL and EXPO, under the procedure to which they relate. This applies not only to reasoned opinions but also to all contributions received from EU national Parliaments.

# CONNECT

CONNECT enables rapporteurs, Members, assistants and staff of the committee secretariats, as well as all external stakeholders, to have an up-to-date and complete overview of all submissions received from national Parliaments at any moment of a given legislative procedure. In 2020, a total of 232 submissions were received: 115 (49.5 %) were submitted within the framework of the Protocol No 2 subsidiarity checks and 117 (50.5 %) contributions under the Informal Political Dialogue.

By the end of 2020, nearly 6 000 submissions (reasoned opinions and contributions) from EU national Parliaments could be found in the CONNECT database. Approximately 60 % were submitted within the framework of Protocol No 2 on subsidiarity checks and 40 % under the Informal Political Dialogue.

### Main developments in 2020:

- Some minor updates have been executed, resulting in a newer version of the CONNECT database.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/subsidiarity-and-ipd/welcome>

### 7.3 Directory of Corresponding Committees (CorCom)

*The Directory of Corresponding Committees (CorCom) is an information resource on national Parliaments' committees corresponding to the committees of the European Parliament. It also provides information about the different committee secretariats of EU national Parliaments and the European Parliament. The information included in the Directory related to national Parliaments is provided by the Brussels-based permanent representatives of EU national Parliaments.*

Following the adoption of a resolution in May 2009<sup>31</sup> on the development of the relations between EU national Parliaments and the European Parliament (rapporteur Mr Elmar Brok), the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament

# CORCOM

have been revised accordingly, and now state that 'a committee may directly engage in dialogue with national Parliaments at committee level within the limits of the budgetary appropriations set aside for that purpose. This may include appropriate forms of pre-legislative and post-legislative cooperation' (Rule 150.3).

The CorCom application improves continually to meet the changing needs of its users. It has become a web-based application<sup>32</sup>, being much more user-friendly and equipped with a whole range of new features. The average number of monthly page views is 392. The database has also begun an update following the creation of new parliamentary committees in the European Parliament in 2020.

31 [European Parliament resolution of 7 May 2009 on the development of the relations between the European Parliament and national parliaments under the Treaty of Lisbon.](#)

32 CorCom is for internal use only. It is available on the intranet of the European Parliament.

## 7.4 Publications of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments

*The Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments produces a number of publications.*

*The Weekly Agenda provides information about activities involving national Parliaments with a view to increasing the transparency and visibility of the numerous interparliamentary activities that take place.*

*The monthly State of Play Note provides information on reasoned opinions and contributions submitted by national Parliaments within the scope of Protocol No 2.*

*'Spotlight on Parliaments in Europe' summarises information which has been exchanged on selected topical matters among Parliaments in the ECPRD network.*

In 2020, the Directorate prepared publications on the following topics:

- Missing refugee and migrant children in Europe;
- COVID-19 related information on adjustment of parliamentary activity; the prospect of remote sessions and voting; preventive and sanitary measures in Parliaments; emergency laws and legal measures; restrictions on the right to demonstrate; and the state of measures in Parliaments;
- Parliamentary oversight of the European Council.

The Weekly Agenda is sent on Fridays by email to all Members and services of the European Parliament. In 2020, 34 *Weekly Agendas* were sent out. The publication covers interparliamentary events of the upcoming two weeks, such as interparliamentary conferences, ICMs and bilateral visits. Information provided includes the date, the location, and the MEPs and Parliament services involved.

The Directorate also produces a monthly State of Play Note on reasoned opinions and contributions submitted by national Parliaments (see chapter 5.1.3.).<sup>33</sup>

All publications<sup>34</sup> are available on the Directorate's website, which provides information on upcoming activities and publications of the Directorate<sup>35</sup>.

In 2020, the Directorate started to introduce a new visual identity in its publications and communication tools.

