



Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies

# Six Ways to Better Involve National Parliaments in EU Affairs

**Cristina Fasone, Nicola Lupo and Olivier Rozenberg**





Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies

# Six Ways to Better Involve National Parliaments in EU Affairs

**Cristina Fasone, Nicola Lupo and Olivier Rozenberg**



## Credits

---

The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party, dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

**Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies**  
**Rue du Commerce 20**  
**Brussels, BE 1000**

**For more information please visit**  
**[www.martenscentre.eu](http://www.martenscentre.eu).**

**Editor:** Federico Ottavio Reho, Strategic Coordinator and Senior Research Officer, Martens Centre

**External editing:** Pole Star Editing CommV

**Layout and cover design:** Gëzim Lezha, Brand and Visual Communications Officer, Martens Centre

**Typesetting:** Victoria Agency

Printed in Belgium by ABIJ bv.

This publication receives funding from the European Parliament.  
© 2026 Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies

The European Parliament and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies assume no responsibility for facts or opinions expressed in this publication or their subsequent use. Sole responsibility lies with the author of this publication.

# Table of contents

About the Martens Centre	4
About the authors	6
Executive summary	8
Introduction	12
Taking the EU seriously: the successful Grand Committee in Finland	15
Staffing directly in Brussels: the German Bundestag and Bundesrat strike forces	20
Applying robust and tailored transparency rules: insights from Sweden	24
Scrutinising the government before and after European Councils: plenary debates in Italy and Spain	28
Making sure members of national parliaments and MEPs work together: Denmark and Hungary at the forefront	33
Making interparliamentary cooperation work (finally!): the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group	37
Conclusion and recommendations	42
Bibliography	48

# About the Martens Centre



The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, established in 2007, is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP). The Martens Centre embodies a pan-European mindset, promoting Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values. It serves as a framework for national political foundations linked to member parties of the EPP. It currently has 30 member foundations and one permanent guest foundation in 25 EU and non-EU countries.

The Martens Centre takes part in the preparation of EPP programmes and policy documents. It organises seminars and training on EU policies and on the process of European integration. The Martens Centre also contributes to formulating EU and national public policies. It produces research studies and books, policy briefs and the twice-yearly *European View* journal. Its research activities are divided into six clusters: party structures and EU institutions, economic and social policies, EU foreign policy, environment and energy, values and religion, and new societal challenges. Through its papers, conferences, authors' dinners and website, the Martens Centre offers a platform for discussion among experts, politicians, policymakers and the European public.

# About the authors



**Cristina Fasone** is Associate Professor of Comparative Public Law in the Department of Political Science at Luiss University in Rome. On parliamentary studies and the role of parliaments in the EU, she has co-edited *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (with N. Lupo; Hart, 2016); *Parliaments, Public Opinion and Parliamentary Elections in Europe* (with D. Fromage and Z. Lefkofridi; EUI Max Weber Working Paper Series 2015/18); and *Constitutional Reform of National Legislatures: Bicameralism Under Pressure* (with R. Albert and A. Baraggia; Edward Elgar, 2019).



**Nicola Lupo** is Professor of Constitutional and Public Law in the Department of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies at Luiss University in Rome. His publications include *The Constitution of Italy: A Contextual Analysis* (with M. Cartabia; Hart, 2022); *Corso di diritto parlamentare* (with L. Gianniti, 4th edn.; Il Mulino, 2023); and *Il Parlamento europeo* (with A. Manzella, 2nd edn.; LUP, 2024). He also co-edited *The Routledge Handbook of Parliamentary Administration* (with T. Christiansen and E. Griglio; Routledge, 2023).



**Olivier Rozenberg** is Senior Fellow in the School of Government of Luiss University, Rome. He has authored a monograph on the French Parliament and the European Union (Palgrave, 2020). He has also co-edited volumes on national parliaments and the EU (*The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union*; Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and on parliamentary studies (*Handbook of Parliamentary Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Legislatures*; Edward Elgar, 2020). He teaches at the École Polytechnique in Paris and the University of Luxembourg.

# Executive summary



This research paper argues that there is no single right way to involve national parliaments in European governance, but rather several. The diversity of experiences in the 27 member states makes it possible to identify certain best practices that go beyond a purely passive role of approving treaty changes and validating European secondary legislation. The paper highlights them by presenting a number of case studies that are emblematic in both their legal and political dimensions. The six cases have been selected to cover a variety of parliaments and refer to various aspects of national parliaments' participation in European affairs: government oversight, direct participation in EU policymaking, interparliamentary cooperation and so on. Each practice has been associated with one or two specific parliamentary assemblies to better understand their rationales and procedures, even though other national parliaments could also have been considered.

The six selected practices are the following:

1. *The robustness of the oversight exercised by the Grand Committee in Finland on EU affairs.* There is not one factor that explains why this committee is so crucial but several: the committee-based nature of the Finnish Parliament; the constitutional protection of its information rights; the design of scrutiny procedures based on a mix of document-based and mandate-based systems and grounded in the coordinating role of the Grand Committee, in consultation with sectoral committees; the composition of the Grand Committee, which includes party leaders and committee chairs; and the staff supporting it. That meetings take place behind closed doors also favours a consensual style of decision-making.
2. *The direct and continuous involvement of national parliamentary officials in Brussels, for example, those from the German chambers.* The opening of permanent representations of national parliaments in Brussels, especially since the Treaty of Lisbon, has given added value to EU decision-making. The German parliamentary representation, which is by far the biggest and most robust of the representations of the national parliamentary administrations in Brussels, seems to have exploited this potential more than others. Its office helps German interests to be better identified and represented in EU decision-making, and enables the Bundestag to fully exercise its vital functions of direction, scrutiny and authorisation of developments in European integration, which the German Federal Constitutional Tribunal has deemed crucial.



3. *The right to very broad but carefully regulated access to information, as fully implemented in Sweden.* The Swedish Parliament's influence on its government's European policy is based on the completeness, quality and timeliness of the information that ministers are required to provide to parliamentarians. However, contrary to popular belief, the system allows for exceptions and relies on closed-door proceedings. Its replication raises issues, but offers clear democratic benefits.
4. *The focus on monitoring European Councils, as seen in Spain and Italy.* It is almost common sense that more effective parliamentary scrutiny of the European Council by each national parliament would help to reduce the gap in democratic oversight. The ad hoc procedures that take place in the Spanish Congress (especially after each European Council meeting) and in the Italian Chambers (mostly before each meeting) are an effective way to increase the democratic accountability of the respective prime ministers.
5. *The permanent arrangement whereby Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from the same member state can associate with 'their' national parliament—as is the case in Hungary and Denmark.* Cooperation between members of national parliaments and MEPs from the same member state is crucial for the effective functioning of EU decision-making. Despite the difficulties of coordinating organisations operating at different levels, solutions do exist, such as coordinating within parties (as in Denmark) or granting MEPs the right to attend and speak in their national parliament (as in Hungary). Politically, the Hungarian case shows that such coordination serves the interests of the government in power but can also, sometimes, serve those of the opposition.
6. *The establishment of effective interparliamentary cooperation, as in the case of the supervision of Europol.* Interparliamentary cooperation, that is, cooperation between national parliaments, and also with the European Parliament, creates numerous challenges of institutional, partisan and practical natures. Although there are still avenues for improvement, and the extension of the model depends on the subject matter and the scope of activity, the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group, established in 2017, with its strong legal basis, specific mandate, power of joint scrutiny, manageable size and effective right to information, has become a successful blueprint for effective and stable interparliamentary cooperation.



The study of the six cases outlined here leads, in conclusion, to the formulation of nine recommendations regarding ways to improve the involvement of national parliaments in European affairs, an outcome which is seen as needed to ensure the better functioning of European democracy.

**Keywords** National parliaments – Democracy – EU – European Parliament – Accountability – Democratic deficit

# Introduction



The involvement of national parliaments in EU legislative and political processes (often under the label ‘European affairs’) has become a well-established phenomenon, developing through a variety of instruments. The engagement of national parliaments takes place both through the scrutiny of European policies by each member state and through more direct participation in EU decision-making, which is partly grounded in the provisions of the treaties and partly involves the protection of the principle of subsidiarity.<sup>1</sup> In practice, the distinction between the national and the EU levels of government is increasingly blurred, with national parliaments forming a vital link—each one in its own way and according to its own traditions and priorities—in the political interdependence of the Euro–national parliamentary system.<sup>2</sup>

More than 15 years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon—which notably aimed to strengthen the role of parliaments in the European framework—this research paper seeks to identify best practices and exemplary standards for national parliaments in both their scrutiny of and participatory functions in EU affairs. It aims to improve the involvement of national parliaments, not by imposing a unique model from above but by helping to circulate and adapt best practices and well-functioning procedures. Through a selection of key case studies, it highlights several relevant national or cross-cutting features which, while not intended as straightforward institutional transfers, nor as ‘legal transplants’, may serve as sources of inspiration across the EU.

The cases were selected on the basis of our knowledge of the European activities of national parliaments, whether they be long-established practices (e.g. the role of the Grand Committee in Finland) or more recent

---

<sup>1</sup> Protocol 1 annexed to the Treaty of Lisbon lists national parliaments’ prerogatives and rights in the EU (such as information rights), while Protocol 2 grants them special prerogatives regarding checks on subsidiarity. In particular, under the ‘Early Warning System’, if one-third of national parliaments consider that a legislative proposal does not respect this principle, then the Commission should provide justification.

<sup>2</sup> The Euro–national parliamentary system comprises a set of interinstitutional relationships: those between each national parliament and its government, those between the European Parliament and the European Commission, those established among the national executives within the EU institutions and with the European Commission, and those among national parliaments and between them and the European Parliament (C. Fasone and N. Lupo, ‘Introduction: Parliaments in the Composite European Constitution’, in N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Bloomsbury), 9). This means that it should not be a surprise if the many executives who have roles at the EU level are called to democratic accountability before their respective parliaments (the European Parliament for the European Commission and its agencies; the national parliaments for the members of national governments who comprise the European Council and the Council of the EU), but should at the same time also respond to directions from and scrutiny at other institutional levels. For instance, the European Commission may be asked to respond to national parliaments (through the Early Warning System, the political dialogue or hearings) and, reciprocally, members of national governments can be summoned to the European Parliament, especially when they are presiding over the Council.



examples (e.g. the joint oversight of Europol).<sup>3</sup> We have not sought to explain why the ‘good performers’ in parliamentary oversight are so, nor to draw up an exhaustive map of the European activities of assemblies, but rather to highlight a variety of practices that we consider relevant. The core of these practices certainly relates to the oversight of each government’s European policy by national parliamentarians, but many of them tend to go beyond this power relationship to include other actors (parliamentary officials, other national parliamentarians, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), etc.) and other functions (interparliamentary cooperation, the facilitation of public debate, the sharing of information with stakeholders etc.). Ultimately, the question of the role of national parliaments goes beyond the powers and actions of these institutions alone to question the democratic quality of the multilevel governance system that is the EU.

Indeed, the stakes of our investigation fundamentally concern the quality of representative democracy at both the national and the European level. The rise in power of the European Parliament (EP) from the 1970s to the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon contrasts with the timid commitment of many national parliaments to exercising their rights. Some national parliamentary assemblies have clearly struggled to find their place in European governance. There are a variety of factors that have led to difficulties in their involvement, including the varying assertiveness of governments in terms of their participation in the European decision-making process; the centrality of the strategy of parliamentary legitimisation through the EP; the diversity of the national constitutional frameworks, which has made it difficult to draw up common rules in the treaties; and, often, the lack of an electoral incentive for national parliaments to engage in European activities. These obstacles are real and well known. However, we do not believe that they justify the sidelining of national parliaments or even the limiting of their role to that of guardians of subsidiarity. Indeed, as the central institutions of representative democracy at the national level, national parliaments are involved in European issues in at least four ways. These are the following:

1. *As legislators.* National parliaments are required to transpose parts of European legislation and must ensure that all texts they discuss are consistent with the European legal order. This has led to the introduction of procedures to examine European legislative proposals at an early stage.

---

<sup>3</sup> We acknowledge that our choices are subjective. Other cases could have been included, such as the efforts of the French Parliament to make structured information on European documents available to the public, the dynamism and sustainability of the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX), the use of the political dialogue in Portugal, the embedding of the Bundesrat in the German negotiating delegation, or the recent attempts at collaboration between the European Parliament rapporteur on a given EU legislative file and the national parliaments.



