

IPEX ANNUAL REPORT 2017

**MEETING OF THE SECRETARIES GENERAL
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS**

**28-29 January 2018
Tallinn**

Mr Daniel Guspan
Secretary General of the National Council of the
Slovak Republic

Chair of the IPEX Board

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to take the floor to present the 2017 IPEX annual report. Looking back at the last year, I feel very proud to observe that so many people are dedicated to this instrument of interparliamentary dialogue, which is one of the most successful and concrete projects realised in cooperation with the national Parliaments of the European Union and the support of the European Parliament.

As you may know, 2016 and 2017 have been for Slovakia, for the National Council of the Slovak Republic, a huge challenge. Indeed, during the second semester of 2016, the National Council of the Slovak Republic, in the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Slovak Presidency, has prepared seven major - in terms of the contents, as well as the attendance - inter-parliamentary events. Several of these events, such as the Plenary Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of the Parliaments of the European Union, the Inter-parliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, or the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union, have been the biggest official events held during our presidency.

In 2016, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has organized the so-called small COSAC or the COSAC Chairs, the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination, and Governance in the European Union and the Meeting of Chairpersons of the Economic Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union on the Energy Union. Given the fact that the Slovak Republic has been preside over the Council of the EU during the second half of the calendar year, we were also entitled to host the annual presidency of the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union; this also implied an obligation to organize further events in 2017. Our parliamentary presidency was thus the organizer of the Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments, and the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States and at this conference, we had the honour to take over the rotating IPEX Presidency, according to the IPEX guidelines adopted in Rome in 2015. Therefore, the parliamentary dimension of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU have presented yet another yearlong commitment, the Slovak Presidency of the Governing Board of the EU Platform for Inter-parliamentary Information Exchange (IPEX).

As this was the first Slovak Chairmanship of IPEX, taking over from the Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg, I also take this opportunity to thank our Luxembourgish colleagues for their hard work and efforts in the last year. The Luxembourgish Chairmanship of the IPEX Board was a very successful one and has produced a very concrete and useful outcome, the IPEX Digital strategy, which will guide our work for years to come. Colleagues, thank you very much indeed and congratulations on your accomplishments. 2017 has been a particularly fruitful year for IPEX in many aspects, and, therefore I would like to express my sincere thanks also to the members of the Board, to the IPEX Information Officer as well as to the national Correspondents.

Table of contents

<i>1 Meetings under the Slovak Chairmanship</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2 New order of presidencies</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>3 Adoption the IPEX Work Programme 2017-2020</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>4 IPEX national Correspondents meeting</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>5 Future of IPEX.....</i>	<i>10</i>

1 Meetings under the Slovak Chairmanship

From 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016, Slovakia held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time in the country's history. In 2017, Slovak republic also took over the Chairmanship of IPEX from the Parliament of Luxembourg.

During its chairmanship, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has organised the following events:

- Three Board meetings (19 May 2017 and 19 January 2018 in Bratislava and 12 October 2017 in Brussels)
- The annual national Correspondents meeting (15-16 November 2017 in Bratislava)
- Nine Working group meetings (*Enhancing the IPEX network* - two times in Bratislava and once in Brussels; *Strengthening the promotion of IPEX network* - two times in Bratislava and once in Brussels; *Improving the IPEX digital system network* - two times in Bratislava and once in Brussels)

Five Working groups have been active during the Slovak Chairmanship.

- 1) Working group on the institutions, chaired by the Information officer, Mr Calin Racoti;
- 2) Working group on the Enhancing the IPEX network, chaired by Mr Mongin Forrest;
- 3) Working group on the Strengthening the promotion of IPEX network, chaired by Ms Birgit Von Pflug;
- 4) Working group on the Improving the IPEX digital system network, chaired by Mr Hilbert Gerard;
- 5) Working group on the organisation of the IPEX national Correspondents meeting, chaired by Ms Petra Ďurinová.

