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***Report on “Interparliamentary
relations between the European
Parliament and national Parliaments
under the Treaty of Lisbon”***

2012

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

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Preface

This is the second annual report on developments in interparliamentary cooperation between the European Parliament and national Parliaments following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. The 2012 annual report logically builds on the first report, which covered developments in 2010 and 2011.

Interparliamentary cooperation in 2012 clearly showed that despite the diversity between Parliaments a lot can be achieved whenever there is a willingness to compromise and to reach agreement based on a consensual approach.

First and foremost, consensus-based negotiations enabled a breakthrough regarding the parliamentary scrutiny of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) at the Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU (EUSC) in Warsaw. The first Interparliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP took place in September 2012 and the EP was a key contributor to its success by closely cooperating with the Cypriot Presidency on all organisational aspects and offering its expertise during the process of drafting and adopting the Conference's Rules of Procedure. As regards the EUSC, which is the steering body of interparliamentary cooperation, an interesting and ongoing trend since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is that its agenda is becoming more political, resulting in conclusions which increasingly have political consequences.

The distinct trend towards a more consensual approach within the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) had already become apparent during the Polish Presidency of COSAC in 2011. At the plenary meeting in Copenhagen the EP chose to have its dissenting opinion on a specific issue explicitly mentioned in the minutes, rather than to abstain or vote against. At the plenary meeting in Nicosia two delegations of national Parliaments acted similarly. COSAC was also successful in promoting the exchange of information and best practices between national Parliaments and the European Parliament, for instance by inviting EP keynote speakers at its plenary meetings.

The "yellow card" procedure was triggered for the first time in 2012, more than two years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. National Parliaments' submissions, and reasoned opinions in particular, provide a valuable source of information on concerns that should be taken seriously. The benefits from the early warning mechanism for the European Parliament can be significant. National Parliaments' positions are often good indicators of positions that will be taken in the Council, while their reasoning can be a useful additional source of information for the legislative work of EP committees. That is why the EP launched an initiative to enhance the visibility of national Parliaments' reasoned opinions and contributions within the EP.

Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICM) remain a most appropriate format for Members of specialised EP committees and corresponding committees of national Parliaments, including EP rapporteurs and their counterparts in national Parliaments, to meet on specific dossiers. The right timing for such meetings is crucial. A telling example was the first interparliamentary conference on the European Semester in

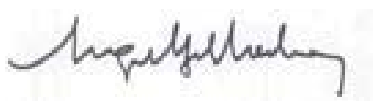
February 2012, which was hosted by the EP under the auspices of the committees on Economic and Monetary Affairs, Budgets and Employment and Social Policy. In this context it should be underlined that the economic, financial and sovereign debt crisis and the subsequent multiple and far-reaching decisions on economic governance taken at EU level have united the EP and national Parliaments in their concerns about the tendency to marginalise the role of parliaments in this field and the double democratic deficit which this may entail. These common concerns explain the success of interparliamentary meetings on related issues.

In 2012 bilateral visits continued to be a flexible ad hoc formula that was used rather frequently. Recent technical developments should give an additional boost to videoconferencing as a tool for interparliamentary dialogue.

The overall better performance and improved visibility of the platform for Interparliamentary EU information exchange (IPEX) is well illustrated by the findings of a survey that was part of the 17th Bi-annual Report of COSAC. Parliaments mentioned IPEX as the second most commonly used source of information on other Parliaments. The same survey shows that the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) ranks on an excellent second position in the category "additional sources or networks used to gather information". The EP itself has largely benefited from the ECPRD network, either to collect data for studies and notes or to obtain input for projects to boost the EP's efficiency in certain areas.

The Treaty of Lisbon bestowed more powers on both the EP and national Parliaments, which - each at their level - represent the very same citizens. Parliaments should therefore, whilst fully respecting their respective competencies and levels of responsibility, work together to ensure the democratic legitimacy of decisions through a constructive, consensus-based interparliamentary dialogue.

We hope that you will find this report useful.



Miguel Ángel Martínez Martínez
Vice-President



Othmar Karas
Vice-President

1. Introduction

This annual report first identifies a number of key developments and trends in interparliamentary cooperation that demonstrate how the ongoing interaction between Parliaments within the framework of the Treaty of Lisbon yields tangible and promising results. It goes on to analyse developments and trends in the field of institutional parliamentary cooperation, Interparliamentary Committee Meetings and other related meetings. The chapter on the early warning mechanism shows what the European Parliament (EP) has done and can do to make national Parliaments' feedback more visible whilst benefiting from it in its own legislative work. Finally, as tools for the exchange of information and networking between Parliaments, IPEX and ECPRD have become increasingly successful.

The Annexes to the second report provide detailed factual information on meetings in 2012 and documents submitted by national Parliaments. They are, of course, not only about figures, but also about the people behind them. This is particularly true for IPEX and ECPRD, which are all too often perceived as mere "technical platforms", while they regularly bring together the people who actually make things work.

2. Key developments and trends in interparliamentary cooperation

2.1 The first Interparliamentary Conference for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

While the extraordinary Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU (EUSC) in Stockholm in December 2009 had concluded that no new institutions or structures for interparliamentary cooperation were needed, the Belgian EUSC presidency, following the dissolution of the WEU Assembly as of 30 June 2011, decided to explore the establishment of regular conferences between parliamentary committees dealing with European affairs, foreign affairs and defence in cooperation with the EP.

It took more than a year of negotiations before a comprehensive agreement on the Interparliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP was reached at the April 2012 EUSC in Warsaw. Key features are the size of delegations (16 for the European Parliament and 6 for each national Parliament) and the EP's close cooperation with the Parliament of the EU Council Presidency which is in charge of preparing, organising and presiding the Conference. The Conference will meet every six months, either in the country that holds the EU Council Presidency or in the EP.

The first Interparliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP was organised in Paphos on 9-11 September 2012 by the Cypriot House of Representatives. It focused on the Arab Spring and prospects for further cooperation on CSDP. For the EP this conference was a positive experience both in terms of the working methods for future meetings and the substance of the debate with distinguished speakers including Ms Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Bernardino León, EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean region, Ms Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus and Mr Demetris Eliades, Minister

of Defence of Cyprus. Throughout the Conference the EP was seen as a key contributor to its successful outcome. Indeed, the EP closely cooperated with the Cypriot Presidency in preparing and organising the Conference. Moreover, it offered its good offices during the process of drafting and adopting the Rules of Procedure, which are in line with the Conclusions of the EUSC in Warsaw.

