COSAC

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Twenty-eighth Bi-annual Report:

Developments in European Union

Procedures and Practices

Relevant to Parliamentary Scrutiny

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Background

This is the Twenty-eighth Bi-annual Report from the COSAC Secretariat.

COSAC Bi-annual Reports

The XXX COSAC decided that the COSAC Secretariat should produce factual Bi-annual Reports, to be published ahead of each ordinary meeting of the Conference. The purpose of the Reports is to give an overview of the developments in procedures and practices in the European Union that are relevant to parliamentary scrutiny.

All the Bi-annual Reports are available on the COSAC website at:
http://www.cosac.eu/documents/bi-annual-reports-of-cosac/

The three chapters of this Bi-annual Report are based on information provided by the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States and the European Parliament. The deadline for submitting replies to the questionnaire for the 28th Bi-annual Report was 18 September 2017.

The outline of this Report was adopted by the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, held on 10 July 2017 in Tallinn.

As a general rule, the Report does not specify all Parliaments or Chambers of which the case is relevant for each point. Instead, illustrative examples are used.

Complete replies, received from 41 out of 41 national Parliaments/Chambers of 28 Member States and the European Parliament, can be found in the Annex on the COSAC website.

Note on Numbers

Of the 28 Member States of the European Union, 15 have a unicameral Parliament and 13 have a bicameral Parliament. Due to this combination of unicameral and bicameral systems, there are 41 national parliamentary Chambers in the 28 Member States of the European Union.

Although they have bicameral systems, the national Parliaments of Austria, Ireland and Spain each submitted a single set of replies to the questionnaire, therefore the maximum number of respondents per question is 39. There were 39 responses to the questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 1: THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The first chapter of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC explores the opinions of Parliaments/Chambers with regard to different EU policy documents: the Rome Declaration, the European Commission's White Paper and subsequent reflection papers on the future of Europe, as well as the European Parliament's resolutions on the same subject. Additionally, this chapter examines the positions of EU Parliaments on the proposed five scenarios and possible institutional rearrangements (including Treaty changes) on EU level.

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers examined either at committee level or in plenary both the Rome Declaration and the Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe. In addition, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers had held discussions on the different reflection papers or intended to do so in the near future.

In light of the above, Parliaments/Chambers were asked about the current challenges faced by the EU. The vast majority singled out the migration/refugee crisis, followed by security issues in general, and social/economic inequalities. In the same vein, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers pointed out that the EU should integrate/cooperate more in the fields of security, migration, and defence.

In general, EU Parliaments had held debates on the White Paper and the five scenarios presented by the European Commission. The general feeling was that a combination of the proposed scenarios would be the best solution.

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers had not adopted a formal position on the Commission's reflection papers on the social dimension; harnessing globalisation; deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union; future of EU finances; and the future of European defence. However, some indicated that they intended to do so in the near future.

Incidentally, the vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated that there were no relevant plans to discuss the reports on the future of the EU presented by the European Parliament and none of the Parliaments/Chambers had had a debate in plenary on them.

As all of the three reports proposed some institutional re-arrangements on the EU level, Parliaments/Chambers were asked which ones they considered necessary. The vast majority of the respondents refrained from answering. However, several Parliaments/Chambers provided further details of their vision for the future of the EU.

On possible changes to the EU Treaties, the results showed that there was no consensus as the vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers expressed no opinion on the subject. Only three of the respondents expressed explicit support for the idea.

When asked to provide examples of ways in which they had discussed the future of the EU, several Parliaments/Chambers noted that the topic was generally included in broader discussions. Some Parliaments/Chambers examined the future of the EU in the context of Brexit, while others focussed on the future of the Eurozone and the Economic and Monetary Union. Others even dedicated special conferences on one or more aspects of the topic.

CHAPTER 2: BRINGING THE EU CLOSER TO ITS CITIZENS

The second chapter of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC focusses on the citizens' involvement in EU discussions and decision-making and existing or foreseen actions plans aimed at improving the interaction between Parliaments/Chambers and the wider public, while examining the digital platforms that allow citizens to be more engaged in EU matters. It also attempts to assess the visibility of parliamentary debates on EU-related topics by determining the frequency of and public access to these debates.

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated that there were action plans in place aimed at improving the interaction between them and the wider public. The majority of respondents also indicated that there were no specific rules or frameworks in place to ensure the involvement of citizens in EU related matters, though several did refer to some existing arrangement or provision.

Asked how the committees responsible for EU matters involved civil society in parliamentary debates, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers said that this was done both directly by, for instance, actively seeking direct contact with NGOs, and passively by sharing information with NGOs. Open involvement by civil society through NGO participation in committee meetings was indicated by less than half of the respondents, whereas less than a third said that civil society involvement was guaranteed by the Government, which involved them directly before sending EU materials to Parliament. Finally, almost a third of respondents employed other strategies in order to involve and interact with civil society.

According to the findings of the Report, most Parliaments/Chambers occasionally invited civil society organisations to participate in debates on EU matters or in the decision-making process, while most of the remaining Parliaments/Chambers did so regularly or at least sometimes. The majority of Parliaments/Chambers also asked civil society organisations for their written opinion on EU matters regularly, sometimes or occasionally.

Half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers had no specific cooperation formats for discussing EU matters with civil society organisations, while several respondents referred to existing arrangements within their Parliaments/Chambers.

More than half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers, on the other hand, indicated the existence of digital platforms allowing citizens to be more engaged in EU matters and express their opinions on topics being discussed. The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers did not have a register for lobbyists.

Asked whether their Parliament/Chamber had discussed the possibilities of improving the involvement of civil society in EU debates and the decision-making process, less than half of the respondents answered positively.

EU Affairs Committee meetings were regularly, sometimes, or occasionally open to the public in all of the responding Parliaments/Chambers but two, where such meetings were never open to the public.

All respondents indicated that they had written minutes of the debates of the EU Affairs Committee meetings, and in the vast majority of cases these were also public.

Most Parliaments/Chamber held debates on EU matters at the plenary at regular intervals or on *an ad hoc* basis. Only two Parliaments held such debates once a year.

Asked to name three main topics related to EU policy debated at the plenary session of their Parliament/Chamber in the past two years, a good number of respondents mentioned migration and Brexit.

As for the main targeted audience that regularly followed the EU debates held at plenary, Parliaments indicated the following (in order of most to least chosen): journalists and members of the media; individual citizens; interest groups; University students; High School students.

Press releases and media interviews given by MPs were identified as other means used by Parliaments/Chambers to inform citizens on EU matters by an almost equal number of respondents. A great number of respondents also identified social media and conferences on EU-specific topics, while a smaller number indicated press conferences.

Many different suggestions to make EU debates more visible to citizens were offered by a number of Parliaments/Chambers, including live streaming of debates and distribution of information through different media.

CHAPTER 3: DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

Building on the discussions held during the meeting of the LIV COSAC, the third chapter of the 28th Bi-annual Report of COSAC examines the progress made in the implementation of the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy launched by the European Commission in 2015 and presents the digitalisation of parliamentary procedures. It also evaluates the importance that Parliaments/Chambers place on the DSM Strategy.

In nearly half of the respondents, voting during the plenary was conducted by electronic voting. In only a few was voting conducted by a show of hands. Parliaments/Chambers reported a mixture of voting methods, both electronic and physical, depending on the circumstances. The chapter documents information given by Parliaments on their electronic voting systems. In the vast majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers, the voting in plenary was public. In the majority of them, voting was conducted by a show of hands in committee meetings. In many cases, the respondents reported the use of a mixture of voting methods, depending on the case. Voting in committee sittings was public in almost two thirds of the respondents. The majority referred to secret ballots by manual voting using ballot papers and only a few to electronic voting or to the possibility of using both systems.

An electronic document management system was used by the vast majority of respondents. This chapter documents the information given by Parliaments on the functioning and purpose of such systems.

Almost half of the respondents used a system enabling paperless plenary meetings. Half of the respondents used a system enabling paperless committee meetings.

More than half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers used electronic platforms for communicating with other government departments. This chapter presents the information given about this means of communication.

Most responding Parliaments/Chambers did not have a separate committee responsible for matters relating to digitalisation. In those Parliaments/Chambers where there was no separate committee responsible for matters relating to digitalisation, other committees or no committees were responsible for such matters.

For most of the respondents, the digitalisation of the public sector was very important. Data protection concerns was considered as the main challenge hindering further development and implementation of digitalisation by more than half of the respondents. Lack of resources and traditions were considered as challenges by almost a third. Mistrust of digital solutions and lack of political will were thought to be challenges by a considerably smaller number of Parliaments/Chambers.

A majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers had held debates on the DSM Strategy either in the EU Affairs Committees or in other sectoral committees. Creating the right environment for digital networks and services was the most debated topic in Parliaments. Providing better access for consumers and businesses to online goods, as well as maximising the growth potential of the European digital economy and of its society were almost as much debated.

As to the main policy challenges for further development of digital initiatives in Member States, the majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers agreed that costs and infrastructure were the main impediments to further development. Ensuring civil/social values and rights constituted a major challenge. Fewer Parliaments/Chambers considered job losses/displacements as the biggest hurdle for further development of digital initiatives.

CHAPTER 1: THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Building upon the 23rd Bi-annual report of COSAC, and with a view to further encourage this debate, Chapter 1 aims to identify the positions and views of the Parliaments in the context of parliamentary scrutiny when considering EU policy documents related to the future of the EU.

Section A aims to take stock of the views of the Parliaments/Chambers on the Commission's White Paper on the Future of the EU, as well as other reflection papers published by the European Commission. Additionally, it strives to discern their points of view on the five scenarios put forward by the European Commission.

Section B focuses on the debate generated within national Parliaments by the Commission's reflection papers, as well as the European Parliament's reports on the future of the EU. In addition, this section poses the question whether EU Parliaments wish to reconsider institutional arrangements on the EU level and whether they would support possible changes of the EU treaties.

Section A: Parliaments'/Chambers' position on the documents concerning the future of the EU

i. European Commission documents concerning the Future of Europe

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers had debated both the Rome Declaration and the Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe (COM(2017) 2025) at least in the EU Affairs Committee. A small minority had no plans to debate the documents at all.

Fifteen respondents said that they had debated the Commission's reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe (COM(2017) 206) in EU Affairs Committee. Another 14 reported that a debate on the subject was foreseen.

Regarding the Commission's reflection papers on harnessing globalisation (COM(2017) 240), on the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (COM(2017) 291), on the future of European Defence (COM(2017) 315) and on the future of EU finances (COM(2017) 358), the majority of Parliaments/Chambers said that debates on these topics were planned for the near future.

A number of Parliaments/Chambers provided further information regarding the modalities of scrutiny. Whereas the German *Bundesrat* elaborated that both the Rome Declaration, as well as the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe, had been discussed at a Conference of members of the EU Affairs Committee, the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* and the Swedish *Riksdag* specified that there had been debates on these topics between the EU Affairs Committees and their respective governments. In the same vein, the Estonian *Riigikogu* reported that reflection papers were not discussed as separate agenda topics, but were debated in the EU Affairs Committee meetings with ministers before the EU Council meetings. Likewise, the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* responded that documents concerning the Future of the EU were regularly discussed during the *in camera* meeting of the Consultative Body of European Union Affairs, which met ahead of the European Council meetings.

In the case of the Dutch *Eerste Kamer,* discussions were held on the Future of Europe with the EU institutions on 25 September 2017. Furthermore, the annual plenary debate with the government on European policy, to be held in November, would focus on the Future of Europe. Similarly, the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* planned to hold a parliamentary enquiry on the Future of Europe on 7 November. The Slovenian *Državni zbor* held a public presentation on the White paper on the Future of Europe with different societal actors.

In the case of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas,* the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs (JCEUA) had launched a public consultation on the Future of Europe. While this was guided by the White Paper process, as well as the State of the Union delivered by President JUNCKER, the Committee had asked members of the public for their own ideas and suggestions, and forwarded the Reflection Papers to the sectoral committees most relevant to their topics for additional comment and contribution. The Committee also thought it beneficial to hold debates on this subject as part of a dedicated event, such as an Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM), or as part of COSAC.

The Belgian *Sénat* reported that in addition to having discussed the majority of the reflection papers, they had also debated the Energy Union as well as the EU's policy on Public Health and Food Safety.