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33 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatpar/en/subsidiarity-and-ipd/state-of-play-note>

34 <https://europarl.europa.eu/relnatpar/en/home/publications>

35 <https://europarl.europa.eu/relnatpar/en/home/news>

## 8. DIRECTORATE FOR RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

2020 was a very challenging year and almost everyone had to adapt in their working environment to new realities. This was of course no different for the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments. The Directorate quickly adjusted its work to the particular circumstances in order to provide high-quality support to the Members of the European Parliament and to several of its partners. It adapted as necessary in order to continue developing institutional cooperation and legislative dialogue with the EU's national Parliaments and providing assistance for numerous interparliamentary events.

The Directorate provides support for interparliamentary activities, contributes to the implementation of the Treaty provisions on interparliamentary cooperation and acts as a knowledge centre for information on EU national Parliaments. It represents the European Parliament in the administrative networks of interparliamentary cooperation. It manages relations with the officials who represent EU national Parliaments in Brussels and maintains close links with their administrations.

The Directorate is grateful for the continuous support of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General as well as of all services in the Directorates-General of the European Parliament that it cooperates with. The IT and conferencing services were particularly sought after and were very helpful to the Directorate's activities this year.

Director: **Katrin Ruhmann**

The Directorate consists of two units:

- Institutional Cooperation Unit

The areas of responsibility of the Institutional Cooperation Unit include multilateral regulated cooperation, i.e. the EUSC, meetings of Secretaries-General of EU Parliaments and COSAC. The Unit also deals with established networks, in particular IPEX and ECPRD, as well as handling cooperation with DG EXPO and coordinating the Presidency Parliament Support Programme and capacity-building visits.

Head of Unit: **Pekka Nurminen**

- Legislative Dialogue Unit

The Legislative Dialogue Unit is mainly responsible for political and legislative dialogue with national Parliaments. It plans, coordinates and organises interparliamentary meetings at committee level, including ICMs, European Parliamentary Week and the JPSG on Europol. It also ensures monitoring of the subsidiarity check and follow-up with rapporteurs and committees of the implementation of Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Unit also organises thematic seminars bringing together European Parliament and national Parliament administrations, and is responsible for the CONNECT and CorCom databases.

Head of Unit: **Jesús Gómez**



This report, as well as further information related to the European Parliament's relations with EU national Parliaments, can be found on the European Parliament's website:

<https://europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/home/annual-reports>

## ANNEXES

### ANNEX I – COSAC meetings – Topics and keynote speakers 2020

COSAC event	Place, Date	Topics	European Parliament's keynote Speakers / panellists
Meeting of the Chairpersons	Zagreb, 19-20 January 2020	I Priorities of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU  II European Union, national Parliaments and COSAC in the new institutional term of office	Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament
Presidential Troika of COSAC	Videoconference, 20 May 2020	Preparation of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC of 16 June 2020	
Extraordinary Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC (replacing the cancelled LXIII COSAC Plenary meeting)	Videoconference, 16 June 2020	I A common European response to the coronavirus outbreak and repercussions on the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027  II Conference on the Future of Europe	Mr Jan Olbrycht, MEP, co-rapporteur on MFF  Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament
Informal Exchange of views with EU Chief Negotiator Michel BARNIER	Videoconference, 26 June 2020	State of play of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement negotiations	
Presidential Troika of COSAC	Videoconference, 13 July 2020	Preparation of the Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC of 14 September 2020	
Meeting of the Chairpersons	Videoconference, 14 September 2020	I Report by the German Federal Government on the priorities of the German Presidency  II Dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and lessons learned	

Informal Exchange of views with EU Chief Negotiator Michel BARNIER	Videoconference, 17 September 2020	State of play of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement negotiations	
Informal Exchange with Commission Vice-President Věra JOUROVÁ and Commissioner Didier REYNDERS	Videoconference, 29 October 2020	Commission's first Annual Rule of Law Report	
Informal Exchange of views with Executive Vice-President of the Commission Margrethe VESTAGER	Videoconference, 23 November 2020	Review of competition policies, industrial strategy and digital transformation	
Presidential Troika of COSAC	Videoconference, 27 November 2020	Preparation of the Virtual COSAC meeting of 30 November-1 December 2020	
Virtual COSAC meeting (replacing the LXIV COSAC Plenary meeting)	Videoconference, 30 November-1 December 2020	<p>I Restart for the transatlantic relations?</p> <p>II Lessons learned from the coronavirus crisis – cooperation in the EU in the event of pandemics and in health care</p> <p>III Review of the German EU Presidency</p> <p>IV The future of the European Union</p> <p>V Europe's role in the world – a responsible partnership with Africa</p>	