2.2 The first yellow card on a Commission proposal

In 2012, for the first time since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, a Commission proposal triggered the so-called "yellow card" procedure. By 22 May 2012, the deadline for national Parliaments to respond, the Commission proposal for a Council regulation on the "exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services" (the so-called "Monti II" proposal) had been the object of 12 reasoned opinions. These voiced a number of concerns of national Parliaments, *inter alia* on the well-foundedness of the legal basis, the possible negative impact on the system of industrial relations in Member States, national labour law issues and the insufficient justification of the need and objectives of EU action. Together they represented 19 votes out of the total of 54 votes allocated to national Parliaments, i.e. more than one third. Pursuant to the Treaty of Lisbon the Commission was thus obliged to review its proposal and to decide whether to maintain, modify or withdraw it¹.

On 12 September 2012 the Commission decided to withdraw its proposal, although not on the grounds of non-compliance with the subsidiarity principle, but because it had concluded that it was unlikely to "gather the necessary political support within the EP and the Council to enable its adoption".

2.3 The role of Parliaments in the Union's new economic governance

2012 was dominated by the continuing economic, financial and debt crisis and by the attempts at EU level to coin a policy and legal framework able to bring order and avoid similar situations in the future. The sovereign debt crisis has led to significant changes in economic governance over the last two years, which saw the creation of the European Stability Mechanism through the modification of the existing Treaties (Article 136 TFEU), the new Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance and other legislative measures that will step up the surveillance of economic and fiscal policies in the EU.

In December 2012 the European Council adopted a roadmap for the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union that will transform European governance considerably. These measures have already raised concerns about their democratic legitimacy and accountability. As President Schulz stated at his first European Council²: "a fiscal union without parliamentary control is unacceptable".

¹ Article 7 of Protocol 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon

² On 30 January 2012

A consensus has emerged in the European Council that the general objective remains to ensure democratic legitimacy and accountability at the level at which decisions are taken and implemented. The recently adopted roadmap towards a genuine EMU requires appropriate democratic legitimacy and accountability of decision-making which only the European Parliament can provide at the European level and only national Parliaments can provide at the national level, by exercising their respective roles in the budgetary domain. In this context, interparliamentary cooperation has a crucial complementary role to play in order to reinforce the coherence of the whole system of democratic legitimacy. The European Council on 13 December 2012 noted that "further integration of policy making and greater pooling of competences must be accompanied by a commensurate involvement of the European Parliament", thereby recognising that the European Parliament has a key role when it comes to accountability of actions at the Union level in the future EMU architecture³.

The position of the European Parliament on the European Semester – which testifies of its commitment to further develop interparliamentary cooperation in the field of economic governance - is that "the ex ante coordination of economic policies carried out as part of the European Semester must be combined with guarantees that the national Parliaments and the European Parliament will be involved and will be able to exercise scrutiny".⁴ Following a report on the European Semester⁵, the EP proceeded to host the first interparliamentary conference on the subject under the auspices of the committees on Economic and Monetary Affairs, on Budgets and on Employment and Social Policy, with the support of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments. The two-day event, which took place at the end of February 2012, brought together 68 Members of national Parliaments from 24 Member States, who discussed with MEPs matters of common concern relating to the Union's framework for economic governance.

A follow-up meeting, the *European Parliamentary Week* on the European Semester, was scheduled for January 2013⁶. It is worth noting in this context that the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (the so-called *Fiscal Compact*), and in particular its Article 13⁷, includes provisions on interparliamentary cooperation which open up new possibilities for cooperation in the framework of economic governance.

3. Institutional parliamentary cooperation

3.1 The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC)

COSAC was established in May 1989 at a meeting in Madrid, where the Speakers of EU Parliaments agreed to bring together their Committees on European Affairs as a

³ The role which should be played by the European Parliament throughout all related processes is underlined in its resolution of 20 November 2012 on the report of the Presidents of the European Council, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup "Towards a genuine Economic and Monetary Union"

⁴ 13 December 2012 speech of EP President Martin Schulz to the European Council

⁵ European Parliament: 'Resolution on the European Semester Policy Coordination', P7_TA(2011)0542, 1 December 2011

⁶ See also 4.1 par. 7

⁷ See also 3.1, par. 6

means to strengthen the role of Parliaments regarding European issues. It first met in November 1989 in Paris. Meetings take place twice per semester. COSAC was formally recognised in Protocol (No 1) to the Treaty of Amsterdam on the role of national Parliaments in the EU, which came into force on 1 May 1999. It is unique in that it is the only forum for interparliamentary cooperation enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon. The Parliament of the Member State that holds the EU Presidency plays a leading role at all stages of COSAC.

The distinct trend towards a more consensual approach within COSAC since the Polish Presidency of COSAC in 2011 is well illustrated by the EP delegation's stance during the plenary meeting in Copenhagen in April 2012. In order to enable the smooth adoption of the Contribution and Conclusions by consensus rather than by voting the EP delegation chose to have its dissenting opinion⁸ explicitly mentioned in the minutes by a reference to Article 230 TFEU. At the plenary meeting in Nicosia two delegations of national Parliaments chose to act in a similar way

By means of promoting the exchange of information and best practices between national Parliaments and the European Parliament, COSAC succeeded in reinforcing the EU interparliamentary dimension, as well as the need for both the EP and national Parliaments to be actively involved in the democratic scrutiny of the European Semester⁹.

As a rule, plenary meetings of COSAC are preceded by preparatory meetings of political groups in which Members of the EP delegation have a key role by either presiding or co-presiding most of them. The overall usefulness of these meetings is generally acknowledged.

The invitation by both COSAC Presidencies of keynote speakers from the European Parliament to address plenary meetings consolidated developments since the Hungarian Presidency of COSAC in the first semester of 2011. In 2012 three EP committee Chairs (Mr. Harbour, Mr. Casini, Ms. Berès) shared their expertise with national Parliaments in COSAC plenary meetings, which resulted in a more genuine interparliamentary dialogue (→ *Annex I for a list of topics and keynote speakers*).