The UK *House of Lords* pointed out that the focus of the *House of Lords* was on the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The House had not debated or taken a position on proposals for the future development of the EU, and it would not be appropriate for it to do so – these were issues for the EU27 and the EU institutions.

The European Parliament had held debates in plenary on all the documents in question. Additionally, the Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe was discussed in the Committee on Budget (BUDG) and Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO). The former held a general discussion on the potential impact of the various scenarios on the EU budget. The latter would be holding a series of debates on the White Paper and the reflection papers this autumn. The Committee would also be organising an ICM on 11 October 2017 on the Future of Europe. The Committee on International Trade would draw-up an own-initiative report entitled "Harnessing globalisation: trade aspects".

Responding to the question whether Parliaments/Chambers had adopted any positions, opinions or resolutions on the Rome Declaration, 21 respondents out of 39 said that no formal position, opinion or resolution had been adopted, but a discussion or hearing had been held. Thirteen respondents reported that nothing had been adopted and no hearing would be held.

Of those who elaborated on the adopted position or opinion, the French *Assemblée nationale* and the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* both echoed the need for deeper integration of the EU, as well as for a better functioning migration policy in line with the fundamental free movement of persons. Unity and cohesion were mentioned by the Finnish *Eduskunta* and the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas,* whilst safety and prosperity were highlighted by the Latvian *Saeima*. The French *Sénat* pointed out that, in light of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU, it was necessary to commence work on the revival of the European project.

ii. Parliaments'/Chambers' opinion on the biggest challenge for the European Union

When asked about the biggest challenge for the EU, the vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers (26 out of 36) considered it to be the migration crisis, followed by the challenge of social and economic inequalities. The question of security was also highlighted by 18 respondents.

What is the biggest challenge for the EU?

Chart data (challenge: count):
- Regional conflicts: 0
- Protectionism: 0
- Increasing use of technology: 1
- Aging societies: 2
- Democratic deficit: 7
- Distrust of citizens: 8
- Terrorism: 9
- Other, please specify: 15
- Security: 18
- Social and economic inequalities: 20
- Migration/refugee crisis: 26
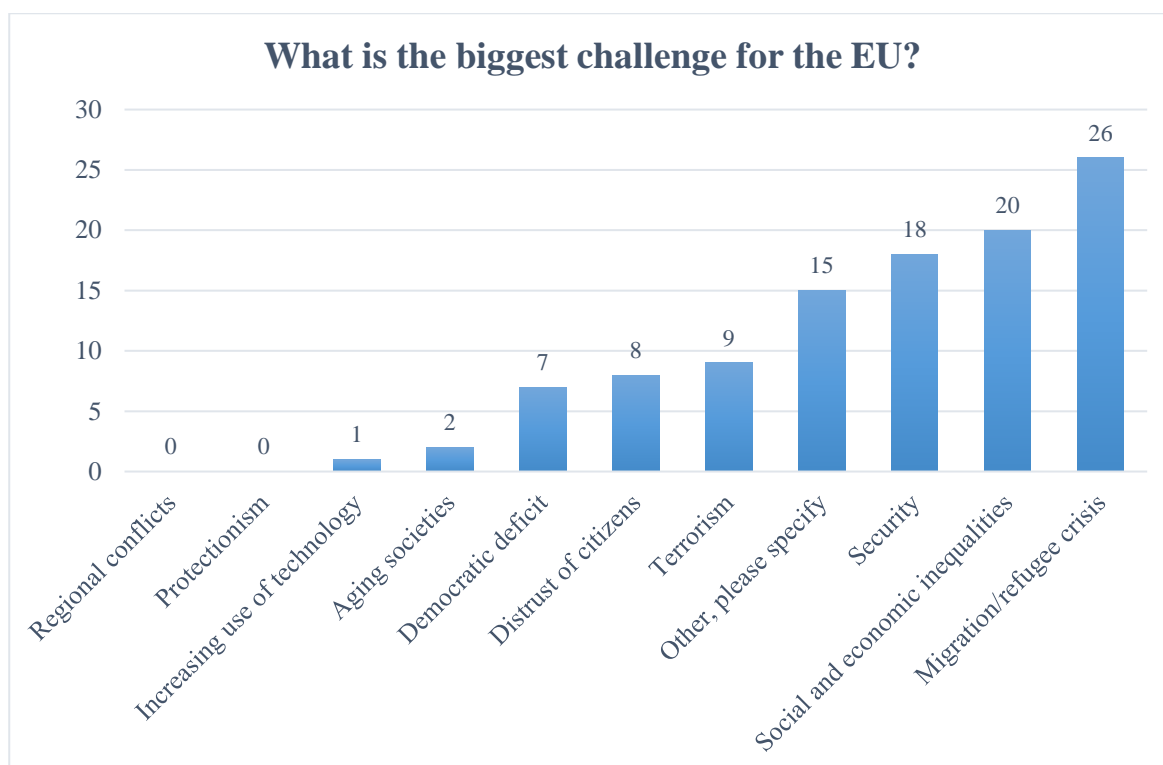
A number of Parliaments provided further information. The Finnish *Eduskunta* had adopted a more general approach, suggesting that one of the key challenges for the EU's future was to find ways to simultaneously reinforce both the EU's cohesion and its effectiveness. The Committee observed that attitudes toward the EU and its ideological foundations had become polarised and divisive in many Member States and that disagreement among them on major issues was testing the effectiveness of the Union.

Among the prime concerns were the withdrawal of the UK from the EU (the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*), achieving a balanced economic and social policy (Lithuanian *Seimas*), the future of the Eurozone (Romanian *Senat*), unemployment, debt sustainability and sustainability of investments (Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs of the European Parliament) and the surge of populist anti-European parties coupled with hostile actions of non-European countries (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*).

In the case of the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon,* whilst the majority of the Committee members regarded migration, terrorism and social/economic inequalities as the biggest challenges for the EU, the Movement of Social Democrats EDEK (KS EDEK) was of the opinion that, in addition to the former two, democratic deficit should also feature on the list. The National People's Front (ELAM), was of the opinion that the biggest challenges were migration/refugee crisis, terrorism and the Cyprus problem.

As to the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat,* two political parties had dissenting opinions. NEOS considered migration, the development of illiberal democracies and instability in the European neighbourhood as key challenges. The Green Party regarded migration, distrust of citizens, social/economic inequalities and climate change as the biggest challenge for the EU.

iii. European Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe and its five scenarios

When asked whether Parliaments/Chambers had adopted any positions, opinions or resolutions on the European Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe, 18 out of 39 respondents said that no formal position, opinion or resolution had been adopted, but a discussion or hearing had been held.

Eight said that they had adopted an official position and another eight said that they intended to do so. The remaining five had no plans to hold a discussion nor to adopt a position.

Many Parliaments/Chambers gave additional information, including references to relevant resolutions or opinions when applicable, which showed a diversity of positions. Among others, the following conclusions were mentioned: the need to bring Europe closer to its citizens through a more legible action which respected the principle of subsidiarity (French *Sénat* and Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*), support for inclusive formats and reservation about multiple speeds (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, *Croatian Hrvatski sabor* and Czech *Senát*), calls for more cooperation in the fields of climate change, including growth, migration and terrorism (Swedish *Riksdag*), and the importance of common values and goals (Romanian *Senat*).

On the five scenarios presented by the European Commission in its White Paper, 23 respondents out of 39 had discussed and analysed them, 10 said that they intended to do so and six had no such plans.

Of those that gave additional information, the German *Bundesrat* stated that a hybrid implementation of the various scenarios would be possible and necessary. A combination of scenarios 1, 3 and 5 seemed desirable. The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* and Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* supported scenario 3. The former, however, added an addendum of 'ensuring that others could join'.

A number of Parliaments/Chambers had held discussions on the topic, but did not come to an official decision about the preferred scenario. The general feeling was that a combination of the proposed scenarios would be the best solution (Estonian *Riigikogu,* Croatian *Hrvatski sabor,* Latvian *Saeima*). The Czech *Senát* had also not adopted an official position, but had expressed an implicit preference for a combination of scenarios 3 and 4.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* reported that the European Affairs Committee had endorsed the government's position, supporting more effective functioning within the EU treaties. Unity needed to be maintained, and therefore the priority must be given to the engagement of all the EU Member States in the possible future integration processes.

In the case of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, the debate indicated a preference for scenario 5, especially through the strengthening of the social dimension of the EU whilst democratising its economic governance.

iv. Where should the EU integrate/cooperate more?

Responding to the question as to where the EU should integrate/cooperate more, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers said that it should be in the fields of security (15 out of 37 respondents) and migration (14 out of 37 respondents).

Where should the EU integrate/cooperate more?
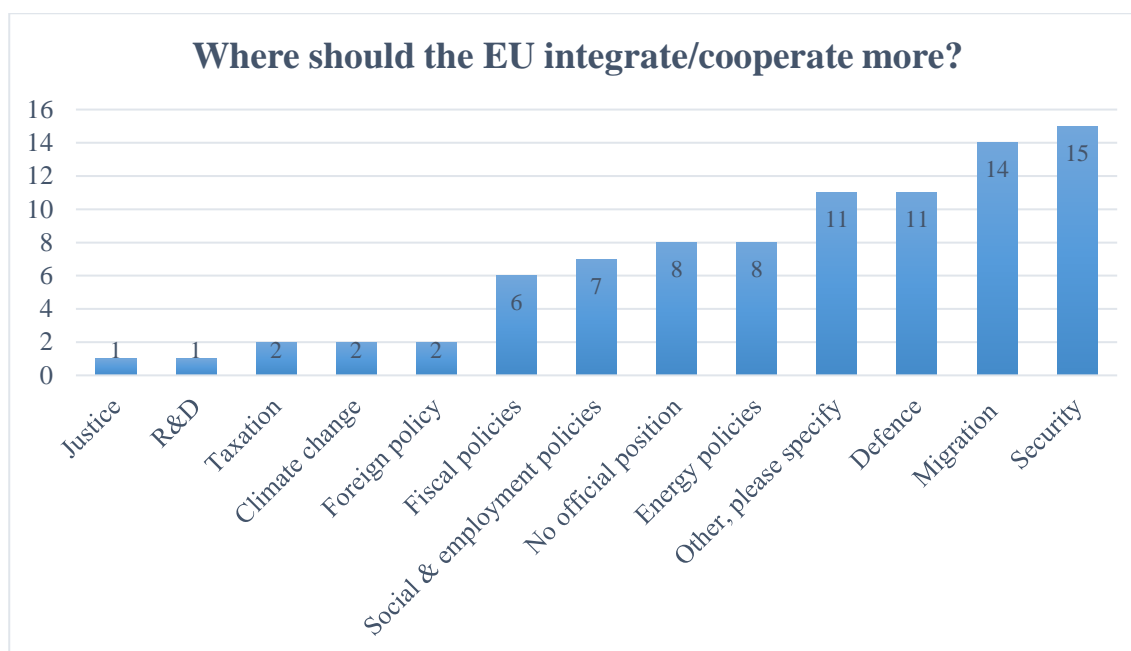
Of those who gave other information, the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* viewed competitiveness, cohesion and enlargement as the main areas in need of integration/cooperation. In its two resolutions[1], the European Parliament identified the following policy areas as those where the EU should cooperate more: extending and deepening EMU, external action, Justice and Home Affairs, economic governance, energy, foreign policy, fundamental rights and the establishment of a European Defence Union.

In the cases of Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* and Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, there were dissenting opinions among the political parties. In the former, the Parliamentary Group of AKEL-Left New Forces, had reservations about further integration on security issues. It considered that further integration/cooperation should take place in the fields of migration, social and employment policies and climate change. In the case of the latter, the Green Party and NEOS diverged from the official Austrian position. The Green Party considered migration, social & employment policy and climate change as areas where the EU should cooperate more. NEOS, on the other hand, regarded defence, security and foreign policy as the fields in need of stronger cooperation.

Section B: Parliaments'/Chambers' position on the future of the EU in more specific matters

i.   Parliaments'/Chambers' positions, opinions or resolutions on specific reflection papers issued by the European Commission

Regarding the Commission's reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe (COM (2017) 206), five Parliaments/Chambers had adopted an official position, opinion or resolution. Half of the respondents (20 out of 39) had not held any discussions on the topic, but 11 of them expressed their intention to do so at a later stage, including the EMPL Committee of the European Parliament. Fourteen Parliaments/Chambers had held hearings on this subject, without having adopted a formal position.

