02 July 2020

Report on activities of the workgroup on Improving the IPEX Digital System

as part of the

IPEX Work Programme 2017-2020

Introduction

At the Speakers' Conference in Rome in 2000, the Secretaries General were given the task of finding ways of improving the information exchange between National Parliaments.

In 2001, IPEX was created, initially as an information portal. In 2006, the web site was launched and the current Board replaced the then Steering Group.

In Rome 2009, at the IPEX correspondents meeting, recommendations were made to improve the accessibility and usability of the IPEX website. This resulted in a new version of the website, which was officially launched in early 2011.

At their meeting held in Luxembourg on 15 February 2016, the Secretaries General, after having endorsed the note on the Role of IPEX, in their conclusions on IPEX "*call on the IPEX Board to present proposals for the definition of a digital strategy, meant to provide IPEX with a comprehensive and efficient strategy with the view of a mid-term work programme to be carried out by the rotating presidency*".

Based on that mandate, an IPEX Digital Strategy[1] was outlined. It was approved by the IPEX Board at its meeting on 27 January 2017 in Luxembourg, and adopted by the Secretaries General at their meeting of 20-21 February 2017.

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[1] Link to the IPEX Digital Strategy (www.ipex.eu > About IPEX > Basic documents)

The Digital Strategy is implemented in iterations, the first of which is a 3-year Work Programme (2017-2020)[2] that was adopted by the IPEX Board on 19 May 2017 in Bratislava. The Work Program focuses on the following three priority objectives for which workgroups were mandated to make proposals for improvements:

1. Enhancing the IPEX network

2. Strengthening the promotion of IPEX

3. Improving the IPEX digital system

More specifically the mandate for the workgroup on Improving the IPEX Digital System detailed that:

"The IPEX digital system is a multifunctional platform, which provides a database of official EU documents, as well as documents uploaded by EU national Parliaments. It also contains the calendar of interparliamentary cooperation activities. Moreover, the IPEX website hosts the webpages of various Interparliamentary Conferences; it is the exclusive information point for these conferences.

This priority objective focuses on improving the quality of the information and services provided by the IPEX digital system - especially on usability, features and the electronic exchange of information, as outlined in the IPEX Digital Strategy. Improving the website should take fully into account the provisions of section 3.6 of the IPEX Digital Strategy referring to relations to other actors in the framework of EU information exchange[3]."

Composition and working methods

Members

• ARACO Gianpaolo	Italy	
• BURGSTALLER Gregor	Austria	(2019-)
• HILBERT Jerry (Chair)	European Parliament	
• PIRSEL Marek	Slovak Republic	
• SCARPELLINI Cédric	Luxembourg	
• SILLAJOE Siiri	Estonia	(2018-2019)
• SCHACKE-BARFOED Iben Tybjærg	Denmark	(2019-)
• UHNAKOVA Anna	Slovak Republic	
• WASOWICZ Regina	Poland	
• ZETTERMAN Tuula	Sweden	

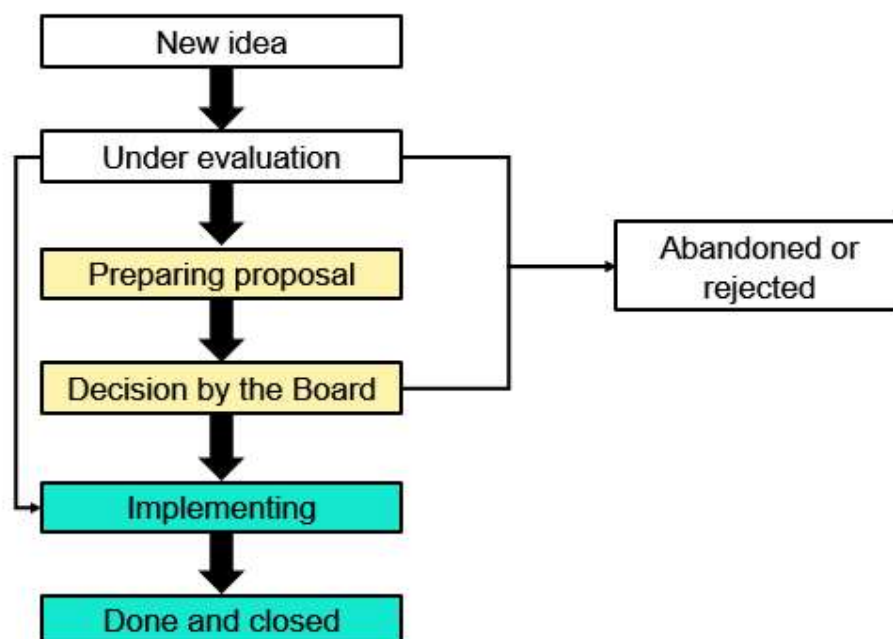[2] Link to the IPEX Work Program 2017-2020 (www.ipex.eu > About IPEX > Basic documents)

[3] The IPEX website has undergone major revisions since its initial introduction. From the start, revisions of the website have taken a top down approach where various working groups, set up by the IPEX Steering Group and subsequently by the IPEX Board, introduced changes to the website.

Working methods

The documents and contributions were shared, starting with the early drafts, in a common cloud repository in order to allow for a collaborative work at all moments.

Work group meetings were organized in connection to Board meetings, as well as at different moments by visio conference. In between those meetings email exchanges were used among work group members.