2. As *overseers* (or controllers) of their governments. National parliamentarians must ensure that they obtain authoritative official justification of the national government's European policy, which they can then either support or criticise, both upstream and downstream.
3. As central *national political institutions*. National parliaments de facto express the parliamentary viewpoint of a member state on European issues, whether in the public arena or in direct dialogue with European institutions. This parliamentary viewpoint, distinct from official diplomacy, may be consensual or polarised depending on the case. Logically, it reflects the concerns of voters and/or territories.
4. As *representative political institutions*. Being relatively similar from one member state to another, national parliaments collectively form a network of partisan, pluralistic and deliberative organisations. This network collaborates through formal and informal instances of interparliamentary cooperation and runs in parallel to, and reinforces, domestic parliamentary participation in EU affairs. This cooperation is a form of transnational parliamentarism which may include the EP, but which also means that the EP cannot claim a monopoly on expressing the will of the composite European people.

## Taking the EU seriously: the successful Grand Committee in Finland

---

Although there is no 'one-size-fits-all' arrangement suitable for every member state, the scrutiny of EU affairs in the Finnish Parliament can be regarded as a best practice in many respects, procedurally as well as in terms of the genuine political commitment it represents. The Finnish unicameral legislature (the Eduskunta) has famously been described as one of the strongest national parliaments in terms of how it deals with EU affairs.<sup>4</sup> Much of the merit is owed to its Grand Committee, the pillar of the parliamentary scrutiny of EU matters.

---

<sup>4</sup> T. Raunio, 'The Finnish Eduskunta and the European Union: The Strengths and the Weaknesses of a Mandating System', in C. Heffler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 409–10.



Originally established in 1907 with a different mandate, the Grand Committee was turned into the standing committee responsible for EU affairs soon after the accession of Finland to the European Community in 1995. It is one of the 17 standing committees of the Eduskunta, and one of the largest: it is formed of 25 full members and 13 substitutes (out of 200 Members of Parliament (MPs), thus comprising one-eighth of the House), whereas most of the other standing committees have just 17 members and 9 substitutes.

The strength of the Grand Committee is due to multiple factors. It is one of the few committees whose setting up, at the beginning of every term, is mandated by the Constitution<sup>5</sup> adopted in 1999 and which is thus immediately able to regulate the country's participation in the EU. Its functions as the European Affairs Committee (EAC) are largely regulated and protected by the Constitution itself.<sup>6</sup> Its members typically also sit on other committees—most Finnish MPs serve on two standing committees—and, at least until recently, are very often chairs of other committees or party leaders, to ensure the strategic and coordinating role envisaged for this parliamentary body. For most of its history, the Grand Committee has taken a very consensual approach to decision-making, rarely issuing reports subject to a formal vote.

Since the adoption of the 1999 Constitution following the country's accession to the EU, the position of the Eduskunta on EU matters, as well as the status and the powers of the Grand Committee, have been protected under constitutional law. According to Article 96 of the Finnish Constitution, the Parliament has the powers to consider all legislative proposals, agreements and other measures to be decided by the EU that otherwise would fall under the Parliament's remit. This thus includes all dossiers falling under any EU competence, which are considered to be at a very early stage in the EU deliberative process, well before the supranational decision is taken.<sup>7</sup> To determine the position of the Parliament, the government must communicate all EU proposals to the Eduskunta without delay. The main 'beneficiary' of this information flow is the Grand Committee, save for matters concerning foreign and defence policies, which are referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee.

---

<sup>5</sup> Finland, Constitution of Finland (11 June 1999), art. 35: 'For each electoral term, the Parliament appoints the Grand Committee, the Constitutional Law Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Finance Committee, the Audit Committee and the other standing Committees provided in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.' The same section also sets the size of the Grand Committee.

<sup>6</sup> See arts. 96 and 97, further described below.

<sup>7</sup> Finland, Constitution of Finland, art. 96.



The Eduskunta has traditionally been considered a ‘working Parliament’,<sup>8</sup> heavily reliant on its standing committees to carry out its activities. This is also confirmed with regard to EU matters: in all EU instances, except for the transmission of a reasoned opinion to EU institutions in the framework of the early warning mechanism (EWM),<sup>9</sup> when the plenary has to be involved, EU-related activities are undertaken by the Grand Committee. Even in cases where either the Grand Committee or the plenary could be involved, as is the case regarding the information to be shared by the prime minister before or after each European Council meeting or for EU treaty amendments,<sup>10</sup> on most occasions the Grand Committee is given responsibility for the issue. Hence, even though, for scrutiny of EU legislative proposals and consultation documents, the Speakers’ Council—the parliamentary body composed of the speaker and the committee chairs that steers the activity of the Eduskunta—‘may decide that the matter be taken up for debate in plenary session’, the plenary cannot take a decision.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, on all EU matters save for Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Defence and Security Policy issues, it is the Grand Committee that regularly adopts resolutions, reports and opinions on behalf of the Parliament.

In a comparative perspective, the Parliament, and the Grand Committee especially, also enjoy broad information rights, protected by the Constitution. The Parliament has almost unlimited access to information from the government:<sup>12</sup> under the Constitution, it has to receive the information it needs for consideration of the matters before it.<sup>13</sup> The information rights of committees vis-à-vis the executive are explicitly mentioned

---

<sup>8</sup> D. Arter, *Scandinavian Politics Today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 211–17.

<sup>9</sup> The EWM, formally introduced with the Lisbon Treaty (see Article 12 of the Treaty on European Union and Protocol no. 2 to the Treaty of Lisbon), allows each national parliament, or a chamber thereof in the case of a bicameral legislature, to control the compliance of EU legislative proposals falling beyond the exclusive competences of the EU with the subsidiarity principle and, in the case of an alleged violation, to issue a reasoned opinion. Each parliament is given two votes (one per chamber in the case of a bicameral parliament). If the number of reasoned opinions on a legislative proposal counts for at least one-third of the overall number of votes assigned to the domestic legislatures (one-quarter if the proposal falls within the area of freedom, security and justice), the European Commission has to reconsider the proposal and decide, providing due reasons, whether to withdraw, amend or maintain it (the so-called yellow card procedure, of which there have been only three cases since 2009). For legislative proposals under the ordinary legislative procedure, if the number of reasoned opinions is equal to a simple majority of the votes cast, a proposal whose text has been maintained by the Commission can be blocked by the EP by a majority of the votes cast or in the Council by a majority of 55% of its members (the so-called orange card procedure, no cases of which have yet been recorded).

<sup>10</sup> Finland, Constitution of Finland, art. 97.

<sup>11</sup> See the ‘twin provisions’ contained in Finland, Constitution of Finland, arts. 96 and 97.

<sup>12</sup> Raunio, ‘The Finnish Eduskunta and the European Union’, 414–15.

<sup>13</sup> Finland, Constitution of Finland, art. 47.



with regard to EU matters<sup>14</sup> and the Grand Committee has to receive reports dealing with the preliminary stage of EU decision-making.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, primarily through the Grand Committee, the Eduskunta is involved very early on in the process, even before the European Commission formally tables an EU legislative proposal.

The design of the Finnish parliamentary scrutiny procedures was carefully considered prior to Finland acquiring EU membership. The Danish Folketing's experience in EU affairs, regarded as a benchmark in the 1990s, was studied in depth,<sup>16</sup> but the Eduskunta moved in a slightly different direction, and for the better. Rather than situating the powers of scrutiny with an EAC only, it was considered appropriate not only to entrust the Grand Committee with significant decision-making powers and a coordinating role, but also to actively involve sectoral committees in the procedure. Indeed, the Grand Committee may decide to ask the sectoral committees for an opinion on any EU document, thus giving it the leading role in EU scrutiny activity.<sup>17</sup> Multi-committee membership and the regular presence of party leaders and committee chairs in the Grand Committee have helped to build a cooperative approach to inter-committee relations and to foster a genuine commitment to monitoring EU dossiers.

EU legislative proposals are reviewed by the Grand Committee and, typically, by one or more sectoral committees, which may issue statements to the Grand Committee. The Grand Committee, in turn, can adopt a resolution to orient the action of the government.<sup>18</sup> The Grand Committee usually agrees with the position expressed by the sectoral committees, which thus play a significant role and normally concur with the position of the government.<sup>19</sup> For example, it is sufficient to recall here the influence exerted by the Constitutional Committee at the time of the negotiations for the European Stability Mechanism Treaty in 2011,<sup>20</sup> as well as for the legal foundations of the NextGenerationEU programme in 2020.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, in comparison to the weaknesses of the Danish Folketing's procedures, the Finnish Grand Committee successfully makes an effort to offer its view to the government before a matter is considered by

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., art. 96.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., art. 97.

<sup>16</sup> Raunio, 'The Finnish Eduskunta and the European Union', 416.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., art. 96.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Raunio, 'The Finnish Eduskunta and the European Union', 410.

<sup>20</sup> K. Tuori, *The Eurozone Crisis: A Constitutional Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 197–8.

<sup>21</sup> P. Leino-Sandberg and M. Ruffert, 'Next Generation EU and Its Constitutional Ramifications', *Common Market Law Review* 59 (2022), 447.



the various intergovernmental committees prior to the formal consideration by the EU Council of Ministers. These various elements of the Finnish process, including the political leadership the Grand Committee is able to exert and its very early involvement in EU policymaking, have made the Finnish model one to imitate, as it was by the Baltic states, Slovenia and Hungary at the time of their accession.<sup>22</sup>

The procedure used for scrutinising EU affairs in Finland combines document-based and mandate-based systems. While the government has to transmit documents and information to the Grand Committee without delay, including a summary of the executive's position on the matter and a report after all EU Council of Ministers meetings, the Grand Committee typically meets every Friday to hear from the relevant ministers ahead of the Council meetings scheduled for the following week.<sup>23</sup> The statement that the Grand Committee issues to the government is considered a mandate which, while not constitutionally binding, is politically highly significant.<sup>24</sup> Although the mandate is not usually formulated in strict terms, to allow sufficient leeway for negotiations in Brussels, the ministers have to appear before the Grand Committee to explain in great detail any deviation from its recommendations. The same applies to the prime minister, who appears before the Grand Committee before and after every European Council meeting.

Moreover, of the standing committees of the Finnish Parliament, the Grand Committee has by far the most staff at its disposal. Finally, it meets behind closed doors,<sup>25</sup> with just the documents reviewed and the agenda being published. Neither the full text of the debates nor the questions to the ministers (and their answers) are included in the minutes. While this 'secrecy' may be viewed as problematic from the point of view of openness, transparency and citizens' involvement, it has so far guaranteed significant effectiveness in the committee's work and scrutiny capacity, as well as in achieving political compromises on EU matters.<sup>26</sup>

In 2011 changes in party dynamics, caused by both the rise of the populist and Eurosceptic Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*) and the EU's response to the eurozone crisis, seemed to have triggered a major shift

---

<sup>22</sup> Raunio, 'The Finnish Eduskunta and the European Union', 421.

<sup>23</sup> The Finnish Grand Committee regularly meets twice a week, on Wednesday and Friday afternoons. See Eduskunta Riksdagen, 'The Committees and the EU'.

<sup>24</sup> K. Auel and C. Neuhold, *Europeanisation of National Parliaments in European Union Member States: Experiences and Best-Practices*, study prepared for The Greens/EFA Group (2018), 20.

<sup>25</sup> Finland, Constitution of Finland, art. 50.

<sup>26</sup> T. Raunio, 'Committees in the Finnish Eduskunta. Cross-Party Cooperation and Legislative Scrutiny Behind Closed Doors', in S. T. Siefken and H. Rommetvedt (eds.), *Parliamentary Committees in the Policy Process* (London: Routledge, 2021).



in the traditionally consensual and pro-European attitude of the Parliament and the Grand Committee. Contrary to the practice of deciding by consensus, voting in the Grand Committee became more common, as did the addition of ‘dissenting opinions’ to the statements of both the Grand Committee and the sectoral committees on EU affairs. However, the inclusion of the Finns Party in governmental coalitions (2015–17 and 2023–), as well as the internal split of the party in 2017, has somewhat returned parliamentary practice to normal, enabling consensual decision-making in the Parliament to be brought back,<sup>27</sup> save for during the critical juncture of the pandemic, when the adoption of the NextGenerationEU programme became a very divisive and hotly contested issue in the Parliament.<sup>28</sup>

All in all, the leading role of the Grand Committee and the strength of the parliamentary scrutiny of the government in EU affairs make the Finnish Parliament an effective domestic player in EU decision-making and explain the lack of appetite shown by this legislature for both the EWM and interparliamentary cooperation,<sup>29</sup> with the focus instead being on domestic oversight of the executive.

