

IPEX ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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

21-22 February 2017

Bratislava

Mr Claude Frieseisen

Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Chair of the IPEX Board



Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with a great pleasure that I take the floor to present the 2016 IPEX annual report on. I am particularly pleased to report on the IPEX activities, because I supported the initiative of an interparliamentary information exchange platform since its presentation back in 2000 at the Speakers Conference. Looking back over the last years, I feel very proud to observe that this instrument of interparliamentary dialogue 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. Indeed, the original goals of IPEX have been largely achieved; however, there are new challenges ahead of us that we have to face.

As you may know, 2015 and 2016 have been two challenging and enriching years for our Parliament. Indeed, during the second semester of 2015, the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies organised six interparliamentary meetings as well as a COSAC Working Group as part of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In February 2016, the Chamber of Deputies hosted the Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments. And finally, on 22-24 May 2016, we officially concluded our Presidency with the Conference of the Speakers of the European Union Parliaments and we had the honour to take over the rotating IPEX Presidency, according to the IPEX guidelines adopted in Rome in 2015. As stated during the Secretaries General meeting held in Luxembourg in February 2016, I firmly believe that the mechanism of the rotating presidencies will lead to an increased feeling of ownership of IPEX by all EU Parliaments.

It was with a great respect and profound admiration for the work performed so far by the previous IPEX presidencies, that Luxembourg took over this exciting but also demanding challenge. 2016 has been a particularly fruitful year for IPEX in many aspects, and, therefore I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the Board, to the IPEX Information Officer as well as to the national Correspondents.



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A.) Meetings under Luxembourg Chairmanship

During its chairmanship, the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies has organised the following events:

- **Three Board meetings** (1 July 2016 and 27 January 2017 in Luxembourg and 21 October 2016 in Brussels)
- The annual **national Correspondents meeting** (1-2 December 2016 in Luxembourg)
- Three **Working group** meetings (digital strategy in Warsaw and Luxembourg, Organisation of national Correspondents meeting in Luxembourg)

Regarding the organisation of the annual national Correspondents meeting, the chair wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to encourage Parliaments/Chambers to come forward and to volunteer in view of the organisation of the next national Correspondents meeting. The meeting does not necessarily need to take place in the parliament which holds the Chairmanship of the Board.

Four Working groups have been active during the Luxembourg Chairmanship.

- 1) Working group on the digital strategy, co-chaired by Mr Gianpaolo Araco and Ms Tania Tennina
- 2) Working group on the institutions, chaired by the Information officer, Mr Calin Racoti
- 3) Working group on the fora, chaired by Ms Birgit von Pflug
- 4) Working group on the organisation of the IPEX national Correspondents meeting, chaired by Mr Yves Carl

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.

B.) New order of presidencies

Dear Colleagues,

Before entering into further details concerning the achievements of the past term, allow me to remind you that the chairmanship had to take into account a decision of the Council of the European Union, which also had an impact on IPEX.



Following the UK decision to relinquish the Council presidency in the second half of 2017, the Council decided to move forward, by 6 months, the order of presidencies, starting, as of 1 July 2017. On 26 July 2016, the Council adopted decision 2016/1316 establishing a revised order in which the Member States will hold the presidency of the Council of the EU until 2030.

The revised order of the presidencies foresees that Estonia will take over the presidency of the Council of the EU during the second semester of 2017. This decision had a direct impact on the composition of the IPEX Board, in particular in view of art. 4 of the IPEX guidelines, which states:

The Board consists of members representing:

- a. the national Parliaments holding the previous, current and upcoming Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments;*
- b. the national Parliament of the member state holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first semester of the year in which the Board takes office;*

Accordingly, the *ex-officio* composition of the IPEX Board was the following:

- a. Luxembourg, Slovakia, Estonia
- b. The Netherlands

The Luxembourg Chairmanship sent a letter to the Estonian Parliament informing the *Riigikogu* about this decision and about their upcoming chairmanship in 2018, while asking them to delegate a representative to the IPEX Board.

The Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies received a letter from the Estonian Parliament stating that Ms Maria ALAJÕE, Secretary General of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, would join the Board.



C.) Priorities of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies

In 2015, the IPEX Board, under the Luxembourg chairmanship, mainly focussed on the following issues:

- IPEX Handbook
- IPEX Leaflet
- the digital strategy
- Financing IPEX

One of the priorities of the Luxembourg Presidency consisted in finishing two projects already launched by previous presidencies. These were, first of all on the one hand, the Handbook for the Correspondents, whose aim is to provide the new Correspondents with an overview of IPEX, its functionalities, and above all, to offer a guide on how to upload information. The second projects was the Leaflet, that promotes the IPEX and in which you can find at a glance what IPEX stands for and whom to contact. I am very pleased to announce that both projects have been realised during the past 12 months.

Handbook

The Handbooks purpose is to provide support to the Correspondents by giving them a general overview of how IPEX is embedded in the interparliamentary framework, with a particular regard to the EU legislative process. It informs about the functionalities of the website and offers a guide on how to upload information on IPEX. It is a compact 11-pages document which also contains the guidelines as well as some reference documents.

IPEX Leaflet

The Leaflet is an instrument aiming the promotion of IPEX, both, inside the national Parliaments or Chambers, and outside the parliamentary framework to groups interested in parliamentary activities. It provides for a very short overview of what IPEX stands for, its objectives, structure and database. The leaflet contents also a page dedicated to the national Correspondents and their roles as a network facilitator and IPEX ambassador and where every national Parliament is free to add its contacts.