Contributions how to improve the IPEX digital system were collected in a bottom-up approach from the IPEX user base at different events and with different tools, before being processed along the following workflow:

The IPEX Board was regularly briefed on activities of the workgroup and the state of progress. Also different contributions, based on this progress, have been prepared for the Board.

Activities of the workgroup during the work program

While the workgroup was meeting regularly, either face-to-face or by visio, it also organized different workshops at the IPEX Correspondents meeting 2017 in Bratislava and the IPEX Users conference 2018 in Stockholm to gather input. It has also closely followed up work done by the other workgroups when their proposals required technical changes.

Shortly after the summer break 2018 a survey, with questions relating to the use and expectations for the IPEX Digital System, was sent to IPEX correspondents and users. Its findings allowed to further fine tune the ideas and their respective relevance.

In line with the timetable for the workgroup, as outlined in the work program, to propose an Action Plan during the first semester of 2019, this input was processed, completed with ideas from workgroup members, and finally compiled in the document "6.1 Collections of Improvements for the proposals to the Board (WG Digital System)"[4] presented to the IPEX Board on 18/01/2019 in Tallinn (attached Annex I).

The ideas contained in the documents focus on:

- reviewing the structure of the IPEX website, to make it more attractive and ease the access to information, including new information to be added
- enriching the website with additional content to make IPEX a comprehensive source of information about EU related parliamentary activities
- hosting multiple/all EU inter parliamentary conferences
- enabling authors[5] of content to directly contribute to the website and maintain content that they are responsible for or that they have contributed with
- ensuring that new content is having an extensive set of metadata for its publication and reuse
- improving the access to content by adapting and/or refining the search options; or by providing dashboards on dossiers and specific topics
- enhancing the notification system and allowing for newsletters to be generated
- applying techniques to improve the ranking by external search engines in order to create a higher visibility of the IPEX website and its content
- adapting the website for it to offer a user friendly and modern design, fit for mobile devices

The IPEX Board endorsed the collection of improvements contained in the document, allowing for a further analysis by technical specialists. Following this further analysis a draft cost estimate was prepared and a first set of mock-ups presented at the IPEX Board meeting on 17/05/2019 in Vienna, which adopted the document, subject to have the financial resources for their implementation.

The effort for implementing the different proposals within a revised IPEX+ digital system were estimated at one year starting the moment that the budget becomes available.

While extra work was done f.i. to refine the navigation structure or the formula identifying document with high activity, the content underwent proposals for additional categorization for Parliaments' EU relating information in the reformed IPEX database[6] (see ANNEX II) when uploaded by the correspondents. Since the workgroup submitted the proposals for improvement and while considering that all ideas were to be implemented within a single overall refactoring of the IPEX website (so no specific prioritization was applied), it continued to meet in order to fine tune the ideas, as well as being able to evaluate their implementation once developments allow so.

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[4] IPEX > Calendar > IPEX Board > 17/05/2019: IPEX WG PO3 Collection of ideas endorsed by the Board on 20190118

[5] IPEX Information Officer, IPEX correspondents, Conference secretariats,etc.

[6] IPEX > Calendar > Annual IPEX National Correspondents meeting 2019: Information note - New categories of documents

ANNEXES

Improvements identified by the workgroup and adopted by the Board

CONTENT

Introductory remarks

The EU Speakers Conference in 2015 invited IPEX to an expansion in the exchange of information and documents on EU related activities of Parliaments "in addition to the existing database". Taking, in accordance with the Digital Strategy and the Work Programme, the bottom up approach, the workgroup for improving the IPEX Digital System based its proceedings on the input received by participants at the Users Conference, the other two workgroups (Enhancing the IPEX network, Strengthening the promotion of IPEX), as well as on its own detailed survey. The aim of including new content is to make the website a comprehensive source of information about EU related parliamentary activities.

The input of the two other workgroups includes proposals for new categories of information ("important/horizontal issues") and for a new section "Information to share", while they are not finalised yet, this shall not prevent from analysing technical solutions for how to propose such information.

Basic points requiring special attention under the "content" issue (but also linked to other sections of this document) are:

- definitions and classification of types of new information uploaded
- description of the content of new section(s) in the context of the structure of the website
- ensuring reliable search results, especially with regard to search by symbols which is fundamental for "basket I' and "basket II" proposals (an in-depth review of the IPEX search is proposed[7], see the chapter covering search proposals)

During the debate in the workgroup on basic questions concerning the character/shape of new content it was underlined to explore at a maximum the possibilities for new content to be based on information retrieved from IPEX databases (existing or future ones), automatically processed for specific purpose or them being added and enriched by authorised people. Predefined searches should be favoured, wherever the information has been enriched with the required level of classifications.   In general, editorial work of Correspondents should be limited to a minimum.

The information uploaded into IPEX (mainly by the sources of this information: national Correspondents, EU institutions) can be subject to editorial work *sensu stricto* (which means

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[7] With regard to search by symbols it should be recalled that the structure of the "Documents" database doesn't allow for retrieving reliable data concerning national parliaments' documents in the situation of multi-COM dossiers. It's due to the fact that, as decided by the TWIG in 2010, every symbol is linked with the procedure dossier – not with a NP document. Therefore, any new symbol ascribed to a NP document in multi-COM dossiers will have the same drawback as currently.
It is proposed to consider a modification of the back office with an impact on the search engine and changing the rule of uploading symbol: instead of linking it to procedure dossier – linking it to document to which it refers.

shaping the text of information) only by the authors of this information. Editorial work of third persons shall only be possible in the framework of the "IPEX general editorial rules" as published on the IPEX website.