## Staffing directly in Brussels: the German Bundestag and Bundesrat strike forces

The decision to open permanent representations (‘liaison offices’) of national parliaments in Brussels has been a silent and gradual innovation that has given added value to EU decision-making, both from a national and a supranational perspective. Compared to the little effort that has been required to achieve this so far, in terms of both human and financial resources, the results appear very positive and relevant. Indeed, the potentialities of involving national parliamentary administrations in EU dynamics and increasing

---

<sup>27</sup> C. Poyet and T. Raunio, ‘Confrontational but Respecting the Rules: The Minor Impact of the Finns Party on Legislative–Executive Relations’, *Parliamentary Affairs* 74 (2021).

<sup>28</sup> Leino-Sandberg and Ruffert, ‘Next Generation EU and its Constitutional Ramifications’, 465.

<sup>29</sup> A. Jonsson Cornell, ‘Similar but Different: Comparing the Scrutiny of the Principle of Subsidiarity Within the EWM in Denmark, Finland and Sweden’, in M. Goldoni and A. Jonsson Cornell (eds.), *National and Regional Parliaments in the EU Legislative Procedure Post-Lisbon: The Impact of the Early Warning Mechanism* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017).



their mutual cooperation often seem overlooked and underdeveloped, and yet might help to involve more national parliaments in EU issues and reduce the gap between national politics and EU policies.

Paradoxically, both the direct election of the EP in 1979 and the end of the double parliamentary mandate in 2004 (i.e. the possibility of being simultaneously a national and a European parliamentarian) strengthened the monopoly of the executives in representing their national interests at the EU level and in developing all the formal and informal negotiating activity that EU decision-making implies. Not by chance, the permanent representation of each member state in Brussels has acquired an even more crucial role, as has their coordination body, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which was formally established in 1965.

None of this presents a problem, as long as the EP and the national parliaments are not completely sidelined and still receive the information needed to allow them to fulfil their functions in the Euro–national parliamentary system. These functions are, specifically, to have a certain amount of law-making and budgetary authority and, most of all, to scrutinise and oversee their respective executives, with the aim of ensuring the functioning of the mechanisms of political responsibility which form the basis of every democracy. Precisely with the aim of avoiding the creation of an excessive information gap on EU affairs between the national parliaments and the national executives, some member state legislatures have started to send a member of their administration to Brussels, to the heart of EU negotiations.

The first parliament to send a representative was the Danish Folketing, in 1991:<sup>30</sup> this was no coincidence, given the high level of attention and debate that EU issues traditionally raise in that parliament (the one which has most clearly adopted a ‘mandate-based system’ regarding EU affairs) and the country’s public opinion.<sup>31</sup> Then, gradually, and especially as an effect of the role for national parliaments acknowledged in the Treaty

---

<sup>30</sup> See A. Pegan and A.-L. Högenauer, ‘The Role of Parliamentary Administrations in Interparliamentary Cooperation’, in N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Bloomsbury, 2016), 149, where it is noted that the Danish representative had its office in the Belgian Parliament at that time. See also A.-L. Högenauer, C. Neuhold and T. Christiansen, *Parliamentary Administrations in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016), 51.

<sup>31</sup> On Denmark, see M. B. Christensen, ‘The Danish Folketing and EU Affairs: Is the Danish Model of Parliamentary Scrutiny Still Best Practice?’, in C. Heftler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). On the difference between the mandated system and the document-based system, see P. G. Casalena, C. Fasone and N. Lupo, ‘Protocol no. 1 (“On the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union”); in H. J. Blanke and S. Mangiameli (eds.), *The Treaty on European Union. A Commentary* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2013).



of Lisbon,<sup>32</sup> all the member state parliaments decided to send someone from their administrations, although following different formats in terms of the numbers and seniority of the representatives, the stability of the appointment and its coordination (in the case of bicameral parliaments).<sup>33</sup> The EP, realising the potential of this kind of representation and coordination among the national parliaments, and so as to be included and follow what the national parliaments were doing, decided to host them in one of its buildings (the same building that houses the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments) and to support the dialogues, both among the parliaments and with the EP itself. Therefore, these representatives are publicly known as ‘EU national parliaments’ representatives in the European Parliament’.<sup>34</sup>

In the case of Germany, the liaison office of the Bundestag in Brussels is specifically provided for by the Act on Cooperation between the Federal Government and the German Bundestag in Matters concerning the EU of 4 July 2013,<sup>35</sup> which implements Article 23 of the German Basic Law. This piece of legislation aims to better exploit the potential role in the EU of the Bundestag and the Bundesrat. This closer involvement in EU affairs was stipulated as necessary by the German Federal Constitutional Tribunal prior to the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon.<sup>36</sup>

Article 11 of this Act allows the Bundestag to maintain direct contact with the bodies of the EU through a liaison office to enable it to exercise its participatory rights in matters concerning the EU, and directs the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag to second representatives to the liaison office. Furthermore, it requires the federal government to assist the Bundestag Liaison Office in its professional tasks, not only through the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU, but also through the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Kingdom of Belgium, which is, naturally, also located in Brussels.

---

<sup>32</sup> On the Treaty of Lisbon as a ‘game changer’, see A.-L. Högenauer and C. Neuhold, ‘From Advisor to Interparliamentary Networker: A Typology of Parliamentary Officials in EU Affairs’, *Politics and Governance* 14 (2026), 14.

<sup>33</sup> See Högenauer, Neuhold and Christiansen, *Parliamentary Administrations in the European Union*.

<sup>34</sup> European Parliament, ‘Representatives of National Parliaments’.

<sup>35</sup> Germany, Federal Government, Gesetz über die Zusammenarbeit von Bundesregierung und Deutschem Bundestag in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union (EUZBBG), *Federal Law Gazette I*, 4 July 2013, 2170. This Act replaced the Act of 12 March 1993, as amended by Article 2 of the Act of 13 September 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Following the Lisbon judgment of the German Constitutional Court (30 June 2009), another piece of legislation (Act on the Exercise by the Bundestag and by the Bundesrat of their Responsibility for Integration in Matters concerning the European Union—Responsibility for Integration Act) was approved and soon amended to strengthen the role of the German Parliament in EU affairs (Germany, Federal Government, Gesetz über die Wahrnehmung der Integrationsverantwortung des Bundestages und des Bundesrates in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union (Integrationsverantwortungsgesetz – IntVG), *Federal Law Gazette*, 22 September 2009, IS 3022).



In line with Articles 23 and 50 of the German Basic Law, the involvement of one or more representatives of the Bundesrat is also required. The Bundesrat is the higher German parliamentary chamber, which has the peculiarity of being composed of members of the executives of the 16 *Länder*. As the *Länder* are called on, together with the federal government or sometimes even in its place, every time a policy affecting their jurisdiction is dealt with at the EU level,<sup>37</sup> each *Land* also has its own permanent representation office in Brussels, established in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>38</sup> The Bundesrat, in Brussels as well as in Berlin, plays a coordinating role among the various territorial interests within the German Federation: if the competences of the *Länder* are affected, the Bundesrat's opinion is decisive, and prevails over that of the federal government, provided that it is supported by a two-thirds majority in the plenary.

In other words, the ambiguous and middle-way nature of the German Bundesrat, which according to many does not qualify as a proper parliament,<sup>39</sup> seems in this case to have an advantage, helping to collect sufficient information about the territorial interests at stake and then contributing to defining the German approach to negotiation at the EU level, 'automatically' keeping on board not only all the executives at the federal and sub-federal levels, but also the respective parliamentary dimension.

Overall, what is impressive is the scale of German parliamentary representation, which is by far the biggest and the most robust among the representations of the national parliamentary administrations in Brussels.<sup>40</sup> The significant size of the representation requires, logistically, that a large part of it is hosted in a separate building (where the Bundestag's parliamentary groups also have their own representatives), as the space allotted by the EP was not deemed sufficient. It must also be remembered that supporting these representatives are the EU offices of the Bundestag and Bundesrat based in Berlin, which are similarly well staffed. These include the Directorate of EU Affairs of the Bundestag<sup>41</sup> and the Secretariat of the Committee on Questions

---

<sup>37</sup> See Germany, Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 25 May 1949, arts. 23 and 50.

<sup>38</sup> O. Höing, 'With a Little Help of the Constitutional Court: The Bundestag on Its Way to an Active Policy Shaper', in C. Hefftl et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 208.

<sup>39</sup> O. Rozenberg, *The Council of the EU: From the Congress of Ambassadors to a Genuine Parliamentary Chamber?*, Study for the AFCO Committee, European Parliament (2019).

<sup>40</sup> As of June 2025, eight people: one for the Bundesrat and seven for the Bundestag (one representative, three deputy representatives and three assistants).

<sup>41</sup> This Directorate employs 74 staff members, with 38 of them holding jobs that require a university degree according to F. Arndt, A.-L. Högenauer and C. Koggel, 'Germany's Parliamentary Administration', in T. Christiansen, E. Griglio and N. Lupo (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Parliamentary Administrations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 263.



of the EU of the Bundesrat, which also functions as the Secretariat of the Chamber for European Affairs (a permanent body that can be convened when the Bundesrat is not in session, in place of the plenary).<sup>42</sup>

This conspicuous and well-articulated administrative structure has been in place since the beginning of EU law-making thanks in part to specific databases and information instruments aimed at coordinating German institutional activity in the EU, which is very carefully regulated by the law. The representation in Brussels also issues a weekly bulletin, the 'Report from Brussels', which is sent to each member of the German Parliament.

This massive administrative support provided to the German Parliament on EU affairs reduces the information gap with the executive. It does so by relying on the structural links between the national parliament and the executive, and is favoured by the ambiguous but crucial position of the Bundesrat: a body in which the various territorial interests are balanced in the national interest. Thus, this strong parliamentary staff on EU affairs both better represents and negotiates for German interests in Brussels and allows the Bundestag to fully exercise its crucial functions of direction, scrutiny and authorisation with regard to developments in European integration, functions which have been deemed vital by the German Federal Constitutional Tribunal in its jurisprudence.

## Applying robust and tailored transparency rules: insights from Sweden

---

Despite efforts to increase the transparency of the legislative process, the EU suffers from a definite deficit in this area. This is due to a combination of three factors: (a) the operational and diplomatic nature of negotiations; (b) the complexity and slowness of the decision-making process, which involves a variety of actors; and (c) the signalling stakes with regard to public opinion. The latter means that, for example, the

---

<sup>42</sup> This secretariat is composed of 14 people. See *ibid.*



position appearing on the record of votes in the General Affairs Council is not always the official position taken by a state during negotiations.<sup>43</sup>

This lack of transparency is not inherently a problem.<sup>44</sup> Secrecy can sometimes be essential to reaching compromises. Furthermore, shining a spotlight on certain bodies can lead to negotiations being moved to more informal venues, ultimately undermining genuine transparency. Italy, the US and the EP<sup>45</sup> have all provided similar examples of this in recent years, as has the French bicameral procedure.

However, in European matters, a lack of transparency is problematic given both the importance of the legislation adopted (in terms of volume and normative primacy) and the bureaucratic nature of the actors negotiating on behalf of the member states. Indeed, while ministers formally validate their government's final position, most of the negotiations often take place upstream, in Council working groups or within the Committee of Permanent Representatives, which are made up of senior officials, many of whom are diplomats.<sup>46</sup> From the point of view of democratic theory, the difficulty of knowing what is happening in these forums, and in particular who supports what, is an issue, to say the least.<sup>47</sup>

This is where national parliaments can play a role not only in monitoring the process but, more generally, in promoting transparency for the benefit of citizens, civil society and interest groups.<sup>48</sup> Among them, the Swedish Parliament stands out for the scope of its powers in this area. In Sweden, the government's transparency obligations towards the Parliament, particularly in European matters, are enshrined in a very rigorous institutional and constitutional framework based on a long tradition of public access to official documents and government accountability.