For more detailed information on the agendas of COSAC meetings as published by the Presidencies, please consult the IPEX website: [www.ipex.eu](http://www.ipex.eu)

## ANNEX II – Interparliamentary Committee meetings and Interparliamentary Conferences organised by the European Parliament in Brussels in 2020

				Number of participants:			
Date	European Parliament committee	Event		National Parliaments			EP
		Type of meeting	Title of meeting	Members	Parliaments	Chambers	Members
18-19 February 2020	ECON EMPL BUDG	<b>European Parliamentary Week:</b> • Conference on the European Semester	Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union	<b>111</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>Plenary day 1: 17</b> <b>Plenary day 2: 12</b> <b>ECON ICM: 12</b> <b>BUDG ICM: 7</b> <b>EMPL ICM: 30</b>
28-29 September 2020	LIBE	Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol	7th Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol	<b>72</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Physical presence: 6</b> <b>Remote connection: 9</b>
27 October 2020	JURI	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting	Better Law Making from a digital perspective	<b>38</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Physical presence: 3</b> <b>Remote connection: 4</b>
10 November 2020	LIBE	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting	The first Annual Rule of Law Report by the Commission and the role of national Parliaments	<b>51</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Physical presence: 2</b> <b>Remote connection: 18</b>
19 November 2020	LIBE DEVE	High-Level Interparliamentary Conference	Migration and Asylum in Europe	<b>71</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Physical presence: 4</b> <b>Remote connection: 40</b>
1 December 2020	LIBE	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting	Evaluation of Eurojust's activities	<b>46</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Physical presence: 3</b> <b>Remote connection: 20</b>
2 December 2020	AFET	Interparliamentary Committee Meeting	Western Balkans: 25 years after the Dayton Accords A united EU response in support of democratic change in Belarus	<b>56</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Physical presence: 4</b> <b>Remote connection: 45</b>
<b>Total number of participants</b>				<b>445</b>			<b>236</b>

**ANNEX III – Visits of EU national Parliaments to the European Parliament in 2020 (including videoconferences facilitated by the Directorate)**

Date(s)	Country and Chamber	Visitor	Who the visitor met with at the EP	Type of visit	Number of participating MPs	Number of participating staff members
08-09/01/2020	UNITED KINGDOM – House of Commons	Staff	MEP Nethsinga, EP staff	Staff	0	13
20/01/2020	THE NETHERLANDS – Tweede Kamer	Standing Committee on Social Affairs and Employment	MEP Jongerius, MEP Lenaers, MEP Van Sparrentak	MPs	5	6
21/01/2020	FRANCE – Assemblée Nationale	MP Crouzet	MEP Decerle	MPs	1	2
22-23/01/2020	UNITED KINGDOM – House of Commons	Staff	EP staff	Staff	0	13
22/01/2020	FRANCE – Assemblée Nationale	MP Gouttefarde and MP de Ganay	JURI Chair MEP Nethsingha	MPs	2	
23/01/2020	FRANCE – Assemblée Nationale	MP Bono-Vandorme and MP Deprez-Audebert	MEP Verheyen, MEP Zver	MPs	2	
28/01/2020	FRANCE – Assemblée Nationale	MP Janvier and MP Pueyo	SEDE Chair MEP Loiseau	MPs	2	1
28-29/01/2020	UNITED KINGDOM – House of Commons	Staff	SEDE Chair MEP Loiseau, MEP Hannan, MEP In 't Veld	Staff	0	10
29/01/2020	FRANCE – Assemblée Nationale	MP Vichnievsky and MP Gosselin	MEP Didier	MPs	2	1
04/02/2020	GERMANY – Bundestag	EU Affairs Committee	VP MEP Wieland, MEP Simon, MEP Bischoff, MEP Freund, MEP Beer, MEP Scholz, MEP Beck	MPs	29	9
05-06/02/2020	NORWAY – Storting	Visit of Members of Parliament	MEP Auken, MEP Federley, MEP Schaldemose, MEP Kohut, MEP Danielsson	MPs	12	3