New content on the IPEX website

The information hereafter refers to proposals from the other two workgroups, amongst others the paper "Next step: new frame on the front page of IPEX "Information to share", from which the whole idea of new section divided into basket I and basket II was taken.

The proposal below also includes also some questions and alternative solutions, which may be further discussed in the coming analysis phase.

Final documents of interparliamentary conferences hosted on IPEX and possibly other interparliamentary meetings

Decsription:

- Documents (conclusions, summaries etc.) adopted by the IPCs / other meetings, or summaries by the IPCs/other meetings

and/or

- Links to video material from IPCs that exists already on the webpages of subsequent IPCs Presidencies Parliaments.

Published regularly in dedicated subpages and the "Start page - "Information to share", at most 2 (or more) documents of the last meetings of IPCs at the same time should be shown

Those documents are drawn from the searchable database of interparliamentary conferences hosted on IPEX and possibly from the Calendar for other interparliamentary meetings

Newsletters dealing with EU matters from NPs, the EP

Description:

Structured information from parliaments describing their EU activities (procedures and events), translated into en/fr - at least a part of it.

Published in a dedicated subsection or/and "Information to share" – if uploaded into 2nd basket as a material accompanying an important issue from the list of topics adopted by the Board

Drawn from the Subsection of "Parliamentary newsletters" by search/filtering possibilities

Research papers dealing with EU matters from NPs

Description:

Research papers, not necessarily linked to EU dossiers, including a translation of the title in en/fr obligatory, and possibly a translation of the abstract in en/fr

Published in a dedicated subsection or/and in "Information to share" – if uploaded into 2nd basket as a material accompanying an important issue from the list of topics adopted by the Board

Drawn from the Subsection of "Research papers from NPs" by using search/filtering possibilities

Documents/research papers from EU institutions concerning relations with NPs or NPs role in EU matters

Description:

Documents/research papers from EU institutions concerning relations with NPs or NPs role in EU matters (for instance documents in this category: EC reports, EP resolutions, EP research papers) which are published in a dedicated subsection or/and "Information to share" – if uploaded into 2nd basket as a material accompanying an important issue from the list of topics adopted by the Board

Drawn from the Subsection of "Documents/research papers from EU institutions" with search/filtering possibility

Remark:

Documents/papers should ideally be linked or uploaded by EU institutions (if such an approach is chosen it needs a special arrangements between IPEX and EU institutions)

Information to share

The aim is to increase the attractiveness of IPEX by adding new, up to date content (horizontal issues, "hot topics") not necessarily linked to one specific dossier.

Precondition for the success of the new frame is the support and engagement of the National Correspondents being mainly in charge of uploading information. Uploading documents to the new frame should be made as easy as possible.

Three sources of content for the new frame:

- Information extracted from the IPEX database (Basket I)
- Information by National Parliaments uploaded by the National Correspondents to Basket II
- Information by related EU-Institutions like the current Presidency of EU Council, the EP, COSAC, the other institutions hosted on IPEX

Important legislative issues - basket I

Basket I contains legislative proposals generating a certain number of activities by National Parliaments and the EP (when a certain number of activities - be it reasoned opinions, decisions in the framework of political dialogue or other opinions - is reached, the respective legislative proposal is automatically uploaded

to the new frame). The documents are listed in chronological order. The Board has to decide on the concrete number of activities triggering the process of uploading.

Important issues - basket II

Basket II contains documents linked to a list of keywords. The list of keywords has to be approved by the Board. The Board holds the responsibility for the list which should be open for modification. The users will have the possibility to click on the keywords and will then receive the respective information. The documents will be visible in chronological order.

Examples of possible content/keywords to be included in Basket II: Annual Work Program; MFF; European Semester; Brexit; EU trade agreements; NPs plenary debates; Plenary debates of National Parliaments, hearings on European issues; Studies and research papers concerning parliamentary scrutiny of EU-affairs and interparliamentary cooperation as well as the role of National Parliaments in EU affairs in general (EC reports, EP resolutions, documents like the report of the Timmermans Task Force – sent by the respective institutions, uploaded by the Information Officer); Own Initiative Opinions by National Parliaments (addressed to the EU Commission); Newsletters or any other kind of structured information from National Parliaments concerning EU activities; New appointments (for example new Secretary Generals, new chairs of EU-affairs committees)

General remarks concerning the "Important information" to share:

The possibility to search for content and an archive function should be in place.

The new frame has to be adjusted to the front page with regard to ergonomics and compatibility with tablets, smartphones and other electronic devices.

IPEX is owned by National Parliaments and the EP, therefore it should not offer any informal information in the public space.

News from Parliaments

News from Parliaments – currently including a large thematic scope decided by NPs, IPCs and the EP

Current state of play:

- Announcements of the future events: conferences, meetings, plenary debates with links to video materials
- Summaries of visits, meetings
- Ex post info about adopted documents (ex. ROs, parl. reforms, declarations of cooperation)
- Documents like resolution, political opinion – links or full text - rarely
- Plenary debates – ex post info or documents – published very rarely.

Published in "News from Parliaments" or/and the Home page

Drawn from a searchable database of "news" that should be established.