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[1] The European Parliament's resolution 2014/2248(INI) of 16 February 2017 on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty (on the basis of the Mercedes BRESSO and Elmar BROK report) and the European Parliament resolution 2014/2249(INI) of 16 February 2017 on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union (P8_TA(2017)0049, adopted on the basis of the Guy VERHOFSTADT report).

Among those who had adopted formal positions, the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* and the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* acknowledged that the future of the EU was inextricably linked to the well-being of its citizens and a fair balance between economic and social policies should be found at EU level. The Czech *Senát,* however, considered that the reflection paper in question did not contain enough details and emphasised that the negative social impacts of internal market rules related to economic disparities between Member States should be addressed by greater support for their economic convergence. The Romanian *Senat* also expressed its disappointment with the measures included in the European Pillar of Social Rights and called for the continuation of the EU's financial support through the 2014-2020 period.

The Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* was the only Parliament/Chamber who indicated that it had adopted a formal opinion on the Commission's reflection paper on harnessing globalisation (COM (2017) 240), in which it welcomed the Commission's efforts to modernise the EU economy, while at the same time expressing its belief that the realisation of social policies should remain a national competence. The majority of the respondents (30 out of 38) indicated that they had not held any formal debates on the topic, but 13 of them, including the INTA Committee of the European Parliament, declared intention to do so. Seven Parliaments/Chambers had held discussions without having adopted formal positions on the matter.

Concerning the Commission's reflection paper on the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (COM (2017) 291), the majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (25 out of 38) had not adopted any resolutions on it; however, 15 of them expressed their intention to do so at a later stage. Eleven Parliaments/Chambers had held discussions without formal outcome, while two had expressed formal positions. The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* noted that, while it was legitimate to contemplate full exploration of the Lisbon Treaty's potential, there was little to be gained from further concentration on the institutional aspects of the EU; instead, more focus should be placed on the political ones. The Committee on National Economy, Agriculture and Transport of the Czech *Senát*, on the other hand, stated their general support for the initiatives in the paper, noting that further scrutiny of the detailed proposals would have to be carried out[2]. The ECON Committee of the European Parliament noted that an own-initiative report had been adopted ahead of the release of the Commission's reflection paper.

The Swedish *Riksdag* noted that its Committee on Finance had reviewed the five Committee chairs' report on the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in 2015 by way of a statement that formed the basis of the Commission's work in that area. Furthermore, in a statement of opinion to the Committee on Foreign Affairs regarding the Commission Work Programme 2017, the Committee on Finance maintained, in connection with the EMU, that clear national ownership over the pursued policy within the EU's framework was a core precondition for a strong democratic basis, as it was at national level that choices concerning economic policy should ultimately be made and implemented with effective parliamentary participation and true accountability.

Regarding the Commission's reflection paper on the future of European defence (COM (2017) 315), three Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they had adopted positions. The majority of the respondents (28 out of 39 respondents) had not adopted formal opinions on the topic, but 15 of them expressed their intention to do so, including the SEDE Sub-Committee of the European Parliament. Hearings had been held in eight Parliaments/Chambers with no subsequent adoption of formal resolutions.

Among those who had adopted formal positions, the French *Sénat* called for greater political and budgetary involvement of the EU in defence and security matters, while the EU affairs Committee of

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[2] The adoption in plenary was expected in October 2017.

the Czech *Senát* emphasised the importance of an effective cooperation between EU and NATO and pointed out that the civilian aspects of the security issues should be considered alongside the military ones[3].

Last but not least, the Commission's reflection paper on the future of EU finances (COM (2017) 358) had been discussed by 11 out of 39 Parliaments/Chambers. The majority (28) indicated that it had not adopted a formal position on it, but 16 Parliaments/Chambers indicated their intention to do so. The European Parliament mentioned its plans to adopt a resolution on the topic during the plenary session in October.

ii.   Parliaments'/Chambers' positions, opinions or resolutions on specific resolutions issued by the European Parliament

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers indicated that there were no relevant plans to discuss the reports on the future of the EU presented by the European Parliament[4] and none of the Parliaments/Chambers had had a debate in plenary on them. However, some of the respondents noted that the content of the reports was part of broader discussions held on the Future of Europe (Austrian *Nationalrat*, Czech *Senát,* German *Bundestag,* German *Bundesrat,* Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* and Dutch *Eerste Kamer*), while others referred to the participation of their Members in the Interparliamentary Committee Meetings (ICMs) during which the reports were being drafted and discussed (Hungarian *Országgyűlés* and UK *House of Lords*). Some Parliaments/Chambers mentioned that the reports were usually used by their EU affairs committee when drafting opinions (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*) or discussing EU affairs with Members of the European Parliament (Portuguese *Assembleia da República*), as well as in preparation of debates on European Council and the Council of the EU meetings (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*).

Among the Parliaments/Chambers who had debated the European Parliament's reports either in their EU affairs committee or in the sectoral committees, some singled out the transition from unanimity decision-making process in the Council to a qualified majority one as an important topic (German *Bundesrat,* Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*), while the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* focused on regaining citizens' commitment to the project of political integration of the EU. The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* expressed its preference for further exploration of the Lisbon Treaty potential, while the French *Sénat* insisted on a revision of the institutional structure of the EU, consisting of a reduced number of Commissioners and members of the European Parliament and better involvement of the national Parliaments.

As all of the three reports proposed some institutional re-arrangements on the EU level, Parliaments/Chambers were asked which ones they considered necessary. The vast majority of the respondents did not answer (33 out of 38); however, four of the five Parliaments/Chambers who replied expressed support for the idea of establishing an EU finance minister[5].

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[3] The adoption of the final resolution was expected in October 2017.
[4] BRESSO and BROK resolution on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty (P8_TA(2017)0049); VERHOFSTADT resolution on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union (P8_TA(2017)0048); and Reimer BÖGE and Pervenche BERÈS resolution on budgetary capacity for the euro area (P8_TA(2017)0050).
[5] The chart below does not include the answers provided by the NEOS party, Austrian *Nationalrat*, who expressed its support for the establishment of an EU foreign minister and a Council of defence ministers, as well as for reducing the number of Commissioners.

The total number of received replies exceeds the number of respondents as some of them selected more than one answer.

Which arrangements do you consider necessary?

Arrangement	Value
Reducing the number of Councils	0
Establishment of an EU foreign minister	1
Establishment of a Council of defence ministers	1
Reducing the number of commissioners	2
Reducing the number of MEPs	3
Establishment of an EU finance minister	4
No answer	33
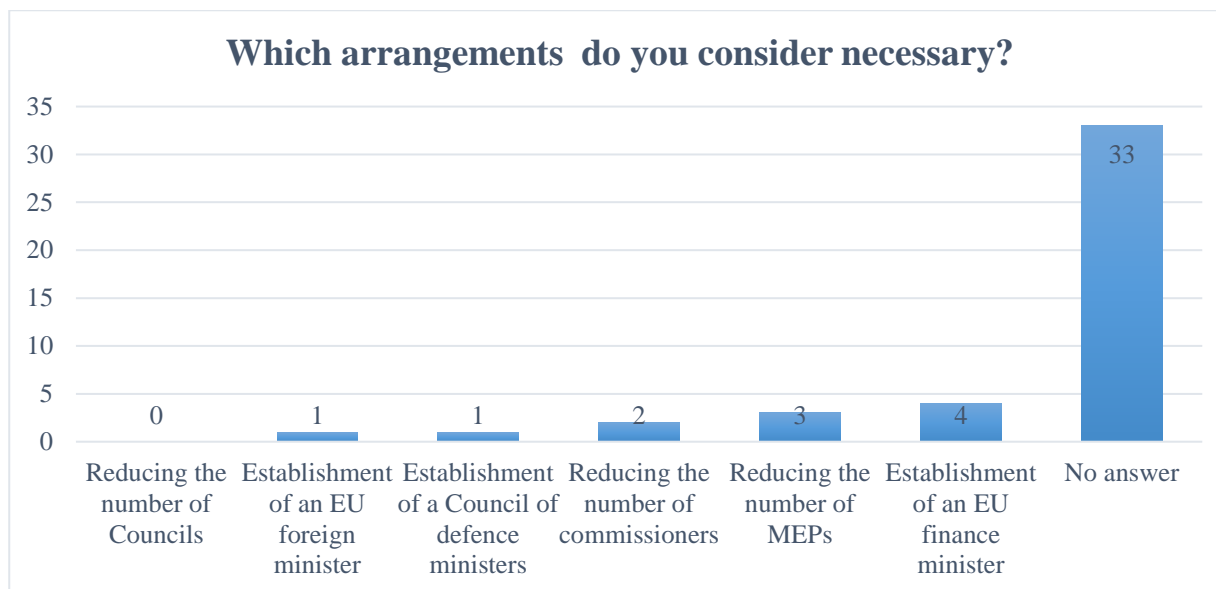
Several Parliaments/Chambers provided further details on their vision for the future of the EU:

- The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* expressed the belief it would be useful as a first step to reduce the number of Commissioners; however, the Green party expressed a discerning opinion, envisioning a more enhanced status for the European Parliament with rights to initiate legislative acts and to elect the Commission as a fully-fledged government.
- The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* excluded the possibility of reducing the number of members of the European Parliament, as well as the possibility of amending the Treaties.
- The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* supported the unification of the positions of President of the European Council and President of the European Commission.
- The Czech *Senát* did not consider that the establishment of new institutions or any of the listed possible changes would improve the functioning of the EU and instead suggested that the democratic scrutiny of the EU legislative and policymaking processes should be strengthened on national level.
- The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* proposed to increase the democratic control on the Eurogroup.
- The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* noted that they had adopted a resolution asking the Dutch government to oppose the establishment of an EU Finance Minister.
- The Swedish *Riksdag* noted that subsidiarity, European added value, proportionality, sound economic management and restrictiveness should guide the budget, working towards an efficient and restrained budget policy within the EU, involving a cost-effective use of EU funds and strict budgetary discipline. The *Riksdag* Committee on Finance also noted an opportunity for further modernisation of the EU budget and a reprioritisation in favour of measures with a clear European added value and that promote economic innovation should lead these efforts. The Committee further expressed its fears that the consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU may represent a major aspect of the negotiations, noting that a reduction in the number of Member States would also mean a reduction in the budget and that there would still be a need in the future for levelling out the differences between Member States' contributions to the budget in order to avoid disproportionately large net contributions.

iii. Parliaments'/Chambers' views on changing the EU treaties

Parliaments/Chambers were also asked whether they would support changing the EU treaties in order to re-shape the future of the EU. The vast majority (23 out of 36) expressed no opinion on the matter, while 10 respondents answered negatively. Three Parliaments/Chambers indicated approval for the

idea (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, French *Assemblée nationale* and Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*), together with the AFCO Committee of the European Parliament[6].

Do you support changing the EU treaties?

Yes: 3	No: 10	No opinion: 23
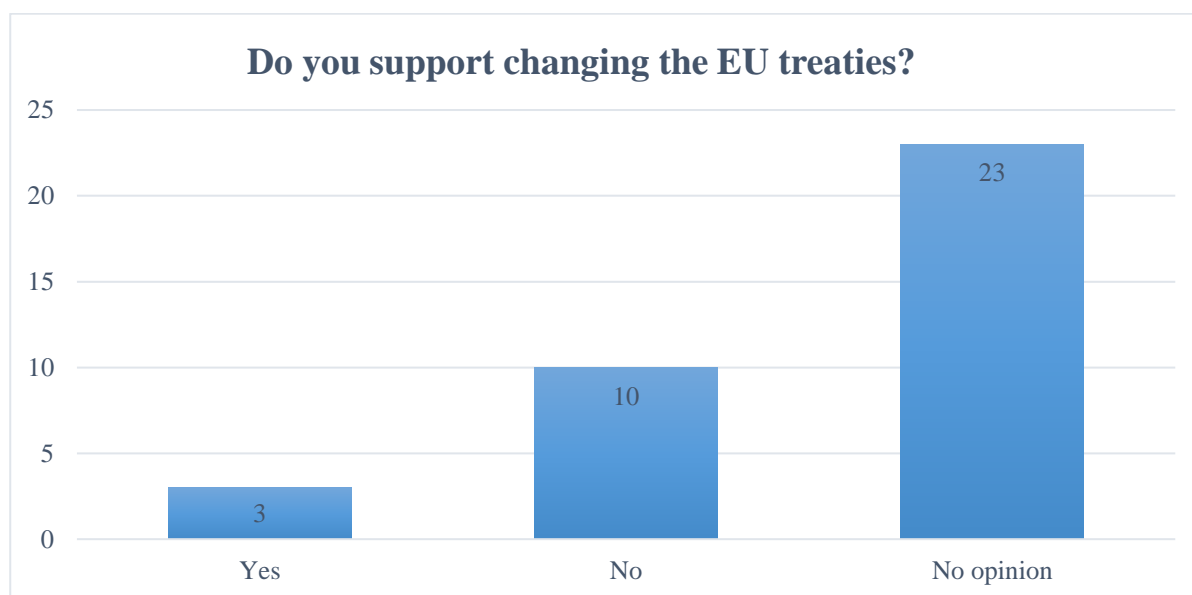
In addition, the NEOS party, Austrian *Nationalrat*, and the Green party, Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, also supported possible changes to the Treaties.

iv.   Discussion on the future of the EU in national Parliaments

When asked to provide examples of ways in which they had discussed the future of the EU, several Parliaments/Chambers noted that the topic was generally included in broader discussions (Finnish *Eduskunta,* Portuguese *Assembleia da República,* Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie,*[7] Swedish *Riksdag,* Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*), especially as part of the parliamentary oversight process before or after European Council and Council meetings (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat,* Estonian *Riigikogu,* Czech *Senát* and Spanish *Cortes Generales*).