I would like to thank the IPEX Board members who chaired the working groups for their active involvement and their dedication in reaching the goals set by the IPEX Board.

It is also important to inform you, that Slovak presidency has received a letter from the Chairman of the Estonian EU Affairs Committee concerning the interconnectivity of COSAC

web-page and the IPEX platform. The letter states that, the IPEX has set itself an aim in a Digital Strategy for IPEX to provide inter alia also information from national parliaments concerning the parliamentary dimension of EU Council Presidencies. One important cooperation format that enriches the parliamentary dimension of EU presidencies is the Conference of the committees of the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States dealing with the European Union affairs (COSAC). Accordingly, the Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee, Mr. Toomas Vitsut would like to encourage the Board to analyse and propose the ways to interconnect COSAC web-page and IPEX platform.

The Board had an exchange of views on the letter, at meeting held in Brussels on 12 October 2017. It was agreed, that Mr. Guspan as IPEX Chair will send the letter to the Chairman of the Estonian EU Affairs Committee and will offer the service of the website.

At the same meeting, the Board discussed a suggestion from Ms. Birgit von Pflug, that the IPEX website should be actively promoted as a platform for the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol. It was also agreed by the Board, that Mr. Guspan as IPEX Chair will send the letter to the Co-Chairs of the Europol Scrutiny Group and will offer the service of the website. Mr. Guspan have already sent both letters.

The letter to the COSAC was debated by national delegations and representatives of European institutions during the LVIII COSAC, which took place in Tallinn, 27 and 28 November. In the Conclusions of the LVIII COSAC national politicians are encouraging "the COSAC Secretariat and the IPEX Board to cooperate towards increasing the interconnection between the COSAC website and the IPEX platform" and to look for ways of a future integration of the two.

As far as the letter to the Co-Chairs of the Europol Scrutiny Group is concerned, we have received a letter from Mr Raivo AEG, Chair of the delegation of the Parliament of Estonia to the JPSG. In his letter, he expressed support for the idea to have the IPEX platform host the website of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group. According to him, it would be extremely convenient to have all the documents related to this event in one database and available on one single website and IPEX would be ideal for this because it includes all the information and documents on inter parliamentary cooperation. He also pointed out that Estonian Parliament has no ownership of the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny group meetings, therefore, he hopes, that we will soon receive positive feedback also from the European Parliament.

2 New order of presidencies

Dear colleagues, as you all probably know, at our meeting held in Bratislava on 20 and 21 February 2017, we have confirmed the composition of the IPEX Board during the Estonian Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments in 2017/2018. Let me inform you about the composition of the IPEX Board in 2018/2019, which is as following:

- Chair of the Board: Slovakia (ex officio) – until the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States;
- Ex officio members of the Board: Estonia (after the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States - acting chair), Austria, Bulgaria, Finland and European Parliament;
- members willing to contribute to the Board and its activities: Belgium (both chambers), Denmark, France (both chambers), Germany (only the Bundestag), Greece, Italy (both chambers), Luxembourg, Poland (both chambers), Portugal, Romania (both chambers), the Netherlands (both Chambers) and Sweden .

Of course, the IPEX Information Officer, COSAC secretariat, the ECPRD, the European Commission and the Council participate in and contribute to the IPEX Board meetings (According to the IPEX Guidelines).

The revised order of the presidencies foresees that Estonia will take over the Chairmanship of IPEX from the National Council of the Slovak Republic in April 2018 at the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States, which will take place in Tallinn on 23-24 April 2018.

3 Adoption the IPEX Work Programme 2017-2020

The IPEX Board members adopted the IPEX Work Programme 2017-2020, during their meeting held in Bratislava on 19 May 2017. The 3-year Work Programme was prepared by the WG on Digital Strategy and Work Programme, which was established by the Board on

2 October 2015. The procedural principles governing the Work Programme are stipulated in the Digital Strategy, as approved by the Secretaries General at their meeting held in Bratislava. The execution of the Work Programme is conducted through working groups. The working groups work under mandates approved by the IPEX Board and submit their conclusions in the form of

Action Plans to the Board (Art. 7 of IPEX Guidelines) for final approval as well as regular progress reports.