---

<sup>43</sup> S. Novak, 'The Silence of Ministers', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51 (2013).

<sup>44</sup> M. Hillebrandt, P. Leino-Sandberg and I. Koivisto (eds.), *(In)visible European Government: Critical Approaches to Transparency as an Ideal and a Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).

<sup>45</sup> C. Fasone and N. Lupo, 'Transparency vs. Informality in Legislative Committees: Comparing the US House of Representatives, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the European Parliament', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 21/3 (2015).

<sup>46</sup> T. Larue, 'Agents in Brussels. Delegation and Democracy in the European Union', Ph.D. thesis, Umeå University, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> With regard to the Council, and the alleged violation of the publicity regime requested for meetings dealing with legislative procedures, see Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, art. 15(2) and (3); the issue was addressed in General Court of the EU, Case T-163/21, *De Capitani v. Council* [25 January 2023], ECLI:EU:T:2023:15.

<sup>48</sup> On how the work of national parliaments is accessible to citizens, see the survey in COSAC, *Report on the Developments in EU Procedures and Practices Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny, 30th Report* (November 2018), iv. It states: 'With regard to committee sittings, half of the respondents stated that civil society organisations took part regularly, with only a minority saying that they did not participate at all'.



Since 1766 Sweden has applied a very strong principle of transparency, based on one of its fundamental laws, the Freedom of the Press Act, which guarantees public access to official documents.<sup>49</sup> This principle also applies to relations between the government and the Parliament. Citizens and parliamentarians tend to be seen as a single group that is entitled to access information—a salient feature of Swedish political culture that distinguishes it from more elitist conceptions such as that of the British.<sup>50</sup>

The imperative of transparency with regard to the Parliament can also be understood in the light of the importance of the Riksdag's prerogatives in European matters.<sup>51</sup> The EAC meets weekly and other standing committees also consider European issues. The Parliament is systematically consulted by the government on European issues. Although the government is not legally bound to follow the EAC's opinion, political logic dictates that it should do so. Ministers must also justify their choices to the committee after the Council meetings.

When it joined the EU in 1995, Sweden insisted on preserving its principle of transparency, particularly with regard to the communication of EU-related information. In 1994 Swedish domestic legislation was amended to strengthen transparency requirements for the government, stressing that cases of classification should be exceptional. A specific declaration was also annexed to the Act of Accession to ensure that accession would not undermine this principle. Declaration 47 of the Act of Accession thus states: 'Sweden welcomes the development now taking place in the European Union towards greater openness and transparency. Open government and, in particular, public access to official records as well as the constitutional protection afforded to those who give information to the media are and remain fundamental principles which form part of Sweden's constitutional, political and cultural heritage.'<sup>52</sup>

Although this declaration has no legal value in itself, it set two important benchmarks. First, it provided a basis for affirming that member states have their own constitutional traditions that, unless otherwise justified, should be respected. Second, it marked the starting point for a strategy aimed at changing the way the EU

---

<sup>49</sup> Sweden, Freedom of the Press Act, chap. 2, art. 2, provides that 'Any restriction of the right of access to official documents shall be scrupulously specified in a provision of a special act of law'.

<sup>50</sup> U. Öberg, 'EU Citizens' Right to Know: The Improbable Adoption of a European Freedom of Information Act', *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies* 2 (1999).

<sup>51</sup> H. Hegeland, 'The Swedish Parliament and EU Affairs: From Reluctant Player to Europeanised Actor', in C. Heffler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>52</sup> European Communities, Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the European Union is founded, OJ C241 (29 August 1994), 9.



operates in favour of greater transparency, including ensuring better access to official documents and greater publicity for Council deliberations.<sup>53</sup> The provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty,<sup>54</sup> the Lisbon Treaty and various regulations<sup>55</sup> on transparency have crowned this dynamic.

However, the disclosure of certain documents by the Swedish authorities has occasionally caused friction with other member states and European institutions. It also complicates the daily lives of Swedish civil servants, as one of them, a senior official at the Permanent Representation, explained: ‘When I write an email to Stockholm, I know it may end up in the hands of parliamentarians. It makes you think twice before sending it.’<sup>56</sup>

While Sweden’s culture of transparency is highly developed in European matters, it is not absolute. Certain parts of official documents may be temporarily kept confidential if they concern national security or sensitive negotiations, in accordance with the relevant articles in Sweden’s Public Access and Secrecy Act.<sup>57</sup> However, even in such cases, Parliament may demand explanations and request confidential access to the documents. In the field of European affairs, classified information is not published by the Parliament’s services.<sup>58</sup> The assembly may also wait until negotiations have been completed before releasing certain documents.

Furthermore, the Riksdag’s parliamentary committees usually meet behind closed doors. This allows the government to outline its negotiation strategy and the compromises it is prepared to accept. A certain consensus among political groups on the benefits of secrecy on European matters is therefore necessary—a consensus that is more difficult to achieve in polarised political systems or larger member states. The

---

<sup>53</sup> R. M. Czarny, *Sweden: From Neutrality to International Solidarity* (Cham: Springer, 2018), 117–32.

<sup>54</sup> However, during the 1996 intergovernmental conference, Sweden scaled back its ambitions for fear that a European right to transparency might allow for greater exceptions than those provided for in the Swedish Constitution. See: U. Öberg, ‘Public Access to Documents After the Entry Into Force of the Amsterdam Treaty: Much Ado About Nothing?’, *European Integration Online Papers* 2/8 (1998).

<sup>55</sup> In particular European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) no. 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, OJ L145 (31 May 2001), 43; and European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) no. 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, adopted during the Swedish EU Council Presidency, OJ L8 (12 January 2001), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Interview conducted by Olivier Rozenberg in Brussels on 23 May 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Sweden, Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act, *Swedish Code of Statutes*, 2009, 400.

<sup>58</sup> J. M. Möllerberg Nordfors, ‘Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Swedish Governments’ European Policy: The Role of the EU Committee in the Swedish Parliament’, in J.-F. Papin, *Information Report on Behalf of the Senate Committee on European Affairs on the Proceedings of the Symposium on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union Held at the Senate on 6 December 2021*, French Senate Report no. 168 (5 December 2023), 69. Möllerberg Nordfors is the head of the Secretariat of the Swedish Parliament’s Committee on European Union Affairs. The following information is taken from the same source.



minutes are not released until two weeks after the EAC meeting.<sup>59</sup> However, the desire to inform the public is taken into account, with live broadcast of the prime minister's hearings on the eve of European Councils. In addition, numerous meetings take place in the standing committees well in advance of the European legislative process, often when the European Commission announces its initial plans. Therefore, even when published a few days later, the minutes of the parliamentary committees provide advance information on the government's position on a subject, as well as on the positions of all the parliamentary party groups.

It would be absurd to hold up Swedish transparency standards as a magical solution to the European democratic deficit. The idea that transparency is a vehicle for trust has often been disproved, including when we consider the rise of the Swedish far right in the 2020s, fuelled by scandals that were revealed by, but also manipulated using the transparency standards.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the Swedish case demonstrates the absolute necessity for national parliaments to be well informed in order to be influential. What matters here is the obligation on ministers to disclose their negotiating strategy rather than a formal right to a binding mandate. Furthermore, given the sheer volume and apparent technicality of the documents produced each week by the European institutions, the government's reporting obligations also help the Parliament to filter out the essential from the incidental and to make sense of the texts. When MPs receive a 'fact memorandum' from the government, they know that the issue is of some importance.

Last, from a democratic theory perspective, it should be noted that the obligation of transparency does not only apply to the government, which is accountable for its intentions or past actions. It also compels the opposition to take a stance. Indeed, when the EAC takes a position prior to European negotiations, 'Members or parties who do not share the position of the majority have to clarify this by registering a dissenting opinion'.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the mechanism designed to constrain the government also forces the opposition to abandon what is sometimes a comfortable ambiguity. In the Swedish case, however, the opposition often adopts the majority position, which hinders the politicisation of European questions.

---

<sup>59</sup> The proceedings of the EAC are the only closed meetings which provide stenographically recorded reports.

<sup>60</sup> S. Paquin, 'Trust and Transparency: Is Sweden Still a Model?', *Policy Options*, February 2025.

<sup>61</sup> Möllerberg Nordfors, 'Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Swedish Governments' European Policy', 250.



# Scrutinising the government before and after European Councils: plenary debates in Italy and Spain

---

The intergovernmental turn in EU politics since the Treaty of Maastricht and the increased role of the European Council, especially since the Treaty of Lisbon, have created an urgent need for each national parliament to closely scrutinise and oversee the activities of their representative (usually the prime minister, in some cases the president). More effective scrutiny of the European Council by each national parliament may help to fill the gap in democratic oversight that exists in public opinion and might also present a basis for the development of more informed and meaningful interparliamentary cooperation which could counterbalance the dominance of intergovernmental bodies.<sup>62</sup>

According to the treaties, '[t]he European Council shall meet twice every six months'.<sup>63</sup> In practice, the meetings of this institution have become much more frequent, in part to allow the EU to address the multiple crises which have arisen in the last two decades.<sup>64</sup> This explains why some member states, especially those with a solid tradition of a parliamentary form of government, have, over the same two decades, tried to strengthen the direction and scrutiny exercised by their parliaments by setting up or fine tuning ad hoc parliamentary procedures. The breadth and importance of the issues dealt with by the European Council, as well as the dominant role played by the prime ministers in the formal and informal negotiations held within it, explain the decision to involve the plenary, and not just the standing committees, in the development of these parliamentary procedures.

In Spain, the procedure, which consists of parliamentary debates regularly organised in the Congress after each European Council meeting, was implemented relatively early on. It is usually the prime minister

---

<sup>62</sup> C. Heffler et al., 'National Parliaments: Their Emerging Control Over the European Council', *Notre Europe Jacques Delors Institute Policy Paper* 89 (2013).

<sup>63</sup> Art. 15(3), Treaty on European Union.

<sup>64</sup> W. Wessels, *The European Council* (Red Globe Press, 2015); E. Griglio, *Parliamentary Oversight of the Executives. Tools and Procedures in Europe* (Oxford: Hart, 2020), 182.



who comes before the Congress to inform its members about the decisions taken during a European Council meeting.<sup>65</sup> After all, when Spain joined the European Communities in 1986, the European Council was already playing a crucial role in determining the overall political direction, and so it seemed rather natural to focus political and parliamentary attention on the outcome of these meetings, even though at that time the Council had not yet been recognised as a proper European institution by the treaties.

This procedure was then enshrined in Law 8/1994. Article 4 of the law states that ‘[t]he Government shall appear before the Plenary of the Congress of Deputies, after each meeting of the European Council, ordinary or extraordinary, to report on what has been decided there and to hold a debate with the Parliamentary Groups’.<sup>66</sup> This plenary procedure therefore usually follows each meeting of the European Council—although in some cases where multiple meetings have been held in a three-to-four-month period, these were grouped—and allows members of the Congress to ask questions of and raise issues with the prime minister.

According to the rules currently in force, the plenary of the Congress does not need to be involved before European Council meetings. Instead, in the crucial days that precede European Council meetings, parliamentary debates mostly occur at committee level, with the secretary of state for the EU appearing before the Joint Committee for the EU. This is a standing committee, regulated by the aforementioned Law 8/1994 and active since 1985, composed of both deputies and senators, with the possible addition, in specific circumstances, of Spanish MEPs.<sup>67</sup> However, *ex ante* plenary debates have recently become more frequent, due both to the higher salience of EU issues and the fact that several Spanish governments have been supported by only a tiny and fragile parliamentary majority.<sup>68</sup>

The Italian situation contrasts with the Spanish set-up. With Italy being among the founding member states, the European procedures of the Italian Chamber and Senate—both directly elected and having exactly the same powers, as is well known—were designed well before the European Council was affirmed

---

<sup>65</sup> C. Closa and P. M. Heywood, *Spain and the European Union* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>66</sup> Spain, Ley 8/1994, de 19 de mayo, por la que se regula la Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 20 May 1994, no. 120. Authors’ translation.