While Bi-annual Reports of COSAC mainly deal with issues of parliamentary scrutiny, politically relevant issues, too, increasingly find their way to these reports. The 17th Bi-annual Report includes an overview of what national Parliaments have done in relation to the European Commission's new Single Market Act. The 18th Bi-annual Report builds on this and also deals with the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) and notably its Article 13¹⁰, analysing Parliaments' replies¹¹ to questions on – *inter alia* – the appropriate forum for interparliamentary cooperation

⁸ On the issue of the possibility for national Parliaments to submit written requests to the Commission

⁹ See also 2.3 and 4.1 par. 6

¹⁰ "As provided for in Title II of Protocol No 1 on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union annexed to the European Union Treaties, the European Parliament and the national Parliaments of the Contracting Parties will together determine the organisation and promotion of a conference of representatives of the relevant committees of the European Parliament and representatives of the relevant committees of national Parliaments in order to discuss budgetary policies and other issues covered by this Treaty."

¹¹ In 2012 all national Parliaments of the EU Members States (40 Chambers in total) and the European Parliament replied to the questionnaires for the 17th and 18th Bi-annual Reports of COSAC

in this field and its composition¹². The findings of these reports can thus be instrumental in establishing a relevant, focused agenda for future interparliamentary meetings.¹³

3.2 The Conference of Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU (EUSC)

*The EUSC is the steering body of interparliamentary cooperation and meets in the spring of each year in the country that held the EU Council Presidency during the second semester of the previous year. The EUSC is preceded by a preparatory meeting of the Secretaries General of the participating countries.*¹⁴

Participants in the Warsaw EUSC which reached a comprehensive agreement on the Interparliamentary Conference for CFSP/CSDP (→ 2.1) also called on national Parliaments and the EP to help rebuild a coherent and solidarity-based Union, acknowledging that the EU needs responsible and cooperating Parliaments, which should act as architects and leaders of an integrated Europe. The EUSC will most probably continue to be an important forum for debate on issues such as the democratic accountability of economic policy coordination and governance through cooperation between national Parliaments and the EP (including the implementation of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union) and the scrutiny of Europol's activities and evaluation of Eurojust's activities by parliaments.

Regarding the role of media in parliamentary democracies, the EUSC underlined the importance of maximum transparency and accurate and timely information on parliamentary activities. The Speakers also welcomed the increased efforts and means to promote IPEX (→ 6.1) as the main technical support instrument for the exchange of information between EU Parliaments and with European institutions on EU related issues.

3.3 Relations with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

The European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments¹⁵ took place in Strasbourg from 20 to 21 September. EP President Schulz was represented by Vice-President Martínez, who took actively part in the debates and had a bilateral meeting with PACE President Mignon to discuss the state of relations between the EP and the PACE.

The conference discussed three major themes. The future of the European Court of Human Rights was the object of a lively debate. The Speakers agreed that necessary legislation should be adopted and better parliamentary scrutiny of human rights issues

¹² In this context it is worth noting that Mr Casini, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, stated in his keynote speech in the Nicosia plenary meeting that Article 13 de facto confirms the existing practice of interparliamentary meetings between the EP and national parliaments, especially on the European Semester

¹³ See also 4.1, par. 7

¹⁴ All documents relating to EUSCs and the preparatory meetings of Secretaries General can be accessed via the IPEX website www.ipex.eu

¹⁵ Which is organised by the Council of Europe every two years and should not be confused with the EUSC

should be ensured in order to avoid the submission of repetitive cases to the Court. A second topic was the question whether the representative democracy was in crisis and how to deal with it. Finally, participants exchanged views on the "Arab Spring" and lessons to be learnt. The conference also unanimously approved a proposal to grant "Partners for Democracy" membership to the Parliament of Morocco and the Palestinian Legislative Council.¹⁶

On 7 November 2012 the EP's Conference of Presidents chaired by EP President Schulz had its annual meeting with the Presidential Committee of the PACE led by its President, Mr Mignon. On this occasion, EP President Schulz proposed that the Secretaries-General of the EP and the PACE explore ways of reinforcing cooperation and exchange of information and present concrete proposals in view of the joint EP/PACE meeting in 2013.

4. Interparliamentary meetings

4.1 Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICM) - more focused exchanges between experts

*ICMs are meetings that are organised at the initiative of one or more EP committees and bring together Members of specialised EP committees and corresponding committees of national Parliaments.*¹⁷

As in previous years, the most appreciated meetings in 2012 were those with the most precisely defined agendas featuring clearly grouped topics and leaving enough time for debate between parliamentarians. An example is the joint meeting of the Bureau High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity and the EP Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in October, which focused on efforts of the European and national Parliaments to promote gender equality in their administrations and through legislation. Its timing ahead of the presentation of the Commission's proposal on the representation of women on company boards was very appropriate.

ICMs in 2012 focused mainly on the reform proposals covering key EU policies and legislative issues for the 2014-2020 period¹⁸. As illustrated in the preceding paragraph, the timing of meetings is key to their success. Meetings were therefore mostly scheduled to coincide with the drafting or finalisation phase of legislative reports at committee stage, thus enabling national Parliaments to voice their views and concerns at important stages.

A total of 302 Members of national Parliaments participated in the 10 ICMs that were organised in 2012 and covered issues ranging from the European Semester for economic policy coordination¹⁹ - for which the three most directly concerned EP

¹⁶ See also 6.2, par.4

¹⁷ These meetings should not be confused with Joint Committee Meetings (**JCM**) or Joint Parliamentary Meetings (**JPM**) which are jointly organised by the European Parliament and the Parliament of the country that holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU. In 2012 no such meetings took place

¹⁸ See Annex II for a full overview of meetings and attendance by Members of national Parliaments

¹⁹ See also 2.3, par. 4 and Annex II

committees joined forces - over the EU data protection framework reform and the Rio+20 Summit to the future cohesion policy.

On the occasion of the ICM on the Common Agricultural Policy reform held on 25 June 2012 a pilot project "Communicating national Parliaments' EU policies" was launched. Input from national Parliaments regarding their positions on the Commission's reform proposals was compiled in a booklet that was made available to all participants..

