The French Parliament and EU affairs

Introduction to France's parliamentary system

The role of the French Parliament has varied under successive French Republics. The Constitution of the Fifth Republic, adopted in 1958, was amended by referendum in 1962 to establish the direct election of the President by universal suffrage. This created a hybrid political regime with some presidential and some parliamentary characteristics, sometimes described as a 'semi-presidential regime' or a 'hyper-presidential' regime.¹

The government is responsible to Parliament, but contrary to classical parliamentary regimes, the President plays an important role. The President has the power to dissolve the National Assembly (Assemblée nationale). He or she appoints the Prime Minister, as well as – on the recommendation of the Prime Minister – the other members of the government.

This briefing is part of an EPRS series on national parliaments (NPs) and EU affairs. It aims to provide an overview of the way the NPs of EU Member States are structured and how they process, scrutinise and engage with EU legislation. It also provides information on relevant NP publications.

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Traditionally, the Prime Minister makes the government’s programme or a general policy statement an issue of a vote of confidence before the National Assembly. The latter can overthrow the government, but is largely subordinate to the executive – consisting of the President and the government placed under the authority of the Prime Minister. In periods of *cohabitation*, the National Assembly plays a greater role in supporting the Prime Minister, who in this specific configuration acts as leader of the majority.

Legislative powers are exercised by the two houses, who vote on laws, monitor government action and assess public policy. The National Assembly (*Assemblée nationale*) is elected for five years by direct universal suffrage. The indirectly elected Senate (*Sénat*) represents the ‘territorial communities of the Republic’ (Article 24 of the *Constitution*) and shares legislative power with the National Assembly. It embodies continuity, as it cannot be dissolved and half of its Members are renewed every three years. However, in cases of disagreement, the National Assembly has the final say.

**The French Parliament's role and organisation in EU affairs**

A specific section on the European Union (Title XV) was added to the French Constitution in 1992, to ensure the compatibility of the Constitution with the Maastricht Treaty. This title was subsequently revised several times, especially in relation to the adoption of new EU Treaties. It provides the framework for French participation in the European integration process, including by specifying the role played by the two houses of Parliament.

Article 88-4 of the Constitution stipulates that the government must send proposals from EU institutions to both houses as soon as they have been transmitted to the Council of the European Union. Since a 1999 revision, resolutions can be adopted on these texts, as well as on any document issued by an EU institution. Since a further revision in 2008, this same article also provides for the existence of a committee on European affairs (EAC) in both assemblies.

**The National Assembly and its European Affairs Committee**

Even though the EAC is mentioned in the Constitution, it is not one of the National Assembly’s eight standing committees. It consists of 48 members (Article 151-1 of the Assembly’s *rules of procedure*), and its composition should correspond with a proportional representation of political parties and a balanced representation of standing committees. Franco-German member Sabine Thillaye (Modem, Renew) has chaired the EAC since the outset of the current term in June 2017. French Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are allowed to attend its meetings in an advisory capacity, and MEPs of other nationalities can also be invited.

Working groups focus on specific topics of particular importance, such as the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, the posting of workers, and the EU *multiannual financial framework* (MFF). They include representatives of each of the political groups. Such working groups can also be established between the EAC and standing committees to consider the European dimension of texts under negotiation (for example on agricultural policy or energy policy).

The EAC meets once or twice per week, usually on Thursday mornings. It held 214 working meetings between the beginning of the current legislative term (June 2017) and the end of October 2021. By comparison, 353 meetings were held during the previous legislative term. The current average is around 50 meetings per year, compared to more than 70 for the previous term. More details on EAC activity are provided in Figure 1.

The National Assembly’s EAC holds regular meetings with other committees and sometimes joint meetings with the Senate EAC. Joint meetings are also organised with European affairs committees from other EU countries – with Germany, in the ‘Weimar format’ (France, Germany, Poland) or in the ‘Montecitorio’ format (France, Germany, Italy). A Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly was also established on 25 March 2019 – the anniversary of the Treaty of Rome – (see Box 1).
The National Assembly's role on European issues focuses on informing and alerting the government to potentially sensitive or problematic matters, typically through formal or informal hearings and meetings. According to the current chair of the EAC, the role of this committee is to monitor EU issues and help the National Assembly take a position on the most important European files.