OWN initiative contributions

<u>Draft definition of OWN initiative category:</u>

Document containing a position of Parliament(s)/Chamber(s) in EU matter, in whatever form (resolution, scrutiny document, letter, common declaration etc.), sent to EU institution(s) – which is not a Reasoned Opinion or Political Dialogue

1) Most of the time OWN initiative documents are not connected to an EU document, for ex.:

- parliamentary scrutiny documents on horizontal issues, for ex. HoL reports of sessions (Brexit – energy security, future financial regulations), resolution on the future shape of cohesion policy);
- common declarations of several parliaments /chamber (their bodies) with regard to an important issue (future of CAP, joint letter of 26 parl/chambers on transparency of political decision-making in the EU))
- open letter to the presidents of European parliaments (Nord Stream II)
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2) OWN initiative documents may concern a particular EU document.

- resolution of the Czech Senate of 17 May 2018 concerning the decision of the European Council establishing the composition of the European Parliament
- Letter to the EC in the framework of the political dialogue regarding the provision of EU-wide multimodal travel information services under the ITS Directive 2010/40/EU – Dutch HoRepr.

Published in a new part of the database (to be linked to the existing Documents database (on the ex. of Connect: under a special <OWN + number> reference)) or/and "Information to share" – <u>basket II</u>

They are drawn from the new part of the database.

SEARCH

Search is closely linked to the other fields and more specifically to the one related to the design of the IPEX-website. For the IPEX users, the search engine revealed to be one of the strong points of the website.[8] However, the current search approach dates back to 2010 and is, in terms of IT and modern ergonomics, outdated. Therefore, a general re-engineering of the IPEX search system is proposed to be done simultaneously with the implementation of ideas related to the search possibilities. Survey results showed that the advanced search function is being used more frequently than the basic search.[9]

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[8] Survey results (Q4. What are the strong and weak points of the website?)

[9] Survey results (Q2.1. How do you proceed to find the information you are looking for?

Do you use the basic search function on the website? = 70% Yes

Do you use the advanced search? = 82% Yes.

To improve the search-function in general, the working group has been evaluating a total of 9 ideas, which were initiated by members of the two other working groups, members of the working group itself, or by the participants of the National Correspondents Meeting (Bratislava, 2017) :

- Idea #3 – EuroVoc classification
- Idea #8 – Propose a set of predefined searches
- Idea #9 – Search by transmission date (for weekly reports)
- Idea #12 – Search Engine Optimization
- Idea #15 – Add keywords to uploaded Reasoned Opinions
- Idea #19 – Improving the IPEX notification system
- Idea #24 – Adding dashboards for dossiers and other information
- Idea #26 – On screen info box with the definition of the search terms
- Idea #27 – Search issues – link Reasoned Opinions to documents for legislative proposals
- Idea #28 – Search issues – deadline for subsidiarity scrutiny (in case of multi-COM dossiers - keeping earlier deadlines in the database)

Overview of the findings

Using Eurovoc classifications (Idea #3) would improve the IPEX search engine in a general way. It is linked to idea #12, for designing the site in such a way that is optimized for search engine indexation.

Searching by transmission date (Idea #9) revealed itself to be an interesting tool for a more direct access to information. Indeed, users want to obtain the correct and precise results in the easiest and fastest way possible. The survey results showed that only 56% of the users and correspondents do use the "Refine your search"-function.[10] It will follow up on some of the propositions received by the users to improve the advanced search tool.[11] To this end, a better use of metadata, as well as automated searches were proposed.

Allowing to search for documents produced by hosted conferences (see also the chapter on Conferences) will grant easy access to that relevant information.

Search Engine Optimization (Idea #12) will implement the finding "V. Optimizing the visibility in search engines" included in the action plan of the working group on "Strengthening the promotion of IPEX", as adopted by the Board meeting in Tallinn on 25 May 2018. It will allow for IPEX content to get a higher ranking and visibility on internet search engines like Google, Bing and others.

Info boxes of the search fields (Idea #26) will satisfy one of the requests of the users, which would be to have an explanatory text for some key functions of the website.[12]

Notifications of the IPEX website

The current version of the IPEX website provides users with an accurate and modifiable notification system. Notifications are sent by email, but only to registered users. This notification

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[10] Survey results (Q2.2. How easy is it to get the information? / Do you use the filtering function once you have clicked on "Search"?)

[11] Survey results (Q2.2. How easy is it to get the information? / Do you use alerts (subscription to a specific document)?)

[12] Survey results (Q2.2.) saying that 76% of the respondents are in favour of such a feature.

system shall be retained, as it is beneficial to experts who interested in specific topics and policy areas.

The existing notification system should, however, be complemented by a modern push notification system that would also serve to unlogged IPEX users and should aim to alert users to new posts in News or Information to Share sections (see also the point on predefined searches). The advantage of this notification system is that the users will see a warning (for a few seconds) on a new post when they start their Internet browser without having to view the IPEX website.

Push notifications are only supported by modern Internet browsers, such as Google Chrome, Safari (in Mac OSX), Microsoft Edge (in Windows 10), and the user must only be allowed to receive notifications from the IPEX site once in their Internet browsers. In this way, the IPEX website run also users who originally did not want it to run, but saw a notification that appeared for a few seconds when you start the browser.