The Board decided, in particular, that the English and French IPEX Leaflet versions should have the same format, but every national Parliament could customize the



translation of the Leaflet in its own language and put in pre-defined spaces, its logo or national flag, possibly the IPEX correspondent's contacts and other relevant information according to a standard template. Pursuant to this decision, the Luxembourg Chairmanship contacted an external agency in order to realise the graphical layout of the above-mentioned leaflet. The Chairmanship took charge of the costs for the graphical realisation, but the costs related to the adaptations made by the national Parliaments should be taken over by themselves, as discussed and approved during the Board meeting.

Financing IPEX

a) Cofinancing

In July 2016, the Presidency sent out a letter of intent asking national Parliaments/Chambers for their commitment in participating in the co-financing of the IPEX Information Officer. The Parliaments/Chambers were informed that the costs would be shared in equal parts according to the number of participating national Parliaments, and that the estimated maximum amount would be 70.000€ per year for the given period (2017-2018). The maximum contribution per national Parliament is € 4,667 per year; the minimum is 2.500 € per year, depending on the number of participating parliaments. The bills will be sent by the Belgian Senate at the beginning of each year and will bear a mention that they are accounted for and audited following the rules applicable to the Senate. After receiving the commitment of at least fifteen national Parliaments of at least fifteen Member States over the elapsed year, the commitment has become effective.

b) Contract with the Information Officer(IO)

As decided previously by the IPEX Board, the Belgian Senate concluded an employment contract with the IPEX IO (Mr Calin RACOTI) as of 1 January 2015 for a fixed term of two years which, according to the Belgian law automatically turned into a non-fixed term contract after these two years, as of 1 January 2017. The Board decided to continue the contract with the IPEX information officer.

The chair wants to thank the Belgian Senate for having hired the IO and for being transparent in the management of the costs.



D.) Adoption of the IPEX digital strategy

At their last meeting held in Luxembourg on the 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”.

The IPEX digital strategy will guide the decisions of the IPEX Board regarding the future development of IPEX. After its adoption by the Secretaries General of EU parliaments, the IPEX digital strategy will be complemented by a 3-year work programme, which will ensure continuity in the management of projects that span over more than one (rotating) chairmanship and will indicate the priorities, the projects, the activities to be undertaken, as well as the timeframe for individual projects.

The digital strategy will outline the strategic approaches needed to be taken in order to achieve and implement the IPEX goals in relation to the target IPEX audience, the information, and services provided by IPEX.

It will also define the guiding provisions on the short-term maintenance and upkeep of the website.

Furthermore, it will identify how to involve national Correspondents more actively in the exchange of information and, finally, identify the relevant actions for the promotion of IPEX.

I am very proud to announce to you that the Board has finalised its work on the digital strategy on 27 January and that the final document for the IPEX digital strategy has been submitted to the Secretaries general and should be adopted at our meeting in Bratislava.

The 3-year work programme will be adopted by the IPEX Board following the adoption of the IPEX digital strategy by the Secretaries General. The Board will be responsible for the implementation of the work programme, whereas the IPEX Chair will be responsible for constant monitoring of the work programme implementation.



E.) IPEX national Correspondents meeting

The Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies also had the honour to organise the IPEX national Correspondents meeting from 1-2 December 2016 in Luxembourg. 53 participants representing 26 Member States and 4 candidate countries attended this Correspondents meeting.

The first day of the meeting basically consisted in 2 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 plenary hall of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies in order to discuss two main subjects: “IPEX as a facilitator for the Exchange of Parliamentary Information” and “e-trustEx”.

Former Chairman of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies and Member of the European Parliament, Mr Ben Fayot recalled the historical context in which IPEX was developed as a merely information instrument for national Parliaments and how it became a platform for the parliamentary dimension of EU issues. He also focused on the importance of the implication of national Parliaments in the EU legislative process and the responsibility of every single member of the Parliaments to deal with EU matters, not only in the framework of the EU affairs committee but also in every single sectoral committee.

Mr de Bondt, Advisor to the European Affairs unit of the Belgian Senate, insisted on the fact that IPEX should become a “one-stop shop”, i.e. the place where you could find all the documents related to the parliamentary dimension of EU issues, including COSAC, information on EU discussions in national Parliaments and other EU related initiatives. He also stressed the importance to have another user’s conference and to enhance the visibility of IPEX with adequate promotional material. Finally, he said that IPEX should be “THE” facilitator for the exchange of parliamentary information on EU matters.

In their presentation about e-TrustEX, Ms Deprez and Ms Smets from the European Commission explained that this project was part of a rationalisation process for EU documents launched by the EC. They announced that in 2017 eTrust-Ex would also start transmitting the replies to national Parliaments’ opinions and that one year later the reception of these opinions would also be possible via eTrust-Ex.



F.) Future of IPEX

IPEX has gone through many evolutions and developments since its start in 2000. It has proved to be a reliable instrument and a relevant platform, not only for the exchange of documents and information, but also, and most importantly, for the exchange of ideas and for human exchange, i.e. networking. Indeed, we have to bear in mind that such a huge project would not have been possible without the commitment of many persons at all levels, political and non-political. At this stage, I would encourage the future presidency to follow this path and to continue bringing those people together who have a vision of a bright future for IPEX. The digital strategy clearly attests that IPEX is ready to take on new challenges and to be strictly forward-looking.