The EAC can, on request or at its own initiative, discuss any EU-related project or proposal and express comments and inform any other committee about the EU dimension of draft domestic legislation.

The EAC follows the work of EU institutions, monitors EU legislation and informs members of the National Assembly in this regard. It scrutinises French European policy, and develops inter-parliamentary cooperation. Other National Assembly committees are also responsible for the scrutiny of EU proposals. In cases where a project involving a European treaty has to be examined (such as concerning the accession of a new Member State), the Committee for Foreign Affairs takes the lead. A secretariat of around 14 people, part of the Directorate for European, international and defence affairs, supports the EAC's work.

The Senate and its European Affairs Committee

Like the members of the National Assembly, senators are members of one, and only one, of the Senate's seven standing committees. Members of the Senate's EAC are appointed following the nomination of members of standing committees. The Senate's EAC counts 41 members (Article 73bis of the Senate's rules of procedure), with a composition ensuring proportional representation of political groups and a balanced representation of standing committees. It is chaired by Jean-François Rapin (LR, EPP) since the last 'renewal' of members in October 2020.

Working or monitoring groups are created to focus on some specific or horizontal topics. A working group on regional cohesion was created jointly with the Committee on Finances and the Committee on
Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development. Two further examples, established with the Committee on Economic Affairs, focus on reform of common agricultural policy and EU industrial strategy.

The Senate EAC also usually meets once, sometimes twice, per week, and held 189 meetings between October 2017 and the end of October 2021. It occasionally holds joint meetings with the National Assembly’s EAC, as well as with other Senate committees, such as on 26 November 2020, for example, when a joint hearing of the Minister of Agriculture and Food took place with the EAC and the Committees for Economic Affairs of both houses. It also sometimes meets with other Parliaments’ committees, and MEPs may be invited to attend its meetings. A joint meeting with the National Assembly’s EAC and the French MEPs took place, for example, on 26 February 2020, to discuss the 2021-27 MFF. More details about the Senate EAC’s activities are provided in Figure 2.

The EAC is in charge of ‘informing members about EU issues and checking the activities of the European Union’. This information and scrutiny work can lead to the adoption of ‘European resolutions’ (Article 88-4 of the Constitution). A proposal for a European resolution can originate either from the EAC or any member of the Senate. The EAC chair can designate a representative to participate in the examination of a draft European legislative act or any document issued by the EU institutions. A secretariat of around 16 people supports the EAC’s work.

### Engagement with the European Union

#### Debates on EU affairs

In 2018, a National Assembly information report noted that the French Parliament is ‘very discreet’ on European issues. Despite institutional reforms, new rights obtained and resources invested, the Assembly and the Senate remain, according to the academic literature, ‘marginal players on the European stage in both the creation and debate of European public policies’.

An analysis of National Assembly EU affairs debates in 2002-2010 shows that activity was fairly low, especially in comparison with the German Bundestag. The focus is largely on ‘high politics’, while ‘normal’ issues are debated infrequently. Question times with the government on European issues were enhanced in 2002, with one session per month, starting with a question from each political group on a European topic. This practice was dropped in 2007, but later reintroduced between 2013 and 2017. In the Senate, oral questions with debate were sometimes organised on European issues, but this practice was abolished in 2019.

A specific stipulation in the National Assembly’s rules of procedure (Article 48-8) exists to ensure the discussion of European issues. One week per month is dedicated to oversight and control by opposition and minority groups.
Plenary debates are now held regularly in the National Assembly before European Council meetings, albeit not systematically. In the Senate, such debates take place before each formal European Council meeting. This was the case in March, June, October, and December 2021. After the meetings, the Secretary of State for European Affairs is generally heard by the EACs of both houses.