<sup>67</sup> M. Delgado-Iribarren García-Campero, ‘La Comisión mixta para la UE como cauce fundamental de participación de las Cortes Generales en los asuntos europeos’, *Revista de las Cortes Generales* 104 (2018).

<sup>68</sup> Y.-S. Rittelmeyer, *The Spanish Parliament and EU Affairs*, European Parliamentary Research Service Briefing (December 2023). See also V. Aguilar Calahorra, ‘Gobernar con una mayoría frágil. Crónica política y legislativa del año 2024’, *Revista Española de Derecho Constitucional* 133 (2025).



as a crucial institution of European integration, and also before the attribution to the prime minister of clear leadership in managing EU affairs. This means that the plenaries of the two houses have long been involved in examining and approving the legislative bills needed to ratify and execute treaty reforms, while the task of scrutinising the EU activity of the government is exercised, rather episodically, by the standing committees of the two houses.

There have been some exceptions, with the involvement of the prime minister, and thus of the plenary, especially when the European Council was dealing with the treaties and institutional reform.<sup>69</sup> However, institutional practice has long consisted of simple joint ‘briefings’ (*informative*) by a representative of the executive—usually an undersecretary of state—to the standing committees on both foreign and EU affairs of the two houses (thus, four committees), held in the days leading up to the European Council. These are sometimes followed by similar briefings on the outcome of the meeting of the European Council in the following weeks.<sup>70</sup>

For a long time the traditional idea of the executive’s privilege over foreign and European policies hindered full recognition of parliamentary power to direct and oversee the executive’s behaviour in meetings of the EU institutions. In this way, the approval of parliamentary motions or resolutions was rejected<sup>71</sup> and government ‘briefings’ instead of ‘communications’ were favoured, as the latter might be followed by a parliamentary vote.

---

<sup>69</sup> For instance, see the communications of President Giuliano Amato on the European Council of Feira and the institutional reform prospects for the European Communities, held in the Senate on 13 July 2000.

<sup>70</sup> L. Gianniti, *Napolitano senatore a vita* (forthcoming).

<sup>71</sup> This issue has now finally been overcome, partly with reference to parliamentary committees, as noted in Law 234/2012 (Italy, Legge 24 December 2012, n. 234, Norme generali sulla partecipazione dell'Italia alla formazione e all'attuazione della normativa e delle politiche dell'Unione europea, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 4 January 2013, no. 3, art. 1, par. 1-bis), as introduced by Law 238/2021 (Italy, Legge 23 December 2021, n. 238, Disposizioni per l'adempimento degli obblighi derivanti dall'appartenenza dell'Italia all'Unione europea, Legge europea 2019-2020, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 17 January 2022, no. 12): 'The competent Parliamentary Committees, in accordance with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Houses, before each meeting of the Council of the European Union, may adopt policy acts aimed at outlining the principles and lines of the Government's action in the preparatory activity for the adoption of European Union acts' (authors' translation).



It is only since 2005<sup>72</sup> that the government has been obliged to inform the houses about the position it intends to adopt before the meetings of the European Council.<sup>73</sup> However, this provision does not require the attendance of the prime minister. Therefore, prior to the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, it was more often the minister for foreign affairs, who accompanied the prime minister to meetings, who would brief the two houses (separately), without a vote being taken afterwards.<sup>74</sup>

The picture changed six years later, in November 2011, when the Monti government succeeded the last Berlusconi government at the request of President Napolitano, who hoped that it would be better able to address the financial crisis. From this point, the prime minister was consistently present at the briefings and a parliamentary vote often followed in both houses. This procedure was partially codified in 2012. Indeed, the legislative provision still does not explicitly require the attendance of the prime minister—rather it specifies that the government not only has to explain the position it intends to adopt, but also has to ‘take into account’ any parliamentary guidelines given.<sup>75</sup>

What matters most is that this procedure is regularly used and has also often been at the centre of political discussion and media attention, clearly demonstrating—of course with reference to the Italian case—two crucial features of EU democracy: the close connection between the EU form of government and those of each of its member states, and the decisive role exercised by the prime minister in managing EU affairs. This is a role that is not taken for granted in the Italian government as it requires the capacity to coordinate the rather differentiated positions that usually coexist within the parliamentary majority.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> With the passing of Law 11/2005 (Italy, Legge 4 February 2005, n. 11, Norme generali sulla partecipazione dell'Italia al processo normativo dell'Unione europea e sulle procedure di esecuzione degli obblighi comunitari, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 15 February 2005, no. 37), art. 3.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Before the meetings of the European Council are held, the Government shall report to the Houses, explaining the position it intends to adopt’ (ibid., authors’ translation).

<sup>74</sup> A. Esposito, *European Affairs Within the Chamber of Deputies*, in N. Lupo and G. Piccirilli (eds.), *The Italian Parliament in the European Union* (Oxford: Hart, 2017), 103.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Before the meetings of the European Council are held, the Government shall explain to the Houses the position it intends to take, which shall take into account any guidelines formulated by them’ (Italy, Legge n. 234/2012, art. 4, authors’ translation). This provision was extended to Eurogroup meetings and informal meetings in Italy, by Italy, Legge n. 238/2021.

<sup>76</sup> In this way the prime minister has the opportunity to clearly show the office’s strengthened role due to its leadership and coordination of EU policies: see, with reference to the first Conte government, L. Gianniti and B. Guastafarro, ‘The New Italian Government Between Break and Continuity: Political Discourse and Constitutional Practices’, in C. Rauegger and A. Wallerman (eds.), *The Eurosceptic Challenge: National Implementation and Interpretation of EU Law* (Oxford: Hart, 2019); and, more generally, N. Lupo, ‘Gli interlocutori europei, nel processo di integrazione europea e nei meccanismi di governo dell’Unione’, in S. Cassese, A. Melloni and A. Pajno (eds.), *I presidenti e la presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri nell’Italia repubblicana. Storia, Politica, Istituzioni* (Rome: Laterza, 2022).



In particular, the debate and the votes after the communications of the prime minister have acquired more importance, in part due to the practice of dividing and combining the contents of the many resolutions tabled by both the majority and the opposition groups. Especially in the current legislative term (2022–), it has often been the case that some parts of the resolutions tabled by the opposition parties have received a positive response from the government and have been approved by the plenaries, and that some parts of the resolutions submitted by the majority have been approved by a unanimous (or quasi-unanimous) vote.<sup>77</sup> This is a further confirmation of the high level of articulation of the positions of Italian political parties, within both the majority and the opposition, on EU matters.

## Making sure members of national parliaments and MEPs work together: Denmark and Hungary at the forefront

The relationship between members of national parliaments (MNPs) and MEPs from the same member state is a fundamental element in coordinating the various levels of government in the Euro–national parliamentary system.<sup>78</sup> The organisation of joint meetings, either in person or online, and the invitation of MEPs to participate in some of the work of the national parliament can help to circulate information; harmonise the preparation, negotiation and transposition of European norms; and homogenise the positions of political parties at both levels. In terms of influence, both MNPs and MEPs can benefit from this coordination.

In short, the democratic and efficiency gains are considerable. However, serious problems structurally limit the deepening and formalisation of this type of cooperation. Legally, the two types of parliamentarians do not belong to the same institution. Their mandates are completely separate. Moreover, since its creation,

---

<sup>77</sup> A. Esposito, 'Il ruolo della Camera dei deputati nella formazione delle politiche dell'UE. Un bilancio 15 anni dopo l'entrata in vigore del Trattato di Lisbona', *Rassegna parlamentare* 1 (2025).

<sup>78</sup> N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2016).



the EP has sought to move beyond the notion of the national affiliation of MEPs in favour of structuring parliamentary life through transnational party groups. The statute for MEPs, adopted in 2005, prohibits them, for instance, from following voting instructions.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, since 2009 no MEP can simultaneously hold a national parliamentary mandate. From a more political point of view, possible differences in voting systems between the national and the European elections, as well as specific voting patterns, can lead to relatively heterogeneous delegations. Among the MNPs and MEPs from the same state, the majorities may differ. Some groups outside the system may be better represented in the EP, as was the case for many years with the National Rally (Rassemblement national) in France. All these factors explain why, in 2017, only one in two EACs invited MEPs from the same country to attend their meetings.<sup>80</sup>

Despite these obstacles, there are positive forms of cooperation between MNPs and MEPs. A comparative study based on a questionnaire indicates that ‘MEPs attend EAC meetings more often when 1) the EAC is strong; 2) they have advanced participation opportunities; and 3) they are members of a large political party’.<sup>81</sup> In other words, MEPs make an effort to be involved in their home country’s parliament when they feel that it can serve a purpose.

Although they differ in their modalities, the Danish and Hungarian cases are interesting examples of MEP/MNP cooperation. The Danish Parliament has not developed any specific prerogatives regarding the invitation of MEPs: it was ranked zero on a scale of zero to six in terms of the extent of MEP/MNP cooperation.<sup>82</sup> However, there is strong informal coordination between the two types of parliamentarians based on political party membership—an essential pillar of interparliamentary cooperation.<sup>83</sup> This practice is motivated by the Folketing’s influence on European affairs (itself explained by the frequency of minority

---

<sup>79</sup> European Parliament Decision no. 2005/684/EC adopting the Statute for Members of the European Parliament (Euratom), OJ L262 (7 October 2005), 1.

<sup>80</sup> Y. Shemer-Kunz, ‘Is There an MEP in the House?’, *European Politics* 59/1 (2018), 148.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 155. It should be noted, however, that despite the absence of specific rules, the practice is conducive to coordination, including on a cross-party basis. The frequency of the participation of MEPs in Danish EAC meetings was estimated to be monthly (*ibid.*, 158).

<sup>83</sup> B. Crum and J.-E. Fossum (eds.), *Practices of Inter-Parliamentary Coordination in International Politics. The European Union and Beyond* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2013).



governments) and by the small size of the country, which encourages its political elites to support each other in order to be influential.<sup>84</sup>

Consultations between the two types of parliamentarians are largely informal and organised by each political group. They involve joint meetings at the party level, mainly focused on legislative priorities, and even the joint drafting of reports and briefings. Meetings are dictated by the EP's agenda and are often held before important votes. Joint communication strategies and even programmatic shifts can thus be decided together. For example, in the case of the Danish Social Democrats (*Socialdemokratiet*), the recent shift towards a stricter line on immigration has been reflected both in the Folketing and within the Danish delegation of the Socialists and Democrats group in the EP. Within this group, the relative unity of the Danish Social Democrats has led to abstentions and even dissenting votes, for example, on the reform of the European asylum system.

In addition to informal meetings, coordination is also facilitated by the circulation of Danish political elites between the two levels of representation—something that is helped by both the small size of the country and the relative stability of domestic politics. Between 1979 and 2014, nearly half of Danish MEPs had previously been national parliamentarians.<sup>85</sup> Of the 76 MEPs, 15 had even served as ministers. And this can work the other way round as well: for example, before becoming minister for foreign affairs (2019–22), Social Democrat Jeppe Kofod was an MEP. By selecting a sitting MNP in 2024 to lead their list, the Conservatives (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*) gave themselves every opportunity to facilitate informal coordination within the party.<sup>86</sup>

In comparison, Hungary has a more organised form of cooperation and received the highest score in the previously mentioned scale.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> D. M. Jensen and P. Nedergaard, 'Danish European Union Policies Sailing Between Economic Benefits and Political Sovereignty', in P. M. Christiansen et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Danish Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>85</sup> F. J. Christiansen, 'Politiske karriereveje blandt danske Europa-Parlamentsmedlemmer', *Økonomi og politik* 87/2 (2014).

<sup>86</sup> F. J. Christiansen and M. D. Jensen, 'Denmark', in J. Lodge, J. Smith and S. Fotopoulos (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook on the 2024 European Parliament Elections* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025).

<sup>87</sup> Shemer-Kunz, 'Is There an MEP in the House?', 155. It should be noted that these constitutional provisions were adopted well before the authoritarian shift observed in the Orbán governments over the last decade.