In addition to the ICMs, some EP committees preferred to invite MPs to key debates as part of their regular meetings. The Foreign Affairs Committee, for instance, invited the Chairs of corresponding committees of national Parliaments to participate in an exchange of views with the Secretary General of NATO ahead of the Chicago summit, while the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs invited its national Parliament counterparts to its September 2012 debate on the cycle of the European Semester. In a similar vein, other EP committees invited Members of national Parliaments to events like expert hearings or workshops, in which they participated alongside other stakeholders.

2012 also saw the organisation of meetings that fall outside the established formats of interparliamentary cooperation²⁰, such as the high-level conference on the Multi-annual Financial Framework in March 2012, which was co-organised by the EP and other EU institutions with the participation of national Parliaments. The EP has also proposed the organisation of a Parliamentary Week in the framework of the European Semester each year before the Spring European Council, followed later by an event at the level of Committee Chairs. The objective of the first Parliamentary Week - scheduled for 28-30 January 2013 at the EP in Brussels - is to generate a new kind of interparliamentary meeting that takes the working calendars of both the EP and national Parliaments duly into account and allows MEPs and MPs to debate together the European Commission's annual growth survey and related issues.

4.2 Bilateral visits - a flexible and efficient formula

A more informal and focused dialogue can also be fostered through direct contacts between MEPs and MPs working on the same or similar issues (e.g. between rapporteurs), and through bilateral working visits or videoconferences (→ 4.3) for which the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments provides specialised assistance and advice. As in 2011, bilateral visits were rather frequent. Annex III gives a full overview of the 43 bilateral visits in 2012, in which 125 MEPs, 208 MPs and 190 staff participated.

4.3 Videoconferencing - technology for ad-hoc dialogue

Videoconferencing is becoming increasingly popular as it saves both time and money and has a lot of potential. In the autumn of 2012, EP services successfully concluded a

²⁰ See Annex II for an overview of these meetings

pilot project on videoconferences with top quality image and sound and interpretation into up to four languages. This should give an additional boost to this tool for interparliamentary dialogue. An example of the possibilities offered by videoconferencing is the meeting between the EP "sherpas"²¹ in the conference negotiating the Stability Treaty and the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Senate in January 2012, which allowed the MEPs to brief their Italian counterparts as soon as the negotiations had been concluded²².

5. The "early warning mechanism" - Protocol No 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon

Pursuant to Protocol No 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon national Parliaments have a right of scrutiny of proposed EU legislation falling under the shared competence of the EU and Member States. The same Protocol sets out a procedure for compulsory review (by the Commission) of a draft proposal if a sufficiently large number of reasoned opinions are received (→2.2).

The mechanism under Protocol No 2 is formally limited to questions on subsidiarity. Nevertheless, national Parliaments have used this window of opportunity to routinely transmit to the EU institutions their views on a much broader range of issues beyond subsidiarity.

The European Parliament, for its part, has taken a series of initiatives to fulfil its legal obligations under the Treaty and promote constructive interparliamentary relations in the process. These include modifications to its Rules of Procedure, translation of all reasoned opinions and their publication and dissemination to parliamentary committees.²³ Furthermore, following an exchange of letters in April 2012 between the Speaker of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Gianfranco Fini, and the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, the EP proceeded to a number of steps to further enhance the visibility and impact of national Parliaments' reasoned opinions and contributions.²⁴

Overall, draft legislative proposals published in 2012 yielded a somewhat higher number of reasoned opinions as compared to previous years²⁵. However, the ratio between reasoned opinions and contributions since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (174 to 954 on a total of 320 EU draft legislative acts)²⁶ clearly shows that national Parliaments are not inclined to use Protocol No 2 in order to stall the European decision-making process, but rather see it as a means to assess the merits of political and legislative choices at EU level.

²¹ MEPs Elmar Brok, Roberto Gualtieri and Guy Verhofstadt, who were appointed by the Conference of Presidents

²² For videoconferences organised in 2012 see Annex III

²³ An intranet database containing all reasoned opinions and other contributions received by national Parliaments is regularly updated by the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments

²⁴ These include (a) a monthly update of all MEPs on the state of play regarding reasoned opinions and contributions submitted by national Parliaments (this is done by the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments ahead of the meeting of the Conference of Committee Chairs) and (b) a link to a database on reasoned opinions and contributions (<http://www.presnet.ep.parl.union.eu/presnet/cms/Legislative-Activities/Subsidiarity>), on the "e-committee" intranet pages, which are also accessible to the representatives of national Parliaments in the EP premises in Brussels

²⁵ See Annex IV for statistical data on the early warning mechanism

²⁶ Data as at 31 December 2012

6. Tools for exchanging information and networking

6.1 Interparliamentary EU information exchange - IPEX

*IPEX is a platform for the mutual exchange of information between national Parliaments and the European Parliament concerning issues related to the European Union, especially in light of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon.*²⁷

In 2012, much has been done to promote the revamped IPEX website following its launch in June 2011, including the organisation of training sessions for all national correspondents. Links to the IPEX website are now provided for each report on the EP's "e-committee" and "Legislative Observatory" intranet pages. 2012 also saw a significant increase of downloads (+40%) as compared to 2011, while the number of hits exceeded a record 17 million. Finally, 3800 scrutiny related pages were uploaded by national Parliaments.

Combined efforts - a more user-friendly website, its promotion and the work of national correspondents - resulted in an overall better performance and improved visibility of IPEX as an important tool for interparliamentary cooperation²⁸. Another welcome development is that - in line with the Conclusions of the EU Speakers Conference in Warsaw - national Parliaments provide an increasing number of translations and/or summaries of important decisions in English and/or French. National Parliaments have also started using the recently added "News" section, where they can post any news they believe to be of importance to other Parliaments, such as the notification of the ratification of the "Fiscal Compact" or of the amended Art.136 of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The 17th Bi-annual Report of COSAC summarizes the replies of national Parliaments and the EP to a comprehensive set of questions on IPEX. It reveals *inter alia* that staff of 36 out of 40 Parliaments/Chambers use IPEX on a daily or weekly basis as a source of information and that IPEX is the second most commonly used source of information on other Parliaments. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of Parliaments/Chambers upload reasoned opinions and opinions within the framework of the political dialogue either on the day of adoption or within two days following adoption.

