



GUIDELINES FOR INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Conferência dos Presidentes dos Parlamentos da União Europeia
Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments
Conférence des Présidents des Parlements de l'Union européenne

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Considering that:

- a)** National parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning and to increase the democratic legitimacy of the European Union;
- b)** Member states are represented in the Council of the European Union by their governments, themselves democratically accountable to their national parliaments;
- c)** Inter-parliamentary cooperation respects all the principles and rules established in the framework of the European Union;
- d)** Inter-parliamentary cooperation respects the principle of national parliaments and the European Parliament being on a equal footing and having complementary roles in the EU structure;
- f)** The Lisbon Treaty gives national parliaments, together with the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament, a responsibility to scrutinize all legislative and non legislative initiatives.

I. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of Inter-parliamentary Cooperation in the European Union are:

- a)** To promote the exchange of information and best practices between the national parliaments of the European Parliament with a view to reinforcing parliamentary control, influence and scrutiny at all levels.
- b)** To ensure effective exercise of parliamentary competences in EU matters in particular in the area of monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
- c)** To promote cooperation with parliaments from third countries.

II. FRAMEWORK

Inter-parliamentary Cooperation in the European Union is performed within the following framework:

a) Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments

This Conference gathers Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU Member States and the President of the European Parliament. The Conference shall oversee the coordination of inter-parliamentary EU activities. The organisation of the Conference is conducted in accordance with the Guidelines for the Conference of Presiding Officers.

b) COSAC

COSAC (Conference of European Affairs Committees) enables a regular exchange of information, best practices and views on European Union matters between European Affairs Committees of national parliaments and the European Parliament.

c) Joint Meetings on Topics of Common Interest

The Parliament of the country holding the presidency and the European Parliament can organise joint meetings on topics of common interest, e. g., Joint Committee Meetings and Joint Parliamentary Meetings.

d) Meetings of Sectoral Committees

Meetings between sectoral committees are organised by national parliaments or the European Parliament with the purpose of discussing European Union topics within their fields of competence. In arranging meetings of sectoral committees, national parliaments of the countries holding the EU Presidency and the European Parliament should avoid the duplication of activity.

e) Secretaries-General

The Secretaries-General or other designated officials convene regularly in order to prepare the agenda and the debates of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments and to settle any other business that is deemed necessary. Meetings of the Secretaries-General are prepared and chaired by the Secretary-General or other designated officials of the Parliament that holds the presidency of the Conference of Speakers, after having consulted the preceding and the next presidencies. Additional provisions on technical practices and procedures can be adopted by the Secretaries-General.

f) Representatives of National Parliaments to the EU

National Parliaments' Representatives contribute to reinforce inter-parliamentary cooperation by facilitating a regular exchange of information between national parliaments and national parliaments and the European institutions.

III. FIELDS OF COOPERATION:

Inter-parliamentary cooperation is of particular value in the following fields:

a) Exchange of information and best practice

Exchange of information and best practice between national parliaments and with the European Parliament in all policy-fields covered by the Treaties of the European Union is a main field for inter-parliamentary cooperation, mainly in what regards procedures for parliamentary scrutiny of European Union matters.

b) Monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality

National parliaments have a key role to play in monitoring the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. In order to facilitate effective scrutiny, national parliaments are encouraged to exchange information on EU draft legislation and its compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

IV. INSTRUMENTS OF COOPERATION

a) IPEX

The objective of IPEX is to support inter-parliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for electronic exchange of information on all EU-related parliamentary activities. IPEX should inter alia facilitate an exchange of information between parliaments with regard to EU draft legislation including its compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

A calendar of inter-parliamentary meetings of the European Union is also available on the IPEX website.

b) INFORMATION, RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Parliaments should promote the exchange of information, research and documentation by all the appropriate means, including COSAC and ECPRD.