06/02/2020	FINLAND – Eduskunta	Foreign Affairs Committee	AFET MEPs	MPs	8	1
11-13/02/2020	FINLAND – Eduskunta	MP Kärnä	MEP Kumpula-Natrin, MEP Pekkarinen	MP	1	1
17/02/2020	THE NETHERLANDS – Tweede Kamer	Standing Committee on Justice and Safety	MEP Azmani, MEP In ' t Veld, MEP Lenaers, MEP Sippel	MPs	4	4
17/02/2020	ROMANIA – Camera Deputatilor	Speaker	President Sassoli	Speaker	1	4
20/02/2020	FRANCE – Assemblée Nationale	MP Degois	ENVI Chair MEP Canfin	MPs	1	2
02-03/03/2020	FINLAND – Eduskunta	Study Visit of Members of Parliament	MEP Katainen, MEP Heinäluoma, MEP Hakkarainen, MEP Torvalds, MEP Hautala and EP staff	MPs	10	7
20/11/2020	GREECE – Hellenic Parliament	Chair of the Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs (videoconference)	SEDE Chair MEP Loiseau	MP	1	
01/12/2020	GREECE – Hellenic Parliament	Chair of the Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs (videoconference)	AFET Chair MEP McAllister	MP	1	
15/12/2020	PORTUGAL – Assembleia da República	Chair of the EU Affairs Committee (videoconference)	VP MEP Metsola	MP	1	
16/12/2020	LITHUANIA – Seimas	Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee (videoconference)	AFET Chair MEP McAllister	MPs	1	
23/12/2020	POLAND – Senat	Chair of the EU Affairs Committee (videoconference)	VP MEP Metsola	MP	1	

## ANNEX IV – Early Warning System 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 Treaties.
- **‘Contributions’** indicate any other submissions which do not fulfil the criteria listed above for a reasoned opinion.

Submissions received from national Parliaments in 2020			
		Reasoned opinions	Contributions
Member State	Parliament/Chamber	2020	2020
Austria	Nationalrat	0	0
Austria	Bundesrat	1	1
Belgium	Chambre des Représentants	0	0
Belgium	Sénat	0	0
Bulgaria	Narodno Sabranie	0	0
Croatia	Hrvatski Sabor	0	0
Cyprus	Vouli ton Antiprosópon	0	0
Czechia	Poslanecká sněmovna	1	3
Czechia	Senát	0	7
Denmark	Folketinget	1	0
Estonia	Riigikogu	0	0
Finland	Eduskunta	0	0
France	Assemblée Nationale	0	8
France	Sénat	1	1
Germany	Bundestag	0	0
Germany	Bundesrat	0	5
Greece	Vouli ton Ellinon	0	4
Hungary	Országgyűlés	5	0
Ireland	Houses of Oireachtas	0	0
Italy	Camera dei deputati	0	8
Italy	Senato	0	5
Lithuania	Seimas	0	0
Luxembourg	Chambre des Députés	0	0
Latvia	Saeima	0	0
Malta	Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti	1	0
The Netherlands	Tweede Kamer	0	0
The Netherlands	Eerste Kamer	1	1
Poland	Sejm	0	0
Poland	Senat	0	1

Portugal	Assembleia da República	0	26
Romania	Camera Deputaților	0	0
Romania	Senat	0	8
Spain	Congreso / Senado	0	32
Sweden	Riksdagen	2	0
Slovenia	Državni Zbor	0	0
Slovenia	Državni Svet	0	0
Slovakia	Národná rada	0	1
United Kingdom	House of Commons	0	0
United Kingdom	House of Lords	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>111</b>



## ANNEX V – Contributions under Protocol 1 – Informal Political Dialogue

This table lists EU national Parliaments' documents sent in response to draft legislative acts falling under the exclusive competence of the EU, as well as to a large variety of non-legislative documents, such as Green/White Papers or communications from the European Commission falling under Protocol No 1 to the Treaties