Apart from the EP's substantial contribution to the running of the website throughout 2012 in terms of technical advice and (financial) support, several resolutions and other EP texts have highlighted the importance of IPEX and its further promotion as a valuable tool for interparliamentary cooperation and notably for the exchange of information relating to scrutiny procedures.

6.2 European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation - ECPRD

The ECPRD is a tool for interparliamentary cooperation and exchange of information based on voluntary cooperation between specialised parliamentary staff of participating countries. Comparative requests allowing parliaments to learn more

²⁷ For more information see www.ipex.eu

²⁸ Meetings on IPEX are organised on a regular basis. For the full list of IPEX meetings in 2012 see Annex V

about each other's practices and policies, as well as seminars and surveys by individual Parliaments on specific topics, are the Centre's core business.

The ECPRD network saw another substantial rise in the number of comparative requests in 2012. No less than 297 requests on complex legal and parliamentary topics were transmitted by member parliaments to the network in 2012. Correspondents provided 6811 replies. It is therefore of the utmost importance that all members respect the guidelines and turn to the network only as a last resort.

The EP has largely benefited from the ECPRD network, too. In 2012 alone it transmitted 16 requests²⁹ on a broad variety of parliamentary, procedural, technical and administrative topics, either to collect data for studies and notes requested by political bodies or to obtain relevant input for projects to boost the EP's efficiency in certain areas.

At their meeting in Strasbourg on 21 September 2012³⁰, the Secretaries General opened the door to ECPRD to the Parliament of Morocco and the Palestinian Legislative Council by granting them the right to nominate correspondents, to search the ECPRD website and to attend ECPRD events. However, they are not entitled to transmit requests to the network. This is a direct consequence of the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to offer "Partner for Democracy" status to these parliaments³¹.

Last but not least, the financial commitment of the EP and the close cooperation with the Directorate General for Innovation and Technological Support made it possible to refurbish the event pages on the ECPRD website, resulting in more visibility for the hosting Parliament, an improved presentation of the content and increased time-efficiency thanks to an electronic registration tool.

²⁹ For the full list of EP requests to the ECPRD network see Annex VI

³⁰ On the occasion of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments in Strasbourg (→3.3), organised by the Council of Europe and not be confused with the EUSC (→3.2)

³¹ The Secretaries General decided to review the ECPRD status of both Parliaments and possible changes to the ECPRD Statute at their next meeting in Oslo in 2014.

ANNEX TO THE 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

- I. COSAC Meetings - Topics and Keynote Speakers**
- II. Interparliamentary Committee Meetings and other interparliamentary meetings**
- III. Bilateral Visits (including videoconferences)**
- IV. Early Warning Mechanism Data**
- V. IPEX Meetings**
- VI. ECPRD: List of comparative requests launched by the EP & List of Seminars and Statutory Meetings**

ANNEX I

COSAC Meetings 2012: Topics and keynote Speakers

EVENT	TOPICS	KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, 29-30 January 2012, Copenhagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Infrastructure The sovereign debt crisis, European Economic Governance and democratic accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Connie HEDEGAARD, Commissioner for Climate Action Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration
XLVII COSAC, (Plenary Meeting) 22-24 April 2012, Copenhagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 years of free movement for goods, people, services and capital Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in Europe A Single Market for Services - full implementation of the Services Directive Sustainable Growth - promoting the transition to a resource efficient economy in Europe The Digital Single Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr José Manuel BARROSO, President of the European Commission Ms Helle THORNING-SCHMIDT, Prime Minister of Denmark Mr Michel BARNIER, Commissioner for Internal Market and Services Mr Malcolm HARBOUR, Chair of the Committee for Internal Market and Consumer Protection in the European Parliament Mr Janez POTOČNIK, Commissioner for Environment Ms Neelie KROES, Vice-President of the European Commission, Commissioner for the Digital Agenda
Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, 8-9 July 2012, Limassol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union Energy 2020 Strategy – Security of Supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Andreas MAVROYIANNIS, Deputy Minister for EU Affairs Mr Günther OETTINGER, EU Commissioner for Energy
XLVIII COSAC, (Plenary meeting) 14-16 October 2012, Nicosia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State of Play/ Priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union From words to action: making “More Europe” a reality Energy - Security of Supply Europe 2020 Strategy - Recovery from the Economic Crisis Single Market-Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Andreas MAVROYIANNIS, Deputy Minister for EU Affairs Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice-President of the European Commission for Inter-institutional Relations and Administration, Mr Carlo CASINI, Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the European Parliament Mr Solon KASSINIS, Director of Energy Service, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Ms Pervenche BERÈS, Chairwoman of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament Mr Pierre DELSAUX, Deputy Director General, Directorate General, Internal Market and Services, European Commission

ANNEX II

EP Interparliamentary Committee Meetings with National Parliaments

Statistical information for 2012

<u>EP Committee</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Members of National Parliaments</u>	<u>Member States Represented</u>
AFET Foreign Affairs Committee	The Arab revolution: one year later - Debate with the participation of NP	24 January	12	10
ECON/BUDG/EMPL Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee/Budgets Committee/Employment and Social Affairs Committee	The European Semester for Economic Policy Coordination	27 & 28 February	68	24
PECH Fisheries Committee	Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy: the opinion of National Parliaments	28 February	38 +2	20 +Nordic Council
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee	Equal pay for work of equal value	8 March	23 +5	14 +Croatia, Turkey
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee	Towards the Rio+20 Summit	21 March	33	19
AFET Foreign Affairs Committee	Exchange of views with Anders Fogh Rasmussen, SG of NATO, on EU-NATO relations ahead of the NATO Chicago Summit with the participation of NP	23 April	7	5
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development Committee	The Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	25 June	46	21
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee	The reform of the EU Data Protection Framework: Building Trust in a Digital and Global World	9 & 10 October	34 +2	17 +Norway
REGI Regional Development Committee	Towards a Common Strategic Framework and Partnership Contracts in the context of the Future Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 - views and role of national Parliaments	11 October	26	16
JURI Legal Affairs Committee	The Proposal for a Common European Sales Law: taking stock after a year	27 November	15 +1	10 +Norway
10 ICMs			302 MPs +10	