Since the LVII Act of 2004,<sup>88</sup> Hungarian MEPs have had special rights enabling them to participate in the work of the Hungarian National Assembly, namely the option to attend certain parliamentary sessions, access to parliamentary documents, and the right to participate and speak at committee meetings, particularly those related to European affairs.<sup>89</sup> In theory, they can also speak in plenary sessions when European issues are being discussed<sup>90</sup>—this is a comparatively rare prerogative, as usually only MNPs and members of the government are allowed to speak in parliaments, especially during a plenary session.<sup>91</sup>

For several years, the strong coordination between the two types of parliamentarians has been used to defend the Orbán government in its fight against Brussels. This was facilitated by the dominance of Orbán's party, Fidesz, and the movement of certain individuals between the different levels of government. For example, Balázs Hidvéghi, an MEP since 2019 and the leader of the Fidesz MEPs in Strasbourg, was previously the party's communications director. He is one of the main proponents of Viktor Orbán's political line in the EP.<sup>92</sup> In this case, it is not so much a question of seeking greater influence on legislative issues as of coordinating a communication strategy for electoral, diplomatic and even ideological purposes in favour of illiberalism.<sup>93</sup>

However, the 2024 European elections seem to have changed the game and hint at some kind of 'minority cooperation' within the opposition between MNPs and MEPs. Those opposing Viktor Orbán scored well, with nearly 30% of the vote going to a new party (The Respect and Freedom Party/Tisza) that has joined the European People's Party Group in the EP, from which Fidesz was expelled in 2021.<sup>94</sup> Having become the leader of the opposition following these elections, MEP Péter Magyar is using the platform provided by the EP to criticise the prime minister. In response, in March 2025 the government tabled a bill that would allow the mandates of Hungarian MEPs to be revoked for non-compliance with financial transparency rules—a

---

<sup>88</sup> Hungary, évi LVII, Törvény az Európai Parlament magyarországi képviselőinek jogállásáról, *Magyar Közlöny*, 2004.

<sup>89</sup> Hungarian MEPs tend to prefer the EAC to other standing committees. Hungarian National Assembly, 'The Hungarian National Assembly and the EU'.

<sup>90</sup> Hungarian National Assembly, 'Relations Between the Hungarian National Assembly and the European Parliament'.

<sup>91</sup> Shemer-Kunz, 'Is There an MEP in the House?', 154.

<sup>92</sup> A. Franco, 'Pour l'eurodéputé hongrois Balasz Hidvéghi, l'UE est un terrain de « conflit et de chantage idéologiques »', *RTS*, 15 January 2024.

<sup>93</sup> P. Krekó, 'The Birth of an Illiberal Informational Autocracy in Europe: A Case Study on Hungary', *The Journal of Illiberalism Studies* 2/1 (2022), 55–72.

<sup>94</sup> A. Batory, 'Hungary', in J. Lodge, J. Smith and S. Fotopoulos (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook on the 2024 European Parliament Elections* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025); R. Sata, 'The 2024 European Elections in Hungary: The Orbán Regime's First Misstep and the Emergence of a Real Opponent', *European Politics* 86/4 (2024).



clear attempt to target Magyar.<sup>95</sup> In any case, coordination within the opposition between the EP and the national parliament could be politically crucial despite the lack of a formal structure.

## Making interparliamentary cooperation work (finally!): the Europol Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, interparliamentary cooperation has been constantly on the rise. Yet, its real impact on democratic scrutiny and the accountability of EU decision-making procedures is yet to be ascertained.<sup>96</sup> Interparliamentary cooperation has also increased as a consequence of the setting up of structured forms of collaboration through permanent and semi-permanent conferences. The Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy and the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU (IPC on SECG), pursuant to Article 13 of the so-called 'Fiscal Compact', were established in 2012 and 2013, respectively. These act alongside the EU Speakers' Conference (EUSC), convened since the 1970s, and the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU, created in 1989 and endowed with a permanent secretariat. The two most recently established conferences, mentioned above, which represent a post-Lisbon institutional innovation to enhance democratic accountability in key, yet less integrated and very much intergovernmental, policy areas, have attracted strong criticism.<sup>97</sup> The

<sup>95</sup> S. Zsiros, 'Hungary: MEP Péter Magyar Claims to Be the Target of a Bill', *Euronews*, 25 March 2025.

<sup>96</sup> C. Hefftlar and K. Gattermann, 'Interparliamentary Cooperation in the European Union: Patterns, Problems and Potential', in C. Hefftlar et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016); B. Crum, *The EU as Multilevel Democracy: Conceptual and Practical Challenges*, Parliamentary Democracy in Europe series (2016); E. Griglio and S. Stavridis, 'Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation as a Means for Reinforcing Joint Scrutiny in the EU: Upgrading Existing Mechanisms and Creating New Ones – Editorial', *Perspectives on Federalism* 10/3 (2018), i–viii.

<sup>97</sup> A. Herranz-Surrallés, 'The EU's Multilevel Parliamentary (Battle)Field: Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation and Conflict in Foreign and Security Policy', *West European Politics* 37/5 (2014); I. Cooper, 'The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination, and Governance (the "Article 13 Conference")', in N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the European Composite Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Publishing 2016).



lengthy process of the adoption of their rules of procedure, their plethoric composition,<sup>98</sup> their lack of focus, and their limited interaction with the Council and the Commission has made them, at least so far, unable to exert any meaningful (indirect) parliamentary scrutiny.

The setting up of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG) on Europol, completed a few years later, in 2017, appeared to offer a change of pace. Established in 1999, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, Europol, is an independent EU agency that supports cross-border police cooperation to prevent and combat serious crimes and terrorism that affect two or more member states.

Article 12(c) of the Treaty on European Union now provides that ‘National Parliaments contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union . . . through being involved in the political monitoring of Europol’, in accordance with Article 88 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The second paragraph of this Article provides for the adoption, through the ordinary legislative procedure, of regulations that ‘determine Europol’s structure, operation, field of action and tasks’, as well as ‘lay down the procedures for scrutiny of Europol’s activities by the European Parliament, together with national Parliaments.’

On the basis of these provisions, Regulation (EU) 2016/794 was approved (and subsequently modified in 2022),<sup>99</sup> entering into force on 1 May 2017. Its Article 51 regulates, for the first time in the Union, a stable form of joint parliamentary scrutiny of an EU body by the EP and the national parliaments. The organisation and the rules of procedure (RoP) of the JPSG were defined together by the EP and the national legislatures, in accordance with Article 9 of Protocol no. 1 to the Lisbon Treaty—that is, by the EUSC in 2017 and then by the JPSG itself in 2018. Article 51 of the Regulation entrusts the JPSG with the political monitoring of ‘Europol’s activities in fulfilling its mission, including as regards the impact of those activities on the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons’.<sup>100</sup> To this end, a number of avenues available to the JPSG for carrying out its scrutiny function are listed. The chair of the Europol Management Board, the executive director or

---

<sup>98</sup> Especially for the IPC on SECG, which even today still has no fixed number of members per delegation. See V. Kreilinger, ‘From Procedural Disagreement to Joint Scrutiny? The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance’, *Perspectives on Federalism* 10/3 (2018), 168.

<sup>99</sup> See European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) 2022/991 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794, as regards Europol’s cooperation with private parties, the processing of personal data by Europol in support of criminal investigations, and Europol’s role in research and innovation, OJ L169 (27 June 2022), 1, which has strengthened the JPSG’s information capacity through the setting up of a consultative forum.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 51.



their deputies must appear before the JPSG at its request to discuss the fulfilment of their tasks, including budgetary aspects and the suitability of the organisation.<sup>101</sup> Any other relevant persons can be invited to its meetings and the European data protection supervisor must appear before the JPSG at least once a year. Moreover, the JPSG is consulted on Europol's multiannual programming and receives a number of files and reports such as threat assessments, strategic analyses and general situational reports relating to Europol's objectives. In addition to this, the JPSG may request other relevant documents necessary for the fulfilment of its tasks, and may draft summaries of its meetings, including non-binding specific recommendations for Europol, to be forwarded by the EP to the Council and the Commission.

Unlike the EU interparliamentary conferences, the status and the tasks of the JPSG are regulated in EU secondary law; the mandate has a very clear focus—rather than covering an entire policy field; and joint scrutiny powers, shared between the EP and national parliaments, have been conferred on the newly created interparliamentary body.<sup>102</sup>

The procedure leading to the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2016/794 and its implementation have triggered lengthy discussions on the actual composition and regime of the JPSG, whose denomination is already a testament to the intent to depart from the 'conference format'. Furthermore, the EUSC, with the support of the secretary generals, decided upon the composition of the delegations: the threshold was set for up to 4 delegates per national parliament<sup>103</sup> and 16 MEPs (thus smaller than the delegations of the interparliamentary conferences). It was decided that any determination, especially with regard to the conclusions of the meetings, had to be taken by consensus rather than by qualified majority voting, as had been envisaged at the outset of the process: this was a decision that could in principle undermine the efficiency of the body.

Further elements were clarified by the JPSG at the time of the adoption of the RoP in 2018. Interestingly, the German Bundestag, which on other occasions (for example, on the setting up of the IPC on SECG) had been quite reluctant to strengthen the powers of interparliamentary conferences beyond sharing information and best practices, was on this occasion one of the national parliaments most supportive of the opportunity to

---

<sup>101</sup> In any event, the disclosure of information and documents to the JPSG does not go so far as to include those related to ongoing Europol investigations.

<sup>102</sup> This is particularly emphasised in V. Kreiling, 'A Watchdog Over Europe's Policemen: The New Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol', 197 (2017), 4; and I. Cooper, 'A New Form of Democratic Oversight in the EU: The Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol', *Perspectives on Federalism* 10/3 (2018).

<sup>103</sup> Up to two MPs per chamber in the case of a bicameral legislature.



enhance the scrutiny capacity of the JPSG. According to the RoP,<sup>104</sup> the members of the JPSG enjoy the right to ask oral and written questions,<sup>105</sup> even between the biannual official meetings, with the targeted institution and official duty-bound to respond. Again, this is unprecedented in a comparative perspective, and the number of questions posed has steadily increased since 2018. Unlike at interparliamentary conferences, where informal questions are submitted simply to trigger an exchange of views, here the procedure is formalised.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, Article 5 of the RoP, in combination with Article 14 of the Europol Regulation as revised in 2022,<sup>107</sup> provides for two members of the JPSG, one from the EP and one from the domestic legislature holding the rotating EU Presidency, to be present at the meetings of the Europol Management Board as non-voting observers. The JPSG representatives are permitted to address the Management Board. These provisions are unusual in that they provide the scrutiniser—the JPSG—with the ability to participate in the activities of the body subject to its control, and they further confirm the attempt to build far-reaching monitoring procedures through interparliamentary cooperation.

With regard to the composition of delegations, Article 2(1) of the JPSG RoP requires that the appointment of the members by each parliament or chamber thereof takes into account the ‘necessity to ensure substance matter expertise as well as long-term continuity’.<sup>108</sup> Such a provision has certainly been respected when looking at the EP’s delegation, but turnover is much higher in the national parliament delegations,<sup>109</sup> which also tend to be formed of fewer MPs than permitted. Thus, in practice the JPSG is a de facto smaller body than the interparliamentary conferences.

All in all, the JPSG has become a successful blueprint for effective interparliamentary cooperation. Although the capacity to replicate this model in other contexts remains to be seen—it could work well to scrutinise other agencies, such as Frontex<sup>110</sup>—margins for improvement can be detected in at least two

---

<sup>104</sup> The latest version, following the amendments adopted in 2019, 2021 and 2024, can be found in JPSG on Europol, *Rules of Procedure of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol* (19 February 2024).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 4(2).

<sup>106</sup> However, Tacea and Trauner detected a lack of follow-up of the JPSG’s activities in the domestic legislatures. See A. Tacea and F. Trauner, ‘The European and National Parliaments in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice: Does Interparliamentary Cooperation Lead to Joint Oversight?’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 29/4 (2023), 532.

<sup>107</sup> See European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) 2022/991.

<sup>108</sup> JPSG on Europol, *Rules of Procedure of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol*, art. 2(1).

<sup>109</sup> Tacea and Trauner, ‘The European and National Parliaments in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice’, 531.

<sup>110</sup> See Cooper, ‘A New Form of Democratic Oversight in the EU’, 211.



directions. First, the JPSG does not approve actual conclusions—it is only able to set recommendations and give political direction. Second, as it is, the JPSG does not yet represent genuine joint scrutiny between the EP and the national parliaments, given their asymmetric positions. The EP enjoys other effective avenues to scrutinise Europol under the EU treaties and secondary law,<sup>111</sup> while the position of the national parliaments lags significantly behind.