Improving the IPEX Notification system (Idea #19) will implement point 3.1 "Conduct an analysis on the improvement of the IPEX notification system" of the action plan of the working group "Enhancing the IPEX network", as adopted by the Board meeting in Tallinn on 25 May 2018 and discussed during the joint meeting of the working groups in Brussels on 10 October 2018. Concurrently, this idea could promote the subscription to alerts-function, which is at the moment only being used by 26% of the users and correspondents.[13]

How these ideas will improve the system

All those ideas mentioned here above are improvements that will have main impacts on the search engine in general. The modifications made will mostly be visible under the advanced search function linked to the database but will also bring along adjustments that are less visible to the basic search. By implementing the ideas, users could get better search results, i.e. get the desired results easier and faster and maybe even without having to refine their search.

Two ideas (ideas # 27 and 28) are resolving issues related to the database structure. Once those ideas have been implemented, the search results would always be correct. In other terms, the **reliability** of the information available on IPEX would beneficiate from those adjustments and so also gain in importance.

Through the optimization of the IPEX search engine (ideas #3 + 12), the IPEX website would become more detectable by traditional search engines such as Google. By doing so, the **visibility** of IPEX would considerably be increased.

The **user-friendliness** would be improved specifically by the implementation of idea #26, but also in a general matter, by the implementation of the other ideas of the catalogue. The website would be easy to understand, easy to use and practical for a broader public, next to the correspondents.

Already existing features that are being revised (idea # 19) and newly introduced features (ideas #9 and 15) would increase the **attractiveness** of the IPEX.

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[13] Survey results (Q2.1. How do you proceed to find the information you are looking for?)

CONFERENCES

Since the launch of the second version of the website in 2011, which offered space for the "EU Speaker's conference" only, the IPEX website has been enhanced to allow for hosting also for other conferences.

Currently IPEX hosts in addition to the "EU Speakers conference" the conference sites of COSAC, the IPC for the CFSP/CSDP, the IPC on SECG and the JPSG on Europol, some of them having been added only recently.

With this increase in conferences the current design starts to meet its limits in terms of ergonomic aspects, searchability and administration. It has therefore become necessary to reconsider those aspects (also listed in other chapters of this document) in order to improve the visibility for currently hosted conferences as well as future conferences that could be hosted on IPEX.

Hosting the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG)

The IPEX board offered to host the JPSG on IPEX. The idea was initiated by the working group for "Enhancing the IPEX network" and implemented following a decision by the IPEX board in May 2018. Once the implementation was carried out by the Information Officer, all documents from the JPSG can now be found on IPEX.

Integration of the COSAC website to IPEX

The IPEX board offered to host the COSAC website on IPEX. Following the Conclusions of COSAC in Tallinn (November 2017) and a careful examination of the information provided by the IPEX Board, COSAC at the meeting in Sofia (June 2018) expressed its support for IPEX to host the COSAC website.

COSAC in Vienna (November 2018) welcomed the decision to transfer the information from the COSAC website to IPEX. COSAC took positive note of the progress achieved so far by the COSAC Secretariat in uploading the available COSAC documents on IPEX. COSAC called on the Secretariat to finalize the process as soon as possible and to submit a schedule of the transfer operations at the meeting of the COSAC Chairpersons in Bucharest, in order to ensure that the COSAC website would be fully integrated into IPEX by the COSAC Plenary in Bucharest. Finally, COSAC invited the incoming Romanian Presidency to monitor closely the transfer of information and to ensure the completion of the process by the LXI COSAC plenary meeting.

Include conference meeting documents in search results

The IPEX Correspondents meeting launched the idea to be able to search for COSAC and other conference documents by document type, for example conclusions, contributions or biannual reports.

First of all, the different types of documents that should be searchable would have to be defined: Contributions, Conclusions, Bi-annual reports and more general documents (those available at every conference meeting, like agenda, invitation, participants list, background notes, and general information). Once the definitions of the different types of documents done, a standardization of the kinds of documents would be need for the documents to be searchable.

The idea is also to be able to search in different sections of for example biannual reports.

The key challenge is to include conferences to general search. The implementation of the proposed idea would only be feasible in the "Keyword search" under the section Calendar. The filtering function of the basic search as well as of the advanced search under the section Documents do not lend themselves to be options for a solution in this matter. To that end, documents being uploaded in the CMS would have to be linked with the specific predefined type of document.

The expected potential would be more easily accessible information about conclusions from conferences or scrutiny systems in national parliaments found in Bi-annual reports. As well as an improvement of the exchange of best practices by making this information searchable.

Improve the navigation among conferences

Enhance the navigation in order to make every conference content site be an autonomous entity within IPEX, allowing to be able to show its identity. A more in detail presentation for this shall be elaborated in the section on ergonomics.

Separate administration of conferences' website content

Currently all conferences and their content is managed by a single account, the one of the IPEX webmaster used by the IPEX Information Officer. In order to give the conference secretariats a full autonomy on when content is published on their site, it is proposed that every single conference can be managed by one or more accounts that do not need to have full administrative access to the IPEX website; however the IPEX webmaster will keep control to any content published on the website(s).

ERGONOMICS

Ergonomics are a key factor for the success of the IPEX website, as it allows users to access information in a user friendly way, applying modern standards of website design.

IPEX users unanimously call for improved user friendliness of the IPEX website, expecting IPEX to have a clear, easy, user friendly (including mobile-friendly) navigation based on a logical and functional structure. In other words, there is a need to revise the design for it to be more effective and comfortable for the IPEX user and also comply with current web design standards and trends (idea nr. 22 and 25).