Other interparliamentary meetings

Statistical information for 2012

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Members of National Parliaments</u>	<u>Member States Represented</u>
EU Multiannual Financial Framework and Own Resources	22 March	42	21
"The 2012 cycle of the European Semester" Exchange of views with NP	26 September	16	12
Joint Meeting of the High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity and the FEMM Committee Associating the Bureau Working Group on Communication with Counterparts from National Parliaments. "Gender Equality*What do the Parliaments of the European Union Do-An Exchange of Best Practices"	3 October	21 +3	15 +Croatia, Turkey, FYROM
		79 MPs +3	



ANNEX III

Date	Site	Country / Chamber	Committee / Other	Type of visit
JANUARY		-	-	-
23-24-Jan	BXL	Finland Eduskunta	Association of Finnish MPs and researchers	Members' Working Visit
24-Jan	BXL	Italy Parliament, Senate & Chamber	Committee on Foreign Affairs+ European Affairs	Videoconference 11h30 -13h00 (4 MEPs)
FEBRUARY		-	-	-
01-Feb	BXL	United Kingdom House of Lords	Facilities Department	Working visit by the Director of Facilities Department
6-8-Feb	BXL	United Kingdom House of Commons	International Development Committee	Working lunch
08-Feb	BXL	Italy Chamber	Committee on Finance + EU Affairs	Videoconference 14h00-15h30
09-Feb	BXL	Sweden Riksdagen		Working visit by officials
10-Feb	BXL	United Kingdom House of Lords	Committee Office	
MARCH		-	-	-
05-Mar	BXL	Netherlands Eerste Kamer	Committee on European Affairs & other	Working Lunch
05-Mar	BXL	Netherlands Tweede Kamer	Defence Committee	Members' Visit
06-Mar	BXL	Ireland Parliament	Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs	Working visit by Dominic Hannigan, Chairman, Joint Committee on European Union Affairs
21-Mar	BXL	Austria Bundesrat	Visit of the President of the Bundesrat	Visit by Mr Hammerl
27-29-Mar	BXL	Czech Republic Chamber of Deputies	Committee on Mandate and Immunity	Members' Visit
APRIL		-	-	-
MAY		-	-	-
JUNE		-	-	-
05-Jun	BXL	Finland Eduskunta	Grand Committee of the Finnish Parliament	Members' Working Visit
06-Jun	BXL	Italy Camera dei Diputati	Italian Parliament Camera dei Deputati	Videoconference
26-27 June	BXL	United Kingdom House of Lords	EU Committee	Visit by Lord Boswell, Chairman
26-Jun	BXL	Nordic Council	Welfare Committee	Members' Visit
28-29 June	BXL	United Kingdom House of Commons	Public information office	Working visit by officials
JULY		-	-	-
AUGUST		-	-	-
SEPTEMBER		-	-	-
05-Sep	BXL	United Kingdom House of Commons	Welsh Affairs Committee	Members' Visit
06-Sep	BXL	Netherlands Tweede Kamer		Individual Meetings
07-Sep	BXL	Netherlands Tweede Kamer	EU Affairs Staff	Individual Meetings
19-Sep	BXL	Poland Sejm		Members' Visit

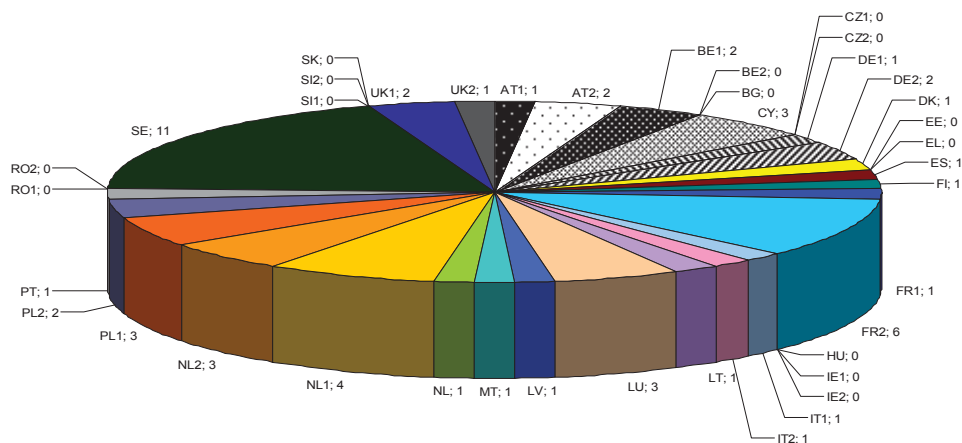
Date	Site	Country / Chamber	Committee / Other	Type of visit
OCTOBER		-	-	-
03-Oct		United Kingdom House of Lords	Sub-Committee A - EU Economic and Financial Affairs	Members' Visit
08-Oct	BXL	Netherlands Tweede Kamer	Committee on European Affairs & other	Members' Visit
09-10 Oct	BXL	Germany Bundestag	Committee on Family, Seniors, Women and Youth	Members' Visit
10-Oct	BXL	Germany Bundestag	Parliamentary Advisory Board for Sustainable Development	Members' and Experts' Visit
10-Oct	BXL	Sweden Riksdag	Officials from the Riksdag Administration	Working visit by officials
NOVEMBER		-	-	-
06-Nov		Austria National Council	Committee on Petitions	Members' Visit
07-Nov		United Kingdom House of Commons	Environmental Audit Committee	Members' Visit
07-Nov		United Kingdom House of Lords	Sub-Committee E	Members' Visit
07/08-Nov		United Kingdom House of Lords	Sub-Committee F	Members' Visit
12-Nov	BXL	Germany Bundestag	Sub-committee on Health in Developing Countries	
12-Nov	BXL	Lithuania Seimas	Officials from the parliamentary committees of the Seimas	Working visit by officials
15-Nov		United Kingdom House of Commons	Clerks study visit	Working visit by officials
15-Nov		United Kingdom House of Lords	Clerks study visit	Working visit by officials
26-Nov		United Kingdom House of Lords	Select committee on SME exports	Members' Visit
26-27 Nov		Finland The Grand Committee	Grand Committee of the Finnish Parliament	Working visit by MEPs
26-28 Nov	BXL	Italian Camera dei Deputati	Officials from the Camera dei deputati	Working visit by officials
29-Nov		United Kingdom House of Commons House of Lords	Tripartite meeting European Scrutiny Committee European Union Committee	Working visit by MEPs
29-30 Nov		United Kingdom House of Commons	Home Affairs Study visit	Working visit by officials
DECEMBER		-	-	-
3-4 Dec		Austria National Council	Clerks study visit	Working visit by officials
4-5 Dec		United Kingdom House of Lords	EU Select Committee	Working visit by officials
4-5 Dec	BXL	Lithuanian Seimas	Officials from the Communication department	Working visit by officials
05-Dec		Italy Senate & Chamber	Inquiry committee on illegal activities related to waste treatment	Working visit by MPs

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF
NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS/CHAMBERS
USED IN ANNEX IV**

AT1	Austria	Nationalrat
AT2	Austria	Bundesrat
BE1	Belgium	Chambre des Représentants
BE2	Belgium	Sénat
BG	Bulgaria	Narodno sabranie
CY	Cyprus	Vouli ton Antiprosopon
CZ1	Czech Republic	Poslanecká sněmovna
CZ2	Czech Republic	Senát
DK	Denmark	Folketinget
EE	Estonia	Riigikogu
FI	Finland	Eduskunta
FR1	France	Assemblée nationale
FR2	France	Sénat
DE1	Germany	Bundestag
DE2	Germany	Bundesrat
EL	Greece	Vouli ton Ellinon
HU	Hungary	Országgyűlés
IE1	Ireland	Dáil Éireann
IE2	Ireland	Seanad Éireann
IT1	Italy	Camera dei Deputati
IT2	Italy	Senato della Repubblica
LV	Latvia	Saeima
LT	Lithuania	Seimas
LU	Luxembourg	Chambre des Députés
MT	Malta	Kamra tad-Deputati
NL1	Netherlands	Tweede Kamer
NL2	Netherlands	Eerste Kamer
PL1	Poland	Sejm
PL2	Poland	Senat
PT	Portugal	Assembleia da República
RO1	Romania	Camera Deputaţilor
RO2	Romania	Senatul
SK	Slovak Republic	Národná rada
SI1	Slovenia	Državni zbor
SI2	Slovenia	Državni svet
ES	Spain	Congreso de los Diputados
ES	Spain	Senado
SE	Sweden	Riksdagen
UK1	United Kingdom	House of Commons
UK2	United Kingdom	House of Lords

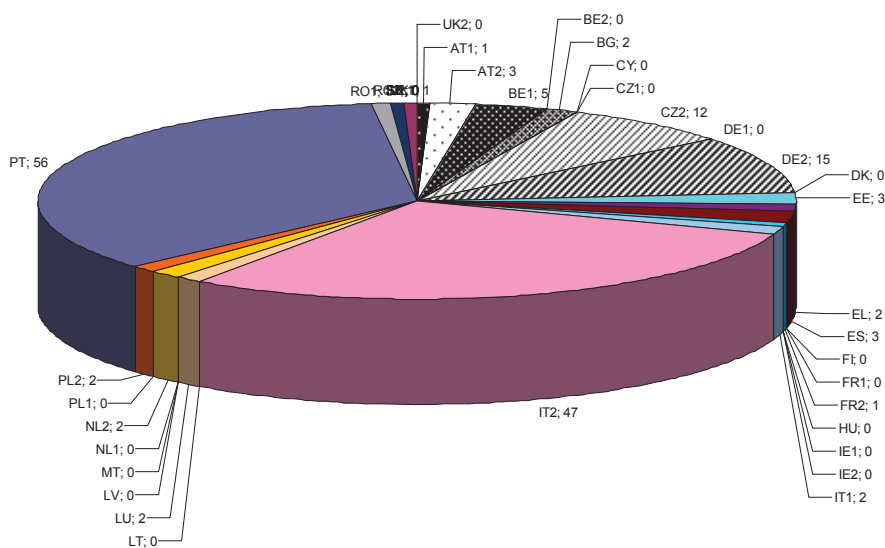
ANNEX IV

REASONED OPINIONS by PARLIAMENTS / CHAMBERS on COMMISSION PROPOSALS SUBMITTED IN 2012



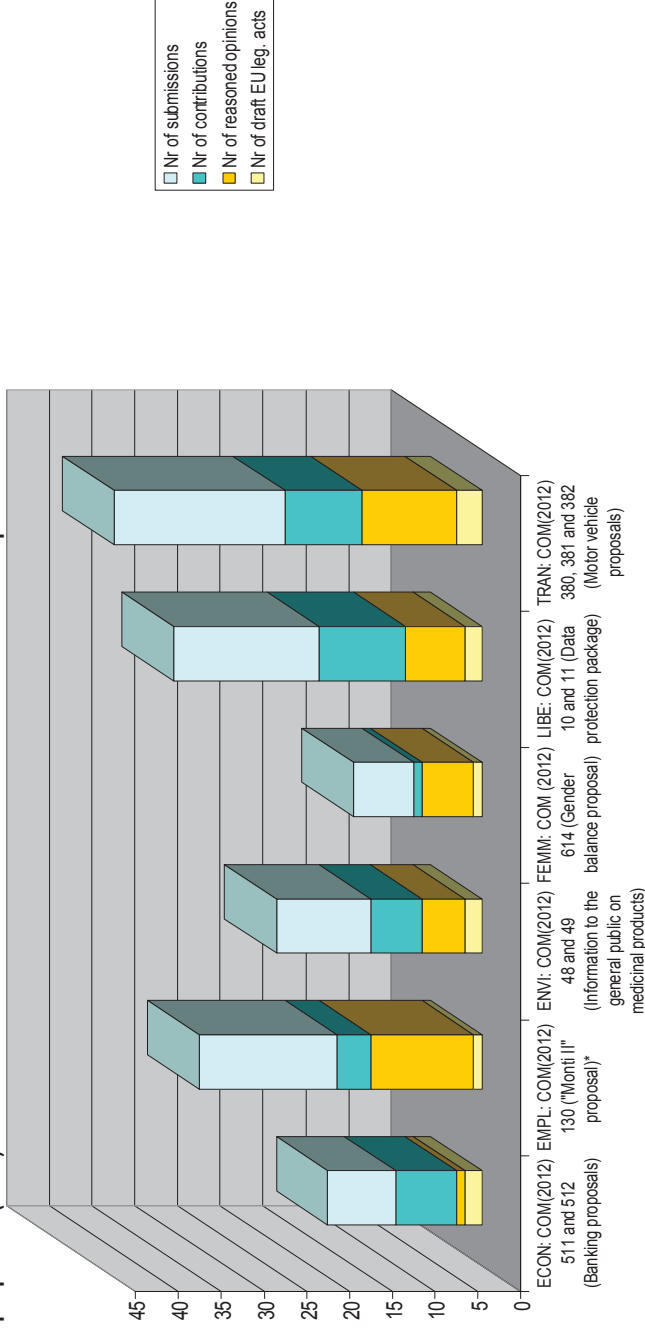
N.B.: On a total of 74 COM (2012) proposals assigned to the EP Committees (data as at 31.12.2012), the ratio between reasoned opinions and draft proposals is 0,77 (as compared to 0,49 on the total of 155 COM (2011) proposals).

CONTRIBUTIONS by PARLIAMENTS / CHAMBERS on COMMISSION PROPOSALS SUBMITTED IN 2012



N.B.: On a total of 74 COM (2012) proposals assigned to the EP Committees (data as at 31.12.2012), the ratio between contributions and draft proposals is 2,17 (as compared to 3,18 on the total of 155 COM (2011) proposals).

Commission proposals (2012) on which National Parliaments submitted most reasoned opinions/contributions under Protocol 2



EP Committee responsible	Number of draft EU legislative acts	Number of reasoned opinions	Number of contributions	Total Number of submissions
EMPL: COM(2012) 130 ("Monti II" proposal)*	1	12	4	16
TRAN: COM(2012) 380, 381 and 382 (Motor vehicle proposals)	3	11	9	20
LIBE: COM(2012) 10 and 11 (Data protection package)	2	7	10	17
FEMM: COM (2012) 614 (Gender balance proposal)	1	6	1	7
ENVI: COM(2012) 48 and 49 (Information to the general public on medicinal products)	2	5	6	11
ECON: COM(2012) 511 and 512 (Banking proposals)	2	1	7	8

* This proposal was the first to trigger the "yellow card" procedure, since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty

ANNEX V

IPEX

Meetings of the IPEX Board, Central Support and Correspondents

Date	Meeting	Place
13 January 2012	Board	Bundestag - Berlin
13 January 2012	Central Support ³²	Bundestag - Berlin
1& 2 March 2012	Central Support	Folketinget - Copenhagen
4 May 2012	Central Support	EP - Brussels
21 June 2012	Central Support	Bundestag - Berlin
22 June 2012	Board	Bundestag - Berlin
20-21 September 2012	Central Support	Senato - Rome
15 November 2012	Central Support	Tweede Kamer - The Hague
16 November 2012	Correspondents	Tweede Kamer - The Hague
3 December 2012	Central Support by videoconference	Hosted by the EP services - Brussels
7 December 2012	Board	EP- Brussels

³² The Central Support manages all tasks that are relevant to the IPEX website, editorial as well as technical. It comprises members from National Parliaments represented on the Board and from the European Parliament. Other national Parliaments may assist in the functioning of the Central Support.

ANNEX VI

ECPRD

A. Issues on which political bodies and administrative services of the European Parliament consulted the ECPRD network in 2012 through comparative requests:

- Use of Internet Explorer 9 in parliaments
- Evolution of the budgets of national parliaments in the EU
- Use of the parliament's logo
- Art collections in parliaments
- Statistical figures on Written Questions to the government
- Democratic control, transparency and modalities of vote in the National Parliaments of the Member States and in the European Parliament
- Women in senior management positions of parliaments
- EP Study on the ex-post budgetary control exercised by parliaments in the EU
- EU affairs units/departments in National Parliaments
- Banking and financial systems in the EU - the scrutiny role of parliaments
- Policy in national parliaments of making the services they provide to Members more client oriented
- Comparative overview of parliamentary immunity across EU member states
- Best practices of opinion-giving committees in parliaments
- Incompatibilities and immunity of Members of Parliament
- Independent and democratic oversight of the police
- Incompatibilities and immunity of Members of Parliament - Croatia

B. 2012 ECPRD Seminars and Statutory meetings

Event	Place	Date
2012 Seminars		
"Parli@ments on the Net X" (Area of Interest ICT in parliaments)	Madrid	31 May - 1 June
"The European Economic and Financial Crisis and the Role of Parliaments" (Area of Interest Economic and Budgetary Affairs)	Rome	7-8 June
"Members' use of information and changing visions of the Parliamentary Library" (Area of Interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives)	Copenhagen	14-15 June
"Building for parliament" (Area of Interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives)	The Hague	6-7 September
"The control of governments by parliaments in the legislative process"(Area of Interest Parliamentary Practice and Procedure)	Berlin	13-14 September
"Open the window, close the door - The role of Open data, XML and Web 3.0" (Area of Interest ICT in Parliaments)	Budapest	15-16 November
2012 Statutory meetings		
Meeting of the Executive Committee and Coordinators	Rome	16-17 September
Meeting of Secretaries General of Parliaments (in the framework of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament)	Strasbourg	20-21 September
Annual Conference of Correspondents	Athens	18-20 October



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ПАРЛАМЕНТ PARLAMENTO EUROPEO
EVROPSKÝ PARLAMENT EUROPA-PARLAMENTET
EUROPÄISCHES PARLAMENT
EUROOPA PARLAMENT ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΚΟΙΝΟΒΟΥΛΙΟ
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN PARLAIMINT NA HEORPA
PARLAMENTO EUROPEO
EIROPAS PARLAMENTS EUROPOS PARLAMENTAS
EURÓPAI PARLAMENT
IL-PARLAMENT EWROPEW EUROPEES PARLEMENT
PARLAMENT EUROPEJSKI
PARLAMENTO EUROPEU PARLAMENTUL EUROPEAN
EUROPSKY PARLAMENT
EVROPSKI PARLAMENT EUROOPAN PARLAMENTTI
EUROPAPARLAMENTET