Indeed, both houses frequently organise EU-related hearings, mainly of the Secretary of State for European Affairs, as well as with other actors. The National Assembly’s EAC organised 23 hearings between August 2020 and July 2021, including eight hearings with French ministers and four with European Commissioners. Others heard were parliamentarians, ambassadors, EU personalities and civil society representatives. During the 2019-20 legislative year, the Senate’s EAC spent almost 50 hours in hearings, double the time spent during previous years. Since October 2020, the Senate’s EAC organised 27 hearings, most of them with French ministers (7) and EU Commissioners (5), as well as with other EU personalities (Michel Barnier, Gilles de Kerchove, Laura Kövesi and several MEPs).

National Assembly plenary debates on parliamentary resolutions are quite rare. Between 1994 and 2014, an average of 2.6 European resolutions per year were debated in the Assembly. However, only three resolutions have so far been examined in public session since the beginning of the current legislative term in 2017 (compared with 11 resolutions in the previous term). The number of Senate public sessions on European debates varies greatly from one year to another (see Senate list).

Contributions to EU policy

Since 2006, when José Manuel Barroso, then President of the European Commission, first invited national parliaments to react to EU legislative proposals, the two houses of the French Parliament have been relatively active contributors to political dialogue with the EU institutions. However, the Senate has profiled itself as a more active player in EU affairs than the National Assembly. The explanation for this difference might lie in the possibility that this involvement is a way ‘to enhance its own role in the French parliamentary system’.8

Over the last five years, the National Assembly has issued an average of six contributions per year in the framework of informal political dialogue (Protocol 1), while the Senate contributes slightly more than twice as many. Concerning contributions in the framework of the subsidiarity procedure (Protocol 2), which could not be registered as reasoned opinions, both houses have been almost equally active in total, but the National Assembly’s activity has varied greatly. After an electoral year with no contributions, a high number of contributions (39) were made during the first year of the new legislative term. However, this number subsequently steadily and dramatically decreased.

Contributions can be of varying nature: the National Assembly usually issues ‘European resolutions’, while the Senate issues ‘political opinions’. However, the nature of these documents is similar and corresponds to what is envisaged under Article 88-4 of the Constitution. Other types of documents issued include ‘conclusions’ or ‘communications’ (by oral presentation) from the EAC President or a special rapporteur.

Both assemblies also regularly publish ‘information reports’, which can be about any document issued by the EU institutions. These can lead to the proposal of a resolution. In 2021, for example, the Senate adopted reports on the proposed Digital Markets Act, on the rule of law in the EU, or on the follow-up given to European resolutions, motivated and political opinions. The National Assembly has recently published reports on the coverage of EU issues in the media, on the transposition methods of European directives and on the social protection of platform workers.

Each year, in theory, the Senate adopts an information report on the European Commission’s annual work programme (CWP), written by the President and Vice-President of the EAC (see the 2019 CWP report). This is usually followed by a political opinion, which is then sent to the EU institutions (see the
2021 CWP opinion). The National Assembly has adopted EAC conclusions on the CWP in the past, but has not done so since the 2016 CWP.

Interactions with the EU

The French Parliament's Brussels liaison office

The Senate has had a permanent administrative unit in Brussels to engage directly with all the EU institutions since 1999. Staffed by two people, it has both an office within the European Parliament and in France’s permanent representation to the EU. Its role is to 'collect information on European proposals and promote all the work done by the Senate to European interlocutors, especially European resolutions or opinions given in the framework of the political dialogue'. The office is also in charge of providing technical support for the missions of French Senate members to the EU institutions.

The National Assembly created its Brussels liaison office in 2003, also located both within the European Parliament and France's permanent representation to the EU. Similar to the Senate office, it helps obtain information on EU issues, establish direct relations with EU institutions and other national parliaments, and provide support for French Assembly members' visits to Brussels or Strasbourg. It is currently staffed by the representative of the National Assembly to the EU, his assistant, and an additional clerk for the French EU Council presidency. Several informal reports adopted by the EAC have underlined that the staff complement could be increased.