At the same time, there is a request to create some additional space on the IPEX website in order to be able add the new content (idea nr. 14, 16, 20 and nr. 29) and to add dashboards with already existing structured information (idea nr. 24).

In order to improve IPEX website user-friendliness in terms of ergonomics, its redesign shall be focused on the following aspects:

- **simplicity (**uncluttered websites) - a uniform graphic charter shall be applied to all of the pages if possible and suitable, to let the user know that he is still on the same website;

- **navigation –** IPEX users shall be able to easily browse through the content and all information must be accessible by as few clicks as possible;

- **location** - IPEX user shall be able to locate where he is on the website at all time;

- **interactivity –** in order to allow IPEX users to take in information more easily the IPEX website should provide more of its content in a dynamic way; IPEX website shall contain dashboards where the users can view actual information in an aggregated way (events/news/scrutiny/reports etc.);

- **readability** – the IPEX website shall provide the possibility of font resizing (IPEX users shall be able to resize the font if they so desire) and **the text should be sufficiently spaced out and organized;**

- **accessibility** (*technical issue) – the IPEX website shall be able to be accessed universally, i.e. by all types of users (including partially sighted and visually handicapped people); simple accessibility rules exist and should be followed so as to give access to the greatest number of people (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines).

Navigation in a renewed IPEX website

To make the navigation of the website clearer and easier, a 2-level (or 3-level where applicable) responsive navigation menu is proposed, where possibly the sub-menu will appear below the main menu (with a narrow symbol). The navigation bar shall give IPEX users the possibility to access any of the menu or submenu items they wish to enter with one simple click, no matter what page they are on.

*When designing menu items, a minimalistic approach is recommend – that is each menu item is a single word: **Calendar, Documents, Parliaments, Conferences** and **About**. Homepage/Home menu item would be represented by a **home icon** (it will ease navigation across different devices).

It would also be useful to have a **sitemap** page reachable through a hyperlink from the Homepage. A sitemap may make navigating the website easier and help user to know where he is on the website. Moreover, a sitemap is an important way for a website to communicate with search engines and it will help to improve the visibility on internet search engines, thus contributing to the idea of a Search Engine optimization (idea nr. 12)

Structure of a renewed IPEX website

Homepage would be a page with dynamic content (dashboards, infographics – referring for example to Calendar events, Hot topics, News etc.) providing links to other sections of the website. There is also the request to create space on the IPEX homepage for the new "Information to share" - this would be represented by links to the Documents section (e.g. first 3 links from Subsidiarity, European Semester, EU related research papers, Resolutions and decisions, Reports

and minutes, if they are flagged to show there). Any information on the homepage should be ideally visible without the necessity to scroll down (desktop view).

Other pages – the new design should analyse the possibility of omitting submenus and content that is currently shown in the left hand information panel containing navigation in the respective page.

- **CALENDAR section**:
  Ought to show a list of upcoming events in chronological order first (idea nr. 25)

  Filters by Event types and Institutions could become drop-down boxes, with a pre-filter based on typed input (this would also solve the issue of lengthy lists)

  Showing all events included in the database would be a possible by a separate sub menu entry or button

- **DOCUMENTS section**
  The entry page could show the entries retrieved from the Hot topics on the current homepage, as well as important documents from conferences

  The advanced search giving access to the legislative database would be the next option, then specific sub sections – new sub-menu items with the new content - would be added here. The exact layout shall be further discussed during the upcoming analysis phase

- **PARLIAMENTS section**
  Should include new sub-menu items:

  Parliaments of the former EU member states (*UK)

  News (as they inform about events in parliaments) - News should be individual entries/pages rather than one list (this is also required by the SEO, idea #12), News on the Homepage - link from this section (e.g. first 4 links from News with a photo or a Parliament logo)

  Interparliamentary Cooperation (useful links)

- **CONFERENCES section**
  This sub section would start with a splash page, showing the different conferences hosts (see also ideas expressed for conferences)

  Every conference would get its own page (possibility for some graphics to be personalized by conference)

- **ABOUT section**
  New sub-menu items within Contacts:

  Speakers - the same format for the Speaker´s contact list as the list of Secretaries General and others

  Contact lists form the COSAC website (possibly)

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

A number of ideas collected and analysed proofed to be transversal and requiring some in-depth technical changes to the website for becoming operational.

The following chapter covers these ideas, which most of the times have links also to other sections (content, ergonomic, search).

New sections using a content management system (CMS) for editorial contributions

Objective:

Enhance the current IPEX system to allow for easily (i.e. without the need to have a new development) add/update/remove new sections to the website that can contain text, documents, graphics, photos, links to videos, links to other sites, etc.

This stems from idea #04, which was proposed at the Correspondents' meeting 2017 in Bratislava.

Expected benefit:

Be able to easily create new static content for subjects that relate to EU Interparliamentary exchanges, but which do not have a specific entry on the website.

Make the website more attractive by having an extended editorial content.

Make the website more flexible by answering quickly to new developments of interparliamentary cooperation/ requests of users.

Impact:

The current version of the IPEX website already allows for some editorial content to be added by the Information Officer, however such content presentation is limited to a number of pages specifically foreseen for that purpose (f.i. About IPEX section).