Some Parliaments/Chambers examined the future of the EU in the context of Brexit (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, UK *House of Commons*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*), while others focussed on the future of the Eurozone and the Economic and Monetary Union (Romanian *Senat*, French *Assemblée nationale*, French *Sénat*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*). In addition, a number of Parliaments/Chambers dedicated special conferences on one or more aspects of the topic (Polish *Sejm,* Danish *Folketing*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Latvian *Saeima,* and Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*).

CHAPTER 2: BRINGING THE EU CLOSER TO ITS CITIZENS

Communicating the EU is a complex matter, but national Parliaments, due to their proximity to the citizens, are in a unique position to reach out to them and to make EU politics more transparent and accountable. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the best practices in involving civil society and citizens in debates on EU matters, and find out how EU Parliaments communicate their activities related to EU affairs to the general public.

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[6] See resolution P8_TA(2017)0048

[7] The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* further noted a decision whereby the Minister of Foreign Affairs would regularly report to the MPs on the progress of the debate on the Future on EU on a pan European level, whereas the Government was elaborating national framework position regarding the European Council in December 2017, to be presented, discussed and adopted by Parliament.

Section A addresses citizens' involvement in EU discussions and decision-making. It focusses on action plans to improve interaction between Parliaments/Chambers and the wider public, cooperation formats between these two parties, and the digital platforms that allow citizens to be more engaged in EU matters.

Section B attempts to assess the visibility of parliamentary debates on EU-related topics by determining the frequency of and public access to these debates.

Section A: Citizens' involvement in EU discussions and decision-making

i.   Action plans and rules/framework for interaction with the public and involving citizens in EU Parliaments

Parliaments/Chambers were asked if specific action plans aimed at improving interaction between them and the wider public existed, and to list the main principles/objectives the action plans were based on. Over half of the 38 responding Parliaments/Chambers (21) answered positively and provided information on a wide range of actions and tools designed to ensure visibility of parliamentary work in order enhance democracy and parliamentarism.

The Estonian *Riigikogu* stated that the public must have access to all public information, which should be correct, up-to-date, politically impartial and easily accessible from the website. The Directorate general for Communication of the European Parliament helped media cover Parliament's activities and designed a campaign for encouraging people to go vote in the 2019 European elections. While only the Swedish *Riksdag* referred to a Strategic plan (2015-2018), the respondents mentioned various initiatives geared towards: providing access to information, ensuring transparency, promoting interaction with the wider public, increasing the understanding of parliamentary procedures, revising education content on parliaments, building engagement capability in web and social media, and strengthening engagement with Parliaments. The actions referred to included:

- Parliamentary websites, web portals, databases, including sites dedicated to European affairs, with education content on the role and work of Parliaments (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Danish *Folketing*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Polish *Senat*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Swedish *Riksdag*, Belgian *Sénat*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Spanish *Cortes Generales,* Estonian *Riigikogu*);
- social media: Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, YouTube channel (French *Sénat*, Danish *Folketing*, Polish *Senat*, Belgian *Sénat*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, European Parliament);
- live streaming of parliamentary debates and committee meetings (European Parliament, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*);
- parliamentary TV channels (European Parliament, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*);
- engagement with broadcast and print media (press briefings before sittings in the case of the Polish *Senat*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*; through press conferences, press releases, seminars, day-to-day contacts in the case of the European Parliament);
- parliamentary Information Offices/Centres (Danish *Folketing*, Polish *Senat*; network of information offices of the European Parliament in the Member States);
- public parliamentary hearings (Spanish *Cortes Generales*);
- workshops: 'Democracy Workshop' in the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, 'Introduction to Parliament' and 'Making the Law' in the UK *House of Commons*;

- inquiry services via mail, telephone hotline, frequently asked questions pages (European Parliament, Danish *Folketing*, Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, 'Offices for Information to the Citizens' set up in both chambers of the Spanish *Cortes Generales*);
- petitions and letters (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, European Parliament);
- working groups on digital democracy and citizens' participation (French *Assemblée nationale*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*);
- online platforms for: public consultations - Italian *Senato della Repubblica* (on the circular economy package and on the "Italian Quality" trademark); Citizens' Initiative online (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*), Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* (bills pending); popular referendum initiatives (Portuguese *Assembleia da República*);
- visits and guided tours (Polish *Senat*, UK *House of Commons*, Belgian *Sénat*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*; visitors' facilities of the European Parliament – the House, Parlamentarium, House of European History, Station Europe);
- publications, educational material (Polish *Senat*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, European Parliament);
- implementation of high standards on transparency and public consultation by the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*; new Code of conduct adopted by the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*;
- initiatives targeting young people: Youth Parliament (the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*); Education Centre for young people and teachers, and Education outreach programme for school children (UK *House of Commons*); training and quizzes targeted at schools (Polish *Senat*); since 1994 annual essay-competition on 'Hungary and the Central European area in the European Union, the European Union in the world' initiated by the Speaker of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés;*
- examples of other initiatives: 'Project Crowdsourcing' (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat)*, 'Open Days' for the public (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*).

The majority of the respondents (25 out of 39) indicated that there were no specific rules or a framework for the involvement of citizens in EU related matters.

Several respondents referred, however, to existing arrangements/provisions. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* mentioned the specific provisions in the Rules of Procedure of both Chambers, and the EU Information Act, while the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* mentioned the consultation process involving citizens. The Swedish *Riksdag* gave a detailed account of its communications strategy, which targeted a wide range of stakeholders. According to the information given, communication of the Chamber's decisions took place via: the *Riksdag´s* website in the form of 'Decisions in brief', webcast broadcasts of the Prime Minister's consultation with the Committee on European Union Affairs and reports to the Chamber after European Council meetings, as well as via the specific website on EU information. Selected items of business were communicated via sign language and "easy Swedish". The Danish *Folketing*'s EU Information office had a communication strategy, which focussed on the best way to target EU information to citizens. In the case of the European Parliament, the framework given by its Bureau and the Working Party on Information and Communication was governed by the following principles: distribution should prevail over production of communication material; data-driven strategies and actions; cost-benefit analysis; intelligence and evaluation; audience-driven approach.

The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* reported having a comprehensive framework for communication which included: a web portal; a new Code of Conduct meant to ensure transparency and credibility in the exercise of public authority; the Hellenic Parliament Foundation for Parliamentarism and Democracy; educational programmes (organised in cooperation with the Cyprus Ministry of Education); the self-owned Hellenic Parliament Television Station, which also promoted the work of the European Parliament and of Greek MEPs (Members of European Parliament); and the Library of the Hellenic

Parliament. A decision unanimously adopted in 2014 provided for the publication of all administrative acts of the President and the Secretary-General on a website on which asking questions and making comments was possible.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* mentioned an e-Services section on its website enabling society's participation in legislative process (e-legislation) by registering public legislative initiatives and accepting comments and proposals on legislative initiatives.

In the European Parliament, plenary and committee meetings were public and web streamed. In the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* all plenary sessions were transmitted live on the Parliament's web page and a state TV/radio channel. Committee meetings were in general open to the public, and NGOs and citizens were encouraged to submit their opinions and statements in writing beforehand. Public Councils comprising different NGOs worked alongside the EU Affairs Committee and the Committee on Interaction with Non-Governmental Organisations and the Complaints of Citizens.

The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* enabled citizens to follow Committee meetings and plenary sessions via media coverage by parliamentary correspondents or directly. Interested parties were also invited to express their opinion on matters under discussion. In the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* meetings were also open to the public, and the agendas were public. Whenever matters of particular relevance to the EU's plan were discussed, a press release is issued beforehand.

In the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* frameworks were set up for petitions and letters of citizens and the website had a section for comments from the public on European legislation; on the portal for "The *Cortes Generales* and the European Union", the work of the Joint Committee for EU Affairs of the Spanish *Cortes Generales* was published in a timely fashion.

ii.   Modes of involving the civil society and civil society organisations in EU Parliaments

When asked how the committees responsible for EU matters involved civil society in parliamentary debates, the majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (21 out of 39) informed that that was done both passively by sharing information with NGOs (21 out of 39) and directly by actively seeking direct contact with NGOs (20 out of 39). Slightly less than half (19 out of 37 respondents) answered that civil society involvement was ensured openly via NGO participation in committee meetings. Almost a third of the respondents (12 out of 37) indicated that it was achieved via the Government, which involved NGOs before sending EU materials to the Parliament.

Almost a third of the respondents (12 out of 39) mentioned other strategies used for interacting with civil society. The French *Sénat* mentioned that NGOs were heard by committees or rapporteurs or were involved in exchanges of information. The Romanian Camera *Deputaților* invited civil society representatives to committee meetings. The German *Bundestag* added that NGO representatives could be invited as experts for a public hearing or for an informal meeting of the rapporteurs of the EU Committee; during a delegation trip abroad, NGOs were also often visited as local experts. The European Parliament informed that civil society organisations could be invited as experts in the framework of committee hearings and workshops. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* clarified that different stakeholders, other than NGOs, were also directly involved. The EU Committees of the UK *House of Lords* conducted regular inquiries into the UK government's engagement with the EU and its policies. As part of these inquiries, the Committees issued 'calls for evidence' which invited interested stakeholders, such as NGOs, to respond in writing or give evidence in person before the Committee. In the UK *House of Commons*, oral and written evidence was sought for specific inquiries, but there was no direct involvement in debates. The Czech *Senát* mentioned involvement in *ad hoc* seminars, conferences or public hearings, and added that, while it was open to receiving information and positions from NGOs, it usually did not actively seek them. The Belgian *Sénat*

informed that the meeting on the Energy Union with Commissioner ŠEFČOVIČ was open to NGOs on an exceptional basis; the German *Bundesrat* mentioned public hearings with NGOs regarding CETA. The Committee of European Affairs of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* regularly organised topical roundtable/stakeholder sessions (e.g. on Brexit and the White paper on the Future of Europe), in preparation of parliamentary debates.

Fifteen of the 38 responding Parliaments/Chambers invited civil society organisations to participate in debates on EU matters or in the decision-making process occasionally, while 11 did so sometimes, and ten regularly; only two Parliaments/Chambers never invited them to the debates.

Sixteen of the 39 responding Parliaments/Chambers asked occasionally civil society organisations for their written opinion on EU matters, seven did so sometimes, nine regularly and seven never.

Over half of Parliaments /Chambers (21 out of 39) answered they had no specific cooperation formats for discussing EU matters with civil society organisations. Several respondents referred to existing arrangements within their Parliaments/Chambers.

The Standing Orders of the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor* provided for "external members" who were representatives of the civil society and had all the rights of the Committee Members, except for the right to vote or participate in other forms of decision-making. In the case of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, the Standing orders mentioned that standing committees might request the hearing of relevant interlocutors in position to enlighten the committee on various special and technical subjects. In the Bulgarian *Narodno Sabranie*, a consultative body towards the EU Affairs Committee was established, namely a Public Council, consisting of 25 NGOs and representatives of business, academia, student organisations etc.

The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* was informed on the work of the Malta-EU steering action committee, which was responsible for discussion and consultation of EU matters with the civil society. The Romanian Camera *Deputaților* established a formal cooperation protocol between it and the National Coalition for the Absorption of Structural Funds (a group of NGOs active in different fields). In the Polish *Sejm*, there were institutionalised forms of cooperation on the discussion of EU affairs within the Sejm committees and parliamentary groups.