Members' visits to, and meetings with, EU actors

Exchanges between French parliamentarians and MEPs have improved over time, according to academic literature, with the European Parliament currently well respected and cooperation developed with MEPs. National Assembly members or officials meet with their European Parliament colleagues frequently. Between June 2017 and November 2021, 211 missions of Members of the National Assembly have been organised by its liaison office. Almost all of them implied exchanges with MEPs and members of the European Commission. Only a small proportion of these visits were organised in cooperation with the secretariat of the European Parliament (6 in 2020, 9 in 2019, 19 in 2018, and 18 in 2017). Since 2017, the European Parliament has not been involved in the organisation of visits from members or officials of the Senate. Each year, the European Commission records some meetings between its members and the National Assembly (9 in 2020, 1 in 2019, 15 in 2018, and 7 in 2017) and the Senate (9 in 2020, 9 in 2018, and 2 in 2017).

Interestingly, the majority of National Assembly missions originates from the standing committees – rather than the EAC – with members keen on being informed about the EU context in the process of passing a bill, information missions or inquiry committees. Just one or two French members take part in most visits, with a similar number of MEPs; however, larger delegations also sometimes visit the EU institutions. This was the case when the Bureau of the EAC visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg in September 2018 and 2019, for example, during the State of the Union debate, and a joint meeting of the EAC members of the National Assembly and the German Bundestag took place in Brussels in July 2018. Cooperation is particularly frequent with French MEPs. Despite the possibility for MEPs to attend EAC meetings, this usually only happens when they are invited for a hearing, but this has recently changed with the development of videoconferencing.

Another possibility for exchange between national and European parliamentarians is provided by the inter-parliamentary meetings organised by European Parliament committees and Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC) meetings. An inter-parliamentary forum, enshrined in Protocol 1 to the EU Treaties, COSAC gathers representatives of national parliaments' European affairs committees and MEPs twice a year. These meetings provide opportunities to exchange information and good practice, and to strengthen cooperation between EU affairs committees, national parliaments and the European Parliament. The COSAC presidency is linked to the order of rotating Council presidencies and will therefore be in the hands of the French Parliament from 1 January 2022 for six months. The next COSAC meetings are scheduled to take place in Paris on 13 and 14 January and from 3 to 5 March 2022. Thematic inter-parliamentary conferences are also planned: on space and digital (6 and 7 February), on Common Foreign and
Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (24 and 25 February), on strategic economic autonomy (13 and 14 March), on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU (15 and 16 March), on the Green Deal, CAP and regional funds (20 and 21 March), on Europol (28 March), and on migration (15 and 16 May).

A dedicated website provides information on the parliamentary dimension of the French EU Council Presidency. A report reflecting on the French Council Presidency was presented by Laetitia Saint-Paul, Vice-President of the National Assembly, in October 2021.

**Scrubinising EU affairs**

French government accountability to Parliament and the latter’s role to ‘monitor the action of the government’ and ‘assess public policies’ are clearly defined in Articles 20 and 24 of the Constitution. Both houses have the right to examine European matters and pass European resolutions (Article 88-4), or issue reasoned opinions on the respect of the principle of subsidiarity (Article 88-6). The European resolutions allow a debate and, when adopted, express the position of the house, but they have no legal effect and are not a binding mandate for the government. The EACs are the heart of parliamentary scrutiny for EU affairs in both houses, even if other committees also deal with EU affairs.

The scrutiny of EU affairs exercised by the French Parliament is relatively weak in comparison to other national parliaments, according to the academic literature. This is due to limited systematic follow-up of the government’s actions in the negotiations in the Council, as well as the fragmentation of policy cycle scrutiny between the EACs and sectoral committees. Another reason is that the National Assembly’s parliamentary majority tries to avoid weakening the government, thereby exercising a ‘shadow control’. Conversely, because it often has a different political majority to the National Assembly, the Senate is more willing to act as a possible government ‘watchdog’.

A distinctive feature is that both houses tend to use their scrutiny instruments to project their preferences to the EU level, instead of focusing on their national government. The French oversight procedure is indeed ‘dedicated to the scrutiny of draft European texts, rather than the position of the government on these texts’.

**The National Assembly**

Regular debates are held before European Council meetings and the Secretary of State for European Affairs is questioned by the EAC after every European Council meeting. Members of Parliament can also question the Prime Minister and ministers – but not the President – either in writing or orally. Other ministers may be heard, but there is no systematic ex-ante or ex-post scrutiny of Council meetings.

The government supports the National Assembly’s scrutiny work by sending ‘explanatory memoranda’ outlining its position on selected EU proposals and ‘government briefs’ before taking a position in the Council. Furthermore, since an organic law of 2009, government bills have to be accompanied by an impact study laying down how the bill fits into European law in detail and specifying the mechanisms envisaged for its application. The economic, financial, social and environmental consequences should be examined, as well as the effects on public employment. Some bills however are not subject to this rule. The French Parliament engages in small-scale, mostly scrutiny-related, impact assessment work. For example, the National Assembly conducts in-depth appraisal of the government’s impact assessment. It is also one of the few EU national parliament chambers that can scrutinise the European Commission’s impact assessments, following a request from a committee or a member.

A Committee for the Assessment and Monitoring of Public Policies (Comité d’évaluation et de contrôle des politiques publiques) has been established in the National Assembly. It evaluates cross-cutting topics, can express its opinion on the above-mentioned impact studies, and coordinates the work of information missions. Such information missions can be created by the Assembly’s Conference of Presidents on the basis of a proposal by the President of the Assembly. They have to be temporary, usually concern sensitive or current topics, and lead to an information report. Recent EU-related
examples are the missions on national and European digital sovereignty, on the monitoring of Brexit negotiations and on European external action.

Inquiry committees provide a further major tool of control. They have important prerogatives, but their creation and role are strictly regulated by Articles 137 to 144 of the Assembly’s rules of procedure. They rarely concern European issues; however, in 2021, an inquiry committee was established on migration.

Study groups can be established following a request from members and after Bureau approval. Their role is to ensure legal and technical observation of topics which are too specialised for standing committees. Among their various activities are hearings of experts and well-known figures, as well as participation in events. Numerous study groups exist, with some of them dedicated to EU issues or having an important place on the EU agenda, such as the status of mobile workers, development aid, green or circular economy, and cybersecurity and digital sovereignty.

The EAC’s scrutiny is based mostly on documents, and ‘concentrates on gathering information and alerting the government to potentially politically sensitive issues before they are decided upon in the Council’. The EAC reviews around 1,500 documents received from EU authorities per year. It can carry out this scrutiny throughout the whole EU legislative process.

Following scrutiny of an EU text, the EAC can adopt positions, conclusions (a political text expressing the EAC’s point of view) or, when it deems necessary, table a draft resolution to be adopted by the National Assembly. In the perspective of adopting such texts, it uses communications or information reports. Even though the EAC has a monopoly on the preparatory examination of European resolutions, proposals for resolutions are then sent to the sectoral committee concerned by the content, which can either adopt them explicitly or tacitly – if the sectoral committee does not react within a month.

Like all other EU Member State national parliaments, the National Assembly can raise an objection in the form of a reasoned opinion, if it considers that an EU proposal does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity (Protocol 2 to the EU Treaties). However, this possibility is very rarely used. The last occasion related to the common agricultural policy and was issued in September 2018.

The Senate

The Senate examines the work of the government using different methods (questioning ministers, fact-finding missions, hearings and debates), that take place either in plenary sessions or committees and delegations. The Senate can establish inquiry committees or information missions.

The Senate holds plenary debates in advance of formal European Council meetings and the EAC also hears the Secretary of State for European Affairs after the meetings, but there is no systematic ex-ante or ex-post scrutiny of Council meetings.

The Senate EAC is entrusted with the scrutiny of all EU legislative drafts passed to it. The Senate website lists all the texts submitted by the government to the Senate since 1992, and a database allows consultation of the opinions expressed by the EAC and the result of the subsidiarity checks. The EAC systematically reviews European texts before they are adopted by the EU institutions and classifies the different texts by level of importance. Texts considered quite important – politically or economically – lead to the adoption of conclusions sent to the government, or to a draft resolution to be debated in the relevant committee or in plenary session.

The Senate EAC makes substantial use of European resolutions as an instrument to control and interact with the government on European issues. They are ‘increasingly seen by Senators as a ‘routine procedure’ to communicate with the government’ on EU affairs, and the Senate describes them as ‘a political act, that tends to guide government’s action in one or the other direction’.
process to adopt European resolutions is described in Article 73 quater and quinquies of the Senate rules of procedure.

Since 2011, a working group on subsidiarity composed of one representative per party group exists within the EAC. The Senate is more active than the National Assembly regarding subsidiarity checks. Since 2017, it has issued 16 reasoned opinions, while the lower house has only issued three.

Table 1 – The Senate procedure for parliamentary scrutiny of the subsidiarity principle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Body responsible</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>EAC Secretariat</td>
<td>Reception of the legislative acts transmitted by the European institutions, pursuant to Article 4 of Protocol No 2 to the EU Treaties. Implementation of Article 88-6 of the Constitution of the French Republic and Article 73 octies of the Senate Rules of Procedure. All senators are informed by email of the reception of the legislative acts, in order to allow them to propose their own draft reasoned opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within approximately 14 days</td>
<td>EAC Subsidiary Working Group</td>
<td>The Working Group scrutinises every text received under Article 4 of Protocol No 2. When it deems that a text might infringe the principle of subsidiarity, it nominates a rapporteur to scrutinise the text further.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or two weeks later</td>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>The rapporteur presents the results of their scrutiny and possibly a draft reasoned opinion to the members of the EAC. After debate, the EAC rejects or adopts the (possibly amended) draft reasoned opinion. When a senator proposes their own draft reasoned opinion, the EAC, after scrutiny, rejects or adopts it, possibly amended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within approximately four weeks</td>
<td>Standing committee</td>
<td>If adopted by the EAC, the draft reasoned opinion is then sent to the standing committee concerned by the subject matter. On the basis of the scrutiny of its rapporteur, the committee may reject or adopt the draft resolution, amended if necessary. The standing committee may also decide not to intervene. In that case, the draft reasoned opinion of the EAC is considered adopted by the standing committee at the end of the eight-week period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of the procedure</td>
<td>President of the French Senate</td>
<td>After scrutiny by the competent committee, the draft reasoned opinion becomes a final reasoned opinion, signed by the President of the French Senate and sent to the European institutions (Commission, Council, Parliament). At every stage of the procedure, the president of any political group in the Senate is entitled to request a debate in plenary, if there is enough time left to comply with the mandatory eight-week period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPEX.

Implementing EU legislation

The French government has priority in setting the agenda for both the National Assembly and the Senate, even if the agenda has been shared since 2008. Around three-quarters of the laws passed are initiated by the government (74% since the beginning of this term, 75% under the previous one). The houses can take the initiative in tabling bills and use this right frequently – however, very few of these are adopted. Once a bill has been tabled, members of both houses act as legislators, discussing the text in turn and voting to reach an agreement (see details of the French legislative process).

The French Parliament is theoretically in charge of transposing EU directives into national law, and the Prime Minister has to ‘ensure the implementation of legislation’ (Article 21 of the Constitution). Under the authority of the Prime Minister, the Secretariat General for European Affairs (SGAE) acts as inter-ministerial coordinator for European affairs. It presents itself as a ‘unique source of expertise on European affairs in France’ and has a department dedicated to the European Parliament and the French Parliament. The SGAE consults and informs the Parliament, and has developed relations with
local governments and civil society. Among its various tasks are to oversee the transposition of EU directives into domestic law, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the government.

An information report on the methods of transposition of European directives, presented in the National Assembly in 2021, observed that in 86% of cases between 2002 and 2018, transposition was carried out through executive acts, instead of through the legislative process. It concluded that the French Parliament was involved at a very late stage and only marginally, and made several proposals to further improve the quality of France's transposition of EU directives and its Parliament's involvement.