A wider use of editorial content will require to allow the Information Officer - under the guidance of the Board - to dynamically extend the current navigation structure under some or all of the main entries for accessing to new (blank) pages to contain the additional contributions.

Also it would be require to add a new type of content in the search engine for easily find and accessing the content on those pages.

Beyond purely textual contributions, the pages might also contain pictures or diagrams. While videos being hosted on third party architecture would not be completely excluded, they would need to match a certain number of criteria as regards the format.

One time costs:

Development of the new features

Long term costs:

Contributions will need to be drafted, updated and translated.

Webservices to retrieve information from IPEX

Objective:

Offer a set of web services which allow external applications to retrieve information from IPEX.

Access to these web services shall require an authentication, so that the client application owners can be known.

Information exposed in such web services should focus on legislative proposals, dossiers and scrutiny pages, as well as to calendar entries.

Expected benefit:

Allow f.i. national parliaments wishing to retrieve electronically information contained in IPEX for enhancing their national information systems.

Impact:

In order to implement this idea some development work is required, based on an outline of web services to be defined.

Once implemented, the web services will ensure an increased transparency and reusability of information contained in the database.

One time costs:

Development of the web services

Developments will be required by client applications to communicate with IPEX

Long term costs:

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Dashboards for legislative proposals

Objective:

Enhance the IPEX website with components or pages that give a compiled overview of some of the core content of IPEX.

This stems from idea #24, which was proposed at the Users conference 2018 in Stockholm.

Expected benefit:

Providing a synthesis of some core information of the website which updates automatically with new content being added will allow users with a simple view to find out f.i. the status of a given legislative proposal. It will increase the readability and attractiveness of the IPEX website.

Impact:

Dashboards shall be based on information existing in the website.

Dashboards being a new product that the website will offer (with the understanding that they will introduce a complete graphical overhaul of the current overviews that exist already on the dossier level), an extended graphical analysis is required.

One time costs:

Graphical analysis

Development of the dashboard templates and their integration with existing data.

Long term costs:

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New categories of Parliaments' EU relating information in the reformed IPEX database

Information note for IPEX Correspondents' Meeting

Vienna, 15 November 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The EU Speakers Conference invited IPEX to look into "an expansion in the exchange of information and documents on EU related activities of Parliaments in addition to the existing database"[14]. According to Secretaries General conclusions on IPEX, the IPEX platform should become a "one stop shop" of interparliamentary EU information exchange[15].

Based on this mandate, proposals submitted by the workgroups for implementing the Work Program 2017-20 of the **IPEX Digital Strategy**, identified additional information and papers from Parliaments to be published in order to:

a) expand the scope of national Parliaments' documents in the IPEX database, for ex. by introducing documents on general/horizontal issues or falling under the category of "own initiative" documents**[16]**,

b) introduce Parliaments' newsletters and research papers dealing with EU matters,

c) transform "News from Parliaments", containing mostly different types of information but also documents, into a searchable database.

These proposals result from input collected at the Stockholm 2018 Users Conference, the National Correspondents Meetings in 2017 and 2018, as well as from 3 working groups tasked with the implementation of the Work Programme 2017-20. They have been included in the report "Improvements resulting from different ideas proposed by the IPEX Workgroup on "Improving the IPEX Digital System"[17], approved by the Board at its meeting in Tallinn on 18 January 2019.

Taking the above into account, it needs to be highlighted that IPEX will have to deal with a new situation: **new records in the future database will not only be built upon an EU document but upon**

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[14] Conclusions of the EU Speakers Conference, Rome, April 2015, p. 7:
https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/dossier/files/download/082dbcc54ce35cd0014ce64535e5028a.do

[15] Conclusions of the Secretaries General, Vienna, January 2019, p. 2:
 https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/dossier/files/download/082dbcc5686db5be016870edf74a02fd.do

[16]   An initial idea to apply a not defined category of "own initiative" documents, existing in the databases of the EC (NPs Opinions) and the EP (Connect), was abandoned. The WG PO3, after a detailed analysis, concluded that it should not be introduced into new database, because such a collective category (used differently by two institutions) is too vague and imprecise, and therefore it will not facilitate the interparliamentary exchange of information, which is the main goal of IPEX. The analysis conducted made it possible however to identify some gaps (like common parliamentary documents) and to confirm that some types of documents, being part of interparliamentary EU information exchange but absent on IPEX for technical reasons, should find their place in the modified IPEX platform.

[17] Report of the WG PO3, p. 5-8:
https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/dossier/files/download/082dbcc5682ac32801682e01037b03da.do

a national Parliament/Chamber document or information item[18]. That is why the classification of parliamentary documents/information items is so important and shall be established in close cooperation with Correspondents.

2. PROPOSED CATEGORIES FOR THE PLANNED NEW PART OF THE IPEX DATABASE

A first level of classification for the new types of NPs' documents/pieces of information, shall allow to **differentiate between "document" and "information item". Therefore it should be considered and defined that**:

- **"document of NP"** includes any kind of resolution, decision, opinion etc. adopted by a Parliament/Chamber or its body in the course of appropriate parliamentary procedures, as well as any kind of letters or declarations signed on behalf of Parliament/Chamber or its body,
- **"information item"** describes only parliamentary activity or document(s), or contains an analysis of an issue for the use of Parliament, written inside the institution or outsourced (case of research papers). The "Information item" category includes newsletters (structured information), research papers as well as what can be called "information notes" (see the examples in point 4 below).