Contributions received from national Parliaments in 2020		
Member State	Parliament/Chamber	Contributions
Czechia	CZ Senát	26
Romania	RO Senat	24
Romania	RO Camera Deputaților	23
Czechia	CZ Poslanecká sněmovna	19
France	FR Sénat	17
Germany	DE Bundesrat	17
Italy	IT Camera dei Deputati	15
Portugal	PT Assembleia da República	12
The Netherlands	NL Eerste Kamer	7
France	FR Assemblée Nationale	5
Germany	DE Bundestag	3
Lithuania	LT Seimas	3
Austria	AT Nationalrat	2
Belgium	BE Sénat/Senaat	2
Poland	PL Sejm	2
Croatia	HR Hrvatski Sabor	1
Denmark	DK Folketing	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>179</b>

## **ANNEX VI – 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 2020 through comparative requests:**

- Dublin III Regulation implementation
- Constitutional requirements envisaged in the Member States to approve modifications to the European Electoral Act (Article 224 TFEU)
- Member State parliaments' involvement in capacity building activities in the Western Balkan countries, Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Tunisia
- Members' travel expenses – Spanish Parliament personalised card for taxis
- Administrative assistance to the committees responsible for budgetary affairs
- Obstacles to the free movement of rainbow families
- Questionnaire on the efficiency of the ECPRD network
- Possibility to table petitions or requests to Parliament in sign languages
- Disability policies in national Parliaments
- Implementation of EU requirements for exchange of tax information
- Mindfulness initiatives within national Parliaments
- Financial management of national Parliament visitor groups

### **B. The European Parliament provided replies to requests from other ECPRD Parliaments on the following topics:**

- Electronic voting in practice
- Holders of political/public offices: participation in secret or 'discreet' organisations
- Rights to paternity leave among sexual minorities
- Allocation of speaking times in plenary sessions
- Event management system
- The use of YouTube in Parliament
- Resignation of Members of Parliament
- Parliaments' financial autonomy
- Fiscal rules compliance
- Oaths and gestures
- Precautionary measures taken on Parliament's premises to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19
- Interjections in transcripts
- Transcription of the minutes of plenary sessions and parliamentary committees
- Editing process for publicly available research publications
- Remote sessions and voting
- Use of speech-to-text solutions
- Additional measures taken on Parliament's premises to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Adjustment of parliamentary activity to the COVID-19 outbreak
- Members' attendance at Parliament – rules, records and sanctions for non-attendance

- Addressing the President / Speaker at the beginning of speeches in parliament
- COVID-19: ICT support for Parliaments
- Amendments to the Rules of Procedure related to the COVID-19 outbreak
- COVID-19 – preventive provisions regarding parliamentary work/staff
- Disinfection procedures for moving vehicles transporting goods to customs
- Parliamentary clubs, electoral thresholds and pre-electoral coalitions
- Legal regimes relating to the health emergency in Europe
- Support for culture and restrictions on secondary schools due to the Coronavirus outbreak
- Services assisting with filming and broadcasting
- Supply of emergency medical services to Parliament
- Testing MPs and parliamentary staff for COVID-19
- Organisation of interpreting during international/multilingual videoconferences
- Parliamentary libraries – use of printed papers and digital services
- Gender analysis of the parliamentary budget
- MPs' assets web publication
- Parliamentary activity during the COVID-19 period
- Standards and methodology for public opinion research during electoral periods
- Force Majeure regulatory fees for natural resources
- Changes in electoral legislation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Law on audiovisual media
- COVID-19 precautions and parliamentary meetings
- Public disclosure of food fraud and adulteration
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on subnational governments (self-governing regions, municipalities etc.)
- Digitalisation of parliamentary processes and relevant technical equipment
- Audiovisual recordings of interrogations
- Donation of human organs and tissue and their transplantation
- Conflicts of interest of local government representatives
- Official verification of profiles of MPs or political groups on social media
- Sanctions available to Parliaments to apply to Members of Parliament
- Powers of investigative parliamentary committees and contempt
- Governments' policies on refugees and internally displaced persons in their region of origin since 2017
- Legislation and practice concerning vaccine hesitancy
- Health tourism
- Archives – accommodation and delivery
- Face masks in parliament – MPs, staff and visitors
- Selling alcohol on the internet
- Institutions established by Parliaments
- Citizens' initiative schemes, including intellectual property rights issues
- Status of Members of Parliament
- New employee induction and orientation in parliamentary library and research services
- Plenary sittings and parliamentary business during COVID-19
- Penal measures – foreign nationals, children and non-imputable persons
- Telework for Parliament's staff
- Research relationships with non-parliamentary research bodies