Follow-up on the implementation of laws is also one of the French Parliament's roles. The aim is to check the implementation of the laws passed and to influence their application in practice. Implementation reports on legislation requiring the publication of rules of a regulatory nature are presented before standing committees. However, the National Assembly does not evaluate existing EU legislation. In this regard, it considers that the European Commission evaluation reports on the implementation of EU laws are insufficient as tools to scrutinise the French government, and that parliaments should have access to additional information. By contrast to the National Assembly, the Senate considers that it carries out evaluation of existing EU legislation and discusses related reports. However, the Senate has similar tools to the National Assembly to monitor or scrutinise the government on the implementation of EU law.

French Parliament publications on EU policy

Research capabilities on EU affairs

Neither the National Assembly nor the Senate have a research service. The study and documentation department of the National Assembly was abolished in 2006. A Division for European studies and comparative law (Division des études européennes et du droit comparé) had been established in the EAC secretariat. A Division for international parliamentary assemblies and multilateral issues (Division des assemblées parlementaires internationales et des questions multilatérales) is today responsible for studies on comparative law and documentation. In the Senate, a Division for comparative legislation (Division de législation comparée) carries out research in comparative law.

A specific expertise and assessment body, the Parliamentary Office for Scientific and Technological Assessment (Office parlementaire d'évaluation des choix scientifiques) deals with issues linked to the development of scientific knowledge and new technologies. This joint body, made up of an equal number of members from both houses, acts as an intermediary between politics and research and is supported by a scientific council made up of 24 nominated experts. It publishes reports on a wide range of subjects.

Documents produced by the French Parliament on EU affairs

National Assembly documents on EU affairs

The National Assembly publishes a verbatim report of its debates in the Journal Officiel, with minutes available a few hours after the end of each session.

Table 2 – A selection of publicly available documents produced by the National Assembly in relation to EU affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>Minutes of EAC meetings.</td>
<td>212 (since June 2017)</td>
<td>Minutes of meeting No 212, November 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information reports</td>
<td>In-depth reports on the activities of the EU, written by one or more members acting as rapporteur(s). Often based on visits and hearings, they inform the National Assembly and can also include proposals.</td>
<td>2021: 13 2020: 13 2019: 13 2018: 21 2017: 3</td>
<td>Rule of law during public health emergencies, October 2021.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News notes</th>
<th>Short factual notes on topics in European news.</th>
<th>19 (started in March 2020)</th>
<th>Interim assessment of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU, March 2021.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>Informative publications by the Brussels liaison office regarding European activities (including meetings, hearings, reports) and EU news (including missions)</td>
<td>2-3/year and monthly</td>
<td>Lettre européenne de l’Assemblée Nationale, October 2021. Lettre européenne, Novembre 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity reports</td>
<td>Information and data about discussion of EU affairs in EAC.</td>
<td>Every year</td>
<td>Activity report on EAC work (August 2020-July 2021), November 2021.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Senate documents on EU affairs

The Senate publishes summaries of its debates within two hours, and the verbatim record of its meetings in the Journal Officiel 24 to 36 hours afterwards.

Table 3 – A selection of publicly available documents produced by the Senate in relation to EU affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Published</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>Minutes of EAC meetings.</td>
<td>193 (since October 2017)</td>
<td>Minutes of 4 November 2021 meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News notes</td>
<td>Short factual notes about the consequences of EU-related topics.</td>
<td>Usually 2 per year</td>
<td>Mandatory vaccination and sanitary pass, July 2021.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MAIN REFERENCES


ENDNOTES


2. ‘Cohabitation’ describes a period where the President of the Republic and the majority of the Assemblée nationale – and by extension the Prime Minister – are from different political parties and are forced to co-exist.

3. According to Article 43 of the Constitution, the number of standing committees shall not exceed eight in each house.


10. Ibid., p. 172.


15. Ibid., p. 179.

16. According to Article 48 of the Constitution, the French government has agenda-setting prerogative in half of the Parliament’s sittings. Each house determines the agenda one week out of four. Opposition or minority groups determine the agenda for one day of sitting per month.

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