This division is important, since **a document expresses an official position of a given Parliament/Chamber** or its body while an information item does not. Such classification will allow identifying instantly what kind of paper we are dealing with.

Therefore, it is proposed to consider for the new content of the IPEX database **the following categories** of NPs' documents and parliamentary information items relating to EU matters – if decided so by Parliaments issuing them:

1) documents of individual national Parliaments/Chambers concerning EU general/horizontal issues (not only concrete EU documents as currently): resolutions, scrutiny documents, minutes, verbatim reports etc.
   (eg., Opinion of the EUAC of the French Senate on the simplification of the European law, 16.02.2017[19]; House of Lords report: "UK-EU relations after Brexit", 08.06.2018[20]),

2) common parliamentary documents: letters/declarations/proposals of several Parliaments/Chambers or conclusions of interparliamentary EU fora that are not hosted on IPEX (*an important category since it shows a certain level of interparliamentary cooperation*)
   (eg., "Joint Parliamentary Declaration on the Future of the CAP for 2020" of the EUAC of the French, Italian, Polish Senates and Irish Parliament, 11.04.2017[21], Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Parliaments Speakers/Presidents, 02.03.2018[22]),

3) documents concerning EU documents not included currently in IPEX Documents database

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[18] The term "information item" is used in this text as synonymous with "piece of information".

[19] In the Connect - OWN(2017)0048: http://www.connefof.europarl.europa.eu/connefof/app/1723?lang=en&p=1

[20] In the Connect - OWN(2018)0092: http://www.connefof.europarl.europa.eu/connefof/app/2041?lang=en&p=1

[21] In the EC database:

https://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/relations/relations_other/npo/docs/poland/own_initiative/oi_common_agriculture_policy_for_2020/oi_common_agriculture_policy_for_2020_senate_opinion_en.pdf

[22] In the EC database:

https://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/relations/relations_other/npo/docs/poland/own_initiative/oi_v4_countries_joint_statement_parliamentary_cooperation/oi_v4_countries_joint_statement_parliamentary_cooperation_sejm_opinion_en.pdf

(eg., Czech Senate opinion on the decision of the European Council establishing the composition of the European Parliament, 17.05.2018[23], Swedish Committee on Finance about Completing Europe's EMU, Five Presidents' Report, 2015[24]),

4) information items: newsletters (or any structured information), research papers, and "information notes"[25] which may comprise: announcements of future events, summaries of meetings, info about adopted parliamentary documents (ROs, resolutions, decisions) etc.,

5) links to transmissions of NPs' debates (plenary, committees),

6) other (?).

This new part of IPEX database should follow the same basic rule as the current Documents database: **every Parliament/Chamber is owner of the content that it has published. Common documents can be linked to multiple national Parliament pages**. The decision to upload documents/information is always up to Parliaments, but must be in line with the guidelines decided by the IPEX Board

3. DEBATE WITH CORRESPONDENTS

As mentioned in the Introduction, it is **the first time when IPEX records will be based on the documents/information from Parliaments/Chambers** (not on EU documents as it happens now). It means that more than 40 persons will be uploading and indexing. So, general **guidelines concerning uploading/indexing** prepared together with Correspondents shall be foreseen.

The Parliaments should upload their documents/information items, in accordance with general guidelines, while providing the following mandatory elements:

o **codes of categories** to be agreed:
  - documents: "individual document concerning general issues", "common document",
  - information items: "information note", newsletter, research paper, links, others;
  From the formal description point of view the most important is a division into 2 categories: documents and information items, the further classification of information items into subcategories being very helpful,

o **keywords of Basket II**[26] - reflecting topics important from Parliaments' point of view; a rolling list to be established and managed by the Board, for ex.: Annual Work Program, Multiannual Financial Framework, European Semester, Brexit; the keywords of Basket II will allow to show automatically recent parliamentary documents and information items relating to them on the IPEX front page,

o **Eurovoc**[27] **descriptors**; Eurovoc - multilingual (23 languages), multidisciplinary thesaurus covering the activities of the EU, a tool for subject indexing and therefore enabling to carry out searches using a controlled vocabulary.

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[23] In the Connect - OWN(2018)0090: http://www.connefof.europarl.europa.eu/connefof/app/2019?lang=en&p=1

[24] In the Connect – OWN(2015)0016:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/docs_autres_institutions/parlements_nationaux/contrib/dv/2015/0016/SE_PARLIAMENT_CONT1-OWN(2015)0016_EN.pdf

[25] The different subcategories of "information notes" listed in point 4 are currently published in the section "News from Parliaments" but they do not constitute a database (they are not searchable).

[26] See the WG PO3 report „Collection of improvements for proposal to the Board", p. 7
https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/dossier/files/download/082dbcc5682ac32801682e01037b03da.do

[27] Eurovoc: https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-vocabularies/th-dataset/-/resource/dataset/eurovoc?target=About

Taking into account results of the debate on the reform of the IPEX website, especially the requests from Correspondents and Users to have more EU related parliamentary information searchable and archived on IPEX, the Board would like **to discuss the proposed new categories with the national Correspondents at their meeting in November 2019**.

The result of the discussion with Correspondents and their replies to the planned questionnaire should allow establishing a list of categories of objects described in the database that will be reflected in new types of records and types of relations between them, subject to approval by the Board.