- Rules for clear felling and wood harvesting
- Access to the plenary hall
- Abandoned agricultural lands
- Noise level regulation with regard to religious buildings
- Legal requirements for performing a legal activity
- State of COVID-19 measures in Parliaments
- Assignment and document management systems for the administration of requests to the research service
- Telephony for Members of Parliament
- Gender impact assessment in parliamentary documentation
- Scope of parliamentary inviolability – recent developments
- Renegade procedure
- Sustainable development objectives and Parliament
- IT resources for MPs
- Internal procedures in parliamentary administration regarding provision of personal information of MPs to the media
- Human resources and services supplied in parliamentary research units
- Tabling legislative proposals in Parliament
- Independent candidates and their right to compete in selected types of elections
- Human resources and services supplied in parliamentary research units

### C. ECPRD seminars and statutory meetings in 2020

<b>SEMINARS</b>		
Webinar – ‘Parliamentary privilege and the General Data Protection Regulation’ (area of interest: Parliamentary practice and procedure)	Vienna (online)	15 June 2020
Webinar – ‘Parliaments and constitutional law – parliaments and constitutional courts’ (area of interest: Parliamentary practice and procedure)	Vienna (online)	12-13 November 2020
Webinar – ‘Parliamentary research in crisis mode: corona, comeback, change’ (area of interest: libraries, research services and archives)	Brussels, European Parliament (online)	12-13 November 2020
<b>STATUTORY MEETINGS</b>		
<i>Virtual</i> meeting of the Executive Committee	Strasbourg, PACE (online)	26 May 2020
<i>Virtual</i> meeting of the Executive Committee	Strasbourg, PACE (online)	1 July 2020
<i>Virtual</i> meeting of the Executive Committee	Helsinki, Eduskunta (online)	25 September 2020
<i>Virtual</i> Annual Conference of Correspondents	Skopje, Sabor (online)	22 October 2020

## Glossary of terms and acronyms

**AFCO:** Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament.

**AFET:** Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament.

**BUDG:** Committee on Budgets, European Parliament.

**CORCOM:** The Directory of Corresponding Committees. An information source on national Parliaments' committees corresponding to the committees of the European Parliament. Provides information about the different committee secretariats of EU national Parliaments and the European Parliament.

**COSAC:** Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs. Treaty-based conference of Members of the European Parliament and Members of national Parliaments from parliamentary committees responsible for European Union affairs.

**COSAC BAR:** COSAC bi-annual report. An extended document based on a questionnaire sent to all EU national Parliaments and the European Parliament on topical issues in EU Affairs.

**DEVE:** Committee on Development, European Parliament.

**DG EXPO:** Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, European Parliament Secretariat.

**EBCG:** European Border and Coast Guard.

**ECPRD:** European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation. Information exchange network for the administrations of Parliaments in Europe, functioning on the basis of comparative requests.

**ECON:** Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, European Parliament.

**EMPL:** Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, European Parliament.

**EP:** European Parliament.

**EPW:** European Parliamentary Week. The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (IPC SECG) and the European Semester Conference bring together parliamentarians from all over the European Union to discuss economic, budgetary and social matters.

**Eurojust:** European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation.

**Europol:** The European Union's law enforcement agency.

**EUSC:** European Union Speakers' Conference. Annual meeting of the Speakers of the Parliaments of EU Member States, organised by the Parliament of the previous autumn EU Council Presidency.

**EWS:** Early Warning System. A review mechanism set out in Protocol No 2 to the Treaties on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It provides for national Parliaments to send a reasoned opinion to the Presidents of the institutions.

**ICM:** Interparliamentary Committee Meeting. Meetings co-organised by committee secretariat(s) and the Legislative Dialogue Unit of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments of the European Parliament. ICMs function as a forum for dialogue between Members of national Parliaments and MEPs.

