Inter-parliamentary committee meeting

The Future Institutional Evolution of the European Union

19 November 2015, Brussels

Purpose

The European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs is holding an inter-parliamentary committee meeting with EU national parliaments in order to discuss the future institutional evolution of the European Union, together with experts and institutional representatives. The main topics of debate include, amongst others: improving the functioning of the EU, building on the potential of the Lisbon; possible evolutions and adjustments of the current institutional set up of the EU; and reinforcing parliamentary scrutiny over the executive at European level.

The meeting is being organised with the support of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments of the European Parliament.

Inside

This leaflet provides extracts from supporting analyses prepared by Parliament’s policy department on Economic and Scientific Policy for the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, the Committee on Budgetary Control and the Committee on Foreign Affairs relevant to the topic of this meeting. Scan the QR code or click on the title of the publication to access it.

Publications

European Parliament: relations with national parliaments - October 2015

The progress of European integration has changed the role of national parliaments. Some responsibilities that used to be exercised by the national governments have been transferred to joint institutions, thus diminishing the role of national parliaments as legislative, budgetary and controlling authorities. This Fact Sheet explains how various instruments of cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments have been created in order to establish effective democratic control of European legislation at all levels.

The Treaty of Lisbon - October 2015

This Fact Sheet presents the essential provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, signed at the European Council of Lisbon in December 2007 and ratified by all Member States. The Treaty transferred no additional exclusive competences to the Union but changed the way it exercises its powers by enhancing citizens’ participation and protection, creating a new institutional set-up and modifying the decision-making processes for increased efficiency and transparency. A higher level of parliamentary scrutiny and democratic accountability was therefore attained.

DG IPOL and DG EXPO Policy Departments

European Parliament

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Flexibility mechanisms in the Lisbon Treaty - November 2015

This study shows how against any superficial impression of uniformity, the Treaty of Lisbon offers a significant number of mechanisms for flexibility (i.e. establishing different obligations and/or with different deadlines for accomplishment for different Member States). External treaties complete the vast array for flexibility in European integration. Their full deployment depends on political opportunity and they may offer some opportunities to develop some policy areas. However, they are not a panacea to face the EU’s biggest challenges.

Implementing the Lisbon Treaty - improving functioning of the EU: Foreign Affairs - November 2015

Foreign Affairs as a field of EU action have very distinctive constitutional qualities. Its external powers are broad, encompassing not only traditional foreign policy, but also development cooperation and a number of sectoral policies such as trade, transport and environment. This report provides an analysis of the changes in the constitutional and institutional framework brought about by the Lisbon Treaty and assesses the implementation of those changes including obstacles to further improvement of its implementation.

Implementing the Lisbon Treaty - improving the functioning of the EU: Justice and Home Affairs - November 2015

This study examines the functioning of EU Justice and Home Affairs cooperation in light of the reforms and innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty since 2009. It identifies the main challenges and deficits characterising the practical and effective implementation of these transformations and suggests specific ways for the European Parliament to address them. It recommends that any future legislative reform or treaty change should not promote or enable further differentiation in EU cooperation in the Area of Freedom Security and Justice.

The European Parliament as a driving force of constitutionalisation - October 2015

This report analyses the increasing role played by the European Parliament in the EU decision-making process. It describes how since the Treaty of Rome, Parliament acquired more formal and informal powers in legislation, comitology, in the appointment of the European Commission and in the budgetary field. It also illustrates Parliament’s role in two relevant policy fields: economic governance and external trade agreements. This empowerment is partially explained by the concern for democratic legitimacy from some Member States and the Commission.

Shaping and controlling foreign policy: parliamentary diplomacy and oversight, and the role of the EP - June 2015

This study examines the role and functions of parliaments in shaping and controlling foreign policy. It reflects on the gradual parliamentarisation of Member State-dominated EU foreign policy. It analyses the nature of the European Parliament’s actorhood in international relations, its emerging role in EU foreign policy, and the tools and powers available to exert influence on the Union’s decisions and relations. It concludes that EU foreign policy can become efficient and democratic in the process of building an EU representative democracy.


This analysis highlights some of the challenges that Parliament will be confronted with in the upcoming legislature. In terms of legislative powers, trialogues, legislative initiatives and legislative discontinuity should draw the attention of MEPs. In terms of scrutiny, it is Parliament’s overall strategy in its relations with the Commission and the European Council that is at stake. Its organisation should focus on its public image, while taking into consideration the impact of rationalising its political operation and the visibility of its inherent political cleavages. (EN version available soon)
The European Council and the Council: perspectives on new dynamics in EU governance - January 2015

The European Council and the Council play a central role in policy-making within those new areas of EU activity within which intergovernmental policy coordination prevails over legislative decision-making such as economic governance and foreign affairs. The emphasis on decentralised governance implies important changes to institutional design and the practice of inter-institutional relations. The aim of this study is to answer the question of why this new intergovernmentalism in EU governance has emerged and has been consolidated over time.