Along with daily cooperation, the Latvian *Saeima* organised since 2006 an annual forum of the *Saeima* and NGOs. One session of the forum was dedicated to NGO activities and civil dialogue at the local and European level. Every year, the Lithuanian *Seimas* organised the European Week of the *Seimas*, a series of debates open to civil society.

In the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, interested parties and civil society organisations were invited to Committee meetings to give their opinion, and the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* could hold expert meetings on specific topics. In the German *Bundestag*, there was involvement only in public hearings on the formal level. In the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, European Scrutiny and Policy was mainstreamed across Committees, and when EU matters were being discussed, relevant stakeholders were routinely invited to contribute.

The European Parliament mentioned the following formats: regular high-level conferences organised at the request of Parliament's President, with the involvement of actors of the civil society; a biennial Youth event, gathering 8 000 young people in Strasbourg; the activities of the European Parliament's Information Offices in the Member States, organised to promote legislation among stakeholders; and the sectorial cooperation formats with civil society, such as the dialogue with religious and non-confessional organisations.

EU matters may be discussed with civil society organisations in specific formats in the Spanish *Cortes Generales*; recently a seminar on the economic effects of the Brexit was organised jointly with the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (CEOE). The Czech *Senát* mentioned civil society's involvement in seminars, conferences, and public hearings; the Romanian *Senat* listed hearings, conferences and committee meetings open to civil society, while the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* referred to *enquêtes*. In the Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, participation was possible on an *ad hoc* basis in the framework of the discussion of legislative proposals or of informative committee meetings. In the UK *House of Commons*, only MPs could speak in debates in the Chamber. Civil Society organisations regularly gave evidence to committees, including on EU matters. Although the Italian *Camera dei deputati* did not have a specific cooperation format, it organised in 2016 an *ad hoc* on-line consultation on the Current situation of the EU and its perspectives.

iii.   Digital platforms in Parliaments allowing citizens' engagement in EU matters

Over half of the 39 responding Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had digital platforms that allowed citizens to be more engaged in EU matters and to express their opinions on topics being discussed. Some respondents were more specific and mentioned the following:

- Contact form on the website (Polish *Sejm*);
- Facebook-page of the EU Information Office (Danish *Folketing*);
- fora created if necessary (French *Sénat*);
- twitter accounts of the parliament and of its Brussels Office; use of the Government´s "civic platform interface" allowing real-time comments to public documents (Finnish *Eduskunta*);
- Facebook and Instagram sites (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*);
- web page; social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+ (Romanian Camera *Deputaţilor*);
- Draft Information System on the public consultation page; webpage where citizens can express their views on certain draft acts (Estonian *Riigikogu*);
- e-Services section on the website (Lithuanian *Seimas*);
- *ad hoc* on-line consultation (Italian *Camera dei deputati*);
- Twitter account of the EU Committee; it re-tweets posts made by other stakeholders; citizens queries may be answered via Twitter (UK *House of Lords*);
- website dedicated to European Affairs with section for comments; electronic exchange of letters (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*);
- Electronic Petitions platform - not specific to EU matters; E-petitions; digital platforms set up by committees in relation to specific inquiries (UK *House of Commons*);
- links under the titles «Blog», «Legislate», «Consultation» on Parliament's website (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*);
- specific section on Parliament's website with databases; Facebook page; Twitter account of the Committee used for publishing news and answering queries (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*);
- web platform that allows citizens to participate online (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*);
- specific section on EU Information Services website for communication with users who had access to information and contact details of relevant interlocutors; Twitter account (Swedish *Riksdag*);
- replies to comments on social media (Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*);
- the portal for "The *Cortes Generales* and the European Union"; web streaming of the parliamentary sessions in the social media (Spanish *Cortes Generales*);
- Facebook page (Romanian *Senat*);

- twelve social media platforms followed by almost 5 million people, in 24 languages: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Reddit, Google Plus, Spotify, Tumblr; platforms to debate EU topics and engage with MEPs; 'my House of European History', a collaborative project incorporating testimonies of citizens on Europe (European Parliament).

iv.   Register for lobbyists in Parliaments

The vast majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (32 out of 39) did not have a register for lobbyists.

In those cases where such a register did exist, Parliaments/Chambers provided more information on its objectives and principle. For the Polish *Sejm*, the objective of this register was to provide information on persons carrying out professional lobbying activities and on the documents and proposals of legal solutions addressed to the committees. Avoiding conflicts of interest was the declared objective of the register for lobbyists of the French *Assemblée nationale*.

The register of the Polish *Senat* contained information on lobbyists who operated in the Senate; documents submitted by lobbyists to Senate committees are registered and published on the Senate's website. In the German *Bundestag*, since 1972 there was a voluntary register, which was open to the public and encompassed about 2300 lobbyist groups. The Register for lobbyists of Italian *Camera dei deputati* in force since 10 March 2017 regulated the activities and the access of lobbyists inside the Chamber.

In the UK *House of Commons*, the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists was set up in order to create and administer the statutory Register of Consultant Lobbyists. The Government's intention behind the introduction of the Register was to enhance the transparency of those seeking to lobby Ministers and Permanent Secretaries on behalf of a third party. There were also registers of MPs' interests, and for informal groups of MPs.

The objective of the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* register for lobbyists was to further the transparency of the work of the Chamber. Lobbyists were required to disclose the firm they work for, as well as their clients.

At the EU level, there was a transparency register operated jointly by the Commission and the European Parliament and based on the following objectives/principles: European citizens were entitled to follow the activities of their elected Members closely, verifying that they complied with strict principles of conduct and maintain well-balanced relations with interest representatives; the decision-making process must be transparent to allow for proper scrutiny and to ensure that the Union's institutions are accountable.

According to the information given, the European Parliament, Commission and Council were in the process of negotiating a new inter-institutional agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register for EU lobbyists, which aimed to enhance the transparency of the work of interest representatives at the EU institutions, in order to increase public trust in the EU decision-making process. Ms Sylvie Guillaume, Vice-President responsible for the Transparency Register, and Ms Danuta HÜBNER, Chair of the European Parliament's AFCO Committee, were Parliament's lead negotiators for the agreement under discussion.

The Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* reported that, in Ireland, a central Register of Lobbyists was maintained by the Standards in Public Office Commission, an independent body established to maintain standards for elected and public officials in Ireland. Individuals/Organisations involved are

required to register and declare their activity, including the names of the public officials who were lobbied. In the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* there was no register for lobbyists, but rather a long detailed list of NGOs and other civil society groups, which was regularly updated. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* informed that such a register existed only in the Federal Ministry of Justice.

v.   Discussions on improving the involvement of civil society in EU debates and the decision-making process

Less than half of the respondents (17 out of 38) had discussed the possibilities of improving the involvement of civil society in EU debates and the decision-making process.

Debates within the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* led to various amendments to the Rules of Procedure and the entering into force of the EU Information Act. The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* committed itself to organising regular hearings with civil society on relevant European topics.

By launching a new website for EU Information Services, the Swedish *Riksdag* intended to enhance understanding and knowledge of the EU among its target groups, including the civil society. The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* had an accreditation system for NGOs wishing to attend committee meetings.

The EU Committee of the UK *House of Lords* sought to strengthen engagement with civil society by highlighting calls for evidence on Twitter, providing travel expenses for stakeholders who travelled to give evidence before the Committee, holding Committee meetings in other parts of the UK. All the Committees of the Finnish *Eduskunta* organised weekly public hearings and other open events.

The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* reported advocating for many years increased access for the public to the classified documents (*Limité* level) that were part of the EU legislative process. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* and the Danish *Folketing* were considering ways to include citizens and civil society in the political debate. The Latvian *Saeima*'s discussions included providing a more detailed Committee agenda, and considering different discussion formats.

The European Parliament's AFCO Committee was currently drafting a legislative initiative report on the revision of the Regulation on the European Citizens Initiative. The European Parliament adopted a resolution on e-democracy in the EU. AFCO Committee drafted a recommendation for Parliament's decision on the conclusion of the Interinstitutional agreement on Better Law-making and would draft, jointly with the Committee on Legal Affairs, a report on the interpretation and implementation of this agreement. It also adopted a report on the transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions adopted in plenary on 14 September 2017. A report featuring the most concrete ideas discussed during the European Youth Event was distributed to all MEPs; some participants presented select ideas to a number of parliamentary committees and got feedback from MEPs.

Section B: Visibility of parliamentary EU-related discussions and decision-making

Asked whether EU Affairs Committee meetings were open to the public, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers (24 out of 37 respondents) replied that these were regularly open to the public.[8] For three Parliaments/Chambers, these meetings were sometimes open, whereas eight

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[8] The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* clarified that the meetings of the Committee on EU Affairs were open to the public indirectly through parliamentary correspondents' reporting. The Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, on the other hand, pointed out that the meetings of the EU Affairs Committee were always open to the public, and did not answer the question.

Parliaments/Chambers said that they were only occasionally open to the public. EU Affairs Committee meetings were never open to the public in only two Parliaments/Chambers.

All respondents indicated that they had written minutes of the debates of the EU Affairs Committee meetings, and the best part of Parliaments/Chambers (31 out of 38) reported that these were also open to the public.

Asked how often EU matters were debated at the plenary of their respective Parliaments/Chambers, half of the respondents (19 out of 38) said these debates were held *ad hoc*, whenever deemed relevant, whereas an almost equal number (17 out of 38) indicated that they held such debates at regular intervals. Two Parliaments/Chambers held plenary debates once a year.

Many respondents qualified their answer. The German *Bundesrat* pointed out that EU matters were discussed regularly in the plenary, and at least once every two sessions, while the French *Assemblée nationale* discussed such matters once every three months. The Polish *Sejm*, while explaining that a briefing on the participation of the Republic of Poland in the EU context was presented by the government every six months, noted that such information was also provided ad hoc, whenever it seemed relevant. Similarly, the Luxembourg *Chambre de Députés* stated that, while a declaration by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs was made in a plenary meeting once a year, EU matters were debated in the plenary whenever this was deemed appropriate.

A number of Parliaments/Chambers (Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Croatian *Hrvatski Sabor*, Swedish *Riksdagen*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*) reported that some form of debate occurred at the plenary before or after the European Council, with either the Prime Minister or the European Affairs Minister present.

In the case of the Estonian *Riigikogu*, during the autumn session of the plenary assembly, the Prime Minister presented an overview of the activities of the Government in implementing EU policy, which was then followed by a debate.

Reports of the European Union Committee were frequently debated in the UK *House of Lords*, with 16 debates having been conducted between June 2016 and May 2017.

A couple of Parliaments/Chambers (Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Polish *Senat*) referred to the discussion of the Commission Work Programme. The Polish *Senat* further mentioned the discussion of reasoned opinions, which happened one to three times a year, and a debate on EU matters held after the end of each Presidency term (hence twice a year). The Romanian *Camera Deputaților* also mentioned the fact that reasoned and draft opinions were submitted to the plenary. The same happened in the Swedish *Riksdagen*, where the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on EU activities during the previous year and on the Committee on the Constitution's annual follow-up of the *Riksdag*'s application of the principle of subsidiarity were also debated. Subsidiarity issues, as well as other pertinent topics, were also discussed in the Belgian *Chambre des représentants.*

The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* also debated EU matters at the plenary twice a year for the approval of the national yearly laws necessary for the implementation of European law and the settlement of infringement procedures.

In the Czech *Senát*, EU legislative proposals, Government mandates for European Council meetings and other matters were debated at almost every plenary session. The Romanian *Senat* also debated European documents at every plenary meeting on Tuesday.

The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* also held a yearly debate on the "State of the European Union".

When it came to naming three main topics related to EU policy and debated at plenary, a clear convergence came to light with respect to some topics. Most notably, topics related to the migration crises were the most popular, featuring in the reply of 18 respondents (out of 32), closely followed by Brexit (13 respondents). Other topics included the future of the EU; the Neighbourhood Policy and CFSP; Terrorism; the Energy Union; Climate Change; CETA and TTIP; and the Digital Agenda. The most cited topics relating to the economic sphere were taxation, the Economic and Monetary Union, and the Multi Annual Financial Framework.

Parliaments/Chambers were then asked to indicate the main targeted audience that regularly followed EU debates at their plenary session. These were (from most chosen to least): journalists and members of the media; individual citizens; interest groups; NGOs; university students; and high school students.

■ Media/Journalists   ■ University Students   ■ High School Students
■ NGOs   ■ Interest Groups   ■ Individual Citizens
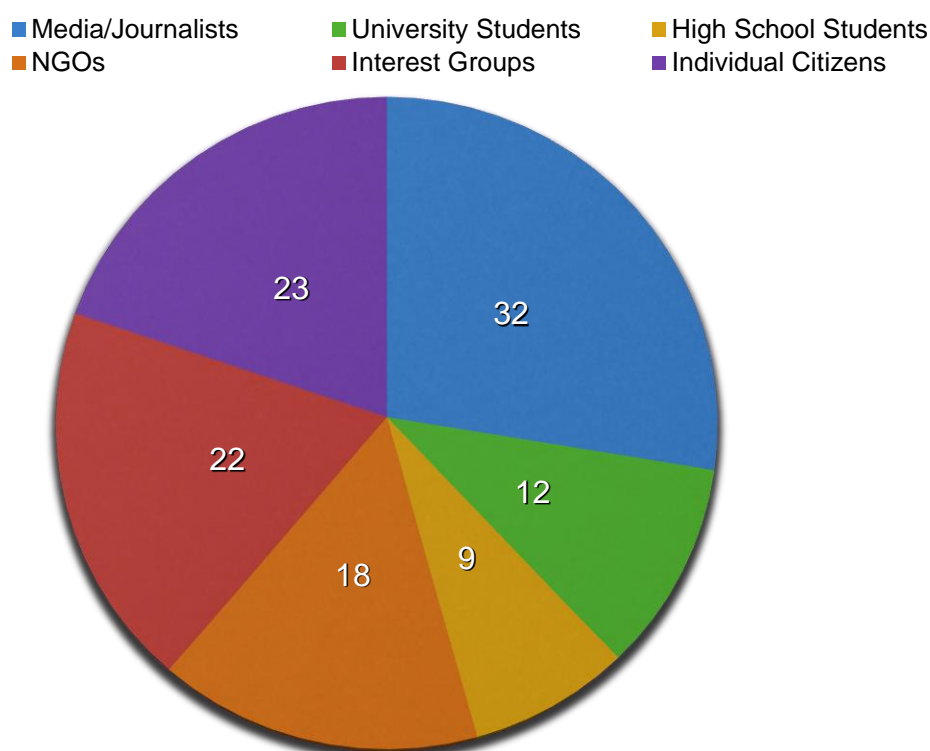
Certain Parliaments/Chambers mentioned other target groups in addition to the ones specified above. The UK *House of Lords* pointed out that the UK Government was also its main targeted audience, given that, apart from informing wider public debate, committee reports also had the objective of influencing Government policy. The Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, on the other hand, identified the representatives of the European Commission in the Netherlands as an audience regularly following its EU debates, but clarified that such debates in the Chamber did not have a 'targeted' audience, since they were debates between the Senate and the government. The European Parliament noted that a special focus was put on media, due to their multiplication effect, and to youth, one of its key target audiences.

The German *Bundestag*, the Swedish *Riksdag*, the Czech *Senát*, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* and the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, all refrained from identifying a main target audience, adding that all citizens could follow the debates.

Asked to identify through which other means citizens were informed on EU matters, an almost equal number of Parliaments/Chambers identified press releases and media interviews given by MPs (31 and 32 respectively). Twenty-eight identified social media, whereas conferences on EU-specific topics were identified as a means of public information by 22 Parliaments/Chambers and press conferences by 17.

Some of the other means identified by Parliaments/Chambers were the following: Parliamentary Youth Day (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*); activities carried out by MPs in their constituencies, including individual meetings with citizens (Romanian *Camera Deputaților*); dedicated TV channel (Lithuanian *Seimas,* Italian *Senato della Repubblica*); web streaming and YouTube (Lithuanian *Seimas*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Swedish *Riksdagen*); newsletter (Lithuanian *Seimas*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*); website (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*).

Parliaments/Chambers offered many different suggestions to make EU debates more visible to citizens. Nevertheless, there were some suggestions which were proposed by more than one Parliament/Chamber. The live streaming of debates, for instance, was proposed by the Belgian *Chambres des représentants*, the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* and the NEOS party of the Austrian *Nationalrat*. The distribution of information was in fact a common and recurrent theme among replies, with the Estonian *Riigikogu* advocating for more active information sharing via social media, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* mentioning the newsletter prepared by its EU Affairs directorate, the Slovak *Národná Rada* proposing the use of new digital technologies for communication with citizens and the Swedish *Riksdag* pointing out that the reports of the Prime Minister regarding meetings at the European Council were to be published on a new website for EU Information Services.
The European Parliament stressed the importance of inter-institutional cooperation and cooperation with the national Parliaments, noting that the 2019 European Elections should be a priority in this regard. It added that it was ready to put all its material and knowledge at the disposal of the relevant authorities, with a view to encourage participation in the elections.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* stressed the importance of maintaining dialogue between Parliaments and society, increasing both visibility and transparency, something echoed by the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*. The general sentiment was also echoed by the Romanian *Camera Deputaților* as it called for a change in the communication strategy of the EU to better identify ways of reaching out to citizens. In this regard, a relevant suggestion was proposed by the Maltese *Kamra tad-deputati*, suggesting the setting up of an EU-citizen department to act as a bridge between parliaments and citizens on EU matters.

CHAPTER 3: DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

Building on the discussions held during the meeting of the LIV COSAC, chapter 3 examines the progress made in the elaboration and implementation of the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy launched by the European Commission in 2015. Emphasis is placed on the digital transformation of parliamentary procedures.

Section A presents the information provided by Parliaments/Chambers on the current voting mechanisms therein and Parliaments' views on digitalisation of parliamentary proceedings.

Section B aims to understand what importance individual Parliaments/Chambers place on the DSM Strategy, how it features in EU policy and which aspects of it have received most attention from parliamentarians.

Section A: Digitalisation of parliamentary procedures

i.   Parliaments'/Chambers' voting systems during the plenary sessions

Voting during the plenary in slightly less than half of the respondents (18 out of 39) was conducted by electronic voting, while in none was it only conducted in written format. In only four was voting conducted by a show of hands.

In addition to the results above, Parliaments/Chambers reported a mixture of voting methods, both electronic and physical, depending on the circumstances.

The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* reported the use of open and secret ballot, whereby votes cast by open ballot were normally counted by electronic voting. Exceptionally, Members might vote with a show of hands. The German *Bundestag* reported voting by show of hands, by roll-call vote, and by "hammelsprung" whereby Members were asked to leave the plenary and return through one out of three doors ("yes", "no" or "abstention"). The Lithuanian *Seimas* referred to voting both electronically and by show of hands. The Italian *Camera Dei Deputati* stated that most votes were conducted by roll call using an electronic system. The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* used a roll call vote or standing vote. In the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* an electronic system was used and voting by show of hands was only used for verification purposes. The Spanish *Cortes Generales* reported that, as a general rule, the voting in the plenary sessions of both Chambers was conducted electronically. However, voting may be conducted a) by assent to the Speaker's proposal, b) by ordinary vote, c) by a public vote, by roll call, and d) be secret vote. The ordinary vote may be conducted, at the discretion of the Speaker, in either of the following ways: by those in favour standing up first, those against next and lastly those who abstained, or by an electronic process. The French *Sénat*, the Belgian *Sénat* and the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* used sitting and standing votes.

Physical voting was reported by the UK *House of Commons* and *House of Lords*. In the *House of Lords*, it was conducted by means of divisions, where members physically divided into two groups, passing through one or the other of the two voting lobbies, where they were counted by tellers. Clerks also recorded the names electronically as they voted, and lists were then published automatically on the parliamentary website once the result had been announced. In the *House of Commons*, votes were collected from 'voices' by the Speaker, then if necessary by division (vote). In the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* most voting was conducted electronically. However, a manual vote was also possible, and required in certain specified circumstances. This was conducted by Members walking through voting lobbies in the Chamber.

Only two Parliaments/Chambers reported voting in a written format; the Belgian *Chambre des représentants* said that, depending on the issue, the House might vote electronically, by show of hands, in a written format, or (very rarely) by sitting and standing, while the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* reported voting both by show of hands and in a written form.

ii.   Information on electronic voting in Parliaments/Chambers

Parliaments/Chambers were asked to give more details on their electronic voting systems. Their replies are presented in the table below.

Parliaments/Chambers using electronic voting	Date of introduction	Information on its functioning
Belgian *Chambre des représentants*		Buttons (green – red – white) and oversight scoreboard.
Belgian *Sénat*	1954 It has been modernised on many occasions.	Towards the end of 1990s, this system was coupled with computerised voting record management (with special specifications for special quorum or majority votes). Each Member's vote is displayed on a synoptic light table, and the colour corresponds to the type of vote (for-green, against-red, abstention-orange). Another light table shows, in three columns, all votes (for / against / abstention).
Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*	In 2013, a biometric chip was added to the existing electronic voting system.	It allows MPs to vote only after using their fingerprint.
Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*	First established some ten years ago and modernised two years ago.	Each MP has a card that is inserted into a slot at their designated seat in the plenary chamber, thus registering his presence in the plenary hall. When voting takes place, MPs vote by pressing one of three options: "in favour", "against" or "abstained". Results are displayed on screens in the Hall.
Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*	January 2017	The system displays each bill of law/regulation/resolution to be adopted by the Plenary on monitors installed in the Plenary Hall and the results of the vote are displayed, as well as the vote cast by each MP.
Czech *Senát*	1998 (shortly after the Senate was established)	It is both a voting and a conference system. It is interconnected with the Senate's website and automatically publishes the results of the vote on the screen in the plenary hall and on the website (including how individual senators voted).
Danish *Folketing*	The recent system is 7 years old. The previous system is 20 years old.	The recent system makes it possible for members to vote from their seat in the Chamber by pressing a button on a small flat screen imbedded in the table. The members can only vote when an ID-card is inserted at their seat guaranteeing that they are physically present.
Estonian *Riigikogu*	1994	Every MP has a personal touch screen in front of them where voting options are displayed.

Finnish *Eduskunta*	Electronic (electro-mechanical) voting has been the rule since 1931. The current technology was introduced 2014.	
Hungarian *Országgyűlés*	1999	It operates smoothly.
Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*	2002 in the *Dáil Éireann* 2003 in the *Seanad Éireann* as a stand-alone voting system.	In the *Dáil Éireann*, the system was updated in 2016 to an integrated audio and voting system using a modified Bosch Ditigal Congress Network Next Generation (DCN NG) system. Each member has a designated seat from which to vote. When a vote is called, members have a set amount of time to make their way to their designated seats. There is an electronic voting box either in front of, or in the arm rest of, each seat. The result of the vote is shown on screens. In the *Seanad Éireann*, the original system was a modified Bosch Digital Congress Network (DCN) system with some proprietary software installed to suit the requirements of the Parliament. It is currently being changed to an integrated audio and voting system using a modified Bosch Digital Congress Network Next Generation (DCN NG) system.
Italian *Senato della Repubblica*	Used and foreseen at least since the Rules of Procedures of 1971.	Electronic voting is the most widely used method in the Senate. Rule 113 states that votes are expressed by show of hands, but by request of at least 15 senators, they are expressed by electronic means. Furthermore, in case of show of hands, an electronic double-check can be asked immediately after the vote.
Latvian *Saeima*	December 1997	The system is fully based on digital technologies. It provides a variety of functions: open voting; voting by a secret ballot, registration for the quorum; signing up for debate. If necessary, the system can be used for simultaneous interpreting. The voting panel shall be used only with a voting identification card inserted. The voting results are displayed on the information

		screens and on the screen of the member of the parliament workstation.
Lithuanian *Seimas*	2007	According to Article 111 of the Statute of the Seimas, laws and resolutions of the Seimas are adopted using the electronic vote counting system. Likewise, voting also takes place on individual provisions of an issue under consideration, individual articles or stipulations of a law, protocol decisions and work programme of the session, agenda of sittings and other issues. On the decision of the chair of the sitting, abovementioned issues may be voted upon by a show of hands. The system works in the desk of each MP and allows each MP to request (or withdraw) the floor; review bills, other drafts and documents of the agenda; look over the results of all voting of the day; watch the broadcasting of the sitting on the screen. Identification (access) to the voting system is provided by a personal electronic card. Members of the Seimas vote in person and must stay in their seats during the voting. The right to vote may not be transferred to other persons. Voting is carried out by pressing buttons. Voting results are announced by the chair and by the indicators of the electronic voting counting system. Information is displayed on screens (individual screens at a working place and two large ones in the Chamber). The voting system is a part of the general information system of the Plenary Chamber, which is connected to other internal databases.
Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*	2013	It functions with a digital fingerprint.
Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*	February 2016	MPs use a card system, which is also used as identification, and use an electronic panel to vote. MPs are given two minutes to express their vote and the voting result is shown on the plenary screens.
Polish *Sejm*	1993	
Polish *Senat*	November 1991	Each senator has an electronic card that enables identification, voting and taking the floor.

Portuguese *Assembleia da República*	2001 Since 2009, electronic voting is conducted through computer and user identification.	Electronic voting through console and card identification since 2001. Since 2009, electronic voting is conducted through computer and user identification. This voting modality is used to confirm the existence of quorum, and for the polls stipulated by the Rules of Procedure of the Assembleia da República.
Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*	2015	DIS Shure system. Each MP has a personal Access card used to make voting possible from his/her voting terminal. The technical performance of the system is assessed as good.
Slovak *Národná rada*	1992	Each MP receives a voting card for the entire parliamentary term. The MP votes in person only by his/her voting card. There are four options for the vote; the first to express presence, the second to express disagreement, the third to express abstention, and the fourth to express consent to the subject of voting.
Spanish *Cortes Generales*	Early 80s	These systems allow Members of Parliament to press the "yes", "no" or "abstention" buttons from their seats. Once the voting is closed by the Speaker, each Member's vote is recorded and both the individual votes and the total result are immediately shown in the screens located to this effect in the plenary room.
Swedish *Riksdag*	The current system came into effect in 2003.	It consists of computer-based hardware. The members vote using buttons on their seats and the result is counted and displayed in the Chamber. The result is exported directly to the *Riksdag's* website once the vote is over.
European Parliament		Electronic voting is carried out using a blue personal chip card issued to Members when they take office. Electronic voting systems are installed in the Strasbourg and Brussels Chambers and in several meeting rooms. Members may vote from any seat in the Chamber using their personal card. Electronic voting is used for roll-call votes or to verify the result of a vote that was taken by show of hands.

iii. Public and secret voting in Parliaments'/Chambers' plenary sessions

In the vast majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (32 out of 38), the voting in plenary was public.

The six remaining Parliaments/Chambers gave more information on this issue. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* explained that it decided on personnel matters by secret ballot. The plenary's voting results were immediately accessible via the internet page of the Parliament. The UK *House of Commons* stated that, except in rare circumstances, the division lists were published. The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* said that it was always public, except in case of votes relating to individuals, in case of internal elections, in matters concerning language minorities, constitutional rights and freedoms, and in motions to amend the Rules of the Senate. In the Latvian *Saeima* it was public, except in the case of the President's election whereby voting was conducted by secret ballot. In the case of the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, all votes were conducted in public session, apart from a few very limited circumstances. In the Spanish *Cortes Generales*, on a general basis, voting at the plenary of both Chambers was public. According to section 85 of the Rules of Procedure of the Congress of Deputies, voting would be secret when so required by the relevant Standing Orders, or when requested by two parliamentary groups or one-fifth of Members of the House or the committee's members. Voting on legislative procedure or in those cases in which resolutions must be passed according to the principle of weighted voting was not secret. In the case of the Estonian *Riigikogu* and the European Parliament, the voting was secret in certain cases, i.e. in relation to certain appointments.

iv. Parliaments'/Chambers' voting systems during committee sittings

The majority of responding Parliaments/Chambers (27 out of 39) stated that during committee meetings voting was conducted by a show of hands. Only the Slovenian *Državni zbor* reported voting electronically. In the Spanish *Cortes Generales* voting in both Chambers was conducted by a show of hands, even in committee rooms equipped for electronic voting.

In many cases, the respondents reported the use of a mixture of voting methods, depending on the case. The Polish *Sejm* stated that in the majority of cases voting was conducted by a show of hands, but that, in some committee meeting rooms, electronic voting was also available. In the case of the Finnish *Eduskunta*, voting was usually conducted by a show of hands and in rare cases by roll call. In the case of the European Parliament, voting was conducted electronically and by show of hands. However, voting for electing the committee Bureaux consisting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs may take place by acclamation or by secret ballot (Rule 204 of the Rules of Procedure).The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* referred to voting by a show of hands, and to roll call voting if a proposal was being voted on during a procedural meeting. Written ballots in the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* were used in case of internal elections.

The UK *House of Lords* explained that formal votes were conducted by means of the clerk reading out the question to be decided on, and then calling on members in alphabetical order to indicate orally whether they were for or against the question. The clerk then announced and recorded the result. All such votes were published in formal committee minutes. The UK *House of Commons* referred to voting by roll call. Formal decisions were recorded by the Committee Clerk and published in the formal minutes of the Committee. The Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* stated that voting was conducted by roll call.

In the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* decision-making in the committees was done by consensus, while, in the the Danish *Folketing*, if a vote was needed, which was very seldom the case, the Chair of the relevant committee would ask the spokesperson from each party to call the vote of their respective party.

Slightly over two thirds of the respondents replied that voting in committee sittings (26 out of 38) was public. Almost one third responded that it was not.

v. Secret ballots in Parliaments/Chambers

The majority of Parliaments/Chambers referred to secret ballots by manual voting using ballot papers and only a few to electronic voting or to the possibility of using both systems.

The Slovenian *Državni svet* gave detailed information on its provisions; it held a secret vote on issues for which such a vote was prescribed by the majority of national councillors present on the proposal of the President of the National Council, at least eight national councillors or one of interest groups. A secret vote was conducted by way of ballot paper. For each voting the service of the National Council printed 40 ballot papers. The secret ballot was carried out by a specific commission. The Polish *Sejm* reported that secret ballots were conducted using ballot papers signed with the name of the MP. The Luxembourg *Chambre des Représentants* reported vote on paper and the French *Sénat* a ballot vote by the Senators in a ballot box. Similarly, the Polish *Senat* gave detailed information on its provisions, explaining that secret ballots were held using sealed voting cards placed in a box. In the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* during a secret ballot, parliamentary notaries acted as a vote-counting panel and votes were cast on stamped voting sheets placed in envelopes, by use of ballot boxes and polling booths. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* reported a secret vote by means of official ballots marked and ballot boxes. The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* referred to mostly black and white ball ballot, and less frequent paper written ballot. The Estonian *Riigikogu* referred to secret ballot in a written format, using ballot papers and voting booths. In the Lithuanian *Seimas* voting by secret ballot was conducted in certain cases foreseen in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure outlined in detail; in those cases, ballot papers were stamped and issued by the tellers' group. There was a secret voting booth and a ballot box in the premises where voting was held. In the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and *Tweede Kamer*, secret ballots were conducted in writing. The Slovak *Národná rada* mentioned that, in secret voting, a ballot was used through ballot papers distributed by the Verifiers of the National Council to each member. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* stated that election with voting slips was only used for nominal election; voting slips were distributed and then placed by the elector in the ballot box. The Croatian *Hrvatski sabor* referred to paper ballots prepared by the Secretary General and to ballot box or boxes. Similarly, the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* referred to paper ballots and the Belgian *Chambre des représentants* to voting cards to be deposited in an urn. In the Swedish *Riksdag*, secret ballots were used in the case of personal preference voting. The members were called up to hand their ballot paper to the Speaker. In the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, voting was organised by a specialised committee on voting; ballot papers were used. The Czech *Senát* referred to its rules in detail; secret ballot applied in certain specified cases and were conducted using officially printed and stamped ballot papers. According to the Standing Orders of the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, in specified cases where there was a secret ballot, this was held by closed ballots. Each MP received identical, white ballot papers and a sufficient number of blank ballot papers. In the Belgian *Sénat*, Senators received a voting ballot and placed it in a ballot box. The Irish *Dáil Éireann* referred to voting booths and votes counted. The European Parliament referred to Rule 180a of its Rules of Procedure whereby, in the case of appointments and following certain requests by Members, Members indicated their vote on ballot papers. The names of Members taking part in a secret ballot were recorded in the minutes of the relevant sitting.

The Finnish *Eduskunta* specified that the election of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Deputy Ombudsman and the Director of the National Audit Office was conducted by secret ballot; ballot paper was folded by the voters and placed in a sealed ballot box. The German *Bundestag* specified that secret ballots only applied in the case of the election of the Chancellor, the President and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the armed forces. MPs used a

voting booth in the plenary and checked a box on the ballot paper. In the UK *House of Lords*, secret ballots were used for certain types of election (e.g. of the Lord Speaker). In such cases, Members voted in person, at a designated polling station, or by post. The Alternative Vote system was used, whereby Members listed their preferences in numerical order. In the Latvian *Saeima*, only the President was elected by secret ballot held simultaneously by using ballot papers.

The Parliaments/Chambers using electronic voting explained their rules. The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* referred to secret ballot by electronic voting, but to ballot cards when voting related to individuals and elections. In the Italian *Camera dei deputati*, voting by secret ballot was normally carried out electronically. In case of failure of the electronic voting system, the President had two ballot boxes prepared and voters were given a small white ball and a small black ball, to be placed in the ballot boxes. Referring in detail to the Rules of Procedure of the Congress of Deputies, the Spanish *Cortes Generales* referred to a secret ballot held: i) by an electronic process recording the total outcome of the voting, but omitting the identity of voters, ii) by ballot papers when the election of persons was involved, when so decided by the Speaker and when that form of voting had been specified in the request for a secret ballot. According to the Rules of Procedure of the Senate, a secret nominal voting was made by ballot papers when it came to election of persons, and by white and black balls in cases of qualification of acts or when personal information was involved. The Romanian *Senat* referred to secret electronic vote, ballot paper and ballot with balls.

vi.   Electronic document management systems in Parliaments/Chambers

The vast majority of respondents (35 out of 39) did use an electronic document management system.

Parliaments/Chambers which did use such systems gave detailed information on their functioning and purpose.
- The German *Bundesrat* referred to "Eudisys" intended to keep the Länder Governments up-to-date on current EU legislative proposals and debates.
- The Polish *Sejm* referred to its Information System available through the Internet, which intended to collect, process and share data related to the activities of the *Sejm*, its organs and the Chancellery of the *Sejm*.
- The Danish *Folketing* said its system intended to make sure that documents were successfully stored in a common system, and not just on each employee's personal computer.
- The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* said it was used for circulating and archiving documents.
- The French *Sénat* said it was used to archive and put documents online.
- The Finnish *Eduskunta* stated that, in principle, all the dossiers on which the decision-making was based could be found in an electronic format. Parliamentary documents were no longer routinely distributed on paper, although they remained available.
- The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* reported that, since April 2017, parliamentary papers on related legislation (draft bills and other motions, proposal for amendments etc.) were submitted in electronic form via the so-called ParLex system.
- The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* referred to electronic system for the whole legislative process and to an electronic internal file management system on an administrative level.
- The electronic page of the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* was used to provide access to draft and existing legislation, press releases, organisation of the Chamber, voting, plenary meetings minutes and audio-video, meetings of the Standing Bureau, information on opinions on EU matters, information on the activities of the services of the General Secretariat, etc.
- In the Estonian *Riigikogu* the system was used to forward and coordinate different EU documents/bills/opinions of Committees; reports; sign documents, compile written minutes etc.

- In the German *Bundestag* it was used for the distribution of all kinds of EU documents (EuDoX - not open to the public). Distribution of minutes of the plenary, parliamentary requests, agendas of Committee sessions, etc. (DIP - open to the public).
- In the Lithuanian *Seimas*, the system was used for the registration and distribution of the documents, including EU documents.
- In the UK *House of Lords*, an electronic system was used for storing and archiving records. It would in coming months be replaced by a new system based on SharePoint.
- In the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, the system was used internally for archiving, agenda setting, notifications for members and staff. For external use, the existence of a public website was mentioned.
- In the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, the system allowed for the creation/archiving and retrieval of documents utilised in the conduct of parliamentary business.
- The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* reported that the system was used to record correspondence in and out, enabling it to be controlled and facilitating tracking.
- The Croatian *Hrvatski sabor* said the purpose was mainly to minimise the distribution and to archive printed documents.
- The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* referred to internal documentation, managing and distribution of tasks.
- The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* referred to its various systems used for specific purposes such as registering debates, bookkeeping, and subscriptions management.
- The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* reported that every document made public (national bills, EU proposals, reports, laws and regulations, etc.) was filed under its specific category in electronic format, and made available through the Senate's web site. All plenary and committee meetings and work could be paperless, but to facilitate the Senators, the main documents were still printed.
- In the Czech *Senát* the system was used for dissemination the Senate's prints and related information.
- In the Latvian *Saeima*, the main purpose was the rapid circulation of documents between the different departments and in the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* for administration purposes.
- The Belgian *Sénat* referred to a database based on a chronological system of legislative procedures and of the parliamentary documents linked to the dossiers.
- In the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, the system was used for Committee meeting documents.
- The Spanish *Cortes Generales* used various document management systems, the main ones being those programmed to process the parliamentary register, to manage the internal database or to distribute parliamentary documents to the bodies and parliamentary groups in both Chambers.
- The European Parliament referred to GEDA (*Gestion Électronique Documents Administratifs*), a tool that allowed searching, registering and sending electronically all Parliament's official correspondence and administrative documents. The intention was to replace GEDA with a new Electronic Records Management System.

The Polish *Senat* stated that an electronic document management system was to be introduced in January 2018 and was to be fully operational in January 2019.

vii.   Systems enabling paperless plenary and committee meetings in Parliaments/Chambers

An almost equal number of respondents, which amounted to slightly over half of them, used a system enabling paperless plenary meetings (20 out of 38) and a system enabling paperless committee meetings (20 out of 39). The remaining did not.

viii. Electronic platforms for communicating with other government departments in Parliaments/Chambers

More than half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (20 out of 38) used electronic platforms for communicating with other government departments.

Most of the respondents who did use such platforms gave more information regarding this means of communication. A few referred to their electronic document management systems outlined above (see point vi above).

In addition, other tools/platforms were mentioned:
- Email (Polish *Sejm*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, UK *House of Commons*, Czech *Senát*);
- websites (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*), a bespoke web-based system for parliamentary questions of (UK *House of Lords*)[9];
- IPEX (French *Sénat*);
- electronic platforms for exchange of information and documents (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*), for sending Parliamentary Questions (PQs) to the Departments, and to receive the replies to the PQs from those Departments (Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*), or only for transmission of confidential/secret documents from the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*), or for communication with other government departments through Draft Information system (DIS) and Bill Management System (EMS), via which different documents/draft acts were forwarded and coordination procedure took place (Estonian *Riigikogu*). In the case of the latter, in addition, the EU Affairs Committee was a member of the EU Coordination Body, which approved the positions on EU matters prior to their submission to the Government for discussion and decision-making and confirmed that the documents complied with the requirements. All relevant documents/bills etc. were found on a special electronic platform;
- a separate electronic platform used by the Government drafting service to send the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. Both Government legislation and Government amendments to legislation going through the parliament (Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*);
- E-Norm: e-administration of documents regarding draft laws during the legislative procedure (German *Bundestag*);
- Intranet of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs access to which was given to certain parliamentary officials (Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*) or shared databases (Czech *Senát*);
- X-Leges used to manage and certify every step in the formation and life of all legislative acts and regulations, linking together every Parliamentary and Governmental institution involved in the process (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*).

ix. Committees responsible for matters relating to digitalisation in Parliaments/Chambers

Most responding Parliaments/Chambers (34 out of 39) did not have a separate committee responsible for matters relating to digitalisation.

According to the information provided, in those Parliaments/Chambers where there was no separate committee responsible for matters relating to digitalisation, other committees or no committees were responsible as follows:

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[9] http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-questions-answers

Parliament/Chamber	Committee responsible for digitalisation and/or other comments
Austrian *Nationalrat* Austrian *Bundesrat*	Committee on Research, Innovation and Technology. Partly also Transport Committee and Committee for Constitutional Affairs
Belgian *Sénat*	No committee responsible. Digital issues were dealt with by civil servants.
Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*	Committee on Transport, Information Technology and Communications
Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*	Committee on Information, Computerisation and the Media
Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*	A team of MPs and parliament staff is tasked with the promotion of digitalisation of the Parliament's workflow supervised by the President of the House.
Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*	A commission on the functioning of the Office of the Chamber of Deputies
Czech *Senát*	There is no specific committee. It depends on the area of digitalisation (e.g. for healthcare it will be a different committee than for e-Government).
Dutch *Eerste Kamer*	Matters of digitalisation within the Senate are primarily dealt with by the Internal Committee (President and two Vice Presidents of the Senate).
Estonian *Riigikogu*	Economic Affairs Committee
Finnish *Eduskunta*	Transport and Communications Committee, although the issue necessarily involves all committees to a high degree.
French *Sénat*	Committee on Culture, Committee on Economic Affairs
Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*	Special Permanent Committee on Research and Technology
Hungarian *Országgyűlés*	Committee on Economics
Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas: Dáil Eireann* Irish *Seanad Eireann*	The Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and the Taoiseach has within its remit the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is responsible for the Public Service ICT Strategy, which deals with issues of digitalisation. No specific Committee has a responsibility solely for the digitalisation in the Houses of the Oireachtas. The issue would be relevant to the normal decision-making structures.
Italian *Camera dei deputati*	IX Committee on Transport and Telecommunications
Italian *Senato della Repubblica*	8th Standing Committee on public infrastructures and communication networks

Latvian *Saeima*	Economic, Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Policy Committee
Lithuanian *Seimas*	Committee on Economics
Polish *Senat*	Infrastructure Committee
Slovak *Národná rada*	Economic Affairs Committee
Spanish *Cortes Generales: Congreso de los Diputados* (lower Chamber)	Committees for Energy, Tourism and Digital Agenda both in the Congress of Deputies and the Senate
Spanish *Senado de España*	
Swedish *Riksdag*	Committee on Transport and Communications
UK *House of Commons*	Responsibility is shared between several committees, depending on context.
UK *House of Lords*	Within the responsibility of the House of Lords Services Committee.
European Parliament	The topic fell within the competence of multiple committees. The Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) was, according to the Rules of Procedure, the Committee responsible for "the identification and removal of potential obstacles to the implementation of the Single Market, including the Digital Single Market". The substantive aspects on the DSM under discussion in the current chapter fell under the competence of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), as relating to information technology and communications networks and services, etc.

x. Importance of digitalisation of the public sector to Parliaments/Chambers and the main challenges hindering further development and implementation of digitalisation in Member States

For most of the respondents (18 out of 31) and for NEOS of the Austrian *Nationalrat*, digitalisation of the public sector was very important. For 12 it was important; this also reflected the Austrian position, as well as the position of the Green Party of the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*. Only one considered such digitalisation somewhat important.

As regards the challenges in this domain, more than half of the respondents (22 out of 37), as well as the Austrian coalition in Parliament, considered data protection concerns as the main challenge hindering further development and implementation of digitalisation. Lack of resources[10] and traditions[11] were considered as challenges by almost a third (11 out of 36). Mistrust of digital solutions (eight out of 36) and lack of political will[12] (four out of 36) were thought to be challenges by a considerably smaller number of Parliaments/Chambers.

In addition to the above, among those Parliaments/Chambers, which had an official position to share, the Finnish *Eduskunta* reported that the Transport and Communications Committee had addressed those issues in a recent statement, but not in a way that prioritised some challenges over others. In its statement, the Committee emphasised, among others, the need to create a balanced regulatory

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[10] 'Lack of resources' was also pointed out by NEOS, Austrian *Nationalrat*.
[11] 'Traditions' reflected also the Austrian position.
[12] 'Lack of political will' was also pointed out by NEOS, Austrian *Nationalrat*.

framework and a level playing field, which sufficiently protected the consumers and other end-users, but which enhanced innovation and development at the same time. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* referred to bureaucracy, while the Czech *Senát* indicated problematic procurement rules, lack of expertise on the part of the administration, risk of embezzlement, unclear financial control rules, as well as a history of criminal charges for overpriced and unsatisfactory digitalisation projects, which resulted in fear of taking political responsibility for digitalisation projects.

The Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, though it had no formal position on this matter, stressed the provision of broadband services in rural areas, which remained a concern raised regularly.

Section B: Digital Single Market Strategy initiatives

Regarding discussions of the Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy, a majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (26 out of 38) had held debates on the subject either in the EU Affairs Committees or in other sectoral committees (22 respondents out of 38). Of those who provided further information, the Polish *Sejm* and the Spanish *Cortes Generales* both had held joint sessions on the DSMS, which were attended by Commissioner ANSIP. The Commissioner also attended sessions of Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* and the Belgian *Chambre des représentants.* The Swedish *Riksdag* reported that it had not debated the Strategy in its respective committee, but that the government provided regular updates to the Committee on Industry and Trade (ITRE) on issues that concerned the strategy and initiatives based on it. The Estonian *Riigikogu* had discussed the Strategy in Legal, Cultural, Economic, and also in EU Affairs Committees. The UK *House of Commons* reported that the European Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised all DSM legislative proposals, as well as a wide range of Communications from the Commission, which had often involved some degree of discussion. There had not, however, been a general discussion on the strategy as a whole in the Committee or in plenary.

The European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) had produced a number of own-initiative reports on the DSM throughout the current and past legislatures. The Committee also held expert exchanges and discussions on the DSM Strategy and related files.

Seventeen out of the 39 responding Parliaments/Chambers also said that they had adopted an official position, opinion or a resolution on the DSM Strategy. There was an overall positive reaction to the Strategy, with the majority of Parliaments/Chambers having welcomed its creation. Elaborating on this, the German *Bundesrat* highlighted the importance of audivisual, as well as journalistic content and the need to safeguard consumer rights. Consumer rights were also mentioned by the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and the Finnish *Eduskunta*; the former additionally called for the preservation of the link between the DSM and the traditional economic sectors, and the latter emphasised the need to create a technologically neutral regulatory platform.

Respect for copyright was echoed by a number of Parliaments/Chambers, amongst which were the French *Assemblée nationale,* the French *Sénat,* the Spanish *Cortes Generales* and the Portuguese *Assembleia da República.* The French *Sénat* further pointed out that the EU should not just be a large digital consumer space, but it must also become a producer and have an industrial policy for the digital economy.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* and the Estonian *Riigikogu* were of the opinion that the Strategy had the ability to maximise the growth potential of the digital economy and produce economic growth in general.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, as well as the Latvian *Saeima* both emphasised the importance of data security. The latter did so in connection with calling for the abolition of regulatory and non-regulatory barriers in the Member States' markets.

The Italian *Camera dei deputati* and the Czech *Senát* called for the promotion of public and private investment in digital infrastructure to develop ultra-broadband or ultra-fast internet. The latter also requested its government to pay substantially more attention to the development of digital public services.

The DSM resolution (2015/2147(INI)) jointly drafted by the European Parliament's IMCO Committee and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) asked for additional measures on the role of online platforms, in terms of trust and security in the digital world and in terms of ensuring that the consumer protection framework was fit for the digital age; it also asked the Commission to propose rules which boosted investment, competition and innovation.

When asked which of the DSM Strategy topics had been the most debated, the outcome was very even between the three topics. Twenty-one Parliaments/Chambers (out of 31 respondents) responded that creating the right environment for digital networks and services was the most debated topic for them. Providing better access for consumers and businesses to online goods was considered as most debated topic by 18 Parliaments/Chambers. Maximising the growth potential of the European digital economy and of its society had the same amount of support as the previous topic. In the Austrian *Nationalrat*, NEOS and the Green Party had diverging opinions *vis-à-vis* the national position. Both of the parties considered creating the right environment for digital networks and services most important. The Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, however, said that it had mainly focussed on copyright in the DSM and on certain aspects concerning contracts for the supply of digital content.

Parliaments/Chambers were also asked what they would consider as the main policy challenges for further development of digital initiatives in their countries. The majority (20 out of 28 respondents) agreed that costs and infrastructure were the main impediments to further development. Fifteen Parliaments/Chambers (as well as the Green Party in the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*) said that ensuring civil/social values and rights constituted a major challenge. Seven Parliaments/Chambers, as well as NEOS in the Austrian *Nationalrat*, considered job losses/displacements as the biggest hurdle for further development of digital initiatives.

As a general note on the section, the UK *House of Commons'* main engagement with the DSM Strategy had been through the legislative scrutiny work carried out by its European Scrutiny Committee. This scrutiny had increasingly focussed on the implications of DSM Strategy initiatives for the UK post-Brexit, i.e. to what extent, and on what terms, would UK businesses and consumers be able to benefit from the creation of an EU Single Market in digital goods and services?