**IPC CFSP/CSDP:** Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. 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 EU Council Presidency, in close cooperation with the European Parliament.

**IPD:** Informal Political Dialogue. The contributions of the EU national Parliaments under Protocol No 1 to the Treaties that comment on legislative files falling under the exclusive competence of the EU as well as on non-legislative documents such as white papers or communications of the European Commission.

**IPEX:** Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange. Platform for the mutual exchange of EU-related documents and information between national Parliaments and the European Parliament.

**JPSG:** Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol. Interparliamentary scrutiny group that ensures that Europol is fully accountable and transparent. The JPSG holds two meetings per year: one at the Parliament of the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, and one at the European Parliament.

**JURI:** Committee on Legal Affairs, European Parliament.

**LIBE:** Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, European Parliament.

**MFF:** Multiannual financial framework. The seven-year framework regulating the annual budget of the European Union.

**MPs:** Members of (national) Parliament.

**MEPs:** Members of the European Parliament.

**PESCO:** Permanent Structured Cooperation in the area of security and defence policy, established by a Council decision on 11 December 2017 with 25 Member States. It offers a legal framework to jointly plan, develop and invest in shared capability projects, and enhance the operational readiness and contribution of armed forces.

**PPSP:** Presidency Parliament Support Programme. Tailor-made programme for the organisation of the parliamentary dimension of the upcoming Presidencies of the EU Member States and for sharing best practices with their Parliaments.

**Spotlight:** Publications related to summaries on parliamentary procedures or practices and based on replies to requests sent to the ECPRD network.

**TEU:** Treaty on European Union.

**TFEU:** Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

# NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF THE EU MEMBER STATES

December 2020



directly elected



indirectly elected / appointed / other

 <b>Belgique/België/ Belgien</b> BELGIUM Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/ Chambre des représentants/ Abgeordnetenversammlung 150  Senaat/ Sénat/ Senat 60 	 <b>България</b> BULGARIA Народно събрание (Narodno sabranie) 240 	 <b>Česká republika</b> CZECH REPUBLIC Poslanecká sněmovna 200  Senát 81 	 <b>Danmark</b> DENMARK Folketinget 179 
 <b>Deutschland</b> GERMANY Deutscher Bundestag 709  Bundesrat 69 	 <b>Eesti</b> ESTONIA Riigikogu 101 	 <b>Éire/Ireland</b> IRELAND Dáil Éireann 160  Seanad Éireann 60 	 <b>Ελλάδα</b> GREECE Βουλή των Ελλήνων (Vouli ton Ellinon) 300 
 <b>España</b> SPAIN Congreso de los Diputados 350  Senado 208  57 	 <b>France</b> FRANCE Assemblée nationale 577  Sénat 348 	 <b>Hrvatska</b> CROATIA Hrvatski sabor 151 	 <b>Italia</b> ITALY Camera dei Deputati 629  Senato della Repubblica 315  6 
 <b>Κύπρος</b> CYPRUS Βουλή των Αντιπροσώπων (Vouli ton Antiprosopon) 56 	 <b>Latvija</b> LATVIA Saeima 100 	 <b>Lietuva</b> LITHUANIA Seimas 141 	 <b>Luxembourg</b> LUXEMBOURG Chambre des Députés 60 
 <b>Magyarország</b> HUNGARY Országgyűlés 199 	 <b>Malta</b> MALTA Il-Kamra Tad-Deputati 67 	 <b>Nederland</b> THE NETHERLANDS Tweede Kamer 150  Eerste Kamer 75 	 <b>Österreich</b> AUSTRIA Nationalrat 183  Bundesrat 61 
 <b>Polska</b> POLAND Sejm 460  Senat 100 	 <b>Portugal</b> PORTUGAL Assembleia da República 230 	 <b>România</b> ROMANIA Camera Deputatilor 330  Senat 136 	 <b>Slovenija</b> SLOVENIA Državni zbor 90  Državni svet 40 
 <b>Slovensko</b> SLOVAKIA Národná Rada 150 	 <b>Suomi/ Finland</b> FINLAND Eduskunta 200 	 <b>Sverige</b> SWEDEN Riksdagen 349 	



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