Looking Ahead: pathways of future constitutional evolution of the EU - November 2014

The effects of the economic and fiscal crisis and the institutional instruments created to deal with it have led several actors (from governments and EU bodies to scholars) to propose different EU reforms. This note looks at the several options that exist to accommodate future constitutional development which, in some cases, may require Treaty revision. In that case, future constitutional evolution faces the challenge that the very stringent EU revision requirement of unanimity poses. Other available options do not seem totally satisfactory.

Challenges in constitutional affairs in the new term: taking stock and looking forward - November 2014

This publication brings together the documentation of a workshop with experts organised for the Committee on Constitutional Affairs in November 2014. The main panel discussions focused on: EU inter-institutional dynamics with the new institutional and political set-up after the European elections; the constitutional evolution of the European Union, its governance and democratic legitimacy; European democracy, the Europarty system and the European Citizens’ Initiative; and institutional and constitutional aspects of the transparency register and lobbying.


The articles included in this compendium aim to provide insights into the questions of efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy in relation to EU governance. While dealing with the lessons from the past experiences of differentiated integration, they put a specific focus on current challenges with respect to the Economic and Monetary Union. They analyse the impact of those developments on the European institutions and their decision-making processes and mechanisms of legitimation. Options for managing the increasing tension towards differentiation are also given.

The European Parliament’s right to grant discharge to the Council - March 2013

This publication brings together the documentation of a workshop with experts organised for the Committee on Budgetary Control in September 2012. The discharge procedure is a central means for Parliament to oversee budget implementation by the executive. It thus attributes accountability for the exercise of budgetary authority. While the experts agreed to a large extent on the European Parliament’s right to information, a more fundamental controversy remained on whether Parliament may decide on the Council’s discharge.

Democratic control in the European Council and the euro zone summits: Annex 1; Annex 2 - January 2013

The European Council is increasingly central to the governance of the European Union. Even if national parliaments have originally focused their involvement in EU affairs on the ordinary legislative process, most of the chambers have started to develop specific activities, before or after European summits. From ex-ante influence to ex-post accountability, seven different models of control have been identified. Beyond their differences rooted in national democratic systems, they call for twelve recommendations listed in this report.
Policy Departments

There are five policy departments within the European Parliament's DGs for Internal Policies and for External Policies. They are responsible for providing both in-house and external high-level independent expertise, analysis and policy advice at the request of committees and other parliamentary bodies (delegations, President, Bureau, Secretary-General). Their expertise covers all areas of activity of the European Parliament. They are closely involved in the work of committees, which they support in shaping legislation on and exercising democratic scrutiny over EU policies.

Outputs

Most frequently prepared at the request of a European Parliament committee or delegation, the written output of the policy departments comprises a wide range of products, including studies, in-depth country- or issue-specific analyses, briefings examining issues of strategic importance, as well as notes containing short EU-oriented analyses of recent events or developments. They serve a variety of purposes: they can feed directly into the legislative work of a specific committee or serve as a briefing for delegations of members. The policy departments also draft the Fact Sheets on the EU, which provide an overview of European integration and of the European Parliament's contribution to that process. Furthermore, they provide background notes and speaking points.

Events

The policy departments organise events that enhance Parliament's analytical capacity and develop common approaches to current political issues. Public workshops, bringing together groups of experts, are organised to provide independent expertise via written and oral presentations. Expert panels are set up to provide members with regular written contributions or to feed into the parliamentary debate during meetings. Publications are generally presented during committee meetings.

Scrutiny

Policy departments provide research support to enhance the European Parliament's capacity to monitor EU negotiations and the implementation of international agreements. They have also developed an in-house methodology to scrutinise EU-funded projects.

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Fact Sheets on the EU

The Fact Sheets provide an overview of European integration and of the European Parliament's contribution to that process. They cover six main themes:

- how the European Union works;
- a citizens' Europe;
- the internal market;
- the economic and monetary union;
- sectoral policies; and
- the EU's external relations.

The online version is reviewed and updated regularly throughout the year.
www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets

Supporting Analyses

Access all Studies, In-depth Analyses, Briefings and At-a-Glance notes produced by the policy departments.
www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

Thematic Digests

These leaflets group policy departments’ publications relevant to events such as seminars and inter-parliamentary meetings.

Monthly Highlights

The Monthly Highlights provide an overview, at a glance, of the on-going work of the policy departments, including a selection of the latest and forthcoming publications, and future events.

To receive them, send an email to: ep-policydepartments@ep.europa.eu

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