---

<sup>111</sup> See, for more detail, Tacea and Trauner, 'The European and National Parliaments in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice', 530–2.

# Conclusion and recommendations



This research paper highlights six examples of successful configurations of participation by national parliaments in European affairs. In doing so, it breaks with established ideas, namely that for national parliaments there is *one* right way to act on European matters, whether that be focusing on government oversight or monitoring compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.<sup>112</sup> The six practices developed here show, on the contrary, a rich palette of actions resulting from both the diversity of functions performed by parliaments and the plurality of actors operating in the parliamentary sphere (elected representatives, but also civil servants, political parties, parliamentarians from other countries etc.). This pluralism echoes the diversity of constitutional practices, political cultures and traditions in Europe and indicates that the quest for a single procedural solution during the revision of the treaties was a mistake.

It should be noted that the six examples examined refer to the four democratic dimensions briefly outlined in the introduction: parliaments as legislators, overseers, national institutions and representative institutions. Some of these examples can be associated with one dimension more than another. Notably, legislation and decision-making are associated with the Grand Committee, oversight with parliamentary hearings around European Councils, the network of representative institutions with the JPSG and the national character of the institution with attempts to bring MEPs from the same member state into ‘their’ national parliamentary assemblies. However, a closer inspection reveals that each case fulfils various democratic objectives, such as the parliamentary contribution to making European governance and policies more transparent and participatory, which ultimately benefits the democratisation of the whole EU.

This examination of some rather successful instances of the involvement of national legislatures in European affairs ultimately leads to the question of the relevance of their generalisation throughout the member states. Answering this question requires a lot of caution. Simply transferring institutional practices from one parliament to another often leads to disappointment, as the procedures are generally part of a broader constitutional and political framework that gives them meaning. Artificially importing a ‘best practice’ from another assembly runs the risk of creating a gimmick that will quickly be abandoned or, worse, misused. With this important caveat in mind, we nevertheless believe that, subject to adaptation to national contexts, some of the examples developed in this research paper may inspire more general institutional reforms.

---

<sup>112</sup> For contrasting accounts, see e.g. P. Kiiver, ‘The Early Warning System for the Principle of Subsidiarity: The National Parliament as a Conseil d’Etat for Europe’, *European Law Review* 36/1 (2011); and P. de Wilde and T. Raunio, ‘Redirecting National Parliaments: Setting Priorities for Involvement in EU Affairs’, *Comparative European Politics* 16 (2018).



Indeed, as European parliaments share some general procedural principles embedded within a common constitutional tradition, that of parliamentarism, and face similar challenges in the EU, they can draw inspiration from each other.

The six examples developed lead, therefore, to the following recommendations:

1. *No distinction should be made between document-based and mandate-based systems* (from the Finnish case). The classic choice between these two forms of parliamentary participation in European affairs is largely fictional. Following the example of the Finnish Parliament, assemblies could benefit from taking a broad interest in European affairs without establishing a priori whether this involves collecting and analysing documents or formulating a position which the government has to take into account. Ideally parliaments should fulfil both tasks at the same time.
2. *There should be dual membership of the EAC and other standing committees* (from the Finnish and French cases). The dual membership of parliamentarians in the EAC and other standing committees provides an advantage in terms of circulating information and raising awareness of European dynamics among a large number of elected representatives.
3. *High-flying politicians should sit on the EAC* (from the Finnish case). Without making it an exclusive condition of membership of the EAC, the participation of leading MPs, particularly the chairs of committees and groups, in the work of an EAC tends to strengthen its influence.
4. *National government and parliamentary officials should liaise in Brussels* (from the German case). The direct and continuous involvement of national parliamentary officials in Brussels is a widespread practice among all parliamentary assemblies. In accordance with the separation of powers, it is important that these officials liaise with all policymakers, particularly those government officials working in Brussels within the Council working groups.
5. *National governments should present their official position in advance* (from the Swedish case). Whatever form and procedure are adopted, democratic control of European affairs benefits from governments having to officially present their positions on a particular European project to their respective EAC in advance, so as to leave adequate time for parliamentary consideration.



6. *The opposition should also be forced to commit itself* (from the Swedish case). Whatever form and procedure are adopted, democratic control of European affairs is enhanced if national oppositions are required to officially state their views in advance on the government's position on each particular European project.
7. *There should be a systematic focus on monitoring the European Council* (from the Italian and Spanish cases). Whether before or after the European Council's meetings, in plenary or in committee, the oversight of this institution is made necessary by its rise in power in European governance. In this regard, parliaments must maintain organisational flexibility to be able to set up sessions around formal and informal European Council meetings.
8. *MEPs from the same member state should be fully involved in the European work of 'their' national parliament* (from the Danish and Hungarian cases). The participation of MEPs in the work of national parliaments is essential for effective cooperation between the different levels of governance. This can be encouraged by a policy of systematically inviting national MEPs to EAC meetings, and by making no distinction between them regardless of which party they originate from.
9. *There should be focused interparliamentary cooperation* (from the existing interparliamentary oversight of Europol). Successful interparliamentary cooperation requires that it focuses on precisely defined areas of public action. In addition, the practical organisational choices made for the JPSG on Europol in terms of the composition of delegations and frequency of meetings seem very appropriate.

All in all, the emphasis in this paper on some rather efficient practices leads us to break with the relatively pessimistic mood regarding the role of national parliaments in European governance.<sup>113</sup> The procedures introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon have certainly not revolutionised the role played by national parliaments. Some scholars have even argued that the EWM on subsidiarity was a mistake, or a way of avoiding the genuine involvement of national parliaments.

---

<sup>113</sup> See A. Maurer and W. Wessels (eds.), *National Parliaments on their Way to Europe: Losers or Latecomers?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2001); and, post-Lisbon, R. Bellamy, *A Republican Europe of States. Cosmopolitanism, Intergovernmentalism and Democracy in the EU* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 97.



Yet, the vitality of the cases developed here shows that there are reasons to be more optimistic. Through a variety of actions, national parliaments can find further ways to play a role in European democracy. The good practices developed in this regard indicate that monitoring the texts under discussion in the ordinary legislative procedure is only one of many ways in which they can assert themselves. The legislative quality of the European parliamentary assemblies certainly leads them to pay particular attention to draft European legislation. However, their political and generalist nature means that nothing European is foreign to them—not the European Council, not Europol, not transnational party politics, nor any other aspect of European politics. And it is precisely because the European dimension is paramount in most of the major issues facing contemporary societies, from the economy to geopolitics, that national parliaments cannot afford to ignore it and should be more closely involved in the dynamics of the Euro–national parliamentary system.



# Bibliography



Aguilar Calahorro, V., 'Gobernar con una mayoría frágil. Crónica política y legislativa del año 2024', *Revista Española de Derecho Constitucional* 133 (2025), 139–64.

Arndt, F., Högenauer, A.-L. and Koggel, C., 'Germany's Parliamentary Administration', in T. Christiansen, E. Griglio and N. Lupo (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Parliamentary Administrations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 255–67.

Arter, D., *Scandinavian Politics Today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Auel, K. and Neuhold, C., *Europeanisation of National Parliaments in European Union Member States: Experiences and Best-Practices*, study prepared for The Greens/EFA Group (2018).

Batory, A., 'Hungary', in J. Lodge, J. Smith and S. Fotopoulos (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook on the 2024 European Parliament Elections* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 301–14.

Beichelt, T., 'Recovering Space Lost? The German Bundestag's New Potential in European Politics', *German Politics* 21/2 (2012), 143–60.

Bellamy, R., *A Republican Europe of States. Cosmopolitanism, Intergovernmentalism and Democracy in the EU* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Capuano, D., 'European Affairs Within the Senate of the Republic', in N. Lupo and G. Piccirilli (eds.), *The Italian Parliament in the European Union* (Oxford: Hart, 2017), 119–38.

Casalena, P. G., Fasone, C. and Lupo, N., 'Protocol no. 1 ("On the role of national Parliaments in the European Union")', in H. J. Blanke and S. Mangiameli (eds.), *The Treaty on European Union. A Commentary* (Berlin-Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2013), 1529–634.

Cavatorto, S., 'Italy: Still Looking for a New Era in the Making of EU Policy', in C. Hefftlar et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 209–31.



Christiansen, F. J., 'Politiske karriereveje blandt danske Europa-Parlamentsmedlemmer', *Økonomi og politik* 87/2 (2014), 4–12.

Christiansen F. J. and Jensen, M. D., 'Denmark', in J. Lodge, J. Smith and S. Fotopoulos (eds.), *Palgrave Handbook on the 2024 European Parliament Elections* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 193–210.

Christensen, M. B., 'The Danish *Folketing* and EU Affairs: Is the Danish Model of Parliamentary Scrutiny Still Best Practice?', in C. Heffler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 275–89.

Closa, C. and Heywood, P. M., *Spain and the European Union* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Cooper, I., 'A New Form of Democratic Oversight in the EU: The Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol', *Perspectives on Federalism* 10/3 (2018), 186–88.

Cooper, I., 'The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination, and Governance (the "Article 13 Conference")', in N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the European Composite Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Publishing 2016), 247–67.

COSAC, *Report on the Developments in EU Procedures and Practices Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny, 30th Report* (November 2018).

Crum, B., *The EU as Multilevel Democracy: Conceptual and Practical Challenges*, Parliamentary Democracy in Europe series (2016), accessed at [https://www.pademia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Crum\\_PademiaOnlineSeries.pdf](https://www.pademia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Crum_PademiaOnlineSeries.pdf) on 27 December 2025.

Crum, B. and Fossum, J.-E. (eds.), *Practices of Inter-Parliamentary Coordination in International Politics. The European Union and Beyond* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2013).

Czarny, R. M., *Sweden: From Neutrality to International Solidarity* (Cham: Springer, 2018).

Delgado-Iribarren García-Campero, M., 'La Comisión mixta para la UE como cauce fundamental de participación de las Cortes Generales en los asuntos europeos', *Revista de las Cortes Generales* 104 (2018), 593–612.



de Wilde, P. and Raunio, T., 'Redirecting National Parliaments: Setting Priorities for Involvement in EU Affairs', *Comparative European Politics* 16 (2018), 310–29.

Eduskunta Riksdagen, 'The Committees and the EU', accessed at [https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/naineduskuntatoimii/eduskunnan\\_tehtavat/euasiat/euasiat\\_valiokunnissa/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/naineduskuntatoimii/eduskunnan_tehtavat/euasiat/euasiat_valiokunnissa/Pages/default.aspx) on 5 December 2025.

Esposito, A., *European Affairs Within the Chamber of Deputies*, in N. Lupo and G. Piccirilli (eds.), *The Italian Parliament in the European Union* (Oxford: Hart, 2017), 99–118.

Esposito, A., 'Il ruolo della Camera dei deputati nella formazione delle politiche dell'UE. Un bilancio 15 anni dopo l'entrata in vigore del Trattato di Lisbona', *Rassegna parlamentare* 1 (2025), 95–148.

European Parliament, 'Representatives of National Parliaments', accessed at <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl/en/networks/representatives-of-national-parliaments> on 1 December 2025.

Fasone, C. and Lupo, N., 'Introduction: Parliaments in the Composite European Constitution', in N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Bloomsbury), 1–19.

Fasone, C. and Lupo, N., 'Transparency vs. Informality in Legislative Committees: Comparing the US House of Representatives, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the European Parliament', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 21/3 (2015), 342–59.

Ferrer Martín de Vidales, C., 'La Comisión mixta para la Unión Europea. Sus nuevas competencias tras el Tratado de Lisboa y la influencia de los factores constitucionales del Estado Español en su eficacia', *Revista de Derecho Comunitario Europeo* 45 (2013), 631–58.

Franco, A., 'Pour l'eurodéputé hongrois Balasz Hidvéghi, l'UE est un terrain de « conflit et de chantage idéologiques »', RTS, 15 January 2024, accessed at <https://www.rts.ch/info/monde/14624960-pour-leurodepute-hongrois-balasz-hidveghi-lue-est-un-terrain-de-conflit-et-de-chantage-ideologiques.html> on 27 December 2025.