The Board, also at meeting held in Bratislava on 19 May 2017, nominated the chairs and members of the new working groups set up for each of the priority objective of the IPEX Work Programme 2017 – 2020. The Board agreed that Parliaments will be able to send whomever they wish to represent their Parliament in the respective WG. In the discussion concerning the composition of the working groups, some members of the board offered their support, although not being formal members of the respective group.

The composition of the working groups and their mandates is as follows:

<i>Working Group</i>	<i>Chair</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Mandate</i>
<i>1. Enhancing the IPEX network</i>	<i>Danish Parliament</i>	<i>1. Austrian Parliament 2. Estonian Riigikogu 3. Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies 4. Belgian Senate 5. Romanian Parliament 6. The Dutch Staten-Generaal</i>	<i>As described in point III.1 of the Work Programme</i>
<i>2. Strengthening the promotion of IPEX</i>	<i>German Bundestag</i>	<i>1. Polish Senate 2. European Parliament 3. Hellenic Parliament 4. Italian Chamber of Deputies 5. Maltese House of Representatives</i>	<i>As described in point III.2 of the Work Programme</i>

<p><i>3. Improving the IPEX digital system</i></p>	<p><i>European Parliament</i></p>	<p><i>1. Polish Sejm</i> <i>2. National Council of the Slovak Republic</i> <i>3. Italian Senate</i> <i>4. Riksdagen (Sweden)</i> <i>5. Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies</i></p>	<p><i>As described in point III.3 of the Work Programme</i></p>
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4 IPEX national Correspondents meeting

The National Council of the Slovak Republic also had the honour of hosting the IPEX national Correspondents meeting from 15-16 November 2017 in Bratislava. 52 participants representing 24 Member States and 4 candidate countries attended this Correspondents meeting.

Based on the proposals by the working group on the organisation of the national Correspondents meeting, chaired by Ms Petra Ďurinová from the National Council of the Slovak Republic, a draft programme was adopted by the members of the Board. The first day of the meeting consisted in two trainings held by the IPEX Information Officer. One training was for the newcomers and the second one was for the more experienced correspondents.

On the second day, participants gathered in the Constitution hall of the historical building of the National Council of the Slovak Republic in order to discuss the Report of the Chair concerning the activities of the IPEX Board. Then we have hosted three Workshops – one for each of the three priority objectives in the Work Programme (Enhancing the IPEX network; Strengthening the promotion of IPEX; Improving the IPEX digital system). The chair of the corresponding Working Group chaired each Workshop. This gave each Working Group the opportunity to discuss their mandate and ideas directly with the correspondents. In addition, there were two Workshop time slots – and each Working Group was represented in each timeslot. Each workshop lasted 90 minutes, so there have been a real chance for the IPEX Correspondents to communicate. After the workshops, there was the last point on the agenda: Report-back from the chairs of the Workshops.

5 Future of IPEX

IPEX, as a platform for the mutual exchange of information between the national Parliaments and the European Parliament concerning issues related to the European Union, has gone through many evolutions and developments since its start in 2000. I see this platform as very helpful and reliable instrument for the Inter- Parliamentary information exchange, and for networking as well. It is important not to forget about the people who are involved in, enthusiastic and committed to their work to promote and improve the IPEX. Here, in this very moment I would like to encourage all the future presidencies to follow this path and to recognize the importance of the connection of the IPEX related persons to get the best outcomes for the future of IPEX. Presidencies must foster continuous improvements, innovations and initiatives. Presidencies must be committed to initiative mindset for the future of the IPEX. The digital strategy and also a 3-year Work Programme clearly attest that IPEX is ready to take on new challenges and to be strictly forwardlooking.