Gianniti, L., *Napolitano senatore a vita* (forthcoming).

Gianniti, L. and Guastaferrò, B., 'The New Italian Government Between Break and Continuity: Political Discourse and Constitutional Practices', in C. Rauchegeger and A. Wallerman (eds.), *The Eurosceptic Challenge: National Implementation and Interpretation of EU Law* (Oxford: Hart, 2019), 47–66.

Griglio, E., *Parliamentary Oversight of the Executives. Tools and Procedures in Europe* (Oxford: Hart, 2020).

Griglio, E. and Stavridis, S., 'Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation as a Means for Reinforcing Joint Scrutiny in the EU: Upgrading Existing Mechanisms and Creating New Ones – Editorial', *Perspectives on Federalism* 10/3 (2018), i–viii.

Heffttler C. et al., *National Parliaments: Their Emerging Control Over the European Council*, Notre Europe Jacques Delors Institute Policy Paper 89 (2013).

Hegeland, H., 'The Swedish Parliament and EU Affairs: From Reluctant Player to Europeanised Actor', in C. Heffttler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 425–41.

Herranz-Surrallés, A., 'The EU's Multilevel Parliamentary (Battle)Field: Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation and Conflict in Foreign and Security Policy', *West European Politics* 37/5 (2014), 357–75.

Hillebrandt, M., Leino-Sandberg, P. and Koivisto, I. (eds.), *(In)visible European Government: Critical Approaches to Transparency as an Ideal and a Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).

Högenauer, A.-L. and Neuhold, C., 'From Advisor to Interparliamentary Networker: A Typology of Parliamentary Officials in EU Affairs', *Politics and Governance* 14 (2026), 1–14.

Högenauer, A.-L., Neuhold, C. and Christiansen, T., *Parliamentary Administrations in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016).



Höing, O., 'With a Little Help of the Constitutional Court: The Bundestag on Its Way to an Active Policy Shaper', in C. Heffttler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 191–208.

Hungarian National Assembly, 'Relations Between the Hungarian National Assembly and the European Parliament', accessed at <https://www.parlament.hu/web/house-of-the-national-assembly/relation-to-the-european-parliament> on 1 December 2025.

Hungarian National Assembly, 'The Hungarian National Assembly and the EU', accessed at <https://www.parlament.hu/en/web/parleu2024/the-hungarian-national-assembly-and-the-eu> on 1 December 2025.

Jensen, M. D. and Nedergaard, P., 'Danish European Union Policies Sailing Between Economic Benefits and Political Sovereignty', in P. M. Christiansen et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Danish Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 487–501.

Jonsson Cornell, A., 'Similar but Different: Comparing the Scrutiny of the Principle of Subsidiarity Within the EWM in Denmark, Finland and Sweden', in M. Goldoni and A. Jonsson Cornell (eds.), *National and Regional Parliaments in the EU Legislative Procedure Post-Lisbon: The Impact of the Early Warning Mechanism* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017), 210–24.

JPSG on Europol, *Rules of Procedure of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol* (19 February 2024).

Kiiver, P., 'The Early Warning System for the Principle of Subsidiarity: The National Parliament as a Conseil d'Etat for Europe', *European Law Review* 36/1 (2011), 98–108.

Kreiling, V., 'A Watchdog Over Europe's Policemen: The New Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol', *Jacques Delors Institut Berlin Policy Paper* 197 (2017).

Kreiling, V., 'From Procedural Disagreement to Joint Scrutiny? The Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance', *Perspectives on Federalism* 10/3 (2018), 155–84.



Krekó, P., 'The Birth of an Illiberal Informational Autocracy in Europe: A Case Study on Hungary', *The Journal of Illiberalism Studies* 2/1 (2022), 55–72.

Larue, T., 'Agents in Brussels. Delegation and Democracy in the European Union', Ph.D. thesis, Umeå University, 2006, accessed at <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:144529/FULLTEXT01.pdf> on 1 December 2025.

Leino-Sandberg, P. and Ruffert, M., 'Next Generation EU and Its Constitutional Ramifications', *Common Market Law Review* 59/2 (2022), 433–72.

Lippolis, V. and Salerno, G. M., *La presidenza più lunga: I poteri del capo dello Stato e la Costituzione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996).

Lupo, N., 'Gli interlocutori europei, nel processo di integrazione europea e nei meccanismi di governo dell'Unione', in S. Cassese, A. Melloni and A. Pajno (eds.), *I presidenti e la presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri nell'Italia repubblicana. Storia, Politica, Istituzioni* (Rome: Laterza, 2022), 1731–52.

Lupo, N. and Fasone, C. (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2016).

Maurer, A. and Wessels, W. (eds.), *National Parliaments on their Way to Europe: Losers or Latecomers?* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001).

Möllerberg Nordfors, J. M., 'Parliamentary Scrutiny of the Swedish Governments' European Policy: The Role of the EU Committee in the Swedish Parliament', in J.-F. Papin, *Information Report on Behalf of the Senate Committee on European Affairs on the Proceedings of the Symposium on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union Held at the Senate on 6 December 2021*, French Senate Report no. 168 (5 December 2023).

Neuhold, C. and Högenauer, A.-L., 'An Information Network of Officials? Dissecting the Role and Nature of the Network of Parliamentary Representatives in the European Parliament', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 22/2 (2016), 237–56.



Novak, S., 'The Silence of Ministers', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51 (2013), 1091–107.

Öberg, U., 'EU Citizens' Right to Know: The Improbable Adoption of a European Freedom of Information Act', *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies* 2 (1999), 303–28.

Öberg, U., 'Public Access to Documents After the Entry Into Force of the Amsterdam Treaty: Much Ado About Nothing?', *European Integration Online Papers* 2/8 (1998).

Paquin, S., 'Trust and Transparency: Is Sweden Still a Model?', *Policy Options*, February 2025, accessed at <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/february-2025/sweden-trust-transparency/> on 1 December 2025.

Pegan, A. and Högenauer, A.-L., 'The Role of Parliamentary Administrations in Interparliamentary Cooperation', in N. Lupo and C. Fasone (eds.), *Interparliamentary Cooperation in the Composite European Constitution* (Oxford: Hart Bloomsbury, 2016), 147–64.

Piccirilli, G., 'Il ruolo europeo del Presidente della Repubblica', in R. Ibrido and N. Lupo (eds.), *Dinamiche della forma di governo tra Unione europea e Stati membri* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018), 387–411.

Poyet, C. and Raunio, T., 'Confrontational but Respecting the Rules: The Minor Impact of the Finns Party on Legislative–Executive Relations', *Parliamentary Affairs* 74 (2021), 819–34.

Raunio, T., 'Committees in the Finnish Eduskunta. Cross-Party Cooperation and Legislative Scrutiny Behind Closed Doors', in S. T. Siefken and H. Rommetvedt (eds.), *Parliamentary Committees in the Policy Process* (London: Routledge, 2021), 79–97.

Raunio, T., 'The Finnish Eduskunta and the European Union: The Strengths and the Weaknesses of a Mandating System', in C. Heffler et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (London: Palgrave, 2016).

Rittelmeyer, Y.-S., *The Spanish Parliament and EU Affairs*, European Parliamentary Research Service Briefing PE 757.579 (December 2023).



Rozenberg, O., *The Council of the EU: From the Congress of Ambassadors to a Genuine Parliamentary Chamber?*, Study for the AFCO Committee, European Parliament (2019).

Sánchez C. and Gornals, A., 'Parlamentos nacionales y Unión europea. El papel de las Cortes Generales en la cooperación interparlamentaria europea', *Revista de las Cortes Generales* 104 (2018), 573–92.

Sata, R., 'The 2024 European Elections in Hungary: The Orbán Regime's First Misstep and the Emergence of a Real Opponent', *European Politics* 86/4 (2024), 140–9.

Shemer-Kunz, Y., 'Is There an MEP in the House?', *European Politics* 59/1 (2018), 146–68.

Tacea, A. and Trauner, F., 'The European and National Parliaments in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice: Does Interparliamentary Cooperation Lead to Joint Oversight?', *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 29/4 (2023), 519–37.

Thomas, A., "'Domesticating" and Differentiating the European Union', *Politique européenne* 67/68 (2020), 158–86.

Tuori, K., *The Eurozone Crisis: A Constitutional Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Wessels, W., *The European Council* (London: Red Globe Press, 2015).

Zsiros, S., 'Hungary: MEP Péter Magyar Claims to Be the Target of a Bill', *Euronews*, 25 March 2025, accessed at <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/03/24/hungarian-opposition-leader-mep-peter-magyar-claims-new-law-targets-him> on 7 January 2026.

## Legislation

European Communities, Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the European Union is founded, OJ C241 (29 August 1994), 9.



European Parliament Decision no. 2005/684/EC adopting the Statute for Members of the European Parliament (Euratom), OJ L262 (7 October 2005), 1.

European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) no. 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, adopted during the Swedish EU Council Presidency, OJ L8 (12 January 2001), 1.

European Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) no. 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, OJ L145 (31 May 2001), 43.

European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) 2022/991 amending Regulation (EU) 2016/794, as regards Europol's cooperation with private parties, the processing of personal data by Europol in support of criminal investigations, and Europol's role in research and innovation, OJ L169 (27 June 2022), 1.

Finland, Constitution of Finland (11 June 1999), accessed at <https://www.finlex.fi/api/media/statute-foreign-language-translation/688686/mainPdf/main.pdf?timestamp=1999-06-10T21%3A00%3A00.000Z> on 5 January 2026.

Germany, Federal Government, Gesetz über die Wahrnehmung der Integrationsverantwortung des Bundestages und des Bundesrates in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union (Integrationsverantwortungsgesetz – IntVG), *Federal Law Gazette*, 22 September 2009, IS 3022.

Germany, Federal Government, Gesetz über die Zusammenarbeit von Bundesregierung und Deutschem Bundestag in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union (EUZBBG), *BGBI*, I, 4 July 2013, 2170.

Germany, Federal Government, Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 25 May 1949.

Hungary, évi LVII, Törvény az Európai Parlament magyarországi képviselőinek jogállásáról, *Magyar Közlöny*, 2004.



Italy, Legge 4 February 2005, n. 11, Norme generali sulla partecipazione dell'Italia al processo normativo dell'Unione europea e sulle procedure di esecuzione degli obblighi comunitari, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 15 February 2005, no. 37.

Italy, Legge 24 December 2012, n. 234, Norme generali sulla partecipazione dell'Italia alla formazione e all'attuazione della normativa e delle politiche dell'Unione europea, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 4 January 2013, no. 3.

Italy, Legge 23 December 2021, n. 238, Disposizioni per l'adempimento degli obblighi derivanti dall'appartenenza dell'Italia all'Unione europea, Legge europea 2019-2020, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 17 January 2022, no. 12.

Spain, Ley 8/1994, de 19 de mayo, por la que se regula la Comisión Mixta para la Unión Europea, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 20 May 1994, no. 120.

Sweden, The Freedom of the Press Act (1949:105), chap. 2, art. 2.

Sweden, Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act, *Swedish Code of Statutes*, 2009, 400.

## Case law

General Court of the EU, Case T-163/21, *De Capitani v. Council* [25 January 2023], ECLI:EU:T:2023:15.

This research paper argues that there is no single preferred way to involve national parliaments in EU democracy, but rather several. The diversity of experiences in the 27 member states makes it possible to identify certain best practices that go beyond a purely passive role of approving treaty changes and validating European secondary legislation. The paper highlights them by presenting a number of case studies that are emblematic in both their legal and political dimensions. The six cases focus on the drivers of successful parliamentary oversight procedures on the Executive on EU affairs; the direct and systematic involvement of national parliaments' officials at the EU level; the 'right' of national legislatures to access information on EU dossiers and decision-making processes; the regular scrutiny of the European Council's activities in domestic parliaments; the permanent involvement of Members of the European Parliament in the relevant EU activities carried out by the legislature of their country of election; the setting up of effective mechanisms of interparliamentary cooperation, drawing on the example of Europol. The study covers a variety of parliaments: in particular, the Danish, the Finnish, the German, the Hungarian, the Italian, the Spanish, and the Swedish Parliaments, while considering, of course, also the European Parliament into the picture. Each practice identified has been associated with one or two specific parliamentary assemblies to better understand their rationales and procedures.



Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies