



# *Parliamentary Democracy in Action*

Comparing the EP and five national parliaments

US Congress

German Bundestag

French Assemblée Nationale

Italian Camera dei Deputati

UK House of Commons

**EDITOR**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE**

Eschel Alpermann, Head of Unit  
Annamaria Forgacs, Administrator  
Strategy and Innovation Unit  
European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

Special thanks for 'Plenary Reform and Agenda-setting in the EP' to:  
Ana-Iuliana Postu, Administrator  
Directorate for the Plenary  
Directorate-General for the Presidency

**LANGUAGE VERSIONS**

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in September 2021  
Brussels, © European Union, 2021  
Cover illustration: © vector\_master / Adobe Stock

**DISCLAIMER**

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

PE 698.833  
ISBN: 978-92-846-8788-6  
DOI:10.2861/502048  
CAT: QA-08-21-377-EN-N



# PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN ACTION:

Comparing the EP and five national parliaments

US Congress

German Bundestag

French Assemblée Nationale

Italian Camera dei Deputati

UK House of Commons

Increasing impact and effectiveness



# CONTENTS

<b>PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SYSTEMS.....	6
BUDGETARY POWERS.....	7
SUPERVISORY AND SCRUTINY POWERS .....	7
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.....	8
OUTREACH CAPACITY.....	9
<b>PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....</b>	<b>10</b>
STRUCTURE OF THE PLENARY AGENDA.....	10
STRATEGIC PROGRAMMING.....	12
SETTING PARLIAMENTS' PRIORITIES.....	14
CONTENT OF THE PLENARY AGENDA.....	15
CONDUCT OF PLENARY DEBATES.....	17
VOTING PROCEDURES AND TREATMENT OF AMENDMENTS.....	21
QUESTION TIME.....	22
WRITTEN QUESTIONS.....	24
SEATING ORDER.....	26
MEETINGS IN PARALLEL TO PLENARY SESSIONS.....	27
PARLIAMENTS' CALENDARS.....	28
<b>STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....</b>	<b>29</b>
ORGANISATION OF HEARINGS.....	29
SCRUTINY AND CONTROL POWERS.....	31
APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES .....	33
TRANSPARENCY OF LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES .....	35
RESOLVING CONFLICTS OF COMPETENCE BETWEEN COMMITTEES.....	37
CHANGES TO COMMITTEE COMPETENCES AND STRUCTURES IN RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT CRISIS SITUATION.....	38
<b>ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....</b>	<b>39</b>
RELATIONS WITH THE EXECUTIVE.....	39
INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS.....	40
DIPLOMACY ON HUMAN RIGHTS.....	42
DEMOCRACY SUPPORT.....	43
MEDIATION OF FOREIGN CONFLICTS .....	44
HIGH-LEVEL VISITS BY FOREIGN DIGNITARIES .....	44
MULTILATERAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY FORA.....	45
<b>RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....</b>	<b>47</b>
PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF PARLIAMENTS.....	47
NEW PATTERNS IN RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA IN RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT CRISIS.....	48
FIGHTING DISINFORMATION AND HATE SPEECH .....	49
SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES.....	50
HYBRID EVENTS .....	51
DIGITAL OFFER TO VISITORS.....	52
MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES ON OFFICIAL PARLIAMENTARY WEBSITES.....	53
<b>COMPARATIVE STUDIES.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>US CONGRESS.....</b>	<b>57</b>
1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	60
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	97
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....	116
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	129

<b>GERMAN BUNDESTAG.....</b>	<b>141</b>
1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	144
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	163
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....	180
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	194
<b>UK HOUSE OF COMMONS .....</b>	<b>207</b>
1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	210
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	228
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....	245
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	257
<b>ITALIAN CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI.....</b>	<b>269</b>
1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	272
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	298
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....	316
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	328
<b>FRENCH ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE.....</b>	<b>341</b>
MAIN FINDINGS.....	344
1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	344
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	371
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....	390
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	407

## Parliamentary Democracy in Action: Summary of findings

This study is the latest edition in a series of comparative studies, undertaken in recent years by the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), to compare and contrast features of the work of the European Parliament with those of five national parliaments. This latest edition concentrates on some of the aspects discussed in the EP President's Focus Group exercise, which is currently considering ways to modernise and improve the Parliament's way of working on several fronts.

The two earlier editions of 'Parliamentary Democracy in Action' were produced in 2012 and 2016, and are partially replicated in here. They focussed on the budgetary and administrative aspects of the support given to Members individually and collectively, in the context of the work of the Parliament's (then) Joint Working Group of the Bureau and the Committee on Budgets on 'budgetary priorities within the Parliament's own sphere of activity'.

The original study was intended to measure how advanced the European Parliament was, by comparison to other parliaments, in providing the kind of comprehensive administrative support that would enable it to build a truly transcontinental democracy. Based on the original study, the EP adopted a number of changes to improve some of its services and activities, including the creation of EPRS; however, it did not address the issues now being considered in the Focus Group process, notably the organisation of plenary sessions, the exercise and protection of parliaments' prerogatives, parliamentary diplomacy and/or the communication capacity of parliaments. This present study seeks to address these areas, with the aim of identifying where best practice exists and where there might still be room for improvement.

This study analyses and compares the above-mentioned dimensions of the work of the EP with those of four national parliaments in Europe - the German Bundestag, the Italian Camera dei Deputati (Chamber of Deputies), the French Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly) and the UK House of Commons. A fifth comparison goes beyond Europe, looking at the respective arrangements in what are in effect the world's two most influential free-standing parliamentary institutions – the European Parliament and the US Congress – and, in particular, the lower chamber of the latter, the US House of Representatives.

The main findings of the 2016 study in respect of 'basic differences', 'budgetary powers', 'supervisory and scrutiny powers', 'international relations' and 'outreach capacity' are 'revisited' in the introduction to this new edition, since the research has shown that relatively little has changed in terms of the institutional setting of each parliament. Conversely, the new areas included in this comparison cover, as mentioned above, 'plenary reform and agenda-setting', 'strengthening parliamentary prerogatives', 'enhancing parliamentary diplomacy', and 'relations with citizens / communicating effectively'.

The two charts that follow (on pages 4 and 5) provide an overall assessment of the degree of support provided by the permanent administrations of the various parliaments to their members, individually and collectively. The first chart shows the situation as it was assessed to be in 2014; the second updates this to 2021, including a number of new dimensions relevant to the current Focus Groups exercise.

## Parliamentary services for Members compared - Situation in 2014

						
<b>LANGUAGE SERVICES</b>						
Translation						★
Interpretation						★
<b>TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (COLLECTIVE)</b>						
Security					★	
Members' office space					★	
Meeting facilities		★				
IT hardware				★		
IT software						★
Conference services						★
<b>TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (INDIVIDUAL)</b>						
Training						
Financial services			★			
Travel service			★			
Catering and canteens			★			
Local support to Members					★	
Car service			★			
Crèches						★
Medical service					★	
<b>KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT</b>						
Library services					★	
Research services					★	
Scrutiny of executive					★	
<b>POLITICAL PROCESS</b>						
Committee support					★	
Personal assistants					★	
Political group support						★
Interparliamentary delegations						★
Democracy support						★
Plenary tools						★
Legal and legal-linguistic support						★
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>						
TV or radio					★	
Press (including online)						★
Offer to visitors						★
Social media						★
Audiovisual facilities						★



## Parliamentary services for Members compared - Situation in 2021

							Remarks on EP situation
<b>LANGUAGE SERVICES</b>							
Translation	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	★	Biggest and widest language regime.
Interpretation	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	★	Biggest and widest language regime.
<b>TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (COLLECTIVE)</b>							
Physical security	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Improved passive security measures. Fewer armed guards than US.
Cybersecurity	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	★	Yellow	Highest spending in Europe on cybersecurity.
Members' office space	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	★	Green	Second best to US: 1+2 office in Brussels. 1+1 office in Strasbourg.
Meeting facilities	Yellow	★	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	MEPs can book meeting rooms via political groups and special requests.
IT hardware	Yellow	Green	Red	Green	Red	Green	Provision and maintenance of hardware as in FR and UK.
IT software	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	★	Interactio. Remote voting solutions.
Conference services	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red	Green	★	Cultural events and exhibitions.
<b>TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (INDIVIDUAL)</b>							
Training	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Most comprehensive training offer.
Financial services	Yellow	Green	★	Yellow	Yellow	Green	EP and NPs quite similar.
Travel service	Yellow	Green	★	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Most favourable provisions in Italy.
Catering and canteens	Green	Yellow	★	Yellow	Green	Green	No subsidies. Wide range of providers.
Local support to Members	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	★	Green	Smaller local staff/allowance than US.
Car service	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	★	Biggest car fleet. Internal drivers.
Crèches	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	Red	★	Most places for children.
Medical service	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	★	Green	Similar number of medical staff as US.
<b>KNOWLEDGE SUPPORT</b>							
Library services	Red	Green	Green	Yellow	★	Green	Greatly extended digital library offer.
Research services	Red	Green	Green	Yellow	★	Green	EPRS now second largest after CRS.
Scrutiny of executive	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	★	Green	No subpoena authority as in US.
Impact assessment / evaluation	Red	Yellow	Red	Yellow	★	Green	EP has widest scope of ex-ante and ex-post evaluation. Greatest volume and staff in US.
Fighting disinformation	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	★	Going beyond rules: training and education.
<b>POLITICAL PROCESS</b>							
Agenda-setting	Red	Yellow	Green	Red	★	Green	Five-year and annual planning, but inter-institutional.
Hearings / appointments	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	★	Green	Still limited compared to US, but more independent from executive than NPs.
Committee support	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	★	Green	Staffing close to but still less than US.
Personal assistants	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	★	Green	About 1 500 APAs.
Political group support	Red	Green	Red	Yellow	★	Yellow	EP above 1 000; DE around 850 staff.
Interparliamentary delegations	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	★	Green	Highest number of delegations. Biggest support staff.
Democracy support	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	★	Green	Most systematic programme.
Plenary tools	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	Red	★	Wide range of plenary tools for MEPs.
Legal and legal-linguistic support	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	★	Highest number of lawyers.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>							
TV	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Red	No dedicated TV channel.
Radio	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Podcast production, but no own radio.
Press	Red	Green	Green	Red	★	Green	Largest multilingual press team.
Offer to visitors	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Green	★	Green	Visitor campus. Sponsored visits.
Social media	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	★	Red	Widest outreach. Most channels.
Audiovisual facilities	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	★	Red	Offer for individual recordings.
Web presence	Green	Green	Green	Green	★	Red	Most comprehensive information on Members (functions, parliamentary activities etc.).

## Basic differences between systems

The European Parliament is, of course, an institution operating at supranational level. It is independent of the executive (Commission) and its co-legislator (Council). It has a wide influence in the EU policy process, having steadily increased its powers in the legislative field and the inter-institutional arrangements of the Union over time. Today, the Parliament is in effect an equal partner with the Council in very many areas. It provides direct representation of citizens at EU level and seeks to ensure the democratic accountability of decisions taken at EU level.

The focus of work in national parliaments is mainly driven by the executive. In all four European national parliaments analysed, the members of government are either members of the parliament or have the right to speak in parliament.

The fact that the **German Bundestag** is not entirely independent from the executive branch has a direct influence on all activities it performs (legislative, scrutiny, international relations). In Germany, about two-thirds of all bills tabled are introduced by the federal government. A large amount of legislative work is therefore prepared by civil servants in the federal ministries, who also assist the committees of the German Bundestag in the process of drafting amendments to parliamentary bills.

In the **French National Assembly**, the focus is also on the government. Although there is no obligation for the Prime Minister or the other ministers to be parliamentarians, the members of the French government are, in practice, also Members in the National Assembly. The fact that the French National Assembly is not entirely independent from the executive branch has a direct influence on all activities performed by this body (legislative, scrutiny, international relations).

The **Italian Chamber of Deputies** has a primarily legislative function, carried out jointly with the Senate (perfect bicameralism). However, unlike the EU system, the right of legislative initiative is not a prerogative of government, with bills also introduced by individuals or groups of Deputies or Senators. Indeed, in Italy about 90% of bills are introduced by Members of Parliament (Chamber and/or Senate) with just 8% of bills tabled by the government.

Looking at the **United Kingdom**, the **House of Commons** majority also supports the government, with Ministers required to be sitting members of the House of Commons. Virtually all legislation adopted is proposed by the government.

The **United States** Constitution separates the legislative, executive and judiciary functions, in a system of 'separation of powers'. Within the legislative branch, the **House of Representatives** is given the power to originate revenue bills, and the Senate is responsible for the confirmation of executive and judiciary nominations, as well as treaties. While in all other countries analysed in this study, the legislative initiative is formally shared between the parliament and the executive, the US is a partial exception insofar as, although the President may ask a Member to introduce a bill on his/her behalf, the legislator is under no obligation to do so. Even though a general distinction is drawn between work in Washington DC and 'district days' (when Representatives return to their constituencies), the schedules of Representatives, chairs of committees and the party leadership vary notably according to workload, timing and priority. The duration and importance of plenary debates varies greatly.

Due to these multiple differences, there is a constraint on how easy it is to compare the parliamentary activity of these different parliaments like for like.

## Budgetary powers

In every country, the budget is presented by the executive and then discussed, possibly amended, and then approved by the parliament. The **EP** has the power to reject the budget and demand a new draft if it considers that insufficient consideration has been given to its priorities. Parliaments also have a power of scrutiny over government spending and in approving the budget execution. The **EP** gives a discharge on the implementation of the budget.

Some specific features: Before the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** begins its discussions, regions provide their opinion on the draft budget submitted by the government; in **France**, if the two houses of parliament have not reached a decision within a fixed time-limit, the provisions of the bill may be enforced by government ordinance, although the government may also convene a joint committee responsible for suggesting a text on the remaining provisions under discussion; the **US House of Representatives** stands out insofar as Congress has set up a specific agency within the legislative branch - the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) - with about 235 staff, to analyse the President's budget proposal to support the two Houses during the budgetary procedure. In addition, CBO provides among other publications for Congress 'Budget and Economic Outlook Updates', identifies 'Budget Options' and prepares a 'Monthly Budget Review' as well as long-term budget outlooks and spending projections.

Scrutiny and monitoring of budget execution are entrusted to specific bodies in the UK and in France: the **UK House of Commons** has a specific parliamentary select committee, known as the Public Accounts Committee. The Committee monitors how funds are used by each government department and may examine cases of overspending. It also verifies whether the government has used its funds wisely. The Committee has access to any accounts or documents considered necessary in order to discharge its duty. It can also call witnesses for questioning. The Committee is helped in its work by over 500 auditors in the National Audit Office. Once a series of investigations is complete, the Committee presents a report to the House of Commons, which may choose to debate any aspect it considers particularly serious. The **French National Assembly** has set up two permanent missions whose aim is to oversee the efficiency of public expenditure, namely the Assessment and Monitoring Mission (MEC) and the Monitoring Mission for the Laws Governing Social Security Financing Laws (MECSS).

## Supervisory and scrutiny powers

All parliaments studied exercise a degree of control over the executive. Notably, national governments (as well as the European Commission) are subject to a vote of (no)confidence. Where confidence is not granted, governments must resign (in Germany, only a 'constructive' vote of no confidence is allowed). Other forms of control include the monitoring of the implementation of legislation and parliamentary question time, and interpellations and debates with ministers. Investigations and inquiries are other activities performed by all parliaments studied.

In addition, the five parliamentary democracies studied have developed various other relevant and specific features in the field of supervisory and control powers.

In **France**, different mechanisms are in place to assess laws and to monitor their implementation, often focussing particularly on their social impact. When transmitted to the 'Conseil d'État', government bills are preceded by a presentation explaining their objectives and are accompanied by an impact study. This

impact study lays down in detail how the bill complies with European law and specifies notably the mechanisms envisaged for its application, its economic, financial, social and environmental consequences, and its effect on employment. For laws which require the publication of rules of a regulatory nature, a presentation of implementation reports is foreseen before standing committees. The Finance Committee of the National Assembly is supported in its assessment and monitoring tasks by an Assessment and Monitoring Mission (MEC) in charge of evaluating each year the results of certain public policies. Likewise, the Social Affairs Committees of the National Assembly and the Senate are supported by the MECSS (the Assessment and Monitoring Mission for Social Security Financing Laws).

The **German Bundestag** scrutinises the government inter alia through its elected Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (Wehrbeauftragter). He or she keeps the Bundestag up to date on the situation in the Bundeswehr and intervenes in cases where the fundamental rights of military personnel are infringed.

The opinion of the **Italian Parliament** is required for all appointments of presidents and chairpersons of public authorities and for all draft legislative decrees that would introduce the exercise of delegated powers for more than two years.

An interesting feature of the **UK House of Commons** is the twenty opposition days in each parliamentary session when, on a topic chosen by the opposition, government ministers have to appear and respond to criticism raised in the debate. Moreover, the House of Commons comprises a broad range of committees whose role it is to scrutinise the government and departmental Select Committees oversee government departments. Like the European Ombudsman, the House of Commons has a Parliamentary Ombudsman (also known as Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration) who is responsible for investigating complaints from citizens about maladministration by government departments and agencies and other public bodies.

In the **United States**, the Congress holds ultimate control over the executive branch through its power to impeach the President and Vice-President, as well as executive officials. When this procedure occurs, the **House of Representatives** has the unique power to impeach while the Senate holds a trial for the official. In a more routine way, Congress also oversees the executive branch by scrutinising its activities in a way which informs its decision to fund, de-fund, or terminate government programmes. For instance, Congress performs ex-post evaluation through regular as well as ad-hoc hearings, which address the efficiency of agencies and programmes. Congress also created the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to support many of the legislative branch's oversight tasks, both at the direct request of Congressional committees or as mandated by public law or resolutions.

## International relations

Even though, from a general perspective, foreign policy can be regarded as mainly the responsibility of governments, national parliaments play a role in some matters concerning international relations. All five parliaments have one or more committees dealing with foreign affairs, have delegations in parliamentary assemblies, and participate in interparliamentary activities, as well as in bilateral and multilateral parliamentary groups.

Some national parliaments play a role in questions of war and peace. The **German Bundestag** has to agree to Bundeswehr deployments outside Germany. The **French National Assembly** must authorise extensions

of interventions by French armed forces abroad. The **US House of Representatives** shares with the Senate the power to declare war. They also have to agree to the conclusion of international treaties, except for EU-only trade agreements for which the **European Parliament** (only) has to approve the outcome of the negotiations, rather than the Member States' national parliaments. Moreover, all international agreements and proposals for EU enlargement now require the EP's approval. Decisions on the implementation of trade, development cooperation and humanitarian aid policy must be taken jointly by the Parliament and Council. The **EP** has a number of interparliamentary delegations that maintain and develop the Parliament's international contacts and contribute to enhancing the role and visibility of the Parliament and of the European Union in the world.

In the **United States**, the **House of Representatives** can influence foreign policy with its unique appropriations power and with its oversight role. Moreover, there are a number of Congressional 'member organisations' (groups of members of the Congress that meet to pursue common legislative objectives) dealing with foreign affairs, such as the European Union Caucus. The Office of Interparliamentary Affairs has the role of facilitating the official visits from foreign parliamentary assemblies to the House.

Among the parliaments of EU Member States, the **German Bundestag** possesses a unique position when the German government negotiates in the Council of Ministers of the EU acts for which the Bundestag holds power. Enshrined in German Basic Law (Article 23 of the constitution) and further detailed in secondary legislation, the Bundestag is conferred extensive participation, cooperation and co-decision-making rights in EU affairs. The government has to inform the Bundestag comprehensively, as early as possible and continuously, about its EU policy and the parliament can adopt resolutions on draft EU laws or EU affairs in general which the government has to take into account, but the Bundestag cannot veto EU regulations and directives once adopted. Even though the **EP** has to consent to international agreements, the Treaty only provides for it to 'be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedure', but offers no further details.

## Outreach capacity

The **UK** Parliament has a long tradition and a very comprehensive set of outreach activities. Public outreach efforts date back to 1880 and a Parliamentary Outreach Service, which serves both chambers, was launched in 2008. The House of Lords has primary oversight over both Houses' joint outreach efforts and according to a Lords' Information Committee Report, the service 'promotes understanding of, and engagement with, the work of the House of Lords and **House of Commons**'. A regional delivery team, consisting of six outreach officers based across the UK, delivers 400 sessions a year, in partnership with a variety of organisations, business networks, further education and higher education institutions, students and local authorities. There are also a number of national programmes tailored to specific sectors, for example, 'Train the Trainer', 'Adult with Learning Disabilities', a programme of legislative engagement to encourage more productive participation in Parliament's scrutiny of legislation, and a Parliamentary Studies module in universities. Furthermore, the Parliament's Education Service aims to inform, engage and empower young people to understand and get involved in Parliament, politics and democracy. This Education Service runs an annual programme of school visits to the Parliament. There is also a House of Commons Enquiry Service that provides a telephone enquiry service to the public, responds to e-mails and letters and produces a range of material.

The outreach activities of the other parliaments appear much more limited or akin to traditional communication activities. In the **US**, visits of both chambers, events open to the public in the Library of Congress, or information on the Congress.gov website are the main means for reaching out. Members' personal staff have a strong role in the delivery of outreach activities, providing services and responding to constituent requests. Public hearings are also an important tool in shaping public opinion.

In France, outreach activities correspond basically to traditional communications activities (information to the general public, or the organisation of specific events, such as Heritage Days or a Children's Parliament) and visits. These activities are carried out on the premises of the **French National Assembly**. There is also the use of internet and social media. The National Assembly launched a first online citizens' consultation in 2015, and its conclusions were sent to the relevant rapporteurs. The situation of Italy is similar to that in France. The **German Bundestag** has a wide range of communications and information activities, but also engages with citizens at consumer fairs. It has a mobile information unit, emphasising that not all the activities are based in Berlin. Briefings for journalists and some publications of the research service are also part of the outreach activities as well as online petitions, public hearings and expert briefings.

Compared to this, the **EP** has a relatively broad range of outreach activities. It promotes awareness of EP work through seminars, competitions, public events and social media campaigns. In 2015, the EP implemented two projects – the Stakeholder Dialogue Pilot Project and the Ambassador School Programme – whose purpose is to encourage dialogue with stakeholder organisations and young people. The Stakeholder Dialogue Pilot Project is intended to encourage a process of citizens feeding into the consultation part of the legislative cycle. Through its information offices in all Member States, the EP has worked actively to engage with young people through activities such as Euroscola, the new EP Ambassador School Programme, the Charlemagne Youth Prize, and the European Youth Event, as well as other activities such as training, school or university visits. A large part of the information offices' communication activities takes place online, with a recent shift to social media. The EP also organises visits of various forms, reaching out to the general public in all three workplaces of the Parliament (e.g. Open Days).

## Plenary reform and agenda-setting

### Structure of the plenary agenda

The European Parliament (EP) typically organises its work in successive weeks attributed to committee, political group and 12 usually monthly plenary part-sessions of one week per year, with additional plenary part-sessions being held in Brussels in 'mixed' weeks comprising committee meetings and political group meetings as well. During plenary, there are specific time slots fixed for each day of a part-session: Generally Strasbourg sessions start on Monday at 17:00 and end on Thursday at 16:00, while Brussels sessions start at 15:00 on Wednesday and end at 13:00 on Thursday. Part-session days may last until 23:00 or, less often, until midnight. Each agenda of the part-session contains time slots for debates - divided into morning and afternoon/evening slots - and votes are generally scheduled from 12:00 to 14:00 and followed by oral explanations of votes. Time slots for key debates and topical debates are specifically set aside in the agenda: Key debates are usually scheduled on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings, while topical debates on current affairs (Rule 162) are scheduled on Wednesday afternoons at 15:00 and should last for 1h30. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law take place once every month, on Thursday mornings of Strasbourg part-sessions.

In each of the national parliaments under investigation, differing patterns of organising plenary sessions can be observed. The **US House of Representative**, for example, follows a 'three weeks on, one week off' schedule of sessions, during which routine parliamentary business activities (and votes) are scheduled. Owing to the pandemic, the legislative business of the House has been temporarily divided into committee working days (during which members may work from their home state) and voting days. On the first day of each Congress, the House determines the daily time-frame typically reserved for 'House floor' activities. Currently they are primarily starting (after) noon (except for votes on Fridays), with the remainder, the morning of the session days, dedicated to committee work. What is considered in the House as non-legislative business takes place in three different forms: morning hour debates, one-minute speeches, and special-order speeches. These non-legislative activities are governed at the Speaker's discretion and by unanimous consent requests. The schedule for the voting week ahead is published every Friday beforehand.

The typical structure of a sitting week in Berlin starts on Monday afternoons with one and a half days for parliamentary group meetings, half a day for committee meetings and two and a half days for **Bundestag** plenary sessions (Wednesday afternoons until Fridays). Basically, no committee meetings are held in parallel with the plenary. Most committees meet on Wednesday mornings. (Some exceptions are possible. The Budget Committee meets on Wednesday afternoons, while committees often get special permission to hold a meeting on Thursdays.) Legislative proposals debated in committee are voted in the public plenary sittings on Thursdays and Fridays. However, there are two annual, multi-day debates on the national budget, starting on Tuesday mornings and running until Fridays.

A particularity of the **House of Commons** compared with the previously mentioned parliaments is that under the Standing Orders, the Commons agenda is controlled by the government, apart from days provided (with the timing controlled by the government) for Opposition Day debates, Backbench Business Committee debates and for debates on private members' bills. The Leader of the House of Commons (a senior minister) announces the agenda for the coming week in a statement to the House each week (usually on a Thursday) about the business scheduled for the period ahead. In practice, before being publicly presented, the agenda for the week will have been discussed inside government (primarily between the Leader of the House of Commons and the Chief Whip, in consultation with ministers who will lead on particular business). In comparison with other parliaments, the UK executive, as distinct from the parliamentary majority of the day, is considered to have an unusual amount of control over parliamentary business. The **House of Commons** meets at 2.30 p.m. until 10.30 p.m. on Mondays, 11.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on Thursdays and 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on sitting Fridays.

Sessions of the Italian **Chamber of Deputies** are generally scheduled for each calendar week from Monday to Friday morning: Monday is devoted to general debates on the topics scheduled for the week; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are devoted to debates on the topics with votes (starting times of the votes as well as the duration are communicated beforehand). The first part of Tuesday morning is devoted to questions and interpellations to the Government; Wednesday is devoted to question time; Friday morning is normally devoted to urgent questions.

The French Constitution provides that the **National Assembly** meets in ordinary session, opening on the first working day of October and ending on the last working day of June. During the ordinary session, the number of sitting days may not normally exceed 120. The President of the Republic may convene by decree the Parliament to an extraordinary session on a specific agenda item, at the request of the Prime Minister or a majority of deputies.

The timetable for the work of the National Assembly and the agenda of the sittings are established by the Conference of Presidents within the framework set by the Constitution: Two weeks out of four are thus

reserved for the examination of texts and debates whose inclusion in the agenda has been requested by the Government. One week out of four is reserved for monitoring the Government's action and evaluating public policies. One sitting day per month is devoted to an agenda drawn up on the initiative of the opposition and minority groups and at least one sitting per week for questions to the Government.

## Strategic programming

Strategic planning in the European Parliament, leading to actual plenary sessions, is an elaborate process that starts at the beginning of each legislature and consists mainly of three stages: long, medium and short-term planning. In the European Parliament, the definition of its priorities falls under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents and political Groups. The governing bodies – the Conference of Presidents and Conference of Committee Chairs – have regular exchanges with the Commission ahead of the preparation of its annual work programme. This allows Parliament to exert its influence on the work programme via political initiatives and calling for legislative proposals, which are the prerogative of the Commission. Since 2016, the three institutions have agreed to work and agree each year on a joint declaration on inter-institutional programming and, at the beginning of each term, on joint conclusions on multiannual programming (through the inter-institutional agreement on better law making, to implement the provisions of Article 17 TEU). This has enabled Parliament to further influence the political and legislative agenda and the timing of such submissions. Both multiannual and annual inter-institutional planning is further refined in Parliament's medium-term (6 months) and short-term planning (1 month).

Time spans covered in national legislatures in strategic programming and policy planning usually are shorter than the five-year programme and the annual work plan of the European Commission. Like in the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents six-month rolling programme, national legislatures tend to use several months to one year programming periods.

Similar to the annual State of the Union address of the President of the European Commission to the EP's plenary session, the US President delivers his annual State of the Union address before a joint session of U.S. Congress. However, this programmatic speech is not binding on the legislature. Longer-term planning for the **House of Representatives** can concern a maximum time-frame of two-years which corresponds to one Congress. The two years are split into two sessions. This is a much shorter period compared to the longer legislative term of the EP and the tenure of the European Commission or a US President.

The most prominent longer-term and recurring item on the House legislative agenda is the annual budget. The Constitution requires Congress to hold each year an annual budget debate based on the President's budget request for the next fiscal year and to establish an annual budget for the government and to initiate revenue bills. Apart from scheduling the annual budget debate on the floor, the Majority Leadership, depending on which party controls the executive and the legislative branches, may to a larger or lesser extent factor in the President's policy priorities and plans articulated at events such as inaugural and State of the Union addresses and those announced separately. Party leaders decide whether the House or the Senate will act first on a specific legislative initiative.

In Germany, coalition governments usually agree a coalition treaty for the four-year election period. Even though the **German Bundestag** enjoys the right to organise its plenary sessions independently from the government, the governing majority will support its course. In addition, members of the federal government and the Federal Council (the upper house of the German Parliament) or their representatives have the right to be heard whenever they ask for 'government interventions' including on matters not on the parliamentary agenda which they can thus alter. The most prominent place for priority topics is a so-

called 'core time' for priority debates of around four hours on issues of special public interest. The opposition alternatively gets to decide the second item on the agenda of the broadcast core time debate either on Thursday or Friday of the plenary week and hence has some influence on parliamentary priorities. There is no set proportion of plenary sessions reserved for legislation and for non-legislative debates. Rather non-legislative debates can be put on the agenda if a parliamentary group or a certain number of Members present request it (usually 5%).

In the UK Parliament, the Queen's Speech delivered at the State Opening of Parliament is the main ceremonial event in the parliamentary calendar and the start of the parliamentary year. The speech is written by government ministers and sets out the government's policies and proposed legislation for the new parliamentary session. The speech is delivered in the House of Lords and addressed to both houses of Parliament. Subsequently, in the **House of Commons**, Members debate the planned legislative programme for several days, looking at different subject areas. The Prime Minister defends the government's agenda, and the Leader of the Opposition is given a right of reply. The Queen's Speech is then voted on by the Commons. The agenda set out in the speech is not legally binding, and it is not uncommon for uncompleted legislative proposals from a previous year's speech to be carried over into the following year's agenda.

The activities of the Italian **Chamber of Deputies** are organised around three different tools: the Programme (*programma dei lavori*), the Calendar (*calendario*) and the Agenda (*ordine del giorno o di seduta*). The Programme of the plenary is set by the Conference of Presidents for at least 2 months and in any case for not more than 3 months.

Based on the Programme, the Calendar of parliamentary works is established. It sets out the practical arrangements and timing for implementing the Programme for a period generally corresponding to each month of the Programme. This document is generally drawn up at the end of the month preceding the month to which it relates.

The two to three-month long Programme for the Chamber of Deputies' plenary sessions is adopted by a large majority in the Conference of Presidents after extensive consultations among political groups, possibly a meeting of the Conference of Committee Chairs, contacts with the President of the Senate and the government. The government indicates the items of priority at least two days prior to the meeting of the Conference of Presidents, within the same deadline each group may communicate own proposals to the government, the President of the Chamber and the other political groups.

The **National Assembly** has only limited freedom to plan its agenda ahead as large parts of it are defined by the government's legislative priorities and hence out of its influence or control. However, in terms of strategic programming of the sitting weeks whose content is under the control of the Assembly, since 2018, the 'Spring of Evaluation' tends to become the focal point for the National Assembly's public policy evaluation work by strengthening the procedures for examining the settlement bill. The Finance Committee adopts an evaluation program at the beginning of the year. Within this framework, each special rapporteur works on an evaluation topic that he or she has proposed, conducting the necessary investigations and hearings. All ministers are then interviewed by the Finance Committee at the end of May/beginning of June and questioned on the performance of the public policies for which they are responsible. Finally, in the public session, these questions are examined during a week of scrutiny, both by the political groups placing subjects on the agenda and by organising a debate.

## Setting parliaments' priorities

In the European Parliament the agenda of a part-session starts as a working document on the basis of recommendations from committees and points that are cyclical in a yearly session. Once input is received from political groups, a preliminary draft agenda is drawn up and presented to the Conference of Presidents in view of the adoption of the draft agenda, approximately one month before the part-session in question. The Conference of Presidents then adopts the final draft agenda at its last meeting on the Thursday before the part-session. Whilst there are often items on the agenda which are comprised of a Council and/or Commission statement, the two institutions do not have the right to claim certain time slots for debates or declarations. This remains the prerogative of the Conference of Presidents, which adopts the final draft, and the House, which adopts the agenda at the opening of each part-session.

Very differing procedures - and decision-makers - can be observed among the parliamentary chambers forming part of this comparison. They range from a dominating role of the executive, as is the case with the UK government in the House of Commons, or a solely dominating majority party in the legislature, as in the US House of Representatives, to priority setting in a joint governing body in which all party groups of the legislature are represented.

In the UK, given that the government of the day has a significant say over the **Commons** agenda, via the order paper, the main instrument for setting the Commons' priorities is the government's agenda, as set out in the Queen's Speech that opens a new Parliament. The business for each week is announced the week before by the Leader of the House at 'business questions' and is set out in the Order Paper, which is the agenda for each day's sitting. The Government effectively controls the timetable of the House and can change the business at short notice. Government business usually has priority. But the House's rules (standing orders) provide for a number of days when non-Government business is taken, such as Opposition days and Private Members' Bill Fridays. The Backbench Business Committee is also given time for debates. The Speaker may also select motions for debate tabled by individuals or groups of MPs, known as Early Day Motions, but in practice seldom does so.

It is important to stress that the **House of Representatives'** floor activities are dominated by the Majority Leadership's political priorities, as if in the EP exclusively files supported by the political group with the biggest size, and some other files for which broad consensus exists across all political groups, were debated during the EP plenary. The Speaker through the House Committee on Rules controls the legislative agenda, i.e. which bills the House considers and in what order. The legislative business is listed in the weekly schedule. More controversial bills that are taken from the House's four long-standing calendars of bills (the Discharge Calendar, the House Calendar, the Private Calendar, and the Union Calendar) for floor consideration, uncontroversial 'suspensions' are taken from a relatively new separate calendar, the Consensus calendar, created during the 116th Congress (2019-2020). A calendar is an agenda or list of business awaiting possible action by the House. The House calendars are printed every day the House is in session. In addition, the Speaker designates members to serve as Speaker pro tempore, defines the priorities of the majority, appoints members of the majority party to committees, refers bills and resolutions to committees etc. In this regard, the Speaker is one of the most dominating leaders in any legislature in the world.

In the Italian **Chamber of Deputies** the 'Conference of Presidents' follows a two to three month Programme. On the basis of the Programme, the Calendar indicates the days and times of the sittings, which topics will be dealt with at these sittings and for how long. The Calendar, approved by the Presidents of political groups representing at least three quarters of the members of the Chamber, also sets out the maximum total time to be devoted to the discussion of each topic, with a few exceptions where this time

is not fixed. For the definition of the Calendar, a representative of the Government may inform which items it wishes to insert in the agendas of the plenary sessions. Political groups may communicate their own priorities to the Government, to the President of the Chamber and to the other political groups. A quota of the available time in the Calendar is reserved for items proposed by dissenting political groups according to a proportional allocation. The Calendar also indicates which days are devoted to the discussion and which ones to the vote.

The German *Ältestenrat* ('Council of Elders') is a body that includes the President of the **Bundestag**, the Vice-Presidents and 23 Members of Parliament appointed by parliamentary groups in proportion to their size. While the Council of Elders formally sets the Bundestag's agenda for the next plenary week, this is only the last step of a long process to determine what will be discussed in the plenary sessions. First, the working groups of the different parties determine their priorities and for how long they would like to discuss them. In exchange with the offices of the respective parliamentary groupwhips - and in the case of the coalition parliamentary groups also with the federal government - they draw up a list of topics ranked by the importance they assign to them. Based on these lists the parliamentary groups formulate proposals. The decision on which topics they will try to get on the agenda is ultimately made by the parliamentary group executive committee and the First Parliamentary Secretary before the heads of the parliamentary management teams meet every Wednesday to negotiate the agenda, which is then agreed upon by the first parliamentary managers as a draft for the Council of Elders. They often follow an unofficial rule to facilitate negotiations - the governing parties and the opposition take turns in putting an item on the agenda - with the exception of the core debate hours on Thursdays and Fridays. In the priority debates on Thursday and the first two items of Friday, the opposition gets to decide the second item on the agenda either Thursday or Friday alternatively. The subsequent, shorter debates then usually also alternates between the governing and the opposition groups.

As already mentioned before, the model of the French **National Assembly** in contrast to the other legislatures is a mixed one, where the government can set the agenda for two out of four session weeks. The Conference of Presidents sets the Assembly's agenda under the chairmanship of the President of the National Assembly. It is composed of the six Vice-Presidents, the chairmen of all the political groups, the eight chairmen of the standing committees, the general rapporteur of the finance committee and the chairman of the European Affairs Committee. However, the government is represented too, usually by the Minister responsible for relations with Parliament. In practice, the government can still set its priorities since it can request, during the two weeks of sittings of the National Assembly reserved for government each month, the inclusion of finance bills and social security financing bills (LFSS). It can also request the priority inclusion of texts transmitted by the French Senate to the Assembly over six weeks hitherto during the parliamentary week not devoted to scrutiny.

## Content of the plenary agenda

The European Parliament's plenary agenda contains debates on legislative and non-legislative files presented in the form of reports, as well as statements from the Council and the Commission or from the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, oral questions, topical debates, debates on breaches of human rights and rule of law, votes and explanations of votes. While setting the agenda, political groups often interlink dossiers in order to have joint debates on 'thematic packages'. There are no plenary sessions reserved only for legislation or only for non-legislative debates. In addition, there are annual events and prizes, such as the award of the

Sakharov Prize for Human Rights, and, upon invitation, addresses by European and foreign heads of state or government.

The **House of Representatives'** floor activities include both legislative and non-legislative debates. The legislative business is listed in the weekly schedule and taken from the five calendars of bills mentioned above. Bills for legislative business are governed by different legislative procedures: under the standing House rules as adopted at the beginning of each two-year session; under tailor-made rules passed as a simple House resolution (order of business resolution) by simple majority vote for a given bill; bills referred to as 'suspensions' for which the standard rules of the House are waived to dispose of them expeditiously.

The non-legislative activities during the voting week are ceremonial acts and three types of non-legislative debates: morning hour debates, one-minute speeches, and special-order speeches. There are no morning hour debates on the last legislative day of the week. Several time-slots are possible for holding 'One Minute Speeches': at the start of the legislative day after the approval of the Journal and occasionally after the conclusion of legislative business before the start of special-order speeches or at other times during the daily session. The Speaker has discretion over the one-minute speech period as well as over the number of such speeches. Members can only give one one-minute speech during any given legislative day on a subject of his or her choice. However, Majority or Minority Leaderships tend to coordinate one-minute speeches to focus on particular topics. Those Members participating in these coordinated efforts tend to receive priority seating in the front row on their party's side of the floor.

In the House of Representatives there are no explicit time slots foreseen for priority debates or for debates on 'current affairs'. Neither are there joint debates on interlinked dossiers ('thematic packages') between several committees on the House floor, as is the established practice during the EP plenary. There is a debate on bills one after the other and no debate on thematic packages in this sense. However, if it serves their political needs, the majority could bring up a series of bills thematically, but there is no requirement to do so.

By contrast, it is possible to schedule a so-called 'discussion on current topics of general interest' or the 'Current hour' in the **Bundestag**. Its initial purpose was to give Members of Parliament the opportunity to ask the government further questions when they were not happy with the responses given in the scheduled 'Question Hour'. However, it has since become common to use it to discuss current affairs of general interest. It can be scheduled by the Council of Elders or if a parliamentary group or five per cent of the Members of Parliament who are present request it. Only one such discussion can be scheduled per day and its length is limited to one hour. Each speaker has five minutes speaking time.

Each sitting day in the **House of Commons'** main Chamber foresees time slots for private business (except Fridays), Oral Questions for one hour to the relevant government ministers, or Urgent Questions (on Fridays), the Presentation of Bills, Ten Minute Rule Bills from Backbench Members, topical debates for 90 minutes on a weekly basis, main business in the form of a debate, including debates on legislation, general topics or issues selected by the major parties, Exempt Business, Petitions, and the Adjournment Debate. A Moment of Interruption – at 10 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays, 7 p.m. on Wednesdays, 6 p.m. on Thursdays and 2.30 p.m. on Fridays - is bringing an end to business in general, but Ministers may introduce a Business motion to extend business beyond the interruption. In the Adjournment Debate, a Backbench Member (chosen by ballot, except on Thursdays when they are selected by the Speaker from those unsuccessful in the ballot) calls for a debate of 30 minutes on a matter often of interest to his/her constituency. The Minister responsible must reply. Debates may also deal with a government policy.

The **Chamber of Deputies** does not hold 'joint debates' on thematic packages of legislation as does the European Parliament. However, when motions addressed to the government are being considered, it may

happen that the topic identified by the motions is particularly broad and therefore allows for a debate and the approval of policy documents with a general thematic content (e.g. infrastructure, economic recovery, etc.). This type of debate may also take place on a (non-legislative) report submitted by a Commission on a topic within its competence.

The Rules of Procedures of the Camera dei Deputati do not provide for a ratio between the number of sessions devoted to legislative and non-legislative work. Statistically speaking, however, it is reported that in 2020, 54% of the Assembly's activity was devoted to legislative activity, 34% to policy and control activities and the remainder to other activities (examination of documents issued by the authorising committee, elective proceedings, speeches at the end of the session, commemorations, etc.).

In the French case, the nature of the plenary session of the **Assembly** depends on the nature of the task performed by the deputies: legislation or control of the government and evaluation of public policies. When legislation is discussed, the sitting is organised in several phases: the examination of any procedural motions; the general discussion; the discussion of the articles and the amendments attached to them. The rules are not the same depending on whether or not the programmed legislative time procedure is used. When members exercise their constitutional mission of monitoring the action of the government and evaluating public policies (one week out of four sittings), activities may take various forms in the sitting: the questioning of the government's responsibility; the control week; statements followed by a debate; resolutions; and questions. In addition, at least one sitting per week is devoted to questions from members of parliament and answers from members of the government. Since the 2008 revision, the holding of questions to the government has been extended to extraordinary sessions. During the ordinary session, this provision applies to both weeks of sittings on the government agenda and those on the parliamentary agenda.

## Conduct of plenary debates

In the European Parliament, speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session. The agenda is divided into different "time slots", which can include one or several debates. While there is usually no fixed time for each debate, a notional speaking time is allocated to rapporteurs, rapporteurs for opinion, authors of oral questions, major interpellations and topical debates and to other institutions (Council, Commission, etc.). Based on the speaking time available for each political group, they draw up their lists of speakers and allocate speaking time. Members speak in the order of the relative size of their political groups. Members may ask to speak in a more spontaneous manner under the 'catch-the-eye' (short speeches of one minute maximum at the end of a debate) or 'blue card' procedures (a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, during another Member's speech, where the speaker agrees). Sometimes however, debates are limited to just one round of group speakers. During the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a prepared list, the President calls Members who wish to draw Parliament's attention to a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of one minute each for a period totalling no more than 30 minutes. The European Parliament conducts its deliberations using several types of debates: full debates and short presentation for committee reports; statements by, oral questions to, the other institutions; debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and/or the rule of law; major interpellations which require a written answer; question time; public hearings, and; debates on citizens' initiatives.

None of the five national parliaments in this comparison is allocating speaking time purely proportionally. While in the **US House of Representatives**, majority and minority have exactly the same speaking time

(and the government none at all), European parliaments have developed mixed systems for the attribution of speaking time to political groups. They often combine a minimum allocation of equal speaking time for all groups with a proportional system (**Italian Chamber of Deputies**). The **German Bundestag** combines these features but does not use a mathematical formula and rather takes a political decision. In most cases, time used by representatives from the government is deducted from the parliamentary majority's speaking time. Alternatively, when the rules foresee interventions from rapporteurs or the government outside speaking time allocations, like in the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, opposition groups are granted some extra time in the attribution of the scheduled speaking time.

Some parliaments apply differing methods to define speakers and speaking time depending on the nature of the debate. The **US House of Representatives**, for example, holds debates with 'controlled' time, where one member for each party, the so-called 'floor manager', decides on the length of each member's intervention, and debates where time is not controlled, where the chair decides who intervenes but speaking time is limited to five minutes. Other parliaments set special speaking time arrangements according to the nature of the debate (e.g. discussion of amendments, procedural motions etc.).

In the **UK House of Commons**, members wishing to speak have to register with the Speaker's Office but still have to 'catch-the-eye' of the Speaker during the debate. In the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, they have to enrol on the day of the speech. While often the parliamentary groups decide on the members who get the floor, Speakers like in the **UK House of Commons** or the President of the **German Bundestag** hold some role in deciding on the order of speakers. In the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, the order of registration, with an alternation of one against and one in favour, decides the order of speakers. The other national parliaments under study attempt to alternate speeches between government and opposition MPs to create livelier debates.

While speakers in the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** speak from their own benches, they speak from the central rostrum in the **French National Assembly** and the **German Bundestag**. Interventions by members who do not have the floor can occur in the US, German and the UK parliaments, but can be rejected by the member holding the floor.

Generally speaking, Members of the majority and the minority in the **US House of Representatives** are recognized for an exact equal amount of time, with a Member of the majority party alternating with a Member of the minority party. In this sense, the size of the political party is irrelevant. For debates about bills and resolutions, time is therefore equally shared between proponents and opponents of a given bill or resolution. No time is allocated to representatives of the executive branch, since they have no role on the House Floor. The order of speakers for legislative and non-legislative business is controlled by the Speaker of the House and by the chair of the 'Committee of the Whole', a procedural setting which allows Members an efficient way to consider amendments.

The first speech is given by the majority. The chair will alternate between the parties in recognizing Members to offer amendments. Members who have pre-printed their amendments in the Congressional Record could receive priority treatment. The amount of speaking time and the manner in which time is allocated in the House depends on the procedures the House applies to consider a bill or resolution, as well as on the terms of any special order of the House governing the consideration of the bill or resolution. There are two different methods of allocating time to speak on legislation on the House floor: Time for debate is either 'controlled', or it is not controlled. Under controlled time, a Member is granted a block of time from a Member, called a 'floor manager,' who determines for each side of the aisle which Members may speak, for how long, and in what order. There is one floor manager for the majority party and one for the minority party. The floor managers are almost always the chair and the Ranking Member of the Committee whose bill is being considered. If time is not controlled, a Member obtains time to speak for five

minutes by seeking recognition from the chair. A Member can ask the chair if the person holding on the floor will 'yield for a question'. However, the person controlling the floor can refuse. A member may seek recognition, but recognition is not guaranteed. When time runs out, no further speakers are allowed, unless unanimous consent is granted. The executive branch cannot be asked questions on the House Floor. For most House bills and resolutions time limits apply (40 minutes) and no amendments can be offered by members on the floor. Owing to the time constraints of meetings, there is a possibility for Members to put longer statements on record, if the speaking time allocated to them is not sufficient.

The President of the **German Bundestag** decides the order of the speakers. They are supposed to take into consideration the different political alignments, the relative strengths of the parties, and that speeches by Members of Parliament from the governing parties are ideally followed by those from opposition parties. If a member of government or a representative speaks, the President shall ensure that someone with a differing opinion speaks afterwards. Generally, allocation of speaking time to the parliamentary groups takes place according to a pattern agreed upon at the beginning of the parliamentary term. Its starting point is the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups but also other aspects like a bonus for the opposition are considered. There is no set mathematical framework, but it is rather a political decision. Within the allotted speaking time, the parliamentary groups decide whom of their members should speak and how long about an item on the agenda. The government and the Federal Council are granted unlimited speaking time. In practice, however, their speaking time is deducted from their parliamentary group so that the relative speaking times are kept constant. For questions to the speaker during the speech or for interventions in a debate, the Member may speak up from one of the microphones in the chamber. These questions and interventions must be short and concise and may only be posed once the speaker permits it upon being asked by the President. Following an argument made in a debate, the President may permit an intervention of three minutes at most, the speaker can then also respond to it once. Within a debate, Members can be permitted to make a statement after its end, interruption or adjournment only to give rebuttals to statements made in the debate concerning their person or rectifications of their own statements. Maximum speaking time is five minutes.

In the **UK House of Commons**, members wishing to speak in a debate should let the Speaker's Office know in advance and stand in their place every time a speech ends, though they may also speak without prior notice. To do so, they must get the Speaker's attention (called 'catching the Speaker's eye') and usually stand, or half-rise from their seat to do so. There is no published speaking list. There may be time limits on backbench speeches. At the start of a debate, the Speaker calls an MP whose name is on the motion (a minister for a government motion) to move it. Once the first speech is over, the Speaker 'proposes the question' to the House, which opens the debate. In the case of a government motion, the Speaker will usually call a frontbencher from the official Opposition, a backbencher from the government side, and a frontbencher from the third largest party to make speeches next. The Speaker will then seek to call MPs from each side of the House in turn. Most debates end with speeches from the official Opposition and a minister. These are sometimes known as the winding-up speeches. Members may intervene during a debate, which is to say make a comment during another MP's speech. They can try to intervene on another MP by rising slightly, trying to catch the MP's eye and asking them to give way. MP's being asked to give way are under no obligation to accept an intervention by another Member, and if they make it clear that they don't intend to do so, the intervening Member resumes their seat. The Speaker is likely to call the Member to order if their intervention is too long.

The Conference of Presidents of political groups in **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, representing the majority of three quarters of members of parliament, establishes the time allocated to the discussion of the items indicated in the calendar depending on their complexity. Taken away the time allocated to the rapporteur, the government and the members of the mixed group, the time for raising questions of

procedure, and for casting the vote, the Conference allocates the remaining time among political groups partly in a fixed manner and partly in a proportionate way (depending on the numerical dimension of the political group). For draft laws upon the initiative of the government, the Conference of Presidents gives to opposition groups a bigger quota of available time than that attributed to the majority groups. In the allocation of time, each political groups may not be allocated less than 30 minutes. With regard to the time that the government may claim for its speeches or statements, the Constitution provides that the government representatives, even if they are not members of the Chamber, have the right and, if requested, the obligation, to attend sittings. They must also be heard whenever they request.

Members wishing to speak must register on the day when the debate begins and have the floor in the order of their registration, with an alternation of one against and one in favour. Members may exchange the order among themselves, however if a member is not present, it is understood that he/she has renounced to the intervention. Speakers speak from their own benches, standing up and addressing the President. No interlocutions are allowed between members. The duration of interventions in a discussion may not exceed 30 minutes, but can be extended under specific circumstances. The President may increase the speaking time for one or more speakers of each political group if the importance of the topic requires so. Once the discussion is closed, one member for each political group which has requested so, may speak. Ministers may also speak in the name of the government and, if the plenary is going to vote, so can all members when it comes to the explanations of vote.

Possibilities for interaction with the government are foreseen for the rapporteurs of a bill, in the course of their report, when they may ask the government to answer questions relating to the reasons and objectives of government-initiated bills and questions on the financial and regulatory consequences. At other procedural stages, such as the expression of opinions on amendments or agendas, clarifications may be requested from the government by members. Speakers are allowed to submit their written interventions to supplement or replace their oral intervention. The text of the speeches is published at the end of the minutes of the sitting.

The nature of sitting weeks in the **French National Assembly** differs according to the nature of the debates. Sittings devoted to political debates or the general discussion of legislative texts give rise to speeches of a general nature. The discussion of a legislative text in the sitting is organised in several phases: the examination of any procedural motions; the general discussion; the discussion of the articles and related amendments. The rules differ depending on the procedure used. The examination of the articles of bills or proposals for legislation is accompanied by technical discussions. On the articles themselves, each member may, on his or her own initiative, register for two minutes. The scrutiny procedures, which have been thoroughly renewed in recent years, provide an opportunity for questions and rapid exchanges with members of the government.

For 'Interventions of a general nature' with speeches usually held from the rostrum the overall speaking time defined by the Conference of Presidents is divided among groups according to a corrected proportional system, so as to guarantee a minimum amount of time for the smaller groups (corrected proportionality). Each group chairman nominates the speakers of its group and attributes the speaking time among them. The Chair then determines the order of speakers to allow for alternation between the groups, and as subsequent debates proceed, each group is assured 'in turn' of the sought-after position of 'first speaker'. Members who speak from the rostrum have a 'ruler', a series of small-lighted dots that light up every ten seconds as the last five minutes of their speaking time elapses.

The discussion on amendments, although highly regulated, frequently generates lively exchanges. In the interest of the discussion, the presiding officers often allow interruptions. In addition, they may 'allow a

speaker to reply to the government or the committee'. Some important amendments thus give rise to extensive discussions.

## Voting procedures and treatment of amendments

While there is no automatic cooling-off period between a final vote on a report in committee and the adoption by plenary of the European Parliament and the timing of the plenary vote is entirely determined by the Conference of Presidents (Group Chairs) and the plenary itself as part of the agenda decision-making process, a cooling-off period does take place between the conclusion of inter-institutional negotiations on a draft legislative act and its final vote in plenary. Voting on draft legislation usually takes place at the first available voting session following the close of a debate on that piece of legislation, unless the agenda specifically provides for a later vote. Non-contentious draft legislation is sometimes put straight to the vote without a debate, in which case the vote may be earlier in a part-session, and, depending on the outcome of the vote in committee and in absence of a medium threshold of opposition, without further amendments by plenary. Amendments to draft legislation may be voted in plenary. Amendments may be tabled by a "low threshold", constituted either by a political group or by a number of individual Members equivalent to 5% of Parliament's membership. Such amendments are voted alongside any amendments proposed by the committee responsible in its report. If inter-institutional negotiations lead to a provisional agreement on a draft legislative text, that agreement is put to the vote as single vote with no further amendment, unless the House explicitly decides otherwise. Oral amendments may be moved in plenary by individual Members, although these may be opposed on procedural grounds (lack of full translation into all languages) by Members representing 5% of the House.

Most parliaments in this comparison do not know a delay similar to the 'cooling-off' period. However, some adhere to minimum intervals between the opening of the parliamentary procedure and their closure, like a gap of at least two weekends between publication/first reading and second reading, of one or two weeks between second reading and committee stage, and of a week between committee stage and report stage in the **UK House of Commons**. However, this timetable can be compressed. Similarly, the Rules in the **Italian Camera dei Deputati** provide that two months should elapse between the start of consideration in parliamentary committees and the start of consideration in plenary. But the minimum between the end of the committee referral procedure and the start of deliberations in the plenary is only set at 48 hours.

It is not common for national parliaments to set aside particular time slots for votes. In the **US House of Representatives**, the **German Bundestag** and the **UK House of Commons** votes are taking place immediately after the closure of the debate. This is normally also the case in the **Italian Camera dei Deputati**, but the President of the Chamber can postpone the vote to a further sitting where more than one draft law is voted simultaneously. In the **US House of Representatives**, however, in recent years, Monday votes were typically postponed until 6:30 p.m., with the last votes on Friday occurring no later than 3:00 p.m. The Majority Leadership may, however, postpone the vote for a variety of reasons. Separate slots for voting time for this procedure do not exist for these bills. Bills considered under the suspension of the House standing rules are usually postponed to the end of a debate and voted in a row on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays of each week.

Like in the European Parliament, most amendments in national parliaments are dealt with at committee stage. Amendments are admissible in plenary sessions as well. They are however not very frequent features.

In the **US House of Representatives** amendments to a draft law are permitted in plenary (depending on the procedure) and every Member is entitled to table them with or without the support of their

parliamentary group. This is also the case in the **German Bundestag**, the **UK House of Commons** and the Italian **Camera dei Deputati**. Amendments can be presented orally in the **US House of Representatives** and the **German Bundestag** but not in the **Italian Camera dei Deputati**. Generally they are voted on immediately so that the general vote on the draft can include or exclude them.

## Question time

Question Time with two, exceptionally three, Members of the European Commission who have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme(s) decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance may be held at each part-session of the European Parliament for a duration of 90 minutes. While question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance, the President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents. The President may rule on their admissibility. The Member has one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. The Member formulating the question may put a supplementary question of a duration of 30 seconds, having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply. In practice, this provision was not used during the 8th and 9th parliamentary term.

In the **US House of Representatives** the executive branch cannot be the subject of questions on the House Floor. Consequently, there is neither a particular slot for 'question time' nor an agenda item that resembles 'oral questions'. In other parliaments, the frequency and nature of questions varies. While the **UK House of Commons** Standing Order specifies that 'Questions shall be taken on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays', including the well-known Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesdays, the **German Bundestag** holds two different types of question time, 'questioning' and 'Question Hour', on Wednesdays. In the **French National Assembly** they occur in two different formats, as 'oral questions' on Tuesday mornings and as 'questions to the government' on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons. In the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, question time (interrogazioni parlamentari) is held once a week, normally on Wednesdays. In the German Bundestag, the UK House of Commons, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the French National Assembly, depending on the nature of the question time, different rules concerning prior submission (in writing) and spontaneous questions (orally) have been put in place. Some parliaments put limits on the number of questions an individual member or a political group can ask. The **French National Assembly** and the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** put procedures in place that guarantee at least half of the questions are asked by members of opposition parties.

There are two ways the Members of the **German Bundestag** can ask the government questions: The 'questioning' usually takes place on Wednesdays starting at 13:00 during plenary weeks. It lasts 60 minutes and the questions are spontaneous, and each answer may be followed up once by the questioning member. Its focus are issues of the cabinet meeting as well as issues of public interest. The other possibility is the so-called 'Question Hour' that takes place for 120 minutes right after the questioning where Members have to submit their questions by Friday of the previous week at 10:00 to allow for three working days to draft an answer and Members can submit up to two questions per week.

In the **UK House of Commons** questions can be submitted in writing, or asked orally. Oral questions are usually transmitted in advanced to ministers, on paper or online, so that they will appear on the Order Paper, to be asked orally in the House. However, Members can take part in Question Time even if they

haven't got a question on the Order Paper. Once an MP with a question on the Order Paper has asked their original and supplementary questions and the minister has replied, the Speaker may call other MPs to ask a supplementary question too. The Members should stand in their place to indicate that they would like to ask a question. The question must be on the same subject. The Speaker will try to call MPs from alternate sides of the House. Answers to written questions are sent by email. A short time later the answers are published on the questions database. Answers to oral questions are given orally, with all statements in the House transcribed in Hansard.

For the weekly question time (interrogazioni parlamentari), normally on Wednesdays, in the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** questions may be tabled no later than 12 noon on the day preceding the day devoted to the question time. One member from each group may put a question through the President of the political group to which they belong. The author of each question shall be entitled to ask the question for not more than one minute. Each question tabled shall be answered by the representative of the government for not more than three minutes. The questioner or another member of the same group shall then be entitled to reply for not more than two minutes. The President of the Chamber arranges also for the televised recording of the question time session.

The questions tabled at question time must consist of a single question formulated clearly and concisely on a subject of general importance. The subject areas on which Members of Parliament may submit questions to the President of the Chamber are limited in scope (whether any information has reached the government, or is accurate, or whether the government intends to communicate to the Chamber documents or information or has taken, or is about to take, any action on a particular matter). The answer to the question is always given orally, although sometimes by reading out a written text, if requesting members do not state that they wish to receive a written answer. All acts of inspection, including questions for question time, are also subject to word limits: for urgent questions, 1,000 words; for other questions, 800 words; for questions for immediate answer, 400 words; and for other types of questions, 600 words. There is no provision for oral questions to the government that have not been submitted in writing beforehand.

The **French National Assembly** foresees 15 questions to be asked per sitting and parity between the majority and the opposition is achieved over 2 sittings, with 15 for the majority and 15 for the opposition. Non-attached Members may ask a question every two months. During the sitting, the President calls questions in an order that alternates between a question from a majority group and one from an opposition group, with the first question going to an opposition or minority group. The time available per speaker is set at two minutes.

Unlike oral questions, questions to the government are not tabled, notified or published in advance. In principle, their content is not communicated to the government, only the names of the authors are transmitted to it one hour before the opening of the sitting. The spontaneous nature of the questions and the presence of all members of government ensure a large audience for these sittings, which, moreover, thanks to their televised broadcast, constitute a high point in parliamentary news. The content of questions is free (only insults and threats are prohibited). In practice, the duality of oral questions and questions to the government means that questions of local interest are reserved for the former and general political questions for the latter.

Questions have, in principle, a dual purpose: to monitor and to enable members to obtain information on government policy. However, given their resonance with public opinion - questions to the government are broadcast live on television - they are also an opportunity for the political groups and their spokespersons to express their point of view, whether supportive or critical, of government action.

Questions to the government, or questions without debate, take place in very different ways:

- every Tuesday and Wednesday at 3 p.m., questions to the government are called. All the ministers are present on the 'ministerial bench'. This important moment in the parliamentary week provides an opportunity to address current national and international issues. The Prime Minister is frequently called upon to speak to explain or defend his policy. One hour before the sitting, each group sends the relevant department a list containing the names of the authors of questions and the ministers questioned. Since the beginning of the 10th legislature, the subject of questions is no longer tabled in advance. The time of the sitting is distributed among the groups according to their numerical importance. The government's response time is deducted from the groups' time. Questions are called in an alternating order, by political group, which varies for each sitting, allowing each group to regularly speak first. On average, some twenty-five questions are called each week.
- the oral questions on Tuesday mornings take a more traditional form. Questions are tabled in advance, sent to the relevant minister and published in the Official Journal as an annex to the full report. During the sitting, the deputy has seven minutes to speak and may speak again after the minister if there is some time left. Oral question sessions allow members to address issues of interest for them, particularly of regional or local interest, more easily than during questions to the government, where the groups play a decisive role. As a result, only the members who have submitted questions usually attend these sessions. The government is not always represented by the minister competent to intervene on the subject in question. In recent times, oral questions without debate have lost their weekly rhythm. Following a reform of the Rules of Procedure in June 1999, they now alternate with a sitting devoted to a private member's agenda, while the number of questions that can be called at each sitting concerned has been increased to twenty-five.

## Written questions

In the European Parliament, members, political groups and committees are entitled to submit questions for written answer to the President of the European Council, to the Council, the Commission and to the Vice-President of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union. Admissibility criteria and deadlines for answers apply but delays are extremely frequent. A completely different procedure are questions for oral answer. These are never answered in writing, even if they lapse without having been scheduled for debate in plenary. They can only be tabled by a political group, a parliamentary committee or at least 5% of the EP's component Members. In addition, with the major interpellations for written answer, a 'hybrid' instrument exists too, as they can be scheduled for debate if they have not been answered, but also if they have been answered (different rules apply). They can only be tabled by political groups. There are specific rules for each of these oversight instruments regarding length, deadlines etc. and maximum limits concerning the frequency in which they can be used.

As is the case for oral questions, there is no procedure for written questions of members of the **US House of Representatives** to the executive branch requiring the latter to provide information on a given subject matter, while they are known in all four European parliaments.

Every Member of the **German Bundestag** can ask the government up to four written questions per month. Similar to the Question Hour questions, they should be short and allow for a concise answer and can only concern issues for which the government is directly or indirectly responsible. Questions and answers are published in the Bundestag printed paper and online the following week. There is a long tradition of interpellations harking back to the German Empire. They can be posed by a parliamentary group or at least

five out of a hundred Members. The President then passes them on to the government. Once the response has been received, it is put on the agenda and debated. There are also so-called small interpellations where a question is posed to the government to be answered in writing. The response is published and not debated.

In the **UK House of Commons** there are two kinds of written question: 'ordinary' written questions and so-called 'Named day' written questions. Government departments usually respond to 'ordinary' written questions between five and 10 working days after the question has been tabled. There is no limit on the number of ordinary written questions Members can table. 'Named day' written questions are dealt with by departments as a priority. They should be answered on the third sitting day after they are tabled. Members can table a maximum of five named day questions each day. This allows Members to prioritise some questions. Answers to written questions are sent by email. A short time later the answers are published on the questions database.

Members of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** may submit written questions (*interpellanze*) to the President of the Chamber consisting of a written enquiry as to the motives or the intentions of the government's conduct in matters concerning certain aspects of its policy. *Interpellanze* therefore may have a broader reach than *interrogazioni* put on the question time.

The presidents of the parliamentary groups, on behalf of their respective groups, or a number of members not less than thirty, may table urgent questions, which shall normally be dealt with during the Friday morning sittings each week. Each president of a political group may table no more than two urgent questions per month of parliamentary work while each member may table no more than one during the same period. The questions submitted are published as an annex to the minutes of the sitting of the assembly. No more than two questions or two questions tabled by the same member may be placed on the agenda of the same sitting. There is a limit on questions for immediate answer, which may only be tabled by one member per group and through the president of the political group to which he/she belongs.

In the **French National Assembly**, the procedure for written questions is an individual prerogative of members. It is the only parliamentary procedure of its kind that is exercised outside the sitting and whose effect is deferred. Written questions are put by a member to a minister; only those concerning the general policy of the government are put to the Prime Minister. Written questions must be drafted concisely and limited to the elements that are strictly essential for understanding the question. They must not contain any personal imputation against named third parties. Moreover, the principle of separation of powers and the non-accountability of the President of the Republic prohibits written questions that question his actions.

The text of written questions is submitted to the President of the National Assembly, who notifies the government. Since 2008, Members submit their questions electronically using a special internet portal. Written questions are published every week on the National Assembly's website. In principle, the answers to the questions have no legal value and are not binding on the administration, except in tax matters where they are considered to express the administrative interpretation of the texts.

The written question procedure has met with great success because of its simplicity and unlimited nature, facilitated furthermore by new IT facilities. It allows members to intervene whenever they wish (even during the intersessional period) and as often, as they wish, with ministers on issues that often directly affect their constituents. The consequence has been an inflation in the number of written questions: from 3,700 written questions tabled in 1959 to 12,000 in 1994, 20,066 in 2015 and 39,258 since the beginning of the 15th legislature.

The average response time was 180 days as of 30 September 2015. The overall response rate was around 70 %. Several procedural changes have been made to improve the response rate and response times. To encourage the government to remedy the deterioration in response rates and deadlines, the Conference of Presidents shall, before the start of each ordinary session, set the maximum number of written questions that may be asked by each Member and defer the remainder to the start of the following ordinary session. The current maximum number of questions that may be tabled by each member for the period stands at 52.

## Seating order

The seating order in the European Parliament's hemicycle is decided by the Conference of Presidents (Group chairs) at the beginning of each legislature: They allocate seats in the Chamber to the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the Union. Each Member of the European Parliament has his own seat in the Chamber, as indicated by his respective political group. Small changes may occur in the seating plan from one part-session to the next, due to changes in political group affiliation of Members. Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President. Since the beginning of the pandemic, due to social distancing restrictions, the seating plan of Members has had to be adapted and Members speak from the central rostrum (without their mask).

The **UK House of Commons** is the only chamber in this comparison in which members do not sit in a hemicycle but on two opposing sides of a gangway which encourages a confrontation between government and opposition parties. Ironically, it is the only parliament where no rules on seating order exist. In the other legislatures, members sit by parliamentary group, and in the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** and **French National Assembly** they have numbered seats, like in the European Parliament.

In the **US**, members of the **House** have no assigned seats, unlike the members of the Senate, but are by tradition divided by party. Members of the Democratic Party sit to the Speaker's right and Members of the Republican Party sit to the Speaker's left.

For members of the **German Bundestag**, there is a general seating order with regard to the parliamentary groups to which they belong (with non-attached members being seated in the back) but within the group, there are no fixed seats. It is common that members move up when there are free seats rather than leaving gaps. This seating order applies generally to all parts of the agenda. Members speak at the designated microphones in the chamber or from the rostrum. Once a Member has spoken, they normally sit down in the first or second row to allow for interaction with the speakers after their speech.

In the **Italian Camera dei Deputati**, 'speakers shall speak from their own bench, standing and facing the President'. To this end, each Member is assigned a numbered seat according to their political affiliation, which must necessarily be used by the member not only for speeches, but also to cast their vote. The seating order of political groups in the hemicycle is from the left, centre, and right of the seat of the President of the Chamber, according to their political orientation. Members of government and of commissions have reserved seats.

The seats in the first row in the centre of the chamber are reserved for the members of the 'Committee of Nine', a nine-member committee appointed at the end of the discussion of a bill in the Committee, composed in such a way as to ensure the proportional participation of minorities, for the discussion before the Assembly and for the examination of new amendments tabled directly in the Assembly.

Following a tradition created by the first **National Assembly** during the French Revolution, the 'left-wing' parties sit to the left as seen from the President's seat; the 'right-wing' parties sit to the right. The seating arrangement thus directly indicates the political spectrum as represented in the Assembly.

The choice of the location of each member is made in two stages. First, the President of the Assembly and the representatives of the political groups decide on the distribution of the groups in the Chamber. The division is then done by sector. Once this division has been made, the president of each political group distributes his or her elected representatives as he or she wants. The Assembly has no say in the matter. The President of the Assembly and the representatives of the groups also determine where non-attached members sit. It is customary for them to be grouped together in the same place, but sometimes they are separated. At the beginning of each new legislature, the members take their final places during the Prime Minister's general policy statement, when he presents his programme and commits the government. Before this date, the placement of the members follows the alphabetical order. Each seat has a number. Some of the seats have commemorative plaques in memory of well-known former members. There are about sixty of them in the National Assembly.

According to Rule 159 (added in 1994) of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, members may excuse themselves from attending a particular sitting. Requests must be made in writing, giving reasons, and addressed to the President.

As mentioned above, the seating order in the **UK House of Commons** is governed by convention: Ministers sit on the front bench on the right hand side of the Speaker: the Chief Whip usually sits in this row immediately next to the gangway. Parliamentary Private Secretaries usually sit in the row behind their minister. Official opposition spokespersons use the front bench to the Speaker's left. Minority or smaller parties sit on the benches below the gangway on the left. There is nothing sacrosanct about these places and on occasions when a member has deliberately chosen to occupy a place on the front bench or on the opposite side of the House from their usual position, there is no redress for such action.

Members may speak only from where they were called, which must be within the House. They may not speak from the floor of the House between the red lines (traditionally supposed to be two sword-lengths apart). Also, the Speaker will not call a member in the gallery if there is room downstairs. Members must stand whilst speaking but if they are unable to do so, they are allowed to address the House seated. As a matter of courtesy, you should not intervene immediately after arriving in the Chamber, and you should remain for a reasonable time after intervening.

## Meetings in parallel to plenary sessions

In the European Parliament, as a general rule, no other meeting may be held simultaneously to plenary sessions. Therefore, no meeting of a parliamentary body nor any other meeting involving Members shall be authorised during voting time, during formal sittings and on Wednesday mornings during Strasbourg part-sessions and on Wednesdays from 15.00 to 16.30 during Brussels part-sessions or during any other debate of particular general importance defined as such by the Conference of Presidents. However, there are the important exceptions from the general principle for various parliamentary bodies.

In some parliaments, there are no general rules in force against meetings concurrent with plenary sessions or only for specific parts of the session. At present, committee meetings in the **US House of Representatives** may take place at any time, except during a joint session of the House and Senate or during a recess when a joint meeting of the House and Senate is in progress. Earlier restrictions on

scheduling House committee meetings and exemptions were eliminated in the 105th Congress (1997-1998). Meetings of the **German Bundestag** usually follow the plenary week pattern described above but there are no Rules of Procedure that explicitly prohibit meetings to be held in parallel. However, the core time on Thursday is kept free of any other commitments to allow as many Members as possible to attend. The **UK House of Commons** also has no rules in place against parallel meetings of MPs when the House is in session. Select committees, for example, often meet while the House is in session, usually at least once a week. Most committee meetings are scheduled on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, or on Thursday mornings, with a few on Monday afternoons. If MPs are required to take part in a vote, the division bell will ring, signalling that they should leave the committee meeting to vote in the Commons.

By contrast, in the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, committees may not meet at the same time as the Assembly is in session. With regard to the needs of the work of the plenary, the President of the Chamber may always revoke the convocation of committees. However, it is possible for the committees to meet in parallel following an express authorisation of the President of the Chamber. However, the established practice is that the President generally authorises the holding of meetings of the committees at the same time as a session, if no votes are scheduled. On the other hand, meetings of the committees cannot be held at the same time as sittings in which votes are scheduled in the plenary, unless specifically authorised by the President of the Chamber. Likewise, the standing committees of the **French National Assembly** are generally subject to a very rigorous time constraints. In principle, they do not sit at the same time as the Assembly's public sitting, except to complete the examination of a text on the agenda. However, this principle is very difficult to respect, especially since the introduction of the single ordinary session (in 1995) has concentrated public sittings over three days (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). Wednesday morning is reserved for committee work. Almost all committee meetings take place on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday.

## Parliaments' calendars

The European Parliament (EP) typically organises its work in successive weeks attributed to committee, political group and 12 usually monthly plenary part-sessions per year of one week, with additional plenary part-session being held in Brussels in 'mixed' weeks comprising committee meetings and political group meetings as well. Furthermore, a few days each year are set aside for external parliamentary activities for inter-parliamentary meetings and constituency work. For 2020, the number of working days amounted to 174. Committee and plenary working days are more frequent than political group working days.

With the exception of the UK, national parliaments decide set their calendar themselves. In the **UK House of Commons**, the calendar is set by the government, although the individual recess periods are decided by the House on motions tabled by the government. The 13 Fridays on which the House of Commons sits each session to consider Private Members Bills (PMBs) are also proposed by the government and again agreed by the House, through the tabling of a motion. The (annual) calendar setting out the sitting days of the House of Commons in each parliamentary session is announced and issued by the Leader of the House of Commons as far in advance as is practicable. This helps Parliament and the government with their long term planning but is always issued on the understanding that dates are subject to the progress of the scheduled parliamentary business. There are no 'committee weeks' or 'constituency weeks' like there are in the EP.

Before the pandemic, unlike the EP calendar, the **US House of Representatives** calendar was divided into time in session requiring presence in D.C. and district work time (presence outside of D.C.), with committee

work and floor activities arranged as deemed fit, with no strict floor voting during one specific week. Owing to the pandemic, the 2021 structure of the Majority Whip calendar is different from the pre-pandemic structure. As of June 2021, the House legislative calendar in 2021 continues to be divided into weeks with voting days (23 weeks of mostly four days in a row stretching from Monday to Thursday or from Tuesday to Friday including committee work, totalling 101 days), committee workdays without votes (59 days) and district work time (93 days). As of June 2021, the Majority Whip calendar suggests that the House in 2021 is in session for 35 weeks corresponding to 160 working days.

The **German Bundestag** generally works for 22-24 weeks (or 110-120 days) a year. The calendar set by the Council of Elders for the next year includes 1-2 non-plenary weeks for every two plenary weeks. Election years, like 2021 with 16 session weeks, are an exception to that pattern.

The calendar of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** usually includes also, in varying degrees of detail, the start and end times of sittings, differentiated by day, therefore there is no fixed overall duration of plenary sittings. It accounted, for example, for 164 sittings of the Assembly in 2020, lasting 753 hours and 55 minutes, with an average duration per sitting of 4 hours 59 minutes. With regard to the number of session weeks, the Rules of Procedure stipulate that each month, with the exception of the period in which the budget session is held, one week is set aside for the suspension of the Chamber's work for the performance of other activities relating to the parliamentary mandate, such as activities of members in their constituencies. However, this rule is rarely applied.

The **French National Assembly** sits for about 150 days per year (for both ordinary and extraordinary sessions). The Assembly sits on the basis of one ordinary session starting on the first working day of October and ending on the last working day of June. According to the Constitution, the number of days of sitting during an ordinary session must not exceed 120 days. The Constitution allows the Assembly to determine their weeks in which sittings take place, which, in practice, essentially allows them to determine the weeks when they will not sit (during holiday periods or an election campaign, for instance). Plenary sittings take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, afternoons and evenings, and on Wednesday afternoons and evenings. The time of the sittings is the following but can be amended: 9.30 a.m. - 1 p.m. in the morning, 3 p.m. - 8 p.m. in the afternoon, and 9.30 p.m. - 1 a.m. at night. On a proposal from the Conference of Presidents, the Assembly may decide to hold further sittings, provided the maximum number set by Article 28 (2) of the Constitution is not exceeded.

## Strengthening parliamentary prerogatives

### Organisation of Hearings

Similarly to the other five national parliaments, the **European Parliament** conducts Hearings on a regular basis. Its committees can invite the Commission and other EU institutions and bodies to their meetings. Apart from that, they may organise public hearings with experts for different purposes and shall organise public hearings on European citizen's initiatives once they have gathered the necessary citizens' support. Pre-appointment hearings are also relevant to the European Parliament's committee work, especially the ones held during the appointment procedure of the European Commission. The EP's inquiry committees may also invite witnesses to provide evidence. In general, hearings are public in all the parliaments studied, except in the Bundestag. The rules that govern the organisation and scheduling of the hearings are quite

flexible in the five parliamentary democracies that were analysed. Usually, the Committee Chairs have a wide margin of discretion to decide on how to organise the debate. When it comes to expert hearings, in the EP, it is necessary to obtain the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau. Each parliamentary committee shall submit a draft 6-months program of expert hearings to the Conference of Committee Chairs twice a year. Individual authorisations for hearings may also be granted and in urgent cases, the President may directly give his/her authorisation.

The **US Congress** conducts different types of hearings. Oversight hearings are used by Congress to hold the executive branch accountable and more specifically to monitor and supervise the implementation of a given public policy. Investigative hearings can take place in relation to allegations of mismanagement or wrongdoing by public officials. Legislative hearings are used by Committees to collect evidence and expertise in relation to topics on which the Committee might legislate and confirmation hearings are used by the Senate to appoint key public officers following their nomination by the US President.

Rules applicable to the organisation and scheduling of hearings are quite flexible in both the EP and the Congress. While in the EP the organisation of hearings requires the prior authorisation of the Parliament's Bureau (with some exceptions), in Congress, the organisation of committee meetings and hearings may vary from one committee to another and the practical conduct of them largely remains under the remit of the committee chair.

Notwithstanding these differences, Congress hearings share some commonalities. They are public and the possibility to have in camera sessions is limited. From an organisational point of view, the tasks carried out by the committee staff ahead of a hearing usually include amongst others: selection of the witnesses in conjunction with the majority (or subpoena them, if so required); drafting a memorandum and an opening statement for the chair, ranking members and other congressmen/women if so requested; sending the invitation; and the day before the hearing, check members' attendance to ensure that the required quorum to take sworn testimony is reached. Hearing documents, including research material and written testimony are made available to the public.

Unlike EP hearings, where MEPs articulate a long list of questions and the experts, for time reasons, can pick the questions they are most comfortable to answer, the House hearings are structured into five-minute slots. This allows individual Members to ask several questions during this time-frame requiring immediate answers from the witness giving testimony.

In general, **German Bundestag** committee hearings are not public. They take place when the Committee Chair decides and according to the agenda set by the Council of Elders. The federal government, the Federal Council and its representatives are always permitted to attend hearings if they wish. The committee may request the presence of a member of government both for public and non-public hearings. Similarly, they can ask experts or representatives of associations to attend. For non-public hearings, Members of Parliament are generally permitted to attend as listeners. When appointing the committees, Parliament may decide for certain committees to restrict attendance to their regular members. Such a decision can also be taken later in the legislative term for individual issues within the committee's competences. The Foreign Affairs Committee hearings are not public in line with the Rules of Procedure.

A committee may organise a public hearing of experts and advocacy groups. It serves to introduce scientific expertise as well as enhancing public awareness. If it concerns a proposal that has been assigned to the committee by the Bundestag, such a public hearing can be called if a quarter of the committee members demand it. If it concerns a topic the committee is working on without official assignment by the Bundestag, it must first be officially put on the committee's agenda and then requires a resolution by the committee. Public hearings are streamed live on the Bundestag's website and its recordings can be freely accessed

afterwards. The hearing's minutes as well as the written statements submitted by experts and associations are made available on the committee's website.

The **UK House of Commons'** Committees can organise a hearing with experts, where this is considered essential to their work on a particular subject. Hearings can also be held jointly by two or more committees. Most committees organise regular hearings, as they allow them to hear from experts and others and facilitate further discussion on the key issues at stake.

Hearings are the ordinary instrument available to Parliamentary Committees of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** for carrying out cognitive activities and in-depth investigations. The formal or informal nature of hearings, for which a different publicity regime applies, depend on who is going to be interviewed and on the assessment made by the Committee's Bureau. Formal hearings have a full publicity regime, which includes stenographic and summary reporting and the broadcasting of the session. If, on the other hand, the Committee wishes to do so, or if the subject to be heard does not fall within the types of subjects identified by the Regulations, the hearing is informal. Informal hearings are usually preferred to formal ones in a procedural context due to the flexibility of this instrument. The number of hearings in recent legislatures have been steadily increasing, especially the informal ones.

In the **French National Assembly**, the special or standing committee may summon any person it deems necessary to a hearing on matters of national defence, foreign affairs, internal or external state security, as long as it respects the principle of the separation of powers. The committees frequently hear members of the executive, experts, stakeholder representatives and others. During the 14th legislature, 2 837 hearings were organised in the Parliament. The hearings held by the committees of enquiry are public. However, they may decide to have closed meetings in certain cases. The persons heard by a committee of enquiry shall be allowed to consult the minutes of their hearing.

## Scrutiny and control powers

All parliamentary democracies that were looked at in this study scrutinize the executive, monitor the proper use of the budget and ensure the correct implementation of the law. The European national parliaments have the power to dismiss the head of the government through a vote of no confidence. The **European Parliament** has the right to approve and dismiss the Commission. A candidate for the position of Commission President is proposed by the Member States' governments based on the results of the European elections. The candidate is then elected by the Parliament. The Commission as a whole is subject to a vote of consent by Parliament and it can be forced to resign if the EP adopts a motion of censure. The Parliament keeps a close eye on the Commission's work, scrutinizing its reports on EU policies, legislation and the budget. Commissioners are often required to appear before MEPs, at committee meetings or in plenary, to defend their policies, explain what action they intend to take and answer questions. In addition, the EP can ask the European Court of Justice to take action against the Commission or the Council if they have acted in a way that is contrary to the provisions of EU law. Furthermore, the EP has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of EU law.

The **US Congress** has a range of supervisory and control powers. The fundamental power Congress has over the President and the Administration is through law making, as the executive must implement the laws passed by Congress. Congress exercises direct control over the executive branch through its power to impeach executive officials as well as the President and Vice-President. Congress also oversees the executive branch by scrutinizing its activities in a way which informs its decision to fund, de-fund, or

terminate government programmes. Last but not least, Congress has the power of investigation and inquiry into executive branch activities.

Congress also created the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to perform many of the legislative branch's oversight tasks, both at the direct request of congressional committees or as mandated by public law or committee reports. The GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer money.

When it comes to the Federal Court, Congress can exert significant influence through its ability to create lesser federal courts and prescribe their jurisdiction. Similarly, the Senate holds sway over the composition of federal courts, including the Supreme Court, by confirming or failing to approve the President's nominees.

The Federal Reserve is accountable to Congress. It submits written reports to Congress twice a year explaining the central bank's monetary policy. In addition, the Fed's chairman and vice-chairman regularly testify in front of Congress to discuss monetary issues.

The **German Bundestag** exercises an important power of scrutiny over the government. The starting point of this scrutinising function is the election of the Chancellor by the Bundestag at the start of each electoral term. The Bundestag may also depose the head of government by means of a constructive vote of no confidence, in which the majority of Members of Parliament express their lack of confidence in the Chancellor. This procedure only applies to the Chancellor. Dismissal of a single member of government is not possible.

Members of Parliament can obtain information about the work of the government and its objectives. For this purpose, they have a number of rights and instruments at their disposal: oral questions, written questions, interpellations and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Armed Forces.

In addition, the Bundestag's committees exercise their control function indirectly by participating in the legislative process. However, they also have direct control rights. For example, they request reports on current legislative projects from representatives of the federal ministry and make recommendations. Furthermore, the Bundestag has specialised control committees and committees of inquiry. The specialised control committees monitor specific areas of government work, such as intelligence activities, which are overseen by the Parliamentary Control Committee. The control bodies can demand information from the government on their general activities and on transactions of particular importance. The committees of inquiry are set up temporarily in response to events and with the consent of at least 25 percent of the Members of the Bundestag. Their task is to investigate and clarify political and bureaucratic abuses in the federal government, the Bundestag and the administration.

Prime Ministers are appointed in part based on their ability to command confidence in the **UK House of Commons**. The appointment of the PM is technically a prerogative power of the Crown. In practice, the Crown has very limited discretion in their choice of PM and must take full account of the outcome of election results and the preferences of the political parties represented in the House of Commons. No consideration is made of the balance of parties in the House of Lords, which varies from the House of Commons.

A motion for a 'vote of confidence' (proposed by the government) or a motion for a 'vote of no confidence' (proposed by the opposition) can be held at any point during the legislative term to test whether the Commons continues to support the PM and his/her government.

The House of Commons has a range of procedures and mechanisms to hold the government regularly to account. MPs and the opposition parties have different means to question government ministers. These include: oral questions, written questions, Prime Minister's questions and Opposition Day. The opposition

has a specific mandate to criticise any aspect of government policy it wants on 20 Opposition Days held in each parliamentary session.

The **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, together with the Senate, exercises a policy-setting function in respect of the government, primarily by means of the vote of confidence. Before it begins to govern, every government must first obtain a vote of confidence in Parliament, which grants or denies it by voting on a motion of confidence that is based on the programme communicated to the Houses of Parliament by the incoming government. Deputies and Senators may move a motion of no confidence in the government at any time. The motion of no confidence must be countersigned by at least one tenth of the members of one of the two Houses of Parliament. The same discipline applies to motions requesting the resignation of an individual minister, i.e. motions of individual non-confidence. In addition, the Italian Parliament uses the following scrutiny tools: written questions, interpellations, fact-finding investigations, enquiries and opinions on government instruments (all appointments of presidents and chairpersons of public authorities and for all draft legislative decrees that allow the exercise of delegated powers for more than two years).

The French Fifth Republic set up a hybrid political regime with characteristics of both a presidential regime, such as the election of the President by direct universal suffrage, and a parliamentary regime, notably the possibility for the **French National Assembly** to hold the government to account. When the National Assembly passes a resolution of no confidence, or when it fails to endorse the government programme or general policy statement, the Prime Minister shall tender the resignation of the government. There are three procedures for making government accountability an issue of confidence before the National Assembly: 1) Making the government's programme or a statement of general policy an issue of confidence in the government; 2) Tabling of a motion of censure initiated by members; 3) Making the adoption of a bill an issue of confidence in the government.

Follow up on the implementation of laws has become one of the main missions of Parliament. It has a double aim: to check the implementation of the laws passed, and to influence the concrete conditions of their application. Several mechanisms have been set up since 1996 in order to meet these new demands. These include:

- presentation before standing committees of implementation reports concerning laws which require the publication of rules of a regulatory nature;
- setting up assessment and monitoring missions within the standing committees e.g., the Assessment and Monitoring Mission (MEC);
- setting up the Commission for the Assessment and Monitoring of Public Policies (CEC).

## Appointment procedures

The role and the prerogatives of the **European Parliament** have evolved and increased over time, not only as regards legislative powers and oversight but also in relation to the procedures to nominate, vet and appoint people to other senior positions in EU institutions, agencies and other bodies, including the Commission, Court of Auditors, Court of Justice, Ombudsman, European Central Bank, etc. The EP's role varies from case to case depending on the legal basis. Parliament's scrutiny of such candidates, in various different forms, helps in ensuring the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of the process as well as its transparency. What is today codified in the EU Treaties, secondary legislation and Parliament's Rules of Procedure, is mostly the result of a set of parliamentary processes that became established practices over the years. The EP, the US Senate and the Bundestag have a strong role in the appointment procedures,

while in the UK, in Italy and in France, the government is responsible for the majority of public appointments.

In the **US Congress**, confirmation hearings are dealt with by the Senate. The US President has the power to nominate - with the advice and consent of the Senate - ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the United States, whose appointments are not otherwise provided for. In practice, a limited number of them gives rise to public attention, usually those concerning very high positions, such as the Supreme Court Justices. Many other nominations are handled by the Senate as routine business. For instance, in 2020, the Senate dealt with 21,854 nominees out of which 21,617 were confirmed. Several factors influence the public visibility and the debate within the Senate including whether or not the President and the majority in the Senate are from the same political party or, whether it is a presidential election year. To prepare for these hearings, each committee decides on the kind of background documentation the nominee must provide.

The **German Bundestag** plays a role in the appointment and vetting of several bodies and institutions. The Federal Assembly consists of all Members of the Bundestag and the same number of Members nominated by the Bundesrat and it comes together once every five years to elect the Federal President. The Judicial Selection Committee, together with the relevant Federal Ministries, appoints the judges of the highest Federal Courts. Half of the Committee is composed of the State Ministers responsible for the relevant subject area while the other half of the members is elected by the Bundestag. Also, the President and Vice-President of the Federal Court of Auditors are elected by the Bundestag through a majority vote.

The Bundestag appoints two thirds of the Joint Committee, an emergency parliament replacing the Bundestag and the Federal Council when the Bundestag can no longer convene because of a state of defence (meaning the country is under attack). The Joint Committee is composed of 16 representatives of the States and 32 Members of the Bundestag. In addition, the Bundestag appoints half of the members of the Mediation Committee, a body located between the Bundestag and the Federal Council. Its task is to seek compromise solutions in the event of legislative conflicts between the Bundestag and the Federal Council. Finally, The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information is nominated by the federal government and elected by the Bundestag.

The UK Prime Minister (PM) or one of his/her Ministers is responsible for the vast majority of public appointments in the UK, including heads of government agencies and other public bodies. While the **UK House of Commons** has the right to be consulted on a small number of these appointments, it rarely has any power to veto government choices. The role of the House of Commons is limited to holding pre-appointment hearings for preferred candidates for more than 50 public bodies. This is only a small part of the more than 1000 public appointments made by UK ministers each year.

There are exceptional cases where the House of Commons has a more powerful role in public appointments. The 2011 legislation establishing the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) gave the Treasury Select Committee a veto over the appointment of the chair and members of the Budget Responsibility Committee. In the case of the National Audit Office, which is actually a parliamentary body, the House of Commons leads the process of appointing the chair. The Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman is formally appointed by the Crown, through an independent and objective selection process that involves the chair of the House of Commons' Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee.

In **Italy**, the President of the Council of Ministers, the Council of Ministers and individual Ministers, before proceeding to appointments, proposals or designations of presidents and vice-presidents of institutes and public bodies, must request Parliament's opinion. The activity carried out by the parliamentary committees

in this case is advisory. In the event that the committees do not express an opinion within the regulatory deadlines, the government is free to proceed and, in the event of a contrary opinion, it may depart from it.

In a number of cases, it is envisaged that the parliamentary assemblies themselves should elect all or part of the members of certain public bodies, e.g.:

- Authority for Communications Guarantees
- Italian Data Protection Authority
- Board of Directors of RAI (the national public broadcasting company)
- Presidential Board of the Court of Audit
- Parliamentary Supervisory Committee of Cassa Depositi e Prestiti
- Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment

Elections falling within the competence of the two Chambers in joint session:

- Members of the Constitutional Court
- Members of the Superior Council of the Judiciary

The President of the **French National Assembly** is responsible for appointments to functions that are essential for the proper functioning of the Republic. He/She appoints, following the opinion of the Law Committee, a member of the Constitutional Council at the time of each triennial renewal and two of the six personalities called to sit on the panels of the High Council of the Judiciary with jurisdiction over judges and prosecutors. The President also appoints one or more members of various councils and independent administrative authorities (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, Conseil général de la Banque de France, Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés, Autorité des marchés financiers, Autorité de régulation des communications électroniques et des postes, Haute Autorité pour la transparence de la vie publique, etc.).

## Transparency of legislative procedures

All parliaments in this study make their legislative documents available to the public through a register or their internet. Primary law lays down some principles, which need to be respected by the EU institutions. The institutions are to conduct their work as openly as possible, with the **European Parliament** and Council meeting in public, the latter specifically 'when it deliberates and votes on a draft legislative act'. In addition, institutions must ensure the publication of documents relating to legislative procedures, and allow citizens and EU residents to access them. EU legislative documents are considered public, with some limited exceptions. While the EP receives the Council mandate for negotiating, the mandate does not provide information on the individual position of the Member States. The Ombudsman conducted an inquiry into the transparency of the legislative process of the Council in 2017. The Court of Justice also looked at this issue and considered that the Council was wrong to refuse public access to parts of a note from its Secretariat that contained amendments tabled by a number of Member State governments. The Court clarified that the EU's rules on access to documents 'aim to ensure public access to the entire content of Council documents, including, in this case, the identity of those who put forward proposals'. The Ombudsman welcomed the Council's confirmation that, as a consequence of the Court's ruling, legislative documents containing Member States' positions are now need to be disclosed upon request. However, this practice can only work well, if member States' positions are recorded appropriately from the start.

The **US House of Representatives** has specific availability requirements applicable for legislative measures that are captured under the '72-hours-rule'. The House cannot consider a measure or matter reported by a committee until the proposed text of each report has been made available to members, delegates, and the Resident Commissioner for 72 hours. Once a bill or resolution is introduced into the U.S. Congress, it is automatically registered in the database of Congress activities, the Congressional Record. As a piece of legislation moves forward, more information, including the text of the bill and an analysis by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), is added to the entry. A bill introduced in the House can only become law, if either the Senate passes exactly the bill approved by the House or a different bill on the same matter passed by the Senate is matched in every detail with the bill of the House in a so-called conference committee. Conference committees are rarely used because the Speaker is keen on keeping control over negotiations with the Senate. Bills are reconciled between the two Chambers through messages between the Speaker and the Senate Majority Leader.

In the **German Bundestag** there is a public register of documents that publishes all official documents on legislative procedures. Official documents are legislative proposals, forms of order by the parliamentary groups or the government, recommended resolutions and reports of the committees, amendments and resolution proposals, major and minor interpellations to the government, reports and briefings as well as questions for the plenary Question Hour. Those official documents are also printed and distributed to the members, the Federal Council and Federal Ministries. As the Bundestag employs stenographers, reports, minutes and other official documents are usually published within the week. The same applies to minutes and resolutions taken by the Federal Council.

Hansard is the official publication for all **UK House of Commons** proceedings and (verbatim) debates. Hansard is published the day after parliamentary proceedings take place and is freely available online for the public via the Hansard website. Where there is legislative reconciliation on amendments between the Commons and the Lords, written amendments are then sent back and forth between the two Houses in a process known as 'ping pong'. There is no strict limit on the number of times that written amendments can be sent back and forth between the Houses. This means the House of Commons (or Lords) is always working on the latest version of the text as amended by the other House.

Parliamentary documents of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** include documents published by Parliament for the purpose of disclosing the activities carried out by MPs in the Lower House and by the various parliamentary bodies. They include: minutes of the proceedings, verbatim reports of sittings, bulletins of parliamentary bodies, messages by the Presidents of the Houses, printed documents with the texts of bills, proposed parliamentary enquiries or proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure, reports presented to the Floor of the House by committees, the final conclusions of fact-finding enquiries and the official documents of the parliamentary oversight body. The sittings of the Chamber of Deputies are public. Verbatim reports of the sittings of committees are also published, both in printed publications and on the internet. The sessions are also transmitted live on the internet, on radio and on the Chamber of Deputies satellite television channel.

The "perfect bicameralism" of the Italian legal system, in which the Chamber and the Senate are endowed with the same powers, does not provide for the position of one chamber to be communicated to the other chamber during the legislative process before the bill is approved with a final vote by one of them. Only after approval of one of the chambers, is the approved text transmitted to the other chamber of the Parliament.

In **France**, bills and proposals for legislation must be examined by both houses of parliament (the **National Assembly** and the Senate). Once the text is adopted by the National Assembly, it is transmitted to the second assembly. The Senate examines the text according to the same rules, after a period of four weeks

after its transmission. The amended text must then be sent back to the first assembly to be examined again. During this back-and-forth phase, known as the parliamentary shuttle ('la navette'), only the amended articles are considered. In the event of disagreement, the government may convene a joint committee (CMP). The laws come into force on the day they determine, or failing that, the day after their publication in the 'Journal Officiel de la République française' (JORF). Since 1 January 2016, the Official Journal has been exclusively digital and can be accessed by the public.

## Resolving conflicts of competence between committees

Each parliament has set up different procedures for resolving conflicts between committees. In the US House of Representatives and in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the Speaker has the authority to refer the proposals to the appropriate committee. In the Bundestag, the competent committee is defined at the first reading, upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders. The French National Assembly introduced a flexible system, which allows any committee to submit an opinion on all or part of the legislative text. As a result, conflicts are extremely rare in the Assembly. The issue of resolving conflicts of competence does not apply to the House of Commons as it has a unique system in terms of committee structure. It has Select Committees and General Committees. Select Committees are mainly scrutiny committees that have no role in the legislative process, but which are free to pursue their own lines of inquiry on topics within their remit. House of Commons General Committees are ad hoc cross-party committees that consider legislation, hear evidence and provide advice. In the case of the **European Parliament**, if a conflict arises over the competence of two or more standing committees, the question of competence shall be submitted to the Conference of Committee Chairs. The Conference of Presidents shall take a decision within six weeks after the submission of the question on the basis of a recommendation from the Conference of Committee Chairs.

The **House of Representatives** vests the Speaker with the authority to refer bills to House committees. He or she has many options and is supported by the House Parliamentarian. The Speaker may refer a bill to a committee of primary jurisdiction and, if he or she deems fit, to one or more additional committees for consideration in sequence, with appropriate time limits. The 30 day-timeline means that the first committee cannot hold up the legislation indefinitely. The Speaker can refer portions of the matter reflecting different subjects and overlapping jurisdictions to one or more committees or may refer the matter to a special, ad hoc committee appointed by him or her with the approval of the House.

Rule X is the main determinant of House committee jurisdiction. However, other factors also play a role in the referral process, including

- precedents established by past referrals;
- agreements between committees outlining their jurisdictional boundaries on new, evolving, or contested policy subjects; and
- statutes that identify how particular types of matter will be referred.

Once a legislative proposal is on the plenary agenda of the **German Bundestag** it normally goes through three deliberations - so-called readings - in the Parliament. The primary objective of the first reading is to designate one or more committees, upon recommendation of the Council of Elders. If several committees are chosen, one committee is given the lead and responsibility for the further legislative procedure. The other committees have an advisory function. If the parliamentary groups differ in their opinion on which

committee should be given the lead for a certain proposal, it is put to vote in plenary. The vote may be preceded by a debate.

**UK House of Commons** Select Committees are mainly scrutiny committees that have no role in the legislative process, but which are free to pursue their own lines of inquiry on topics within their remit. House of Commons General Committees are ad hoc cross-party committees that consider legislation, hear evidence and provide advice. There are three main categories: The first is Public Bill Committees, created for a specific legislative proposal and consisting of 16-50 members distributed according to the seats held by the different parties in the House of Commons. The second category is Delegated Legislation Committees, created for specific statutory instruments (similar to EU delegated acts). Finally, there are Second Reading Committees that serve a formal procedure in the legislative process. As all these General Committees are specific to a given legislative proposal or statutory instrument or legislative procedure' There is never a competence dispute between them.

The President of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** refers the bills to the appropriate Committees on the basis of their subject matter. If, within two days of the announcement, a Group Chairperson or ten deputies question the competence of the Committee, the President must put it on the agenda and the Chamber must vote on the issue. After referral, two Committees may ask the President of the Chamber to allow joint consideration of a bill. Any questions of jurisdiction arising between two or more Committees shall be submitted to the President of the Chamber, who then can submit the question to the Committee on the Rules of Procedure. The Committee on the Rules of Procedure is chaired by the President himself or herself and is composed of at least 10 Deputies. It is responsible for issuing opinions on how to interpret the Rules of Procedure and how to resolve conflicts of competences between Committees.

If there is a conflict of competence between two standing committees, the **French National Assembly** decides which committee is responsible for the bill. However, conflicts are very rare. The last time it occurred, was in 1979. The absence of conflicts of competence can be explained by the flexibility of the procedure of issuing an opinion. Each committee has the freedom to submit an opinion on all or part of a text referred to another standing committee.

## Changes to committee competences and structures in response to the current crisis situation

Out of the five parliaments, only the House of Representatives has made adjustments to its committee structure as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It created a Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis. In the other legislatures, no significant changes took place in terms of the structure and the competences of committees. However, most of them modified their Rules of Procedure so they could move to a form of hybrid working and Members could participate in meetings remotely. They also allowed more flexibility concerning the times of the committee meetings. Regarding the **European Parliament**, no major change occurred. In principle, it is allowed for the EP to change its committee structure at any given time; however, the established practice is that it modifies the structure and/or the competences of its committees shortly before the end of each legislative period, in order to keep up with the changing circumstances and increase its effectiveness in the subsequent legislative term.

The **US House of Representatives** adapted its structure of parliamentary committees as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. On 23 April 2020, the House established the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis during the 116th Congress. The Select Subcommittee was re-authorised by the Speaker

for the 117th Congress. Another change in the committee structure was introduced in June 2021, when Speaker Pelosi announced the creation of a new select committee to probe the Capitol Hill riot of 6 January 2021.

The **German Bundestag** passed a law on the special application of the Rules of Procedure during the limits imposed by the Covid-19 crisis. According to that law, a committee can make resolutions when a quarter of its members are present not just physically but also via an electronic form of communication. Furthermore, the committees may authorize their committee chair to schedule votes outside of their hearings even during plenary weeks. Votes may be held, and resolutions may be taken, using an electronic form of communication. Hearings open to the public and public hearings of experts and associations may be held in such a way that the public can follow them exclusively via electronic forms of communication.

The Covid-19 crisis also saw the appointment of a special parliamentary advisory group concerned with the Covid-19 pandemic. Its area of work essentially comprises three major thematic blocks. Firstly, keeping the pandemic under control, which includes, for example, research into the virus and its mutations, opportunities through digitalisation, and international aspects. The second block of topics covers vaccinations, both the development and approval of vaccines as well as access to vaccination and the associated ethical, social and legal aspects. Finally, the third looks at the social impact of the pandemic.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, **UK House of Commons** committees moved to a form of hybrid working from April 2020, with some MPs (and staff) working from the House of Commons and meeting online with other MPs (and staff) participating in proceedings remotely. These measures are currently still in place. One of the effects of these temporary changes is that it has allowed committees to meet during parliamentary recesses, which is usually not possible. However, no significant changes to House of Commons committee structures and competences have yet taken place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There have been no adjustments in the composition of parliamentary committees in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** and the **French National Assembly** either.

## Enhancing parliamentary diplomacy

### Relations with the executive

In Europe, traditionally, parliaments have less power when it comes to foreign policy. The governments are responsible for this area. In the US, the President and the Congress share this power, according to the US Constitution. However, in terms of foreign policy, the Bundestag, the House of Commons, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the French National Assembly can formulate opinions, monitor the measures of the government and evaluate public policies. In addition, they can influence diplomacy using their budgetary power. Similarly to these four national parliaments, the **European Parliament** has the right to be consulted regularly by the High Representative on the decisions made under the CFSP and to be informed of the policy's evolution. The EP holds bi-annual debates on CFSP progress reports and submits questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative. In addition to the political dialogue, Parliament exercises its authority through the budgetary procedure. As one arm of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament must approve the annual CFSP budget. Parliament also helps to shape the relevant external financial instruments. The EP regularly scrutinises the operations of the EEAS and provides

it with suggestions on structural issues, ranging from its geographical and gender balance to its interaction with other EU institutions and the diplomatic services of the Member States. Furthermore, the EP has a role to play in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. Parliament's consent is required before the Council can conclude such agreements.

The US Constitution divides the foreign policy powers between **Congress** and the President. The Constitution gives the Senate specific powers to confirm high-ranking foreign policy officials, such as the Secretary of State and US Ambassadors, as well as gives its consent on treaties with foreign countries negotiated by the Executive branch. The House of Representatives does not benefit from specific foreign policy powers to the same extent as the Senate, but it does share power with the Senate to declare war against foreign states.

Traditionally, the Federal Republic of Germany's foreign policy has been the responsibility of the federal government. This foreign policy is supervised at the parliamentary level by the Members of the **German Bundestag**. Apart from the scrutiny they exercise over the actions of the federal government, the classic fields of 'parliamentary foreign policy' include the Bundestag's rights to participate in the conclusion of treaties under international law, legislative acts of the European Union and Bundeswehr deployments outside Germany. In addition, Parliament can influence foreign policy priorities through its budgetary power. The federal constitutional court has ruled that the German Bundestag has a "right of co-decision" or a "right to participation" in the field of foreign affairs and German constitutional law foresees the establishment of a Foreign Affairs and a Defence Committee. To a certain extent, the Bundestag can thus pursue an independent foreign policy in the sense of "parliamentary diplomacy", even though it is not legally binding under international law.

In the **UK House of Commons**, four committees deal with foreign policy: the Foreign Affairs Committee, the International Development Committee, the International Trade Committee and the European Scrutiny Committee. They scrutinise the expenditure, administration and policies of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Department for International Trade (DIT). In addition, they monitor the legal and/or political importance of new EU legislation/policies.

The **Italian Chamber of Deputies** cooperates on a regular basis with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The cooperation implies the exchange of information and documents related to the international activity of the Chamber. The cooperation also implies contacts with the Italian diplomatic missions and corps.

In accordance with Article 24 of the Constitution, the Parliament monitors the action of the government and evaluates public policies. Traditionally, the **French National Assembly** has little power in the field of controlling the external action of France. The Parliament can control French diplomacy through its budgetary powers and through information missions.

## Interparliamentary delegations

All five parliaments have some form of interparliamentary delegations - official groups of Members - whose purpose is to build ties to foreign countries, regions or organisations, as well as to multilateral assemblies. The **European Parliament** currently has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one term to the next. The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner

country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner. There are two main types of delegation: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations. Standing delegations have three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations. The Conference of Presidents has the authority to adopt the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs.

Parliamentary diplomacy is a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy. To conduct international relations, Members of the **US Congress** may participate in Congressional Member Organisations (CMOs) with the objective of improving foreign relations with another country and/or increasing the awareness of, helping find possible solutions to, and influencing the congressional agenda on certain international issues or regions. Moreover, Congressmen will sometimes travel abroad in delegations, sometimes known as "codels", through CMOs. The House of Representatives Office of Interparliamentary Affairs was established in 2004. It facilitates official visits to and from foreign parliaments. Congress has a number of statutorily established interparliamentary groups. These include:

- US Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- NATO Parliamentary Assembly
- Canada-US Interparliamentary Group
- Mexico-US Interparliamentary Group
- US-Senate-China Interparliamentary Group
- US-Senate-Russia Interparliamentary Group .

The **German Bundestag**'s political relations with the national parliaments of foreign states are cultivated by – at present – 47 bilateral and multilateral parliamentary friendship groups. In addition, the German Bundestag sends delegations to interparliamentary organisations and regional forums, for instance to the NATO, OSCE, Council of Europe, and the Euro Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly etc.

The **UK Houses of Parliament** send joint parliamentary delegations to the following multilateral assemblies: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, NATO, OSCE, and the European Security and Defence Assembly. These parliamentary delegations are composed of members from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, reflecting their interests/expertise as well as ensuring a fair political balance. The House of Commons is also active in a number of foreign policy bodies/associations and bilateral fora, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly and the British American Parliamentary Group.

The **Italian Parliament** has five joint Senate-Chamber of Deputies delegations to:

- the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: 18 members and 18 substitutes;
- the NATO Parliamentary Assembly: 18 members;
- the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE): 13 members;
- the Parliamentary Assembly of the Central European Initiative (CEI): 7 members;
- the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA): 3 members.

Friendship groups (*groupes d'amitié*) function as delegations and help create a network of personal links between French parliamentarians, their foreign counterparts and the actors of the political, economic, social and cultural life of different countries. Currently, the **French Assemblée Nationale** has 154 *groupes d'amitié*. The practice of successive Presidents of the Republic inviting one or more presidents of friendship groups during their trips to the country or countries concerned illustrates the importance of this form of inter-parliamentary exchange in bilateral relations.

## Diplomacy on human rights

In the parliaments this study looked at, human rights and democracy-related issues are dealt with by the Committees on Human Rights or by the Foreign Affairs Committees. These can pass legislation and resolutions on the subject and can monitor if government bills are compatible with human rights obligations. In addition, parliamentary delegations play an important role in Diplomacy on human rights. The **European Parliament** attaches great importance to the protection of human rights both inside and outside the Union and has used its power of promoting respect for fundamental rights. It holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has adopted a host of resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights. The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee on Human Rights defend human rights outside the European Union and fight against the death penalty with the support of other key players in the Parliament. The EP created the Sakharov Prize, which is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network, the EU assists laureates, who are supported and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes. The EP awards the Sakharov Prize, with its EUR 50,000 endowment, at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year.

As in its foreign policy operations, the **US Congress** can influence US positions on human rights through the legislation and resolutions it passes. The House of Representatives has its own caucus devoted to human rights. The bi-partisan 'Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission' was established in 2008. Drawing from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the congressional group promotes, defends, and advocates for international human rights. The commission hosts events and operates projects, such as the 'Defending Freedoms' project.

Questions related to human rights and democracy are primarily handled by the **German Bundestag's** Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid. The Committee's responsibilities in this field are consequently very broad. The Committee's purpose is to help stop violations of, and avert threats to, human rights – both in Germany and at the international level. In addition, its aim is to ensure that human rights are safeguarded in the struggle against terrorism, to guarantee the security of those who defend human rights and to work on the improvement and further development of national, European, and international instruments, which can help protect human rights. Parliamentary friendship groups are also involved in strengthening human rights.

Questions on human rights domestically are treated by the **UK Parliament's** Joint Committee on Human Rights. The Joint Committee consists of 12 members, appointed from the House of Commons and the House of Lords, to examine matters relating to human rights within the United Kingdom, as well as scrutinise every Government Bill for its compatibility with human rights obligations on a national and international level. Human rights abroad fall mainly in the remit of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and the International Development Select Committee, since they relate to the UK's foreign policies.

Human rights with respect to international relations are a matter of competence of the Standing Committee for Foreign and Community Affairs of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**. A Sub-Committee on Human Rights was established within the Committee for the entire legislative period. It conducts fact-finding inquiries and hearings of individuals, NGOs, agencies, etc.

The **French National Assembly** acts as a guardian of democracy and human rights. It goes on election observation missions at the request of the authorities of the foreign countries. Also, parliamentary

delegations play a significant role in the protection of human rights and democracy. For instance, the Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities Between Men and Women has the task of informing the Assembly on government policy in respect of its consequences for women's rights and equal opportunities.

## Democracy support

Each parliament has a different approach and uses different tools for supporting democracy and strengthening democratic institutions. The US and the UK set up a commission/foundation for this purpose. The former created the 'House Democracy Partnership' and the latter the 'Westminster Foundation'. The Bundestag offers international parliamentary scholarships, while the Italian Chamber of Deputies contributes to European twinning projects, which aim is to help democratic transition in third countries. The French National Assembly mainly focuses on election observation missions. As the only directly elected EU institution, the **European Parliament** is particularly committed to supporting sustainable democracies throughout the world. This commitment is regularly highlighted in Parliament's resolutions. Democracy support activities focus on a small number of priority countries and are closely associated with the Parliament's role in election monitoring in these priority countries and other non-EU countries. In 2012, the European Parliament decided to create the Directorate for Democracy Support with four units: the Democracy and Election Actions Unit, the European Parliament Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit, the Human Rights Action Unit and the Pre-Accession Unit. In 2014, Parliament set up a Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that provides political guidance for all activities supporting democracy. It consists of 15 MEPs and is co-chaired by the chairs of Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Development. Activities – although decided and supervised by the DEG – must be approved by the Conference of Presidents (CoP).

The House Democracy Partnership (HDP) in the **US House of Representatives** is a bipartisan commission that works with countries around the world to promote responsive, effective government, and strengthen democratic institutions. It has 20 members. The HDP connects House members, staff, and Congressional Budget Office experts with their counterparts in partner countries, supporting legislatures in areas such as budgetary issues, committee operations, constituent services, oversight, ethics as well as libraries and research services. Since 2005, the HDP has cooperated with 21 partner legislatures on five continents – including in Afghanistan, Georgia, North Macedonia, Iraq, Lebanon, Kosovo, Myanmar, Tunisia and Ukraine – in a number of different areas. Over that period, the HDP has conducted 35 inbound programs and brought more than 800 members of parliament and legislative staff to the US.

The **German Bundestag** offers International Parliamentary Scholarships to qualified graduates under 30 from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, France, Israel, North America, South America, Central Asia, the Arab region, South-East Asia and New Zealand. Its aim is to convey democratic values and tolerance, to deepen understanding for cultural diversity and to promote peaceful coexistence in the world.

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is a **UK** public body set up in 1992 to support democratic institutions overseas. WFD is sponsored by the FCDO, which provides most of its funding. Half of the WFD Board (4 out of 8) are serving MPs. WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups, and participates in election missions, with a view to making political systems fairer and more inclusive, accountable and transparent. Its initiatives include helping protect women from violence in the Middle East; making politics more inclusive in Africa; consolidating democratic institutions in Asia; and building trust in democracy across the Western Balkans. WFD recruits international election observers

and fields nearly 150 staff in offices in more than 30 countries (and currently operates across 38 countries). The WFD is a member of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), the umbrella organisation for European democracy assistance organisations. The UK Parliament is also active in democracy support in Commonwealth countries.

The **Italian Chamber of Deputies** participates in several programmes intended to support parliaments in democratic transition. This activity is carried out through European twinning projects or other international platforms like INTERPARES.

Since the 1980s, the **French National Assembly** has received a number of requests from foreign countries for election observation missions. The criteria used to assess the appropriateness of such missions are as follows:

- formal request ;
- the exceptional nature of the elections, in particular because of the "political importance of the country";
- opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- guarantee for being able to follow the elections on the spot without any constraints.

## Mediation of foreign conflicts

The **European Parliament** developed a strong role in mediation and is highly engaged in this area compared to the other five parliaments. Members of the European Parliament are involved in a wide range of mediation, conflict prevention and dialogue activities that complement the EU's overall approach. The European Parliament prides itself in having a 'culture of dialogue', a set of norms and rules that require political opponents to engage in dialogue to bring about a compromise. Efforts have been made to 'export' this culture of dialogue to non-EU parliaments, through a mediation and consensus-building process known as the 'Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy'. In this framework, four series of dialogues with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) have taken place so far. In addition, the EP is committed to building strong and lasting relations with future leaders outside of the European Union. A programme targeting young political leaders was set up in 2015. The young political leaders programme (YPL) expands on existing activities organised by Parliament, such as the annual fora for young leaders from the European Neighbourhood (Maghreb, Middle East, Eastern Partnership), and the young political leaders initiative for the Sudan.

The **German Bundestag** contributes to peace mediation and mediation support through the Centre for International Peacekeeping Operations, which it founded together with the German federal government. The Centre's main purpose is to strengthen international civilian capacities for crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The **US, UK, Italian and French parliaments** are not involved in mediation and conflict prevention activities.

## High-level visits by foreign dignitaries

Foreign dignitaries can participate in the proceedings of the US Congress, UK Parliament and the French National Assembly. In the Italian Chamber of Deputies and in the Bundestag, foreign guests do not address

the plenary. German law only allows Members and representatives of the government to speak in the German Parliament. When an 'official visit' takes place in the **European Parliament**, the Heads of State, high-level Religious Leaders, or any other personalities, are invited to address the formal sitting of Parliament. Visits by Heads of State and Government, Presidents of Parliaments, and others holding equivalent ranks, which do not include an address to a formal sitting shall be considered as working visits. Invitations to make an official visit to the EP are issued by the President after consultation with the Conference of Presidents. On the basis of established practice, the Heads of State of the EU Member States have an open invitation to pay an official visit to the EP. Official visits are managed by the protocol unit (DG PRES).

Traditionally, foreign leaders and dignitaries can be received at joint Meetings and Joint Sessions of the **US Congress**, in addition to separate House and Senate Receptions. A Joint Meeting is the preferred forum for addresses from foreign leaders and dignitaries; it became a standard part of foreign leaders' state visits to the US after 1945. To initiate a Joint Meeting, both houses declare themselves in recess for a joint gathering in the House Chamber. They do so by resolution or by unanimous consent, whereby the House tends towards using unanimous consent rather than a resolution, for the purpose of receiving a foreign leader.

The right to speak in the **German Bundestag** is restricted to Members of the Bundestag, Members of the Federal Council as well as the federal government and its representatives. There is no legal basis for granting non-parliamentarians the right to speak in the Bundestag. There have been exceptional cases, when non-parliamentarians or privileged persons spoke in the plenary chamber, however, they were foreign guests at special commemorative sessions and ceremonial acts. To comply with protocol, the speeches were not held in a regular plenary session.

Foreign dignitaries may participate in the proceedings of the **UK Parliament** as part of their official/state visits to the country. These official/state visits are on invitation from the Queen as the Head of State, who also hosts the visit. In practice, the government is heavily involved in deciding whether and when to offer the invitation to foreign dignitaries, and in setting the agenda and content of the visit. Some prominent official/state visits to the UK have included a speech given by the foreign dignitary to both Houses of Parliament. Such speeches are usually given by current or former Heads of State. Since the Houses of Parliament are independent from the executive, they can choose to reject the option of a speech by the foreign dignitary. This happens rarely and the details of such rejections are not widely publicised.

The President of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** receives on a regular basis Speakers from other Parliaments, Prime ministers, Heads of State. Usually, they are not invited to take the floor in the plenary hall to deliver a speech.

Article 14 of the Rules of Procedure states that the Bureau of the **French National Assembly** establishes the conditions, which govern the way external guests can address the Assembly. Since 1993, when a new policy was adopted, foreign heads of state and prime ministers are regularly invited to speak at the French Parliament.

## Multilateral and international parliamentary fora

All the parliaments in this study send delegations to various multilateral and international parliamentary assemblies or organisations. The **European Parliament** participates in a number of multilateral parliamentary forums. In the framework of Euronest, it works hand-in-hand with its six Eastern Partners to support European integration reforms and foster stability, security, democracy and prosperity across the

continent. The European Parliament's Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (DACP) is the EP part of the joint undertaking set up by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits resolutions and recommendations addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. This Partnership was established at the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1999. Today, EuroLat debates, monitors and reviews all questions relating to the partnership. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean institution provides a forum for the elected representatives of the EU and its southern neighbours around the Mediterranean to cooperate.

The **US Congress** has a number of statutorily established interparliamentary groups. Multilateral interparliamentary groups include the US Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which advances US interests and furthers engagement with parliamentarians from OSCE participating States, as well as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover, the bipartisan Congressional European Union Caucus aims to increase cooperation between the US and the EU.

The parliamentary friendship groups cultivate the **German Bundestag's** political relations with national parliaments. In addition, the Bundestag sends delegations to multiple interparliamentary organisations, such as the NATO, OSCE and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

The **UK Parliament** has always participated in the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), a worldwide organisation of parliamentarians founded in 1889, with the role of enhancing knowledge and understanding of parliamentarians on key global issues through parliamentary exchange. All UK branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) send delegates to the general assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. This Conference usually takes place on an annual basis (rotating location) and takes key decisions for the CPA.

The **Italian Chamber of Deputies** plays an active role in instilling a parliamentary dimension into intergovernmental cooperation involving Italy, including cooperation with the European Union's Neighbourhood. The priority area of multilateral cooperation consists of the Euro-Mediterranean area, the fulcrum of which is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PAUFM). The Chamber of Deputies also cooperates with the countries of the new Eastern Partnership, as well as with countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Chamber of Deputies attends the periodic Conferences of Speakers of Parliaments, in particular those of the Lower Houses of the Parliaments of G7 and EU countries. With an observer status, the Chamber of Deputies takes part in intergovernmental conferences promoted in the context of the United Nations and other international organisations (WTO, OSCE, the World Bank, the IMF etc.), as well as in special thematic conferences organised by national parliaments.

The **French National Assembly** is active in this field through:

- the implementation of inter-parliamentary cooperation which allows the National Assembly to provide technical assistance to parliaments that request its support;
- the participation of the National Assembly in the work of international parliamentary assemblies of which it is a member: the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), NATO's Parliamentary Assembly (NATO-PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE-PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie (APF), Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM).

In 2019, a common French-German assembly has been approved, composed of 50 members of the National Assembly and 50 members of the Bundestag. It will follow the implementation of the Aachen treaty and the French-German ministerial council.

## Relations with Citizens / Communicating effectively

### Public perceptions of parliaments

Out of the five national parliaments that are being analysed here, only the **House of Commons** conducts opinion polls on its work. In the EU, public opinion is assessed via the EU institutions' joint Eurobarometer survey tool. The European Commission, the **European Parliament** and other EU institutions and agencies use this instrument to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. The European Parliament started in 2007 to commission its own Eurobarometer surveys within the joint inter-institutional framework. DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU), is responsible for designing, commissioning and analysing the surveys. Conducted regularly and at least twice per year since 2007, they focus on the one hand on citizens' perceptions and expectations towards EU action, and on the main challenges the Union is facing. An annual 'Parlemeter' survey measures the European Parliament's public image and role as well as public opinion with regard to EU membership and its benefits. A dedicated set of EP Eurobarometer surveys measures Europeans' interest in the European elections every five years. Pre- and post-electoral surveys measure citizens' interest in these elections and the key issues at stake as well as voting behaviour and motivation.

The **US Congress** has no centralised communication service, equivalent to the European Parliament's DG COMM, therefore, public opinion on work of the House and the Senate is not analysed. Each office maintains its own ties with the public, conducts outreach activities, manages social media, etc.

While regular surveys are conducted on the public's opinion of the German government, the perception of the **German Bundestag** is not studied often. In 2014, Bertelsmann Stiftung carried out a study on how visible the work of the Bundestag was to the public. It was based on a face-to-face survey of 1,530 respondents between 1-11 September 2014, conducted by the Allensbach Institute. Only 26% of the respondents said they could clearly remember a recent Bundestag debate and only 54% could correctly identify which parliamentary groups formed the opposition.

In 2018, 43 % of respondents to a poll commissioned by Hansard claimed to know 'a fair amount' about the **UK Parliament**, and 7 % considered themselves highly knowledgeable. Knowledge of Parliament tends to be particularly high in election years, with a longer term trend towards increased knowledge. Greater awareness of the Parliament's work does not translate into positive perceptions. In 2019, only 34 % had confidence in members of the House of Commons (House of Lords: 33 %; government: 33 %) to act in the public interest. This is a far lower figure than for civil servants (49 %), the courts (62 %) and the armed forces (74 %). Intensive media coverage of parliamentary debates on Brexit raised public awareness of the parliament's role, but did not improve its image. In 2019, only 28 % expressed confidence in the way Brexit was being handled by the House of Lords, compared to 25 % for the House of Commons and 26 % for the government.

Thus far, no opinion polls have been conducted by the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** and the Senate to find out the public's perception of the Parliament nor by the **French Assemblée Nationale**.

## New patterns in relations with the media in response to the current crisis

National parliaments and the **European Parliament** have been active in their communication with the media during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bundestag, the House of Commons, the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the French National Assembly moved most of its meetings and briefings online and increased its activity on social media. The **US Congress** has no centralised communication service. Each office maintains its own ties with the public and the media; therefore, their communication strategy is developed independently. The European Parliament is the only EU institution, which has remained open for journalists throughout the pandemic. Commission and Council have been operating in a fully remote mode since March 2020, whilst Parliament adopted a hybrid approach - facilitating remote participation to parliamentary meetings and press conferences, but without excluding the possibility for journalists to come in person to the pressroom, to interview MEPs or simply to work from the EP's press centre. Whilst the physical presence of the media on EP premises has naturally fallen significantly over the past 12 months, online participation in media events (especially online briefings) has increased enormously. Online meetings and briefings also opened up access to journalists in the Member States to follow EP activities directly and thus blurred the distinction between national media and Brussels correspondents. Growing exchanges with journalists from other countries lead to the 'Europeanisation' of the debate.

Before 2019, the **German Bundestag** decided not to use the social media platforms of Twitter and YouTube, due to data protection concerns. Instead, it relied on its own website, a freely downloadable App, and the 'Parliamentary television'. In October 2019, the Bundestag started making greater use of new information channels, namely Twitter and YouTube. For that purpose, a staff unit on 'Social Media' was established in the Information and Communication sub-department of the Presidium of the Bundestag. Since August 2020, it runs a Twitter account called @hib\_Nachrichten. The Twitter account publishes selected news from the committees and current parliamentary initiatives. It is similar to the 'hib' newsletter that is available on the Parliament's website.

Throughout the pandemic, the **UK House of Commons** Communications Office remained active. Parliament premises including the House of Commons Press Gallery were open to journalists, although with reduced seating. To allow coverage by a broader range of outlets, the media were offered pooled access to parliamentary debates. MPs were allowed to use 'filming points' in the grounds of the Parliament for face-to-face interviews with the media, subject to social distancing constraints. Inevitably, however, most interviews were conducted online. Weekly media briefings were also held online; this resulted in an increase in the number of participants, with people attending from a range of regional and international outlets. As well as these weekly briefings, communication staff also organised a number of bespoke online media briefings devoted to particular issues. The pandemic sparked strong media interest in the work of the parliament, with record numbers of enquiries from journalists.

In the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, there is an iconic place called Transatlantico, where traditionally, politicians meet with reporters and talk about important issues. From the outset of the pandemic, to allow all the 630 MPs to take part in the plenary sessions in compliance with social distancing rules, the Transatlantico became part of the Plenary Hall. 120 deputies had their seats in Transatlantico. At the same time, the Chamber of Deputies guaranteed the press the possibility to meet MPs in the areas outside the

Plenary Hall. During lockdown, Montecitorio's web site significantly increased its number of viewers, by streaming all Committee hearings and providing information and data on the different measures debated and enacted by the House. The Chamber of Deputies' social-media accounts have covered every single event, with a special focus on government communications to the House.

In March 2020, the Bureau of the **French National Assembly** decided that journalists would only be able to follow the work of the plenary and committees online (with the exception of the LCP-AN TV channel and the permanent correspondent of Agence France Presse). During plenary sessions, one TV channel, one Radio, one written press and one photographer would be allowed to enter the Parliament. Between October 2020 and July 2021, committee meetings were closed to journalists. Since July 2021, the committees are open to journalists depending on available seats.

## Fighting disinformation and hate speech

The **US Congress** has no centralised approach to fight disinformation and hate speech since it has no centralised communication service. The other parliaments have set up sub-committees or/and committees of inquiry and adopt legislation to deal with this issue. In addition, they create observatories, which are responsible for monitoring hateful content. The **European Parliament** addresses disinformation and hate speech through non-legislative and legislative measures such as the current draft Digital Services Act. While services undertake specific actions to counter disinformation, the most effective defence against false narratives and foreign influence operations is to ensure proactive communication of factual narratives related to the work and decisions of Members. To this end, Parliament's services communicate in all official working languages and through a variety of media and platforms to ensure maximum reach. The Secretariat of the Parliament established an inter-DG task force against disinformation to streamline cooperation between different DGs and services. This ensures more joined-up action in response to disinformation threats. The EP's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) developed its capacity to monitor, analyse, alert and devise counter strategies in response to disinformation and deceptive narratives that target the institution and its Members. DG COMM cooperates closely with the other DGs (EPRS, EXPO and ITEC e.g.) and other EU institutions via an informal "tripartite" arrangement. It participates in the European Commission Network Against Disinformation and shares information with EU Member State governments via a secure "Rapid Alert System". Furthermore, it cooperates on a regular basis with leading experts in civil society.

The **German Bundestag** attaches great importance to the fight against disinformation and hate speech. It addresses the issue through legislative proposals and interpellations to the German government. It published a so-called 'netiquette' for its Twitter, which needs to be followed by the users. According to the netiquette, comments including hate speech are deleted and, if necessary, reported. The Petitions Committee created a netiquette as well.

The work of the **UK Parliament's** communication services focuses mainly on factual presentation of parliamentary activities and procedures, rather than directly countering disinformation. The parliamentary committee dealing with disinformation is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee of the House of Commons. In March 2020, the Committee set up a Sub-Committee on Online Harms and Disinformation. The Sub-Committee has opened an inquiry into online harms and the ethics of data, which is expected to lead to a report.

In order to fight disinformation, the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** approved, on 28 July 2020, the creation of a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry on the massive dissemination of false information (currently under consideration by the Senate).

The law against the manipulation of information, which aims to better protect democracy against various forms of intentional dissemination of fake news, passed its second reading in the **French National Assembly** on 20 November 2018. The 24 June 2020 law, which aims to fight against hateful content on the Internet, creates an observatory responsible for monitoring and analysing the evolution of hateful content, in conjunction with the operators, associations and researchers concerned. The observatory is placed under the authority of the Conseil Supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA).

## Social media strategies

All national parliaments that were studied are present on social media, except the **US Congress**, which has no centralised communication service. The UK Parliament and the Italian Chamber of Deputies have four different social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. The Bundestag is on two platforms: Twitter and YouTube, and the French National Assembly has three accounts: Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. The **European Parliament** is very active in this area, it is present on the following platforms: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit, Flickr and Pinterest. DG COMM's social media team manages these accounts. All social-media activities are part of the editorial workflow of the Directorate for Campaigns, with a weekly review in the 'agency' meeting. They are also part of the larger coordination at Directorate General level: Editorial Committee (CED) and more frequent Restricted-Editorial Committees (CED-R) during Plenary and Committees weeks. Both CED and CED-R are chaired by the advisor to the DG and Spokesperson of the European Parliament, who provides editorial and political oversight of social media activities. Furthermore, the Web Communication Unit and its social-media experts provide trainings to MEPs and their staff.

The Social Media Staff Unit of the **German Bundestag** runs the following social-media platforms for the German Bundestag:

- Twitter: 12,700 followers
- YouTube: 69,700 subscribers

Until 2019, the Bundestag had no social media strategy due to data protection concerns. On 23 October 2019, the Bundestag Presidium decided to make greater use of Twitter and YouTube as additional information channels.

The main social media platforms used by the **UK Parliament** are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube: Number of followers/subscribers:

Platform	UK Parliament	House of Commons	House of Lords
Facebook	398,000	77,000	31,000
Twitter	1,600,000	385,000	307,000
Instagram	163,000	35,000	7,000
YouTube	262,000	—	—

Parliamentary committees also have their own separate social media accounts, but some are much more active than others. The Commons Library, equivalent to the European Parliamentary Research Service, is also prominent on social media (6,307 tweets; 32,000 followers). To ensure consistency across these many separate accounts, the Parliamentary Digital Service has established strategies for Facebook and Instagram use, and the Commons and Lords Liaison committees have both made recommendations for more effective use of social media by Commons and Lords committees.

The **Italian Chamber of Deputies** has a dedicated social media team that works seven days a week to show live recordings and committee meetings, communicate the progress of Parliament's work and historical and cultural content and events. Montecitorio is present on the following social-media platforms: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

- Youtube: 45,000 and 6,000 new followers
- Facebook: 100,000 followers
- Twitter: 325,000 followers
- Instagram: 70,000 followers

The **French National Assembly** has three social media accounts – Facebook, Google+ and Twitter. Three officials from the Communication and Multimedia Information Department are responsible for managing these accounts and feeding them with content.

- Facebook : 139,000
- Twitter (in 24 languages): 373,000
- LinkedIn: 81,500
- Instagram : 42,000 followers.

## Hybrid events

During the pandemic, most parliaments hosted hybrid events. The **US Congress** did not organise events due to the lack of a centralised communication department. The French National Assembly suspended the organisation of events during the corona crisis and only kept essential tasks. This study has no information about what practice parliaments are going to adopt after the pandemic. The **European Parliament** intends to continue hosting hybrid events and in order to be able to do that, it plans to have the seminar rooms in the new ZWEIG visitors' area equipped with high-performance cameras and a trigger microphone system that will support targeted audience interaction. All seminar rooms will furthermore be equipped with professional webcams for streaming presentations, allowing the MEPs, staff and visitors to interact with those who cannot travel to Brussels. Major events, for instance Europe Day, European Youth Seminars, Multilingualism Day as well as press conferences held by EPLO will be organised in the future in hybrid format.

Currently, the **German Bundestag** offers the possibility to follow its public events via videoconferences (upon prior registration) as in-person participation is not possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not clear if and for how long this practice will continue.

Apart from the Chamber (plenary) sessions and select committee meetings, the **UK Parliament** does not organise events. Some events are organised by All-Party Parliamentary Groups, which are informal cross-party groups of members that have a shared interest in a particular theme or country. Some of these Groups

involve external individuals and organisations. During the pandemic, Groups continued to hold events in online or hybrid format.

In March 2020, the political-administrative management bodies, in compliance with the measures aimed at containing the spread of the Covid-19 virus, suspended institutional and cultural events in the premises of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**. Starting from the second half of 2020, hybrid events were being organised anew.

The **French National Assembly** decided to introduce a 'hierarchy' of parliamentary functions and suspend activities when circumstances require. It should be noted that such an approach was strictly implemented from mid-March 2020 on by the Assembly's bodies, which adopted an overall approach of adapting the rules governing the operation of the institution. They kept the Assembly's essential tasks, questions to the government and debates on urgent legislation. All other activities were suspended (delegations, committees of inquiry, study groups, friendship groups, etc.).

## Digital offer to visitors

Each national parliament offers digital guided tours for its visitors. Some of them also host digital workshops and virtual exhibits. The **European Parliament** is in the process of developing digital content for visitors, and soon, it will be launching three new projects. The 'Immersive Online Experience' allows citizens to visit the European Parliament's premises, while the 'Virtual Role Play Game' provides an insight into EP law making through the eyes of a member. In addition, the 'Virtual House of European History' gives a 3-D tour of the museum.

Similarly, the **US Capitol Visitor Center** has various digital offers for visitors: a video tour of the Capitol, online learning, virtual exhibits, podcasts, brochures in English (translated into 13 languages) as well as 'Capitol Conversations' (online discussions about the history of the Capitol).

In June 2021, the **German Bundestag** made a five-minute 'Digital Guided Tour of the German Bundestag' available to the public. The video shows the plenary hall, other parts of the building and some art work.

The **UK Parliament's** Participation team organises a range of public engagement activities, including tours of the Palace of Westminster and workshops at the Education Centre. Now that 'face-to-face' activities are no longer possible, these activities have gone online. The Parliament's website offers virtual tours, including self-guided tours and live guided tours in which participants can interact with a presenter. By April 2021, nearly 30,000 people had taken part in one of the virtual guided tours. During the same period, 75,000 schoolchildren from over 2,000 schools around the UK participated in online learning workshops.

On the website of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies**, it is possible to have a virtual tour of Palazzo Montecitorio. During the tour, the visitors receive in-depth information on the historic background of the rooms and the artwork they contain. This will be further developed in the coming months.

A 'virtual walk' inside the **French Assemblée Nationale** premises is available to visitors, thanks to a partnership with Google Street view. In addition, an audioguide for the physical visit is available beforehand in four languages (FR, EN, DE, ES). Visitors can also access a video about the Palais Bourbon and another one about treasuries of the Assemblée Nationale's library. Visitors can consult online databases about former members of the Assemblée Nationale and a collection of greatest speeches in the history of the Parliament.

## Members' activities on official parliamentary websites

In the **US House of Representatives**, each office has its own website, which they manage individually. The other four national parliaments have a dedicated section for Members on their website, which in general, includes their personal data and parliamentary activities. Just like the national parliaments, the **European Parliament** has a separate section on its official website for all MEPs. It makes their contact details available and provides basic information on their background (for instance date of birth, CV, parliamentary career and a declaration of financial interests) and on their assistants (names and contact information). In addition, the parliamentary website can include links to social media platforms used by MEPs and can give details about their political activities namely about the speeches they deliver in plenary, the reports they prepare, the parliamentary questions they raise and the motions they table. MEPs also publish the meetings they hold with third parties. The data related to Members on the website is reviewed and updated on an ad-hoc basis. The supervision of the website is done by the Bureau and the Secretariat (Secretary General, DG PRES and DG COMM), who have the overall responsibility for content management.

Individual offices maintain their own websites in the **US House of Representatives** offices'. These include:

- The 441 Representatives (435 Members, 5 Delegates, 1 Resident Commissioner);
- The Committees of the House (with a separate website for each full committee and the minority party office of each committee);
- The Leadership offices of the House;
- The Officers and Officials of the House.

All Members of the **German Bundestag** have a dedicated section on the official website of the Bundestag. It shows their contact details, an overview of their background (date and place of birth, education and parliamentary career) and links to their own website and other social media channels (if available). It also lists their memberships and offices as well as their constituencies. The website has links to the speeches given by the Member of the Bundestag and lists how (and if) they voted. Notably, it also contains a section of 'information that must be disclosed'. Lastly, it lists any membership in other committees, such as parliamentary friendship groups. The biographical information is based on self-reporting by the Members of Parliament. For information that must be disclosed, the official Rules of Conduct need to be followed.

The **UK Parliament's** website includes general information about Members' work, voting procedures, pay and allowances, etc. In addition, there is detailed information about each individual MP and Lord, including: (for MPs): contact details, parliamentary career, voting record, early day motions, spoken contributions, written questions, electoral performance; (for Lords): contact details, parliamentary career, experience, focus areas, voting record, spoken contributions, written questions, register of interests.

The website of the **Italian Chamber of Deputies** includes an individual page for each Member where the public can access:

- Personal data (name, date and place of birth, education and employment);
- Political data (about his election);
- Parliamentary data (his or her political group, responsibilities in committees or other parliamentary bodies);
- Links to personal website or social network.

In addition, each individual page includes, for all MPs, two links to:

- Annual declarations of financial interests (including tax returns);

- Parliamentary activities: speeches in plenary and committees, parliamentary questions, motions, bills signed by the Member, proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure, proposed parliamentary enquiries.

In the **French National Assembly**, the Communication and Multimedia Information Department assumes the function of Webmaster. In carrying out this task, it acts in compliance with the instructions coming from the Bureau's delegation in charge of communication and the press. Members' information on the website includes speeches, reports, parliamentary questions, and motions. It does not include attendance records for plenary sittings, voting records for plenary (except for public ballots), voting records for committees. For each Member, several bookmarks are available displaying the following items: videos (each intervention is filmed and available on demand, questions asked by the Member, Member's reports, Member's bills (whether signed or co-signed), reports of plenary sittings or committee meetings, interventions, and votes in public ballots).

### **Eschel Alpermann and Annamaria Forgacs (editors)**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
September 2021

# Parliamentary Democracy in Action

## Comparative studies

1. US House of Representatives
2. German Bundestag
3. UK House of Commons
4. Italian Camera dei Deputati
5. French Assemblée Nationale





# ***Building continent-wide democracy***

US Congress  
European Parliament  
Increasing impact and effectiveness

**EDITOR**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE**

Gisela Grieger (chapters 1 and 2), Naja Bentzen (chapters 3 and 4)  
EP-US Congress Liaison Office in Washington DC  
European Parliament  
Email contact: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**LANGUAGE VERSIONS**

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in September 2021  
Brussels, © European Parliament, 2021  
Cover illustration: ©vector\_master - Fotolia.com

**DISCLAIMER**

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

# Content

1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	60
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	97
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY.....	116
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	129

## 1. Plenary reform and agenda-setting

	European Parliament	US Congress
<b>Structure of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>There are specific time slots fixed for each day of part-session - generally Strasbourg sessions start on Monday at 17:00 and end on Thursday at 16:00, while Brussels sessions start at 15:00 on Wednesday and end at 13:00 on Thursday. Part-session days may last until 23:00 or, less often, until 24:00.</p> <p>Each agenda of the part-session contains time slots for debates - divided into morning and afternoon/evening slots - and votes generally scheduled at noon from 12:00 to 14:00 and followed by oral explanations of votes. Key debates and topical debates are specifically earmarked in the agenda; key debates are usually scheduled on Tuesday or Wednesday morning, while topical debates on current affairs (Rule 162) are scheduled on Wednesday afternoon at 15:00 and should last for 1h30. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law take place once every month, on Thursday morning of the Strasbourg part-session.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session comprises a section explaining the various parliamentary procedures, a summary of the items on the agenda and, for each time slot of a sitting, a breakdown of the items with details of the documents being considered, the procedure to be used, information on speaking time and deadlines for tabling texts and requests for separate, split and roll-call votes.</p>	<p>Unlike the European Parliament (EP) that typically holds a plenary session of one week per month, the U.S. House of Representatives or short the House may schedule floor activities whenever it is 'in session'.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, the House was three weeks in 'session' when Members were expected to be present in D.C. Roughly one week per month Members were absent from D.C. for district work.</p> <p>This 'three weeks on, one week off' schedule means that every day that the House is in session there will be votes, unless it is a pro-forma session<sup>2</sup>, but even that includes voice votes on procedural issues. Hence, the number of House floor voting days each month tends to be much higher than the number of voting days of the EP.</p> <p>However, owing to the pandemic, the House legislative activity in 2021 continues to be divided into committee working days (during which members may work from their home state) and voting days.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, since May 2020, the practice of '<a href="#">proxy voting</a>' has been allowed in the House. It was <a href="#">re-authorised</a> in May 2021.</p> <p>According to the Majority Leader's <a href="#">calendar</a> (as of June 2021), voting on bills in most months of 2021 takes place during two weeks on mostly four days each. It is expected that this exceptional structure will be removed, once social distancing rules are abolished.</p>

<sup>1</sup> This comparison focuses on the House of Representatives, as did the 2016 EPRS study. The author of parts 1 and 2 of the text on the U.S. House of Representatives is grateful to [Mark Strand](#), President of the Congressional Institute and co-author of the book [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, 2017, for his extremely valuable comments on and additions to the draft text. Emphasis in the text added by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Pro-forma sessions are [held](#) for the purpose of meeting the 'three-day rule' in Article I, Section 5 of the U.S. Constitution. The three-day rule prohibits either chamber of Congress from not meeting for more than three consecutive calendar days during a congressional session without the approval of the other chamber.

<sup>3</sup> The [website of the Majority Leader](#) sets out this division for the current and the next month. [House Calendar](#) for the whole year as of June 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Plenary sessions under COVID-19 have been organised at the beginning of the pandemic in a reduced format, with a limited number of items for debates and votes and with voting being done remotely. The system for remote voting has evolved in the months following the start of the pandemic to allow for automatic counting of votes and therefore more voting sessions.</p> <p>Changes introduced in plenary as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic were remote voting already as of March 2020, with a system than was largely improved over time, and remote interventions in debates as of October 2020, from its liaison offices.</p> <p>There is currently a process ongoing in the House of reforming the structure of the plenary agenda and format of debates, aiming of rendering plenary sessions more attractive to Members and incentivise them to attend.</p>	<p>At the first day of each Congress, the House determines the daily time-frame typically reserved for House floor activities.<sup>4</sup> On 4 January 2021, the House adopted <a href="#">H. Res. 11</a>, which spells out the House meeting times as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday: 2:00 p.m.;</li> <li>• Tuesday: 12:00 p.m. (or 2:00 p.m. if no legislative business was conducted on the preceding Monday);</li> <li>• Wednesday: 12:00 p.m.;</li> <li>• Thursday: 12:00 p.m. and</li> <li>• on all other days of the week: 9:00 a.m.</li> </ul> <p>The hour of meeting can be changed at any time, usually by unanimous consent after consultation between both party leaderships.</p> <p>During a week with voting days, every legislative business day starts after the ceremonial parts - prayer, approval of the Journal and pledge of allegiance<sup>5</sup>.</p> <p>Floor business tends to be scheduled in the afternoon after <a href="#">committee work</a> (<a href="#">hearings</a> and <a href="#">mark up</a> sessions during which bills are revised and amended) in the morning. On Fridays, if included in the voting days, legislative business starts early in the morning.</p> <p>The schedule for the voting week ahead is published every Friday<sup>6</sup> before the mostly four voting days (they may stretch from Monday to</p>

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Institute, 117<sup>th</sup> Congress [House Floor Procedures Manual](#), accessed 4 July 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Pursuant to [House Rule XIV](#), Clause 1, the House’s daily order of business, unless otherwise ordered, shall begin with the chaplain’s opening prayer followed by the approval of the Journal and the Pledge of Allegiance.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Usually on the last legislative day of the week, a representative of the Minority leadership seeks unanimous consent to speak out of order for one-minute to address the House for the purpose of asking the Majority Leader about the legislative schedule for the upcoming week. Following the announcement, the Whip offices will send Members “Whip Notices” for the next week listing the specific bills to be considered including how each bill will receive Floor consideration (for example, suspension of the rules, a rule from the Rules Committee, unanimous consent, etc.).’ 117<sup>th</sup> Congress [House Floor Procedures Manual](#), Congressional Institute, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>Thursday but also from Tuesday to Friday). The <a href="#">texts of the bills</a> are published roughly at the same time (for availability requirements see below).</p> <p>It is important to stress that the House floor activities are dominated by the Majority Leadership’s political priorities, as if in the EP exclusively files supported by the political group with the biggest size, i.e. the European People’s Party, and some other files for which broad consensus exists across all political groups were debated during the EP plenary.</p> <p>Unlike in the EP where an individual MEP cannot introduce (sponsor) a legislative proposal or resolution of his or her own, individual Representatives and Senators of U.S. Congress can and do so extensively with often very few supporters (co-sponsors). Therefore, up to 16,000 pieces of legislation (116th Congress: 2019-2020) are introduced in each Congress. Most of them, notably many messaging bills of local relevance die at various levels of the legislative process. They never reach the House floor to be voted on and thus never become law. On average, only <a href="#">2 to 3%</a> of bills and resolutions introduced into the House become acts and enter into force.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>However, many smaller bills (and some larger ones too) are attached to ‘must-pass legislation’. These smaller bills can be added as amendments by unanimous consent in the House. However, since the House has strict rules regarding <b>germaneness</b><sup>8</sup>, this kind of legislation can be blocked easily.</p>

<sup>7</sup> [Statistics and Historical Comparison](#), gov.track, accessed 27 June 2021.

<sup>8</sup> [House Rule XVI, clause 7](#) on *germaneness* states: ‘No motion or proposition on a subject different from that under consideration shall be admitted under color of amendment’ Failure to comply with this Rule means that the amendment may be ruled out of order, if a point of order is made against it. There are ‘three tests of germaneness: subject matter, fundamental purpose, and committee jurisdiction. To be germane, (1) “[a]n amendment must relate to the subject matter under consideration,” (2) “[t]he fundamental purpose of an amendment must be germane to the fundamental purpose of the bill,” and (3) “[a]n amendment when considered as a whole should be within the jurisdiction of the committee reporting the bill.” CRS report on [Amendments on the House Floor: Summary of Major Restrictions](#), 25 August 2015.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>By contrast, the Senate has almost no such restrictions and hundreds of bills can be attached to a must-pass appropriation. Oftentimes the last big bill to be considered is called the 'Christmas Tree' because so many other bills are being hung on it like ornaments on a Christmas tree.<sup>9</sup></p> <p>What is considered in the House as non-legislative business takes place in three different forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>morning hour debate,</b></li> <li>• <b>one-minute speeches,</b> and</li> <li>• <b>special-order speeches.</b></li> </ul> <p>These non-legislative activities are governed by the Speaker's discretion and by unanimous consent requests<sup>10</sup>.</p> <p>There are no explicit time slots foreseen for priority debates or for debates on 'current affairs'. There is no item on the House floor agenda that resembles the item 'oral questions'. There is neither a particular slot for 'question time'.</p> <p>All discussion within the House is considered debate. The President may send messages to Congress from time to time, either as a Constitutional obligation or as required by law.<sup>11</sup></p> <p>There are no particular slots set aside for votes as regards the passing of major bills that are controversial and that are subject to special rules tailor-made for them by the Majority Leadership-controlled House Committee on Rules. Typically, a vote on major bills takes place immediately after the debate, as the special rules governing them tend to eliminate largely the minority party's possibilities of</p>

<sup>9</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

<sup>10</sup> 117th Congress House Floor Procedures Manual, [Unanimous consent requests](#), Congressional Institute, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>preventing the bill from being passed. However, there may nonetheless be reasons for the vote to be postponed.</p> <p>Special Rules reported by the House Committee on Rules control all aspects of the debate: how long Members can speak, what, if any amendments will be allowed, and what points of order (objections) against the standing rules of the House are waived.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>The situation is different for bills and resolutions for which a broad bipartisan consensus exists. These items on the floor agenda are passed under a different, more streamlined floor procedure which includes the suspension of the standard House rules that are adopted at the beginning of each Congress. Therefore, these items are referred to in floor speak as ‘suspensions’. Typically, multiple bills under this procedure are scheduled, considered and debated. The votes on individual bills are postponed until all are completed. The Majority Leadership usually announces that under Rule XX, Clause 8 (<a href="#">postponement of proceedings</a>) recorded votes on passage of each suspension will be postponed for up to two legislative days. At the end of the floor debate the postponed votes may be ‘stacked’ and put before the House.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>Like the annual State of the Union address of the President of the European Commission to the EP’s plenary session, the U.S. President <a href="#">delivers</a> his annual State of the Union address before a joint session of U.S. Congress.<sup>14</sup> The formal <a href="#">legal basis</a> for the State of the Union address is Article II, Section 3, Clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution:</p> <p>The President ‘shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their</p>

<sup>12</sup> For a critical view of the practice of waiving standing House Rules see [Should the House Follow Its Own Rules?](#) Congressional Institute, 26 October 2016, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Strand et al, *Surviving Inside Congress*, Fifth Edition, 2017, Annex I, p. 399.

<sup>14</sup> [President Joe Biden delivers his first State of the Union address](#), Youtube video, 28 April 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.'
<b>Strategic programming</b>	<p>The Parliament exerts influence on the political and legislative agenda through both regular dialogue with the Commission ahead of the presentation of its annual work programme, and the negotiations of an annual joint declaration and multiannual joint conclusions on inter-institutional priorities.</p> <p>The strategic planning in the European Parliament, leading to actual plenary sessions, is an elaborate process that starts at the beginning of each legislature and consists mainly of three stages: long, medium and short-term planning.</p> <p>Parliament is fully independent in organising its own plenary agendas, which are based on a carefully orchestrated mix of close cooperation and interaction with the other European institutions. Parliament needs to be informed, and takes into account, the planning of the work of the Commission and the Council, ensuring</p>	<p>Longer-term planning for the House can concern a maximum time-frame of two-years which corresponds to one Congress. The two years are split into two sessions. This is a much shorter period compared to the longer term of the EP, the European Commission and the U.S. Senate.</p> <p>The most prominent longer-term and recurring item of the House legislative agenda is the annual budget. As part of its exercise of legislative authority, U.S. Congress has to establish an annual budget for the government and to initiate revenue bills<sup>15</sup>.</p> <p>The Majority Leadership of the House is required by Article I, section 9 of the U.S. Constitution ('No money shall be drawn from the treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law') to hold each year an annual budget debate based on the <a href="#">President's budget request</a> for the next fiscal year.<sup>16</sup></p>

<sup>15</sup> [The Legislative Branch](#), the White House, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>16</sup> The following is a [succinct summary](#) of the U.S. budget process: 'The budget process ... begins with the release of the President's proposed budget early in the year, along with detailed justification materials prepared by Federal agencies which are submitted to the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees with jurisdiction over the funding for each agency. The President is required to submit his budget for the upcoming fiscal year to Congress on or before the first Monday in February. The **Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act** of 1974 requires Congress to adopt an annual budget resolution covering the upcoming fiscal year plus the four subsequent years before it enacts any appropriations. Congress is expected to adopt a budget resolution by April 15, but this deadline is frequently not met. The budget resolution establishes a target spending ceiling and revenue floor for the upcoming fiscal year. Further, the spending ceiling total is subdivided into separate functional category (or national priority) totals. The House and Senate Budget Committees have exclusive jurisdiction over budget resolutions and their enforcement. The budget resolution follows the normal legislative process path up to the point where a bill would be sent to the President. Since the budget resolution is an internal congressional housekeeping measure, it does not go to the President for his signature and it is not considered binding on congressional decision-makers. Congress may adopt a later budget resolution that revises the previously adopted concurrent resolution. The budget resolution is adopted in the form of a concurrent resolution accompanied by a written report. After Congress completes action on the concurrent resolution for a given fiscal year, it is generally not in order to consider legislation that does not conform to the constraints on spending and revenue set out in the resolution. The concurrent resolution includes language that instructs the House and Senate committees to recommend changes to achieve the constraints established in the concurrent resolution, and specifies the amount of spending reductions or revenue changes the committee must attain, but does not identify specific changes to be made. The process of passing legislation that reflects the assumptions made in the concurrent resolution is called **reconciliation**. The reconciliation process is intended to bring existing law into conformity with the most recently adopted concurrent resolution. After both the House and Senate pass their versions of an appropriations bill, the bill is referred to a conference committee. Conference reports on appropriations may

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>the synchronisation regarding the conclusion, adoption and signature of legal acts, responses to/by the other institutions and high level debates.</p> <p>1. Long-term planning (1 year and beyond)</p> <p>In order to ensure both coherence and adaptability, the services of DG Presidency follow closely, and deliver, on the annual and multiannual programming of the institutions, having for basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission Work Programme: An annual exercise that covers all proposals expected to be delivered by the Commission in a given year;</li> <li>• The Joint Declaration on legislative priorities, which results in an agreement between the three institutions on legislative priorities for a given year. The Joint Declaration Tracker is used as to monitor the implementation of the legislative priorities in the Joint Declaration;</li> <li>• The multi-annual Foresight Report: A new instrument, through which the Commission brings forward its multiannual political vision and strategy for the Union and its main priorities;</li> </ul>	<p>However, the fiscal year for the budget does not match up with the calendar of the sessions of a Congress. It begins on 1 October and appropriations must be passed by the start of the fiscal year, or Congress must continue the previous year's spending levels or pass a short-term appropriation.</p> <p>The Constitution requires Congress to pass certain legislation every year such as appropriations bills and any expansion of the government's ability to go further into debt. But, under the Constitution appropriations must pass or the government cannot spend money and shuts down. There are other bills the House is supposed to pass – like authorisation bills, but these are frequently waived.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>In terms of scheduling of debates, party leaders may consider the timing of authorisation legislation versus appropriations legislation.<sup>18</sup> U.S. Congress each year seeks to coordinate its considerations of the defence authorisation bill with its consideration of the defence appropriations so that decisions on authorisations can inform decisions to be made on appropriations.<sup>19</sup></p> <p>However, Congress does not need to pass a budget (it is supposed to). Usually, if party control of the Chambers is different they will not</p>

be accepted or rejected by either the House or the Senate, but they cannot be amended in either Chamber. If a conference report is rejected, the conferees negotiate further. Once the reconciliation bill passes both Chambers, it is sent to the President and is subject to the normal procedures governing Presidential action related to the enactment of a law. For more details on the budget procedure, see Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, 2017, pp. 141-174.

<sup>17</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

<sup>18</sup> **Authorisation legislation:** A bill that **creates a new federal program**, extends the life of an existing program, or repeals an existing law. Authorisation bills usually set a limit on the amount of funds that can be spent annually by a program over a period of **three to five years**. But it's important to remember that an authorizing bill only establishes the framework for a federal program - **it does not provide funds to operate the program**.

**Appropriations bill:** A bill that **allocates funding for specific federal programs**. Unlike authorisation legislation, which remains in effect for three or more years, an appropriations bill must be enacted into law **every year**. **Each year, in fact, Congress must pass a series of 13 appropriations bills to keep federal departments and agencies operating**.

**Entitlement legislation:** A measure that guarantees a certain level of benefits to persons who meet eligibility requirements set by law, such as Medicare, Medicaid and college student loan programs. Entitlement programs typically do not need to be re-authorised, nor do they require annual appropriations.

<sup>19</sup> CRS report on [House Committee Markups: Manual of Procedures and Procedural Strategies](#), 27 March 2018.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Multiannual Conclusions – signed by the three institutions for the first time in December 2020 – on the priorities until the end of the 9th legislature.</li> </ul> <p>2. Medium-term planning (6 months)</p> <p>The services follow closely the work of the parliamentary committees and the other institutions, especially the proposals adopted in the Commission, the progress of trilogues with the Council and the agendas of the European Council. The following points are taken into account in the medium-term planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Commission presents, in the “Liste des points prévus” (LPP), its list of proposals to be adopted in the College of Commissioners several months in advance. This gives Parliament the possibility to plan reports or plenary debates either in advance or as a reaction to them. Some major Commission proposals can serve as a basis for monothematic plenaries (European Green Deal in December 2019 and Recovery and Resilience Facility in July 2020);</li> <li>The Council of the European Union sets its agenda of priorities every six months with every new Presidency, which also affects Parliament’s work especially in co-legislation. All incoming Presidencies present their programme of activities in Parliament;</li> <li>The European Council meetings determine the political debates for both the preparation and for the conclusions in the European Parliament. The European Council</li> </ul>	<p>even try to pass a budget. The Defence Department is the one area where the authorisation and appropriation work the way they are supposed to. While the standing rules of the House prohibit appropriating funds for unauthorised programs, the reality is that this rule is waived in most years.<sup>20</sup></p> <p>Apart from scheduling the annual budget debate on the floor, the Majority Leadership, depending on which party controls the executive and the legislative branches, may to a larger or lesser extent <a href="#">factor in</a> the President’s policy priorities and plans articulated at events such as inaugural and State of the Union addresses and those announced separately.<sup>21</sup></p> <p>Party leaders decide whether the House or the Senate will act first on a specific legislative initiative.</p>

<sup>20</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

<sup>21</sup> [Hoyer Discusses 2021 Legislative Agenda on Washington Post Live](#), Majority Leader.gov., 5 May 2021, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>President presents the conclusions of the meetings in the Parliament (Article 15 TEU);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other international events that might become subjects for debate in Parliament are also taken into account (e.g. G7, G20, UN sessions);</li> <li>• In addition, the progress of reports in the parliamentary committees is followed closely. All files are checked and an indicative plenary planning is set.</li> </ul> <p>3. Short-term planning (1 month)</p> <p>The result of the short-term planning one month before the actual plenary session is the very first draft of the plenary agenda. The services make sure that all items included in the plenary agenda are both agreed at political level and are ready from a technical point of view.</p> <p>The plenary agenda contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treaty obligations and obligations arising from Inter-institutional Agreements;</li> <li>• Legislative reports;</li> <li>• Non-legislative reports;</li> <li>• Other input from committees, e.g. oral questions, resolutions or other specific items (petitions, immunities, etc.);</li> <li>• Various forms of debates with the other institutions (Council and Commission Statements, Commission interpellations, debates with the High Representative, topical debates);</li> <li>• Annual events and prizes, such as the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights and the Lux Audience Award for European Films.</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
<b>Setting parliaments' priorities</b>	<p>The definition of Parliaments priorities falls under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents and political Groups.</p> <p>The governing bodies – the Conference of Presidents and Conference of Committee Chairs – have regular exchanges with the Commission ahead of the preparation of its annual work programme. This allows Parliament to exert its influence on the work programme via political initiatives and calling for legislative proposals, which are the prerogative of the Commission.</p> <p>As explained above, since 2016, the three institutions have agreed to work and agree each year on a joint declaration on inter-institutional programming and, at the beginning of each term, on joint conclusions on multiannual programming (through the inter-institutional agreement on better law making, to implement the provisions of Article 17 TEU).</p> <p>This has enabled Parliament to further influence the political and legislative agenda and the timing of such submissions.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session starts as a working document on the basis of recommendations from committees and points that are cyclical in a yearly session. Once input is received from political groups, a preliminary draft agenda is drawn up and presented to</p>	<p>The Speaker through the House Committee on Rules controls the legislative agenda, i.e. which bills the House considers and in what order.<sup>22</sup> The Speaker designates members to serve as Speaker pro tempore, defines the priorities of the majority, appoints members of the majority party to committees, refers bills and resolutions to committees, gives Members permission to speak on the House floor, counts and declares all votes and signs all bills and resolutions passed by the House.<sup>23</sup></p> <p>Until 1910, the Speaker chaired the Committee on Rules<sup>24</sup> and since the 1970s, he or she has hand-picked every Majority member on the Committee on Rules which has a two-to-one-plus-one majority (9-4). This ensures that the Speaker never loses a vote. The minority has no say in what legislation comes to the floor and when. In this regard, the Speaker is one of the most dominating leaders in any legislature in the world.<sup>25</sup></p> <p>The Majority Leader commonly sets and schedules the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual agenda<sup>26</sup> of the House in close consultation with the Speaker, <a href="#">majority whip</a><sup>27</sup>, and others. For instance, the Majority Leader may specify in advance that certain priority bills are to be taken up prior to a congressional recess. He or she may even designate <b>theme weeks</b> ("reform," "high tech," "families first," and so on) for the consideration of related bills.<sup>28</sup> Like the Speaker, the</p>

<sup>22</sup> CRS report on [Party leaders in the House: Election, Duties, and Responsibilities](#), 5 November 2018.

<sup>23</sup> 'Under our modern agenda-setting procedures, bills and policies with significant bipartisan support from American voters can stagnate in one or both houses of Congress, without debate or vote, simply as a result of the whim and political ambitions of one or both leaders of Congress.' Grace DuBois, [The Exclusive Power of Agenda-Setting In The Modern United States Congress](#), University of Pittsburgh, blog post, accessed 27 June 2021.

<sup>24</sup> [House Committee on Rules](#), rules.house.gov., accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

<sup>26</sup> [Hoyer lays out ambitious Democratic agenda for 2021, with health care at top](#), The Hill, 27 October 2020.

<sup>27</sup> [Democratic Whips \(1899 to present\)](#), history.house.gov, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>28</sup> CRS report on [The Role of the House Majority Leader: An Overview](#), 9 January 2009.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>the Conference of Presidents in view of the adoption of the draft agenda, approximately one month before the part-session in question. The Conference of Presidents then adopts the final draft agenda at its last meeting on the Thursday before the part-session.</p> <p>Whilst there are often items on the agenda which are comprised of a Council and/or Commission statement, the two institutions do not have the right to claim certain time slots for debates or declarations. This remains the prerogative of the Conference of Presidents, which adopts the final draft, and the House, which adopts the agenda at the opening of each part-session.</p>	<p>Majority Leader usually does not serve on committees and does not lead the floor debate on major issues.</p> <p>The committee chair in cooperation with the Majority Leadership is entitled with the agenda-setting authority for each committee and determines which bills will be considered at committee or sub-committee level during the course of the two-year Congress.<sup>29</sup></p>
<b>Content of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>The plenary agenda contains debates on legislative and non-legislative files presented in the form of reports, as well as statements from the Council and the Commission or from the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, oral questions, topical debates, debates on breaches of human rights and rule of law, votes and explanations of votes. . There are no plenary sessions reserved only for legislation or only for non-legislative debates.</p> <p>While setting the agenda, political groups often interlink dossiers in order to have joint debates on ‘thematic packages’.</p> <p>Since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretation.</p> <p>Topical debates and major interpellations are not held at all during this period.</p>	<p>The House floor activities include both legislative and non-legislative debates.</p> <p><b>Legislative business:</b> The weekly schedule (“<a href="#">The Weekly Leader</a>”) lists bills for <a href="#">legislative business</a> that are governed by different legislative procedures.</p> <p>First, bills whose consideration is governed by the standing House rules as adopted at the beginning of the House two-year session. These bills include appropriations, authorisation and tax bills.</p> <p>Second, bills subject to special rules which the Committee on Rules reports. They are tailor-made for a given bill. These special rules are debated on the floor prior to the bill at issue and are passed as a simple House resolution (order of business resolution) by simple majority vote. The Committee on Rules acts as an arm of the Majority Leadership which thus controls the debate on the bills.</p> <p>Special rules <a href="#">indicate</a> how much time will be allowed for debate, whether amendments can be offered, and other matters. They</p>

<sup>29</sup> CRS report on [Introduction to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress](#), 24 November 2020.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>provide exceptions to, or departures from, the established procedures of the House.<sup>30</sup></p> <p>An example of such a rule is the <a href="#">House rule</a> adopted for the consideration of the Senate amendment to <a href="#">H.R. 1319</a> on the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The vote on the bills subject to a special rule may not actually occur for several reasons, including because they remain as unfinished business at the end of the day and are taken up on the next voting day or in the next voting week.</p> <p>Third, bills referred to as ‘suspensions’ for which the standard rules of the House are waived under Rule XV, Clause 1 (<a href="#">business in order on special days</a>) to dispose of them expeditiously. They can be passed on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of each week.</p> <p>Unlike more controversial bills that are taken from the <a href="#">House’s four long-standing calendars</a> of bills (the Discharge Calendar, the House Calendar, the Private Calendar, and the Union Calendar) for floor consideration, uncontroversial ‘suspensions’ are taken from a relatively new separate calendar, the Consensus calendar, created under House Rule XIII, Clause 1, and House Rule XV, Clause 7, during the 116th Congress (2019-2020).<sup>31</sup> A calendar is an agenda or list of business awaiting possible action by the House. The House calendars are printed every day the House is in session.</p>

<sup>30</sup> ‘Those procedures are found in the U. S. Constitution, applicable provisions of Jefferson’s Manual, rules of the House adopted on the opening day of each Congress, provisions of law and resolutions having the force of rules of the House, and established precedents by Speakers and other presiding officers of the House and Committee of the Whole.’ For more information on the various types of special rules considered in the House, such as open rules, modified open rules, structured rules and closed rules, see Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, Appendix I, pp. 399-400.

<sup>31</sup> CRS report on [The House Consensus Calendar: Establishment, Principal Features, and Practice in the 116th Congress \(2019-2020\)](#), 16 February 2021. The Consensus calendar ‘provides an alternative route to the floor for certain unreported House bills and resolutions that enjoy broad bipartisan support. Pursuant to Rule XV, the House is to consider at least one measure listed on the calendar during every week that it convenes, except during the first and last weeks of a Congress. In order to be placed on the Consensus Calendar, a House-originated measure must (1) not have been reported by its committee of primary jurisdiction, (2) have accumulated at least 290 cosponsors, (3) have been subject to a motion to place the measure on the Consensus Calendar filed by the measure’s sponsor, and (4) have maintained at least 290 cosponsors for a cumulative total of 25 legislative days following the filing of the motion.’

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>A motion to suspend the rules requires a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting. No amendments are allowed unless submitted with the bill as part of the motion to suspend the rules. The debate on a bill brought up under suspension of the rules is limited to 40 minutes, 20 minutes by a Member who supports the bill and 20 minutes controlled by a Member in opposition. This division does not always follow party lines.<sup>32</sup></p> <p>There are no joint debates on interlinked dossiers ('thematic packages') between several committees on the House floor. There is a debate on bills one after the other and no debate on thematic packages in this sense. However, if it serves their political needs the majority could bring up a series of bills thematically, but there is no requirement.</p> <p><b>Non-legislative business:</b></p> <p>Non-legislative activities during the voting week are ceremonial acts and three types of non-legislative debates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>morning hour debate,</b></li> <li>• <b>one-minute speeches,</b> and</li> <li>• <b>special-order speeches.</b></li> </ul> <p>These items are not governed by the Rules of the House, but have developed as a custom.</p> <p>There are several time-slots possible for holding '<b>One Minute Speeches</b>': at the start of the legislative day after the approval of the Journal and occasionally after the conclusion of legislative business before the start of special-order speeches or at other times during the daily session.<sup>33</sup></p>

<sup>32</sup> Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, Appendix I, pp. 398-399.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, Appendix I, p. 396.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>The Speaker has discretion over the one-minute speech period as well as over the number of such speeches. When these speeches are scheduled at the beginning of a legislative day, they may be limited to a specific number per side of the aisle. An additional one-minute speech period can be scheduled at the end of each legislative day. For this period, there is typically no limit to the number of speeches. Members can only give one one-minute speech during any given legislative day.</p> <p>Any Member may request recognition to give a one-minute speech on a subject of his or her choice. However, Majority or Minority Leaderships tend to coordinate one-minute speeches to focus on particular topics, although the speeches are not limited to such topics. Those Members participating in these coordinated efforts tend to receive priority seating and recognition. However, there are no thematic debates formally scheduled at any given legislative day of the House, as is the established practice during the EP plenary.</p> <p>To give a one-minute speech, Members move to the front row of seats on their party's side of the floor and sit down. The Speaker recognizes Members in turn, alternating between the majority and minority sides. In general, there is no need to reserve time for the speech ahead.<sup>34</sup></p> <p>During the <a href="#">117<sup>th</sup> Congress</a> (2021-2022), every Monday (12:00 p.m.), Tuesday and Wednesday (10:00 p.m.) the House meets for the <b>Morning Hour debate</b> of two hours directly before starting legislative business with the ceremonial parts. The meeting times are established in unanimous consent requests by the House at the start of a new Congress or session.</p> <p>Members are recognized for up to five minutes to speak on any subject of their choice, alternating between majority and minority</p>

<sup>34</sup> CRS report on [Non-Legislative Debate in the House: One-Minute, Morning-Hour, and Special-Order Speeches](#), 2 December 2020.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>Members on a rotating basis. There are no morning hour debates on the last legislative day of the week.<sup>35</sup></p> <p>After the House has concluded all anticipated legislative business, it proceeds to <b>Special Order Speeches</b>. They are evenly divided between the parties. Up to four hours can be allocated for these speeches but they may not extend beyond 10:00 p.m.</p> <p>Members reserve time to speak through their party leadership and are limited to one such speech per week. Members' speaking time ranges between five minutes and up to one hour. One special-order speech may include statements by various Members owing to the practice of yielding to other Members. The leadership may coordinate with several Members to provide a longer time slot consisting of several statements on the same topic.<sup>36</sup></p> <p>The speeches can be about local, national and international issues but the speeches have no concrete follow up in terms of a resolution to be passed. The individual contributions of members concern a broad variety of topics and tend to be completely unrelated to each other.</p> <p>Unlike in the EP, there is no overarching topical framing set beforehand, such as a debate on the current situation in Belarus. Such a debate aimed at passing a resolution takes place as part of the legislative business of the House and is dealt with, if the Majority Leadership so decides.<sup>37</sup></p> <p>When are Five Minutes and One Minutes speeches allowed?  <b>First Legislative Day of the Week</b></p>

<sup>35</sup> CRS report on [Non-Legislative Debate in the House: One-Minute, Morning-Hour, and Special-Order Speeches](#), 2 December 2020.

<sup>36</sup> CRS report on [Non-Legislative Debate in the House: One Minute, Morning-Hour, and Special-Order Speeches](#), 2 December 2020.

<sup>37</sup> On 20 April 2021, for instance the House of Representatives [passed](#) a simple resolution [H.Res.124](#) - Supporting the people of Belarus and their democratic aspirations and condemning the election rigging and subsequent violent crackdowns on peaceful protesters by the illegitimate Lukashenka regime as non-legislative business to convey its political message.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members can give <b>5 minute speeches</b>, during morning hour, beginning at 12 p.m.</li> <li>Members can give <b>1 minute speeches</b>, at 2 p.m., unlimited per side.</li> <li>Members can give <b>1 minute speeches</b>, at the end of legislative business, unlimited per side.</li> </ul> <p><b>Middle Legislative Day(s) of the Week</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members can give <b>5 minute speeches</b>, during morning hour, beginning at 10 a.m.</li> <li>Members can give <b>1 minute speeches</b>, 15 per side, at 12 p.m.</li> <li>Members can give <b>1 minute speeches</b>, at the end of legislative business, unlimited per side.</li> </ul> <p><b>Last Legislative Day of the Week</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members can give <b>1 minute speeches</b>, 5 per side, at 9 a.m.</li> <li>Members can give <b>1 minute speeches</b>, at the end of legislative business, unlimited per side.<sup>38</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Conduct of plenary debates</b>	<p>Speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session.</p> <p>The agenda is divided into different “time slots”, which can include one or several debates. There is usually no fixed time for each debate. A notional speaking time is allocated to rapporteurs, rapporteurs for opinion, authors of oral questions, major interpellations and topical debates and to other institutions (Council, Commission, etc.).</p> <p>The speaking time available for each political group is also indicated on the agenda. This information is used by the political groups in allocating speaking time and drawing up their lists of speakers. Members speak in the order of the relative size of their political groups.</p>	<p>Generally speaking Members of the majority and the minority in the House are recognized for an exact equal amount of time, with a Member of the majority party alternating with a Member of the minority party. In this sense, the size of the political party is irrelevant. For debates about bills and resolutions time therefore is equally shared between proponents and opponents of a given bill or resolution. No time is allocated to representatives of the executive branch, since they have no role on the House Floor.</p> <p>The order of speakers for legislative and non-legislative business is controlled by the Speaker of the House and by the chair of the <a href="#">Committee of the Whole</a>, a procedural setting which allows Members an efficient way to consider amendments. The quorum of this Committee is 100 rather than 218 for the full House.</p>

<sup>38</sup> [The House Democratic Cloak Room](#), FAQs, accessed 2 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Members who wish to speak in a debate on the plenary agenda should ask their political group to allocate them speaking time. Alternatively, they may ask to speak in a more spontaneous manner under the catch-the-eye or blue card procedures (see below).</p> <p>Members who have not spoken in a debate may, at most once per part-session, hand in a written statement of not more than 200 words, which will be appended to the verbatim report of the debate.</p> <p>There are several types of debates: committee reports (full debate), committee reports (short presentation), Statements by the other Institutions (council, Commission, Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), oral questions to the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union, debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, major interpellations for written answer, question time, public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives.</p> <p>Procedures in debates</p> <p>- Catch-the-eye - Rule 171(6)</p> <p>With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short speeches (1 minute maximum) by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs at the end of a debate.</p>	<p>If during the general debate of the Committee of the Whole two or more Members seek recognition, the chair gives priority to Members of the committee(s) of jurisdiction over the bill or resolution, taking account of their seniority. Members of the primary committee of jurisdiction are recognized before Members not serving on that committee. The first speech is given by the majority. The chair will alternate between the parties in recognizing Members to offer amendments. Special rules authorise the chair of the Committee of the Whole to give priority in recognition to Members who have pre-printed their amendments in the Congressional Record.<sup>39</sup></p> <p>The amount of speaking time and the manner in which time is allocated in the House depends on the procedures the House applies to consider a bill or resolution, as well as on the terms of any special order of the House governing the consideration of the bill or resolution.</p> <p>There are two different methods of allocating time to speak on legislation on the House floor: Time for debate is either 'controlled', or it is not controlled.</p> <p>Under controlled time, a Member is granted a block of time from a Member, called a 'floor manager,' who determines for each side of the aisle which Members may speak, for how long, and in what order. There is one floor manager for the majority party and one for the minority party. The floor managers are almost always the chair and the Ranking Member of the Committee's whose bill is being considered.</p> <p>If time is not controlled, a Member gains time to speak for five minutes by seeking recognition from the chair.<sup>40</sup></p>

<sup>39</sup> For more information see [General Debate in the Committee of the Whole](#), Congressional Institute. [Amendment procedure in the Committee of the Whole](#). A brief synopsis, rules.house.gov. [Floor Procedure In The U.S. House Of Representatives](#), rules.house.gov, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>40</sup> CRS report: [Speaking on the House Floor: Gaining Time and Parliamentary Phraseology](#), 10 December 2018.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>- Blue card procedure - Rule 171(8)</p> <p>The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.</p> <p>Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of political group speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" or blue cards.</p> <p>- One-minute speeches - Rule 172</p> <p>For a period of not more than 30 minutes during the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a prepared list, the President calls Members who wish to draw Parliament's attention to a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of 1 minute each.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, and in accordance with the President's decision on exceptional measures enabling the European Parliament to carry out its duties and exercise its prerogatives under the Treaties, the procedures described above were not used in in plenary debates. This was due to the restricted time available for debates, as well as the constraints linked to remote interventions in debates.</p>	<p>A Member can ask the chair if the person holding on the floor will 'yield for a question'. However, the person controlling the floor can refuse. Occasionally, the chair and Ranking Member may engage in a colloquy to explain a provision. These questions and answers are prepared beforehand.<sup>41</sup></p> <p>Most Members will accept a question asked in good faith. A member may seek recognition, but recognition is not guaranteed. When time runs out, no further speakers are allowed, unless unanimous consent is granted.</p> <p>The executive branch cannot be subject of questions posed to it on the House Floor. However, Members of the President's cabinet frequently testify before House committees.</p> <p>Most House bills and resolutions are considered under the <a href="#">suspension of the rules</a> procedure, which limits debate to 40 minutes and does not allow amendments to be offered by members on the floor. However, for the House to pass a bill or resolution under suspension of the rules requires two-thirds of members voting to agree. This method is thus not appropriate for bills and resolutions that do not enjoy overwhelming support in the House.<sup>42</sup></p> <p>Owing to the time constraints of meetings, there is a possibility for Members of putting longer statements on record, if the speaking time allocated to them is not sufficient.</p> <p>Members that need additional time to speak in the general debate in the Committee of the Whole must ask the floor manager to yield more time. Since the time in a general debate is 'controlled', Members cannot ask unanimous consent for additional time. Members can ask the floor manager for more time, but the additional</p>

<sup>41</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

<sup>42</sup> The Legislative Process: [House Floor](#), Congress.gov, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>time allocated would be reduced from the time the floor manager controls.</p> <p>However, a Member may instead opt to speak briefly about the bill and ask unanimous consent to revise and extend his/her remarks and insert a much longer statement into the <i>Congressional Record</i> to cover all the points the Member wants to make.<sup>43</sup></p>
<b>Voting procedures and treatment of amendments</b>	<p>Voting on draft legislation takes place at the first available voting time (voting session) following the close of a debate on that piece of legislation, unless the agenda specifically provides for a later vote. Non-contentious draft legislation is sometimes put straight to the vote without a debate, in which case the vote may be earlier in a part-session. The timing of the vote may also be influenced by other factors such as availability of texts in all official languages.</p> <p>Amendments to draft legislation may be voted in plenary. Amendments may be tabled by a “low threshold”, constituted either by a political group or by a number of individual Members equivalent to 5% of Parliament’s membership. Such amendments are voted alongside any amendments proposed by the committee responsible in its report.</p> <p>Rule 159 provides, however, that if a committee has adopted its position on the draft legislation with less than 10 percent of the committee members opposing, the legislation is adopted without further amendments by plenary. A “medium threshold” consisting of 10% of the House may however veto this and insist on the right to table amendments.</p> <p>In first reading, the vote on amendments is always followed by a final vote on the Commission’s draft legislation as a whole.</p>	<p>The time when bills and resolutions are put to a vote in the House is much less predictable than in the EP owing to the Majority Leadership’s authority to influence the time of the vote and the modalities under which bills and resolutions are put to a vote through the Committee on Rules.</p> <p>The authority of the Speaker and chair of the Committee of the Whole <b>to postpone and cluster record votes</b> is enshrined in the House Rules (Rule XX, clause 8, <a href="#">postponement of proceedings</a>) and (Rule XVIII, clause 6(g), quorum and voting) respectively.</p> <p>The authority to reduce the time allocated for certain votes has expanded over time. By contrast, vote pairing, an accommodation to Members absent for a vote, was eliminated in the 106th Congress (1999-2000).<sup>44</sup></p> <p><b>In recent years, Monday votes were typically postponed until 6:30 p.m., with the last votes on Friday occurring no later than 3:00 p.m.</b></p> <p>The number of ‘recorded’ votes taken in the House and in the Committee of the Whole on a specific issue or day is dependent on how often Members request a ‘recorded’ vote. While there may be estimates of the number of expected “recorded” votes (e.g., from the</p>

<sup>43</sup> [General Debate in the Committee of the Whole](#), Congressional Institute, accessed 4 July 2021.

<sup>44</sup> CRS Report on [Pairing in Congressional Voting: The House](#), 25 August 2015.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Amendments and the final vote require a majority of the votes cast for adoption. In second reading amendments require a majority of Parliament’s component Members (i.e. more than half the House as constituted) for adoption. In second reading, the draft legislation (Council position) is deemed adopted unless amended or rejected, and there is no final vote on the Council position as a whole.</p> <p>If inter-institutional negotiations lead to a provisional agreement on a draft legislative text, that agreement is put to the vote as single vote with no further amendment, unless the House explicitly decides otherwise.</p> <p>Oral amendments may be moved in plenary by individual Members, although these may be opposed on procedural grounds (lack of full translation into all languages) by Members representing 5% of the House.</p> <p>There is no automatic cooling-off period between a final vote in committee on a report and the adoption by plenary. The timing of the plenary vote is determined by the Conference of Presidents (Group Chairs) and the plenary itself as part of the agenda decision-making process. A cooling-off period does take place, however, between the conclusion of inter-institutional negotiations on a draft legislative act and its final vote in plenary.</p> <p>As indicated above, since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretations.</p>	<p>number of amendments made in order or offered, and other motions that might be offered during the day), the vote scheduling remains inherently unpredictable.<sup>45</sup></p> <p>In general, voting on bills governed by a special rule can take place <b>directly after the closure of the debate</b>. However, each special rule must first be passed by a simple majority of the House, before the bill or resolution it governs is brought up. The Majority Leadership may, however, postpone the vote for a variety of reasons. Separate slots for voting time for this procedure do not exist for these bills.</p> <p>Bills considered under the suspension of the House standing rules (<a href="#">RULE XVI</a> on Motions and Amendments and <a href="#">RULE XVIII</a> on the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, etc.) are usually <b>postponed to the end of a debate and voted in a row on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays of each week</b>.</p> <p><a href="#">Private bills</a> that benefits a single individual or organisation may be considered on the <b>1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month</b>.<sup>46</sup></p> <p>Votes on amendments to a bill or resolution on the floor take place to the extent amendments are admissible under the rules set by the Committee on Rules. Whether amendments to a bill or resolution can be tabled on the floor depends on the procedure that was chosen for a given bill or resolution to be considered.</p> <p>For non-controversial bills, the standard House rules can be suspended. These suspensions are passed without floor amendments, with a limited floor debate, and with a two-thirds vote required for final passage.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>For appropriation, authorisation and tax bills, the standing House Rules are applicable, unless waived.</p>

<sup>45</sup> Statement of CRS specialist in a hearing on [‘The House Calendar and Schedule: Evaluating Practices and Challenges’](#), 16 October 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, Appendix I, p. 392. CRS report on [Private Bills: Procedure in the House](#), 15 May 2019.

<sup>47</sup> CRS report on [Suspension of the Rules in the House: Principal Features](#), 4 March 2020.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>If the procedure of special rules to be determined by the Committee on Rules is chosen, the specific rules set out whether amendments may be tabled.</p> <p>All amendments must be <b>germane</b> to the text they would amend, and they are subject to other general prohibitions such as that against proposing only to re-amend language that has already been fully amended.</p> <p>A bill or resolution may reach the floor under the following four modalities:<sup>48</sup></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>open rules</b></li> <li>2. <b>modified open rules</b></li> <li>3. <b>structured rules</b></li> <li>4. <b>closed rules</b></li> </ol> <p>1. If a bill or resolution reaches the floor under <b>open rules</b>, a general debate for one hour is allowed. Any member can table an amendment that complies with a number of requirements, including the House Rules of the House and the 1974 <a href="#">Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act</a>. House Rule XXI (<a href="#">restrictions on certain bills</a>) describes many of the restrictions on amendments to appropriations and tax bills. Under open rules, amendments are debated under the 5-minute rule, meaning that each Member may seek recognition to speak one time for up to 5 minutes on a particular amendment.</p> <p>Under an open amendment process in the Committee of the Whole, measures are usually considered for amendment one section or paragraph at a time. Appropriations bills <a href="#">are considered</a> for amendment under open rules and read 'paragraph-by-paragraph.'<sup>49</sup></p>

<sup>48</sup> Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, 2017, Appendix I, p. 400.

<sup>49</sup> [Reading appropriations bills for a amendment](#). Committee on Rules. [Amending Appropriations Bills - A Basic Guide presented by the Committee on Rules](#), Committee on Rules.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>Members are required to offer their amendments to the appropriate part of a bill when it has been read or designated. If a Member misses the opportunity to offer the amendment at the proper time, he or she may not be able to offer the amendment at all unless unanimous consent is granted to return to the appropriate place in the bill or the Member is able to redraft it to amend a subsequent section of the bill that has not yet been read for amendment.<sup>50</sup></p> <p>Each amendment is debated under the five-minute rule, providing five minutes for the Member offering the amendment and five minutes for a Member in opposition.</p> <p>Each amendment in the Committee of the Whole may be amended by a perfecting amendment, a substitute amendment, or both, and by a substitute for an amendment, unless prohibited by the terms of a special rule reported by the House Committee on Rules.</p> <p>After this first 10 minutes of debate, Members may obtain additional time for debate by offering <a href="#">pro forma amendments</a> in the form of motions to strike the last word or the requisite number of words.</p> <p>After the Committee of the Whole has finalised the debate on the last amendment to be offered to the bill, it rises and the House then votes again on all the amendments the committee has approved (the Committee cannot technically proceed to the final vote on them).</p> <p>A <b>motion to recommit</b> had usually offered a final opportunity to amend a bill or joint resolution before the House votes on passing</p>

<sup>50</sup> [Floor Procedure In The U.S. House Of Representatives](#), rules.house.gov, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>it.<sup>51</sup> However, this procedural tool used by the minority party was weakened<sup>52</sup> at the beginning of the 117th Congress.<sup>53</sup></p> <p>2. If a bill or resolution is brought up to the floor under the <b>modified open rules</b>, a general debate is allowed during which any member may offer a <i>germane</i> amendment which is consistent with the rules of the House under the five-minute rule.<sup>54</sup></p> <p>The only requirement to be respected is that the amendment must be pre-printed in the Congressional Record. Modified open rules may also allow for any amendment that complies with the rules of the House to be offered without pre-printing in the Congressional Record, but the rule may place an overall time cap on consideration of the bill for amendment. The purpose of such a rule is to prevent spontaneous amendments that might be offered as the debate over a bill develops.</p> <p>3. If bills or resolutions are considered under <b>structured rules</b>, a general debate is allowed for a certain period of time. However, the Committee on Rules limits the amendments to only those designated in the special rule or in the Committee on Rules report that accompanies the special rule, or precludes amendments to a particular portion of a bill, even though the rest of the bill may be completely open to amendment.</p> <p>4. If a bill or resolution is reported to the floor under <b>closed rules</b>, no amendments are allowed. An example for a House <a href="#">amendment</a> to a major bill of the Biden Administration considered under closed rules is <a href="#">H.R. 1319</a>, the <a href="#">American Rescue Plan Act</a> of 2021.</p>

<sup>51</sup> CRS report on the [Amending Process in the House of Representatives](#), 16 September 2015.

<sup>52</sup> [House adopts rules package for 117th Congress. Republicans are enraged over weakening of the motion to recommit](#), rollcall.com, 4 January 2021, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>53</sup> [Protect Minority Rights: Save the Motion to Recommit in the 117th Congress!](#), Congressional Institute, 2 January 2020, accessed 4 July 2021.

<sup>54</sup> [House Rule XVI, Clause 7](#), 'No motion or proposition on a subject different from that under consideration shall be admitted under color of amendment'.

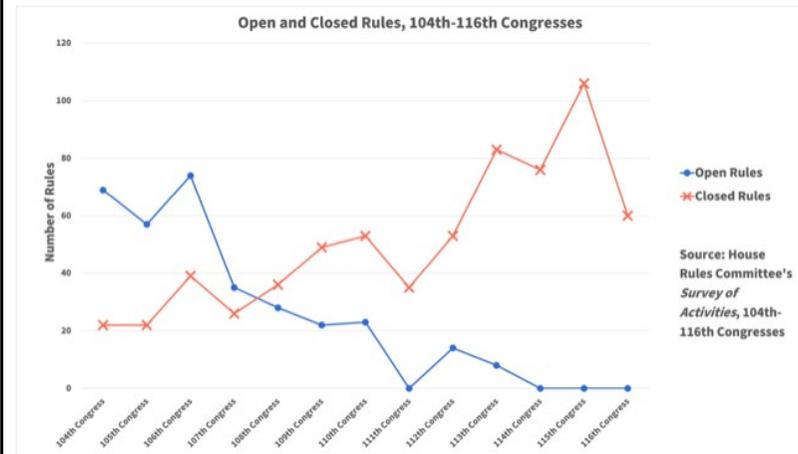
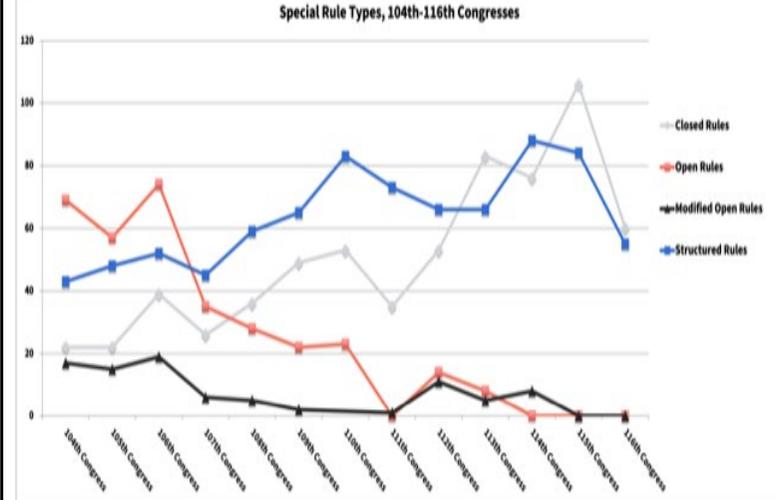
	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>These rules can have a major impact on whether a bill passes. The Committee on Rules can be bypassed in three ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Members can move rules to be suspended (requires 2/3 vote)</li> <li>2) a discharge petition can be filed and</li> <li>3) the House can use a Calendar Wednesday procedure.<sup>55</sup></li> </ol> <p>Although statistics have to be seen in context and they certainly fail to reveal important reasons that may have an impact on the choice between the four modalities above, the two graphs below show a clear trend in the use of the four different modalities over time.</p> <p>They reveal a dramatic shift from open rules (a decline from 60 open rules in the 104th Congress (1995-1996) to 0 open rules in the 116th Congress (2019-2020) to closed rules (an increase from 22 closed rules in the 104th Congress to 60 closed rules in the 116th Congress). This means a trend of less and less opportunities for amendment on the floor. The statistics show that even appropriations bills that were traditionally considered under open rules were passed under closed rules as well.<sup>56</sup></p>

<sup>55</sup> Calendar Wednesday procedure. 'On Wednesday of each week, unless dispensed with by unanimous consent or by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Members voting, a quorum being present, the standing committees are called in alphabetical order. A committee when named may call up for consideration any bill reported by it and pending on either the House or Union Calendar. The report on the bill must have been available for three days and must not be privileged under the rules of the House. General debate is limited to two hours and must be confined to the subject matter of the measure, the time being equally divided between those for and those against. An affirmative vote of a simple majority of the Members present is sufficient to pass the measure. The purpose of this rarely utilized procedure is to provide an alternative method of consideration when the Committee on Rules has not reported a rule for a specific bill.', [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov), accessed 27 June 2021.

<sup>56</sup> 'The House has developed a tradition of allowing the budget bill to be considered without any amendments, except for complete substitute amendments.' Mark Strand et al, [Surviving Inside Congress](#), Fifth Edition, 2017, p. 148.

European Parliament

US Congress



Source: [Open House: How the House of Representatives Can Reinvigorate the Amendment Process](#), Mark Strand and Timothy Lang, updated graphs provided by Mark Strand.

Any Member may table amendments, if amendments are admissible.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>Whether amendments are admissible depends on the rule under which the bill is brought to the floor. If a bill is considered under a special rule it depends on whether the Committee on Rules has determined open, modified open, structured or closed rules to govern the bill. If closed rules are chosen, then no amendments can be offered to the bill.</p> <p>If a bill is considered under suspended House standing rules, no amendments are allowed.</p> <p>An amendment must be made in writing. Even open rules typically require amendments to be submitted in advance in the Congressional Record.</p> <p>Most amendments that Members propose to legislation on the House floor are offered during the general debate in the Committee of the Whole. Measures considered under suspension of the rules are not subject to floor amendments, and few amendments are proposed to bills and resolutions considered in the House or in the House as in Committee of the Whole as a result of the trend described above.<sup>57</sup></p> <p>The House's procedures distinguish between first- and second-degree amendments, between perfecting and substitute amendments, and among amendments in the forms of motions to strike, to insert, and to strike out and insert. A <b>substitute amendment</b> proposes <b>to replace the entire text of a bill or resolution.</b><sup>58</sup></p>

<sup>57</sup> CRS report on [The Amending Process in the House of Representatives](#), 16 September 2015.

<sup>58</sup> 'A method of visualizing the amendment process on a piece of legislation. First, imagine the bill as the trunk and amendments as branches. House and Senate rules permit only first-degree (an amendment to, or branch on, the bill) and second-degree (an amendment to the amendment or a branch on a branch) amendments. However, in the House, a substitute amendment is considered a first-degree amendment, so technically a total of four amendments can be pending at any given time (an amendment, an amendment to the amendment, a substitute amendment, and an amendment to the substitute).' <http://www.lexisnexis.com/help/cu/glossary/glossary.htm>, accessed 2 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		When a bill is brought up to the floor is entirely at the discretion of the Majority Leadership and therefore there is no institutional rule regarding a 'period of grace'. It is for the Majority Leadership to decide how much time it takes between the committee reporting a bill after its mark up process <sup>59</sup> and its listing in the House calendars and a given bill's or resolution's consideration on the House floor. In short, the majority votes when the majority wants to vote.
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners is limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p>	<p>There is no question time foreseen as part of House floor activities.<sup>60</sup> However, government officials may be invited to House and/or Senate committee hearings.</p> <p>Examples:  <a href="#">House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Biden Administration Foreign Policy Priorities</a>, with Antony Blinken, 10 March 2021.  <a href="#">Senate Hearing on Biden Administration Trade Policy</a>, with USTR Katherine Tai, 12 May 2021.</p> <p>Committee chairs often send letters to the Administration seeking answers on different issues. However, the Administration does not have to answer.</p>

<sup>59</sup> 'Committees do not actually change the texts of the bills they markup. Instead, committees vote on amendments that their members want to recommend that the House adopt when it considers the bill on the floor. The committee concludes a markup not by voting on the bill as a whole, but by voting on a motion to order the bill reported to the House with whatever amendments the committee has approved. A majority of the committee must be present when this final vote occurs. For all other stages of markups, committees may set their own quorum requirements, so long as that quorum is at least one-third of the committee's membership.' CRS report on [The Committee Markup Process in the House of Representatives](#), 10 December 2018 and CRS report on [House Committee Markups: Manual of Procedures and Procedural Strategies](#), 27 March 2018.

<sup>60</sup> CRS report on [A Parliamentary-style question period: Proposals and issues for Congress](#), 5 March 2009.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>The Member has 1 minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner 2 minutes in which to reply. The Member formulating the question may put a supplementary question of a duration of 30 seconds, having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>In practice, this provision was not used during the 8th and 9th parliamentary term.</p> <p>With regards to Council representatives, there is a possibility to hold specific question hours with the Council in accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents (Rule 137/3).</p> <p>The use of Question time is, however, being discussed again in the reform exercise initiated in the Parliament, in particular in the Focus Group on Plenary reform.</p>	
<b>Procedure for written questions</b>	<p>Members, political groups and committees are entitled to submit questions for written answer to the President of the European Council, to the Council, the Commission and to the Vice-President of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union (Rule 138 RoP).</p> <p>Admissibility criteria are referred to in Annex III RoP, mainly EU competence, competence of the addressee, general interest, contain an understandable interrogation, not exceed 200 words, not contain offensive language, not relate to strictly personal matters, not contain more than 3 sub-questions, no similar or identical question tabled and answered in the previous 6 months. In addition, data protection regulations shall be respected.</p>	<p>There is no procedure for written questions of Members to the legislative branch requiring the latter to provide information on a given subject matter.<sup>61</sup></p>

<sup>61</sup> CRS report on [A Parliamentary-style question period: Proposals and issues for Congress](#), 5 March 2009.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Deadlines for answering: 3 weeks for priority questions; 6 weeks for non-priority questions. Nevertheless, as those deadlines have never been agreed with the institutions addressees of the questions, they are considered by the latter as non-binding on them, but as mere targets. Delays are extremely frequent.</p> <p>Questions for oral answer are a completely different procedure (cf. Rule 136 RoP). These are never answered in writing, even if they lapse without having been scheduled for debate in Plenary. They can only be tabled by a political group, a parliamentary committee or at least 5% of EP's component Members.</p> <p>Major interpellations for written answer (Rule 139 RoP) are a "hybrid" instrument, as they can be scheduled for debate if they have not been answered, but also if they have been answered (different rules apply). They can only be tabled by political groups. Annex III does not apply to Oral questions and Major interpellations. There are specific rules regarding length, deadlines, etc.</p> <p>Members, political groups, parliamentary committees can table a maximum of 20 questions for written answer over a rolling period of 3 months. They can only table one priority question per calendar month (which is also counted in the 20 questions over the 3 month rolling period). A question can be co-tabled by several Members but it will be counted in the quota of each individual Member. Members can also "support" other Members' questions, and in this case this will not be counted in the respective quota. The number of major interpellations is limited by the Conference of Presidents (proportional to the "weight" of each political group) but there is no limit to the number of Oral questions tabled.</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Parliamentary questions are submitted by using a web form (QP webform) and signed by Members with an electronic signature (DISP). They are managed by the administration, with the help of a specific application (QPPLUS).</p> <p>Every parliamentary question is published on the EP website (<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html</a>), under the Plenary part and in the Register of public documents, when it is forwarded to the institution addressee of the question. Questions can also be accessed from the profile of every author (Member). Replies to questions for written answer are published as links to each question and in the Register of public documents. Questions and answers are available in the language of the author(s) and in English. Regarding Oral questions and Major interpellations, if they are scheduled for debate in Plenary, a link to the debate and to the Minutes is published.</p>	
<b>Seating order and presence</b>	<p>The Conference of Presidents shall decide how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated to the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the Union (Rule 37).</p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure, at the beginning of each legislature, political groups have an allocated number of seats for their Members as decided by the Conference of Presidents. Each Member of the European Parliament has his own seat in the Chamber, as indicated by his respective political group. Small changes may occur in the seating plan from one part-session to the next, due to changes in political group affiliation of Members. Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President.</p>	<p><u><a href="#">Unlike the Members of the Senate</a></u>, Members of the House have no assigned seats but are by tradition divided by party. Members of the Democratic Party sit to the Speaker's right and Members of the Republican Party sit to the Speaker's left.<sup>62</sup></p> <p>House Rule XVII, clause 1 on <u><a href="#">Decorum and Debate</a></u> provides that 'A Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner who desires to speak or deliver a matter to the House shall respectfully address the Speaker and, on being recognized, <b>may address the House from any place on the floor</b>. When invited by the Chair, a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner <b>may speak from the Clerk's desk</b>.'</p>

<sup>62</sup> 'No Assigned Seats' – [The Honorable Beverly Barton Butcher Byron describes the seating arrangement on the House Floor](#), 15 June 2016, accessed 6 July 2021; CRS report on [Speaking on the House Floor: Gaining Time and Parliamentary Phraseology](#), 10 December 2018.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, due to social distancing restrictions, the seating plan of Members has had to be adapted and seats were mostly reserved for Members who intervened in debates. Any remaining seats were allocated to Members present on a free seating basis within the allocation foreseen for their respective political groups. Furthermore, Members speak from the central rostrum (without their mask).</p> <p>In order to attract the attention of Members for their participation on debates of particular general importance, the Conference of Presidents can indicate them as key debates with a consequence that no other meetings may be organised in parallel.</p>	<p>Members typically sit in the first row to offer an amendment to bills or resolutions as well as for the non-legislative debate formats, if they seek to be recognised.</p> <p>In general, every member is expected to vote on every issue and to vote himself or herself.</p> <p>House Rule III, Clause 1 <a href="#">provides</a> that every member - except for the Speaker that is excepted under Clause 7 of Rule 1 'shall vote on each question put, unless he has a direct personal or pecuniary interest in the event of such question. The enforcement of this provision, however, has met with difficulties.<sup>63</sup></p> <p>Clause 2 provides that a member 'may not authorize any other person to cast his vote or record his presence in the House or the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union' and that no 'other person may cast a Member's vote or record a Member's presence in the House or the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union'.</p> <p>However, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic since May 2020 the House has allowed the practice of proxy voting whereby one Member can cast votes for up to ten of their colleagues.<sup>64</sup></p> <p>Additional financial incentives similar to the daily allowances that the members of the European Parliament receive do not exist for members of the House. Members of Congress have a Members Representational Account (MRA) which covers most of their expenses including office rent back home, staff salaries, computers, postage,</p>

<sup>63</sup> CRS report [on Voting and Quorum Procedures in the House of Representatives](#), 26 March 2020.

<sup>64</sup> [House Casts Its 1st Remote Votes, With Parties Still Divided On The Issue](#), NPR, 27 May 2020; [Proxy voting turns one: The past, present, and future of remote voting in the House](#), Brookings, 21 May 2021; [End Proxy Voting in the House of Representatives. Now](#), Congressional Institute, 21 May 2021; [Voting Present by Proxy is an Unconstitutional Oxymoron](#), Congressional Institute, 6 May 2020, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>etc. Members pay for their travel to and from the district from the MRA.<sup>65</sup></p> <p>Two provisions of Article I of the U.S. Constitution are the basis for the rules and practices of the House governing quorums and voting on the floor.</p> <p>As for quorums, Article 1 <a href="#">Clause 1 of Section 5</a> states that ‘a Majority of each [House] shall constitute a Quorum to do Business; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.’</p> <p>As for voting, Article 1 Clause 3 of Section 5 provides that ‘the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those present, be entered on the Journal.’<sup>66</sup></p>
<b>Meetings in parallel to plenary sessions</b>	<p>Meetings of committees should not be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, save for very few exceptions agreed by the president. Political group meetings can be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, except for Tuesday and/or Wednesday morning if key debates are scheduled.</p> <p>Rules for meetings in parallel to plenary sessions are set by the Decision of the Conference of Presidents of 14 May 1998.</p>	<p><b>Committee meetings</b></p> <p>At present, House committee meetings may take place at any time, except during a joint session of the House and Senate or during a recess when a joint meeting of the House and Senate is in progress.<sup>67</sup> Earlier restrictions on scheduling House committees meetings and exemptions were eliminated in the 105th Congress (1997-1998).</p> <p>By contrast, <a href="#">Senate Rule XXVI paragraph 5(a)</a> states that no committee may meet after the first two hours of session or after 2:00</p>

<sup>65</sup> CRS report on [Members’ Representational Allowance: History and Usage](#), 13 August 2020. See also [The Members’ Representational Allowance \(MRA\): Looking at House Personal Office Budgets](#), Congressional Institute, 5 April 2019, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>66</sup> CRS report [on Voting and Quorum Procedures in the House of Representatives](#), 26 March 2020.

<sup>67</sup> House Rule XI, clause 2(i), ([Limitation on committee sittings](#)). For more details on the earlier rules and debate, CRS Report, [A Retrospective of House Rules Changes since the 104th Congress through the 109th Congress](#), section on restrictions on meetings, p. 32, 8 March 2012, cited by CRS specialist in House committee hearing on [“The House Calendar and Schedule: Evaluating Practices and Challenges”](#), 16 October 2019.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>As a <b>general rule</b>, no other meeting may be held simultaneously. Therefore, no meeting of a parliamentary body nor any other meeting involving Members shall be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• during voting time;</li> <li>• during formal sittings;</li> <li>• on Wednesdays mornings during Strasbourg part-sessions and on Wednesdays from 15.00 to 16.30 during Brussels part-sessions or during any other debate of particular general importance defined as such by the Conference of Presidents.</li> </ul> <p>However, there are the following <b>exceptions</b> from this rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Conference of Presidents and the Bureau, and any working party thereof, must be able to meet, where appropriate, at any time.</li> <li>• The Quaestors shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Committee Chairs shall be authorised to meet from 14.00 to 16.00 on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Delegation Chairs shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg provided such meetings do not coincide with a key debate.</li> <li>• Political groups shall be authorised to meet during part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels in specific time slots (different for Strasbourg and Brussels) as defined in Annex III to the Bureau decision of 4 July 2005 on Rules governing meetings of the political groups.</li> <li>• Committees shall be authorised to meet in Strasbourg on Mondays and Thursdays. Monday meetings shall be authorised from 19.00 to 22.30. Committees shall be</li> </ul>	<p>p.m. without special leave. However, this prohibition does not apply to the Senate Appropriations or Budget Committees, and permission for other committees to sit during the hours restricted by the rule is routinely granted in the Senate by unanimous consent.<sup>68</sup></p> <p>What follows is a summary by a CRS staffer of the House internal debate about the advantages and disadvantages of drawing stricter dividing lines between committee and floor business hours:</p> <p>‘The House has periodically examined the timing of committee and floor work. Proposals to reduce scheduling conflicts by allocating separate time exclusively for floor proceedings and exclusively for committee meetings, however, has sometimes competed with proposals to reduce late-night floor sessions and provide for an earlier adjournment of the daily session or to provide for additional deliberation on the floor.</p> <p>In recent Congresses, the House has, under majorities of both parties, <b>generally devoted the morning to committee work, with the House regularly beginning its legislative business at noon.</b></p> <p>Additional arguments in favor of this separation have focused on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how conducting both committee and floor activity simultaneously may divide the attention of Members, and</li> <li>• committee meetings are likely to be interrupted frequently by floor votes.</li> </ul> <p>Potential disadvantages of requiring separate committee and floor times include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further limiting time for both floor and committee activities;</li> <li>• potential complications with committee quorum requirements if all committees need to adhere to the same schedule;</li> </ul>

<sup>68</sup> CRS report on [The Senate “Two-Hour Rule” Governing Committee Meeting Times](#), 20 April 2018.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>authorised to hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Brussels only in exceptional cases and subject to the availability of interpretation resources. Such meetings may be held on Wednesdays from 19.00 to 22.00.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finally, delegations to the Conciliation Committee may hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Strasbourg and Brussels if the constraints of time limits and Council availability so dictate and provided that such meetings do not coincide with voting time or a formal sitting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the possibility of exemptions for certain committees or in certain circumstances; and</li> <li>the idea that some floor activities—for example, non-legislative debate like one-minute and special order speeches [missing text in the transcript];</li> <li>consideration of noncontroversial legislation under suspension of the rules; or</li> <li>consideration of substantive but unrelated matters on the floor and in committee—may not require increased attention of Members to the floor in a way that would justify the postponement of committee activities.<sup>69</sup></li> </ul> <p><b>Meetings of political groups, i.e. of the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Conference</b></p> <p>The <b>Democratic caucus</b><sup>70</sup> and the <b>Republican Conference</b><sup>71</sup> meet once a week when they are in session and can meet on emergency basis by conference call or Zoom meetings when needed.<sup>72</sup></p>

<sup>69</sup> CRS specialist in House committee hearing on “[The House Calendar and Schedule: Evaluating Practices and Challenges](#)”, 16 October 2019.

<sup>70</sup> [Rule 7. Calling and Scheduling Caucus Meetings](#) of the House Democratic Caucus provides:

A. The Caucus **shall meet regularly while the House of Representatives is in session.**

B. Meetings of the Caucus shall be called by the Caucus Chair upon their own motion, at the request of the Speaker, or upon the written request of 50 Members.

C. Members **shall not schedule committee meetings or hearings at times when the Caucus is in session.**

The Democrats held a [virtual conference](#) for instance on 2 March at 3:00 p.m. during a committee work week.

<sup>71</sup> The House Republican Conference [website](#) provides the following details: ‘**Rule 5—Conference Meetings**

(a) Call and Notice.— Meetings of the Republican Conference may be called at any time by the chair of the Conference, after consultation with the Speaker.

(b) Speaker’s Annual Meeting.— The Speaker shall hold an annual Meeting at the beginning of each session of Congress at which the Republican Leadership shall report to the Membership on their plans for the upcoming session.

(c) With respect to a meeting called under this rule, whenever possible, at least 24 hours notice of the time, place, and agenda of a meeting shall be given to Members of the Conference.

(d) Decorum.— Meetings of the Republican Conference shall be conducted in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Rules of the House of Representatives, including rule XVII, that govern decorum and the personal behavior of the Members of the Conference.’ accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>72</sup> For more details about the internal rules of the Democratic Caucus, the Republican Conference and the role of the Speaker see [Party Leaders in Congress: An Overview](#), Congressional Institute, 12 November 2020, accessed 6 July 2021; [How Do Party Rules Change Congress—And History?](#) Congressional Institute, 19 November 2014, accessed 6 July 2021. [Reforming Republican Rules – Or Why You Shouldn’t Wash Your Dirty Linen in Public](#), Congressional Institute, 1 October 2014, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		<p>The Republican Conference meets in a room in the Capitol Visitors Center, usually on Tuesday morning. The Republican meetings are live. On the Republican side, the Conference Chair, Elise Stefanik of NY chairs the meetings.<sup>73</sup></p> <p>The Democratic Caucus typically meet in HC-5 in the Capitol on Tuesday as well. These meetings have been modified on the Democratic side, since so many of their Members have not been in Washington D.C. for many months so that they are generally done by Zoom calls.</p> <p>Both Caucuses have their own rules which have a big influence on party actions and party elections. Rules on committee assignments belong to the two caucuses, not the Rules of the House. The recently lifted ban on earmarks by Republicans was caused by caucus decisions, even though they were legal under the Rules of the House.<sup>74</sup></p> <p>From the U.S. perspective, the meetings of the EP political groups look like a formal committee meeting with assigned seats and the chair running the meeting like a committee hearing in U.S. Congress. By contrast, the two caucus meetings in U.S. Congress are usually more free flowing affairs.<sup>75</sup></p>
<b>Parliaments' calendars</b>	Parliament's work is structured according to a calendar divided into weeks of different colours, each corresponding to a different type of parliamentary activity: pink for committee meetings, red for plenary part-sessions, blue for political group meetings and	Owing to the pandemic, the 2021 structure of the <a href="#">Majority Whip calendar</a> is different from the pre-pandemic structure. Unlike the EP calendar, the House calendar prior to the pandemic was divided into time in session requiring presence in D.C. and district work time (presence outside of D.C.), with committee work and floor activities

<sup>73</sup> She recently [replaced](#) Liz Cheney, an [outspoken critics](#) of former President Trump.

<sup>74</sup> [House Republican Conference votes to bring back earmarks](#). Bipartisan support now in the House for local project funding, as well as Senate Democrats; Senate Republican backing unclear, Roll Call, 17 March 2021, accessed 4 July 2021.

<sup>75</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>turquoise for constituency weeks (external parliamentary activities).</p> <p>Every year the Parliament holds 12 four-day plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Its Members meet in parliamentary committees in Brussels, where additional two-day plenary sessions are held.</p> <p>The plenary session is the highlight of the parliamentary month with all the Members assembling either in the Chamber in Strasbourg or, for additional, shorter sessions, in Brussels. The reports adopted in committees are once again debated, amended and adopted to reflect the Parliament's official position. In addition to adopting reports, Members adopt resolutions and directly question Commission or Council representatives on topical issues. Heads of State or Government and personalities from all over the world may also attend the plenary sessions.</p> <p>Pink weeks are dedicated to committee meetings, the forum where Members coming from different political groups discuss draft legislation, propose amendments, consider Commission and Council proposals and draw up reports to be presented to the plenary.</p> <p>In weeks that are marked blue Members meet with other members from their political group. The political groups in Parliament bring together Members coming from different national political parties, sharing the same political stance and affiliations. During the political groups' meeting, Members discuss their positions on proposed legislation, to be debated and voted on during plenary. They scrutinise reports from Parliamentary committees, table amendments and agree on a group position.</p>	<p>arranged as deemed fit, with no strict floor voting during one specific week.</p> <p>As of June 2021, the House legislative calendar in 2021 continues to be <a href="#">divided</a> into</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• weeks with voting days (23 weeks of mostly four days in a row stretching from Monday to Thursday or from Tuesday to Friday including committee work totalling 101 days),</li> <li>• committee work days without votes (59 days) and</li> <li>• district work time (93 days).</li> </ul> <p>The use of colours to visualise this division is not consistent across the different calendars published by U.S. Congress.</p> <p>As of June 2021, the <a href="#">Majority Whip calendar</a> suggests that the House in 2021 is in session for 35 weeks corresponding to 160 working days.</p> <p>According to this calendar, Members spend a total of 101 voting days that comprise as well committee work in the morning, 59 days on committee work days without floor votes and 93 days out of session for district work.</p> <p>The practice of attending committee work virtually as well as proxy voting has sparked criticism,<sup>76</sup> notably from Republican Members. As can be seen from the House Legislative Calendar, December is the first week without committee work days, since it is expected that the Legislative Calendar will be back to normal by then.</p> <p>There are no barred time periods spelled out in the House Rules: According to <a href="#">Rule I, Clause 10</a> of the House Rules, 'the Speaker may designate a Member, Delegate, Resident Commissioner, officer, or employee of the House to travel on the business of the House within or without the United States, whether the House is meeting, has</p>

<sup>76</sup> [With House Republicans flouting COVID-19 guidelines, proxy voting remains an essential option](#), Brookings, 12 January 2021, accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>During turquoise week, MEPs undertake activities outside the Parliament (external parliamentary activities). They work either in their constituency in their home country, where they have the opportunity to interact with their electorate, or in Parliamentary delegations, responsible for maintaining relations with non-EU countries.</p> <p>Of course, this calendar is implemented with some degree of flexibility in duly justified cases (e.g. committee meetings in plenary or group weeks to vote on urgent legislation, extraordinary plenary sittings, etc.)</p> <p>For 2020:  Number of working days in total: 174  Number of daily sittings*: 51 (including 2 extraordinary sessions in form of daily sittings held on 27 May and 23 July)  Number of sitting hours: 259 h 43</p> <p>N.B.: The length of daily sittings may differ depending on the indication in the calendar (Ex. Monday for Strasburg session and Wednesday and Thursday for the Brussels session are considered only as a half-working days).</p> <p>Number of working days for committee meetings: 58  Number of working days for political group meetings: 32  Number of working days outside of the parliament (external parliamentary activities): 38</p>	<p>recessed, or has adjourned. Expenses for such travel may be paid from applicable accounts of the House described in Clause 1(k)(1) of rule X on vouchers approved and signed solely by the Speaker.’ Rule XX, Clause 8 contains the provisions that provide details for reimbursement for travel outside the US.<sup>77</sup></p>

<sup>77</sup> See in addition CRS in Focus on [Disclosure of International Travel by Congress](#), 23 February 2015.

## 2. Strengthening parliamentary prerogatives

	European Parliament	US Congress
<b>Organisation of Hearings</b>	<p>The European Parliament's Committees may invite the Commission and other EU institutions and bodies to their meetings. Apart from that, they may organise public hearings with experts for different purposes and shall organise public hearings on European citizen's initiatives once they have gathered the necessary citizens' support. Pre-appointment hearings are also relevant in the European Parliament's Committees work, especially the ones held during the appointment procedure of the European Commission. The European Parliament inquiry committees may also invite different categories of witnesses to provide evidence.</p> <p>Rules applicable to the organisation and scheduling of hearing by EP's committees are quite flexible. If a committee decides to invite the <b>Commission, the Council or other EU institutions</b> to one of its meetings, the availability of those institutions may play a relevant role when deciding when to place the item on the agenda. Notwithstanding, the Commission has committed to give priority to its presence at parliamentary sessions when requested to appear (Framework Agreement on relations between the EP and the COM, point 35).</p> <p>Similarly, when deciding on whether to organise an <b>experts' hearing</b>, committees do need to consider that those hearings, no matter if they are organised by standing committees, inquiry or special committees, or subcommittees, need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau (Rule 25 (9) RoP). Proposals to organise hearings are usually discussed by committee coordinators before being submitted to Parliament's Bureau (Rule</p>	<p>Unlike EP hearings where roughly 20 MEPs articulate a long list of questions and the experts, for time reasons, can pick those questions they are most comfortable to answer, the House hearings are structured into five-minute slots. This allows individual Members to ask several questions during this time-frame requiring immediate answers from the witness giving testimony.<sup>78</sup></p> <p>The US Congress makes a great use of hearings and testimony for many different purposes. In addition to hearings, Congress has many different ways to gather information, including informal exchanges with the Executive branch, stakeholders, NGOs and contacts with constituencies. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) classifies hearings in four main categories: oversight, investigative, legislative and confirmation hearings.</p> <p><b>Oversight hearings</b> are used by Congress to hold the executive branch accountable and more specifically to monitor and supervise the implementation of a given public policy. A CRS report explains that <b>investigative hearings</b> can take place in relation to allegations of mismanagement or wrongdoing by public officials acting in their official capacity. <b>Legislative hearings</b> are the most common type of hearings and are used by Committees to collect evidence and expertise in relation to topics on which the Committee might legislate although, from a procedural point of view, they are not formally required in order for the bill to receive further consideration. Hearings can take place even before the bill is introduced and referred to the Committee. When a bill falls under the competences of two Committees, each one may decide to hold a hearing or else they may have joint hearings. <b>Confirmation hearings</b> are peculiar to</p>

<sup>78</sup> CRS report on [Types of Committee Hearings](#), 15 November 2018.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>214 RoP). According to the Bureau’s Rules on Public Hearings (18 June 2003), each parliamentary committee shall submit a draft 6-months program of experts’ hearings to the Conference of Committee Chairs twice a year. Individual authorisations for hearings not included in the 6-months program may also be granted and have to be submitted to the Bureau four weeks in advance of the hearing after notifying the Conference of Committee Chairs. In urgent cases, Parliament’s President may directly give the authorisation (Article 3 Bureau’s Rules on Public Hearings). Committees can only cover the expenses of a maximum of 16 experts’ guests per year (12 for subcommittees) and experts and the organisations they represent need to be on a mandatory transparency register.</p> <p>Once organised, committees notify Parliament’s President and provide detailed information regarding the hearing, Experts’ hearings shall be organised in Parliament’s premises and during the ordinary meeting time of committees (Article 1 Rules on Public Hearings). In these hearings, experts are usually allowed to make a first statement followed by a debate in which committee members may raise questions. As regards the allocation of speaking time in committee Parliament’s Rules of Procedure (Rule 216 (4) only refers to Rule 171 (2) RoP) during a hearing, thus leaving a wide margin of discretion to the Committee Chair to decide on how to organise the debate. Hearings are normally public.</p> <p><b>Public hearings’ on European Citizens initiatives</b> present some peculiarities as they are organised by the competent EP’s standing committee, on a decision made by Parliament’s President on a proposal from the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (Rule 222 (1) RoP), so they do not need the prior authorisation of Parliament’s Bureau. The hearings should be organised within three months of the submission of the European Citizens initiative to the Commission.</p>	<p>the Senate, in fact according to Article 2, Section 2 of the US Constitution, the US President has the power to nominate ‘with the advice and consent of the Senate’, the ‘ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the United States, whose appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by law’. Finally, hearings may be organised in Congress as well as elsewhere, these latter are called <b>field hearings</b>. It is argued that field hearings, besides the legislative or oversight purpose also provide an opportunity for Members to be more visible at local level, raise awareness about Congress activities and attract media attention, though they cannot be used for electoral purposes . Their organisation is similar to the ‘in Congress hearings’ but in addition they might require the organisation of travels, security arrangements, video and/or audio recording.</p> <p>Committees take into consideration several elements when deciding whether or not to schedule a hearing including, the legislative workload, urgency of the matter, visibility in terms of media coverage but also the availability of witnesses. At any rate, the committee chair controls the agenda as well as the schedule. For instance, although hearings may be organised at any time (with few exceptions such as, when the House and Senate are in a joint session or during a recess) the timing is often dependent on Members’ availability to attend, in particular Committee leaders. Joint hearings are also possible and of course in this case, the organisation might be more complex: Both <a href="#">House</a> Rule XI 2. (a)(1) and <a href="#">Senate</a> Rule XXVI(2) require each standing Committee to adopt ‘written rules governing its procedures’ and to publish them in the <a href="#">Congressional Record</a>. The result is that <b>the organisation of Committees’ meetings and hearings may vary from one Committee to another</b> and the practical conduct of them largely remains under the remit of the Committee Chair.</p> <p>Notwithstanding these differences, hearings share some commonalities. They are public and the possibility to have in camera</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p><b>Pre-appointment hearings</b> do not have to receive the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau and the competent committees enjoy a wide range of freedom as regards their organisation and conduct, except the hearings held within the appointment procedure of the Commission, which are thoroughly regulated by Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Hearings held in the European Parliament's committees during the election procedure of the European Commission distinguish themselves from all other pre-appointment hearings, not only because they are conducted before Parliament gives its vote of consent to the Commission as a whole, but also because they involve nearly all EP's standing committees and governing bodies and they have become a major political event. Two major steps take place before the hearings themselves: i) Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee examines the declaration of financial interests presented by each Commissioner-designate to confirm that there is no conflict of interests in connection with their future portfolio ii) and Commissioners-designate are asked to answer several questions in writing before the hearing. Each hearing lasts three hours. Commissioners-designate make an opening statement of no more than 15 minutes. A session of questions and answers follows, in which Members are allowed to ask up to 25 questions, with follow-up questions to be asked immediately by the same MEP within their allocated time. Speaking time is allocated to Members taking into account the size of each political group</p> <p>Temporary <b>inquiry committees</b> may also hold hearings as part of its investigative activities on 'alleged contraventions or maladministration in implementation of Union law'. Members of the institutions and other bodies of the EU and members of the Member States' governments may be invited by inquiry committees to take part in their proceedings (Article 3 (2) of Decision 95/167/EC). Although the wording of the current provision does not seem to impose a legal obligation. In any case,</p>	<p>sessions is limited by Senate and House rules. From the organisational point of view, the tasks carried on by the Committee staff ahead of the hearing usually include amongst others: selection of the witnesses in conjunction with the Majority (or subpoena them, if so required), drafting a memorandum and an opening statement for the chair, ranking member and other Congressmen/women if so requested; sending the invitation; and the day before the hearing, check Members' attendance to ensure that the required quorum to take sworn testimony is reached. Hearing documents, including research material, written testimony and documents are made available to the public through publication on the Committee website. The committee remain the sole judge of the relevance and pertinence of the documents and testimony presented in relation to the hearing. Many other aspects remain dealt by each Committee in a different way for instance some Committees require the witnesses to take an oath, while in other Committees it is for the Chair to decide. Senate, all Committees, with the exception of the Committee on Appropriations, must ask witnesses to provide a statement about their testimony at least 24 hours in advance, unless the chair and the ranking member agreed that this is not necessary because of a 'good cause for noncompliance'. Concerning the appearance of witnesses, both House and Senate have some common rules but again much is left to the Committees to be decided. Concerning the time allocated to Members to question the witnesses, in the House each Member has five minutes to question the witness. After this first round, the Chair may allocate additional time. Also, the Committee may adopt a motion/rule to grant certain Members the possibility to question the witness for more than 5 minutes and up to one hour to be equally distributed between majority and minority. Members' order of intervention is decided by the Committee in both Senate and the House. Usually majority and minority Members alternate, some Committee gives priority to the seniority criteria while some apply the "early bird" rule i.e. Members address the witness according to their order or arrival to the hearing.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	Parliament has at its disposal some other powerful tools, including the motion of censure (Article 234 TFEU and Rule 127 RoP), that it can use against the Commission in case their members decide not to appear in front of inquiry committees. As regards some other EU institutions or bodies (e.g. the Council or the European Council) and national governments, Parliament can use different means to exert political pressure, including by using a “shaming and blaming” strategy.	
<b>Scrutiny and control powers</b>	<p>Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers. These include <b>(1) exercise oversight over other institutions, (2) monitor the proper use of the EU budget and (3) ensure the correct implementation of EU law.</b></p> <p><b><u>Control over the Council</u></b></p> <p>The President of the European Parliament has the right to speak at the start of each European Council, setting out Parliament’s position on the subjects to be addressed by the heads of state and government. After each summit, the President of the European Council presents a report to Parliament on the outcome.</p> <p>At the beginning and end of each six-month presidency, the President of the Council of the European Union discusses the Presidency’s programme with MEPs in plenary. MEPs can table written and oral questions to the Council and can ask it to initiate new policies. The Presidency of the Council often meets the Chairs of Parliament’s political groups and frequently takes part in committee meetings to present its programme, report on its</p>	<p>A single member of government can be subject to the power of impeachment of Congress (see below). However, statistics show that U.S. Congress has used this power against a very limited number of individuals, the majority of them were judges and a few of them were presidents.<sup>79</sup></p> <p><b><u>Oversight over the Executive</u></b></p> <p>The fundamental power of Congress (the Legislative branch) has over the President and the Administration (the Executive branch) is through <b>law making</b>, as the executive must implement the laws passed by Congress. Congress holds direct control over the executive branch through its power to <b>impeach</b> executive officials as well as the President and Vice-President. When this procedure occurs, the House of Representatives has the unique power to impeach<sup>80</sup> while the Senate holds a trial<sup>81</sup> for the official.<sup>82</sup></p> <p>Congress also oversees the Executive branch by scrutinizing its activities in a way which informs its <b>decision to fund, de-fund, or terminate government programmes</b>. For instance, Congress performs ex-post impact assessment through regular as well as ad-</p>

<sup>79</sup> [List of Individuals Impeached by the House of Representatives](#), accessed 2 July 2021.

<sup>80</sup> Article 1, Section 2, Clause 5 of the [U.S. Constitution](#) states that: ‘The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.’

<sup>81</sup> Article 1, Section 3, Clause 6 of the [U.S. Constitution](#) states that: ‘The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments.’

<sup>82</sup> For more information on the impeachment see [Impeachment of Federal Officials](#), accessed 6 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>achievements and discuss them with MEPs. In addition, twice a year, the High Representative reports to the European Parliament about foreign affairs and security policies and their financial implications.</p> <p><b>Control over the Commission</b></p> <p>The Parliament has the right to approve and dismiss the Commission. A candidate for the position of Commission President is proposed by the Member States' governments based on the results of the European elections. The candidate is then elected by the Parliament. The Commission as a whole, including the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is subject to a vote of consent by Parliament. The Commission can be forced to resign if the EP adopts a motion of censure. It can censure the Commission and ultimately dismiss it.</p> <p>The Parliament keeps a close eye on the Commission's work, scrutinizing its reports on EU policies, legislation and the budget. Commissioners are often required to appear before MEPs, at committee meetings or in plenary, to defend their policies, explain what action they intend to take and answer questions.</p> <p>Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, which regularly submits reports to it, including an annual report on EU activities and the implementation of the budget. At every plenary session, the President of the Commission is present for Question Hour, during which MEPs question him or her on current affairs. Once a year, the Commission President gives a</p>	<p>hoc hearings which address the efficiency of agencies and programmes. Congress also created the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to perform many of the legislative branch's oversight tasks, both at the direct request of congressional committees or as mandated by public law or committee reports.</p> <p>Last but not least, Congress has the power of <b>investigation and inquiry</b> into the executive branch activities.<sup>83</sup> Under their extensive investigative powers, both chambers of Congress may compel the production of evidence or testimony toward whatever end they deem necessary.<sup>84</sup> U.S. Congress may use Congressional Subpoenas to compel members of the executive branch reluctant to cooperate to disclose information.<sup>85</sup></p> <p>The <a href="#">House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform</a> and the <a href="#">Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs</a> are both devoted to overseeing and reforming government operations, and each committee conducts oversight in its policy area.<sup>86</sup></p> <p>The Senate also has the important power of confirming high-ranking executive and judicial officials nominated by the President, such as Ambassadors, cabinet Secretaries, and Supreme Court Justices.</p> <p><b>Federal Court</b></p> <p>Although the US federal courts oversee the US Legislative branch significantly through their ability to make rulings on laws passed by the legislature, Congress can refine its legislation in response to judicial decisions. Congress, on its end, can exert significant influence on the judicial branch through its ability to create inferior federal</p>

<sup>83</sup> CRS report on [Congress's Authority to Influence and Control Executive Branch Agencies](#), 12 May 2021.

<sup>84</sup> White House, Our Government - [the legislative branch](#), accessed 2 July 2021.

<sup>85</sup> CRS report on [Congressional Subpoenas: Enforcing Executive Branch Compliance](#), 27 March 2019.

<sup>86</sup> For more detailed information see [CRS Congressional Oversight Manual](#), 31 March 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>State of the Union address at the plenary. Parliament regularly invites the Commission to initiate new policies, and the Commission is required to reply to oral and written questions from MEPs.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Justice</u></b> The EP can ask the Court to take action against the Commission or the Council if they have acted in a way that is contrary to the provisions of EU law. The Parliament is able to seek a prior opinion from the CJEU on the compatibility of an international agreement with the Treaty. In addition, the Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish specialised courts attached to the General Court to hear and determine at first instance certain classes of action or proceeding brought in specific areas.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank (ECB)</u></b> The ECB President reports to Parliament on monetary issues in a quarterly Monetary Dialogue. The ECB also prepares an annual report on monetary policy which is presented in Parliament. Parliament adopts a resolution on this annual report. MEPs may put questions for written answer to the ECB. Parliament is also consulted in the procedure to appoint members of the ECB's Executive Board.</p> <p>The new supervisory responsibilities of the ECB are matched with additional accountability requirements under the SSM Regulation. The practical modalities for this are governed by an inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between Parliament and the ECB. The accountability arrangements include the attendance of the Chair of the Supervisory Board at the competent committee,</p>	<p>courts and prescribe their jurisdiction. Similarly, the Senate holds sway on the composition of federal courts, including the Supreme Court, by confirming or failing to approve the President's nominees<sup>87</sup>.</p> <p><b><u>Federal Reserve (Fed)</u></b> Although the President is responsible for selecting the board of governors, chair, and vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve, the Fed is accountable to Congress. The Federal Reserve Act (1913) requires the Fed to submit written reports to Congress twice a year by law which explain the central bank's monetary policy.</p> <p>In addition, the Fed's chairman and vice-chairman regularly testify in front of Congress to discuss monetary issues. Additionally, staff from the Fed regularly meets with Congressional employees to report on the Fed's operations and future direction.</p> <p>The Government Accountability Office (GAO), supported by Congress, also plays a significant role in oversight of the Fed through its broad authority to review and audit the Fed's activities within legislative limits set out by the Federal Banking Agency Audit Act (1978).</p> <p><b><u>The Government Accountability Office (GAO)</u></b> As a nonpartisan independent agency that works for Congress, the GAO investigates how the federal government spends tax money. Its head, the Comptroller General of the United States, is appointed to a 15-year term by the President from a selection of candidates provided by Congress.</p> <p>As part of their work to inform Congress on the efficiency of the federal government, GAO:</p>

<sup>87</sup> [Senate Committee on the Judiciary](#), Nominations, accessed 4 July 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON); answering questions asked by Parliament; and confidential oral discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the competent committee upon request. In addition, the ECB prepares an annual supervisory report, which is presented to Parliament by the Chair of the Supervisory Board.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Auditors</u></b> Parliament shall be consulted before the appointment of the members of the Court of Auditors by the Council. The Court assists Parliament and the Council in exercising their role of controlling the implementation of the budget. The annual reports and special reports serve as the basis for Parliament's yearly discharge exercise.</p> <p>The Court's Members are invited to present their reports at committee meetings (Parliament's CONT Committee and other specialised committees), and to reply to questions raised by MEPs. Each year the Court of Auditors and CONT hold several meetings at which CONT members discuss with the Members of the Court their political priorities, the Court's annual work programme, detailed arrangements for cooperation, etc. Once a year, the ECA President attends a meeting of the European Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs to present the ECA's annual work programme and invite all committees to submit their suggestions for the next programming exercise. Parliament also makes suggestions on these issues in its annual resolutions on the Court of Auditors' discharge. The Court of Auditors presents the annual report on the previous year's budget to the Council and to the Parliament. Based on this report, Parliament decides whether or not to approve the Commission's handling of the EU budget, by granting the budget discharge.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• audits federal agencies to determine whether federal funds are being spent efficiently,</li> <li>• investigates allegations of illegal and improper activities,</li> <li>• evaluates the impact of certain policies, and</li> </ul> <p>performs multiple other tasks which seek to improve the performance of the federal government.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>The Parliament elects the European Ombudsman. The Ombudsman reports back to the EP and presents an annual report to the MEPs. The Ombudsman may be dismissed by the Court of Justice at Parliament’s request in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b><u>Budget</u></b> Parliament remains one of the two arms of the budgetary authority (Article 314 of the TFEU). It is involved in the budgetary process from the preparation stage, notably in laying down the general guidelines and the type of spending. It adopts the budget and monitors its implementation (Article 318 of the TFEU). It gives a discharge on the implementation of the budget (Article 319 of the TFEU). Finally, Parliament has to provide its consent to the multiannual financial framework (MFF) (Article 312 of the TFEU). The MFF for 2014–2020 is the first to be covered under the rules laid down in the TFEU.</p> <p><b><u>Implementation of EU law</u></b> According to Article 226 of the TFEU, Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of EU law. The same article provides that the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the right of inquiry are to be determined by Parliament itself, acting by means of regulations on its own initiative after obtaining the consent of the Council and the Commission. Until such a regulation is adopted, the right of inquiry is exercised in accordance with a 1995 inter-institutional agreement annexed to Parliament’s Rules of Procedure. Parliament has repeatedly expressed the need to improve communication and cooperation between the three institutions in order to be able to fulfil its mandate based on Article 226 of the TFEU. In 2014, it adopted a position on a proposal for a regulation on the detailed provisions governing</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry. However, the negotiations between the three institutions on the proposal have constantly been in a deadlock. Consequently, in April 2019, Parliament adopted a resolution, in which it considers that the Council and the Commission have failed to comply with the principle of inter-institutional cooperation and invites them to resume on the matter with the newly elected Parliament.</p>	
<b>Appointment procedures</b>	<p>The role and the prerogatives of the European Parliament have evolved and increased over time, not only as regards legislative powers and oversight but also in relation to the procedures to nominate, vet and appoint people to other senior positions in EU institutions, agencies and other bodies. Parliament's role varies from case to case depending on the legal basis. Parliament's scrutiny of such candidates, in various different forms, helps in ensuring the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of the process as well as its transparency. What is today codified in the EU Treaties, secondary legislation and Parliament's Rules of Procedure, is mostly the result of a set of Parliamentary processes that became established practices over the years. This demonstrates that Parliament has managed to use its political leverage to expand and formalise its power to nominate and appoint the holders of senior positions. Despite the heterogeneity of procedures, some common patterns may be highlighted, in particular, that candidates and nominees generally appear in front of the relevant committee(s) of the European Parliament, first making a statement and then answering questions from Members.</p> <p><b><u>European Commission</u></b>  The Lisbon Treaty Article 17(7) TEU provides that Member State governments propose the other Commissioners, who are then nominated by the Council in common accord with the President-elect of the Commission. Each candidate then appears for a three-</p>	<p>Confirmation hearings are peculiar to the Senate, in fact according to Article 2, Section 2 of the US Constitution, the US President has the power to nominate 'with the advice and consent of the Senate', the 'ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the United States, whose appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by law'. Though, in practice, a limited number of them gives rise to public attention, usually those concerning very high positions, such as the Supreme Court Justices. Many other nominations are dealt by the Senate as a routine business, suffice to have a look at the statistics of Congressional activity. For instance in 2020, the Senate dealt with 21,854 nominees out of 21,617 which were confirmed. Several factors influence the public visibility and the debate within the Senate including the fact whether or not the President and the majority in the Senate are from the same political party or, whether it is a presidential election year. To prepare for these hearings, each Committee decides which kind of background documentation the nominee must provide (biography, financial information, FBI background checks etc).</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>hour hearing in front of the Parliament's committee(s) responsible, as stipulated in Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Before a hearing can take place, candidates must answer a written questionnaire and present their declaration of interests. The declarations of financial interests are examined by Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs, which needs to confirm the absence of any conflict of interest. After that, the Commission as a whole still needs to obtain consent from Parliament by a majority of the votes cast, by roll call before being appointed by the European Council, by qualified majority.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Auditors</u></b> According to Article 286(2) TFEU the Council adopts the list of members of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) following proposals from Member States and after consulting the European Parliament. Despite Parliament having a consultative role only, it can influence the outcome. The Member States may prefer to withdraw a candidate than face a formal negative vote by Parliament. The relevance of Parliament's role also comes from the fact that hearings of the nominees are in public in committee, and their answers to the questionnaire are published, creating significant political weight and pressure on the candidates' performance.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Justice</u></b> Parliament has no role in the appointing procedure for Judges or Advocates-General of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). However, according to Article 255 TFEU it proposes one member of the panel entrusted with the duty of vetting the nominees.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> According to Article 228 TFEU the European Ombudsman is directly elected by Parliament for the duration of its legislative term, i.e. a five-year period. This appointment is completely under the aegis of Parliament and Member States have no role at all.</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p><b><u>European Central Bank</u></b>  Parliament also has a role in the appointments procedure for members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) as well as of the Supervisory Board of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM). For the former, Parliament provides an opinion, while for the latter Parliament has a more stringent role. Article 283(2) TFEU states that the ECB Executive Board will be appointed by the European Council on a recommendation from the Council after consulting the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the ECB.</p>	
	<p><b><u>Agencies' board members and Executive Directors</u></b>  The European Parliament exercises its oversight power over EU agencies through various procedures including, but not limited to, budgetary discharge, involvement in the appointment of their Executive Directors and Management Board members.</p>	
	<p><b><u>European Data Protection Supervisor</u></b>  According to Article 53 of EU Regulation 2018/1725, Parliament and Council shall appoint the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) for a five-year term by common accord, on the basis of a public list of at least three candidates drawn up by the European Commission following a public call for submission of candidatures.</p>	
	<p><b><u>European Public Prosecutor's Office</u></b>  The first European Chief Prosecutor was appointed in 2019. According to Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, Parliament and Council shall appoint by common accord the European Chief Prosecutor, based on a number of criteria following an open call for candidates published in the Official Journal. A selection panel, a member of which shall be proposed by Parliament, draws up a</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>shortlist of qualified candidates to be submitted to Parliament and to the Council.</p> <p><b>European Anti-Fraud Office</b>            Article 17 of Regulation No 883/2013 on the investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) recognises Parliament's role in the appointment procedure of the European Anti-Fraud Office Director-General as well as its Supervisory Committee. Following amendments adopted in December 2020, the Regulation states that the Director-General is appointed by the European Commission for a seven-year term. In order to do so, following a public call for applications, the Commission draws up a list of suitably qualified candidates, based on the Supervisory Committee's favourable opinion, then Parliament and Council agree on a shortlist of three candidates based on which the Commission appoints the Director-General. The five independent members of the Supervisory Committee are also appointed by common accord of Parliament, Council and Commission - Article 15(2) of Regulation 833/2013. Finally, the recent amendments introduced the figure of Controller of procedural guarantees, attached to the Supervisory Committee, appointed by the Commission after consultation of Parliament and the Council.</p>	
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of up to 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes to be decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited to participate by the Conference of Presidents shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners to be invited shall be limited to two per part-session. However, it shall be possible to invite a third</p>	<p>There is no 'question time' in the House at floor stage.</p> <p>At committee level, by contrast, there is a possibility for committees to organise hearings on the executive's policy approach to different policy areas.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Commissioner, depending on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall, as far as possible, ensure that Members that hold different political views and that come from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn.</p> <p>The Member shall be given one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. That Member may put a supplementary question, lasting no longer than 30 seconds and having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner shall then be given two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided under paragraph. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p>	
<b>Transparency of legislative procedures</b>	<p>Primary law lays down some principles, which need to be respected by the EU institutions. The institutions are to conduct their work as openly as possible (Article 15(1) TFEU), with the Parliament (Article 15(2) TFEU) and Council (Article 16(8) TEU) meeting in public, the latter specifically 'when it deliberates and votes on a draft legislative act'. In addition, institutions must</p>	<p>There are specific availability requirements applicable for legislative measures that are captured under the '72-hours-rule'.<sup>88</sup> However, waivers of this rule for legislation are possible.</p> <p><a href="#">House Rule XIII, Clause 4(1)</a> states: 'Except as specified in subparagraph (2), it shall not be in order to consider in the House a</p>

<sup>88</sup> For more information on the availability requirements see CRS report on the [Availability of Legislative Measures in the House of Representatives](#) (The "72-Hour Rule"), 25 February 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>ensure the publication of documents relating to legislative procedures, and allow citizens and EU residents to access the types of documents as enshrined in Article 15(3) TFEU and Article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. This fundamental right is also reflected in secondary law adopted in 2001 – Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. It stipulates that legislative documents are in principle public, with some limited exceptions.</p> <p>The Commission’s proposals are published on the day the College adopts them. In the EP, working documents, draft reports and opinions as well as amendments tabled by individual Members or political groups are published in all official languages even before a vote takes place in a committee or in the plenary. Final texts adopted at committee and plenary level are made available to the public closely after the vote. In addition, 4 column-documents of political trilogues can be made available on request under Reg. 1049/2001. The result of the negotiations (the so called compromise agreement or text) is published before the final vote in plenary.</p> <p>While the EP receive the Council mandate for negotiating, the mandate does not provide information on the individual position of the Member States. The Ombudsman conducted an inquiry into the transparency of the legislative process of the Council</p>	<p>measure or matter reported by a committee until the proposed text of each report (except views referred to in clause 2(l) of rule XI) of a committee on that measure or matter has been available to Members, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner for 72 hours.’ A process nicknamed ‘marshal law’ may occur close to the end of a Congress.<sup>89</sup></p> <p>Once a bill or resolution is introduced into U.S. Congress, it is automatically registered in the <a href="#">database</a> of Congress activities, the <b>Congressional Record</b>. As a piece of legislation moves forward, more information, including the text of the bill and a CRS analysis, is added to the entry. The database with the full-text of all bills and resolutions goes back to the 101st Congress (1989-1990). A bill record is also available for all legislation from the 93rd Congress (1973-74) to the present.</p> <p>A bill introduced in the House can only become law,<sup>90</sup> if either the Senate passes exactly the bill approved by the House or a different bill on the same matter passed by the Senate is matched in every detail with the bill of the House in a so-called <b>conference committee</b>.<sup>91</sup> Only afterwards can the bill be submitted to the President for signature.</p> <p>Conference Committees are rarely used because the Speaker is keen on keeping control over negotiations with the Senate. Bills are reconciled between the two Chambers through messages between</p>

<sup>89</sup> ‘Under the martial law procedure, long-standing House rules that require at least one day between the unveiling of significant legislation and the House floor vote on that legislation — so that Members can learn what they are being asked to vote on — are swept away. Instead, under “martial law,” the Leadership can file legislation with tens or hundreds of pages of fine print and move immediately to debate and votes on it, before Members of Congress, the media, or the public have an opportunity to understand fully what provisions have been altered or inserted into the legislation behind closed doors. This is the procedure that the Leadership intends to use to muscle through important bills in the next two days.’ [Statement](#) of U.S. Congressman Michael C. Burgess, M.D., 28 September 2008.

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of U.S. law-making see the CRS [graph on law-making](#) displaying the different steps for law-making taken by the House of Representatives and the Senate. For more details see [Legislative Process. Resolving difficulties](#), congress.gov, accessed 6 July 2021.

<sup>91</sup> CRS report on [Conference Committee and Related Procedures](#): An Introduction, 21 May 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>(OI/2/2017/TE) in March 2017. The report stated that the Council failed to systematically record identities of Member States expressing positions in legislative files in preparatory level bodies. Moreover, the Council automatically assigned 'LIMITE' status to files of ongoing deliberations – meaning for internal use only – in violation of the principle of widest possible public access to documents established by the CJEU's case law. Thus, in the context of trilogues, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council review the 'LIMITE' status of documents setting out its position – the third column – to make it publicly available before trilogues take place. The Court of Justice considered, in the abovementioned case, that the Council was wrong to refuse public access to parts of a note from its Secretariat that contained amendments tabled by a number of Member State governments. The Court clarified that the EU's rules on access to documents "aim to ensure public access to the entire content of Council documents, including, in this case, the identity of those who put forward proposals". The Ombudsman welcomed the Council's confirmation that, as a consequence of the Court's ruling, legislative documents containing Member States' positions are now disclosed upon request, "save in exceptional and duly justified cases". The Ombudsman suggested that the Council update its rules of procedure to reflect this practice. Of course this commitment means little, if Member States' positions are not recorded appropriately in the first place. The Ombudsman therefore made the following recommendation to the Council: The Council should systematically record the identity of Member State governments when they express positions in preparatory bodies.</p>	<p>the Speaker and the Senate Majority Leader. This process is called ping-ponging, as messages are passed back and forth across the Capitol Rotunda like the ball in a ping pong match.<sup>92</sup></p> <p>A conference report cannot be considered in the House unless it has been available in the <b>Congressional Record</b> or on the House document repository website for 72 hours. Copies of the report and the statement must also be available to Representatives for at least two hours before they consider it. Sometimes these availability requirements are waived by a special rule reported by the Committee on Rules. The requirements do not apply during the last six days of a session.</p> <p>The House routinely calls up a conference report under a special rule that protects the report against one or more points of order (objections) if the House Committee on Rules reports and the House passes a resolution waiving the applicable rules.<sup>93</sup></p>
<b>Resolving conflicts of competences</b>	(RoP 211) If a standing committee declares itself not to be competent to consider an item, or if a conflict arises over the competence of two or more standing committees, the question	House <a href="#">Rule XII, Clause 2</a> vests the Speaker <a href="#">with</a> the authority to refer bills to House committees. He or she has many options and is supported by the House <a href="#">Parliamentarian</a> .

<sup>92</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

<sup>93</sup> CRS report on [Conference Committee and Related Procedures](#): An Introduction, 21 May 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
<p><b>between committees</b></p>	<p>of competence shall be submitted to the Conference of Committee Chairs within four weeks of the announcement in Parliament of the referral to committee.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents shall take a decision within six weeks after the submission of the question on the basis of a recommendation from the Conference of Committee Chairs, or, if no such recommendation is forthcoming, from the latter's Chair. If the Conference of Presidents fails to take a decision within that period, the recommendation shall be deemed to have been approved.</p> <p>The committee Chairs may enter into agreements with other committee Chairs concerning the allocation of an item to a particular committee, subject, where necessary, to the authorisation of an associated committee procedure under Rule 57.</p> <p>Where a question of competence is referred to the Conference of Presidents pursuant to Rule 211, and the Conference of Presidents, on the basis of Annex VI, considers that the matter falls almost equally within the competence of two or more committees, or that different parts of the matter fall within the competence of two or more committees, Rule 56 shall apply with the following additional provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the timetable shall be jointly agreed by the committees concerned;</li> <li>-the rapporteurs concerned shall keep each other informed and shall endeavour to agree on the texts they propose to their committees and on their position regarding amendments;</li> </ul>	<p>The Speaker may refer a bill to a committee of primary jurisdiction and, if he or she deems fit, to one or more additional committees for consideration in sequence with appropriate time-limits, either initially or after the matter has been reported by the committee of primary jurisdiction. This is often done, if there would be a political problem in ignoring one committee or another. The 30 day-timeline means that the first committee cannot hold up the legislation indefinitely. The Speaker may refer portions of the matter reflecting different subjects and overlapping jurisdictions to one or more committees. This frequently happens on health care legislation as multiple committees have some form of health care jurisdiction. The Speaker may refer the matter to a special, ad hoc committee appointed by him or her with the approval of the House, and including members of the committees of jurisdiction, for the specific purpose of considering that matter and reporting to the House thereon.<sup>94</sup></p> <p>The House can override the Speaker's decision, but voting to do so in the majority party is a good way to end your career early. It is never done.<sup>95</sup></p> <p><a href="#">Rule X, Clause 1</a> (committee jurisdiction) is the main determinant of House committee jurisdiction. However, other factors also play a role in the referral process, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>precedents</b> established by past referrals;</li> <li>• <b>agreements</b> between committees outlining their jurisdictional boundaries on new, evolving, or contested policy subjects; and</li> <li>• <b>statutes</b> that identify how particular kinds of matters will be referred.</li> </ul>

<sup>94</sup> In practice, the House and Senate parliamentarians refer the bills. Congressional Institute, [Appendix: Congressional Glossary](#), accessed 4 July 2021.

<sup>95</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>-the Chairs and rapporteurs concerned are bound by the principle of good and sincere cooperation; they shall jointly identify areas of the text falling within their exclusive or shared competence and agree on the precise arrangements for their cooperation;</p> <p>-the committee responsible shall accept without a vote amendments from an associated committee where they concern matters which fall within the exclusive competence of that associated committee; if the committee responsible fails to respect the exclusive competence of the associated committee, that associated committee may table amendments directly in plenary; if amendments on matters which fall within the shared competence of the committee responsible and an associated committee are not adopted by the committee responsible, the associated committee may table those amendments directly in plenary;</p> <p>-in the event of a conciliation procedure in respect of the proposal, Parliament's delegation shall include the rapporteur of any associated committee.</p>	<p>Various conflict-resolving techniques, including memoranda of understanding between committees working on the same policy area are used both to reduce committee conflicts and promote cooperative relationships.<sup>96</sup></p> <p>'[H]ouse leaders are well positioned to exert formal and informal pressure on committees at nearly every stage of the process, from the referral of bills through the naming of conference committees. The tools of the leadership [have] the effect of raising the costs of hostile action, for example in the <b>setting of time limits on referrals and limiting amendments with special rules.</b></p> <p>They could also make accommodation more attractive, such as by acting as a guarantor for agreements between committees struck under the direct supervision of the [majority] leadership .... [The Speaker] can implement the [inter-committee] agreements directly in new legislative language via his floor prerogatives and influence over the Committee on Rules. In this way, turf wars are contingent on the patience of leaders and on the latitude they grant.'<sup>97</sup></p> <p>Besides leadership involvement, many other factors are important in promoting committee cooperation, such as regular staff contacts between and among committees, overlapping committee memberships, and recognition by committees that constant jurisdictional bickering can be counter-productive to law-making.<sup>98</sup></p> <p>Committee Jurisdiction is an area of fierce intra-party rivalry in both the House and the Senate. Committee Chairs view it like a form of common law with precedents that they believe should guide referred decisions. But every once in a while you get a new issue that is fiercely fought over.</p>

<sup>96</sup> CRS report on [Committee Jurisdiction and Referral in the House](#), 4 March 2020.

<sup>97</sup> John Baughman, [Common Ground: Committee Politics in the U.S. House of Representatives](#), Stanford University 2006, p. 174.

<sup>98</sup> CRS report on [Resolving House Committee Jurisdictional Disputes: A Survey of Options](#), 26 December 2007.

	European Parliament	US Congress
		In the House the Homeland Security Committee was created by law, much to the resentment of the Committees such as Armed Services, Intelligence, Judiciary, and Foreign Affairs. As a result, the Homeland Security Committee has constantly been challenged on jurisdiction issues (and usually lost). In fact, the Homeland Security Committee has never passed a bill reauthorizing the Department of Homeland Security since it was created in 2003. <sup>99</sup>
<b>Changes to committee competences and structures in response to the current crisis</b>	<p>The EP did not change the structure and the competences of its committees, due to the pandemic. In principle, it is allowed for the EP to change its committee structure at any given time; however, the established practice is that it modifies the structure and/or the competences of its committees shortly before the end of each legislative period, in order to keep up with the changing circumstances and increase its effectiveness in the subsequent legislative term.</p> <p>The last adaptation to the composition of the committees took place on 8 July 2021. Following changes in its composition, Parliament increased the number of seats in its special and inquiry committees, and adopted a new distribution among political groups. Following several changes in the political groups' composition and to ensure that all MEPs can participate in the work of committees and delegations, ten committee seats are allocated to non-attached Members: four additional seats are created, and six existing ones will be reallocated. The plenary adapted the numerical strength of the four committees based on the decision of the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>A new seat will be created in each of the Special Committees on Beating Cancer (BECA), on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (INGE), and on</p>	<p>The House adapted its structure of parliamentary committees as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. On 23 April 2020, the House <a href="#">established</a> the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis during the 116th Congress. The Select Subcommittee was re-authorised by the Speaker for the 117th Congress through <a href="#">House Resolution 8</a>, which was passed by the House on January 4, 2021.</p> <p>Adaptations to the <a href="#">committee structure</a> are possible, notably as regards temporary select committees that are added to the standing committees. There are examples for Select Subcommittees that were created at the beginning of a Congress as well as during a Congress. In some cases, temporary select committees become permanent such as the <a href="#">Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence</a>.</p> <p>The last time such a change in the committee structure was raised in June 2021 when Speaker Pelosi <a href="#">announced</a> the creation of a new select committee to probe the Capitol Hill riot of 6 January 2021.</p> <p>Before that, at the beginning of the 116th Congress in 2019. Speaker Pelosi initiated a new Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. The Speaker re-authorized the Select Committee in the 117th Congress through <a href="#">House Resolution 8</a>, which was passed by the House on January 4, 2021.</p>

<sup>99</sup> Input from Mark Strand by email on 30 June 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA). They will now be composed of 34 members each. The fourth new seat will be created in the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport within and outside the EU (ANIT), which will now be composed of 31 members.</p> <p>The new nominal composition of Parliament's committees will be decided by the political groups and non-attached members, and will be communicated to the plenary in a subsequent session.</p> <p>Parliament's Rules of Procedure provide that the composition of the committees "shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament". When it comes to the criteria for setting up a parliamentary committee or changing its competences, there are no formal guidelines available. Political Groups are free to define such criteria as they consider fit for purpose. Possible criteria in this context would be the 'workload of parliamentary committees', 'match of policy areas between the European Commission's work programme and the competences of parliamentary committees', 'reduction of conflicts of competences', and of course, the 'interest of Members'.</p>	<p>The main criteria for allocating a given bill or resolution to one or more committees are committee competence and precedent. The House Rules (<a href="#">RULE X ORGANIZATION OF COMMITTEES</a>) provide a description of the competence of the individual committees. The Speaker has significant latitude (under House <a href="#">RULE XII</a>) to allocate a given file to one primary committee only or to additional committees and in what order/in parallel</p>

### 3. Enhancing Parliamentary Diplomacy

	European Parliament	US Congress
<p><b>Relations with the executive</b></p>	<p>Article 36 of the TEU requires the High Representative to consult Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the CFSP and to inform Parliament of the policy's evolution. Parliament holds twice-yearly debates on CFSP progress reports and puts questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative.</p> <p>Parliament's right to be informed and consulted about the CFSP/CSDP was further strengthened by the High Representative's declaration of political accountability in 2010. The declaration provided, inter alia, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the status of the 'Joint Consultation Meetings' (JCMs), which allow a designated group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to meet counterparts from the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EEAS and the Commission to discuss planned and ongoing civilian CSDP missions;</li> <li>• Affirming the right of Parliament's 'special committee' to have access to confidential information relating to the CFSP and the CSDP. This right is based on an inter-institutional agreement of 2002;</li> <li>• Holding exchanges of views with heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials during committee meetings and hearings of committees of Parliament;</li> </ul>	<p>The US Constitution divides the foreign policy powers between Congress and the President. The Constitution gives the Senate specific powers to confirm the high-ranking foreign policy officials<sup>100</sup>, such as the Secretary of State and US Ambassadors, as well as gives its consent on treaties<sup>101</sup> with foreign countries negotiated by the Executive branch. The House of Representatives does not benefit from specific foreign policy powers to the extent of the Senate, but it does share power with the Senate to declare war<sup>102</sup> against foreign states.<sup>103</sup></p>

<sup>100</sup> Article II, Section 2 of the [U.S. Constitution](#).

<sup>101</sup> Article II, Section 2 of the [U.S. Constitution](#).

<sup>102</sup> Article I, Section 7 of the [U.S. Constitution](#).

<sup>103</sup> CRS report on: ["Declaration of War and Authorizations for the Use of Military Force: Historical Background and Legal Implications"](#), 18 April 2014.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandating the High Representative to appear before Parliament at least twice a year to report on the current state of affairs regarding the CFSP/CSDP and to answer questions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to this political dialogue, Parliament exercises its authority through the budgetary procedure. As one arm of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament must approve the annual CFSP budget. Parliament also helps to shape the relevant external financial instruments through a process of trilateral negotiations with the Council and the Commission.</p> <p>Parliament regularly scrutinises the operations of the EEAS and provides it with suggestions on structural issues, ranging from its geographical and gender balance to its interaction with other EU institutions and the diplomatic services of the Member States. Parliament also holds regular discussions with the High Representative and the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) appointed for certain regions or issues. Parliamentary committees, which helped to set up the EEAS, also exchange views with the EEAS's newly appointed heads of delegation.</p> <p>Parliament also has a role to play in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. Parliament's consent is required before the Council can conclude such agreements.</p>	
<b>Interparliamentary delegations</b>	The European Parliament's interparliamentary delegations are official groups of Members who build ties to countries, regions or organisations outside the European Union (EU). The European Parliament currently has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one	Parliamentary diplomacy is a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy. To conduct international relations also, Members of Congress may participate in <b>Congressional Member Organisations (CMOs)</b> <sup>104</sup> with the objective of improving foreign relations with another country and/or increasing the awareness of, helping find possible solutions to, and influencing the congressional agenda

<sup>104</sup> The list of Congressional Member Organisations for the 117th Congress is available [here](#).

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>term to the next. The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner.</p> <p>There are two main types of delegations: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations. Standing delegations belong in three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations.</p> <p><b>Parliamentary assemblies</b> are regular, formal meetings of elected representatives from several parliaments. Currently, 5 of Parliament's 44 delegations participate in parliamentary assemblies.</p> <p><b>Interparliamentary committees</b> are mostly bilateral. European Parliament delegations meet their counterparts from a country/countries in formal meetings, held on a regular basis. Interparliamentary committees differ according to the type of bilateral agreement establishing them, between the EU and the respective country. These include Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees.</p> <p>Other <b>interparliamentary delegations</b> form the largest group of delegations (25 out of the total number of 44 delegations), which work with relations with individual countries or a group of countries. The 'interparliamentary meetings' – in which the delegations meet with their</p>	<p>concerning certain international issues or regions inside Congress.<sup>105</sup></p> <p>Some examples of these groups, often known as Caucuses, include the European Union Caucus which seeks to further relations between Europe and the United States.</p> <p>Moreover Congressmen will sometimes travel abroad in delegations, sometimes known "<b>codels</b>", through CMOs.</p> <p>The House of Representatives <b>Office of Interparliamentary Affairs</b> was established in 2004<sup>106</sup>. It facilitates official visits from foreign parliamentarians to the House of Representatives and, along with the Sergeant at Arms and the Clerk of the House, assists delegations of Members of the House to foreign nations. The office also coordinates the participation of the House of Representatives in other interparliamentary exchanges and organisations, among other duties. The director of the office is appointed by the Speaker.<sup>107</sup></p> <p>Congress has a number of statutorily established <b>interparliamentary groups</b>. These include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly<sup>108</sup></li> <li>• NATO Parliamentary Assembly</li> <li>• Canada-US Interparliamentary Group</li> <li>• Mexico-US Interparliamentary Group</li> <li>• US-Senate-China Interparliamentary Group</li> </ul>

<sup>105</sup> CRS report on "[Congressional Member Organizations: Their Purpose and Activities, History, and Formation](#)", 11 April 2015.

<sup>106</sup> P.L. 108-83, §103, September 30, 2003, 117 Stat. 1016; 2 U.S.C. §5582. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/108th-congress/house-bill/2657/text>

<sup>107</sup> CRS report on "[Support Offices in the House of Representatives: Roles and Authorities](#)", 23 June 2020.

<sup>108</sup> See the website of the US Helsinki Commission: <https://www.csce.gov/about-csce/our-history/parliamentary-diplomacy>.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>counterparts – are not held on a regular basis, and do not have their own rules, although they follow the general provisions for delegations.</p> <p>According to Rule 223(5) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Conference of Presidents adopts the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US-Senate-Russia Interparliamentary Group<sup>109</sup>.</li> </ul>
<b>Diplomacy on human rights</b>	<p>The EP attaches great importance to the protection of human rights both inside and outside the Union and has used its power of promoting respect for fundamental rights.</p> <p>In Europe and around the world, Parliament acts as a guardian of liberties and democracy, and strives to uphold human rights and freedoms. It is particularly sensitive to the issue of tolerance, and fights determinedly against all forms of discrimination, whether based on sex, race, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, political opinion, handicap, age or sexual orientation. It takes a stand against racism and xenophobia and constantly highlights the need for compliance with European gender equality standards.</p> <p>MEPs also use their full power to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected, and the rights of children protected. While the EP supports efforts to coordinate police and judicial action, which is the only effective way to counter these cross-border threats, it refuses to allow citizens' rights to bear the brunt of a policy based entirely on security considerations. Parliament also ensures that human rights are protected in the EU's external economic and trade agreements.</p>	<p>As in its foreign policy operations, Congress can influence US positions on human rights through legislation and resolutions it passes.</p> <p>The House of Representatives has its own caucus devoted to human rights. The bi-partisan Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission was established in 2008<sup>110</sup>. Drawing from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the congressional group promotes, defends, and advocates for international human rights. To raise the profile of human rights issues in Congress, the commission hosts events and operates projects, such as the Defending Freedoms Project. Its members are also involved in legislation relating to human rights in the House of Representatives.</p> <p>Among other accomplishments in the field of human rights, the caucus, formerly known as the Human Rights Caucus, was the first to invite His Holiness the Dalai Lama to attend a formal meeting in the caucus.</p> <p>The Senate addresses human rights issues both through its own human rights caucus as well as its Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security,</p>

<sup>109</sup> CRS report on "[Congressional Membership and Appointment Authority to Advisory Commissions, Boards, and Groups](#)", 12 February 2021.

<sup>110</sup> See the website of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission: <https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>The EP holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has adopted a host of resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights.</p> <p>The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee on Human Rights defend human rights outside the European Union and fight against the death penalty with the support of other key players in the Parliament.</p> <p><b>Sakharov Prize:</b> It is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network the EU assists laureates, who are supported and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes.</p> <p>The prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil-society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, long-serving prisoners of conscience, a film-maker, the UN as a body and even a child campaigning for the right to education. It promotes in particular freedom of expression, the rights of minorities, respect for international law, the development of democracy and the implementation of the rule of law. Several laureates, including Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.</p>	<p>Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues <sup>111</sup>. The House benefits from a similar subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights in the Foreign Affairs Committee<sup>112</sup>.</p>

<sup>111</sup> The US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Subcommittees, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/about/subcommittees/>.

<sup>112</sup> The US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/africa-global-health-and-global-human-rights>.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>The European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize, with its EUR 50 000 endowment, at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Each of the Parliament's political groups may nominate candidates, as may individual MEPs (the support of at least 40 MEPs is required for each candidate). The nominees are presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Development Committee and the Human Rights Subcommittee, and the members of the full committees vote on a shortlist of three candidates. The final winner of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents.</p>	
<p><b>Democracy support</b></p>	<p>As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament is particularly committed to supporting sustainable democracies throughout the world. This commitment is regularly highlighted in Parliament's resolutions. Democracy support activities focus on a small number of priority countries and are closely associated with the Parliament's role in election monitoring in these priority countries and other non-EU countries. Parliament almost always organises democracy support activities around the electoral cycle, so as to establish a better link between election observation and complementary activities such as mediation, election follow-up, parliamentary support activities and human rights action.</p> <p>In 2012, the European Parliament decided to create the Directorate for Democracy Support. In setting up this directorate as part of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, four units were created, these are: the Democracy and Election Actions Unit, the European Parliament Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit, the Human Rights Action Unit and the Pre-Accession Unit.</p> <p>In 2014, Parliament set up a Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that provides political guidance for</p>	<p><b>The House Democracy Partnership (HDP)</b> is a bipartisan commission that 'works with countries around the world to promote responsive, effective government, and strengthen democratic institutions.' It has 20 members. In the 117th Congress, it is co-chaired by Rep. David Price (D-North Carolina) and Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-Florida).</p> <p>The roots of the HDP go back to the Frost-Soloman Task Force, a House task force that assisted ten new democratic legislatures in Central and Eastern Europe between 1990 and 1996. In 2005, the House voted to establish the House Democracy Assistance Commission to work with emerging democracies across the world. It was renamed the House Democracy Partnership in 2009. The HDP connects House members, staff, and Congressional Budget Office experts with their counterparts in partner countries, supporting legislatures in areas such as budgetary issues, committee operations, constituent services, oversight, ethics as well as libraries and research services.</p> <p>Since 2005, the HDP has cooperated with 21 partner legislatures on five continents – including in Afghanistan, Georgia, North Macedonia, Iraq, Lebanon, Kosovo, Myanmar, Tunisia and Ukraine – in a number of different areas. Over that period, the HDP has</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>all activities supporting democracy (Decision of Conference of Presidents of 13 September 2012). It consists of 15 MEPs and is co-chaired by the chairs of Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Development. Parliament's vice-presidents responsible for human rights and democracy and the Sakharov Network and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights are ex officio permanent members.</p> <p>The comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA) places more emphasis on pre-election dialogue and the follow-up to election observation. This includes following up on recommendations of the Election Observation Mission. In order to boost the institutional capacity of parliaments in third countries, Parliament organises training programmes and study visits for members and officials of third-country parliaments. Parliament has also built up a mentoring system involving MEPs and newly elected parliamentarians from priority countries. Providing support for mediation and dialogue were added as new types of interventions, with a view to preventing election-related conflicts and violence.</p> <p>Activities – although decided and supervised by the DEG – must be approved by the Conference of Presidents (CoP). The CoP adopted implementing provisions on democracy support and election observation activities in February 2019. According to this document, the DEG co-chairs may, for example, submit requests for authorisation for outgoing missions and for high-level conferences in the European Parliament's premises to the CoP at least four weeks prior to the activity concerned. In addition, the DEG co-chairs may submit requests, including urgent ones, to the CoP to mandate a Member or Members to act as an envoy or mediator or to authorise the establishment</p>	<p>conducted 35 inbound programs and brought more than 800 members of parliament and legislative staff to the US<sup>113</sup>.</p> <p>Recently, the HDP helped pass the Protect Democracy in Burma Act (H.R.1112) in the House on 18 March 2021<sup>114</sup>. The HDP has remained active during the pandemic and has helped partner legislatures consider the proper balance between respect for individual liberties and necessary emergency health measures.</p>

<sup>113</sup> US House of Representatives House Democracy Partnership, <https://hdp.house.gov/about>.

<sup>114</sup> H.R.1112 - [Protect Democracy in Burma Act of 2021](#), 18 March 2021.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	of a Jean Monnet Dialogue with a third country, under the guidance of a lead Member or Members	
<b>Mediation of foreign conflicts</b>	<p>Members of the European Parliament engage in a wide range of mediation, conflict prevention and dialogue activities that complement the EU's overall approach.</p> <p><b>The Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy</b>  The European Parliament prides itself in having a 'culture of dialogue', a set of norms and rules that require political opponents to engage in dialogue to bring about a compromise. Efforts have been made to 'export' this culture of dialogue to non-EU parliaments, through a mediation and consensus-building process known as the 'Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy'. Named after one of the founding fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet dialogues often – although not always – take place at the historical Jean Monnet House. Located in rural France, far away from the media attention characterising either Brussels or national capitals, Monnet's house has proven to be an ideal location for constructive dialogue among opposing political factions. Four series of dialogues with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) have taken place so far.</p> <p><b>Young political leaders programme</b>  The European Parliament is committed to building strong and lasting relations with future leaders outside of the European Union. A programme targeting young political leaders was set up in 2015. The young political leaders programme (YPL) expands on existing activities organised by Parliament, such as the annual fora for young leaders from the European Neighbourhood (Maghreb, Middle East, Eastern Partnership), and the young political leaders initiative for the Sudan. The programme cooperates with young political activists,</p>	N.A

	European Parliament	US Congress
	including political party representatives, civil society actors and young business leaders in the European Neighbourhood countries, priority countries agreed under the comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA), and ad hoc countries requiring assistance in the area of parliamentary conflict prevention and democracy support. Recent YPL activities have targeted young leaders from Israel and Palestine, the Maghreb, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the western Balkans, Armenia and Azerbaijan.	
<b>High-level visits by foreign dignitaries</b>	<p>The term 'official visit' refers to visits by Heads of State, high-level Religious Leaders, or any personality invited to address a formal sitting of Parliament.</p> <p>Visits by Heads of State and Government, Presidents of Parliaments, and others holding equivalent ranks which do not include an address to a formal sitting shall be considered as working visits.</p> <p>Invitations to make an official visit to Parliament are issued by the President after consultation with the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>On the basis of established practice, the Heads of State of the EU Member States have an open invitation to pay an official visit to Parliament.</p> <p>An official visit generally comprises the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Welcoming ceremony including official photo in front of the flags, playing of the visitor's national anthem followed by the EU anthem, and signature of the Parliament's Distinguished Visitors' Book,</li> </ul>	Traditionally, foreign leaders and dignitaries can be received at joint Meetings and Joint Sessions, in addition to separate House and Senate Receptions. A Joint Meeting is the preferred forum for addresses from foreign leaders and dignitaries; it became a standard part of foreign leaders' state visits to the US after 1945. To initiate a Joint Meeting, both houses declare themselves in recess for a joint gathering in the House Chamber. They do so by resolution or by unanimous consent, whereby the House tends towards using unanimous consent rather than a resolution, for the purpose of receiving a foreign leader <sup>115</sup> . The procedure is governed by House Rule IV.

<sup>115</sup> US House of Representatives, "History, Art & Archives", <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Foreign-Leaders/Foreign-Leaders/>.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bilateral meeting between the President of Parliament and the visiting Head of State,</li> <li>➤ Official exchange of gifts,</li> <li>➤ Address to a formal sitting of Parliament, which is usually scheduled to last 30 minutes,</li> <li>➤ Official lunch (or dinner) hosted by the President of Parliament,</li> <li>➤ Press conference (if requested).</li> </ul> <p>An official visit by a Head of State of an EU Member State may incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A reception for the MEPs and/or parliamentary staff of the Member State concerned organised by the respective Permanent Representation,</li> <li>➤ Meetings (if requested) with political group leaders or Members of Parliament.</li> </ul> <p>The red carpet is rolled out at the protocol entrance, for visits by Heads of State and High-Level visitors of equivalent rank. Official visits are managed by the protocol unit (DG PRES).</p>	
<b>Multilateral and international parliamentary fora</b>	<p><b><u>Euronest</u></b>  EU works hand-in-hand with its six Eastern Partners to support European integration reforms and foster stability, security, democracy and prosperity across the continent. Established in 2011, the Euronest PA is the parliamentary forum tasked with the scrutiny over this ambitious policy, while promoting the active participation of civil society actors. It brings together the 60 Members of the European Parliament who sit in the Delegation to the Euronest PA, and 50 Members from the national parliaments of our Eastern Partners, i.e. 10 delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively. For the time being, although Belarus is an active Eastern Partner, its National Assembly has not yet been invited</p>	<p>As noted above, Congress has a number of statutorily established interparliamentary groups. Multilateral interparliamentary groups include the US Delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which advances US interests and furthers engagement with parliamentarians from OSCE participating States, as well as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover, the bipartisan Congressional European Union Caucus aims to increase cooperation between the US and the EU. The EU Caucus was relaunched on 20 July.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>to send its 10 delegates to the Euronest PA, because it does not fulfil the necessary, democratic requirements to do so. Nevertheless, the absence of Belarusian parliamentarians expected to be only be provisory.</p> <p>The Euronest PA includes the plenary, chaired by two Co-Presidents, the Bureau, four standing committees (on political affairs, economic integration, energy security and social affairs) and three working groups (a group on Belarus, ad hoc group on Association Agreements, and a group on Rules of Procedure). It meets once a year for a plenary session, alternating between the European Parliament's premises and the Eastern Partnership countries.</p> <p><b>ACP</b> The European Parliament's Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (DACP) is the EP part of the joint undertaking set up by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Agreement was signed in 2000 in Cotonou (Benin) by the EU Member States and 78 member countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Its aim is to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.</p> <p>The Agreement sets up three joint institutions: the Council of Ministers, the Committee of Ambassadors and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentary institution, the "ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly" (ACP-EU JPA), is composed of equal numbers of EU and ACP representatives, and comprised of both the 78-member EP DACP Delegation and 78 members of parliament of the ACP countries.</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>The Delegation participates together with ACP members in the activities of the Assembly (sessions, Bureau and committee meetings, regional meetings, fact-finding missions and election observation missions).</p> <p>At the EP level, the Delegation also meets regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg to prepare the joint activities and monitor the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the situation in the ACP countries and prospects for the future of the partnership.</p> <p><b><u>EuroLat</u></b>  The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits resolutions and recommendations. These are addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. This Partnership was established at the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1999. Today, EuroLat debates, monitors and reviews all questions relating to the partnership.</p> <p>The Assembly also works generally to strengthen links between the two regions and address issues of bi-regional and international concern. EuroLat debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights, migration, fighting poverty, promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology and the environment and climate change. Half the members - 75 - come from Latin American regional parliaments and the other half - again, 75 members - come from the European Parliament. EuroLat has four Standing Committees. The work of these committees serves as the basis for most of the Assembly's decisions. The Committees and Executive Bureau meet at least twice a year, with one of these two sessions running in parallel with EuroLat's full annual Plenary Session.</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p><b><u>EuroMed</u></b>  The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean institution provides a forum for the elected representatives of the EU and its southern neighbours around the Mediterranean to cooperate.</p> <p>The Assembly describes three principal aims for its work: Fostering dialogue amongst elected representatives from both shores of the Mediterranean; Enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the citizens. Adding democratic legitimacy and political support to regional cooperation.</p> <p>As a north- south forum, the Assembly brings together 44 parliaments -- the 43 parliaments of the countries in the Union for the Mediterranean, and the European Parliament. The Assembly consists of 280 members. The Assembly is directed by a "bureau", made up of four members, who coordinate the work of the Assembly and draft its budget. The bureau remains in place for four years before new members are appointed. The Assembly has five standing committees.</p>	

## 4. Relations with citizens / Communicating effectively

	European Parliament	US Congress
Public perceptions of parliaments	<p>The European Parliament communicates to varied audiences across 28 different countries. Understanding these audiences' point of view is crucial for Parliament's communication activities to be efficient and effective. This means that DG Communication must first establish a clear idea of who these audiences are, what is important to them and via which channels to reach them. DG Communication bases its work on a robust audience insight and a data driven approach to define and evaluate its output. This is ensured by a rigorous analysis of evidence concerning audiences and channels, including an in-depth research of relevant target groups to understand their behaviour. A core part of this analysis is the continuous and in-depth monitoring of public opinion across the European Union. This key strategic activity not only aids the European Parliament's communication strategy but also supports the political and legislative work of Parliament's elected Members.</p> <p>Public opinion is assessed via the EU institutions' joint Eurobarometer survey tool. The European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies use this instrument to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. Eurobarometer provides quality and relevant data for experts in public opinion, researchers, media and the public. Initiated in 1974, the Eurobarometer tool has since then evolved and expanded</p>	<p>N.A There is no centralised equivalent of DG COMM in the House of Representatives nor in the Senate. Each office maintains its own ties to the public, conducts outreach activities, manages social media etc.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>significantly with different survey tools. The combination of the wide range of topics covered consistently over a long time, the regularity of publications and geographical coverage makes the Eurobarometer a uniquely rich source of knowledge and information in the European Union.</p> <p>The European Parliament started in 2007 to commission its own Eurobarometer surveys within the joint inter-institutional framework. DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU), is responsible for designing, commissioning and analysing the surveys. Conducted regularly and at least twice per year since 2007, they focus on the one hand on citizens' perceptions and expectations towards EU action, and the main challenges the Union is facing. An annual 'Parlemeter' survey measures the European Parliament's public image and role as well as public opinion with regard to EU membership and its benefits. A dedicated set of EP Eurobarometer surveys gauges Europeans' interest in the European elections every five years. Pre- and post-electoral surveys measure citizens' interest in these elections and the key issues at stakes as well as voting behaviour and motivation.</p> <p>Published surveys offer unrestricted access to the full data set, including all national, regional and socio-demographic results, allowing for a detailed analysis. POMU as responsible unit will produce an in-depth analytical report as well as a range of supporting products such as presentation, national factsheets or infographics. The data is also used for briefing members on available audience insight relevant to topics on the plenary agenda, distributed ahead of each session to all MEPs. Individual</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>trainings and data-related briefings can be requested by Members.</p> <p>POMU applies the data at its disposal also for contributing to DG Communication's data-driven communication approach by designing relevant audience segmentation and targeting strategies and by assisting DG COMM services to implement this segmentation analysis in their communication activities.</p> <p>The second unique task of POMU is the regular collection and analysis of voting intention trends in all EU Member States. In cooperation with Parliament's Liaison Offices in the Member States, POMU compiles publicly available voting intention polls conducted by reliable institutes in each EU MS. A proprietary database allows POMU to monitor developments in Member States and to produce regular briefings for Parliament's leading bodies (Bureau, CoP, SGs). In the run-up to the European elections, POMU enlarges its activities with a view to election night. A high-level assembly of election results from all Member States allow POMU to produce precise seat projections and to ensure positioning the European Parliament as the sole focal point in the European Union to receive aggregated and detailed election results.</p>	
<b>New patterns in relations with the media in response to the current crisis</b>	<p><b><u>Impact of the Covid</u></b></p> <p>Parliament is the only EU institution which has remained open for journalists throughout the pandemic. Commission and Council have been operating in a fully remote mode since March 2020,</p>	<p>N.A There is no centralised equivalent of DG COMM in the House of Representatives nor in the Senate. Each office maintains its own ties to the public, conducts outreach activities, manages social media etc.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>whilst Parliament adopted a hybrid approach - facilitating remote participation to parliamentary meetings and press conferences, but without excluding the possibility for journalists to come in person to the pressroom, to interview MEPs or simply to work from the EP's press centre.</p> <p>Whilst the physical presence of the media in Parliament's premises has naturally fallen significantly over the past 12 months, online participation in media events (especially online briefings) has increased enormously. In 2020 the Media services organised 589 media events, compared to 436 in 2015 (first year of last legislative term). Online briefings were barely used at all pre-Covid, largely due to the unavailability or unfamiliarity of appropriate technology to operate such platforms.</p> <p>Online meetings and briefings also opened up access to journalists in the Member States to follow EP activities directly and thus blurred the distinction between national media and Brussels correspondents. More exchanges with journalists from other countries mean 'Europeanisation' of the debate.</p> <p>In addition, it is easier to invite MEPs as well as high-level external speakers to online events, as they can simply connect from wherever they are.</p> <p>Therefore, online and hybrid media events will remain a key element of the media strategy in the future. The technology and format can be further refined to enhance the experience and quality.</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p><b><u>Enhanced role for media relations in the Member States</u></b></p> <p>Reinforced press work in the Member States is necessary to reach out to media in the national newsrooms. Not all media have correspondents in Brussels - and in Brussels there is a growing competition for news (Council, EC, NATO...). In particular, in the Member States, the EP has been focusing on:</p> <p><b>National media:</b> TV and radio programs; specialised media/magazines/programs (women, consumers...) and specialised journalists in mainstream media (environment, digital specialist in press agencies and others).</p> <p><b>Native digital media:</b> online only platforms, including media that exist only on social media and influencers active in political/societal debates</p> <p><b>Regional media,</b> when and where relevant.</p> <p><b>Targeted information:</b> DG COMM works with the broad catalogue of EP agenda, MEPs and events to cater a specific offer to each kind of media. Not everything for everybody all the time, but every day some news for some journalists who might be interested. DG COMM offers content, but also services (multimedia centre, facilities in BRU and STR, EPRS research...) and help journalists to build their story: pitching it, finding the right MEP, choosing data and relevant local angles. It invites journalists to BRU and STR to make them experience the richness of the institution from the media point of view. The EP reaches out to them via media tours, trainings and similar activities on the</p>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	ground. It provides editorial content, raw or edited, but always un-biased, politically balanced, reliable and accessible. It promotes transparency and openness as a distinctive feature of the EP press service.	
<b>Fighting disinformation and hate speech</b>	<p>The political work of the European Parliament addresses disinformation and hate speech through non-legislative and legislative measures such as the current draft Digital Services Act. The European Parliament services take very seriously any attempt to target the institution or its members with disinformation or any actions to misrepresent their defined positions. While services undertake specific actions to counter disinformation, the most effective defence against false narratives and foreign influence operations is to ensure communication of <b>proactive factual narratives</b> related to the work and decisions of Members. To this end, Parliament's services communicate in all official working languages and through a variety of media and platforms to ensure maximum reach.</p> <p>The Secretariat of the Parliament established an <b>inter-DG task force against disinformation</b> to streamline cooperation between different DGs and services. This ensures more joined up action in response to disinformation threats.</p> <p>The EP's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) developed its <b>capacity to monitor, analyse, alert and devise counter strategies</b> in response to disinformation and deceptive narratives that target the institution and its members. This concerns both human resources and investing in software to assist with monitoring and analysis. It also relates to close</p>	N.A There is no centralised equivalent of DG COMM in the House of Representatives nor in the Senate. Each office maintains its own ties to the public, conducts outreach activities, manages social media etc.

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>cooperation and training with leading civil society/academic experts in the field.</p> <p>DG COMM cooperates closely with the other DGs (EPRS, EXPO and ITEC e.g.) and other EU institutions via an <b>informal “tripartite” arrangement</b>. It participates in the <b>European Commission Network Against Disinformation</b> and shares information with EU Member State governments via a secure <b>“Rapid Alert System”</b>. Furthermore, it cooperates on a regular basis with leading experts in civil society. With the support over other DGs, mainly DG EPRS and DG EXPO, DG COMM develops its dedicated media and social media monitoring and analysis capacity as well as its media literacy capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upon request, DG COMM and DG EPRS offer <b>personal training to MEPs</b> on disinformation issues, including on data analysis;</li> <li>- Regular offering by DG COMM and DG EPRS of <b>training for accredited parliamentary assistants and EP staff members;</b></li> <li>- <b>Specialised Trainings</b> in partnership with EU institutions, to prepare colleagues dealing with communication in the European Parliament Liaison Offices;</li> <li>- <b>Awareness raising and capacity building exercises for external audiences</b> including visitors groups, youth groups and the Together.EU network. In addition, the House of European History ‘Fake or/for Real exhibition’ helps raise awareness;</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Seminars with media representatives and MEPs</b> to discuss disinformation as a threat to democracy and how to support media as well as fact checking;</li>   <li>- <b>Cooperation with civil society, fact checkers and academia.</b> Parliament services work on initiatives that foster closer cooperation and exchange of best practice. For example, in 2019 the European Parliament services organised a conference for fact checkers. Parliament officials also participate in follow-up initiatives to support this work, such as the <b>European Digital Media Observatory</b>. In 2021, an external expert provided a series of trainings with the goal of developing updated frameworks for assessing and responding to disinformation;</li>   <li>- In addition to these seminars and trainings, regular information is provided on the work of the INGE Special Committee (press releases, briefings, press conferences), supported by DG EXPO.</li>   <li>A news page is available on EP's news portal and regular social media posts promote the importance of factual information and explain "How to spot when news is fake" based on a flagship infographic of DG EPRS.</li>   <li>DG COMM has developed strong policy against any kind of aggression on its platforms since joining the different social media channels. It has been working on best practices and has established a clear moderation policy that is implemented on all corporate accounts. The community management team from DG COMM enforces it on Parliament's channels without the unnecessary removal of content or censorship. Users can always</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>contact the team and refer to the rules guiding our online presence. The key aspect of the policy is that while we welcome all sides of the debate, we do not allow any form of hate speech on our accounts so it remains a safe place for conversation.</p>	
<p><b>Social Media strategies</b></p>	<p>DG COMM's Directorate for the Media animates the following <b>social-media platforms</b> for the European Parliament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facebook</b> : 2.6 million fans</li> <li>• <b>Twitter (in 24 languages)</b>: 1.7 million followers</li> <li>• <b>LinkedIn</b>: 546 497 followers</li> <li>• <b>Instagram</b> : 288 120 followers</li> <li>• <b>Reddit</b> : 6624 followers</li> <li>• <b>Flickr</b>: 2 677 followers</li> <li>• <b>Pinterest</b> : 6650 followers</li> </ul> <p>The <b>social media team</b> is composed of web-editors on various time resources allocations (it's an additional task to their main news publishing in 24 languages mission).</p> <p>There is also an IT developers for social-media also in charge of maintaining and developing the EP Newshub, project manager with an expertise in IT development and data privacy and social-media producers working on all platforms. Unit also produces news and non/news videos and other materials for the social media. The social media team is as well supported by the digital intelligence and community management teams.</p> <p>All social-media activities are part of the editorial workflow of the Directorate for the Campaigns, with a weekly review in the 'agency' meeting. They are also part of the larger coordination on the level of Directorate General: Editorial Committee (CED) and more frequent Restricted-Editorial Committees (CED-R)</p>	<p>N.A There is no centralised equivalent of DG COMM in the House of Representatives nor in the Senate. Each office maintains its own ties to the public, conducts outreach activities, manages social media etc.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	<p>during Plenary and Committees weeks. Both CED and CED-R are chaired by the advisor to the DG and Spokesperson of the European Parliament, who provides <b>editorial and political oversight</b> of the social media activities.</p> <p>The Web Communication Unit and its social-media experts provide <b>trainings to MEPs and their staff</b>. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions by lead actors of the social-media field, with personalised support and inputs by Web Communication Unit's staff</li> <li>• Analysis of the social-media presence of MEPs</li> <li>• Personal coaching on social media</li> <li>• Topic requested by MEP (setting up a social media account, use of statistics, best practices, etc.)</li> <li>• One to one tailor made sessions</li> </ul>	
<b>Hybrid Events</b>	<p>In order to facilitate hybrid EP presentations/talks that combine on-site and online participation and engagement, the EP plans to have the seminar rooms in the new ZWEIG visitors' area (if possible, also in some of the current conference rooms in Spaak building) equipped with high-performance cameras and a trigger microphone system that will support targeted audience interaction. All seminar rooms will furthermore be equipped with professional webcams for streaming presentations, allowing for example the MEPs, staff and visitors to interact with those who couldn't travel to Brussels.</p> <p>Other communication events, as for example Europe Day, European Youth Seminars, Multilingualism Day, press</p>	<p>N.A There is no centralised equivalent of DG COMM in the House of Representatives nor in the Senate. Each office maintains its own ties to the public, conducts outreach activities, manages social media etc.</p>

	European Parliament	US Congress
	conferences, various events held by EPLO..etc. will be organised in the future in a hybrid format.	
<b>Digital offer to visitors</b>	The Digital Citizens' Journey to the European Parliament is an innovative DGCOMM project that uses state-of-art technologies and will launch three main experiences for citizens. The Immersive Online Experience allows citizens visit the European Parliament's people and places, delivered in navigable 360-degree environment with overlays to present micro-interactions and multimedia content. The Virtual Role Play Game is a 'choose-your-own-adventure style' journey to get to know EP law making through the eyes of an MEP. This involves a graphic narrative structure and responsive game engine that allows players explore multimedia content, frame issues before debate, propose amendments and vote. It has chapters, which cover work in committees, political groups and Plenary. The Virtual House of European History will consists of a 3D-tour of the House and virtual exhibition space with an online collection. Additional digital features are being considered.	The <a href="#">US Capitol Visitor Center</a> offers a video tour of the Capitol, online learning, virtual exhibits, podcasts, brochures in English (translated into 13 languages) as well as 'Capitol Conversations'; online discussions about the history of the Capitol <sup>116</sup> .
<b>Members' activities on official parliamentary websites</b>	All the MEPs have a dedicated section on the official website of the European Parliament. It makes their contact details available and provides basic information on their background (for instance date of birth, CV, parliamentary career and financial interest) and on their assistants (names and contact information). In addition, the parliamentary website can include links to social media platforms used by MEPs and can give details about their political	Individual offices maintain their own websites. House offices with websites include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 441 Representatives (435 Members, 5 Delegates, 1 Resident Commissioner)</li> <li>• The Committees of the House (with a separate website for each full committee and the minority party office of each committee)</li> </ul>

<sup>116</sup> <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>US Congress</b>
	<p>activities namely about the speeches they deliver in plenary, the reports they prepare, the parliamentary questions they raise and the motions they table. MEPs also publish the meetings they hold with third parties.</p> <p>The data related to Members via the website is reviewed and updated on an ad-hoc basis. The supervision of the website is done by the Bureau and the Secretariat (Secretary General, DG PRES and DG COMM), who have the overall responsibility for the content management.</p> <p>There is a possibility to download the information about the MEPs in different formats such as XML, PDF or Word.</p> <p>Based on a comparative study, which was recently done by the EPRS and DG COMM on members' activities on parliamentary websites in the EU, it can be concluded that the EP's website is among those that are the most transparent and make the most information available to the public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leadership offices of the House</li> <li>• The Officers and Officials of the House.</li> </ul>



# European ***Democracy in Action***

German Bundestag  
European Parliament  
Increasing impact and effectiveness

**EDITOR**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE**

Katharina Eisele, Tamara Ritter  
Ex-ante Impact Assessment Unit  
European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**LANGUAGE VERSIONS**

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in September 2021  
Brussels, © European Parliament, 2021  
Cover illustration: ©vector\_master - Fotolia.com

**DISCLAIMER**

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

# Contents

1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	144
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	163
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY .....	180
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	194

## Main findings

### 1. Plenary reform and agenda-setting

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<b>Structure of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>There are specific time slots fixed for each day of part-session - generally Strasbourg sessions start on Monday at 17:00 and end on Thursday at 16:00, while Brussels sessions start at 15:00 on Wednesday and end at 13:00 on Thursday. Part-session days may last until 23:00 or, less often, until 24:00.</p> <p>Each agenda of the part-session contains time slots for debates - divided into morning and afternoon/evening slots - and votes generally scheduled at noon from 12:00 to 14:00 and followed by oral explanations of votes. Key debates and topical debates are specifically earmarked in the agenda; key debates are usually scheduled on Tuesday or Wednesday morning, while topical debates on current affairs (Rule 162) are scheduled on Wednesday afternoon at 15:00 and should last for 1h30. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law take place once every month, on Thursday morning of the Strasbourg part-session.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session comprises a section explaining the various parliamentary procedures, a summary of the items on the agenda and, for each time slot of a sitting, a breakdown of the items with details of the documents being considered, the procedure to be used, information on speaking time and deadlines for tabling texts and requests for separate, split and roll-call votes.</p>	<p>The agenda of the plenary sessions is set by the Ältestenrat ('Council of Elders'), a body that includes the President of the Bundestag, the Vice-Presidents and 23 Members of Parliament appointed by parliamentary groups in proportion to their size. They do not have to be the oldest parliamentarians, but extensive experience is necessary. Alternatively, the agenda can be set by the Parliament or the President alone when they have been empowered to do so or there is an urgent reason.</p> <p>The Council of Elders adopts the draft agenda for the next plenary week. Generally, the leader of the parliamentary group agree if an item of the agenda is to be debated, how long the debate should be and how it should proceed before the Council of Elders finalises the agenda. Members can petition for a change in the next days' agenda until 6pm the night before but it is only likely to be granted if a parliamentary group petitions for it. If there are no such petitions, the agenda is seen as formally accepted once the President of the Bundestag opens the plenary day by calling the first item of the agenda.</p> <p><u>Current Hour</u> It is possible to schedule a so-called 'discussion on current topics of general interest' or the 'Current hour'. Its initial purpose was to give Members of Parliament the opportunity to ask the government further questions when they were not happy with the responses given in the scheduled 'Question Hour'. However, it has since become</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Plenary sessions under COVID-19 have been organised at the beginning of the pandemic in a reduced format, with a limited number of items for debates and votes and with voting being done remotely. The system for remote voting has evolved in the months following the start of the pandemic to allow for automatic counting of votes and therefore more voting sessions.</p> <p>Changes introduced in plenary as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic were remote voting already as of March 2020, with a system than was largely improved over time, and remote interventions in debates as of October 2020, from its liaison offices.</p> <p>There is currently a process ongoing in the House of reforming the structure of the plenary agenda and format of debates, aiming of rendering plenary sessions more attractive to Members and incentivise them to attend.</p>	<p>common to use it to discuss current affairs of general interest. It can be scheduled by the Council of Elders or if a parliamentary group or 5% of the Members of Parliament who are present request it. Only one such discussion can be scheduled per day and its length is limited to one hour. Each speaker has five minutes speaking time. Should the speaker not make use of the full five minutes the discussion's length is shortened accordingly.</p> <p><u>Core Time</u> There is a so-called 'core time' for priority debates on issues of special public interest. This core time debate generally takes place on Thursdays of the plenary week and lasts around four hours. It is broadcasted live and working groups (groups of Members of Parliament tasked with working on certain issues) are not supposed to meet at that time. Speaking time is normally limited to 10 minutes to allow as many Members of Parliament as possible to take the floor.</p> <p><u>Government Interventions</u> The members of the federal government and the Federal Council (the upper house of the German Parliament) or their representatives have the right to be heard whenever they ask for it. If one of them takes the floor after the end of a debate or after the allotted speaking time, the debate is re-opened to allow the opposition to express their views on the matter. Similarly, if the federal government, the Federal Council or their representatives take the floor during a debate, the parliamentary groups who have already used their allotted speaking time are re-granted another quarter of their original speaking time. Should they take the floor to speak about an item not on the agenda, a debate on this topic can be launched if a parliamentary group or 5% of the Members of Parliament present ask for it.</p> <p><u>Pattern of the plenary week</u> Generally, a plenary week follows the following pattern:</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Monday afternoon, the parliamentary leaders as well as some important sub-committees of the parliamentary groups meet;</li> <li>• On Monday evening most regional groups, the parliamentary groups of the German states, meet;</li> <li>• On Tuesday morning, the working groups of the parliamentary groups meet;</li> <li>• Tuesday afternoon is reserved for the parliamentary groups' general assemblies;</li> <li>• On Wednesday morning usually the committees as well as the Presidium of the Bundestag come together;</li> <li>• On Wednesday from 13:00, the plenary session begins with the Question Session, followed by the Question Hour where Members of Parliament may pose questions to the federal government;</li> <li>• On Thursday, a long plenary session begins at 9:00 and going until the late evening. The Council of Elders meets at 14:00;</li> <li>• On Friday, another plenary takes place from 9:00 until the early afternoon.</li> </ul> <p>There are some exceptions to that pattern. For example, when it comes to discussing the annual budget which normally requires four days of plenary sessions.</p>
<b>Strategic programming</b>	<p>The Parliament exerts influence on the political and legislative agenda through both regular dialogue with the Commission ahead of the presentation of its annual work programme, and the negotiations of an annual joint declaration and multiannual joint conclusions on inter-institutional priorities.</p> <p>The strategic planning in the European Parliament, leading to actual plenary sessions, is an elaborate process that starts at the beginning of each legislature and consists mainly of three stages: long, medium and short-term planning.</p>	<p>The plenary agenda is set one week in advance. However, there is an annual, multi-day debate on the national budget.</p> <p><u>Sub-Committees</u> For questions of importance to Parliament or questions that need longer-term work, sub-committees can be established by the relevant committee. These sub-committees work on specific items and can be resolved once a relevant proposal has been passed or be established for the entire legislative period, such as the sub-committee on EU issues.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Parliament is fully independent in organising its own plenary agendas, which are based on a carefully orchestrated mix of close cooperation and interaction with the other European institutions. Parliament needs to be informed, and takes into account, the planning of the work of the Commission and the Council, ensuring the synchronisation regarding the conclusion, adoption and signature of legal acts, responses to/by the other institutions and high level debates.</p> <p>1. Long-term planning (1 year and beyond)</p> <p>In order to ensure both coherence and adaptability, the services of DG Presidency follow closely, and deliver, on the annual and multiannual programming of the institutions, having for basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission Work Programme: An annual exercise that covers all proposals expected to be delivered by the Commission in a given year;</li> <li>• The Joint Declaration on legislative priorities, which results in an agreement between the three institutions on legislative priorities for a given year. The Joint Declaration Tracker is used as to monitor the implementation of the legislative priorities in the Joint Declaration;</li> <li>• The multi-annual Foresight Report: A new instrument, through which the Commission brings forward its multiannual political vision and strategy for the Union and its main priorities;</li> <li>• The Multiannual Conclusions – signed by the three institutions for the first time in December 2020 – on the priorities until the end of the 9th legislature.</li> </ul> <p>2. Medium-term planning (6 months)</p>	<p><u>Commission of Inquiry</u></p> <p>Separate from sub-committees is the possibility of creating so-called ‘Enquete-Commissions’. The Bundestag may appoint an Inquiry Commission to prepare decisions on extensive and significant issues. It is obliged to do so if one quarter of its Members request it. The establishment resolution sets out a work assignment on the basis of which a final report is expected from the Commission by the end of the respective legislative period. In addition to a systematic presentation of the information collected by the Commission, the reports also contain recommendations for future.</p> <p>The members of the Commission are appointed by agreement of the parliamentary groups, with each group being able to send at least one representative. In parliamentary practice, the composition roughly reflects the strength ratio of the parliamentary groups. They also may appoint an equal number of expert members of the Commission. The experts are mostly scientists, but also representatives of interest groups. The Commission’s work usually has a medium- to long-term impact by raising awareness of complicated issues.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>The services follow closely the work of the parliamentary committees and the other institutions, especially the proposals adopted in the Commission, the progress of trilogues with the Council and the agendas of the European Council. The following points are taken into account in the medium-term planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission presents, in the “Liste des points prévus” (LPP), its list of proposals to be adopted in the College of Commissioners several months in advance. This gives Parliament the possibility to plan reports or plenary debates either in advance or as a reaction to them. Some major Commission proposals can serve as a basis for monothematic plenaries (European Green Deal in December 2019 and Recovery and Resilience Facility in July 2020);</li> <li>• The Council of the European Union sets its agenda of priorities every six months with every new Presidency, which also affects Parliament’s work especially in co-legislation. All incoming Presidencies present their programme of activities in Parliament;</li> <li>• The European Council meetings determine the political debates for both the preparation and for the conclusions in the European Parliament. The European Council President presents the conclusions of the meetings in the Parliament (Article 15 TEU);</li> <li>• Other international events that might become subjects for debate in Parliament are also taken into account (e.g. G7, G20, UN sessions);</li> <li>• In addition, the progress of reports in the parliamentary committees is followed closely. All files are checked and an indicative plenary planning is set.</li> </ul> <p>3. Short-term planning (1 month)</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>The result of the short-term planning one month before the actual plenary session is the very first draft of the plenary agenda. The services make sure that all items included in the plenary agenda are both agreed at political level and are ready from a technical point of view.</p> <p>The plenary agenda contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treaty obligations and obligations arising from Inter-institutional Agreements;</li> <li>• Legislative reports;</li> <li>• Non-legislative reports;</li> <li>• Other input from committees, e.g. oral questions, resolutions or other specific items (petitions, immunities, etc.);</li> <li>• Various forms of debates with the other institutions (Council and Commission Statements, Commission interpellations, debates with the High Representative, topical debates);</li> <li>• Annual events and prizes, such as the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights and the Lux Audience Award for European Films.</li> </ul>	
<b>Setting parliaments' priorities</b>	<p>The definition of Parliaments priorities falls under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents and political Groups.</p> <p>The governing bodies – the Conference of Presidents and Conference of Committee Chairs – have regular exchanges with the Commission ahead of the preparation of its annual work programme. This allows Parliament to exert its influence on the work programme via political initiatives and calling for legislative proposals, which are the prerogative of the Commission.</p> <p>As explained above, since 2016, the three institutions have agreed to work and agree each year on a joint declaration on inter-</p>	<p>While the Council of Elders formally sets the agenda, it is only the last step of a long process to determine what will be discussed in the plenary sessions.</p> <p>First, the working groups of the different parties determine their priorities and for how long they would like to discuss them. In exchange with the offices of the respective parliamentary group whips - and in the case of the coalition parliamentary groups also with the federal government – they draw up a list of topics ranked by the importance they assign to them. On the basis of these lists the parliamentary groups formulate proposals. The decision which topics they will try to get on the agenda is ultimately made by the parliamentary group executive committee and the First</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Bundestag</b>
	<p>institutional programming and, at the beginning of each term, on joint conclusions on multiannual programming (through the inter-institutional agreement on better law making, to implement the provisions of Article 17 TEU).</p> <p>This has enabled Parliament to further influence the political and legislative agenda and the timing of such submissions.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session starts as a working document on the basis of recommendations from committees and points that are cyclical in a yearly session. Once input is received from political groups, a preliminary draft agenda is drawn up and presented to the Conference of Presidents in view of the adoption of the draft agenda, approximately one month before the part-session in question. The Conference of Presidents then adopts the final draft agenda at its last meeting on the Thursday before the part-session.</p> <p>Whilst there are often items on the agenda which are comprised of a Council and/or Commission statement, the two institutions do not have the right to claim certain time slots for debates or declarations. This remains the prerogative of the Conference of Presidents, which adopts the final draft, and the House, which adopts the agenda at the opening of each part-session.</p>	<p>Parliamentary Secretary before the heads of the parliamentary management teams meet every Wednesday to negotiate the agenda, which is then agreed upon by the first parliamentary managers as a draft for the Council of Elders. Therein they follow an unofficial rule to facilitate negotiations - the governing parties and the opposition take turns in putting an item on the agenda – with the exception of the core debate hours on Thursdays and Fridays.</p> <p>This procedure normally makes for a smooth running of the plenary sessions. However, there still is the possibility to change the agenda. Every Member may apply for it to be changed by 18:00 of the day before the item in question is discussed. In that case there will be a vote on it in the plenary. However, such cases are quite rare.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Members of the government and the Federal Council (the upper house of the German Parliament) or their representatives have the right to be heard whenever they ask for it.</p>
<b>Content of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>The plenary agenda contains debates on legislative and non-legislative files presented in the form of reports, as well as statements from the Council and the Commission or from the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, oral questions, topical debates, debates on breaches of human rights and rule of law, votes and explanations of votes. . There are no plenary sessions reserved only for legislation or only for non-legislative debates.</p>	<p>The plenary agenda is set every week according to the priorities identified by the parliamentary groups and in agreement with the Council of Elders. There are no thematic packages but for there is a 'core time' on Thursday, where issues of current and special public interest are publicly debated for four hours.</p> <p>Neither is there a set proportion of plenary sessions reserved for legislation and for non-legislative debates. Rather non-legislative debates can be put on the agenda if a parliamentary group or a</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>While setting the agenda, political groups often interlink dossiers in order to have joint debates on ‘thematic packages’.</p> <p>Since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretation.</p> <p>Topical debates and major interpellations are not held at all during this period.</p>	<p>certain number of Members present request it (usually 5% but for certain items like a resolution of non-confidence the barrier is higher).</p>
<b>Conduct of plenary debates</b>	<p>Speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session.</p> <p>The agenda is divided into different “time slots”, which can include one or several debates. There is usually no fixed time for each debate. A notional speaking time is allocated to rapporteurs, rapporteurs for opinion, authors of oral questions, major interpellations and topical debates and to other institutions (Council, Commission, etc.).</p> <p>The speaking time available for each political group is also indicated on the agenda. This information is used by the political groups in allocating speaking time and drawing up their lists of speakers. Members speak in the order of the relative size of their political groups.</p> <p>Members who wish to speak in a debate on the plenary agenda should ask their political group to allocate them speaking time. Alternatively, they may ask to speak in a more spontaneous manner under the catch-the-eye or blue card procedures (see below).</p> <p>Members who have not spoken in a debate may, at most once per part-session, hand in a written statement of not more than 200</p>	<p><u>Order of speakers</u></p> <p>The President of the Bundestag decides the order of the speakers. They are supposed to take into consideration the different political alignments, the relative strengths of the parties and that speeches by Members of Parliament from the governing parties are ideally followed by those from opposition parties. If a member of government, or a representative, speaks, the President shall ensure that someone with a differing opinion speaks afterwards. In debates about proposals by the Members, the first speaker should not be from the same parliamentary group as the applicant. The applicant and the rapporteur are granted the opportunity to speak both, at the beginning and the end of the debate. The rapporteur may speak at any time. In the priority debates of Thursday and the first two items of Friday the opposition gets to alternatively decide the second item on the agenda either Thursday or Friday. The following, shorter debates then are usually alternated between the governing and the opposition group.</p> <p><u>Allocation of speaking time</u></p> <p>Generally, allocation of speaking time to the parliamentary groups takes place according to a pattern agreed upon at the beginning of the parliamentary term. Its starting point is the relative strengths of</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>words, which will be appended to the verbatim report of the debate.</p> <p>There are several types of debates: committee reports (full debate), committee reports (short presentation), Statements by the other Institutions (council, Commission, Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), oral questions to the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union, debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, major interpellations for written answer, question time, public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives.</p> <p>Procedures in debates</p> <p>- Catch-the-eye - Rule 171(6) With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short speeches (1 minute maximum) by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs at the end of a debate.</p> <p>- Blue card procedure - Rule 171(8)</p> <p>The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.</p> <p>Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of political group speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" or blue cards.</p>	<p>the parliamentary groups but also other aspects like a bonus for the opposition are considered. There is no set mathematical framework, but it is rather a political decision. Within the allotted speaking time the parliamentary groups decide whom of their members should speak and how long about an item on the agenda.</p> <p>The Government and the Federal Council are granted unlimited speaking time. In practice, however, their speaking time is deducted from their parliamentary group so that the relative speaking times are kept constant.</p> <p><u>Interventions</u></p> <p>A Member of Parliament may only speak if the President has given them the floor. For discussions of the agenda itself and for explanations Members can speak up from their seat by calling out. For questions to the speaker during the speech or for interventions in a debate, the Member may speak up from one of the microphones in the chamber. These questions and interventions must be short and concise and may only be posed once the speaker permits it upon being asked by the President. Following an argument made in a debate, the President may permit an intervention of three minutes at most, the speaker can then also respond to it once.</p> <p>Within a debate, Members can be permitted to make a statement after its end, interruption or adjournment. The President prioritises direct replies and the statement's purpose has to be made known when the Member speaks up. The Member may only give rebuttals to statements made in the debate concerning their person or rectifications of their own statements. Maximum speaking time is 5 minutes. The Bundestag also has a long tradition of informal interjections or heckling.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>- One-minute speeches - Rule 172</p> <p>For a period of not more than 30 minutes during the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a prepared list, the President calls Members who wish to draw Parliament's attention to a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of 1 minute each.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, and in accordance with the President's decision on exceptional measures enabling the European Parliament to carry out its duties and exercise its prerogatives under the Treaties, the procedures described above were not used in plenary debates. This was due to the restricted time available for debates, as well as the constraints linked to remote interventions in debates.</p>	<p><u>Interpellations to the executive</u></p> <p>There is a long tradition harking back to the German Empire of interpellations. They can be posed by a parliamentary group or at least five out of a hundred Members. The President then passes them on to the government. Once the response has been received it is put on the agenda and debated. There are also so-called small interpellations where a question is posed to the government to be answered in writing. The response is published and not debated.</p> <p>As stated above there is also the possibility to schedule a so-called 'discussion on current topics of general interest' or the 'current hour'.</p> <p><u>Resolutions without voting</u></p> <p>For politically uncontroversial decisions, the Council of Elders may decide in advance that no debate takes place and the proposal is voted on immediately. Alternatively, the Council of Elders may also agree to have the statements be included in the minutes rather than hear them. They will then be published in the plenary protocol. The same is possible if the speaker requests it and two thirds of the Members present agree.</p> <p><u>Interventions in writing</u></p> <p>Members can give their interventions in writing to be registered in the minutes if the Council of Elders has agreed to it beforehand. However, generally Members speak freely although they are allowed to use notes.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<b>Voting procedures and treatment of amendments</b>	<p>Voting on draft legislation takes place at the first available voting time (voting session) following the close of a debate on that piece of legislation, unless the agenda specifically provides for a later vote. Non-contentious draft legislation is sometimes put straight to the vote without a debate, in which case the vote may be earlier in a part-session. The timing of the vote may also be influenced by other factors such as availability of texts in all official languages.</p> <p>Amendments to draft legislation may be voted in plenary. Amendments may be tabled by a “low threshold”, constituted either by a political group or by a number of individual Members equivalent to 5% of Parliament’s membership. Such amendments are voted alongside any amendments proposed by the committee responsible in its report.</p> <p>Rule 159 provides, however, that if a committee has adopted its position on the draft legislation with less than 10 percent of the committee members opposing, the legislation is adopted without further amendments by plenary. A “medium threshold” consisting of 10% of the House may however veto this and insist on the right to table amendments.</p> <p>In first reading, the vote on amendments is always followed by a final vote on the Commission’s draft legislation as a whole. Amendments and the final vote require a majority of the votes cast for adoption. In second reading amendments require a majority of Parliament’s component Members (i.e. more than half the House as constituted) for adoption. In second reading, the draft legislation (Council position) is deemed adopted unless amended or rejected, and there is no final vote on the Council position as a whole.</p> <p>If inter-institutional negotiations lead to a provisional agreement on a draft legislative text, that agreement is put to the vote as</p>	<p>Voting on legislation takes place immediately after the closure of the debate. Votes on amendments to a draft law are permitted in plenary and every Member is entitled to table them with or without the support of their parliamentary group. They can be presented orally and are generally voted on immediately so that the general vote on the draft can include or exclude them. However, it is uncommon to introduce amendments at this stage and more common to discuss them within the committees.</p> <p>Unlike at the EP, there is no ‘cooling off’ period between the deliberation in the committee and the vote in the plenary foreseen by the Rules of Procedure.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>single vote with no further amendment, unless the House explicitly decides otherwise.</p> <p>Oral amendments may be moved in plenary by individual Members, although these may be opposed on procedural grounds (lack of full translation into all languages) by Members representing 5% of the House.</p> <p>There is no automatic cooling-off period between a final vote in committee on a report and the adoption by plenary. The timing of the plenary vote is determined by the Conference of Presidents (Group Chairs) and the plenary itself as part of the agenda decision-making process. A cooling-off period does take place, however, between the conclusion of inter-institutional negotiations on a draft legislative act and its final vote in plenary.</p> <p>As indicated above, since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretations.</p>	
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners is limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p>	<p>There are two ways the Members of the Parliament can ask the government questions: they can ask the government questions right after its cabinet meeting about items covered in the meeting or of general public interest. The other possibility is the so-called 'Question Hour' that takes place right after the questioning where Members have to submit their questions in advance.</p> <p><u>Questioning</u> The questioning usually takes place Wednesdays starting at 13:00 during plenary weeks. It lasts 60 minutes and the questions are spontaneous, and each answer may be followed up once by the questioning member. Its focus are issues of the cabinet meeting as well as issues of public interest.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p> <p>The Member has 1 minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner 2 minutes in which to reply. The Member formulating the question may put a supplementary question of a duration of 30 seconds, having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>In practice, this provision was not used during the 8th and 9th parliamentary term.</p> <p>With regards to Council representatives, there is a possibility to hold specific question hours with the Council in accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents (Rule 137/3).</p> <p>The use of Question time is, however, being discussed again in the reform exercise initiated in the Parliament, in particular in the Focus Group on Plenary reform.</p>	<p><u>Question Hour</u> The Question Hour takes place after the questioning on Wednesdays starting at 13:00 during plenary weeks and lasts 120 minutes. Questions have to be submitted by Friday at 10:00 to allow for three working days to draft an answer and Members can submit up to two questions per week. The executive answers verbally unless the Members are not present for the Question Hour and requested a written response before the question is called by the President. There is also room for questions of ‘urgent public interest’ provided they have been submitted by 12:00 of the previous day.</p> <p>The Member who posed the question is allowed to ask up to two follow-up questions while the other Members are allowed only one question per Government answer. Questions that do not get answered in the Question Hour due to lack of time are answered in writing.</p> <p><u>Admissibility criteria</u> The questions have to be short and allow for a concise answer. They are not allowed to include any off-topic remarks or judgements. Every question may be divided into two sub-questions. The questions have to be related to areas for which the government is directly or indirectly responsible.</p>
<b>Procedure for written questions</b>	<p>Members, political groups and committees are entitled to submit questions for written answer to the President of the European Council, to the Council, the Commission and to the Vice-President of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union (Rule 138 RoP).</p>	<p>Every Member can ask the government up to four written questions per month. Similar to the Question Hour questions, they should be short and allow for a concise answer and can only concern issues for which the government is directly or indirectly responsible.</p> <p>Questions have to be submitted to the President in quadruplicate, and answers (along with the original questions) are published in the</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Admissibility criteria are referred to in Annex III RoP, mainly EU competence, competence of the addressee, general interest, contain an understandable interrogation, not exceed 200 words, not contain offensive language, not relate to strictly personal matters, not contain more than 3 sub-questions, no similar or identical question tabled and answered in the previous 6 months. In addition, data protection regulations shall be respected.</p> <p>Deadlines for answering: 3 weeks for priority questions; 6 weeks for non-priority questions. Nevertheless, as those deadlines have never been agreed with the institutions addressees of the questions, they are considered by the latter as non-binding on them, but as mere targets. Delays are extremely frequent.</p> <p>Questions for oral answer are a completely different procedure (cf. Rule 136 RoP). These are never answered in writing, even if they lapse without having been scheduled for debate in Plenary. They can only be tabled by a political group, a parliamentary committee or at least 5% of EP's component Members.</p> <p>Major interpellations for written answer (Rule 139 RoP) are a "hybrid" instrument, as they can be scheduled for debate if they have not been answered, but also if they have been answered (different rules apply). They can only be tabled by political groups. Annex III does not apply to Oral questions and Major interpellations. There are specific rules regarding length, deadlines, etc.</p> <p>Members, political groups, parliamentary committees can table a maximum of 20 questions for written answer over a rolling period of 3 months. They can only table one priority question per calendar month (which is also counted in the 20 questions over the 3 month rolling period). A question can be co-tabled by several Members but it will be counted in the quota of each individual Member. Members can also "support" other Members'</p>	<p>Bundestag printed paper the following week. The printed paper is distributed to the Members and also available online.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>questions, and in this case this will not be counted in the respective quota. The number of major interpellations is limited by the Conference of Presidents (proportional to the “weight” of each political group) but there is no limit to the number of Oral questions tabled.</p> <p>Parliamentary questions are submitted by using a web form (QP webform) and signed by Members with an electronic signature (DiSP). They are managed by the administration, with the help of a specific application (QPPLUS).</p> <p>Every parliamentary question is published on the EP website (<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html</a>), under the Plenary part and in the Register of public documents, when it is forwarded to the institution addressee of the question. Questions can also be accessed from the profile of every author (Member). Replies to questions for written answer are published as links to each question and in the Register of public documents. Questions and answers are available in the language of the author(s) and in English. Regarding Oral questions and Major interpellations, if they are scheduled for debate in Plenary, a link to the debate and to the Minutes is published.</p>	
<b>Seating order and presence</b>	<p>The Conference of Presidents shall decide how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated to the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the Union (Rule 37).</p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure, at the beginning of each legislature, political groups have an allocated number of seats for their Members as decided by the Conference of Presidents. Each Member of the European Parliament has his own seat in the Chamber, as indicated by his respective political group. Small changes may occur in the seating plan from one part-session to</p>	<p><u>Seating order</u></p> <p>Members speak at the designated microphones in the chamber or from the rostrum. Once a Member has spoken they normally sit down in the first or second row to allow for interaction with the speakers after the.</p> <p>For Members in general is a seating order with regard to the parliamentary groups but within the group there are no fixed seats. It is common that the Members move up when there are free seats rather than leaving gaps. This seating order applies generally to all parts of the agenda.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>the next, due to changes in political group affiliation of Members. Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, due to social distancing restrictions, the seating plan of Members has had to be adapted and seats were mostly reserved for Members who intervened in debates. Any remaining seats were allocated to Members present on a free seating basis within the allocation foreseen for their respective political groups. Furthermore, Members speak from the central rostrum (without their mask).</p> <p>In order to attract the attention of Members for their participation on debates of particular general importance, the Conference of Presidents can indicate them as key debates with a consequence that no other meetings may be organised in parallel.</p>	<p><u>Presence during debates</u></p> <p>The debates in the Bundestag are not meant to be where the Members make their decisions, rather they are meant to make public how a decision has been taken and where the parliamentary groups stand with it. As such it is not expected of Members to always be present in chamber especially since they have a lot of other tasks to attend to, like committee meetings. To make sure Members come together at least once, the Bundestag has agreed on the 'core time' on Thursdays. These topics of importance to the public are discussed and no other panels meet. Furthermore, the President, in agreement with the parliamentary groups, may adjourn the meeting when there are less than 25% of Members present.</p>
<b>Meetings in parallel to plenary sessions</b>	<p>Meetings of committees should not be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, save for very few exceptions agreed by the president. Political group meetings can be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, except for Tuesday and/or Wednesday morning if key debates are scheduled.</p> <p>Rules for meetings in parallel to plenary sessions are set by the Decision of the Conference of Presidents of 14 May 1998.</p> <p>As a <b>general rule</b>, no other meeting may be held simultaneously. Therefore, no meeting of a parliamentary body nor any other meeting involving Members shall be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• during voting time;</li> <li>• during formal sittings;</li> <li>• on Wednesdays mornings during Strasbourg part-sessions and on Wednesdays from 15.00 to 16.30 during Brussels part-sessions or during any other debate of</li> </ul>	<p>Meetings usually follow the plenary week pattern described above but there are no Rules of Procedure that explicitly prohibit meetings to be held in parallel. However, the core time on Thursday is kept free of any other commitments to allow as many Members as possible to attend.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>particular general importance defined as such by the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>However, there are the following <b>exceptions</b> from this rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Conference of Presidents and the Bureau, and any working party thereof, must be able to meet, where appropriate, at any time.</li> <li>• The Quaestors shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Committee Chairs shall be authorised to meet from 14.00 to 16.00 on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Delegation Chairs shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg provided such meetings do not coincide with a key debate.</li> <li>• Political groups shall be authorised to meet during part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels in specific time slots (different for Strasbourg and Brussels) as defined in Annex III to the Bureau decision of 4 July 2005 on Rules governing meetings of the political groups.</li> <li>• Committees shall be authorised to meet in Strasbourg on Mondays and Thursdays. Monday meetings shall be authorised from 19.00 to 22.30. Committees shall be authorised to hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Brussels only in exceptional cases and subject to the availability of interpretation resources. Such meetings may be held on Wednesdays from 19.00 to 22.00.</li> <li>• Finally, delegations to the Conciliation Committee may hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Strasbourg and Brussels if the constraints of time limits and Council availability so dictate and provided that such meetings do not coincide with voting time or a formal sitting.</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<b>Parliaments' calendars</b>	<p>Parliament's work is structured according to a calendar divided into weeks of different colours, each corresponding to a different type of parliamentary activity: pink for committee meetings, red for plenary part-sessions, blue for political group meetings and turquoise for constituency weeks (external parliamentary activities).</p> <p>Every year the Parliament holds 12 four-day plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Its Members meet in parliamentary committees in Brussels, where additional two-day plenary sessions are held.</p> <p>The plenary session is the highlight of the parliamentary month with all the Members assembling either in the Chamber in Strasbourg or, for additional, shorter sessions, in Brussels. The reports adopted in committees are once again debated, amended and adopted to reflect the Parliament's official position. In addition to adopting reports, Members adopt resolutions and directly question Commission or Council representatives on topical issues. Heads of State or Government and personalities from all over the world may also attend the plenary sessions.</p> <p>Pink weeks are dedicated to committee meetings, the forum where Members coming from different political groups discuss draft legislation, propose amendments, consider Commission and Council proposals and draw up reports to be presented to the plenary.</p> <p>In weeks that are marked blue Members meet with other members from their political group. The political groups in Parliament bring together Members coming from different national political parties, sharing the same political stance and affiliations. During the political groups' meeting, Members discuss their positions on proposed legislation, to be debated and voted on during plenary. They scrutinise reports from</p>	<p>Parliament generally works for <b>22-24 weeks / 110-120 days</b> a year.</p> <p>Parliament's work is structured according to a calendar set by the Council of Elders for the next year. Generally, the Council of Elders will aim to have 1-2 non-plenary weeks for every two plenary weeks. Due to the summer break as well as other public holidays, it usually amounts to 22 to 24 sitting weeks a year.</p> <p>The structure of a sitting week is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.5 days for parliamentary group meetings</li> <li>• 0.5 days for committee meetings</li> <li>• 2.5 days for the plenary session</li> </ul> <p><u>Usual plenary week pattern (as stated above)</u></p> <p>The plenary session on Wednesday usually starts at 13.00 with a half-hour government overview and is followed by two hours of Question Time. The session normally ends at 15.30. The plenary session on Thursday usually begins at 9.00. It lasts until the agenda is completed, which is usually about 22.00 or 23.00. The plenary session on Friday also usually starts at 9.00 and lasts until the agenda is completed at around 15.00 or 16.00. In very rare cases, the session may last longer. A general exception is the budget week in which the government's draft law on the budget for the coming year is debated. In this case, meetings take place from Tuesday to Friday, starting at 9.00 and lasting until late in the afternoon or early evening.</p> <p>The parliamentary group executives and the executive bodies of the parties hold meetings on Monday afternoons. On Tuesdays, the parliamentary groups convene to discuss the items on the agenda. In the morning, the groups' working parties meet to prepare for the meetings of the parliamentary committees, which normally take place on Wednesdays. The permanent committees are the bodies that perform the specialised work of Parliament. At the committee meetings, the groups present their views on legislative proposals,</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Bundestag</b>
	<p>Parliamentary committees, table amendments and agree on a group position.</p> <p>During turquoise week, MEPs undertake activities outside the Parliament (external parliamentary activities). They work either in their constituency in their home country, where they have the opportunity to interact with their electorate, or in Parliamentary delegations, responsible for maintaining relations with non-EU countries.</p> <p>Of course, this calendar is implemented with some degree of flexibility in duly justified cases (e.g. committee meetings in plenary or group weeks to vote on urgent legislation, extraordinary plenary sittings, etc.)</p> <p>For 2020:  Number of working days in total: 174  Number of daily sitting*: 51 (including 2 extraordinary sessions in form of daily sittings held on 27 May and 23 July)  Number of sitting hours: 259 h 43</p> <p>N.B.: The length of daily sittings may differ depending on the indication in the calendar (Ex. Monday for Strasbourg session and Wednesday and Thursday for the Brussels session are considered only as a half-working days).</p> <p>Number of working days for committee meetings: 58  Number of working days for political group meetings: 32  Number of working days outside of the parliament (external parliamentary activities): 38</p>	<p>make compromises and prepare drafts designed to attract majority support. These are then discussed and put to the vote in the public plenary sittings on Thursdays and Fridays. Basically, no committee meetings are held in parallel with the plenary. Most committees meet on Wednesday mornings. Some exceptions are possible. For example, the Budget Committee meets on Wednesday afternoons, while committees often get special permission to hold a meeting on Thursdays.</p> <p>Members of Parliament normally have two places of work: the Bundestag and their constituency. They engage with the public, are frequently involved in local politics and report on their parliamentary activities. In regular surgery sessions, they learn of the problems and interests of local people and feed this knowledge into their deliberations in Berlin. Every parliamentary group has regional sub-groups in which Members discuss the political concerns of their federal state and local area.</p> <p>This amounts to 110-120 working days at the Parliament and 28-30 weeks away from the Parliament. Election years are an exception as there is a break in the usual calendar to form a new government. 2021 will see 16 plenary weeks. In 2020, there were 64 sitting days and the average number of sitting hours was 457h and 13 minutes in the legislative term 2013-2017 (the average of the current term is not available as it is ongoing).</p>

## 2. Strengthening parliamentary prerogatives

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<p><b>Organisation of Hearings</b></p>	<p>The European Parliament's Committees may invite the Commission and other EU institutions and bodies to their meetings. Apart from that, they may organise public hearings with experts for different purposes and shall organise public hearings on European citizen's initiatives once they have gathered the necessary citizens' support. Pre-appointment hearings are also relevant in the European Parliament's Committees work, especially the ones hold during the appointment procedure of the European Commission. The European Parliament inquiry committees may also invite different categories of witnesses to provide evidence.</p> <p>Rules applicable to the organisation and scheduling of hearing by EP's committees are quite flexible. If a committee decides to invite the <b>Commission, the Council or other EU institutions</b> to one of its meetings, the availability of those institutions may play a relevant role when deciding when to place the item on the agenda. Notwithstanding, the Commission has committed to give priority to its presence at parliamentary sessions when requested to appear (Framework Agreement on relations between the EP and the COM, point 35).</p> <p>Similarly, when deciding on whether to organise an <b>experts' hearing</b>, committees do need to consider that those hearings, no matter if they are organised by standing committees, inquiry or special committees, or subcommittees, need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau (Rule 25 (9) RoP). Proposals to organise hearings are usually discussed by committee coordinators before being submitted to Parliament's Bureau (Rule 214 RoP). According to the Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings (18 June 2003), each parliamentary committee shall submit a draft 6-</p>	<p>In general, Bundestag committee hearings are not public. They take place when the Committee Chair decides it and according to the agenda set by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders normally schedule for Committee meetings to take place on Wednesdays until 13:00. For a hearing to be permitted outside these times or outside of Berlin, it must be requested by either a parliamentary group, 5% of Members, or unanimously by the committee and formally been allowed by the President. The agenda is decided by the Committee Chair.</p> <p>The federal government, the Federal Council and its representatives are always permitted to attend hearings if they wish to do so. The committee may request the presence of a Member of Government both for public and non-public hearings. Similarly, they can ask experts or representatives of associations to attend.</p> <p><u>Non-public hearings</u> For <b>non-public hearings</b> Members of Parliament generally permitted to attend as listeners. When appointing the committees Parliament may decide for certain committees to restrict attendance to their regular members. Such a decision can also be taken later in the legislative term for individual issues within the committee's competences. The Foreign Affairs Committee hearings are not public in line with the Rules of Procedures.</p> <p>Provided a hearing is not confidential, if the committee is working on a proposal by Members of Parliament, then the first signatory is given the agenda of the hearing and may participate in the hearing as a consultant. The Member may also choose to send a representative in their stead. The same applies to the leader of parliamentary groups who generally have an advisory voice in all hearings.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>months program of experts' hearings to the Conference of Committee Chairs twice a year. Individual authorisations for hearings not included in the 6-months program may also be granted and have to be submitted to the Bureau four weeks in advance of the hearing after notifying the Conference of Committee Chairs. In urgent cases, Parliament's President may directly give the authorisation (Article 3 Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings). Committees can only cover the expenses of a maximum of 16 experts' guests per year (12 for subcommittees) and experts and the organisations they represent need to be on a mandatory transparency register.</p> <p>Once organised, committees notify Parliament's President and provide detailed information regarding the hearing, Experts' hearings shall be organised in Parliament's premises and during the ordinary meeting time of committees (Article 1 Rules on Public Hearings). In these hearings, experts are usually allowed to make a first statement followed by a debate in which committee members may raise questions. As regards the allocation of speaking time in committee Parliament's Rules of Procedure (Rule 216 (4) only refers to Rule 171 (2) RoP) during a hearing, thus leaving a wide margin of discretion to the Committee Chair to decide on how to organise the debate. Hearings are normally public.</p> <p><b>Public hearings' on European Citizens initiatives</b> present some peculiarities as they are organised by the competent EP's standing committee, on a decision made by Parliament's President on a proposal from the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (Rule 222 (1) RoP), so they do not need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau. The hearings should be organised within three months of the submission of the European Citizens initiative to the Commission.</p>	<p>Should the committee meet on an issue that touches upon essential aspects of the municipalities and municipal associations, the municipal umbrella organisations that exist on the federal level, are given the opportunity to make a statement. In special cases, committees may decide to hold their hearings in public so that journalists, associations, and other interested parties can attend if they wish so.</p> <p><u>Public hearings</u> A committee may organise a <b>public hearing</b> of experts and advocacy groups. It serves to introduce scientific expertise as well as enhancing public awareness. If it concerns a proposal that has been assigned to the committee by the Bundestag, such a public hearing can be called if a quarter of the committee members demand it. If it concerns a topic the committee is working on without official assignment by the Bundestag, it must first be officially put on the committee's agenda and then requires a resolution by the committee.</p> <p>Public hearings are streamed live on Bundestag's website and its recordings can be freely accessed afterwards. The hearing's minutes as well as the written statements submitted by experts and associations are made available on the committee's website.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p><b>Pre-appointment hearings</b> do not have to receive the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau and the competent committees enjoy a wide range of freedom as regards their organisation and conduct, except the hearings held within the appointment procedure of the Commission, which are thoroughly regulated by Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Hearings held in the European Parliament's committees during the election procedure of the European Commission distinguish themselves from all other pre-appointment hearings, not only because they are conducted before Parliament gives its vote of consent to the Commission as a whole, but also because they involve nearly all EP's standing committees and governing bodies and they have become a major political event. Two major steps take place before the hearings themselves: i) Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee examines the declaration of financial interests presented by each Commissioner-designate to confirm that there is no conflict of interests in connection with their future portfolio ii) and Commissioners-designate are asked to answer several questions in writing before the hearing. Each hearing lasts three hours. Commissioners-designate make an opening statement of no more than 15 minutes. A session of questions and answers follows, in which Members are allowed to ask up to 25 questions, with follow-up questions to be asked immediately by the same MEP within their allocated time. Speaking time is allocated to Members taking into account the size of each political group</p> <p>Temporary <b>inquiry committees</b> may also hold hearings as part of its investigative activities on 'alleged contraventions or maladministration in implementation of Union law'. Members of the institutions and other bodies of the EU and members of the Member States' governments may be invited by inquiry committees to take part in their proceedings (Article 3 (2) of Decision 95/167/EC). Although the wording of the current provision does not seem to impose a legal obligation. In any case, Parliament has at its disposal some other powerful tools,</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>including the motion of censure (Article 234 TFEU and Rule 127 RoP), that it can use against the Commission in case their members decide not to appear in front of inquiry committees. As regards some other EU institutions or bodies (e.g. the Council or the European Council) and national governments, Parliament can use different means to exert political pressure, including by using a “shaming and blaming” strategy.</p>	
<p><b>Scrutiny and control powers</b></p>	<p>Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers. These include <b>(1) exercise oversight over other institutions, (2) monitor the proper use of the EU budget and (3) ensure the correct implementation of EU law.</b></p> <p><b><u>Control over the Council</u></b></p> <p>The President of the European Parliament has the right to speak at the start of each European Council, setting out Parliament's position on the subjects to be addressed by the heads of state and government. After each summit, the President of the European Council presents a report to Parliament on the outcome.</p> <p>At the beginning and end of each six-month presidency, the President of the Council of the European Union discusses the Presidency's programme with MEPs in plenary. MEPs can table written and oral questions to the Council and can ask it to initiate new policies. The Presidency of the Council often meets the Chairs of Parliament's political groups and frequently takes part in committee meetings to present its programme, report on its achievements and discuss them with MEPs. In addition, twice a year, the High Representative reports to the European Parliament about foreign affairs and security policies and their financial implications.</p> <p><b><u>Control over the Commission</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Control over the government</u></b></p> <p>The Bundestag exercises an important power of scrutiny over the Government. The starting point of this scrutinising function is the election of the Chancellor by the Bundestag at the start of each electoral term. The Bundestag may also depose the head of Government by means of a constructive vote of no confidence, in which the majority of Members of Parliament express their lack of confidence in the Chancellor. This procedure only applies to the Chancellor. Dismissal of a single Member of Government is not possible.</p> <p>Members of Parliament can obtain information about the work of the Government and its objectives. For this purpose, they have a number of rights and instruments at their disposal, such as <b>major and minor parliamentary questions and debates on matters of vital interest</b>. Members have several possibilities to ask questions to the federal government:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Every Member of the Bundestag is entitled to address a brief individual question to the federal government. The answer comes orally or as a written reply. These questions are either for direct reply during Question Time or for written reply within a week. Each Member of the Bundestag is allowed to submit two questions to the federal government for Question Time at each week of sittings and, in addition, up to four questions per month for written reply. In the 19<sup>th</sup> legislative period there were</li> </ol>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>The Parliament has the right to approve and dismiss the Commission. A candidate for the position of Commission President is proposed by the Member States' governments based on the results of the European elections. The candidate is then elected by the Parliament. The Commission as a whole, including the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is subject to a vote of consent by Parliament. The Commission can be forced to resign if the EP adopts a motion of censure. It can censure the Commission and ultimately dismiss it.</p> <p>The Parliament keeps a close eye on the Commission's work, scrutinizing its reports on EU policies, legislation and the budget. Commissioners are often required to appear before MEPs, at committee meetings or in plenary, to defend their policies, explain what action they intend to take and answer questions.</p> <p>Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, which regularly submits reports to it, including an annual report on EU activities and the implementation of the budget. At every plenary session, the President of the Commission is present for Question Hour, during which MEPs question him or her on current affairs. Once a year, the Commission President gives a State of the Union address at the plenary. Parliament regularly invites the Commission to initiate new policies, and the Commission is required to reply to oral and written questions from MEPs.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Justice</u></b> The EP can ask the Court to take action against the Commission or the Council if they have acted in a way that is contrary to the provisions of EU law. The Parliament is able to seek a prior opinion from the CJEU on the compatibility of an international agreement with the Treaty. In addition, the Parliament and the</p>	<p>23 789 written questions and 5 150 oral questions, as well as 2 urgent questions.</p> <p>b. In addition, a parliamentary group or five per cent of the Members are entitled to table major or minor interpellations (a submission containing a number of questions). In the 19<sup>th</sup> legislative period there were 35 major interpellations and 11 101 minor interpellations.</p> <p>The Bundestag also scrutinises the Government through the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces. The Commissioner is appointed by the Bundestag for the purpose of parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces. The Commissioner keeps Parliament up to date on the situation in the Bundeswehr and intervenes in cases where the fundamental rights of military personnel are infringed.</p> <p><b><u>Bodies for scrutiny</u></b> In addition to the possibilities of obtaining information, the Bundestag also sets up committees whose task includes monitoring the Government and which have varying degrees of influence.</p> <p><b><u>Permanent Committees</u></b> The <b>permanent committees</b> of the Bundestag are usually organised in such a way that they mirror a federal ministry. They therefore have a precisely defined area of expertise or business. The committees exercise their control function indirectly by participating in the legislative process. However, they also have direct control rights. For example, they are expressly permitted to request reports on current legislative projects from representatives of the responsible federal ministry and to make recommendations - even without a mandate from the plenum. The composition of the permanent committees reflects the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups in the parliament.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish specialised courts attached to the General Court to hear and determine at first instance certain classes of action or proceeding brought in specific areas.</p> <p><b>European Central Bank (ECB)</b> The ECB President reports to Parliament on monetary issues in a quarterly Monetary Dialogue. The ECB also prepares an annual report on monetary policy which is presented in Parliament. Parliament adopts a resolution on this annual report. MEPs may put questions for written answer to the ECB. Parliament is also consulted in the procedure to appoint members of the ECB's Executive Board.</p> <p>The new supervisory responsibilities of the ECB are matched with additional accountability requirements under the SSM Regulation. The practical modalities for this are governed by an inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between Parliament and the ECB. The accountability arrangements include the attendance of the Chair of the Supervisory Board at the competent committee, the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON); answering questions asked by Parliament; and confidential oral discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the competent committee upon request. In addition, the ECB prepares an annual supervisory report, which is presented to Parliament by the Chair of the Supervisory Board.</p> <p><b>Court of Auditors</b> Parliament shall be consulted before the appointment of the members of the Court of Auditors by the Council. The Court assists Parliament and the Council in exercising their role of controlling the implementation of the budget. The annual reports and special reports serve as the basis for Parliament's yearly discharge exercise.</p>	<p>In line with constitutional law, there must be a Foreign Affairs Committee, a Committee on EU Affairs, a Defence Committee, and a Petitions Committee. In addition, the Budget Committee and the Committee on Election Control, Immunity and the Rules of Procedure are established by administrative law and the Rules of Procedure. In addition to the committees mirroring a federal ministry, there are some specialised committees. Some work on a specific area of the ministry's competences, such as the Committee for Sport which is responsible for some matters of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Others cannot be matched to only one ministry but work on all the proposals that fall under their purview, such as the Committee for Tourism or the Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid. In the 19<sup>th</sup> legislative period (2017-2021) 25 permanent committees were formed, two of them for the first time (the Committee for Construction, Housing, Urban Development and Municipalities and the Committee for Election Review).</p> <p>Among the permanent committees, some have a special position when it comes to controlling the Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the main task of the <b>Foreign Affairs Committee</b> is to control the Government's foreign policy;</li> <li>• The <b>Defence Committee</b>, like the Defence Commissioner, was enshrined into constitutional law to ensure control of the armed forces - and thus also of the Federal Ministry of Defence. It even has the right to declare itself a Committee of Inquiry;</li> <li>• The <b>Budget Committee</b> is considered to be the most powerful committee, because its decisive role in preparing the allocation of the national budget;</li> <li>• The <b>Committee on European Union Affairs</b> can issue opinions on EU regulatory projects on behalf of the Bundestag. The federal government must coordinate its positions with the Bundestag or the Committee before it takes a decision on EU legislation;</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>The Court's Members are invited to present their reports at committee meetings (Parliament's CONT Committee and other specialised committees), and to reply to questions raised by MEPs. Each year the Court of Auditors and CONT hold several meetings at which CONT members discuss with the Members of the Court their political priorities, the Court's annual work programme, detailed arrangements for cooperation, etc. Once a year, the ECA President attends a meeting of the European Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs to present the ECA's annual work programme and invite all committees to submit their suggestions for the next programming exercise. Parliament also makes suggestions on these issues in its annual resolutions on the Court of Auditors' discharge. The Court of Auditors presents the annual report on the previous year's budget to the Council and to the Parliament. Based on this report, Parliament decides whether or not to approve the Commission's handling of the EU budget, by granting the budget discharge.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> The Parliament elects the European Ombudsman. The Ombudsman reports back to the EP and presents an annual report to the MEPs. The Ombudsman may be dismissed by the Court of Justice at Parliament's request in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b><u>Budget</u></b> Parliament remains one of the two arms of the budgetary authority (Article 314 of the TFEU). It is involved in the budgetary process from the preparation stage, notably in laying down the general guidelines and the type of spending. It adopts the budget and monitors its implementation (Article 318 of the TFEU). It gives a discharge on the implementation of the budget (Article 319 of the TFEU). Finally, Parliament has to provide its consent to the multiannual financial framework (MFF) (Article</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Petitions Committee</b> has no right to issue instructions, but its recommendations, following requests or complaints by the people written to Parliament, nevertheless carry great weight. Often, its inquiries alone have a considerable effect.</li> </ul> <p><u>Control bodies for special areas</u> Next to the permanent committees, the Bundestag also has specialised control committees. They monitor specific areas of Government work, such as the intelligence activities which are overseen by the Parliamentary Control Committee. The control bodies can demand information from the Government on their general activities and on transactions of particular importance. The Government must allow the bodies to inspect files and records, allow for the hearing of employees and allow inspection visits to services and offices.</p> <p><u>Committees of Inquiry</u> In contrast to the committees described above, Committees of inquiry are not permanent and are set up only in response to current events and with the consent of at least 25 percent of the Members of the Bundestag. Their task is to investigate and clarify political and bureaucratic abuses in the federal government, the Bundestag and the administration.</p> <p>This role in controlling the government is naturally performed first and foremost by opposition groups which cannot muster a parliamentary majority in the Bundestag, although Members from the groups forming the governing coalition also engage in scrutiny through their participation in parliamentary processes. The Federal Government is required to keep the Bundestag regularly informed of its plans and intentions.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Bundestag</b>
	<p>312 of the TFEU). The MFF for 2014–2020 is the first to be covered under the rules laid down in the TFEU.</p> <p><b><u>Implementation of EU law</u></b>  According to Article 226 of the TFEU, Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of EU law. The same article provides that the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the right of inquiry are to be determined by Parliament itself, acting by means of regulations on its own initiative after obtaining the consent of the Council and the Commission. Until such a regulation is adopted, the right of inquiry is exercised in accordance with a 1995 inter-institutional agreement annexed to Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Parliament has repeatedly expressed the need to improve communication and cooperation between the three institutions in order to be able to fulfil its mandate based on Article 226 of the TFEU. In 2014, it adopted a position on a proposal for a regulation on the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry. However, the negotiations between the three institutions on the proposal have constantly been in a deadlock. Consequently, in April 2019, Parliament adopted a resolution, in which it considers that the Council and the Commission have failed to comply with the principle of inter-institutional cooperation and invites them to resume on the matter with the newly elected Parliament.</p>	<p>Lastly, there are also Inquiry Commissions which differ from Committees of Inquiries in that they may also be staffed with experts in addition to Members.</p>
<b>Appointment procedures</b>	<p>The role and the prerogatives of the European Parliament have evolved and increased over time, not only as regards legislative powers and oversight but also in relation to the procedures to nominate, vet and appoint people to other senior positions in EU institutions, agencies and other bodies. Parliament's role varies from case to case depending on the legal basis. Parliament's scrutiny of such candidates, in various different forms, helps in</p>	<p>The Bundestag plays a role in the appointment and vetting of several bodies and institutions.</p> <p><b><u>Federal Assembly</u></b>  The Federal Assembly consists of all Members of the Bundestag and the same number of Members elected by the people's representatives of the states ('Bundesrat'). The Federal Assembly</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Bundestag</b>
	<p>ensuring the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of the process as well as its transparency. What is today codified in the EU Treaties, secondary legislation and Parliament's Rules of Procedure, is mostly the result of a set of Parliamentary processes that became established practices over the years. This demonstrates that Parliament has managed to use its political leverage to expand and formalise its power to nominate and appoint the holders of senior positions. Despite the heterogeneity of procedures, some common patterns may be highlighted, in particular, that candidates and nominees generally appear in front of the relevant committee(s) of the European Parliament, first making a statement and then answering questions from Members.</p> <p><b><u>European Commission</u></b> The Lisbon Treaty Article 17(7) TEU provides that Member State governments propose the other Commissioners, who are then nominated by the Council in common accord with the President-elect of the Commission. Each candidate then appears for a three-hour hearing in front of the Parliament's committee(s) responsible, as stipulated in Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Before a hearing can take place, candidates must answer a written questionnaire and present their declaration of interests. The declarations of financial interests are examined by Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs, which needs to confirm the absence of any conflict of interest. After that, the Commission as a whole still needs to obtain consent from Parliament by a majority of the votes cast, by roll call before being appointed by the European Council, by qualified majority.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Auditors</u></b> According to Article 286(2) TFEU the Council adopts the list of members of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) following proposals from Member States and after consulting the European</p>	<p>comes together once every five years to elect the Federal President. The President of the Bundestag determines the time and place of the Federal Assembly. The new Federal President is elected by an absolute majority, or if none is achieved in the first or second round, by a relative majority in the third ballot. The President of the Bundestag announces the result of the vote count and asks the person elected whether she or he accept the election.</p> <p><b><u>Judicial Selection Committee</u></b> The Judicial Selection Committee, together with the relevant Federal Ministries, appoints the judges of the highest Federal Courts, such as the Federal Finance Court or the Federal Labour Court. Half of the Committee is composed of the State Ministers responsible for the relevant subject area while the other half of the Members is elected by the Bundestag. Accordingly, the Committee currently has 32 Members: 16 State Ministers (as there are 16 states in Germany) and 16 appointed by the Bundestag. The latter do not actually have to be Members of the Bundestag.</p> <p>The relevant Federal Ministry has no voting rights; it is only responsible for preparing the election and chairing the committee. In addition, it has the right to propose candidates and must approve a decision by the committee.</p> <p><b><u>President and Vice-President of the Federal Court of Auditors</u></b> The President and Vice-President of the Federal Court of Auditors are elected by the Bundestag through a majority vote. The federal government nominates the candidates and the Federal Council votes on them as well. They are officially appointed by the President.</p> <p><b><u>Joint Committee</u></b> The Bundestag appoints two thirds of the Joint Committee, an emergency parliament replacing the Bundestag and the Federal</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Bundestag</b>
	<p>Parliament. Despite Parliament having a consultative role only, it can influence the outcome. The Member States may prefer to withdraw a candidate than face a formal negative vote by Parliament. The relevance of Parliament's role also comes from the fact that hearings of the nominees are in public in committee, and their answers to the questionnaire are published, creating significant political weight and pressure on the candidates' performance.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Justice</u></b> Parliament has no role in the appointing procedure for Judges or Advocates-General of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). However, according to Article 255 TFEU it proposes one member of the panel entrusted with the duty of vetting the nominees.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> According to Article 228 TFEU the European Ombudsman is directly elected by Parliament for the duration of its legislative term, i.e. a five-year period. This appointment is completely under the aegis of Parliament and Member States have no role at all.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank</u></b> Parliament also has a role in the appointments procedure for members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) as well as of the Supervisory Board of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM). For the former, Parliament provides an opinion, while for the latter Parliament has a more stringent role. Article 283(2) TFEU states that the ECB Executive Board will be appointed by the European Council on a recommendation from the Council after consulting the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the ECB.</p> <p><b><u>Agencies' board members and Executive Directors</u></b> The European Parliament exercises its oversight power over EU agencies through various procedures including, but not limited</p>	<p>Council when the Bundestag can no longer convene because of a state of defence (meaning the country is under attack). The Joint Committee is composed of 16 representatives of the States and 32 Members of the Bundestag. In the case of defence, the Committee may pass its resolutions by a simple majority, so that the representatives of the Bundestag could always overrule the Federal Council in a closed vote. It has no decision-making authority in peacetime.</p> <p><b><u>The Mediation Committee</u></b> The Bundestag appoints half of the Members of the Mediation Committee, a body located between the Bundestag and the Federal Council. Its task is to seek compromise solutions in the event of legislative conflicts between the Bundestag and the Federal Council, provided it is called upon by one of them. The Mediation Committee consists of 16 Members of the Federal Council and the same number of Members of the Bundestag. The Members of the Bundestag are a reflection of the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups.</p> <p><b><u>Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information</u></b> The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information is an independent data protection authority responsible for monitoring data protection at federal public bodies and at companies providing telecommunications and postal services. The Federal Commissioner is nominated by the federal government and elected by the Bundestag.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>to, budgetary discharge, involvement in the appointment of their Executive Directors and Management Board members.</p> <p><b><u>European Data Protection Supervisor</u></b>  According to Article 53 of EU Regulation 2018/1725, Parliament and Council shall appoint the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) for a five-year term by common accord, on the basis of a public list of at least three candidates drawn up by the European Commission following a public call for submission of candidatures.</p> <p><b><u>European Public Prosecutor's Office</u></b>  The first European Chief Prosecutor was appointed in 2019. According to Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, Parliament and Council shall appoint by common accord the European Chief Prosecutor, based on a number of criteria following an open call for candidates published in the Official Journal. A selection panel, a member of which shall be proposed by Parliament, draws up a shortlist of qualified candidates to be submitted to Parliament and to the Council.</p> <p><b><u>European Anti-Fraud Office</u></b>  Article 17 of Regulation No 883/2013 on the investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) recognises Parliament's role in the appointment procedure of the European Anti-Fraud Office Director-General as well as its Supervisory Committee. Following amendments adopted in December 2020, the Regulation states that the Director-General is appointed by the  European Commission for a seven-year term. In order to do so, following a public call for applications, the Commission draws up a list of suitably qualified candidates, based on the Supervisory Committee's favourable opinion, then Parliament and Council agree on a shortlist of three candidates based on which the Commission appoints the Director-General. The five independent</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	members of the Supervisory Committee are also appointed by common accord of Parliament, Council and Commission - Article 15(2) of Regulation 833/2013. Finally, the recent amendments introduced the figure of Controller of procedural guarantees, attached to the Supervisory Committee, appointed by the Commission after consultation of Parliament and the Council.	
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of up to 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes to be decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited to participate by the Conference of Presidents shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners to be invited shall be limited to two per part-session. However, it shall be possible to invite a third Commissioner, depending on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall, as far as possible, ensure that Members that hold different political views and that come from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn.</p> <p>The Member shall be given one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. That Member may put a supplementary question, lasting no</p>	<p>There are two ways the Members of the Parliament can ask the Government questions: they can ask the Government questions right after its cabinet meeting about items covered in the meeting or of general public interest. The other possibility is the so-called 'Question Hour' that takes place right after the questioning where Members have to submit their questions in advance.</p> <p>See also Part 1 - Plenary Reform and Agenda-setting: 'Question Time'.</p> <p><u>Questioning</u> The questioning usually takes place Wednesdays starting at 13:00 during plenary weeks. It lasts 60 minutes and the questions are spontaneous, and each answer may be followed up once by the questioning member. Its focus are issues of the cabinet meeting as well as issues of public interest.</p> <p><u>Question Hour</u> The Question Hour takes place after the questioning on Wednesdays starting at 13:00 during plenary weeks and lasts 120 minutes. Questions have to be submitted by Friday at 10:00 to allow for three working days to draft an answer and Members can submit up to two questions per week. The executive answers verbally unless the Members are not present for the Question Hour and requested a written response before the question is called by the President. There is also room for questions of 'urgent public interest' provided they have been submitted by 12:00 of the previous day.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>longer than 30 seconds and having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner shall then be given two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided under paragraph. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p>	<p>The Member who posed the question is allowed to ask up to two follow-up questions while the other Members are allowed only one question per Government answer. Questions that do not get answered in the Question Hour due to lack of time are answered in writing.</p> <p><u>Admissibility criteria</u> The questions have to be short and allow for a concise answer. They are not allowed to include any off-topic remarks or judgements. Every question may be divided into two sub-questions. The questions have to be related to areas for which the Government is directly or indirectly responsible.</p>
<b>Transparency of legislative procedures</b>	<p>Primary law lays down some principles, which need to be respected by the EU institutions. The institutions are to conduct their work as openly as possible (Article 15(1) TFEU), with the Parliament (Article 15(2) TFEU) and Council (Article 16(8) TEU) meeting in public, the latter specifically 'when it deliberates and votes on a draft legislative act'. In addition, institutions must ensure the publication of documents relating to legislative procedures, and allow citizens and EU residents to access the types of documents as enshrined in Article 15(3) TFEU and Article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. This fundamental right is also reflected in secondary law adopted in 2001 – Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. It stipulates that legislative documents are in principle public, with some limited exceptions.</p> <p>The Commission’s proposals are published on the day the College adopts them. In the EP, working documents, draft reports and opinions as well as amendments tabled by individual Members or political groups are published in all official languages even before a vote takes place in a committee or in the plenary. Final texts adopted at committee and plenary level are made available to the public closely after the vote. In addition, 4 column-documents of</p>	<p>There is a public register of documents that publishes all official documents on legislative procedures. Official documents are legislative proposals, forms of order by the parliamentary groups or the Government, recommended resolutions and reports of the committees, amendments and resolution proposals, major and minor interpellations to the Government, reports and briefings as well as questions for the plenary Question Hour.</p> <p>Those official documents are also printed and distributed to the Members of Parliament, the Federal Council and Federal Ministries. As the Bundestag employs stenographers the reports, minutes and other official documents are usually published within the week. The same applies to minutes and resolutions taken by the Federal Council.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>political trilogues can be made available on request under Reg. 1049/2001. The result of the negotiations (the so called compromise agreement or text) is published before the final vote in plenary.</p> <p>While the EP receive the Council mandate for negotiating, the mandate does not provide information on the individual position of the Member States. The Ombudsman conducted an inquiry into the transparency of the legislative process of the Council (OI/2/2017/TE) in March 2017. The report stated that the Council failed to systematically record identities of Member States expressing positions in legislative files in preparatory level bodies. Moreover, the Council automatically assigned 'LIMITE' status to files of ongoing deliberations – meaning for internal use only – in violation of the principle of widest possible public access to documents established by the CJEU's case law. Thus, in the context of trilogues, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council review the 'LIMITE' status of documents setting out its position – the third column – to make it publicly available before trilogues take place. The Court of Justice considered, in the abovementioned case, that the Council was wrong to refuse public access to parts of a note from its Secretariat that contained amendments tabled by a number of Member State governments. The Court clarified that the EU's rules on access to documents "aim to ensure public access to the entire content of Council documents, including, in this case, the identity of those who put forward proposals". The Ombudsman welcomed the Council's confirmation that, as a consequence of the Court's ruling, legislative documents containing Member States' positions are now disclosed upon request, "save in exceptional and duly justified cases". The Ombudsman suggested that the Council update its rules of procedure to reflect this practice. Of course this commitment means little, if Member States' positions are not recorded appropriately in the first place. The Ombudsman therefore made the following recommendation to the Council:</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	The Council should systematically record the identity of Member State governments when they express positions in preparatory bodies.	
<b>Resolving conflicts of competences between committees</b>	<p>(RoP 211) If a standing committee declares itself not to be competent to consider an item, or if a conflict arises over the competence of two or more standing committees, the question of competence shall be submitted to the Conference of Committee Chairs within four weeks of the announcement in Parliament of the referral to committee.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents shall take a decision within six weeks after the submission of the question on the basis of a recommendation from the Conference of Committee Chairs, or, if no such recommendation is forthcoming, from the latter's Chair. If the Conference of Presidents fails to take a decision within that period, the recommendation shall be deemed to have been approved.</p> <p>The committee Chairs may enter into agreements with other committee Chairs concerning the allocation of an item to a particular committee, subject, where necessary, to the authorisation of an associated committee procedure under Rule 57.</p> <p>Where a question of competence is referred to the Conference of Presidents pursuant to Rule 211, and the Conference of Presidents, on the basis of Annex VI, considers that the matter falls almost equally within the competence of two or more committees, or that different parts of the matter fall within the competence of two or more committees, Rule 56 shall apply with the following additional provisions: -the timetable shall be jointly agreed by the committees concerned;</p>	<p>Once a legislative proposal is on the plenary agenda it normally goes through three deliberations, so-called readings, in the Parliament. The primary objective of the first reading is to designate one or more committees, upon recommendation of the Councils of Elders. If several committees are chosen, one committee is given the lead and responsibility for the further legislative procedure. The other committees have an advisory function. In practice, if it is an issue of importance to them, parliamentary groups will often want the leading Committee to be one they are chairing because the leading committee is the one to suggest to the Parliament if they should pass, pass with amendments, or reject a legislative proposal.</p> <p><u>Decision on the competent committee without debate</u> If there is general agreement on which committee should be made the leading one, assignment can be made official in the plenary without further debate.</p> <p><u>Assignment of the leading Committee</u> If the parliamentary groups differ in their opinion on which committee should be given the lead for a certain proposal it is put to vote in the plenary. The vote may be preceded by a debate or not. Normally the request by the parliamentary group that is smaller and therefore unlikely to win is put for the vote first. If it is rejected the President will put the suggestion by the bigger parliamentary group to vote and, if it receives the majority, officially assign it.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>-the rapporteurs concerned shall keep each other informed and shall endeavour to agree on the texts they propose to their committees and on their position regarding amendments;</p> <p>-the Chairs and rapporteurs concerned are bound by the principle of good and sincere cooperation; they shall jointly identify areas of the text falling within their exclusive or shared competence and agree on the precise arrangements for their cooperation;</p> <p>-the committee responsible shall accept without a vote amendments from an associated committee where they concern matters which fall within the exclusive competence of that associated committee; if the committee responsible fails to respect the exclusive competence of the associated committee, that associated committee may table amendments directly in plenary; if amendments on matters which fall within the shared competence of the committee responsible and an associated committee are not adopted by the committee responsible, the associated committee may table those amendments directly in plenary;</p> <p>-in the event of a conciliation procedure in respect of the proposal, Parliament's delegation shall include the rapporteur of any associated committee.</p>	
<p><b>Changes to committee competences and structures in response to the current crisis situation</b></p>	<p>The EP did not change the structure and the competences of its committees, due to the pandemic. In principle, it is allowed for the EP to change its committee structure at any given time; however, the established practice is that it modifies the structure and/or the competences of its committees shortly before the end of each legislative period, in order to keep up with the changing circumstances and increase its effectiveness in the subsequent legislative term.</p>	<p><u>Permanent Committees</u> Generally, there is a permanent committee responsible for each Federal Ministry. They mirror them in name and will generally be the committee responsible for legislative proposals coming from them. The permanent committees are set and staffed at the beginning of the parliamentary term. Each Member of Parliament is supposed to only be part of one Committee.</p> <p><u>Temporary committees</u></p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>The last adaptation to the composition of the committees took place on 8 July 2021. Following changes in its composition, Parliament increased the number of seats in its special and inquiry committees, and adopted a new distribution among political groups. Following several changes in the political groups' composition and to ensure that all MEPs can participate in the work of committees and delegations, ten committee seats are allocated to non-attached Members: four additional seats are created, and six existing ones will be reallocated. The plenary adapted the numerical strength of the four committees based on the decision of the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>A new seat will be created in each of the Special Committees on Beating Cancer (BECA), on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (INGE), and on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA). They will now be composed of 34 members each. The fourth new seat will be created in the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport within and outside the EU (ANIT), which will now be composed of 31 members.</p> <p>The new nominal composition of Parliament's committees will be decided by the political groups and non-attached members, and will be communicated to the plenary in a subsequent session.</p> <p>Parliament's Rules of Procedure provide that the composition of the committees "shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament". When it comes to the criteria for setting up a parliamentary committee or changing its competences, there are no formal guidelines available. Political Groups are free to define such criteria as they consider fit for purpose. Possible criteria in this context would be the 'workload of parliamentary committees', 'match of policy areas between the European Commission's work programme and the competences of</p>	<p>The Parliament can temporarily appoint special committees to work on certain issues. In that case, Parliament also decides on the number of Members. Unlike the control committees, they have to be specially created and only exist until their work on the issue is completed.</p> <p>Each committee may form subcommittees to prepare and support its work. These are set up to discuss a specific proposal or a particular problem. However, they may also be established for specific areas for the entire legislative period.</p> <p><u>The Committee on the Affairs of the European Union</u> The "Committee on the Affairs of the European Union" is increasingly important as mouthpiece of the Bundestag about legal acts from the European Commission or the Council of Ministers. The Bundestag can, entrust the committee with the sole handling of an EU proposal, but the plenary retains the right to take a decision on any issue at any time.</p> <p><u>Adaptations to the structure of parliamentary committees as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic</u> A law was passed on the special application of the Rules of Procedure during the limits imposed by the Covid-19 crisis. According to that law, a committee can make resolutions when a quarter of its members are present not just physically but also via an electronic form of communication. Furthermore, the committees may authorize their committee chair to schedule votes outside of their hearings even during plenary weeks. Votes may be held, and resolutions may be taken using an electronic form of communication. Hearings open to the public and public hearings of experts and associations may be held in such a way that the public can follow them exclusively via electronic forms of communication.</p> <p><u>Special parliamentary advisory group for the Covid-19 pandemic</u></p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>parliamentary committees', 'reduction of conflicts of competences', and of course, the 'interest of Members'.</p>	<p>The Covid-19 crisis also saw the appointment of a special parliamentary advisory group concerned with the Covid-19 pandemic. Its area of work essentially comprises three major thematic blocks. Firstly, keeping the pandemic under control, which includes, for example, research into the virus and its mutations, opportunities through digitalisation, and international aspects. The second block of topics covers vaccinations, both the development and approval of vaccines as well as access to vaccination and the associated ethical, social and legal aspects. Finally, the social impact of the pandemic and the associated contact restrictions will also be considered.</p> <p>Public hearings of experts and expert discussions serve as a source of knowledge for the advisory group. In addition, the German Government regularly informs the committee about the current situation and, if necessary, about current pandemic control issues.</p>

### 3. Enhancing Parliamentary Diplomacy

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<p><b>Relations with the executive</b></p>	<p>Article 36 of the TEU requires the High Representative to consult Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the CFSP and to inform Parliament of the policy's evolution. Parliament holds twice-yearly debates on CFSP progress reports and puts questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative.</p> <p>Parliament's right to be informed and consulted about the CFSP/CSDP was further strengthened by the High Representative's declaration of political accountability in 2010. The declaration provided, inter alia, for:</p>	<p>Traditionally, <b>the Federal Republic of Germany's foreign policy has been the responsibility of the federal government</b>. This foreign policy is supervised at the parliamentary level by the Members of the German Bundestag. Apart from the scrutiny they exercise over the actions of the federal government, the classic fields of "parliamentary foreign policy" include the Bundestag's rights to participate in the conclusion of treaties under international law, legislative acts of the European Union and Bundeswehr deployments outside Germany. In addition, Parliament can influence foreign policy priorities through its budgetary power. The federal constitutional court has ruled that the German Bundestag</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the status of the 'Joint Consultation Meetings' (JCMs), which allow a designated group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to meet counterparts from the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EEAS and the Commission to discuss planned and ongoing civilian CSDP missions;</li> <li>• Affirming the right of Parliament's 'special committee' to have access to confidential information relating to the CFSP and the CSDP. This right is based on an inter-institutional agreement of 2002;</li> <li>• Holding exchanges of views with heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials during committee meetings and hearings of committees of Parliament;</li> <li>• Mandating the High Representative to appear before Parliament at least twice a year to report on the current state of affairs regarding the CFSP/CSDP and to answer questions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to this political dialogue, Parliament exercises its authority through the budgetary procedure. As one arm of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament must approve the annual CFSP budget. Parliament also helps to shape the relevant external financial instruments through a process of trilateral negotiations with the Council and the Commission.</p> <p>Parliament regularly scrutinises the operations of the EEAS and provides it with suggestions on structural issues, ranging from its geographical and gender balance to its interaction with other EU institutions and the diplomatic services of the Member States. Parliament also holds regular discussions with the High Representative and the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) appointed for certain regions or issues. Parliamentary committees, which helped to set up the EEAS, also exchange views with the EEAS's newly appointed heads of delegation.</p>	<p>has a "right of co-decision" or a "right to participation" in the field of foreign affairs and German constitutional law foresees the establishment of a Foreign Affairs and a Defence Committee. To a certain extent, the Bundestag can thus pursue an independent foreign policy in the sense of "parliamentary diplomacy", even though it is not legally binding under international law. Members of Parliament are active in international parliamentary assemblies (e.g. the Council of Europe and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly), discuss with foreign parliamentarians there and ensure that foreign policy issues are brought to the national parliaments.</p> <p><u>Foreign Affairs Committee</u></p> <p>The Foreign Affairs Committee's main task is not to discuss legislative proposals, but to exercise parliamentary control over the foreign policy of the federal government. It is one of the four permanent committees enshrined in German constitutional law and is traditionally one of the largest committees. Many foreign policy debates will not take place in the plenary, but rather behind closed doors within the Foreign Affairs Committee so they are shielded from the national and international public eye. In line with the Rules of Procedure, Foreign Affairs Committee's hearings are not public.</p> <p>The Foreign Affairs Committee is also the leading committee when it comes to the deployment of the German armed forces. The federal constitutional court ruled in 1994 that each deployment requires the - normally prior - constitutive consent of the German Bundestag. A legal basis for this right was created in 2004 (after it had been parliamentary practice for ten years) with the Parliamentary Participation Act. The court thereby emphasised the special character of the Bundeswehr as a parliamentary army and</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Parliament also has a role to play in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. Parliament's consent is required before the Council can conclude such agreements.</p>	<p>granted the German Bundestag a decisive role in foreign deployments of German forces.</p> <p>The Foreign Affairs Committee is currently supplemented by four sub-committees, which concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation;</li> <li>• Foreign cultural and educational policy;</li> <li>• The United Nations, international organisations and globalisation;</li> <li>• Civil crisis prevention, dealing with conflict and interlinked action.</li> </ul> <p><u>The Defence Committee</u></p> <p>Like the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Defence Committee's main task is to guarantee effective parliamentary control of the armed forces rather than working on legislative proposals. Its existence is enshrined in the German constitutional law as well and furthermore, German constitutional law gives it the right to constitute itself as an inquiry committee at any time.</p> <p><u>Participatory powers in EU affairs</u></p> <p>The Bundestag is conferred extensive participation, cooperation, and co-decision-making rights in EU affairs. This is enshrined in the German Basic Law (Article 23 of the constitution) and further detailed in secondary legislation. According to it, the government must inform the Parliament comprehensively, as early as possible, and continuously about its EU policies and the Parliament can adopt resolutions on draft EU laws or EU affairs in general which the government must consider, but the Bundestag cannot veto EU regulations and directives once adopted.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
		<p><u>Diplomatic Corps</u> The German diplomatic corps is made up of the Federal Foreign Office and Germany's representations abroad. The German Bundestag's relates to it in two ways: by exercising parliamentary control over the government's foreign policy as outlined above and by approving its budget.</p> <p><u>The new Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs</u> In 2020 the German Bundestag passed a law to create a Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the Federal Foreign Office. It began its work on 4 January 2021 and it is meant to be a second pillar to the foreign services by gradually taking over a number of service functions from the Federal Foreign Office and its missions abroad that can be handled more sensibly and more efficiently under one roof. Rather than having the staff rotate every four years, like the traditional diplomatic corps, it should be staffed by experts on issues such as the management of foreign grants or visa processing.</p>
<p><b>Interparliamentary delegations</b></p>	<p>The European Parliament's interparliamentary delegations are official groups of Members who build ties to countries, regions or organisations outside the European Union (EU). The European Parliament currently has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one term to the next. The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner.</p> <p>There are two main types of delegations: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations. Standing delegations belong in three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations.</p>	<p><u>Parliamentary Friendship Groups</u> The German Bundestag's political relations with the national parliaments of foreign states are cultivated by – at present – 47 <b>bilateral and multilateral parliamentary friendship groups</b>. Some of the parliamentary friendship groups deal with whole regions.</p> <p>Their aim is to maintain a continuous dialogue with the national parliaments of one or more partner states. They exchange information and opinions with parliamentarians, but there are also in contact with government representatives and representatives of civil society. This gives them opportunities to exchange different perspectives and to learn from each other. In addition to promoting parliamentary democratic structures, these parliamentary friendship groups also aim to strengthen human rights across the globe.</p> <p><u>Delegations</u></p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p><b>Parliamentary assemblies</b> are regular, formal meetings of elected representatives from several parliaments. Currently, 5 of Parliament's 44 delegations participate in parliamentary assemblies.</p> <p><b>Interparliamentary committees</b> are mostly bilateral. European Parliament delegations meet their counterparts from a country/countries in formal meetings, held on a regular basis. Interparliamentary committees differ according to the type of bilateral agreement establishing them, between the EU and the respective country. These include Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees.</p> <p>Other <b>interparliamentary delegations</b> form the largest group of delegations (25 out of the total number of 44 delegations), which work with relations with individual countries or a group of countries. The 'interparliamentary meetings' – in which the delegations meet with their counterparts – are not held on a regular basis, and do not have their own rules, although they follow the general provisions for delegations.</p> <p>According to Rule 223(5) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Conference of Presidents adopts the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs.</p>	<p>In addition, the German Bundestag sends <b>delegations to the following interparliamentary organisations</b> and regional forums:</p> <p>the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU, Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Common Foreign and Security Policy and on Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP), the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.</p> <p>These assemblies have the goal of being the parliamentary link between national governments' interactions with each other and the national parliaments or citizens these nations represent. They create transparency and convey information and thereby support the control function of national parliaments. By taking part in these delegations, politicians can gain knowledge on foreign policy issues and thereby support the Bundestag's work on these matters.</p> <p><u>Delegation Trips Abroad</u></p> <p>The committees, in particular the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, regularly organise delegation trips abroad (usually once or twice a year). Individual and delegation trips serve to gain first-hand information and maintain in contact with foreign politicians and parliamentarians.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<p><b>Diplomacy on human rights</b></p>	<p>The EP attaches great importance to the protection of human rights both inside and outside the Union and has used its power of promoting respect for fundamental rights.</p> <p>In Europe and around the world, Parliament acts as a guardian of liberties and democracy, and strives to uphold human rights and freedoms. It is particularly sensitive to the issue of tolerance, and fights determinedly against all forms of discrimination, whether based on sex, race, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, political opinion, handicap, age or sexual orientation. It takes a stand against racism and xenophobia and constantly highlights the need for compliance with European gender equality standards.</p> <p>MEPs also use their full power to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected, and the rights of children protected. While the EP supports efforts to coordinate police and judicial action, which is the only effective way to counter these cross-border threats, it refuses to allow citizens' rights to bear the brunt of a policy based entirely on security considerations. Parliament also ensures that human rights are protected in the EU's external economic and trade agreements.</p> <p>The EP holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has adopted a host of resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights.</p> <p>The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee on Human Rights defend human rights outside the European Union and fight against the death penalty with the support of other key players in the Parliament.</p> <p><b>Sakharov Prize:</b> It is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals,</p>	<p><u>Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid</u>  Questions related to human rights and democracy are primarily handled by the Bundestag's Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid. The Committee's responsibilities in this field are consequently very broad. The Committee's purpose is to help stop violations of, and avert threats to, human rights – both in Germany and at the international level –, to ensure that human rights are safeguarded in the struggle against terrorism, to guarantee the security of those who defend human rights and to work on the improvement and further development of national, European, and international instruments for the protection of human rights. The Committee also discusses how to protect minority rights and the persistent challenges that are associated with humanitarian aid. Members also examine the appropriateness of options and instruments available for the provision of aid. The Committee incorporates its proposals for improvements into recommendations submitted to the federal government and the German Bundestag.</p> <p><u>Parliamentary Friendship Groups</u>  In addition to promoting parliamentary democratic structures, one of the goals of the parliamentary friendship groups is strengthening human rights.</p> <p><u>Centre for International Peacekeeping Operations</u>  The Centre for International Peacekeeping Operations was founded by the German Bundestag and the German federal government to strengthen international civilian capacities for crisis prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Six out of eight members of the supervisory board of the Centre are Members of Parliament.</p> <p>The Centre for International Peacekeeping Operations trains and assigns civilian experts to peace operations, humanitarian missions</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network the EU assists laureates, who are supported and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes.</p> <p>The prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil-society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, long-serving prisoners of conscience, a film-maker, the UN as a body and even a child campaigning for the right to education. It promotes in particular freedom of expression, the rights of minorities, respect for international law, the development of democracy and the implementation of the rule of law. Several laureates, including Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.</p> <p>The European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize, with its EUR 50 000 endowment, at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Each of the Parliament's political groups may nominate candidates, as may individual MEPs (the support of at least 40 MEPs is required for each candidate). The nominees are presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Development Committee and the Human Rights Subcommittee, and the members of the full committees vote on a shortlist of three candidates. The final winner of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents.</p>	<p>and election observations. It is represented by the Federal Foreign Office.</p> <p><u>“Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians”</u></p> <p>The Members of the German Bundestag’s Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid launched the “Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians” campaign in 2003. Its basic idea is that the Members of the German Bundestag, who can carry out their work in safety, should help fellow parliamentarians who are at risk in other countries as well as persecuted human rights defenders. The initiative established by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) protects parliamentarians worldwide and is a way for the Bundestag to fulfill the voluntary commitment it has made in the IPU framework to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights.</p>
<b>Democracy support</b>	As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament is particularly committed to supporting sustainable democracies throughout the world. This commitment is regularly highlighted in Parliament's resolutions. Democracy	<p><u>Training for International Diplomats</u></p> <p>The Federal Foreign Office offers young foreign diplomats the opportunity to gain professional experience in Germany, to</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>support activities focus on a small number of priority countries and are closely associated with the Parliament's role in election monitoring in these priority countries and other non-EU countries. Parliament almost always organises democracy support activities around the electoral cycle, so as to establish a better link between election observation and complementary activities such as mediation, election follow-up, parliamentary support activities and human rights action.</p> <p>In 2012, the European Parliament decided to create the Directorate for Democracy Support. In setting up this directorate as part of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, four units were created, these are: the Democracy and Election Actions Unit, the European Parliament Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit, the Human Rights Action Unit and the Pre-Accession Unit.</p> <p>In 2014, Parliament set up a Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that provides political guidance for all activities supporting democracy (Decision of Conference of Presidents of 13 September 2012). It consists of 15 MEPs and is co-chaired by the chairs of Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Development. Parliament's vice-presidents responsible for human rights and democracy and the Sakharov Network and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights are ex officio permanent members.</p> <p>The comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA) places more emphasis on pre-election dialogue and the follow-up to election observation. This includes following up on recommendations of the Election Observation Mission. In order to boost the institutional capacity of parliaments in third countries, Parliament organises training programmes and study visits for members and officials of third-country parliaments. Parliament has also built up a mentoring system</p>	<p>exchange views and to identify common ground. They take part and workshops in seminars and meet with Members of the German Bundestag as well as high-ranking staff of the federal ministries and the Federal Chancellery.</p> <p><u>International Parliamentary Scholarships</u></p> <p>The German Bundestag offers International Parliamentary Scholarships to qualified graduates under 30 from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, France, Israel, North America, South America, Central Asia, the Arab region, South-East Asia and New Zealand. Its aim is to convey democratic values and tolerance, to deepen understanding for cultural diversity and to promote peaceful coexistence in the world.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>involving MEPs and newly elected parliamentarians from priority countries. Providing support for mediation and dialogue were added as new types of interventions, with a view to preventing election-related conflicts and violence.</p> <p>Activities – although decided and supervised by the DEG – must be approved by the Conference of Presidents (CoP). The CoP adopted implementing provisions on democracy support and election observation activities in February 2019. According to this document, the DEG co-chairs may, for example, submit requests for authorisation for outgoing missions and for high-level conferences in the European Parliament's premises to the CoP at least four weeks prior to the activity concerned. In addition, the DEG co-chairs may submit requests, including urgent ones, to the CoP to mandate a Member or Members to act as an envoy or mediator or to authorise the establishment of a Jean Monnet Dialogue with a third country, under the guidance of a lead Member or Members</p>	
<p><b>Mediation of foreign conflicts</b></p>	<p>Members of the European Parliament engage in a wide range of mediation, conflict prevention and dialogue activities that complement the EU's overall approach.</p> <p><b>The Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy</b>  The European Parliament prides itself in having a 'culture of dialogue', a set of norms and rules that require political opponents to engage in dialogue to bring about a compromise. Efforts have been made to 'export' this culture of dialogue to non-EU parliaments, through a mediation and consensus-building process known as the 'Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy'. Named after one of the founding fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet dialogues often – although not always – take place at the historical Jean Monnet House. Located in rural France, far away from the media attention characterising either Brussels or</p>	<p>The German Government has committed itself to becoming more involved in the area of mediation and the German Bundestag may employ its usual control powers to oversee this.</p> <p><u>Centre for International Peacekeeping Operations</u>  The Centre contributes to peace mediation and mediation support by assisting in the recruitment and secondment of experts for multilateral organisations and diplomatic initiatives and offering trainings.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>national capitals, Monnet's house has proven to be an ideal location for constructive dialogue among opposing political factions. Four series of dialogues with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) have taken place so far.</p> <p><b>Young political leaders programme</b>  The European Parliament is committed to building strong and lasting relations with future leaders outside of the European Union. A programme targeting young political leaders was set up in 2015. The young political leaders programme (YPL) expands on existing activities organised by Parliament, such as the annual fora for young leaders from the European Neighbourhood (Maghreb, Middle East, Eastern Partnership), and the young political leaders initiative for the Sudan. The programme cooperates with young political activists, including political party representatives, civil society actors and young business leaders in the European Neighbourhood countries, priority countries agreed under the comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA), and ad hoc countries requiring assistance in the area of parliamentary conflict prevention and democracy support. Recent YPL activities have targeted young leaders from Israel and Palestine, the Maghreb, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the western Balkans, Armenia and Azerbaijan.</p>	
<b>High-level visits by foreign dignitaries</b>	<p>The term 'official visit' refers to visits by Heads of State, high-level Religious Leaders, or any personality invited to address a formal sitting of Parliament.</p> <p>Visits by Heads of State and Government, Presidents of Parliaments, and others holding equivalent ranks which do not include an address to a formal sitting shall be considered as working visits.</p>	<p>The right to speak in the German Bundestag is restricted to Members of the Bundestag, Members of the Federal Council as well as to the federal government and its representatives.</p> <p>Beyond that, the Bundestag has no legal basis for granting non-parliamentarians the right to speak. There have been rare exceptional cases in which non-parliamentarians or privileged persons have spoken in the plenary chamber of the Bundestag. These were mainly foreign guests and part of special commemorative sessions (for example, on January 27,</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Invitations to make an official visit to Parliament are issued by the President after consultation with the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>On the basis of established practice, the Heads of State of the EU Member States have an open invitation to pay an official visit to Parliament.</p> <p>An official visit generally comprises the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Welcoming ceremony including official photo in front of the flags, playing of the visitor's national anthem followed by the EU anthem, and signature of the Parliament's Distinguished Visitors' Book,</li> <li>➤ Bilateral meeting between the President of Parliament and the visiting Head of State,</li> <li>➤ Official exchange of gifts,</li> <li>➤ Address to a formal sitting of Parliament, which is usually scheduled to last 30 minutes,</li> <li>➤ Official lunch (or dinner) hosted by the President of Parliament,</li> <li>➤ Press conference (if requested).</li> </ul> <p>An official visit by a Head of State of an EU Member State may incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A reception for the MEPs and/or parliamentary staff of the Member State concerned organised by the respective Permanent Representation,</li> <li>➤ Meetings (if requested) with political group leaders or Members of Parliament.</li> </ul> <p>The red carpet is rolled out at the protocol entrance, for visits by Heads of State and High-Level visitors of equivalent rank. Official visits are managed by the protocol unit (DG PRES).</p>	<p>International Holocaust Remembrance Day) and ceremonial acts. To comply with protocol, the speeches are not held in a regular plenary session. The Bundestag either interrupts its session or its deliberations (tacitly, if necessary) for the speeches or it convenes a session specifically for this purpose.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<b>Multilateral and international parliamentary fora</b>	<p><b>Euronest</b> EU works hand-in-hand with its six Eastern Partners to support European integration reforms and foster stability, security, democracy and prosperity across the continent. Established in 2011, the Euronest PA is the parliamentary forum tasked with the scrutiny over this ambitious policy, while promoting the active participation of civil society actors. It brings together the 60 Members of the European Parliament who sit in the Delegation to the Euronest PA, and 50 Members from the national parliaments of our Eastern Partners, i.e. 10 delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively. For the time being, although Belarus is an active Eastern Partner, its National Assembly has not yet been invited to send its 10 delegates to the Euronest PA, because it does not fulfil the necessary, democratic requirements to do so. Nevertheless, the absence of Belarusian parliamentarians expected to be only be provisory.</p> <p>The Euronest PA includes the plenary, chaired by two Co-Presidents, the Bureau, four standing committees (on political affairs, economic integration, energy security and social affairs) and three working groups (a group on Belarus, ad hoc group on Association Agreements, and a group on Rules of Procedure). It meets once a year for a plenary session, alternating between the European Parliament's premises and the Eastern Partnership countries.</p> <p><b>ACP</b> The European Parliament's Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (DACP) is the EP part of the joint undertaking setup by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Agreement was signed in 2000 in Cotonou (Benin) by the EU Member States and 78 member countries of the African,</p>	<p>see above 'Delegations'</p> <p>As stated above, <b>parliamentary friendship groups</b> cultivate the Bundestag's political relations with the national parliaments of foreign states. Additionally, the Bundestag sends <b>delegations</b> to multiple interparliamentary organisations, such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Its aim is to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.</p> <p>The Agreement sets up three joint institutions: the Council of Ministers, the Committee of Ambassadors and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentary institution, the "ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly" (ACP-EU JPA), is composed of equal numbers of EU and ACP representatives, and comprised of both the 78-member EP DACP Delegation and 78 members of parliament of the ACP countries.</p> <p>The Delegation participates together with ACP members in the activities of the Assembly (sessions, Bureau and committee meetings, regional meetings, fact-finding missions and election observation missions).</p> <p>At the EP level, the Delegation also meets regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg to prepare the joint activities and monitor the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the situation in the ACP countries and prospects for the future of the partnership.</p> <p><b><u>EuroLat</u></b>  The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits resolutions and recommendations. These are addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. This Partnership was established at the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1999. Today, EuroLat debates, monitors and reviews all questions relating to the partnership.</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>The Assembly also works generally to strengthen links between the two regions and address issues of bi-regional and international concern. EuroLat debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights, migration, fighting poverty, promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology and the environment and climate change. Half the members - 75 - come from Latin American regional parliaments and the other half - again, 75 members - come from the European Parliament. EuroLat has four Standing Committees. The work of these committees serves as the basis for most of the Assembly's decisions. The Committees and Executive Bureau meet at least twice a year, with one of these two sessions running in parallel with EuroLat's full annual Plenary Session.</p> <p><b><u>EuroMed</u></b>  The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean institution provides a forum for the elected representatives of the EU and its southern neighbours around the Mediterranean to cooperate.</p> <p>The Assembly describes three principal aims for its work: Fostering dialogue amongst elected representatives from both shores of the Mediterranean; Enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the citizens. Adding democratic legitimacy and political support to regional cooperation.</p> <p>As a north-south forum, the Assembly brings together 44 parliaments – the 43 parliaments of the countries in the Union for the Mediterranean, and the European Parliament. The Assembly consists of 280 members. The Assembly is directed by a "bureau", made up of four members, who coordinate the work of the Assembly and draft its budget. The bureau</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	remains in place for four years before new members are appointed. The Assembly has five standing committees.	

#### 4. Relations with citizens / Communicating effectively

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<b>Public perceptions of parliaments</b>	<p>The European Parliament communicates to varied audiences across 28 different countries. Understanding these audiences' point of view is crucial for Parliament's communication activities to be efficient and effective. This means that DG Communication must first establish a clear idea of who these audiences are, what is important to them and via which channels to reach them. DG Communication bases its work on a robust audience insight and a data driven approach to define and evaluate its output. This is ensured by a rigorous analysis of evidence concerning audiences and channels, including an in-depth research of relevant target groups to understand their behaviour. A core part of this analysis is the continuous and in-depth monitoring of public opinion across the European Union. This key strategic activity not only aids the European Parliament's communication strategy but also supports the political and legislative work of Parliament's elected Members.</p> <p>Public opinion is assessed via the EU institutions' joint Eurobarometer survey tool. The European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies use this instrument to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as</p>	<p>While there are regular surveys conducted on the public opinion of the German Government, the perception of the German Bundestag is only studied rarely. In 2014, the Bertelsmann Stiftung carried out a study on how visible the work of the Bundestag was to the public. It was based on a face-to-face survey of 1,530 respondents between 1-11 September 2014, conducted by the Allensbach Institute. Only 26% of the respondents said they could clearly remember a recent Bundestag debate and only 54% could correctly identify which parliamentary groups formed the opposition.</p> <p>This lack of surveys or studies conducted on the public perception of the Bundestag is remarkable. The Bundestag's legislative work enjoys much less attention than the federal government's work. Most regularly conducted public surveys focus on the public opinion of the Government, the Federal Ministers and the so-called 'Sunday Question'. The latter is a weekly survey where people are asked which party they would vote for if the following Sunday was the day of the Federal Election.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. Eurobarometer provides quality and relevant data for experts in public opinion, researchers, media and the public. Initiated in 1974, the Eurobarometer tool has since then evolved and expanded significantly with different survey tools. The combination of the wide range of topics covered consistently over a long time, the regularity of publications and geographical coverage makes the Eurobarometer a uniquely rich source of knowledge and information in the European Union.</p> <p>The European Parliament started in 2007 to commission its own Eurobarometer surveys within the joint inter-institutional framework. DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU), is responsible for designing, commissioning and analysing the surveys. Conducted regularly and at least twice per year since 2007, they focus on the one hand on citizens' perceptions and expectations towards EU action, and the main challenges the Union is facing. An annual 'Parlemeter' survey measures the European Parliament's public image and role as well as public opinion with regard to EU membership and its benefits. A dedicated set of EP Eurobarometer surveys gauges Europeans' interest in the European elections every five years. Pre- and post-electoral surveys measure citizens' interest in these elections and the key issues at stake as well as voting behaviour and motivation.</p> <p>Published surveys offer unrestricted access to the full data set, including all national, regional and socio-demographic results, allowing for a detailed analysis. POMU as responsible unit will produce an in-depth analytical report as well as a range of</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>supporting products such as presentation, national factsheets or infographics. The data is also used for briefing members on available audience insight relevant to topics on the plenary agenda, distributed ahead of each session to all MEPs. Individual trainings and data-related briefings can be requested by Members.</p> <p>POMU applies the data at its disposal also for contributing to DG Communication's data-driven communication approach by designing relevant audience segmentation and targeting strategies and by assisting DG COMM services to implement this segmentation analysis in their communication activities.</p> <p>The second unique task of POMU is the regular collection and analysis of voting intention trends in all EU Member States. In cooperation with Parliament's Liaison Offices in the Member States, POMU compiles publicly available voting intention polls conducted by reliable institutes in each EU MS. A proprietary database allows POMU to monitor developments in Member States and to produce regular briefings for Parliament's leading bodies (Bureau, CoP, SGs). In the run-up to the European elections, POMU enlarges its activities with a view to election night. A high-level assembly of election results from all Member States allow POMU to produce precise seat projections and to ensure positioning the European Parliament as the sole focal point in the European Union to receive aggregated and detailed election results.</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
<p><b>New patterns in relations with the media in response to the current crisis</b></p>	<p><b><u>Impact of the Covid</u></b></p> <p>Parliament is the only EU institution which has remained open for journalists throughout the pandemic. Commission and Council have been operating in a fully remote mode since March 2020, whilst Parliament adopted a hybrid approach - facilitating remote participation to parliamentary meetings and press conferences, but without excluding the possibility for journalists to come in person to the pressroom, to interview MEPs or simply to work from the EP's press centre.</p> <p>Whilst the physical presence of the media in Parliament's premises has naturally fallen significantly over the past 12 months, online participation in media events (especially online briefings) has increased enormously. In 2020 the Media services organised 589 media events, compared to 436 in 2015 (first year of last legislative term). Online briefings were barely used at all pre-Covid, largely due to the unavailability or unfamiliarity of appropriate technology to operate such platforms.</p> <p>Online meetings and briefings also opened up access to journalists in the Member States to follow EP activities directly and thus blurred the distinction between national media and Brussels correspondents. More exchanges with journalists from other countries mean 'Europeanisation' of the debate.</p> <p>In addition, it is easier to invite MEPs as well as high-level external speakers to online events, as they can simply connect from wherever they are.</p>	<p>Before 2019, the German Bundestag decided not to use the social media platforms of Twitter and YouTube, due to data protection concerns. Rather, it relied on its own website, a freely downloadable App, and the 'Parliamentary television'. The Parliamentary television broadcasts all plenary debates as well as a large number of public committee meetings and hearings live, uncommented and in full length. Since 2009, plenary and committee meetings, special events, interviews and reports can be viewed or downloaded at any time from the Bundestag's media library. Since 2021, the media library also includes live subtitles in German that are generated by artificial intelligence. In 2019, the Bundestag website was visited around 63 million times.</p> <p>In October 2019, it was decided that the Bundestag would start making greater use of other information channels, namely Twitter and YouTube. For that purpose, the staff unit "Social Media" was established in the Information and Communication sub-department of the Presidium of the Bundestag. Since August 2020, it runs a Twitter account called @hib_Nachrichten (hib being an acronym for 'heute im Bundestag' meaning 'today in the Parliament' and Nachrichten being the German word for news). The Twitter account publishes selected news from the committees and current parliamentary initiatives. It is similar to the 'hib' newsletter that is available on the Parliament's website but only posts selected stories from it.</p> <p>It appears that the pandemic has not had a marked impact on how the Bundestag works with the media beyond pushing it to produce more online content, like the 'Digital Guided Tour of the German Bundestag' video.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>Therefore, online and hybrid media events will remain a key element of the media strategy in the future. The technology and format can be further refined to enhance the experience and quality.</p> <p><b><u>Enhanced role for media relations in the Member States</u></b></p> <p>Reinforced press work in the Member States is necessary to reach out to media in the national newsrooms. Not all media have correspondents in Brussels - and in Brussels there is a growing competition for news (Council, EC, NATO...). In particular, in the Member States, the EP has been focusing on:</p> <p><b>National media:</b> TV and radio programs; specialised media/magazines/programs (women, consumers...) and specialised journalists in mainstream media (environment, digital specialist in press agencies and others).</p> <p><b>Native digital media:</b> online only platforms, including media that exist only on social media and influencers active in political/societal debates</p> <p><b>Regional media,</b> when and where relevant.</p> <p><b>Targeted information:</b> DG COMM works with the broad catalogue of EP agenda, MEPs and events to cater a specific offer to each kind of media. Not everything for everybody all the time, but every day some news for some journalists who might be interested. DG COMM offers content, but also services (multimedia centre, facilities in BRU and STR, EPRS research...) and</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>help journalists to build their story: pitching it, finding the right MEP, choosing data and relevant local angles. It invites journalists to BRU and STR to make them experience the richness of the institution from the media point of view. The EP reaches out to them via media tours, trainings and similar activities on the ground. It provides editorial content, raw or edited, but always un-biased, politically balanced, reliable and accessible. It promotes transparency and openness as a distinctive feature of the EP press service.</p>	
<p><b>Fighting disinformation and hate speech</b></p>	<p>The political work of the European Parliament addresses disinformation and hate speech through non-legislative and legislative measures such as the current draft Digital Services Act. The European Parliament services take very seriously any attempt to target the institution or its members with disinformation or any actions to misrepresent their defined positions. While services undertake specific actions to counter disinformation, the most effective defence against false narratives and foreign influence operations is to ensure communication of <b>proactive factual narratives</b> related to the work and decisions of Members. To this end, Parliament's services communicate in all official working languages and through a variety of media and platforms to ensure maximum reach.</p> <p>The Secretariat of the Parliament established an <b>inter-DG task force against disinformation</b> to streamline cooperation between different DGs and services. This ensures more joined up action in response to disinformation threats.</p> <p>The EP's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) developed its <b>capacity to monitor, analyse, alert and devise</b></p>	<p>The fight against disinformation and hate speech frequently gets attention in the Bundestag, be it through legislative proposals or minor and major interpellations to the German government. The Bundestag has also published a so-called 'netiquette' for its Twitter use that it asks users interacting with it to follow. According to the netiquette, comments including hate speech will be deleted and, if necessary, reported.</p> <p>The Petitions Committee has made a netiquette available as well, in which it states that comments by citizens who take part in debates around petitions which contain hate speech will be deleted immediately.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p><b>counter strategies</b> in response to disinformation and deceptive narratives that target the institution and its members. This concerns both human resources and investing in software to assist with monitoring and analysis. It also relates to close cooperation and training with leading civil society/academic experts in the field.</p> <p>DG COMM cooperates closely with the other DGs (EPRS, EXPO and ITEC e.g.) and other EU institutions via an <b>informal “tripartite” arrangement</b>. It participates in the <b>European Commission Network Against Disinformation</b> and shares information with EU Member State governments via a secure <b>“Rapid Alert System”</b>. Furthermore, it cooperates on a regular basis with leading experts in civil society. With the support over other DGs, mainly DG EPRS and DG EXPO, DG COMM develops its dedicated media and social media monitoring and analysis capacity as well as its media literacy capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upon request, DG COMM and DG EPRS offer <b>personal training to MEPs</b> on disinformation issues, including on data analysis;</li> <li>- Regular offering by DG COMM and DG EPRS of <b>training for accredited parliamentary assistants and EP staff members;</b></li> <li>- <b>Specialised Trainings</b> in partnership with EU institutions, to prepare colleagues dealing with communication in the European Parliament Liaison Offices;</li> <li>- <b>Awareness raising and capacity building exercises for external audiences</b> including visitors groups, youth groups and</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>the Together.EU network. In addition, the House of European History 'Fake or/for Real exhibition' helps raise awareness;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Seminars with media representatives and MEPs</b> to discuss disinformation as a threat to democracy and how to support media as well as fact checking;</li> <li>- <b>Cooperation with civil society, fact checkers and academia.</b> Parliament services work on initiatives that foster closer cooperation and exchange of best practice. For example, in 2019 the European Parliament services organised a conference for fact checkers. Parliament officials also participate in follow-up initiatives to support this work, such as the <b>European Digital Media Observatory</b>. In 2021, an external expert provided a series of trainings with the goal of developing updated frameworks for assessing and responding to disinformation;</li> <li>- In addition to these seminars and trainings, regular information is provided on the work of the INGE Special Committee (press releases, briefings, press conferences), supported by DG EXPO.</li> </ul> <p>A news page is available on EP's news portal and regular social media posts promote the importance of factual information and explain "How to spot when news is fake" based on a flagship infographic of DG EPRS.</p> <p>DG COMM has developed strong policy against any kind of aggression on its platforms since joining the different social media channels. It has been working on best practices and has established a clear moderation policy that is implemented on all</p>	

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>corporate accounts. The community management team from DG COMM enforces it on Parliament's channels without the unnecessary removal of content or censorship. Users can always contact the team and refer to the rules guiding our online presence. The key aspect of the policy is that while we welcome all sides of the debate, we do not allow any form of hate speech on our accounts so it remains a safe place for conversation.</p>	
<p><b>Social media strategies</b></p>	<p>DG COMM's Directorate for the Media animates the following <b>social-media platforms</b> for the European Parliament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facebook</b> : 2.6 million fans</li> <li>• <b>Twitter (in 24 languages)</b>: 1.7 million followers</li> <li>• <b>LinkedIn</b>: 546 497 followers</li> <li>• <b>Instagram</b> : 288 120 followers</li> <li>• <b>Reddit</b> : 6624 followers</li> <li>• <b>Flickr</b>: 2 677 followers</li> <li>• <b>Pinterest</b> : 6650 followers</li> </ul> <p>The <b>social media team</b> is composed of web-editors on various time resources allocations (it's an additional task to their main news publishing in 24 languages mission).</p> <p>There is also an IT developers for social-media also in charge of maintaining and developing the EP Newshub, project manager with an expertise in IT development and data privacy and social-media producers working on all platforms. Unit also produces news and non/news videos and other materials for the social media. The social media team is as well supported by the digital intelligence and community management teams.</p>	<p>The Social Media Staff Unit of the Bundestag Presidium runs the following social-media platforms for the German Bundestag:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Twitter</b>: 12.7k followers</li> <li>• <b>YouTube</b>: 69.7k subscribers</li> </ul> <p>Until 2019 the Bundestag opted not to follow a social media strategy due to data protection concerns. On 23 October 2019, the Bundestag Presidium decided to make greater use of Twitter and YouTube as additional information channels. There is a detailed social media usage strategy outlined on the website of the Bundestag.</p> <p><u>Twitter</u></p> <p>The Bundestag's Twitter use aims at expanding existing communication channels for information, opinion-forming and interaction. Its Twitter account @hib_Nachrichten reports on selected parliamentary events, committees and hearings. It seeks to reach a media-oriented, politically interested target group consisting of journalists, representatives of interest groups, politicians and citizens interested in politics.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>All social-media activities are part of the editorial workflow of the Directorate for the Campaigns, with a weekly review in the 'agency' meeting. They are also part of the larger coordination on the level of Directorate General: Editorial Committee (CED) and more frequent Restricted-Editorial Committees (CED-R) during Plenary and Committees weeks. Both CED and CED-R are chaired by the advisor to the DG and Spokesperson of the European Parliament, who provides <b>editorial and political oversight</b> of the social media activities.</p> <p>The Web Communication Unit and its social-media experts provide <b>trainings to MEPs and their staff</b>. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions by lead actors of the social-media field, with personalised support and inputs by Web Communication Unit's staff</li> <li>• Analysis of the social-media presence of MEPs</li> <li>• Personal coaching on social media</li> <li>• Topic requested by MEP (setting up a social media account, use of statistics, best practices, etc.)</li> <li>• One to one tailor made sessions</li> </ul>	<p>As the Bundestag administration must adhere to the neutrality requirement and non-partisanship, the social media editorial team can only engage in dialogue on the channel to a certain extent. Information on the tasks, function and working methods of the Bundestag can be provided but the social media editorial team can not take a position on the content of political debates and their interpretations. If contributions by political actors are published, they have to pay attention to balance, proportionality and the distinction between the Bundestag as an institution and its individual members or political bodies and parliamentary groups.</p> <p>The Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information has judged the use of Twitter as acceptable in terms of data protection when certain functions are disabled (direct messaging function, switching off the dashboard, use of social media plugins in accordance with data protection).</p> <p><u>YouTube</u> The Bundestag YouTube channel complements the distribution channels of the Bundestag. Its importance is demonstrated by the channel's high reach among 14- to 29-year-olds and 30- to 49-year-olds.</p> <p>The Bundestag has been operating a YouTube channel since May 2016. There it uploads a selection of videos from the internet media library of the Bundestag as well as livestreaming the core debates on Thursday mornings. It also publishes content for children and young people, interviews, and information on the history of the Bundestag, among others. The channel has the comment function turned off.</p>
<b>Hybrid events</b>	<p>In order to facilitate hybrid EP presentations/talks that combine on-site and online participation and engagement, the EP plans to have the seminar rooms in the new ZWEIG visitors' area (if possible, also in some of the current conference rooms in Spaak</p>	<p>Currently the German Bundestag offers the possibility to follow its public events via videoconferences (upon prior registration) as in-person participation is not possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not clear if and for how long this practice will continue.</p>

	European Parliament	Bundestag
	<p>building) equipped with high-performance cameras and a trigger microphone system that will support targeted audience interaction. All seminar rooms will furthermore be equipped with professional webcams for streaming presentations, allowing for example the MEPs, staff and visitors to interact with those who couldn't travel to Brussels.</p> <p>Other communication events, as for example Europe Day, European Youth Seminars, Multilingualism Day, press conferences, various events held by EPLD..etc. will be organised in the future in a hybrid format.</p>	
<b>Digital offer to visitors</b>	<p>The Digital Citizens' Journey to the European Parliament is an innovative DGCOMM project that uses state-of-art technologies and will launch three main experiences for citizens. The Immersive Online Experience allows citizens visit the European Parliament's people and places, delivered in navigable 360-degree environment with overlays to present micro-interactions and multimedia content. The Virtual Role Play Game is a 'choose-your-own-adventure style' journey to get to know EP law making through the eyes of an MEP. This involves a graphic narrative structure and responsive game engine that allows players explore multimedia content, frame issues before debate, propose amendments and vote. It has chapters, which cover work in committees, political groups and Plenary. The Virtual House of European History will consists of a 3D-tour of the House and virtual exhibition space with an online collection. Additional digital features are being considered.</p>	<p>In June 2021, the Bundestag published a <a href="#">five-minute video</a> 'Digital Guided Tour of the German Bundestag' where the highlights of a real-life guided tour are presented, such as the plenary, some of the artwork and the building itself.</p>
<b>Members' activities on official parliamentary websites</b>	<p>All the MEPs have a dedicated section on the official website of the European Parliament. It makes their contact details available and provides basic information on their background (for instance date of birth, CV, parliamentary career and financial interest) and on their assistants (names and contact information). In addition,</p>	<p>All Members of the Bundestag have a dedicated section on the official website of the Bundestag. It shows their contact details, an overview of their background (date and place of birth, education and parliamentary career) and links to their own website and other</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Bundestag</b>
	<p>the parliamentary website can include links to social media platforms used by MEPs and can give details about their political activities namely about the speeches they deliver in plenary, the reports they prepare, the parliamentary questions they raise and the motions they table. MEPs also publish the meetings they hold with third parties.</p> <p>The data related to Members via the website is reviewed and updated on an ad-hoc basis. The supervision of the website is done by the Bureau and the Secretariat (Secretary General, DG PRES and DG COMM), who have the overall responsibility for the content management.</p> <p>There is a possibility to download the information about the MEPs in different formats such as XML, PDF or Word.</p>	<p>social media channels (if available). It also lists their memberships and offices as well as their constituency.</p> <p>The website further links to the speeches given by the Member of the Bundestag as well as listing how (and if) they voted. Notably, it also contains a section of 'information that must be disclosed'. There the website lists the remunerated activities carried out next to the mandate, positions held in companies, public bodies and institutions as well as clubs, associations and foundations. Lastly, it lists any membership in other committees, such as parliamentary friendship groups.</p> <p>The biographical information is based on self-reporting by the Members of Parliament. For information that must be disclosed there are official Rules of Conduct to be followed and the information is continuously updated.</p> <p>It is possible to download the information about the Members of the Bundestag in PDF format.</p>





# European ***Democracy in Action***

UK House of Commons  
European Parliament  
Increasing impact and effectiveness

**EDITOR**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE**

Matthew Parry, Alex Wilson, Martin Russel  
External Policies Unit  
European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**LANGUAGE VERSIONS**

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in September 2021  
Brussels, © European Parliament, 2021  
Cover illustration: © vector\_master - Fotolia.com

**DISCLAIMER**

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

## Contents

1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING .....	210
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	228
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY .....	245
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY .....	257

# Main findings

## 1. Plenary reform and agenda-setting

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
<b>Structure of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>There are specific time slots fixed for each day of part-session - generally Strasbourg sessions start on Monday at 17:00 and end on Thursday at 16:00, while Brussels sessions start at 15:00 on Wednesday and end at 13:00 on Thursday. Part-session days may last until 23:00 or, less often, until 24:00.</p> <p>Each agenda of the part-session contains time slots for debates - divided into morning and afternoon/evening slots - and votes generally scheduled at noon from 12:00 to 14:00 and followed by oral explanations of votes. Key debates and topical debates are specifically earmarked in the agenda; key debates are usually scheduled on Tuesday or Wednesday morning, while topical debates on current affairs (Rule 162) are scheduled on Wednesday afternoon at 15:00 and should last for 1h30. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law take place once every month, on Thursday morning of the Strasbourg part-session.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session comprises a section explaining the various parliamentary procedures, a summary of the items on the agenda and, for each time slot of a sitting, a breakdown of the items with details of the documents being considered, the procedure to be used, information on speaking time and deadlines for tabling texts and requests for separate, split and roll-call votes.</p> <p>Plenary sessions under COVID-19 have been organised at the beginning of the pandemic in a reduced format, with a limited number of items for debates and votes and with voting being</p>	<p>Under House of Commons <a href="#">Standing Order</a> 14 (which dates back to 1902), the Commons agenda is controlled by the government, apart from days provided (with the timing controlled by the government) for Opposition Day debates, Backbench Business Committee debates and for debates on private members' bills.</p> <p>The government <a href="#">announces</a> the agenda for the coming week. It is the <a href="#">Leader of the House of Commons</a> (a senior minister) who makes a statement to the House each week (usually on a Thursday) about the business scheduled for the period ahead, typically framed formally as a response to a question from their opposition counterpart. In practice, before being publicly presented, the agenda for the week will have been discussed inside government (primarily between the Leader of the House of Commons and the Chief Whip, in consultation with ministers who will lead on particular business).</p> <p>In comparison with other parliaments, the UK executive, as distinct from the parliamentary majority of the day, is <a href="#">considered</a> to have an unusual amount of control over parliamentary business. Some further elements are specified in the Standing Orders. Standing Order No. 21(1) specifies that 'Questions shall be taken on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays', which in practice facilitates a rota of departmental questions that operate on most sitting days, and the well-known Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesdays. Likewise, Standing Order No. 21(2) provides for 'urgent questions' which may be granted by the Speaker on request, requiring a minister to be called to the House to answer a series of spontaneous questions around a specified topic.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>done remotely. The system for remote voting has evolved in the months following the start of the pandemic to allow for automatic counting of votes and therefore more voting sessions.</p> <p>Changes introduced in plenary as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic were remote voting already as of March 2020, with a system than was largely improved over time, and remote interventions in debates as of October 2020, from its liaison offices.</p> <p>There is currently a process ongoing in the House of reforming the structure of the plenary agenda and format of debates, aiming of rendering plenary sessions more attractive to Members and incentivise them to attend.</p>	<p>In November 2009, the Select Committee on Reform of the House of Commons <a href="#">recommended</a> the establishment of a House Business Committee to “assemble a draft agenda to put to the House in a weekly motion”, but this was never acted on.</p> <p>The Commons <a href="#">meets</a> at 2.30-10.30 p.m. on Mondays, 11.30 a.m.- 7.30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9.30 a.m.- 5.30 p.m. on Thursdays and 9.30 a.m.- 3 p.m. on sitting Fridays.</p> <p><a href="#">Business</a> on sitting days in the House of Commons is organised as follows in the main Chamber:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Prayers;</li> <li>2) Private business (except Fridays);</li> <li>3) Oral Questions (except Fridays) – for one hour, MPs ask questions to the relevant government Ministers;</li> <li>4) Urgent Questions (statements at 11 a.m. on Fridays) – a Member may consider that a particular matter requires an immediate response from a Government Minister. In this event, he may apply to ask an urgent question;</li> <li>5) Presentation of Bills – a Member gives notice that he will present a Bill in the near future;</li> <li>6) Ten Minute Rule Bills – may enable a Backbench Member to introduce a bill, but this is more often used as a way to test Parliament’s opinion on a particular issue or on the need to change a law;</li> <li>7) Topical debate – lasts for 90 minutes on a weekly basis, dealing with regional, national or international issues;</li> <li>8) Main Business - often taking the form of a debate, including debates on legislation, general topics or issues selected by the major parties;</li> <li>9) Moment of Interruption – at 10 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays, 7 p.m. on Wednesdays, 6 p.m. on Thursdays and 2.30 p.m. on Fridays, bringing an end to business in general. Ministers may introduce a Business motion to extend business beyond the</li> </ol>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
		<p>interruption. Generally, this is used to ensure a Bill progresses throughout its stages;</p> <p>10) Exempt Business – Proceedings on statutory instruments, on European documents or items in furtherance of an Act of Parliament, money resolutions on Bills, Bills brought by a ways and means resolution and debates on provisions of a programme motion are exempt from usual rising times for up to 1½ hours after interruption;</p> <p>11) Petitions – MPs may use their discretion to give a short statement about petitions received from their constituents;</p> <p>12) Adjournment Debate – a Backbench Member (chosen by ballot, except on Thursdays when they are selected by the Speaker from those unsuccessful in the ballot) calls for a debate of 30 minutes on a matter often of interest to his/her constituency. The Minister responsible must reply. Debates may also deal with a government policy.</p>
<b>Strategic programming</b>	<p>The Parliament exerts influence on the political and legislative agenda through both regular dialogue with the Commission ahead of the presentation of its annual work programme, and the negotiations of an annual joint declaration and multiannual joint conclusions on inter-institutional priorities.</p> <p>The strategic planning in the European Parliament, leading to actual plenary sessions, is an elaborate process that starts at the beginning of each legislature and consists mainly of three stages: long, medium and short-term planning.</p> <p>Parliament is fully independent in organising its own plenary agendas, which are based on a carefully orchestrated mix of close cooperation and interaction with the other European institutions. Parliament needs to be informed, and takes into account, the planning of the work of the Commission and the Council, ensuring the synchronisation regarding the conclusion, adoption and signature of legal acts, responses to/by the other institutions and high level debates.</p>	<p>The Queen’s Speech is delivered at the <a href="#">State Opening of Parliament</a>, the main ceremonial event in the parliamentary calendar and the start of the parliamentary year. The speech is written by government ministers and sets out the government’s policies and proposed legislation for the new parliamentary session. Due to restrictions necessitated by the pandemic, the 11 May 2021 State Opening took the form of an <a href="#">adapted</a> and reduced ceremony, with fewer attendees and no guests, and attendees required to undergo a Covid test and wear face coverings.</p> <p>The speech is delivered in the House of Lords and addressed to both houses of Parliament. Subsequently, in the House of Commons, Members debate the planned legislative programme for several days, looking at different subject areas. The Prime Minister defends the government’s agenda, and the Leader of the Opposition is given a right of reply. The Queen’s Speech is then voted on by the Commons. The agenda set out in the speech is not legally binding, and it is not uncommon for uncompleted legislative proposals from a previous year’s speech to be carried over into the following year’s agenda.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>1. Long-term planning (1 year and beyond)</p> <p>In order to ensure both coherence and adaptability, the services of DG Presidency follow closely, and deliver, on the annual and multiannual programming of the institutions, having for basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission Work Programme: An annual exercise that covers all proposals expected to be delivered by the Commission in a given year;</li> <li>• The Joint Declaration on legislative priorities, which results in an agreement between the three institutions on legislative priorities for a given year. The Joint Declaration Tracker is used as to monitor the implementation of the legislative priorities in the Joint Declaration;</li> <li>• The multi-annual Foresight Report: A new instrument, through which the Commission brings forward its multiannual political vision and strategy for the Union and its main priorities;</li> <li>• The Multiannual Conclusions – signed by the three institutions for the first time in December 2020 – on the priorities until the end of the 9th legislature.</li> </ul> <p>2. Medium-term planning (6 months)</p> <p>The services follow closely the work of the parliamentary committees and the other institutions, especially the proposals adopted in the Commission, the progress of trilogues with the Council and the agendas of the European Council. The following points are taken into account in the medium-term planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission presents, in the “Liste des points prévus” (LPP), its list of proposals to be adopted in the College of</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Commissioners several months in advance. This gives Parliament the possibility to plan reports or plenary debates either in advance or as a reaction to them. Some major Commission proposals can serve as a basis for monothematic plenaries (European Green Deal in December 2019 and Recovery and Resilience Facility in July 2020);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council of the European Union sets its agenda of priorities every six months with every new Presidency, which also affects Parliament’s work especially in co-legislation. All incoming Presidencies present their programme of activities in Parliament;</li> <li>• The European Council meetings determine the political debates for both the preparation and for the conclusions in the European Parliament. The European Council President presents the conclusions of the meetings in the Parliament (Article 15 TEU);</li> <li>• Other international events that might become subjects for debate in Parliament are also taken into account (e.g. G7, G20, UN sessions);</li> <li>• In addition, the progress of reports in the parliamentary committees is followed closely. All files are checked and an indicative plenary planning is set.</li> </ul> <p>3. Short-term planning (1 month)</p> <p>The result of the short-term planning one month before the actual plenary session is the very first draft of the plenary agenda. The services make sure that all items included in the plenary agenda are both agreed at political level and are ready from a technical point of view.</p> <p>The plenary agenda contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treaty obligations and obligations arising from Inter-institutional Agreements;</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative reports;</li> <li>• Non-legislative reports;</li> <li>• Other input from committees, e.g. oral questions, resolutions or other specific items (petitions, immunities, etc.);</li> <li>• Various forms of debates with the other institutions (Council and Commission Statements, Commission interpellations, debates with the High Representative, topical debates);</li> <li>• Annual events and prizes, such as the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights and the Lux Audience Award for European Films.</li> </ul>	
<b>Setting parliaments' priorities</b>	<p>The definition of Parliaments priorities falls under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents and political Groups.</p> <p>The governing bodies – the Conference of Presidents and Conference of Committee Chairs – have regular exchanges with the Commission ahead of the preparation of its annual work programme. This allows Parliament to exert its influence on the work programme via political initiatives and calling for legislative proposals, which are the prerogative of the Commission.</p> <p>As explained above, since 2016, the three institutions have agreed to work and agree each year on a joint declaration on inter-institutional programming and, at the beginning of each term, on joint conclusions on multiannual programming (through the inter-institutional agreement on better law making, to implement the provisions of Article 17 TEU).</p> <p>This has enabled Parliament to further influence the political and legislative agenda and the timing of such submissions.</p>	<p>Given that the government of the day has much say over the Commons agenda, via the order paper, the main instrument for setting the Commons' priorities is the government's agenda, as set out in the <a href="#">Queen's Speech</a> that opens a new Parliament. The State Opening of Parliament, with the Queen's Speech at its centre, is the key ceremonial and constitutional event at the start of a new session of Parliament. At the start of any session, neither House can consider normal public business until the Queen's Speech has been held.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>The agenda of a part-session starts as a working document on the basis of recommendations from committees and points that are cyclical in a yearly session. Once input is received from political groups, a preliminary draft agenda is drawn up and presented to the Conference of Presidents in view of the adoption of the draft agenda, approximately one month before the part-session in question. The Conference of Presidents then adopts the final draft agenda at its last meeting on the Thursday before the part-session.</p> <p>Whilst there are often items on the agenda which are comprised of a Council and/or Commission statement, the two institutions do not have the right to claim certain time slots for debates or declarations. This remains the prerogative of the Conference of Presidents, which adopts the final draft, and the House, which adopts the agenda at the opening of each part-session.</p>	
<b>Content of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>The plenary agenda contains debates on legislative and non-legislative files presented in the form of reports, as well as statements from the Council and the Commission or from the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, oral questions, topical debates, debates on breaches of human rights and rule of law, votes and explanations of votes. . There are no plenary sessions reserved only for legislation or only for non-legislative debates.</p> <p>While setting the agenda, political groups often interlink dossiers in order to have joint debates on ‘thematic packages’.</p> <p>Since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretation.</p>	<p>The business for each week is announced the week before by the Leader of the House at business questions and is set out in the Order Paper, which is the agenda for each day's sitting. The Government effectively controls the timetable of the House and can change the business at short notice.</p> <p>Government business usually has priority. But the House's rules (standing orders) provide for a number of days when non-Government business is taken (see above), such as Opposition days (see below) and Private Members’ Bill Fridays. The Backbench Business Committee is also given time for debates in the Chamber and in Westminster Hall. The Speaker may also select motions for debate tabled by individual or groups of MPs, known as <a href="#">Early Day Motions</a>, but in practice seldom does.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	Topical debates and major interpellations are not held at all during this period.	
<b>Conduct of plenary debates</b>	<p>Speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session.</p> <p>The agenda is divided into different “time slots”, which can include one or several debates. There is usually no fixed time for each debate. A notional speaking time is allocated to rapporteurs, rapporteurs for opinion, authors of oral questions, major interpellations and topical debates and to other institutions (Council, Commission, etc.).</p> <p>The speaking time available for each political group is also indicated on the agenda. This information is used by the political groups in allocating speaking time and drawing up their lists of speakers. Members speak in the order of the relative size of their political groups.</p> <p>Members who wish to speak in a debate on the plenary agenda should ask their political group to allocate them speaking time. Alternatively, they may ask to speak in a more spontaneous manner under the catch-the-eye or blue card procedures (see below).</p> <p>Members who have not spoken in a debate may, at most once per part-session, hand in a written statement of not more than 200 words, which will be appended to the verbatim report of the debate.</p> <p>There are several types of debates: committee reports (full debate), committee reports (short presentation), Statements by the other Institutions (council, Commission, Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), oral questions to the Council,</p>	<p>Members wishing to speak in a <a href="#">debate</a> should let the Speaker’s Office know in advance and stand in their place every time a speech ends, though they may also speak without prior notice. To do so, they must get the Speaker’s attention (called ‘catching the Speaker’s eye’) and usually stand, or half-rise from their seat to do so. There is no published speaking list. There may be time limits on backbench speeches.</p> <p>At the start of a debate, the Speaker calls an MP whose name is on the motion (a minister for a Government motion) to move it. The MP does this by saying “I beg to move”, and then reading out the motion or saying “the motion in my name on the Order Paper”. It is possible to move the motion formally, without a speech.</p> <p>Once the first speech is over, or if the motion has been moved formally, the Speaker ‘proposes the question’ to the House by saying “The question is as on the Order Paper”. This opens the debate. In the case of a Government motion, the Speaker will usually call a frontbencher from the official Opposition, a backbencher from the Government side, and a frontbencher from the third largest party to make speeches next. The Speaker will then seek to call MPs from each side of the House in turn.</p> <p>Members may <a href="#">intervene</a> during a debate, which is to say make a comment during another MP’s speech. They can try to intervene on another MP by rising slightly, trying to catch the MP’s eye and asking them to give way. MP’s being asked to give way are under no obligation to accept an intervention by another Member, and if they make it clear that they don’t intend to do so, the intervening Member resumes their seat.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union, debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, major interpellations for written answer, question time, public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives.</p> <p>Procedures in debates</p> <p>- Catch-the-eye - Rule 171(6) With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short speeches (1 minute maximum) by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs at the end of a debate.</p> <p>- Blue card procedure - Rule 171(8)</p> <p>The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.</p> <p>Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of political group speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" or blue cards.</p> <p>- One-minute speeches - Rule 172</p> <p>For a period of not more than 30 minutes during the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a prepared list, the President calls Members who wish to draw Parliament's attention to a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of 1 minute each.</p>	<p>MPs may only intervene on a speech, not on another intervention. Interventions should be brief and relate to the subject of the speech. The Speaker is likely to call the Member to order if their intervention is too long.</p> <p>As a matter of courtesy, Members should not intervene immediately after arriving in the Chamber, and they should remain for a reasonable time after intervening. They should not intervene in a maiden speech; a speech to present a Ten-Minute Rule Bill, or a speech against a Ten-Minute Rule Bill; or the Chancellor's budget statement and the frontbench response to it.</p> <p>Most debates end with speeches from the official Opposition and a minister. These are sometimes known as the winding-up speeches.</p> <p>When everyone who wants to speak has done so, the Speaker then 'puts the question'. This means asking the House to decide—through a vote if necessary—on the motion.</p> <p>If the time set aside for the debate runs out while an MP is still speaking, the debate may end without the House taking a decision on the motion.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, and in accordance with the President’s decision on exceptional measures enabling the European Parliament to carry out its duties and exercise its prerogatives under the Treaties, the procedures described above were not used in in plenary debates. This was due to the restricted time available for debates, as well as the constraints linked to remote interventions in debates.</p>	
<p><b>Voting procedures and treatment of amendments</b></p>	<p>Voting on draft legislation takes place at the first available voting time (voting session) following the close of a debate on that piece of legislation, unless the agenda specifically provides for a later vote. Non-contentious draft legislation is sometimes put straight to the vote without a debate, in which case the vote may be earlier in a part-session. The timing of the vote may also be influenced by other factors such as availability of texts in all official languages.</p> <p>Amendments to draft legislation may be voted in plenary. Amendments may be tabled by a “low threshold”, constituted either by a political group or by a number of individual Members equivalent to 5% of Parliament’s membership. Such amendments are voted alongside any amendments proposed by the committee responsible in its report.</p> <p>Rule 159 provides, however, that if a committee has adopted its position on the draft legislation with less than 10 percent of the committee members opposing, the legislation is adopted without further amendments by plenary. A “medium threshold” consisting of 10% of the House may however veto this and insist on the right to table amendments.</p> <p>In first reading, the vote on amendments is always followed by a final vote on the Commission’s draft legislation as a whole. Amendments and the final vote require a majority of the votes cast for adoption. In second reading amendments require a majority of Parliament’s component Members (i.e. more than half</p>	<p>Votes <a href="#">take place</a> at the end of a debate. The Speaker ‘puts the question’ at the end of a debate. MPs shout “Aye” or “No” and the Speaker says “I think the Ayes (or Noes) have it”. If this judgement is challenged by further shouts of “No” (or “Aye”), the Speaker calls a division, saying “Clear the lobby”.</p> <p>The division bells ring and the annunciators display a green bell. The doorkeepers lock the exit doors from the lobbies. Four tellers (often party whips) are appointed to count the votes (one from the Ayes and one from the Noes for each lobby). Two minutes after first putting the question, the Speaker puts the question again (meaning the Speaker repeats the phrase “The question is that...”). If the Speaker’s judgement on the outcome is not challenged (or if there are not enough tellers), the division is called off. If two tellers can’t be found for one side, the question is decided in favour of the other. Otherwise the Speaker announces the names of the tellers. Once they’re in place, the exit doors from the lobbies are opened and MPs begin to pass out of the lobbies.</p> <p>Three clerks in each lobby record the names of those voting. The two tellers for each lobby record the number of those voting.</p> <p>Eight minutes after the question was first put, the Speaker orders the doorkeepers to lock the entrances to the lobbies. MPs can’t get in to vote after that.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>the House as constituted) for adoption. In second reading, the draft legislation (Council position) is deemed adopted unless amended or rejected, and there is no final vote on the Council position as a whole.</p> <p>If inter-institutional negotiations lead to a provisional agreement on a draft legislative text, that agreement is put to the vote as single vote with no further amendment, unless the House explicitly decides otherwise.</p> <p>Oral amendments may be moved in plenary by individual Members, although these may be opposed on procedural grounds (lack of full translation into all languages) by Members representing 5% of the House.</p> <p>There is no automatic cooling-off period between a final vote in committee on a report and the adoption by plenary. The timing of the plenary vote is determined by the Conference of Presidents (Group Chairs) and the plenary itself as part of the agenda decision-making process. A cooling-off period does take place, however, between the conclusion of inter-institutional negotiations on a draft legislative act and its final vote in plenary.</p> <p>As indicated above, since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretations.</p>	<p>Divisions end with the declaration, usually by a whip, of “All out” to the tellers in each lobby, meaning there are no MPs still in the lobby waiting to vote. If there’s a delay, the Speaker may ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate.</p> <p>The tellers report the results to a clerk sitting in front of the Speaker in the Chamber. When the tellers from both lobbies have reported the results, a teller from the winning side announces the result to the House. The Speaker repeats the result and instructs the doorkeepers to unlock the doors to the lobbies.</p> <p>For certain types of business, after the moment of interruption (the time at which the main business must usually finish—10pm on Monday, 7pm on Tuesday and Wednesday and 5pm on Thursday), any division is deferred until the following Wednesday.</p> <p><a href="#">Amendments</a> can be made at all stages of a bill except for the first reading. There are different rules for the type of amendments permissible at second reading, committee stage, report stage, third reading, and ‘ping pong’ between the Commons and the Lords).</p> <p>In the Commons, the time available for each parliamentary stage is usually determined by a programme motion proposed by the Government and agreed by the House after second reading. Programme motions are not used in the Lords. At report stage, the Speaker is responsible for selecting amendments.</p> <p>There is usually a gap of at least two weekends between publication/first reading and second reading; of one or two weeks between second reading and committee stage; and of a week between committee stage and report stage, however none of these breaks are mandatory and the timetable can be compressed.</p>
<b>Question time</b>	Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of 90 minutes on one or more specific	Standing Order No. 21(1) specifies that ‘Questions shall be taken on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays’, which in practice

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>horizontal themes decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners is limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p> <p>The Member has 1 minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner 2 minutes in which to reply. The Member formulating the question may put a supplementary question of a duration of 30 seconds, having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>In practice, this provision was not used during the 8th and 9th parliamentary term.</p> <p>With regards to Council representatives, there is a possibility to hold specific question hours with the Council in accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents (Rule 137/3).</p>	<p>facilitates a rota of departmental questions that operate on most sitting days, and the well-known Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesdays (see below). Likewise, Standing Order No.21(2) provides for 'urgent questions' which may be granted by the Speaker on request, requiring a minister to be called to the House to answer a series of spontaneous questions around a specified topic</p> <p><a href="#">Questions</a> can be submitted in writing, or asked orally. Oral questions are however usually transmitted in advanced to ministers, on paper or online, so that they will appear on the Order Paper, to be asked orally in the House. However, Members can take part in Question Time even if they haven't got a question on the Order Paper. Once an MP with a question on the Order Paper has asked their original and supplementary questions and the minister has replied, the Speaker may call other MPs to ask a supplementary question too. The Members should stand in their place to indicate that they would like to ask a question. The question must be on the same subject. The Speaker will try to call MPs from alternate sides of the House.</p> <p>If a Member has a question on the Order Paper, they can still ask a supplementary to someone else's question, but they will then lose their chance to ask their question on the Order Paper.</p> <p>Answers to <a href="#">written questions</a> are sent by email. A short time later the answers are published on the questions database which can be searched by MP, department, date or UIN (the 'unique identifying number' given to each question when it is tabled, and which appears in brackets next to the question).</p> <p>Answers to oral questions are given orally, with all statements in the House transcribed in Hansard.</p> <p><a href="#">Rules for questions</a>: Questions are intended to obtain information or press for action on matters that are the Government's responsibility.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>The use of Question time is, however, being discussed again in the reform exercise initiated in the Parliament, in particular in the Focus Group on Plenary reform.</p>	<p>Questions must: be about something for which a minister is responsible; be based on fact, not speculation; use neutral language and not contain unnecessary information.</p> <p>Questions must not: ask for information which is readily available; refer to a case that is active in the UK courts (known as 'sub judice'). The Table Office edits questions to make them conform to the rules under the Speaker's authority. Where this is not possible, the Table Office will contact you to discuss the question. The Speaker is the final authority on the admissibility of questions.</p>
<b>Procedure for written questions</b>	<p>Members, political groups and committees are entitled to submit questions for written answer to the President of the European Council, to the Council, the Commission and to the Vice-President of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union (Rule 138 RoP).</p> <p>Admissibility criteria are referred to in Annex III RoP, mainly EU competence, competence of the addressee, general interest, contain an understandable interrogation, not exceed 200 words, not contain offensive language, not relate to strictly personal matters, not contain more than 3 sub-questions, no similar or identical question tabled and answered in the previous 6 months. In addition, data protection regulations shall be respected.</p> <p>Deadlines for answering: 3 weeks for priority questions; 6 weeks for non-priority questions. Nevertheless, as those deadlines have never been agreed with the institutions addressees of the questions, they are considered by the latter as non-binding on them, but as mere targets. Delays are extremely frequent.</p> <p>Questions for oral answer are a completely different procedure (cf. Rule 136 RoP). These are never answered in writing, even if they lapse without having been scheduled for debate in Plenary. They</p>	<p>Members can ask questions of Members and the Prime Minister as set out above. See above for admissibility criteria.</p> <p><a href="#">Written questions</a> are submitted to government departments. Members can ask a department a question in writing and will receive an answer by email. There are two kinds of written question:</p> <p>'Ordinary' written questions. Departments usually respond between five and 10 working days after the question has been tabled. There is no limit on the number of ordinary written questions Members can table.</p> <p>'Named day' written questions. Departments deal with named day questions as a priority. They should be answered on the third sitting day after they are tabled. A sitting day is a day when the House is meeting. Members can table a maximum of five named day questions each day. This allows Members to prioritise some questions.</p> <p>As noted above, answers to <a href="#">written questions</a> are sent by email. A short time later the answers are published on the questions database which can be searched by MP, department, date or UIN (the 'unique identifying number' given to each question when it is tabled, and which appears in brackets next to the question).</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>can only be tabled by a political group, a parliamentary committee or at least 5% of EP's component Members.</p> <p>Major interpellations for written answer (Rule 139 RoP) are a "hybrid" instrument, as they can be scheduled for debate if they have not been answered, but also if they have been answered (different rules apply). They can only be tabled by political groups. Annex III does not apply to Oral questions and Major interpellations. There are specific rules regarding length, deadlines, etc.</p> <p>Members, political groups, parliamentary committees can table a maximum of 20 questions for written answer over a rolling period of 3 months. They can only table one priority question per calendar month (which is also counted in the 20 questions over the 3 month rolling period). A question can be co-tabled by several Members but it will be counted in the quota of each individual Member. Members can also "support" other Members' questions, and in this case this will not be counted in the respective quota. The number of major interpellations is limited by the Conference of Presidents (proportional to the "weight" of each political group) but there is no limit to the number of Oral questions tabled.</p> <p>Parliamentary questions are submitted by using a web form (QP webform) and signed by Members with an electronic signature (DiSP). They are managed by the administration, with the help of a specific application (QPPLUS).</p> <p>Every parliamentary question is published on the EP website (<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html</a>), under the Plenary part and in the Register of public documents, when it is forwarded to the institution addressee of the question. Questions can also be accessed from the profile of every author (Member). Replies to questions for</p>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>written answer are published as links to each question and in the Register of public documents. Questions and answers are available in the language of the author(s) and in English. Regarding Oral questions and Major interpellations, if they are scheduled for debate in Plenary, a link to the debate and to the Minutes is published.</p>	
<p><b>Seating order and presence</b></p>	<p>The Conference of Presidents shall decide how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated to the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the Union (Rule 37).</p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure, at the beginning of each legislature, political groups have an allocated number of seats for their Members as decided by the Conference of Presidents. Each Member of the European Parliament has his own seat in the Chamber, as indicated by his respective political group. Small changes may occur in the seating plan from one part-session to the next, due to changes in political group affiliation of Members. Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, due to social distancing restrictions, the seating plan of Members has had to be adapted and seats were mostly reserved for Members who intervened in debates. Any remaining seats were allocated to Members present on a free seating basis within the allocation foreseen for their respective political groups. Furthermore, Members speak from the central rostrum (without their mask).</p> <p>In order to attract the attention of Members for their participation on debates of particular general importance, the Conference of Presidents can indicate them as key debates with a consequence that no other meetings may be organised in parallel.</p>	<p>By <a href="#">convention</a>, Ministers sit on the front bench on the right hand of the Speaker: the Chief Whip usually sits in this row immediately next to the gangway. Parliamentary Private Secretaries usually sit in the row behind their minister.</p> <p>Official Opposition spokespersons use the front bench to the Speaker's left. Minority or smaller parties sit on the benches below the gangway on the left.</p> <p>There is nothing sacrosanct about these places and on occasions when a Member has deliberately chosen to occupy a place on the front bench or on the opposite side of the House from their usual position there is no redress for such action.</p> <p>Members may speak only from where they were called, which must be within the House. They may not speak from the floor of the House between the red lines (traditional supposed to be two sword-lengths apart). Also, the Speaker will not call a Member in the gallery if there is room downstairs. Members must stand whilst speaking but if they are unable to do so they are allowed to address the House seated.</p> <p>As a <a href="#">matter</a> of courtesy, you should not intervene immediately after arriving in the Chamber, and you should remain for a reasonable time after intervening.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
<b>Meetings in parallel to plenary sessions</b>	<p>Meetings of committees should not be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, save for very few exceptions agreed by the president. Political group meetings can be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, except for Tuesday and/or Wednesday morning if key debates are scheduled.</p> <p>Rules for meetings in parallel to plenary sessions are set by the Decision of the Conference of Presidents of 14 May 1998.</p> <p>As a <b>general rule</b>, no other meeting may be held simultaneously. Therefore, no meeting of a parliamentary body nor any other meeting involving Members shall be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• during voting time;</li> <li>• during formal sittings;</li> <li>• on Wednesdays mornings during Strasbourg part-sessions and on Wednesdays from 15.00 to 16.30 during Brussels part-sessions or during any other debate of particular general importance defined as such by the Conference of Presidents.</li> </ul> <p>However, there are the following <b>exceptions</b> from this rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Conference of Presidents and the Bureau, and any working party thereof, must be able to meet, where appropriate, at any time.</li> <li>• The Quaestors shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Committee Chairs shall be authorised to meet from 14.00 to 16.00 on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Delegation Chairs shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg provided such meetings do not coincide with a key debate.</li> </ul>	<p>There are no rules against parallel meetings of MPs when the House is in session. Select committees, for example, often meet while the House is in session. If MPs are required to take part in a vote, the division bell will ring, signalling that they should leave the committee meeting to vote in the House.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political groups shall be authorised to meet during part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels in specific time slots (different for Strasbourg and Brussels) as defined in Annex III to the Bureau decision of 4 July 2005 on Rules governing meetings of the political groups.</li> <li>Committees shall be authorised to meet in Strasbourg on Mondays and Thursdays. Monday meetings shall be authorised from 19.00 to 22.30. Committees shall be authorised to hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Brussels only in exceptional cases and subject to the availability of interpretation resources. Such meetings may be held on Wednesdays from 19.00 to 22.00.</li> <li>Finally, delegations to the Conciliation Committee may hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Strasbourg and Brussels if the constraints of time limits and Council availability so dictate and provided that such meetings do not coincide with voting time or a formal sitting.</li> </ul>	
<b>Parliaments' calendars</b>	<p>Parliament's work is structured according to a calendar divided into weeks of different colours, each corresponding to a different type of parliamentary activity: pink for committee meetings, red for plenary part-sessions, blue for political group meetings and turquoise for constituency weeks (external parliamentary activities).</p> <p>Every year the Parliament holds 12 four-day plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Its Members meet in parliamentary committees in Brussels, where additional two-day plenary sessions are held.</p> <p>The plenary session is the highlight of the parliamentary month with all the Members assembling either in the Chamber in Strasbourg or, for additional, shorter sessions, in Brussels. The reports adopted in committees are once again debated,</p>	<p>In the House of Commons, <a href="#">the calendar is set</a> by the Government, although the individual recess periods are decided by the House on motions tabled by the Government. The 13 Fridays that the House of Commons sits each session to consider Private Members Bills (PMBs) are also proposed by the Government and again agreed by the House, through the tabling of a motion.</p> <p>The calendar setting out the sitting days of the House of Commons in each parliamentary session is announced and issued by the Leader of the House of Commons as far in advance as is practicable. This helps Parliament and the Government with their long term planning but is always issued on the understanding that dates are subject to the progress of the scheduled parliamentary business.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>amended and adopted to reflect the Parliament's official position. In addition to adopting reports, Members adopt resolutions and directly question Commission or Council representatives on topical issues. Heads of State or Government and personalities from all over the world may also attend the plenary sessions.</p> <p>Pink weeks are dedicated to committee meetings, the forum where Members coming from different political groups discuss draft legislation, propose amendments, consider Commission and Council proposals and draw up reports to be presented to the plenary.</p> <p>In weeks that are marked blue Members meet with other members from their political group. The political groups in Parliament bring together Members coming from different national political parties, sharing the same political stance and affiliations. During the political groups' meeting, Members discuss their positions on proposed legislation, to be debated and voted on during plenary. They scrutinise reports from Parliamentary committees, table amendments and agree on a group position.</p> <p>During turquoise week, MEPs undertake activities outside the Parliament (external parliamentary activities). They work either in their constituency in their home country, where they have the opportunity to interact with their electorate, or in Parliamentary delegations, responsible for maintaining relations with non-EU countries.</p> <p>Of course, this calendar is implemented with some degree of flexibility in duly justified cases (e.g. committee meetings in plenary or group weeks to vote on urgent legislation, extraordinary plenary sittings, etc.)</p>	<p>Select committees usually meet at least once a week. Some, such as Public Accounts, meet twice a week. Some meet more often on occasions. At their first meeting, most committees choose a regular day and time for their main meeting(s). They may identify a further regular time for additional meetings as needed.</p> <p><u>Select committees</u> meet when the House is sitting but most can meet, or travel, during recesses (except during Prorogation, which is normally just a couple of days at the end of a session). They usually try to avoid having a regular meeting time that makes life difficult for committee members who have to travel a long distance or that clashes with the busiest periods in the House – for example, Question Time, particularly on Wednesdays, or the time when oral statements may be made.</p> <p>This means that most committee meetings are scheduled on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, or on Thursday mornings, with a few on Monday afternoons.</p> <p>Meetings usually take place in committee rooms either on the main and upper corridors in the Palace or in Portcullis House, though committees can meet to take evidence away from Westminster. Individual committees often have a preferred location for their meetings, but because lots of committees meet at the same time rooms are allocated by ballot, and can be changed depending on which committees are being televised.</p> <p>There are no 'committee weeks' or 'constituency weeks' like there are in the EP.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>For 2020:  Number of working days in total: 174  Number of daily sitting*: 51 (including 2 extraordinary sessions in form of daily sittings held on 27 May and 23 July)  Number of sitting hours: 259 h 43</p> <p>N.B.: The length of daily sittings may differ depending on the indication in the calendar (Ex. Monday for Strasburg session and Wednesday and Thursday for the Brussels session are considered only as a half-working days).</p> <p>Number of working days for committee meetings: 58  Number of working days for political group meetings: 32  Number of working days outside of the parliament (external parliamentary activities): 38</p>	

## 2. Strengthening parliamentary prerogatives

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
<b>Organisation of Hearings</b>	<p>The European Parliament's Committees may invite the Commission and other EU institutions and bodies to their meetings. Apart from that, they may organise public hearings with experts for different purposes and shall organise public hearings on European citizen's initiatives once they have gathered the necessary citizens' support. Pre-appointment hearings are also relevant in the European Parliament's Committees work, especially the ones held during the appointment procedure of the European Commission. The European Parliament inquiry committees may also invite different categories of witnesses to provide evidence.</p>	<p>Committees can organise a hearing with experts, where this is considered essential to their work on a particular subject. Hearings can also be held jointly by two or more committees. Most committees organise <b>regular hearings</b>, as they allow them to hear from experts and others and facilitate further discussion on the key issues at stake.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Rules applicable to the organisation and scheduling of hearing by EP's committees are quite flexible. If a committee decides to invite the <b>Commission, the Council or other EU institutions</b> to one of its meetings, the availability of those institutions may play a relevant role when deciding when to place the item on the agenda. Notwithstanding, the Commission has committed to give priority to its presence at parliamentary sessions when requested to appear (Framework Agreement on relations between the EP and the COM, point 35).</p> <p>Similarly, when deciding on whether to organise an <b>experts' hearing</b>, committees do need to consider that those hearings, no matter if they are organised by standing committees, inquiry or special committees, or subcommittees, need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau (Rule 25 (9) RoP). Proposals to organise hearings are usually discussed by committee coordinators before being submitted to Parliament's Bureau (Rule 214 RoP). According to the Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings (18 June 2003), each parliamentary committee shall submit a draft 6-months program of experts' hearings to the Conference of Committee Chairs twice a year. Individual authorisations for hearings not included in the 6-months program may also be granted and have to be submitted to the Bureau four weeks in advance of the hearing after notifying the Conference of Committee Chairs. In urgent cases, Parliament's President may directly give the authorisation (Article 3 Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings). Committees can only cover the expenses of a maximum of 16 experts' guests per year (12 for subcommittees) and experts and the organisations they represent need to be on a mandatory transparency register.</p> <p>Once organised, committees notify Parliament's President and provide detailed information regarding the hearing, Experts' hearings shall be organised in Parliament's premises and during</p>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>the ordinary meeting time of committees (Article 1 Rules on Public Hearings). In these hearings, experts are usually allowed to make a first statement followed by a debate in which committee members may raise questions. As regards the allocation of speaking time in committee Parliament's Rules of Procedure (Rule 216 (4) only refers to Rule 171 (2) RoP) during a hearing, thus leaving a wide margin of discretion to the Committee Chair to decide on how to organise the debate. Hearings are normally public.</p> <p><b>Public hearings' on European Citizens initiatives</b> present some peculiarities as they are organised by the competent EP's standing committee, on a decision made by Parliament's President on a proposal from the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (Rule 222 (1) RoP), so they do not need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau. The hearings should be organised within three months of the submission of the European Citizens initiative to the Commission.</p> <p><b>Pre-appointment hearings</b> do not have to receive the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau and the competent committees enjoy a wide range of freedom as regards their organisation and conduct, except the hearings held within the appointment procedure of the Commission, which are thoroughly regulated by Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Hearings hold in the European Parliament's committees during the election procedure of the European Commission distinguish themselves from all other pre-appointment hearings, not only because they are conducted before Parliament gives its vote of consent to the Commission as a whole, but also because they involve nearly all EP's standing committees and governing bodies and they have become a major political event. Two major steps take place before the hearings themselves: i) Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee examines the declaration of financial interests presented by each Commissioner-designate to confirm that there</p>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>is no conflict of interests in connection with their future portfolio ii) and Commissioners-designate are asked to answer several questions in writing before the hearing. Each hearing lasts three hours. Commissioners-designate make an opening statement of no more than 15 minutes. A session of questions and answers follows, in which Members are allowed to ask up to 25 questions, with follow-up questions to be asked immediately by the same MEP within their allocated time. Speaking time is allocated to Members taking into account the size of each political group</p> <p>Temporary <b>inquiry committees</b> may also hold hearings as part of its investigative activities on 'alleged contraventions or maladministration in implementation of Union law'. Members of the institutions and other bodies of the EU and members of the Member States' governments may be invited by inquiry committees to take part in their proceedings (Article 3 (2) of Decision 95/167/EC). Although the wording of the current provision does not seem to impose a legal obligation. In any case, Parliament has at its disposal some other powerful tools, including the motion of censure (Article 234 TFEU and Rule 127 RoP), that it can use against the Commission in case their members decide not to appear in front of inquiry committees. As regards some other EU institutions or bodies (e.g. the Council or the European Council) and national governments, Parliament can use different means to exert political pressure, including by using a "shaming and blaming" strategy.</p>	
<b>Scrutiny and control powers</b>	<p>Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers. These include <b>(1) exercise oversight over other institutions, (2) monitor the proper use of the EU budget and (3) ensure the correct implementation of EU law.</b></p> <p><b><u>Control over the Council</u></b> The President of the European Parliament has the right to speak at the start of each European Council, setting out Parliament's</p>	<p>The House of Commons has a range of procedures and mechanisms to hold the Government regularly to account. MPs and the Opposition parties have different means to question Government Ministers:</p> <p>Question time: MPs can question government ministers directly in parliament. They can do this on the floor of the House in regular question times, scheduled throughout the working week (<b>Oral</b></p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>position on the subjects to be addressed by the heads of state and government. After each summit, the President of the European Council presents a report to Parliament on the outcome.</p> <p>At the beginning and end of each six-month presidency, the President of the Council of the European Union discusses the Presidency's programme with MEPs in plenary. MEPs can table written and oral questions to the Council and can ask it to initiate new policies. The Presidency of the Council often meets the Chairs of Parliament's political groups and frequently takes part in committee meetings to present its programme, report on its achievements and discuss them with MEPs. In addition, twice a year, the High Representative reports to the European Parliament about foreign affairs and security policies and their financial implications.</p> <p><b><u>Control over the Commission</u></b></p> <p>The Parliament has the right to approve and dismiss the Commission. A candidate for the position of Commission President is proposed by the Member States' governments based on the results of the European elections. The candidate is then elected by the Parliament. The Commission as a whole, including the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is subject to a vote of consent by Parliament. The Commission can be forced to resign if the EP adopts a motion of censure. It can censure the Commission and ultimately dismiss it.</p> <p>The Parliament keeps a close eye on the Commission's work, scrutinizing its reports on EU policies, legislation and the budget. Commissioners are often required to appear before MEPs, at committee meetings or in plenary, to defend their policies, explain what action they intend to take and answer questions.</p>	<p><b>Questions</b>). Each government department has to send Ministers to respond to MPs' questions. The Prime Minister also answers oral questions on a weekly basis in an established format that is televised and broadcast globally (<b>Prime Minister's Questions</b>).</p> <p>MPs can alternatively submit questions in writing (<b>Written Questions</b>) to the appropriate Government department. Answers to these questions are published daily in Hansard (the Official Report of proceedings produced by the House of Commons), and may be more detailed/technical than answers given by Ministers in oral questions.</p> <p>The House of Commons Speaker can also allow <b>Urgent Questions</b>. Ministers are required to come to the House of Commons to answer questions which '<i>are in the Speaker's opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business</i>'. The non-partisan Speaker has considerable discretion in deciding which questions should be admitted. The Speaker is closely advised on this matter (and all others related to procedure) by the non-partisan House of Commons administration.</p> <p>The Opposition has other opportunities to debate government policies and influence Government actions:</p> <p>The Government provides <b>time for debates</b> on issues of Government policy or can seek the <b>approval of the House on matters of interest</b>. This is a good chance for an individual Member to raise a matter of special concern for his/her constituents and to get a detailed explanation from the Minister involved. These debates can also be an opportunity for the Opposition to question the Government's broader strategic choices and performance.</p> <p>The Opposition has a specific mandate to criticise any aspect of Government policy it wants on 20 <b>Opposition Day</b> held in each parliamentary session. On 17 of these Opposition Days, the subject</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, which regularly submits reports to it, including an annual report on EU activities and the implementation of the budget. At every plenary session, the President of the Commission is present for Question Hour, during which MEPs question him or her on current affairs. Once a year, the Commission President gives a State of the Union address at the plenary. Parliament regularly invites the Commission to initiate new policies, and the Commission is required to reply to oral and written questions from MEPs.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Justice</u></b> The EP can ask the Court to take action against the Commission or the Council if they have acted in a way that is contrary to the provisions of EU law. The Parliament is able to seek a prior opinion from the CJEU on the compatibility of an international agreement with the Treaty. In addition, the Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish specialised courts attached to the General Court to hear and determine at first instance certain classes of action or proceeding brought in specific areas.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank (ECB)</u></b> The ECB President reports to Parliament on monetary issues in a quarterly Monetary Dialogue. The ECB also prepares an annual report on monetary policy which is presented in Parliament. Parliament adopts a resolution on this annual report. MEPs may put questions for written answer to the ECB. Parliament is also consulted in the procedure to appoint members of the ECB's Executive Board.</p> <p>The new supervisory responsibilities of the ECB are matched with additional accountability requirements under the SSM Regulation. The practical modalities for this are governed by an</p>	<p>for discussion is selected by the Leader of the Opposition (currently the leader of the Labour Party). On the remaining 3 Opposition Days, the choice lies with the smaller Opposition parties in the House of Commons. These debates are always responded to by a Government minister. The government can also make additional Opposition Days available, if they so choose.</p> <p>While the main purpose of Opposition Days is parliamentary debate and therefore the outcome is non-binding on the Government, on 1 November 2017 the Labour Party first used an Opposition Day to table a binding '<i>motion for return, using a <b>Humble Address</b></i>'. The Humble Address is a rarely used parliamentary procedure by which either House of Parliament can petition the Crown - and by extension Her Majesty's Government - to order specific documents to be produced. In November 2017 this forced the Government to publish the internal documents and impact assessments it had prepared on exiting the EU, which it had previously refused to publish. Since then, the Labour Party has used the '<i>Humble Address</i>' on a further 9 occasions on Opposition Days. On 5 occasions the '<i>Humble Address</i>' was passed '<i>without a division</i>' i.e. no vote was held and the Government ultimately accepted its content. On the other 5 occasions, the '<i>Humble Address</i>' was rejected in a parliamentary vote ('<i>negated on division</i>').</p> <p>The House of Commons can in principle control the Government through its unique role in supplying confidence to (or removing its confidence in) the <b>Prime Minister (PM)</b>. The PM is by far the most powerful political position in the UK and he/she effectively chooses the rest of the Government. The PM also considerable powers of appointment throughout the political and bureaucratic system (see below - Appointment Procedures).</p> <p>The appointment of PM is technically a remaining <b>prerogative power of the Crown</b>, i.e. one where the Monarch decides. In practice,</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between Parliament and the ECB. The accountability arrangements include the attendance of the Chair of the Supervisory Board at the competent committee, the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON); answering questions asked by Parliament; and confidential oral discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the competent committee upon request. In addition, the ECB prepares an annual supervisory report, which is presented to Parliament by the Chair of the Supervisory Board.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Auditors</u></b> Parliament shall be consulted before the appointment of the members of the Court of Auditors by the Council. The Court assists Parliament and the Council in exercising their role of controlling the implementation of the budget. The annual reports and special reports serve as the basis for Parliament's yearly discharge exercise.</p> <p>The Court's Members are invited to present their reports at committee meetings (Parliament's CONT Committee and other specialised committees), and to reply to questions raised by MEPs. Each year the Court of Auditors and CONT hold several meetings at which CONT members discuss with the Members of the Court their political priorities, the Court's annual work programme, detailed arrangements for cooperation, etc. Once a year, the ECA President attends a meeting of the European Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs to present the ECA's annual work programme and invite all committees to submit their suggestions for the next programming exercise. Parliament also makes suggestions on these issues in its annual resolutions on the Court of Auditors' discharge. The Court of Auditors presents the annual report on the previous year's budget to the Council and to the Parliament. Based on this report, Parliament decides whether or not to approve the</p>	<p>the Crown has very limited discretion in their choice of PM and must take full account of the <b>outcome of election results</b> and the <b>preferences of the political parties</b> represented in the House of Commons. No consideration is made of the balance of parties in the House of Lords, which varies from the House of Commons.</p> <p>PMs are appointed based on their <b>ability to command confidence in the House of Commons alone</b>. If an election produces a clear majority for one party, then the leader of that party becomes PM. If the election is won by the incumbent PM, then they just continue in office. If it is another party that wins a majority in the House, then the incumbent PM formally resigns the morning after the election and is promptly replaced. If no party wins a clear majority (which rarely happens because of the design of the electoral system), there may be a process of negotiation between parties, resulting in a formal or informal coalition. These parties present their agreed decision to the Monarch, who does not get involved in coalition negotiations but will agree to nominate any PM that can show they can rely on a Commons majority.</p> <p>Once the question of the PM is settled, there is <b>no requirement to hold a formal vote of confidence</b> in the House of Commons, either for the PM or for the Government as a whole. Instead, a motion for a 'vote of confidence' (proposed by the Government) or a motion for a 'vote of no confidence' (proposed by the Opposition) can be held at any point during the legislative term to test whether the Commons continues to support the PM <u>and</u> his/her Government (i.e. these stand or fall together). According to the Fixed Terms Parliament Act 2011, if the PM loses this vote then they have to resign but can immediately afterwards (within 14 days) try to form an alternative government, either with the same parliamentary majority or with a (slightly) different one. If the PM is unable to form an alternative majority in this timeframe then Parliament is dissolved and an election is held.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Commission's handling of the EU budget, by granting the budget discharge.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> The Parliament elects the European Ombudsman. The Ombudsman reports back to the EP and presents an annual report to the MEPs. The Ombudsman may be dismissed by the Court of Justice at Parliament's request in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b><u>Budget</u></b> Parliament remains one of the two arms of the budgetary authority (Article 314 of the TFEU). It is involved in the budgetary process from the preparation stage, notably in laying down the general guidelines and the type of spending. It adopts the budget and monitors its implementation (Article 318 of the TFEU). It gives a discharge on the implementation of the budget (Article 319 of the TFEU). Finally, Parliament has to provide its consent to the multiannual financial framework (MFF) (Article 312 of the TFEU). The MFF for 2014–2020 is the first to be covered under the rules laid down in the TFEU.</p> <p><b><u>Implementation of EU law</u></b> According to Article 226 of the TFEU, Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of EU law. The same article provides that the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the right of inquiry are to be determined by Parliament itself, acting by means of regulations on its own initiative after obtaining the consent of the Council and the Commission. Until such a regulation is adopted, the right of inquiry is exercised in accordance with a 1995 inter-institutional agreement annexed to Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Parliament has repeatedly expressed the need to improve communication and cooperation between the</p>	<p>Is the dismissal of a single member of government possible?</p> <p>No. The choice of Ministers is technically a prerogative of the Crown but in reality this power is delegated to the PM, who can change Ministers at any point during his/her period in office. There is <b>no role for the House of Commons at all in this process</b>. When several Ministers are changed at the same time, this is known as a 'reshuffle' and the House of Commons is not involved. Ministers can also resign at any time, either of their own accord or after being asked to do so by the PM. The latter can dismiss any Ministers who do not want to resign, but the House of Commons cannot force them to resign.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>three institutions in order to be able to fulfil its mandate based on Article 226 of the TFEU. In 2014, it adopted a position on a proposal for a regulation on the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry. However, the negotiations between the three institutions on the proposal have constantly been in a deadlock. Consequently, in April 2019, Parliament adopted a resolution, in which it considers that the Council and the Commission have failed to comply with the principle of inter-institutional cooperation and invites them to resume on the matter with the newly elected Parliament.</p>	
<p><b>Appointment procedures</b></p>	<p>The role and the prerogatives of the European Parliament have evolved and increased over time, not only as regards legislative powers and oversight but also in relation to the procedures to nominate, vet and appoint people to other senior positions in EU institutions, agencies and other bodies. Parliament's role varies from case to case depending on the legal basis. Parliament's scrutiny of such candidates, in various different forms, helps in ensuring the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of the process as well as its transparency. What is today codified in the EU Treaties, secondary legislation and Parliament's Rules of Procedure, is mostly the result of a set of Parliamentary processes that became established practices over the years. This demonstrates that Parliament has managed to use its political leverage to expand and formalise its power to nominate and appoint the holders of senior positions. Despite the heterogeneity of procedures, some common patterns may be highlighted, in particular, that candidates and nominees generally appear in front of the relevant committee(s) of the European Parliament, first making a statement and then answering questions from Members.</p> <p><b><u>European Commission</u></b></p>	<p>The Prime Minister (PM) or one of his/her Ministers is responsible for the vast majority of public appointments in the UK, including heads of Government Agencies and other Public Bodies. While the House of Commons has the right to be consulted on a small number of these appointments, it rarely has any power to veto Government choices.</p> <p>For many <b>public appointments</b>, there is a codified selection procedure involving formal applications, a selection committee and an interview process resulting in a shortlist, from which the (Prime) Minister takes the final decision. The <b>role of the House of Commons is limited</b> to holding pre-appointment hearings for preferred candidates to chair a list of more than 50 public bodies, as set out in <a href="#">Cabinet Office guidance</a>. This is only a small part of the 1000+ public appointments made by UK Ministers each year. Parliament cannot veto almost any of these appointments. There have been cases where a candidate has withdrawn when it has become clear a Commons select committee would recommend against their appointment. In other cases, ministers have proceeded to appoint a particular candidate notwithstanding an adverse view from the select committee.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>The Lisbon Treaty Article 17(7) TEU provides that Member State governments propose the other Commissioners, who are then nominated by the Council in common accord with the President-elect of the Commission. Each candidate then appears for a three-hour hearing in front of the Parliament's committee(s) responsible, as stipulated in Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Before a hearing can take place, candidates must answer a written questionnaire and present their declaration of interests. The declarations of financial interests are examined by Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs, which needs to confirm the absence of any conflict of interest. After that, the Commission as a whole still needs to obtain consent from Parliament by a majority of the votes cast, by roll call before being appointed by the European Council, by qualified majority.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Auditors</u></b> According to Article 286(2) TFEU the Council adopts the list of members of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) following proposals from Member States and after consulting the European Parliament. Despite Parliament having a consultative role only, it can influence the outcome. The Member States may prefer to withdraw a candidate than face a formal negative vote by Parliament. The relevance of Parliament's role also comes from the fact that hearings of the nominees are in public in committee, and their answers to the questionnaire are published, creating significant political weight and pressure on the candidates' performance.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Justice</u></b> Parliament has no role in the appointing procedure for Judges or Advocates-General of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). However, according to Article 255 TFEU it proposes one member of the panel entrusted with the duty of vetting the nominees.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b></p>	<p>There are exceptional cases where the House of Commons has a more powerful role in public appointments. The 2011 legislation establishing the <b>Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)</b> gave the Treasury Select Committee a veto over the appointment of the chair and members of the Budget Responsibility Committee, in a move designed to underline the OBR's independence from the Treasury and the rest of Government. In the case of the <b>National Audit Office</b>, which is actually a Parliamentary body, the House of Commons lead the process of appointing the chair and the appointment is jointly made by the PM and the chair of the Public Accounts Committee.</p> <p>When nominating the <b>Governor of the Bank of England (BoE)</b> - the UK central bank - it is the Chancellor of the Exchequer that decides from a shortlist, although the PM is involved in the process. While not involved in choosing the BoE Governor, the House of Commons Treasury Committee does have a role in scrutinising appointments to the BoE Monetary Policy and Financial Policy Committees, which take the key BoE policy decisions on interest rates and financial stability.</p> <p>The Prime Minister appoints the <b>Leader of the House of Commons</b> from among the ranks of the governing party. This gives the governing party great power over the agenda and proceedings of the House, as well as considerable influence over its internal work organisation. It is similar to the position of 'Majority Leader' in the US Congress.</p> <p>The <b>Speaker of the House of Commons</b> is a cross-party appointment that requires a binding Commons vote (or several). The Speaker is chosen from among serving MPs, with absolutely no role for the Prime Minister or any other Minister in the process. The Speaker must suspend any party affiliation once elected and throughout their term of office, although they are free to (re)join a political party afterwards. In the subsequent general election, the Speaker is (by convention) elected unopposed in their constituency (provided they intend to serve as Speaker in the next parliamentary</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>According to Article 228 TFEU the European Ombudsman is directly elected by Parliament for the duration of its legislative term, i.e. a five-year period. This appointment is completely under the aegis of Parliament and Member States have no role at all.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank</u></b> Parliament also has a role in the appointments procedure for members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) as well as of the Supervisory Board of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM). For the former, Parliament provides an opinion, while for the latter Parliament has a more stringent role. Article 283(2) TFEU states that the ECB Executive Board will be appointed by the European Council on a recommendation from the Council after consulting the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the ECB.</p> <p><b><u>Agencies' board members and Executive Directors</u></b> The European Parliament exercises its oversight power over EU agencies through various procedures including, but not limited to, budgetary discharge, involvement in the appointment of their Executive Directors and Management Board members.</p> <p><b><u>European Data Protection Supervisor</u></b> According to Article 53 of EU Regulation 2018/1725, Parliament and Council shall appoint the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) for a five-year term by common accord, on the basis of a public list of at least three candidates drawn up by the European Commission following a public call for submission of candidatures.</p> <p><b><u>European Public Prosecutor's Office</u></b> The first European Chief Prosecutor was appointed in 2019. According to Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, Parliament and Council shall appoint by common accord the European Chief Prosecutor, based on a number of criteria following an open call</p>	<p>term). The Speaker has a very important role in parliamentary proceedings and in managing the internal administration and functioning of the Parliament.</p> <p>The <b>Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman</b> is responsible for investigating complaints from citizens about maladministration by government departments, agencies, the NHS and other public bodies. The Ombudsman is only contactable through a Member and not directly by a citizen (the so-called '<b>MP filter</b>'). He/she is formally appointed by the Crown, through an independent and objective selection process that involves the chair of the House of Commons' Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee, but does not involve the PM or other Ministers. The Ombudsman <b>remains independent of both Government and Parliament throughout their term in office</b>. Only the Crown is able to dismiss the Ombudsman (at her own request or following a request from both Houses of Parliament). The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee scrutinises the work of the Ombudsman through regular hearings. The Ombudsman must testify before each House of Parliament on a yearly basis, presenting a report on the performance of his/her duties.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>for candidates published in the Official Journal. A selection panel, a member of which shall be proposed by Parliament, draws up a shortlist of qualified candidates to be submitted to Parliament and to the Council.</p> <p><b>European Anti-Fraud Office</b>  Article 17 of Regulation No 883/2013 on the investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) recognises Parliament's role in the appointment procedure of the European Anti-Fraud Office Director-General as well as its Supervisory Committee. Following amendments adopted in December 2020, the Regulation states that the Director-General is appointed by the European Commission for a seven-year term. In order to do so, following a public call for applications, the Commission draws up a list of suitably qualified candidates, based on the Supervisory Committee's favourable opinion, then Parliament and Council agree on a shortlist of three candidates based on which the Commission appoints the Director-General. The five independent members of the Supervisory Committee are also appointed by common accord of Parliament, Council and Commission - Article 15(2) of Regulation 833/2013. Finally, the recent amendments introduced the figure of Controller of procedural guarantees, attached to the Supervisory Committee, appointed by the Commission after consultation of Parliament and the Council.</p>	
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of up to 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes to be decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited to participate by the Conference of Presidents shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners to be invited shall be limited to two per</p>	<p>MPs can question government ministers directly on the floor of the House during the regular question times throughout the week (<b>Oral Questions</b>). The exact questions have to be tabled at least 3 days in advance and Members may ask supplementary questions (see box on question time above in part 1). Each government department regularly sends Ministers to the House of Commons to respond to MPs' questions. The Prime Minister also answers questions on a weekly basis in an established format that is televised and broadcast globally (<b>Prime Minister's Questions</b>).</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>part-session. However, it shall be possible to invite a third Commissioner, depending on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall, as far as possible, ensure that Members that hold different political views and that come from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn.</p> <p>The Member shall be given one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. That Member may put a supplementary question, lasting no longer than 30 seconds and having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner shall then be given two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided under paragraph. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p>	
<p><b>Transparency of legislative procedures</b></p>	<p>Primary law lays down some principles, which need to be respected by the EU institutions. The institutions are to conduct their work as openly as possible (Article 15(1) TFEU), with the Parliament (Article 15(2) TFEU) and Council (Article 16(8) TEU) meeting in public, the latter specifically 'when it deliberates and votes on a draft legislative act'. In addition, institutions must ensure the publication of documents relating to legislative procedures, and allow citizens and EU residents to access the</p>	<p>Hansard is the official publication for all House of Commons proceedings and (verbatim) debates. <b>Hansard is published the day after parliamentary proceedings take place and is freely available online for the public via the Hansard website.</b></p> <p>There is no equivalent to trilogues in the UK political system. Where there is legislative reconciliation on amendments between the Commons and the Lords, then written amendments are sent back</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>UK House of Commons</b>
	<p>types of documents as enshrined in Article 15(3) TFEU and Article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. This fundamental right is also reflected in secondary law adopted in 2001 – Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. It stipulates that legislative documents are in principle public, with some limited exceptions.</p> <p>The Commission’s proposals are published on the day the College adopts them. In the EP, working documents, draft reports and opinions as well as amendments tabled by individual Members or political groups are published in all official languages even before a vote takes place in a committee or in the plenary. Final texts adopted at committee and plenary level are made available to the public closely after the vote. In addition, 4 column-documents of political trilogues can be made available on request under Reg. 1049/2001. The result of the negotiations (the so called compromise agreement or text) is published before the final vote in plenary.</p> <p>While the EP receive the Council mandate for negotiating, the mandate does not provide information on the individual position of the Member States. The Ombudsman conducted an inquiry into the transparency of the legislative process of the Council (OI/2/2017/TE) in March 2017. The report stated that the Council failed to systematically record identities of Member States expressing positions in legislative files in preparatory level bodies. Moreover, the Council automatically assigned 'LIMITE' status to files of ongoing deliberations – meaning for internal use only – in violation of the principle of widest possible public access to documents established by the CJEU's case law. Thus, in the context of trilogues, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council review the 'LIMITE' status of documents setting out its position – the third column – to make it publicly available before trilogues take place. The Court of Justice considered, in the</p>	<p>and forth between the two Houses in a process known as ‘ping pong’. There is no strict limit on the number of times that written amendments can be sent back and forth between the Houses. This means the House of Commons (or Lords) is always working on the latest version of the text as amended by the other House.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>abovementioned case, that the Council was wrong to refuse public access to parts of a note from its Secretariat that contained amendments tabled by a number of Member State governments. The Court clarified that the EU's rules on access to documents "aim to ensure public access to the entire content of Council documents, including, in this case, the identity of those who put forward proposals'. The Ombudsman welcomed the Council's confirmation that, as a consequence of the Court's ruling, legislative documents containing Member States' positions are now disclosed upon request, "save in exceptional and duly justified cases". The Ombudsman suggested that the Council update its rules of procedure to reflect this practice. Of course this commitment means little, if Member States' positions are not recorded appropriately in the first place. The Ombudsman therefore made the following recommendation to the Council: The Council should systematically record the identity of Member State governments when they express positions in preparatory bodies.</p>	
<b>Resolving conflicts of competences between committees</b>	<p>(RoP 211) If a standing committee declares itself not to be competent to consider an item, or if a conflict arises over the competence of two or more standing committees, the question of competence shall be submitted to the Conference of Committee Chairs within four weeks of the announcement in Parliament of the referral to committee.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents shall take a decision within six weeks after the submission of the question on the basis of a recommendation from the Conference of Committee Chairs, or, if no such recommendation is forthcoming, from the latter's Chair. If the Conference of Presidents fails to take a decision within that period, the recommendation shall be deemed to have been approved.</p>	<p>House of Commons <b>Select Committees</b> are mainly scrutiny committees that have no role in the legislative process, but which are free to pursue their own lines of inquiry on topics within their remit.</p> <p>The remit of most select committees consists of one or more policy area(s) that broadly correspond to existing UK government departments (hence they are referred to as 'departmental select committees'). There are currently 19 departmental select committees, but the number can vary over time. It always includes three committees covering the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Other select committees can have a topical remit (e.g. Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs; European Scrutiny; Petitions; Women and Equality). There are 10 of these topical select committees at the current time. Finally, there are several select committees that deal with the internal administration of the House of Commons (7 at the current time).</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>The committee Chairs may enter into agreements with other committee Chairs concerning the allocation of an item to a particular committee, subject, where necessary, to the authorisation of an associated committee procedure under Rule 57.</p> <p>Where a question of competence is referred to the Conference of Presidents pursuant to Rule 211, and the Conference of Presidents, on the basis of Annex VI, considers that the matter falls almost equally within the competence of two or more committees, or that different parts of the matter fall within the competence of two or more committees, Rule 56 shall apply with the following additional provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the timetable shall be jointly agreed by the committees concerned;</li> <li>-the rapporteurs concerned shall keep each other informed and shall endeavour to agree on the texts they propose to their committees and on their position regarding amendments;</li> <li>-the Chairs and rapporteurs concerned are bound by the principle of good and sincere cooperation; they shall jointly identify areas of the text falling within their exclusive or shared competence and agree on the precise arrangements for their cooperation;</li> <li>-the committee responsible shall accept without a vote amendments from an associated committee where they concern matters which fall within the exclusive competence of that associated committee; if the committee responsible fails to respect the exclusive competence of the associated committee, that associated committee may table amendments directly in plenary; if amendments on matters which fall within the shared competence of the committee responsible and an associated committee are not adopted by the committee responsible, the</li> </ul>	<p>While the remit of select committees can overlap, there is no conflict of competences because these are all scrutiny or internal committees that never deal with the negotiation of ongoing legislation. Contacts between committee chairs over their topics of inquiry can take place on an informal basis though and may guide their decisions.</p> <p>House of Commons <b>General Committees</b> are ad hoc cross-party committees that consider legislation, hear evidence and provide advice. There are three main categories. The first is <b>Public Bill Committees</b>, created for a specific legislative proposal and consisting of 16-50 members distributed according to the seats held by the different parties in the House of Commons. The second category is <b>Delegated Legislation Committees</b>, created for specific statutory instruments (similar to EU delegated acts). Finally, there are <b>Second Reading Committees</b> that serve a formal procedure in the legislative process. As all these General Committees are specific to a given legislative proposal or statutory instrument or legislative procedure, then there is never a competence dispute between them.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>associated committee may table those amendments directly in plenary;</p> <p>-in the event of a conciliation procedure in respect of the proposal, Parliament's delegation shall include the rapporteur of any associated committee.</p>	
<b>Changes to committee competences and structures in response to the current crisis</b>	<p>The EP did not change the structure and the competences of its committees, due to the pandemic. In principle, it is allowed for the EP to change its committee structure at any given time; however, the established practice is that it modifies the structure and/or the competences of its committees shortly before the end of each legislative period, in order to keep up with the changing circumstances and increase its effectiveness in the subsequent legislative term.</p> <p>The last adaptation to the composition of the committees took place on 8 July 2021. Following changes in its composition, Parliament increased the number of seats in its special and inquiry committees, and adopted a new distribution among political groups. Following several changes in the political groups' composition and to ensure that all MEPs can participate in the work of committees and delegations, ten committee seats are allocated to non-attached Members: four additional seats are created, and six existing ones will be reallocated. The plenary adapted the numerical strength of the four committees based on the decision of the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>A new seat will be created in each of the Special Committees on Beating Cancer (BECA), on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (INGE), and on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA). They will now be composed of 34 members each. The fourth new seat will be created in the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals</p>	<p>In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, House of Commons committees moved to a form of hybrid working from April 2020, with some MPs (and staff) working from the House of Commons and meeting online with other MPs (and staff) participating in proceedings remotely. These measures are currently still in place. One of the effects of these temporary changes is that it has <b>allowed committees to meet during parliamentary recesses</b>, which is usually not possible.</p> <p><b>No significant changes to House of Commons committee structures and competences</b> have yet taken place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Issues relating to the consequences and management of Covid-19 have been dealt with by individual select committees within their respective remits. Due to the crisis, some select committees have become more prominent than before (e.g. Health and Social Care, Public Accounts). However, no new Commons committees have been created or had their competences significantly adjusted.</p> <p>The situation is different in the House of Lords (<u>outside the scope of this study</u>), where a new Covid-19 select committee has been created to consider the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic and social wellbeing of the UK. In 2020-2021 the House of Lords underwent a broader reorganisation of its committee structures, including major changes to existing committees (e.g. EU Committee) and the creation of several new committees (e.g. environment and climate change; justice and home affairs; international agreements; international relations and defence).</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>during Transport within and outside the EU (ANIT), which will now be composed of 31 members.</p> <p>The new nominal composition of Parliament's committees will be decided by the political groups and non-attached members, and will be communicated to the plenary in a subsequent session.</p> <p>Parliament's Rules of Procedure provide that the composition of the committees "shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament". When it comes to the criteria for setting up a parliamentary committee or changing its competences, there are no formal guidelines available. Political Groups are free to define such criteria as they consider fit for purpose. Possible criteria in this context would be the 'workload of parliamentary committees', 'match of policy areas between the European Commission's work programme and the competences of parliamentary committees', 'reduction of conflicts of competences', and of course, the 'interest of Members'.</p>	

### 3. Enhancing Parliamentary Diplomacy

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
<b>Relations with the executive</b>	<p>Article 36 of the TEU requires the High Representative to consult Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the CFSP and to inform Parliament of the policy's evolution. Parliament holds twice-yearly debates on CFSP progress reports and puts questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative.</p> <p>Parliament's right to be informed and consulted about the CFSP/CSDP was further strengthened by the High</p>	<p>The <b>Foreign Affairs Committee</b> scrutinises the expenditure, administration and policies of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), as well as other bodies associated with the FCDO and within the Committee's broad remit of UK foreign policy.</p> <p>The <b>International Development Committee</b> looks at the tasks of the FCDO in the field of International Development. It used to scrutinise the Department for International Development (DFiD), until this was merged into the FCDO in 2020.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Representative's declaration of political accountability in 2010. The declaration provided, inter alia, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the status of the 'Joint Consultation Meetings' (JCMs), which allow a designated group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to meet counterparts from the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EEAS and the Commission to discuss planned and ongoing civilian CSDP missions;</li> <li>• Affirming the right of Parliament's 'special committee' to have access to confidential information relating to the CFSP and the CSDP. This right is based on an inter-institutional agreement of 2002;</li> <li>• Holding exchanges of views with heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials during committee meetings and hearings of committees of Parliament;</li> <li>• Mandating the High Representative to appear before Parliament at least twice a year to report on the current state of affairs regarding the CFSP/CSDP and to answer questions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to this political dialogue, Parliament exercises its authority through the budgetary procedure. As one arm of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament must approve the annual CFSP budget. Parliament also helps to shape the relevant external financial instruments through a process of trilateral negotiations with the Council and the Commission.</p> <p>Parliament regularly scrutinises the operations of the EEAS and provides it with suggestions on structural issues, ranging from its geographical and gender balance to its interaction with other EU institutions and the diplomatic services of the Member States. Parliament also holds regular discussions with the High Representative and the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) appointed for certain regions or issues. Parliamentary</p>	<p>The <b>International Trade Committee</b> scrutinises the spending, administration and policies of the Department for International Trade (DIT), and associated public bodies. This committee was created in 2016 at around the same time as the UK government created the DIT.</p> <p>The <b>European Scrutiny Committee</b> was created in 1974 to monitor and put for parliamentary debate any EU legislation with considerable impact on the UK. Although the UK is no longer required to transpose EU legislation, this Committee continues to monitor the legal and/or political importance of new EU legislation/policies and assess their potential implications for the UK. It will also scrutinise the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, the Protocol on Northern Ireland, and the UK/EU Trade &amp; Cooperation Agreement.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>committees, which helped to set up the EEAS, also exchange views with the EEAS's newly appointed heads of delegation.</p> <p>Parliament also has a role to play in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. Parliament's consent is required before the Council can conclude such agreements.</p>	
<p><b>Interparliamentary delegations</b></p>	<p>The European Parliament's interparliamentary delegations are official groups of Members who build ties to countries, regions or organisations outside the European Union (EU). The European Parliament currently has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one term to the next. The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner.</p> <p>There are two main types of delegations: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations. Standing delegations belong in three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations.</p> <p><b>Parliamentary assemblies</b> are regular, formal meetings of elected representatives from several parliaments. Currently, 5 of Parliament's 44 delegations participate in parliamentary assemblies.</p> <p><b>Interparliamentary committees</b> are mostly bilateral. European Parliament delegations meet their counterparts from a country/countries in formal meetings, held on a regular basis. Interparliamentary committees differ according to the type of bilateral agreement establishing</p>	<p>The UK Houses of Parliament send joint <b>parliamentary delegations</b> to the following multilateral assemblies:</p> <p>Parliamentary Assembly of the <b>Council of Europe</b> (Strasbourg)  <b>NATO</b> Parliamentary Assembly (Brussels)  <b>OSCE</b> Parliamentary Assembly (Copenhagen)  <b>European Security and Defence</b> Assembly (Paris)</p> <p>These parliamentary delegations are composed of members from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, reflecting their interests/expertise as well as ensuring a fair political balance.</p> <p>The House of Commons is also active in a number of foreign policy bodies/associations and bilateral fora. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All-Party Parliamentary Groups</b> (APPGs) – informal, cross-party interest groups of MPs in the Commons and the Lords. APPGs tend to focus on overseas countries and regions and cover many international issues of interest to the FCDO (e.g. health, education, human rights, climate change, transport, etc.). There are over 130 APPGs at the current time.</li> <li>• UK branches of the <b>Commonwealth Parliamentary Association</b> (CPA). These promote parliamentary democracy throughout Commonwealth countries via processes of political dialogue. The CPA aims to build</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>them, between the EU and the respective country. These include Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees.</p> <p>Other <b>interparliamentary delegations</b> form the largest group of delegations (25 out of the total number of 44 delegations), which work with relations with individual countries or a group of countries. The 'interparliamentary meetings' – in which the delegations meet with their counterparts – are not held on a regular basis, and do not have their own rules, although they follow the general provisions for delegations.</p> <p>According to Rule 223(5) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Conference of Presidents adopts the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs.</p>	<p>enhanced cooperation and information sharing between legislatures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.</b> Composed of an equal number of UK and Ireland MPs that meet to discuss issues of common interest. Two plenary sessions are held per year, while four topical committees meet several times per year.</li> <li>• <b>British-American Parliamentary Group.</b> Composed of UK MPs from both Houses of Parliament who are active in promoting closer relations and understanding with the USA, in particular the US Congress and related institutions.</li> </ul>
<b>Diplomacy on human rights</b>	<p>The EP attaches great importance to the protection of human rights both inside and outside the Union and has used its power of promoting respect for fundamental rights.</p> <p>In Europe and around the world, Parliament acts as a guardian of liberties and democracy, and strives to uphold human rights and freedoms. It is particularly sensitive to the issue of tolerance, and fights determinedly against all forms of discrimination, whether based on sex, race, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, political opinion, handicap, age or sexual orientation. It takes a stand against racism and xenophobia and constantly highlights the need for compliance with European gender equality standards.</p>	<p>Questions on human rights domestically are treated by the UK Parliament's <b>Joint Committee on Human Rights</b>. The Joint Committee consists of 12 members, appointed from the House of Commons and the House of Lords, to examine matters relating to human rights within the United Kingdom (as defined in the Human Rights Act 1998), as well as scrutinise every Government Bill for its compatibility with human rights obligations on a national and international level.</p> <p>Human rights abroad fall mainly in the remit of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and the International Development Select Committee, since they relate to the UK's foreign policies.</p> <p>Human Rights forms part of the activism of several <b>All-Party Parliament Groups</b> (APPGs) in the UK Parliament. Many APPGs</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>MEPs also use their full power to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected, and the rights of children protected. While the EP supports efforts to coordinate police and judicial action, which is the only effective way to counter these cross-border threats, it refuses to allow citizens' rights to bear the brunt of a policy based entirely on security considerations. Parliament also ensures that human rights are protected in the EU's external economic and trade agreements.</p> <p>The EP holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has adopted a host of resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights.</p> <p>The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee on Human Rights defend human rights outside the European Union and fight against the death penalty with the support of other key players in the Parliament.</p> <p><b>Sakharov Prize:</b> It is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network the EU assists laureates, who are supported and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes.</p> <p>The prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil-society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, long-serving prisoners of conscience, a film-maker, the UN as a body and even a child campaigning for the right to education. It promotes in particular freedom of expression, the rights of minorities, respect for international law, the development of</p>	<p>deal with third countries and topics related to human rights. While APPGs are informal groupings, they can nevertheless be influential because of their political membership and cross-party nature. They are composed of members of both the Commons and the Lords.</p> <p>The House of Commons is an active member of the <b>Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)</b>, which has existed in different forms since 1911, and whose principal mission today is to support good governance, democracy and human rights. The focus of the CPA is mainly (but not exclusively) Commonwealth countries.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>democracy and the implementation of the rule of law. Several laureates, including Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.</p> <p>The European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize, with its EUR 50 000 endowment, at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Each of the Parliament's political groups may nominate candidates, as may individual MEPs (the support of at least 40 MEPs is required for each candidate). The nominees are presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Development Committee and the Human Rights Subcommittee, and the members of the full committees vote on a shortlist of three candidates. The final winner of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents.</p>	
Democracy support	<p>As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament is particularly committed to supporting sustainable democracies throughout the world. This commitment is regularly highlighted in Parliament's resolutions. Democracy support activities focus on a small number of priority countries and are closely associated with the Parliament's role in election monitoring in these priority countries and other non-EU countries. Parliament almost always organises democracy support activities around the electoral cycle, so as to establish a better link between election observation and complementary activities such as mediation, election follow-up, parliamentary support activities and human rights action.</p> <p>In 2012, the European Parliament decided to create the Directorate for Democracy Support. In setting up this directorate as part of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, four units were created, these are: the Democracy and Election Actions Unit, the European Parliament</p>	<p><b>Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)</b> is a UK public body set up in 1992 to support democratic institutions overseas. WFD is sponsored by the FCDO, which provides most of its funding. <b>Half of the WFD Board (4 out of 8) are serving MPs.</b> The chair of the Board is Richard Graham MP (Conservatives), the Vice-Chair is from Labour and two other Board members are from the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. <b>WFD has direct relations with UK political parties and the House of Commons.</b> Around a third of the WFD budget is spent through UK political parties and its accounts are presented annually to the House of Commons.</p> <p>WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups, and participates in election missions, with a view to making political systems fairer and more inclusive, accountable and transparent. Its initiatives include helping protect women from violence in the Middle East; making politics more inclusive in Africa; consolidating democratic institutions in Asia; and building</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit, the Human Rights Action Unit and the Pre-Accession Unit.</p> <p>In 2014, Parliament set up a Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that provides political guidance for all activities supporting democracy (Decision of Conference of Presidents of 13 September 2012). It consists of 15 MEPs and is co-chaired by the chairs of Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Development. Parliament's vice-presidents responsible for human rights and democracy and the Sakharov Network and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights are ex officio permanent members.</p> <p>The comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA) places more emphasis on pre-election dialogue and the follow-up to election observation. This includes following up on recommendations of the Election Observation Mission. In order to boost the institutional capacity of parliaments in third countries, Parliament organises training programmes and study visits for members and officials of third-country parliaments. Parliament has also built up a mentoring system involving MEPs and newly elected parliamentarians from priority countries. Providing support for mediation and dialogue were added as new types of interventions, with a view to preventing election-related conflicts and violence.</p> <p>Activities – although decided and supervised by the DEG – must be approved by the Conference of Presidents (CoP). The CoP adopted implementing provisions on democracy support and election observation activities in February 2019. According to this document, the DEG co-chairs may, for example, submit requests for authorisation for outgoing missions and for high-level conferences in the European Parliament's premises to the CoP at least four weeks prior to the activity concerned. In addition, the DEG co-chairs may submit requests, including</p>	<p>trust in democracy across the Western Balkans. <b>WFD recruits international election observers and fields nearly 150 staff in offices in more than 30 countries (and currently operating across 38 countries).</b> The WFD is a member of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), the umbrella organisation for European democracy assistance organisations.</p> <p>UK Parliament is also active in <b>democracy support in Commonwealth countries</b> through the CPA (see section above - human rights). This includes the organisation of election observation missions in Commonwealth countries.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	urgent ones, to the CoP to mandate a Member or Members to act as an envoy or mediator or to authorise the establishment of a Jean Monnet Dialogue with a third country, under the guidance of a lead Member or Members	
<b>Mediation of foreign conflicts</b>	<p>Members of the European Parliament engage in a wide range of mediation, conflict prevention and dialogue activities that complement the EU's overall approach.</p> <p><b>The Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy</b>  The European Parliament prides itself in having a 'culture of dialogue', a set of norms and rules that require political opponents to engage in dialogue to bring about a compromise. Efforts have been made to 'export' this culture of dialogue to non-EU parliaments, through a mediation and consensus-building process known as the 'Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy'. Named after one of the founding fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet dialogues often – although not always – take place at the historical Jean Monnet House. Located in rural France, far away from the media attention characterising either Brussels or national capitals, Monnet's house has proven to be an ideal location for constructive dialogue among opposing political factions. Four series of dialogues with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) have taken place so far.</p> <p><b>Young political leaders programme</b>  The European Parliament is committed to building strong and lasting relations with future leaders outside of the European Union. A programme targeting young political leaders was set up in 2015. The young political leaders programme (YPL) expands on existing activities organised by Parliament, such as the annual fora for young leaders from the European Neighbourhood (Maghreb, Middle East, Eastern Partnership), and the young political leaders initiative for the Sudan. The</p>	N.A

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>programme cooperates with young political activists, including political party representatives, civil society actors and young business leaders in the European Neighbourhood countries, priority countries agreed under the comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA), and ad hoc countries requiring assistance in the area of parliamentary conflict prevention and democracy support. Recent YPL activities have targeted young leaders from Israel and Palestine, the Maghreb, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the western Balkans, Armenia and Azerbaijan.</p>	
<p><b>High-level visits by foreign dignitaries</b></p>	<p>The term 'official visit' refers to visits by Heads of State, high-level Religious Leaders, or any personality invited to address a formal sitting of Parliament.</p> <p>Visits by Heads of State and Government, Presidents of Parliaments, and others holding equivalent ranks which do not include an address to a formal sitting shall be considered as working visits.</p> <p>Invitations to make an official visit to Parliament are issued by the President after consultation with the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>On the basis of established practice, the Heads of State of the EU Member States have an open invitation to pay an official visit to Parliament.</p> <p>An official visit generally comprises the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Welcoming ceremony including official photo in front of the flags, playing of the visitor's national anthem followed by the EU anthem, and signature of the Parliament's Distinguished Visitors' Book,</li> </ul>	<p>Foreign dignitaries may participate in the proceedings of the UK Parliament as part of their <b>official/state visits to the country</b>. These official/state visits are on invitation from the Queen as the Head of State, who also hosts the visit. In practice, the Government is heavily involved in deciding whether and when to offer the invitation to foreign dignitaries, and in setting the agenda and content of the visit.</p> <p>Some prominent official/state visits to the UK have included a <b>speech given by the foreign dignitary to both Houses of Parliament</b>. Such speeches are usually given by current or former Heads of State (Presidents, Monarchs etc.). Occasionally, other dignitaries have addressed the UK Parliament: Nelson Mandela (once before becoming President and once afterwards), Mikhail Gorbachev (on two occasions), the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi. The last speech to the UK Parliament by a foreign dignitary took place in 2018.</p> <p>Since the Houses of Parliament are independent from the executive, they can choose to reject the option of a speech by the foreign dignitary. This happens rarely and the details of such rejections are not widely publicised. However, this seems to have happened when US President Donald Trump undertook his 2019 state visit to the UK. The Speaker of the House at the time, John</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bilateral meeting between the President of Parliament and the visiting Head of State,</li> <li>➤ Official exchange of gifts,</li> <li>➤ Address to a formal sitting of Parliament, which is usually scheduled to last 30 minutes,</li> <li>➤ Official lunch (or dinner) hosted by the President of Parliament,</li> <li>➤ Press conference (if requested).</li> </ul> <p>An official visit by a Head of State of an EU Member State may incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A reception for the MEPs and/or parliamentary staff of the Member State concerned organised by the respective Permanent Representation,</li> <li>➤ Meetings (if requested) with political group leaders or Members of Parliament.</li> </ul> <p>The red carpet is rolled out at the protocol entrance, for visits by Heads of State and High-Level visitors of equivalent rank. Official visits are managed by the protocol unit (DG PRES).</p>	<p>Bercow MP, made clear that a speech by President Trump to the Commons would not be welcome and therefore such a speech never took place.</p>
<b>Multilateral and international parliamentary fora</b>	<p><b>Euronest</b> EU works hand-in-hand with its six Eastern Partners to support European integration reforms and foster stability, security, democracy and prosperity across the continent. Established in 2011, the Euronest PA is the parliamentary forum tasked with the scrutiny over this ambitious policy, while promoting the active participation of civil society actors. It brings together the 60 Members of the European Parliament who sit in the Delegation to the Euronest PA, and 50 Members from the national parliaments of our Eastern Partners, i.e. 10 delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively. For the time being, although Belarus is an active Eastern Partner, its National Assembly has not yet been invited</p>	<p>UK has always participated in the <b>International Parliamentary Union (IPU)</b>, a worldwide organisation of parliamentarians founded in 1889, with the role of enhancing knowledge and understanding of parliamentarians on key global issues through parliamentary exchange. The IPU is headquartered in Geneva and has permanent observer status at the UN General Assembly.</p> <p>All UK branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) send delegates to the general assembly of the <b>Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference</b>. This Conference usually takes place on an annual basis (rotating location) and takes the key decisions for the CPA. Both Houses of Parliament, as well as the devolved legislatures (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), are</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>to send its 10 delegates to the Euronest PA, because it does not fulfil the necessary, democratic requirements to do so. Nevertheless, the absence of Belarusian parliamentarians expected to be only be provisory.</p> <p>The Euronest PA includes the plenary, chaired by two Co-Presidents, the Bureau, four standing committees (on political affairs, economic integration, energy security and social affairs) and three working groups (a group on Belarus, ad hoc group on Association Agreements, and a group on Rules of Procedure). It meets once a year for a plenary session, alternating between the European Parliament's premises and the Eastern Partnership countries.</p> <p><b>ACP</b> The European Parliament's Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (DACP) is the EP part of the joint undertaking set up by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Agreement was signed in 2000 in Cotonou (Benin) by the EU Member States and 78 member countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Its aim is to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.</p> <p>The Agreement sets up three joint institutions: the Council of Ministers, the Committee of Ambassadors and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentary institution, the "ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly" (ACP-EU JPA), is composed of equal numbers of EU and ACP representatives, and comprised of both the 78-member EP DACP Delegation and 78 members of parliament of the ACP countries.</p>	<p>members of the CPA. The current Secretary-General of the CPA is a former Labour MP (Stephen Twigg) and its secretariat is in London.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>The Delegation participates together with ACP members in the activities of the Assembly (sessions, Bureau and committee meetings, regional meetings, fact-finding missions and election observation missions).</p> <p>At the EP level, the Delegation also meets regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg to prepare the joint activities and monitor the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the situation in the ACP countries and prospects for the future of the partnership.</p> <p><b><u>EuroLat</u></b>  The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits resolutions and recommendations. These are addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. This Partnership was established at the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1999. Today, EuroLat debates, monitors and reviews all questions relating to the partnership.</p> <p>The Assembly also works generally to strengthen links between the two regions and address issues of bi-regional and international concern. EuroLat debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights, migration, fighting poverty, promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology and the environment and climate change. Half the members - 75 - come from Latin American regional parliaments and the other half - again, 75 members - come from the European Parliament. EuroLat has four Standing Committees. The work of these committees serves as the basis for most of the Assembly's decisions. The Committees and Executive Bureau meet at least twice a year, with one of these two sessions running in parallel with EuroLat's full annual Plenary Session.</p>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p><b>EuroMed</b> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean institution provides a forum for the elected representatives of the EU and its southern neighbours around the Mediterranean to cooperate.</p> <p>The Assembly describes three principal aims for its work: Fostering dialogue amongst elected representatives from both shores of the Mediterranean; Enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the citizens. Adding democratic legitimacy and political support to regional cooperation.</p> <p>As a north- south forum, the Assembly brings together 44 parliaments – the 43 parliaments of the countries in the Union for the Mediterranean, and the European Parliament. The Assembly consists of 280 members. The Assembly is directed by a "bureau", made up of four members, who coordinate the work of the Assembly and draft its budget. The bureau remains in place for four years before new members are appointed. The Assembly has five standing committees.</p>	

#### 4. Relations with citizens / Communicating effectively

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
<b>Public perceptions of parliaments</b>	The European Parliament communicates to varied audiences across 28 different countries. Understanding these audiences' point of view is crucial for Parliament's communication activities to be efficient and effective. This means that DG Communication must first establish a clear idea of who these audiences are, what is important to them and via which channels to reach them. DG	In 2018, 43 % of respondents to a poll commissioned by Hansard claimed to know 'a fair amount' about Parliament, and 7 % considered themselves highly knowledgeable. Knowledge of Parliament tends to be particularly high in election years, with a longer term trend to increasing knowledge.

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>Communication bases its work on a robust audience insight and a data driven approach to define and evaluate its output. This is ensured by a rigorous analysis of evidence concerning audiences and channels, including an in-depth research of relevant target groups to understand their behaviour. A core part of this analysis is the continuous and in-depth monitoring of public opinion across the European Union. This key strategic activity not only aids the European Parliament's communication strategy but also supports the political and legislative work of Parliament's elected Members.</p> <p>Public opinion is assessed via the EU institutions' joint Eurobarometer survey tool. The European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies use this instrument to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. Eurobarometer provides quality and relevant data for experts in public opinion, researchers, media and the public. Initiated in 1974, the Eurobarometer tool has since then evolved and expanded significantly with different survey tools. The combination of the wide range of topics covered consistently over a long time, the regularity of publications and geographical coverage makes the Eurobarometer a uniquely rich source of knowledge and information in the European Union.</p> <p>The European Parliament started in 2007 to commission its own Eurobarometer surveys within the joint inter-institutional framework. DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU), is responsible for designing, commissioning and</p>	<p>Greater awareness of the Parliament's work does not translate into positive perceptions. In 2019, only 34 % had confidence in members of the House of Commons (House of Lords: 33 %; government: 33 %) to act in the public interest. This is a far lower figure than for civil servants (49 %), the courts (62 %) and the armed forces (74 %).</p> <p>Intensive media coverage of parliamentary debates on Brexit raised public awareness of the parliament's role, but did not improve its image. In 2019, only 28 % expressed confidence in the way Brexit was being handled by the House of Lords, compared to 25 % for the House of Commons and 26 % for the government. In the same year, 42 % felt it would be better if the government did not have to worry about parliamentary votes when tackling problems, although 50 % still felt it would be risky for the government to take decisions without parliamentary oversight.</p> <p>Apart from Brexit, negative attitudes towards the Parliament are partly the result of scandals, such as those caused by staff claims of bullying and sexual harassment by MPs (in 2017), and excessive MP expenses (in 2009).</p> <p>Data source: Hansard Audit of Political Engagement; see reports for <a href="#">2018</a>, <a href="#">2019</a></p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>analysing the surveys. Conducted regularly and at least twice per year since 2007, they focus on the one hand on citizens' perceptions and expectations towards EU action, and the main challenges the Union is facing. An annual 'Parlemeter' survey measures the European Parliament's public image and role as well as public opinion with regard to EU membership and its benefits. A dedicated set of EP Eurobarometer surveys gauges Europeans' interest in the European elections every five years. Pre- and post-electoral surveys measure citizens' interest in these elections and the key issues at stake as well as voting behaviour and motivation.</p> <p>Published surveys offer unrestricted access to the full data set, including all national, regional and socio-demographic results, allowing for a detailed analysis. POMU as responsible unit will produce an in-depth analytical report as well as a range of supporting products such as presentation, national factsheets or infographics. The data is also used for briefing members on available audience insight relevant to topics on the plenary agenda, distributed ahead of each session to all MEPs. Individual trainings and data-related briefings can be requested by Members.</p> <p>POMU applies the data at its disposal also for contributing to DG Communication's data-driven communication approach by designing relevant audience segmentation and targeting strategies and by assisting DG COMM services to implement this segmentation analysis in their communication activities.</p>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>The second unique task of POMU is the regular collection and analysis of voting intention trends in all EU Member States. In cooperation with Parliament's Liaison Offices in the Member States, POMU compiles publicly available voting intention polls conducted by reliable institutes in each EU MS. A proprietary database allows POMU to monitor developments in Member States and to produce regular briefings for Parliament's leading bodies (Bureau, CoP, SGs). In the run-up to the European elections, POMU enlarges its activities with a view to election night. A high-level assembly of election results from all Member States allow POMU to produce precise seat projections and to ensure positioning the European Parliament as the sole focal point in the European Union to receive aggregated and detailed election results.</p>	
<p><b>New patterns in relations with the media in response to the current crisis</b></p>	<p><b><u>Impact of the Covid</u></b></p> <p>Parliament is the only EU institution which has remained open for journalists throughout the pandemic. Commission and Council have been operating in a fully remote mode since March 2020, whilst Parliament adopted a hybrid approach - facilitating remote participation to parliamentary meetings and press conferences, but without excluding the possibility for journalists to come in person to the pressroom, to interview MEPs or simply to work from the EP's press centre.</p> <p>Whilst the physical presence of the media in Parliament's premises has naturally fallen significantly over the past 12 months, online participation in media events (especially online</p>	<p>Throughout the pandemic, the House of Commons Communications Office remained active. Parliament premises including the House of Commons Press Gallery were open to journalists, although with reduced seating. To allow coverage by a broader range of outlets, media were offered pooled access to parliamentary debates.</p> <p>MPs were allowed to use 'filming points' in the grounds of the Parliament for face-to-face interviews with the media, subject to social distancing constraints.</p> <p>Inevitably, however, most interviews were conducted online. Weekly media briefings were also held online; this resulted in an increase in the number of participants, with people attending from a range of regional and international outlets. As well as these weekly briefings, communication staff also organised a number of bespoke online media briefings devoted to particular issues.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>briefings) has increased enormously. In 2020 the Media services organised 589 media events, compared to 436 in 2015 (first year of last legislative term). Online briefings were barely used at all pre-Covid, largely due to the unavailability or unfamiliarity of appropriate technology to operate such platforms.</p> <p>Online meetings and briefings also opened up access to journalists in the Member States to follow EP activities directly and thus blurred the distinction between national media and Brussels correspondents. More exchanges with journalists from other countries mean 'Europeanisation' of the debate.</p> <p>In addition, it is easier to invite MEPs as well as high-level external speakers to online events, as they can simply connect from wherever they are.</p> <p>Therefore, online and hybrid media events will remain a key element of the media strategy in the future. The technology and format can be further refined to enhance the experience and quality.</p> <p><b><u>Enhanced role for media relations in the Member States</u></b></p> <p>Reinforced press work in the Member States is necessary to reach out to media in the national newsrooms. Not all media have correspondents in Brussels - and in Brussels there is a growing competition for news (Council, EC, NATO...). In particular, in the Member States, the EP has been focusing on:</p>	<p>The pandemic sparked strong media interest in the work of the parliament, with record numbers of journalist enquiries (300 in March 2020); to keep enquiries at a manageable level, and help the media produce accurate reports, communication staff sent factual briefings to journalists.</p> <p>To raise public awareness of how the Parliament adapted to the situation, official photographers documented the work of the parliamentary administration to prepare for events such as the first virtual Prime Minister's Questions. In addition, the Communications Office facilitated a special behind-the-scenes report (by external media) showing the efforts of parliamentary staff (such as procedural clerks, caterers and cleaners) to keep parliamentary activities going.</p> <p>The situation is now gradually returning to normal with more journalists physically present in and around the Parliament.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p><b>National media:</b> TV and radio programs; specialised media/magazines/programs (women, consumers...) and specialised journalists in mainstream media (environment, digital specialist in press agencies and others).</p> <p><b>Native digital media:</b> online only platforms, including media that exist only on social media and influencers active in political/societal debates</p> <p><b>Regional media,</b> when and where relevant.</p> <p><b>Targeted information:</b> DG COMM works with the broad catalogue of EP agenda, MEPs and events to cater a specific offer to each kind of media. Not everything for everybody all the time, but every day some news for some journalists who might be interested. DG COMM offers content, but also services (multimedia centre, facilities in BRU and STR, EPRS research...) and help journalists to build their story: pitching it, finding the right MEP, choosing data and relevant local angles. It invites journalists to BRU and STR to make them experience the richness of the institution from the media point of view. The EP reaches out to them via media tours, trainings and similar activities on the ground. It provides editorial content, raw or edited, but always un-biased, politically balanced, reliable and accessible. It promotes transparency and openness as a distinctive feature of the EP press service.</p>	
<p><b>Fighting disinformation and hate speech</b></p>	<p>The political work of the European Parliament addresses disinformation and hate speech through non-legislative and legislative measures such as the current draft Digital Services Act. The European Parliament services take very seriously any attempt</p>	<p>The work of the Parliament's communication services focuses mainly on factual presentation of parliamentary activities and procedures, rather than directly countering disinformation.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>to target the institution or its members with disinformation or any actions to misrepresent their defined positions. While services undertake specific actions to counter disinformation, the most effective defence against false narratives and foreign influence operations is to ensure communication of <b>proactive factual narratives</b> related to the work and decisions of Members. To this end, Parliament's services communicate in all official working languages and through a variety of media and platforms to ensure maximum reach.</p> <p>The Secretariat of the Parliament established an <b>inter-DG task force against disinformation</b> to streamline cooperation between different DGs and services. This ensures more joined up action in response to disinformation threats.</p> <p>The EP's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) developed its <b>capacity to monitor, analyse, alert and devise counter strategies</b> in response to disinformation and deceptive narratives that target the institution and its members. This concerns both human resources and investing in software to assist with monitoring and analysis. It also relates to close cooperation and training with leading civil society/academic experts in the field.</p> <p>DG COMM cooperates closely with the other DGs (EPRS, EXPO and ITEC e.g.) and other EU institutions via an <b>informal "tripartite" arrangement</b>. It participates in the <b>European Commission Network Against Disinformation</b> and shares information with EU Member State governments via a secure <b>"Rapid Alert System"</b>. Furthermore, it cooperates on a regular</p>	<p>The parliamentary committee dealing with disinformation is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee of the House of Commons.</p> <p>In February 2019, the Committee published its <a href="#">report</a> on <i>Disinformation and 'fake news'</i>. The report, based on input from a wide range of stakeholders, looks at issues such as the the role of social media platforms, data misuse, political campaigning, Russian influence in political campaigns and digital literacy.</p> <p>In March 2020, the Committee set up a Sub-Committee on Online Harms and Disinformation. The Sub-Committee has opened an inquiry into <i>Online harms and the ethics of data</i>, which is expected to lead to a report.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p>basis with leading experts in civil society. With the support over other DGs, mainly DG EPRS and DG EXPO, DG COMM develops its dedicated media and social media monitoring and analysis capacity as well as its media literacy capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upon request, DG COMM and DG EPRS offer <b>personal training to MEPs</b> on disinformation issues, including on data analysis;</li> <li>- Regular offering by DG COMM and DG EPRS of <b>training for accredited parliamentary assistants and EP staff members;</b></li> <li>- <b>Specialised Trainings</b> in partnership with EU institutions, to prepare colleagues dealing with communication in the European Parliament Liaison Offices;</li> <li>- <b>Awareness raising and capacity building exercises for external audiences</b> including visitors groups, youth groups and the Together.EU network. In addition, the House of European History 'Fake or/for Real exhibition' helps raise awareness;</li> <li>- <b>Seminars with media representatives and MEPs</b> to discuss disinformation as a threat to democracy and how to support media as well as fact checking;</li> <li>- <b>Cooperation with civil society, fact checkers and academia.</b> Parliament services work on initiatives that foster closer cooperation and exchange of best practice. For example, in 2019 the European Parliament services organised a conference for fact checkers. Parliament officials also participate in follow-up initiatives to support this work, such as the <b>European Digital</b></li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<p><b>Media Observatory.</b> In 2021, an external expert provided a series of trainings with the goal of developing updated frameworks for assessing and responding to disinformation;</p> <p>- In addition to these seminars and trainings, regular information is provided on the work of the INGE Special Committee (press releases, briefings, press conferences), supported by DG EXPO.</p> <p>A news page is available on EP’s news portal and regular social media posts promote the importance of factual information and explain “How to spot when news is fake” based on a flagship infographic of DG EPRS.</p> <p>DG COMM has developed strong policy against any kind of aggression on its platforms since joining the different social media channels. It has been working on best practices and has established a clear moderation policy that is implemented on all corporate accounts. The community management team from DG COMM enforces it on Parliament's channels without the unnecessary removal of content or censorship. Users can always contact the team and refer to the rules guiding our online presence. The key aspect of the policy is that while we welcome all sides of the debate, we do not allow any form of hate speech on our accounts so it remains a safe place for conversation.</p>	
<b>Social media strategies</b>	<p>DG COMM's Directorate for the Media animates the following <b>social-media platforms</b> for the European Parliament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facebook</b> : 2.6 million fans</li> <li>• <b>Twitter (in 24 languages):</b> 1.7 million followers</li> </ul>	<p>The main social media platforms used by the UK Parliament are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube:</p> <p>Number of followers/subscribers (thousands)</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons																				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LinkedIn:</b> 546 497 followers</li> <li>• <b>Instagram :</b> 288 120 followers</li> <li>• <b>Reddit :</b> 6624 followers</li> <li>• <b>Flickr:</b> 2 677 followers</li> <li>• <b>Pinterest :</b> 6650 followers</li> </ul> <p>The <b>social media team</b> is composed of web-editors on various time resources allocations (it's an additional task to their main news publishing in 24 languages mission).</p> <p>There is also an IT developers for social-media also in charge of maintaining and developing the EP Newshub, project manager with an expertise in IT development and data privacy and social-media producers working on all platforms. Unit also produces news and non/news videos and other materials for the social media. The social media team is as well supported by the digital intelligence and community management teams.</p> <p>All social-media activities are part of the editorial workflow of the Directorate for the Campaigns, with a weekly review in the 'agency' meeting. They are also part of the larger coordination on the level of Directorate General: Editorial Committee (CED) and more frequent Restricted-Editorial Committees (CED-R) during Plenary and Committees weeks. Both CED and CED-R are chaired by the advisor to the DG and Spokesperson of the European Parliament, who provides <b>editorial and political oversight</b> of the social media activities.</p> <p>The Web Communication Unit and its social-media experts provide <b>trainings to MEPs and their staff</b>. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions by lead actors of the social-media field, with personalised support and inputs by Web Communication Unit's staff</li> <li>• Analysis of the social-media presence of MEPs</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Platform</th> <th>UK Parliament</th> <th>House of Commons</th> <th>House of Lords</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Facebook</td> <td>398</td> <td>77</td> <td>31</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Twitter</td> <td>1600</td> <td>385</td> <td>307</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Instagram</td> <td>163</td> <td>35</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>YouTube</td> <td>262</td> <td>—</td> <td>—</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Parliamentary committees also have their own separate social media accounts, but some are much more active than others. On Twitter, Public Accounts is the most active select committee (8663 tweets; 17.6 thousand followers), while the most followed are Education (4015 tweets; 44.8 thousand followers), Transport (7131 tweets; 24.5 thousand followers) and Women and Equalities (3908 tweets; 25.3 thousand followers). The Commons Library, equivalent to the European Parliament's Research Service, is also prominent on social media (6307 tweets; 32,000 followers).</p> <p>To ensure consistency across these many separate accounts, the Parliamentary Digital Service has established strategies for Facebook and Instagram use, and the Commons and Lords Liaison committees have both made recommendations for more effective use of social media by Commons and Lords committees.</p> <p>The UK Parliament uses social media mainly to raise awareness of its activities, but in a few cases they can become a channel for two-way dialogue with the public. For example, in 2014, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee used the hashtag #AskPickles to encourage people to submit questions for the committee to put to Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee ministers, with contributors subsequently sent a timestamped link to the relevant section of the oral evidence session.</p> <p>For more information about the Parliament's use of social media, see <a href="#">Parliament and the Public</a>, Institute for Government</p>	Platform	UK Parliament	House of Commons	House of Lords	Facebook	398	77	31	Twitter	1600	385	307	Instagram	163	35	7	YouTube	262	—	—
Platform	UK Parliament	House of Commons	House of Lords																			
Facebook	398	77	31																			
Twitter	1600	385	307																			
Instagram	163	35	7																			
YouTube	262	—	—																			

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal coaching on social media</li> <li>• Topic requested by MEP (setting up a social media account, use of statistics, best practices, etc.)</li> <li>• One to one tailor made sessions</li> </ul>	
<b>Hybrid events</b>	<p>In order to facilitate hybrid EP presentations/talks that combine on-site and online participation and engagement, the EP plans to have the seminar rooms in the new ZWEIG visitors' area (if possible, also in some of the current conference rooms in Spaak building) equipped with high-performance cameras and a trigger microphone system that will support targeted audience interaction. All seminar rooms will furthermore be equipped with professional webcams for streaming presentations, allowing for example the MEPs, staff and visitors to interact with those who couldn't travel to Brussels.</p> <p>Other communication events, as for example Europe Day, European Youth Seminars, Multilingualism Day, press conferences, various events held by EPLD...etc. will be organised in the future in a hybrid format.</p>	<p>Apart from the Chamber (plenary) sessions and select committee meetings, the Parliament does not organise events. Some events are organised by All-Party Parliamentary Groups, which are informal cross-party groups of members that have a shared interest in a particular theme or country. Some of these Groups involve external individuals and organisations. During the pandemic, Groups continued to hold events in online or hybrid format.</p> <p>For more information on hybrid working methods in the UK Parliament, see <a href="#">Parliaments and the Pandemic</a> by the Study of Parliament Group</p>
<b>Digital offer to visitors</b>	<p>The Digital Citizens' Journey to the European Parliament is an innovative DGCOMM project that uses state-of-art technologies and will launch three main experiences for citizens. The Immersive Online Experience allows citizens visit the European Parliament's people and places, delivered in navigable 360-degree environment with overlays to present micro-interactions and multimedia content. The Virtual Role Play Game is a 'choose-your-own-adventure style' journey to get to know EP law making through the eyes of an MEP. This involves a graphic narrative structure and responsive game engine that allows players explore multimedia content, frame issues before debate, propose amendments and vote. It has chapters, which cover work in committees, political groups and Plenary. The Virtual House of European History will consist of a 3D-tour of the House and</p>	<p>Parliament's Participation team organises a range of public engagement activities, including tours of the Palace of Westminster and workshops at the Education Centre. Now that 'face-to-face' activities are no longer possible, these activities have gone online. The Parliament's <a href="#">website</a> offers virtual tours, including self-guided tours and live guided tours in which participants can interact with a presenter. By April 2021, nearly 30,000 people had taken part in one of the virtual guided tours. During the same period, 75,000 schoolchildren from over 2000 schools around the UK participated in online learning workshops.</p>

	European Parliament	UK House of Commons
	virtual exhibition space with an online collection. Additional digital features are being considered.	
<b>Members' activities on official parliamentary websites</b>	<p>All the MEPs have a dedicated section on the official website of the European Parliament. It makes their contact details available and provides basic information on their background (for instance date of birth, CV, parliamentary career and financial interest) and on their assistants (names and contact information). In addition, the parliamentary website can include links to social media platforms used by MEPs and can give details about their political activities namely about the speeches they deliver in plenary, the reports they prepare, the parliamentary questions they raise and the motions they table. MEPs also publish the meetings they hold with third parties.</p> <p>The data related to Members via the website is reviewed and updated on an ad-hoc basis. The supervision of the website is done by the Bureau and the Secretariat (Secretary General, DG PRES and DG COMM), who have the overall responsibility for the content management.</p> <p>There is a possibility to download the information about the MEPs in different formats such as XML, PDF or Word.</p>	<p>The Parliament's <a href="#">website</a> includes general information about Members' work, voting procedures, pay and allowances, etc. In addition, there is detailed information about each individual MP and Lord, including:</p> <p>(for MPs): contact details, parliamentary career, voting record, early day motions, spoken contributions, written questions, electoral performance;</p> <p>(for Lords): contact details, parliamentary career, experience, focus areas, voting record, spoken contributions, written questions, register of interests.</p>



# European ***Democracy in Action***

Italian Camera dei Deputati  
European Parliament  
Increasing impact and effectiveness

**EDITOR**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE**

Alberto Zini, Silvia Kotanidis  
Library Reading Room Unit; Citizens' Policies Unit  
European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**LANGUAGE VERSIONS**

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in September 2021  
Brussels, © European Parliament, 2021  
Cover illustration: © vector\_master - Fotolia.com

**DISCLAIMER**

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

## CONTENTS

1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	272
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	298
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY .....	316
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	328

## MAIN FINDINGS

### 1. Plenary reform and agenda-setting

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<b>Structure of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>There are specific time slots fixed for each day of part-session - generally Strasbourg sessions start on Monday at 17:00 and end on Thursday at 16:00, while Brussels sessions start at 15:00 on Wednesday and end at 13:00 on Thursday. Part-session days may last until 23:00 or, less often, until 24:00.</p> <p>Each agenda of the part-session contains time slots for debates - divided into morning and afternoon/evening slots - and votes generally scheduled at noon from 12:00 to 14:00 and followed by oral explanations of votes. Key debates and topical debates are specifically earmarked in the agenda; key debates are usually scheduled on Tuesday or Wednesday morning, while topical debates on current affairs (Rule 162) are scheduled on Wednesday afternoon at 15:00 and should last for 1h30. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law take place once every month, on Thursday morning of the Strasbourg part-session.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session comprises a section explaining the various parliamentary procedures, a summary of the items on the agenda and, for each time slot of a sitting, a breakdown of the items with details of the documents being considered, the procedure to be used, information on speaking time and deadlines for tabling texts and requests for separate, split and roll-call votes.</p>	<p>The activities of the Chamber of deputies is organised around three different tools: the Programme (<i>programma dei lavori</i>), the Calendar (<i>calendario</i>) and the Agenda (<i>ordine del giorno o di seduta</i>). For the Programme see question "Strategic Programming".</p> <p><b>The Calendar (Article 24 Rules of Procedure of the Chamber)</b>  <b>Definition of the calendar</b></p> <p>Once the Programme has been established (see question on Strategic Programming), the Calendar of parliamentary works is decided which establishes the practical arrangements and timing for implementing the Programme for a period generally corresponding to each month of the Programme. This document is generally drawn up at the end of the month preceding the month to which it relates. According to the letter of the Chamber's Rules of Procedure (RoP), the duration of the Calendar should be three weeks. This is also because the RoP normally provide for a week's recess for members' activities in constituencies, but in practice this week is no longer provided for and the Calendar is normally set for four weeks. The same procedure applies for the adoption of the Calendar and the Programme.</p> <p>For the period of time covered by the Calendar, this latter identifies - on the basis of the Programme - the topics to be dealt with and the sittings for dealing with them: it gives therefore concrete expression to the Programme's forecasts by indicating the days and times of the sittings, which topics will be dealt with at these sittings and for how long. The Calendar also sets out the maximum total time to be</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Plenary sessions under COVID-19 have been organised at the beginning of the pandemic in a reduced format, with a limited number of items for debates and votes and with voting being done remotely. The system for remote voting has evolved in the months following the start of the pandemic to allow for automatic counting of votes and therefore more voting sessions.</p> <p>Changes introduced in plenary as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic were remote voting already as of March 2020, with a system than was largely improved over time, and remote interventions in debates as of October 2020, from its liaison offices.</p> <p>There is currently a process ongoing in the House of reforming the structure of the plenary agenda and format of debates, aiming of rendering plenary sessions more attractive to Members and incentivise them to attend.</p>	<p>devoted to the discussion of each topic, with a few exceptions where this time is not fixed. The Calendar shall also include the sessions devoted to the conduct of the acts of inquiry.</p> <p>For the definition of the Calendar a representative of the Government may participate to the designated meeting and may inform at least 24 hours prior to the meeting the President of the Chamber and the political groups, which items it wishes to insert in the agendas of the plenary sessions. Political groups may communicate their own priorities to the Government, President of the Chamber and to the other political groups under the same deadline.</p> <p>The Calendar must be approved by the Presidents of political groups representing at least <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of the members of the Chamber and becomes final after the communication to the plenary. A quota of the available time in the Calendar is reserved for items proposed by dissenting political groups according to a proportional allocation. The calendar becomes final after communication of it to the plenary. Members may express however their opinion on the content of the Calendar - to be considered for the following calendar - with an intervention of 2 minutes. In any way the time allocated for comments to the Calendar may not exceed 10 minutes for each group.</p> <p>If the required majority (<math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of the members) within the Conference of Presidents cannot be reached, the Calendar is decided by the President of the Chamber who includes also the proposals of the opposition allocating them <math>\frac{1}{5}</math> of the topics to be discussed i.e. of the time available of the works of the plenary. In this case, topics, other than draft decree laws, included in the Calendar upon proposal of the opposition are discussed as first points of the agenda.</p> <p>Discussions on draft laws converting decree laws into laws may not take more than half of the available time. Also when the Calendar is decided by the President, it becomes definitive after communication to the plenary. Members may intervene for not</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>more than 2 minutes, maximum 10 minutes per political group, in order to submit observations that may serve for the next Calendar.</p> <p>The Calendar establishes the topics and the sittings for the discussion, it is printed and distributed after having been communicated to the plenary. The Calendar indicates which days are devoted to the discussion and which ones to the vote.</p> <p>Changes to the Calendar proposed by the government or by a Presidents of political groups are adopted under the same rules applicable for the original definition of the Calendar. As to items justified by a situation of urgency, they may be included in the Calendar even if not included in the Programme if they do not make impossible the execution of the Programme itself. For that purpose, it might be necessary that further sessions for discussion be established.</p> <p><b>Speaking time</b></p> <p>The Conference of Presidents of political groups, representing the majority of <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of members of parliament establishes the time allocated to the discussion of the items indicated in the calendar depending on their complexity. Taken away the time allocated to the rapporteur, the government and the members of the mixed group, the time for raising question of procedure, and for casting the vote, the Conference allocates the <math>\frac{4}{5}</math> of the time necessary for the different phases of the exam, among political groups partly in a fixed manner and partly in a proportionate way (depending on the numerical dimension of the political group). The remaining time is reserved for possible interventions of members on a personal basis, if they have communicated the intention to do so before the discussion. The time attributed to the mixed group is subdivided according to the components of the mixed group and their dimension. For draft laws upon initiative of the government, the Conference of Presidents gives to groups of the opposition a bigger quota of available time than that attributed to the groups of the</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>majority. In the allocation of time, each political groups may not be allocated less than 30 minutes (see Rule 39 of the Chamber's RoP), unless exceptions apply such as discussions concerning draft laws of authorisation to ratify international agreements.</p> <p>If the required majority of <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> above cannot be reached for the definition of the discussion and speaking time, the President is competent for the decision. The abovementioned criteria must be observed.</p> <p><b>The structure of the working week</b> Sessions of the Assembly are generally scheduled for each calendar week from Monday to Friday morning: Monday is devoted to general debates on the topics scheduled for the week; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are devoted to debates on the topics with votes (the starting time of the votes is indicated as well as the duration); the first part of Tuesday morning is devoted to questions and interpellations to the Government; Wednesday - as indicated in Rule 135-<i>bis</i> of the Rules of Procedure - is devoted to question time; Friday morning is normally devoted to urgent questions.</p> <p><b>Speaking time of Government</b> With regard to the time that the Government may claim for its speeches or statements, Article 64 of the Constitution provides that the Government representatives, even if they are not members of the Chambers, have the right and, if requested, the obligation to attend sittings. They must also be heard whenever they request. This provision is reflected in the Chambers RoP in Rule 37 which provides that Government representatives, even if they are not members of the Chamber, shall have the right and, if requested, the obligation to attend the meetings of the Assembly and the Committees. They shall have the right to speak whenever they request to do so. This implies that the Government may request the Chamber to be able to make 'Communications' at any time: the sitting at which these</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>Communications are made - where not already provided for in the Calendar - is established on the basis of a meeting of the Conference of Presidents of political groups. It is often the members themselves who request that the Government inform the Chamber of certain particularly urgent matters (e.g. in relation to an emergency that has suddenly arisen): in such cases the timing of these urgent Government Information (in which, unlike Communications, no vote is taken) may be determined by the President of the Chamber in agreement with the Government.</p>
<p><b>Strategic programming</b></p>	<p>The Parliament exerts influence on the political and legislative agenda through both regular dialogue with the Commission ahead of the presentation of its annual work programme, and the negotiations of an annual joint declaration and multiannual joint conclusions on inter-institutional priorities.</p> <p>The strategic planning in the European Parliament, leading to actual plenary sessions, is an elaborate process that starts at the beginning of each legislature and consists mainly of three stages: long, medium and short-term planning.</p> <p>Parliament is fully independent in organising its own plenary agendas, which are based on a carefully orchestrated mix of close cooperation and interaction with the other European institutions. Parliament needs to be informed, and takes into account, the planning of the work of the Commission and the Council, ensuring the synchronisation regarding the conclusion, adoption and signature of legal acts, responses to/by the other institutions and high level debates.</p> <p>1. Long-term planning (1 year and beyond)</p> <p>In order to ensure both coherence and adaptability, the services of DG Presidency follow closely, and deliver, on the annual and multiannual programming of the institutions, having for basis:</p>	<p><b>The Programme</b></p> <p>According to Rule 23 of the Chamber's RoP, the Programme of the plenary is decided by the Conference of Presidents for at least 2 months and in any case for not more than 3 months.</p> <p>The President of the Chamber calls for a meeting of the President of the political groups, after having had appropriate contacts with the President of the Senate and the government, who is also represented at the meeting. The President may also call for a preliminary meeting of the Conference of Committee Chairs. the government indicates the items of priority at least 2 days prior to the meeting of the Conference of Presidents, within the same deadline each group may communicate the own proposals to the government, the President of the Chamber and the other political groups.</p> <p>The Programme established based on the indications of the government and the political groups contains the items that the Chamber intends to examine, with an indication of priority and period in which the items will be put on the Agenda of the day of the plenary, account taken of the period devoted to the discussion of the finance bill and the parliamentary recess.</p> <p>The Programme must be approved by the Presidents of political groups representing at least <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> of the members of the Chamber. A quota of available time is reserved to the dissenting groups,</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission Work Programme: An annual exercise that covers all proposals expected to be delivered by the Commission in a given year;</li> <li>• The Joint Declaration on legislative priorities, which results in an agreement between the three institutions on legislative priorities for a given year. The Joint Declaration Tracker is used as to monitor the implementation of the legislative priorities in the Joint Declaration;</li> <li>• The multi-annual Foresight Report: A new instrument, through which the Commission brings forward its multiannual political vision and strategy for the Union and its main priorities;</li> <li>• The Multiannual Conclusions – signed by the three institutions for the first time in December 2020 – on the priorities until the end of the 9th legislature.</li> </ul> <p>2. Medium-term planning (6 months)</p> <p>The services follow closely the work of the parliamentary committees and the other institutions, especially the proposals adopted in the Commission, the progress of trilogues with the Council and the agendas of the European Council. The following points are taken into account in the medium-term planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission presents, in the “Liste des points prévus” (LPP), its list of proposals to be adopted in the College of Commissioners several months in advance. This gives Parliament the possibility to plan reports or plenary debates either in advance or as a reaction to them. Some major Commission proposals can serve as a basis for monothematic plenaries (European Green Deal in December 2019 and Recovery and Resilience Facility in July 2020);</li> </ul>	<p>proportionally to their numerical composition. If the majority is not reached the Programme is decided by the President of the Chamber account taken of certain criteria.</p> <p>The Programme becomes final after it is communicated the plenary. Members may intervene for not more than 2 minutes while each group disposes of not more than 10 minutes in order to make remarks that can be taken into account for the next Programme.</p> <p>The Programme is updated at least once a month. In case the majority of 3/4ths cannot be achieved, the Programme is defined by the President.</p> <p>According to Rule 26 the President of the Chamber announces, before the end of the session, the agenda and timing of the sittings of the two successive days. If there is opposition, the plenary decides by show of hands, after having heard one speaker in favour and one against for not more than 10 minutes each.</p> <p><b>Special debates</b></p> <p>With regard to the provision of specific debates during the year, the RoP provide for a special parliamentary budget session for the examination of the State Budget Bill, presented by the Government in October and held in November/December according to a principle of alternation with the Senate and a schedule defined within the Conference of Presidents of political groups.</p> <p>In addition, the examination of the European delegation bill takes place annually, together with the discussion of the annual report on Italy's participation in the European Union's legislative process.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council of the European Union sets its agenda of priorities every six months with every new Presidency, which also affects Parliament’s work especially in co-legislation. All incoming Presidencies present their programme of activities in Parliament;</li> <li>• The European Council meetings determine the political debates for both the preparation and for the conclusions in the European Parliament. The European Council President presents the conclusions of the meetings in the Parliament (Article 15 TEU);</li> <li>• Other international events that might become subjects for debate in Parliament are also taken into account (e.g. G7, G20, UN sessions);</li> <li>• In addition, the progress of reports in the parliamentary committees is followed closely. All files are checked and an indicative plenary planning is set.</li> </ul> <p>3. Short-term planning (1 month)</p> <p>The result of the short-term planning one month before the actual plenary session is the very first draft of the plenary agenda. The services make sure that all items included in the plenary agenda are both agreed at political level and are ready from a technical point of view.</p> <p>The plenary agenda contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treaty obligations and obligations arising from Inter-institutional Agreements;</li> <li>• Legislative reports;</li> <li>• Non-legislative reports;</li> <li>• Other input from committees, e.g. oral questions, resolutions or other specific items (petitions, immunities, etc.);</li> <li>• Various forms of debates with the other institutions (Council and Commission Statements, Commission</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>interpellations, debates with the High Representative, topical debates);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual events and prizes, such as the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights and the Lux Audience Award for European Films.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Setting parliaments' priorities</b></p>	<p>The definition of Parliaments priorities falls under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents and political Groups.</p> <p>The governing bodies – the Conference of Presidents and Conference of Committee Chairs – have regular exchanges with the Commission ahead of the preparation of its annual work programme. This allows Parliament to exert its influence on the work programme via political initiatives and calling for legislative proposals, which are the prerogative of the Commission.</p> <p>As explained above, since 2016, the three institutions have agreed to work and agree each year on a joint declaration on inter-institutional programming and, at the beginning of each term, on joint conclusions on multiannual programming (through the inter-institutional agreement on better law making, to implement the provisions of Article 17 TEU).</p> <p>This has enabled Parliament to further influence the political and legislative agenda and the timing of such submissions.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session starts as a working document on the basis of recommendations from committees and points that are cyclical in a yearly session. Once input is received from political groups, a preliminary draft agenda is drawn up and presented to the Conference of Presidents in view of the adoption of the draft agenda, approximately one month before the part-session in question. The Conference of Presidents then adopts the final draft</p>	<p><b>Working arrangements in the Chamber as a reaction to Covid-19</b></p> <p>Agreements among political groups to reduce the presence of members in the Assembly and to limit the number of voting sessions were made only in the very first phase of the Covid-19 epidemiological emergency (March/April 2020).</p> <p>As the epidemiological situation improved and the more restrictive measures were gradually relaxed, parliamentary activities resumed as normal from May 2020 onwards, but at the same time specific organisational, logistical and behavioural measures were taken to contain the risk of the virus spreading.</p> <p>This approach was maintained also afterwards, when there was again a sharp increase in the number of infections, so that all members of parliament were able to attend the sessions of the Assembly in compliance with the health requirements.</p> <p><b>Practical containment measures</b></p> <p>Measures to allow the Assembly sessions to take place, which are still valid today, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the obligation to maintain the prescribed inter-personal distance of at least one metre and the continuous use of protective masks;</li> <li>- in order to comply with the interpersonal distance requirement, the creation of additional seats for members - previously located exclusively in the Assembly Hall of Palazzo Montecitorio - even in areas previously reserved for the public (the tribunes), and in the so-called 'Transatlantic Lounge', adjacent to the Chamber (communicating with it), which is now considered an integral part of</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>agenda at its last meeting on the Thursday before the part-session.</p> <p>Whilst there are often items on the agenda which are comprised of a Council and/or Commission statement, the two institutions do not have the right to claim certain time slots for debates or declarations. This remains the prerogative of the Conference of Presidents, which adopts the final draft, and the House, which adopts the agenda at the opening of each part-session.</p>	<p>the Chamber. The Members thus occupy the seats allocated to each of them, spaced out.</p> <p>These measures apply also to committee meetings, are currently in force and there is still no certainty as to until when they will remain in force.</p> <p>In addition, in the most acute phases of the pandemic - on an experimental basis - the monthly planning of work involved alternating weeks with votes in the Assembly and weeks without votes. In this way, the committees could be fully operational in the weeks when only sittings, without votes, were scheduled for the conduct of inspections. In weeks when the Assembly was scheduled to sit with votes, the committees could still meet, in particular to deal with urgent matters or acts that were due to expire or to examine bills that were scheduled to be considered later in the Assembly. At present, the ordinary pattern of work has been resumed and the Assembly and the Commissions meet in full every week.</p> <p>In addition, until June 2021, the sessions of the Assembly were scheduled in compliance with the provisions aimed at ensuring the periodic sanitation of the Chamber. In particular, a maximum duration of each phase of the sessions of the Assembly was foreseen, which, in the event of large attendance of members, varied between 3 hours and 3 hours and 30 minutes, providing for a break of between 1 hour and 30 minutes and 2 hours for the carrying out of sanitation activities, without prejudice to any adjustments decided by the President. This time limit was less stringent for sittings at which Members' attendance was lower. As of July 2021, there is no longer a maximum number of consecutive sitting hours. However, there are still breaks (of approximately one and a half hours) between the different parts of the sitting (morning, afternoon and night) for the purpose of sanitising the Chamber.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>At the same time, since March 2020, as part of a broader debate on the definition of an emergency parliamentary right, the Rules of Procedure Committee has been discussing the possibility of providing for remote forms of participation in parliamentary work, including remote voting. Considering the complexity of the issue, both from a regulatory and a constitutional point of view, the Committee for the Rules of Procedure decided to allow, on an experimental basis, the remote participation of Members by videoconference in the Commissions for some activities that do not involve voting, within the limits set by the Rules, such as hearings, formal and informal, acts of inspection and, in general, any other session of the Commissions in which only a debate is scheduled to take place and no votes are expected. On the other hand, there is no provision for Members to participate remotely in the work of the Assembly or to cast votes (in any seat) from a remote location.</p> <p><b>Further digitalization</b></p> <p>With regard to further digitisation measures, even before the pandemic - and thus beyond the health emergency - it was possible to submit bills and amendments in digital form, as well as questions and other acts of initiative by individual parliamentarians and groups, through a specific and dedicated platform. After the start of the COVID-19 emergency, this method became the preferred one.</p> <p>Moreover, following the guidelines expressed by the Chamber of Deputies in the Assembly session of 1 August 2019, the President of the Chamber - in the session of 10 March 2021 - submitted to the Rules of Procedure Committee a proposal to regulate the transition to a new method of submitting petitions, through a digital platform, available on the Chamber of Deputies website.</p> <p>Article 50 of the Italian Constitution states that 'All citizens may petition the Chambers to request legislative measures or to express common needs'. Petitions are currently submitted on paper or by e-mail. According to this proposal, the new rules would apply from 1 September 2021. However, it would remain possible to submit</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		petitions on paper or by e-mail, as an alternative, in the manner currently provided for, without prejudice to a possible future review of the issue in the light of the outcome of the application of the new rules.
<b>Content of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>The plenary agenda contains debates on legislative and non-legislative files presented in the form of reports, as well as statements from the Council and the Commission or from the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, oral questions, topical debates, debates on breaches of human rights and rule of law, votes and explanations of votes. . There are no plenary sessions reserved only for legislation or only for non-legislative debates.</p> <p>While setting the agenda, political groups often interlink dossiers in order to have joint debates on ‘thematic packages’.</p> <p>Since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretation.</p> <p>Topical debates and major interpellations are not held at all during this period.</p>	<p>In addition to what indicated in the answer to question 1 and 3 the following can be said.</p> <p>The RoP do not provide for joint debates on thematic packages of legislation. However, when motions addressed to the government are being considered, it may happen that the topic identified by the motions is particularly broad and therefore allows for a debate and the approval of policy documents with a general thematic content (e.g. infrastructure, economic recovery, etc.). This type of debate may also take place on a (non-legislative) report submitted by a Commission on a topic within its competence.</p> <p>The RoP do not provide for a ratio between the number of sessions devoted to legislative and non-legislative work. Statistically speaking, however, it is reported that in 2020, 54% of the Assembly's activity was devoted to legislative activity, 34% to policy and control activities and the remainder to other activities (examination of documents issued by the authorising committee, elective proceedings, speeches at the end of the session, commemorations, etc.).</p>
<b>Conduct of plenary debates</b>	<p>Speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session.</p> <p>The agenda is divided into different “time slots”, which can include one or several debates. There is usually no fixed time for each debate. A notional speaking time is allocated to rapporteurs, rapporteurs for opinion, authors of oral questions, major interpellations and topical debates and to other institutions (Council, Commission, etc.).</p>	<p><b>Order of speakers</b></p> <p>The Chamber’s RoP stipulate that Members wishing to speak must register on the day when the debate begins (not less than one hour before the start of the debate) and have the floor in the order of their registration, with an alternation of one against and one in favour (Rule 36). The order is therefore determined on the basis of the order of registration. Members may exchange the order among themselves, however if a member is not present it is understood that he/she has renounced to the intervention.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>The speaking time available for each political group is also indicated on the agenda. This information is used by the political groups in allocating speaking time and drawing up their lists of speakers. Members speak in the order of the relative size of their political groups.</p> <p>Members who wish to speak in a debate on the plenary agenda should ask their political group to allocate them speaking time. Alternatively, they may ask to speak in a more spontaneous manner under the catch-the-eye or blue card procedures (see below).</p> <p>Members who have not spoken in a debate may, at most once per part-session, hand in a written statement of not more than 200 words, which will be appended to the verbatim report of the debate.</p> <p>There are several types of debates: committee reports (full debate), committee reports (short presentation), Statements by the other Institutions (council, Commission, Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), oral questions to the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union, debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, major interpellations for written answer, question time, public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives.</p> <p>Procedures in debates</p> <p>- Catch-the-eye - Rule 171(6)</p> <p>With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short speeches (1</p>	<p>As regards the different stages of vote, the Chamber's RoP provide that explanations of vote may be given on any text to be voted on. In some cases, explanations of vote are limited to one member per group and dissenters, in other cases potentially any member may speak. Therefore, as regards explanations of vote, there is normally no deadline for registering and a member may ask to speak by raising of hand.</p> <p>In the case of particularly important explanations of vote (explanations of confidence, explanations of the final vote on a law, or on motions, etc.) in which one member per group takes the floor, the Presidency generally organises a list of speakers in advance, which is determined in ascending order of the number of groups. These organisational requirements were increased after the outbreak of the pandemic by the relocation of the new seats reserved for members, given that speeches are in any case made in the Chamber.</p> <p><b>Duration of the intervention</b></p> <p>According to Rule 39 of the Chamber's RoP, save if a shorter time applies, the duration of the interventions in a discussion may not exceed 30 minutes. After that, having the president warned twice the speaker, the President may interrupt the speaker. Speeches may not be interrupted and postponed to a further session.</p> <p>The timing of 30 minutes may be doubled for discussions concerning the motion of confidence and motion to withdraw the confidence and can be increased to 45 minutes for the discussion on the general lines of draft constitutional laws, legislative delegation, electoral matters, and authorisation to ratify international agreements. The President may increase for one or more speakers of each political group the speaking time if the importance of the topic requires so.</p> <p><b>Order of intervention by topic</b></p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>minute maximum) by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs at the end of a debate.</p> <p>- Blue card procedure - Rule 171(8)</p> <p>The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.</p> <p>Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of political group speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" or blue cards.</p> <p>- One-minute speeches - Rule 172</p> <p>For a period of not more than 30 minutes during the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a prepared list, the President calls Members who wish to draw Parliament's attention to a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of 1 minute each.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, and in accordance with the President's decision on exceptional measures enabling the European Parliament to carry out its duties and exercise its prerogatives under the Treaties, the procedures described above were not used in in plenary debates. This was due to the restricted time available for debates, as well as the constraints linked to remote interventions in debates.</p>	<p>According to Rule 41 of Chamber's RoP, references to the RoP concerning either the agenda or the order of items or the priority of the vote must be dealt before the substantive discussion on the item. In this case, after the member who proposed, only one speaker against and one in favour can speak for not more than 5 minutes. If the President of the Chamber calls for a vote on those questions, this is done by show of hands.</p> <p>When the discussion concerns acts adopted by previous governments, the members that were part of the adopting governments have the right to speak at the end of the discussion. (Rule 42 Chamber's RoP)</p> <p>Each member may speak only once in the same discussion except for declaration concerning the explanation of vote, of a personal nature, references to the RoP, agenda of the day, order of works, position of the issue, priority of vote, preliminary or suspensive issues proposed before the beginning of the discussion. (Rule 43 Chamber's RoP).</p> <p>According to Rule 44, once the discussion is closed, one member for each political group who have requested so, may speak. Ministers may also speak in the name of the government and, if the plenary is going to vote, also members for the explanations of vote.</p> <p><b>Location of the speech</b> According to the Rules of Procedure (Rule 36(4)), speakers speak from their own benches, standing up and addressing the President. No interlocutions are allowed between members.</p> <p><b>Interaction with government</b> As regards the possibility of questioning the representatives of Government during the sitting of the Assembly, the Chamber's RoP (Rule 83(1-bis)) stipulate that the rapporteurs of a bill, in the course of their report, may ask the Government to answer questions relating to the reasons and objectives of Government-initiated bills and</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>questions on the financial and regulatory consequences. The Government may reply immediately or ask for the reply to be deferred until the time of the reply. It may also ask for the sitting or the analysis of the Bill to be suspended for not more than one hour, or declare that it is unable to reply, stating its reasons.</p> <p>At other procedural stages, such as the expression of opinions on amendments or agendas, clarifications may be requested from the Government by members, again through the Presidency, although there is no obligation on the Government to reply in such cases. However, it must be pointed out that during the discussion of bills, dialogue between Parliament and the Government is a physiological fact, and Government representatives may always take the floor to provide requested clarifications.</p> <p><b>Discussion of items not on the agenda</b>  According to Rule 27 of the Chamber's RoP, as a general rule the Assembly cannot discuss or deliberate on matters that are not on the Agenda. However, it is possible to include discussion or deliberation on matters (e.g. draft laws on which the referral procedure has been completed or motions) that are not on the agenda by means of a <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> majority vote. Proposals for the inclusion of items which are not on the agenda may be submitted by 30 members or by one or more Presidents of political groups representing, either separately or jointly, at least an equal number of members, and can be made only at the beginning of the sitting or when another item is about to be placed on the agenda or when the debate has been suspended. Such proposal is generally considered in advance by the Conference of the Presidents of political groups, as it may alter the order of the debate of the items on the agenda.</p> <p>Speakers are allowed to submit their written interventions to supplement or replace their oral intervention. The text of the speeches is published at the end of the minutes of the sitting.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<p><b>Voting procedures and treatment of amendments</b></p>	<p>Voting on draft legislation takes place at the first available voting time (voting session) following the close of a debate on that piece of legislation, unless the agenda specifically provides for a later vote. Non-contentious draft legislation is sometimes put straight to the vote without a debate, in which case the vote may be earlier in a part-session. The timing of the vote may also be influenced by other factors such as availability of texts in all official languages.</p> <p>Amendments to draft legislation may be voted in plenary. Amendments may be tabled by a “low threshold”, constituted either by a political group or by a number of individual Members equivalent to 5% of Parliament’s membership. Such amendments are voted alongside any amendments proposed by the committee responsible in its report.</p> <p>Rule 159 provides, however, that if a committee has adopted its position on the draft legislation with less than 10 percent of the committee members opposing, the legislation is adopted without further amendments by plenary. A “medium threshold” consisting of 10% of the House may however veto this and insist on the right to table amendments.</p> <p>In first reading, the vote on amendments is always followed by a final vote on the Commission’s draft legislation as a whole. Amendments and the final vote require a majority of the votes cast for adoption. In second reading amendments require a majority of Parliament’s component Members (i.e. more than half the House as constituted) for adoption. In second reading, the draft legislation (Council position) is deemed adopted unless amended or rejected, and there is no final vote on the Council position as a whole.</p> <p>If inter-institutional negotiations lead to a provisional agreement on a draft legislative text, that agreement is put to the vote as</p>	<p><b>Voting of legislation</b></p> <p>The final vote on a bill is the final act in the legislative process, which consists of several stages: general debate, consideration of and vote on the articles and amendments tabled, consideration and vote on the agenda, explanations of the final vote and the final vote. The Calendar identifies the sittings at which votes are to be taken, but depending also on the configuration of the legislative process, no time slots are set aside exclusively for voting. Instead, it may be stipulated that voting will not begin before a certain time. On certain occasions it is stipulated that a certain vote of particular importance will take place at a previously established time (e.g. vote on the question of confidence, final vote on a law).</p> <p>According to Rule 91, the final vote on a draft law is cast immediately after the discussion and the vote on the articles. The President may however postpone the vote to a further sitting and may subject to vote simultaneously more than one draft law. In this case, the members that intend to abstain on one of the must inform the secretaries before the start of the vote.</p> <p><b>Amendments</b></p> <p>Amendments shall, as a rule, be tabled and carried out in the Committees, but new amendments may be tabled in the Plenary of the Chamber, in addition of those rejected in the Commission, provided they are within the scope of the subjects already considered in the text or in the amendments tabled and deemed admissible by the Commission. Any member may table amendments no later than the day before the sitting at which the debate on the articles is to begin (Rule 86(1)). The Commission and the Government may also table amendments in the plenary, but in that case until the vote on the article or amendment to which they refer has begun (Rule 86(5)). Sub-amendments may also be tabled.</p> <p>Where new additional articles or amendments imply increased expenditure or decreased revenue, they shall be forwarded as soon as they have been tabled to the Committee on Budgets and Planning</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>single vote with no further amendment, unless the House explicitly decides otherwise.</p> <p>Oral amendments may be moved in plenary by individual Members, although these may be opposed on procedural grounds (lack of full translation into all languages) by Members representing 5% of the House.</p> <p>There is no automatic cooling-off period between a final vote in committee on a report and the adoption by plenary. The timing of the plenary vote is determined by the Conference of Presidents (Group Chairs) and the plenary itself as part of the agenda decision-making process. A cooling-off period does take place, however, between the conclusion of inter-institutional negotiations on a draft legislative act and its final vote in plenary.</p> <p>As indicated above, since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretations.</p>	<p>for examination and assessment of their financial consequences. To this end, the President of the Chamber shall, where appropriate, set a time limit within which the opinion of the Budget Committees shall be delivered.</p> <p>There is no limit to the number of amendments that may be tabled by each member. However, under the Rules of Procedure in force since 1998, not all amendments tabled are to be put to vote, but the Presidency shall adopt selective criteria for voting on amendments, in relation to which each Group is guaranteed a minimum quota of amendments flagged by the political Groups themselves to be put to the vote in any case and no less than, on average, one-tenth of the number of members of the political Group for each article. This proportion shall be increased to one-fifth for decree-laws.</p> <p>Amendments shall always be tabled in writing and oral amendments shall not be admissible. As regards alternative texts, the Chamber's RoP state that, at the end of the examination of a bill in the Commission in referential session, the opposition groups may submit minority reports with their own text, even partially alternative to the Commission text, formulated in articles corresponding to the latter (Rule 79(12)). The alternative texts submitted shall be put to the vote, at the request of the minority rapporteur, as amendments replacing each article in its entirety (Article 87, paragraph 1-bis).</p> <p><b>“Cooling off” period</b></p> <p>As regards the time elapsing between the start of consideration in the Commission and the start of consideration in the Assembly, the Rules of Procedure (Rules 23 and 81) stipulate that two months must elapse, with certain exceptions. In addition, it is provided that the Commission referral procedure must be organised in such a way as to be concluded at least forty-eight hours before the date set in the Calendar for the commencement of consideration of the bill in the plenary (Rule 79(1)) and that the majority report and, if submitted, the minority reports must be printed and distributed at least twenty-four</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		hours before the start of the debate, unless, on account of urgency, the plenary decides on a shorter time limit (Rule 79(14)). These deadlines may be even shorter in certain circumstances.
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners is limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p> <p>The Member has 1 minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner 2 minutes in which to reply. The Member formulating the question may put a supplementary question of a duration of 30 seconds, having a direct bearing on the main</p>	<p><b>Question time (interrogazioni parlamentari: Rules 128-135-ter)</b> The Rules of Procedure (Rule 135-bis) provide for <i>question time</i> to be held once a week, normally on Wednesdays. The President or Vice-President of the Council of Ministers speaks twice at question time sessions, and the minister or ministers with responsibility for the subjects to which the questions relate speak once. However, the President or Vice-President of the Council of Ministers does not speak with the regularity required by the rule.</p> <p>According to Rule 135-bis questions may be tabled no later than 12 noon on the day preceding that devoted to the <i>question time</i>. One member from each group may put a question through the President of the political group to which he/she belongs. The author of each question shall be entitled to make the question for not more than one minute. Each question tabled shall be answered by the representative of the Government for not more than three minutes. The questioner or another member of the same group shall then be entitled to reply for not more than two minutes. The President of the Chamber arranges also for the televised recording of the <i>question time</i> session.</p> <p>Questions are first submitted in writing to the Presidency of the Chamber and then forwarded to the members of the Government concerned. Question time questions must consist of a single question formulated clearly and concisely on a subject of general importance. Members of Parliament in this respect may submit questions to the</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>In practice, this provision was not used during the 8th and 9th parliamentary term.</p> <p>With regards to Council representatives, there is a possibility to hold specific question hours with the Council in accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents (Rule 137/3).</p> <p>The use of Question time is, however, being discussed again in the reform exercise initiated in the Parliament, in particular in the Focus Group on Plenary reform.</p>	<p>President of the Chamber consisting merely of a question, in writing, as to whether a fact is true, whether any information has reached the Government, or is accurate, or whether the Government intends to communicate to the Chamber documents or information or has taken or is about to take any action on a particular matter.</p> <p>The answer to the question is always given orally, although sometimes by reading out a written text, which cannot, however, be deposited and attached to the minutes as an answer. However, according to Rule 134 when tabling a question, or subsequently, the Member may state that he wishes to have a written answer. In this case the Government shall give its answer within twenty days and communicate it to the President of the House. This reply shall be included in the stenographic record of the sitting at which it is announced to the House. If the Government does not provide an answer within 20 days the President of the Chamber shall, at the request of the questioner, place the question on the Agenda for the next sitting of the committee responsible.</p> <p>Two weeks after they have been tabled, questions shall be placed at the head of the Agenda of the first sitting at which they are to be taken. No more than two questions put by the same member shall be placed on the Agenda of any given sitting. (Rule 129)</p> <p>The Government may declare that it is unable to reply and give its reasons. If it declares that it must defer its reply, it shall specify the date on which it is prepared to reply within one month. If the questioner is not present when the Government is about to answer, he/she shall be deemed to have withdrawn the question. (Rule 131)</p> <p>After the Government's reply to each question the questioner may reply to state whether or not he is satisfied. The time allotted to the questioner for replying may not exceed five minutes. (Rule 132)</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>The Rules of Procedure provide (Rule 139-bis) that, for the purposes of publishing all types of inspective acts (and also motions), including therefore also questions put on <i>question time</i>, the President shall check that the content of the act relates to the type of instrument submitted and, where necessary, shall ensure that the act is correctly titled, informing the author thereof. The President of the Chamber assesses also the admissibility of such acts with regard to the coherence of the various parts of the document, to the competence and related responsibility of the Government vis-à-vis Parliament, and to the protection of the personal sphere and honour of individuals and the prestige of the institutions. Acts containing improper expressions are not published.</p> <p>The criteria of admissibility of acts of inspection are specified in the Circular of the President of the Chamber of Deputies of 21 February 1996, which distinguishes between cases of inadmissibility with reference to the structure of the act, the form of the act, the characteristics of the question insofar as it does not fall within the Government's own sphere of responsibility vis-à-vis Parliament, the protection of the personal sphere of individuals and the prestige of the institutions. In the case of questions for immediate answer addressed to the Prime Minister, it must be verified that the question asked relates to a matter falling within the competence of the Prime Minister, as defined by the Constitution.</p> <p>In accordance with the opinion of the Committee on the Rules of Procedure of 3 August 2016, all acts of inspection, including questions for <i>question time</i>, are also subject to word limits: for urgent questions pursuant to Rule 138-bis, 1,000 words; for other questions, 800 words; for questions for immediate answer, 400 words; and for other types of questions, 600 words.</p> <p>No provision is made for questions to be put to members of the government that have not been submitted to them in writing beforehand, after the admissibility has been checked by the</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>Presidency, and there can therefore no interaction between parliamentarians and members of the government on issues not provided for in the written text submitted.</p> <p>The subjects covered by the questions for immediate answer are determined by the competences of the members of the Government who are scheduled to attend the weekly session devoted to question time. Members may also ask questions on subjects falling within the competence of Ministers who are not scheduled to attend that week, but the answer to these questions is given in such cases by the Minister for the Relations with Parliament.</p> <p>Question time is also provided for in the Commission, according to principles similar to those applied in the Assembly.</p>
<p><b>Procedure for written questions</b></p>	<p>Members, political groups and committees are entitled to submit questions for written answer to the President of the European Council, to the Council, the Commission and to the Vice-President of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union (Rule 138 RoP).</p> <p>Admissibility criteria are referred to in Annex III RoP, mainly EU competence, competence of the addressee, general interest, contain an understandable interrogation, not exceed 200 words, not contain offensive language, not relate to strictly personal matters, not contain more than 3 sub-questions, no similar or identical question tabled and answered in the previous 6 months. In addition, data protection regulations shall be respected.</p> <p>Deadlines for answering: 3 weeks for priority questions; 6 weeks for non-priority questions. Nevertheless, as those deadlines have never been agreed with the institutions addressees of the questions, they are considered by the latter as non-binding on them, but as mere targets. Delays are extremely frequent.</p>	<p><b>Written questions (interpellanze Rule 136-138-bis)</b></p> <p>Members of Parliament may submit questions to the President of the Chamber consisting of a written enquiry as to the motives or the intentions of the Government's conduct in matters concerning certain aspects of its policy. <i>Interpellanze</i> therefore may have a broader reach than <i>interrogazioni</i> put on the <i>question time</i>.</p> <p>The Presidents of the parliamentary groups, on behalf of their respective groups, or a number of members not less than thirty, may table urgent questions, which shall normally be dealt with in the Friday morning sitting each week. Each President of political group may table no more than two urgent questions per month of parliamentary work while each member may table no more than one during the same period. The questions submitted are published as an annex to the minutes of the sitting of the Assembly.</p> <p>As regards the control of admissibility exercised by the President of the Chamber, reference is made to the answer given to the previous question concerning question time.</p> <p>According to Rule 137(4) the Government may declare that it is unable to answer the question, stating the reason in which case the</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Questions for oral answer are a completely different procedure (cf. Rule 136 RoP). These are never answered in writing, even if they lapse without having been scheduled for debate in Plenary. They can only be tabled by a political group, a parliamentary committee or at least 5% of EP's component Members.</p> <p>Major interpellations for written answer (Rule 139 RoP) are a "hybrid" instrument, as they can be scheduled for debate if they have not been answered, but also if they have been answered (different rules apply). They can only be tabled by political groups. Annex III does not apply to Oral questions and Major interpellations. There are specific rules regarding length, deadlines, etc.</p> <p>Members, political groups, parliamentary committees can table a maximum of 20 questions for written answer over a rolling period of 3 months. They can only table one priority question per calendar month (which is also counted in the 20 questions over the 3 month rolling period). A question can be co-tabled by several Members but it will be counted in the quota of each individual Member. Members can also "support" other Members' questions, and in this case this will not be counted in the respective quota. The number of major interpellations is limited by the Conference of Presidents (proportional to the "weight" of each political group) but there is no limit to the number of Oral questions tabled.</p> <p>Parliamentary questions are submitted by using a web form (QP webform) and signed by Members with an electronic signature (DISP). They are managed by the administration, with the help of a specific application (QPPLUS).</p> <p>Every parliamentary question is published on the EP website (<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html</a>), under the Plenary part and in the Register of</p>	<p>Government declares that it must defer its answer and state on which day, within the period of one month, it is prepared to answer.</p> <p>Rule 134 provides that a member may, when tabling a question or subsequently, state that he/she wishes to receive a written answer. In this case, the Government must give the answer and communicate it to the President of the Chamber within twenty days. Provision is also made for the member to request an answer in the Commission.</p> <p>Provision is also made for questions and, in the case of the Assembly only, interpellations to be included on the Agenda of sittings of the Assembly and Commissions after a certain time limit has elapsed. However, these principles have been superseded by the adoption of the scheduling method, which is why the Calendar provides for specific sittings or parts of sittings devoted to the conduct of questions.</p> <p>Written answers to questions are sent to the questioning members and published as an annex to the minutes, which are also available online in a digital format accessible to all.</p> <p>No more than two questions or two questions tabled by the same member may be placed on the Agenda of the same sitting. There is a limit on questions for immediate answer, which may only be tabled by one member per group through the President of the political group to which he/she belongs (Rule 135-bis(2)).</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>public documents, when it is forwarded to the institution addressee of the question. Questions can also be accessed from the profile of every author (Member). Replies to questions for written answer are published as links to each question and in the Register of public documents. Questions and answers are available in the language of the author(s) and in English. Regarding Oral questions and Major interpellations, if they are scheduled for debate in Plenary, a link to the debate and to the Minutes is published.</p>	
<b>Seating order and presence</b>	<p>The Conference of Presidents shall decide how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated to the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the Union (Rule 37).</p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure, at the beginning of each legislature, political groups have an allocated number of seats for their Members as decided by the Conference of Presidents. Each Member of the European Parliament has his own seat in the Chamber, as indicated by his respective political group. Small changes may occur in the seating plan from one part-session to the next, due to changes in political group affiliation of Members. Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, due to social distancing restrictions, the seating plan of Members has had to be adapted and seats were mostly reserved for Members who intervened in debates. Any remaining seats were allocated to Members present on a free seating basis within the allocation foreseen for their respective political groups. Furthermore, Members speak from the central rostrum (without their mask).</p> <p>In order to attract the attention of Members for their participation on debates of particular general importance, the Conference of</p>	<p><b>Place of speaking</b></p> <p>According to an express provision in the Rules of Procedure (Rule 36(4)), in the Chamber 'speakers shall speak from their own bench, standing and facing the President'. To this end, each Member is assigned a numbered seat, which must necessarily be used by the member not only for eventual speeches, but also to cast the vote.</p> <p>According to the general rules in force before the pandemic - when members occupied all the seats in the Chamber - at the beginning of the parliamentary term the College of Quaestors allocated the seats in the Chamber to individual members according to their political affiliation, the seats being allocated to members within the section allocated to their group in relation to their political affiliation.</p> <p>The seating order of political groups in the hemicycle is from left centre and right of the seat of the President of the Chamber, according to their political orientation.</p> <p>Members of government and of Commissions have reserved seats. (Rule 31)</p> <p>The seats in the first row in the centre of the chamber are reserved for the members of the Committee of Nine, a nine-member committee appointed at the end of the discussion of a bill in the Commission, composed in such a way as to ensure the proportional participation</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Presidents can indicate them as key debates with a consequence that no other meetings may be organised in parallel.</p>	<p>of minorities, for the discussion before the Assembly and for the examination of new amendments tabled directly in the Assembly.</p> <p>With the epidemiological emergency of Covid-19, with a view to ensuring the required spacing between members, there is greater flexibility with regard to the occupation of seats by members, as they can also make their speeches and vote from seats other than those allocated to them by their own Groups. This is also because, since not all members can be present in their seats as these are not adequately spaced, additional seats have been created for members - previously located exclusively in the Chamber of Palazzo Montecitorio - in places in the Chamber previously reserved for the public (the galleries) and in the Transatlantic Lounge adjacent to the Chamber (communicating with it), which is now considered an integral part of the Chamber. The seats set up in the galleries and the Transatlantic Lounge are equipped with a terminal that enables members, after authentication, to cast their votes. In order to make their speeches, as mentioned above, members must in any case go to the Chamber.</p> <p><b>Incentives for the presence of members during debates</b></p> <p>Law No 1261 of 1965 grants Members of Parliament a daily allowance to reimburse their accommodation expenses in Rome. The Bureau determines the deductions to be made from the per diem for absences from the sittings of the Assembly, Committees and Commissions, and the permissible causes of absence for which no deduction is made. A member shall be deemed to be present if he or she attends at least 30 per cent of the votes taken during the day. A further deduction shall be made in respect of the percentage of absences from meetings of Councils, standing and special committees, the Committee on Legislation, bicameral committees and committees of enquiry, and parliamentary delegations to international assemblies.</p>
<b>Meetings in parallel to</b>	Meetings of committees should not be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, save for very few exceptions agreed by the	<b>Simultaneous meetings</b>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<p><b>plenary sessions</b></p>	<p>president. Political group meetings can be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, expect for Tuesday and/or Wednesday morning if key debates are scheduled.</p> <p>Rules for meetings in parallel to plenary sessions are set by the Decision of the Conference of Presidents of 14 May 1998.</p> <p>As a <b>general rule</b>, no other meeting may be held simultaneously. Therefore, no meeting of a parliamentary body nor any other meeting involving Members shall be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• during voting time;</li> <li>• during formal sittings;</li> <li>• on Wednesdays mornings during Strasbourg part-sessions and on Wednesdays from 15.00 to 16.30 during Brussels part-sessions or during any other debate of particular general importance defined as such by the Conference of Presidents.</li> </ul> <p>However, there are the following <b>exceptions</b> from this rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Conference of Presidents and the Bureau, and any working party thereof, must be able to meet, where appropriate, at any time.</li> <li>• The Quaestors shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Committee Chairs shall be authorised to meet from 14.00 to 16.00 on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Delegation Chairs shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg provided such meetings do not coincide with a key debate.</li> <li>• Political groups shall be authorised to meet during part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels in specific time slots (different for Strasbourg and Brussels) as defined in Annex</li> </ul>	<p>Rule 30(5) stipulates that Commissions may not meet at the same time when the Assembly is in session and that, in relation to the needs of the work of the Assembly, the President of the Chamber may always revoke the convocation of the Commissions. However, it is possible for the Commissions to meet in parallel following an express authorisation of the President of the Chamber.</p> <p>In this regard, the established practice, recognised by the Commission on the Rules of Procedure, is that the President generally authorises the holding of meetings of the Commissions at the same time when the Assembly is in session, if no votes are scheduled (general debates, conducting of inspections, etc.); on the other hand, meetings of the Commissions cannot be held at the same time as sittings in which votes are scheduled in the Assembly, unless specifically authorised by the President of the Chamber. This principle also applies to meetings of special Commissions and delegations.</p> <p>A strict prohibition to meet in conjunction with the sessions of the Assembly does not generally apply to the collegial bodies chaired by the President of the Chamber - which it is up to the President to convene whenever he deems it appropriate - that have fundamental competences in the organisation of the work and activities of the Chamber, such as the Bureau, the Conference of Presidents of political groups and the Committee for the Rules of Procedure. Normally, where it is not necessary, these meetings do not take place at the same time as voting sessions of the House.</p> <p>Meetings of parliamentary groups are also normally held when the Assembly is not in session. In fact, as a rule, when Group meetings coincide with sittings of the Assembly, political groups request that the sitting be suspended.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Ill to the Bureau decision of 4 July 2005 on Rules governing meetings of the political groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees shall be authorised to meet in Strasbourg on Mondays and Thursdays. Monday meetings shall be authorised from 19.00 to 22.30. Committees shall be authorised to hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Brussels only in exceptional cases and subject to the availability of interpretation resources. Such meetings may be held on Wednesdays from 19.00 to 22.00.</li> <li>• Finally, delegations to the Conciliation Committee may hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Strasbourg and Brussels if the constraints of time limits and Council availability so dictate and provided that such meetings do not coincide with voting time or a formal sitting.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Parliaments' calendars</b></p>	<p>Parliament's work is structured according to a calendar divided into weeks of different colours, each corresponding to a different type of parliamentary activity: pink for committee meetings, red for plenary part-sessions, blue for political group meetings and turquoise for constituency weeks (external parliamentary activities).</p> <p>Every year the Parliament holds 12 four-day plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Its Members meet in parliamentary committees in Brussels, where additional two-day plenary sessions are held.</p> <p>The plenary session is the highlight of the parliamentary month with all the Members assembling either in the Chamber in Strasbourg or, for additional, shorter sessions, in Brussels. The reports adopted in committees are once again debated, amended and adopted to reflect the Parliament's official position. In addition to adopting reports, Members adopt resolutions and directly question Commission or Council</p>	<p><b>Structure of parliamentary calendar</b></p> <p>The Calendar usually includes also, in varying degrees of detail, the start and end times of sittings, differentiated by day, therefore there is no fixed overall duration of plenary sittings.</p> <p>By way of example, 164 sittings of the Assembly were held in 2020, lasting 753 hours and 55 minutes, with an average duration per sitting of 4 hours 59 minutes. Below is a link to the statistics on the work of the Assembly <a href="https://www.camera.it/leg18/562">https://www.camera.it/leg18/562</a>.</p> <p>However, the timetables set may be subject to change as a result of Calendar changes or agreements between the Groups as circumstances arise during the sitting.</p> <p>The Rules of Procedure (Rule 25) stipulate that the Chairman of each Commission shall convene the Bureau, supplemented by the representatives of the Groups, to draw up the programme and calendar, which shall be prepared in such a way as to ensure that</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>representatives on topical issues. Heads of State or Government and personalities from all over the world may also attend the plenary sessions.</p> <p>Pink weeks are dedicated to committee meetings, the forum where Members coming from different political groups discuss draft legislation, propose amendments, consider Commission and Council proposals and draw up reports to be presented to the plenary.</p> <p>In weeks that are marked blue Members meet with other members from their political group. The political groups in Parliament bring together Members coming from different national political parties, sharing the same political stance and affiliations. During the political groups' meeting, Members discuss their positions on proposed legislation, to be debated and voted on during plenary. They scrutinise reports from Parliamentary committees, table amendments and agree on a group position.</p> <p>During turquoise week, MEPs undertake activities outside the Parliament (external parliamentary activities). They work either in their constituency in their home country, where they have the opportunity to interact with their electorate, or in Parliamentary delegations, responsible for maintaining relations with non-EU countries.</p> <p>Of course, this calendar is implemented with some degree of flexibility in duly justified cases (e.g. committee meetings in plenary or group weeks to vote on urgent legislation, extraordinary plenary sittings, etc.)</p> <p>For 2020: Number of working days in total: 174</p>	<p>priority is given to the examination of bills and other subjects included in the programme and Calendar of work of the Assembly, for which adequate time is expressly reserved in the Calendar of work of each Commission. Bills included in the programme of work of the Assembly shall be placed at the top of the agenda of the Commission, in referral, at the first sitting included in the calendar of work of the Commission.</p> <p>As regards the meetings of the parliamentary groups, the latter manage their internal organisational activities independently.</p> <p>With regard to the weeks set aside for the activities of Members in their constituencies, the Rules of Procedure (Rule 23(10)) stipulate that each month, with the exception of the period in which the budget session is held, one week is set aside for the suspension of the Chamber's work for the performance of other activities relating to the parliamentary mandate. However, as mentioned, this rule is rarely applied.</p> <p><b>Missions</b></p> <p>With regard to missions outside the Chamber, a 1996 circular provides that missions must be authorised by the President of the Chamber, to whom requests must be addressed, and that requests must be adequately motivated and must indicate the duration of the mission. The circular then defines the types of assignments that may give rise to missions, also identifying some cases for which the use of missions is excluded. In particular, as regards missions abroad, these mainly concern missions on behalf of Commissions whose competence includes reference to relations within the European Union or international frameworks (in particular the Foreign Affairs Committee) or on behalf of members of parliamentary delegations (for example to the Assembly of the Council of Europe or NATO), in relation to specific meetings of these Assemblies or their bodies.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Number of daily sitting*: 51 (including 2 extraordinary sessions in form of daily sittings held on 27 May and 23 July) Number of sitting hours: 259 h 43</p> <p>N.B.: The length of daily sittings may differ depending on the indication in the calendar (Ex. Monday for Strasbourg session and Wednesday and Thursday for the Brussels session are considered only as a half-working days).</p> <p>Number of working days for committee meetings: 58 Number of working days for political group meetings: 32 Number of working days outside of the parliament (external parliamentary activities): 38</p>	<p>As regards, in particular, missions on behalf of the Commissions, as specified in several letters of the President of the Chamber of Deputies, there must be a close connection of the mission with the matters falling within the competence of the Commission and that it corresponds to a current and concrete interest in matters that the Commission itself is examining or has already decided to discuss.</p> <p>Lastly, it must be demonstrated that it is impossible for the Commission itself to acquire information in any other way by means of the usual investigative tools supporting parliamentary activity.</p>

## 2. Strengthening parliamentary prerogatives

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<b>Organisation of Hearings</b>	<p>The European Parliament's Committees may invite the Commission and other EU institutions and bodies to their meetings. Apart from that, they may organise public hearings with experts for different purposes and shall organise public hearings on European citizen's initiatives once they have gathered the necessary citizens' support. Pre-appointment hearings are also relevant in the European Parliament's Committees work, especially the ones held during the appointment procedure of the European Commission. The European Parliament inquiry committees may also invite different categories of witnesses to provide evidence.</p>	<p>Hearings are the ordinary instrument available to Parliamentary Committees for carrying out cognitive activities and in-depth investigations. The formal or informal nature of hearings, for which a different publicity regime applies, depend on who is going to be interviewed and on the assessment made by the Committee's Bureau.</p> <p>The amount of hearings in recent legislatures has been steadily increasing, especially the informal ones.</p> <p>Committees frequently hold hearings with members of the Government to seek clarification on administrative and policy issues relating to their scope of competence. Committees may also take</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Rules applicable to the organisation and scheduling of hearing by EP's committees are quite flexible. If a committee decides to invite the <b>Commission, the Council or other EU institutions</b> to one of its meetings, the availability of those institutions may play a relevant role when deciding when to place the item on the agenda. Notwithstanding, the Commission has committed to give priority to its presence at parliamentary sessions when requested to appear (Framework Agreement on relations between the EP and the COM, point 35).</p> <p>Similarly, when deciding on whether to organise an <b>experts' hearing</b>, committees do need to consider that those hearings, no matter if they are organised by standing committees, inquiry or special committees, or subcommittees, need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau (Rule 25 (9) RoP). Proposals to organise hearings are usually discussed by committee coordinators before being submitted to Parliament's Bureau (Rule 214 RoP). According to the Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings (18 June 2003), each parliamentary committee shall submit a draft 6-months program of experts' hearings to the Conference of Committee Chairs twice a year. Individual authorisations for hearings not included in the 6-months program may also be granted and have to be submitted to the Bureau four weeks in advance of the hearing after notifying the Conference of Committee Chairs. In urgent cases, Parliament's President may directly give the authorisation (Article 3 Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings). Committees can only cover the expenses of a maximum of 16 experts' guests per year (12 for subcommittees) and experts and the organisations they represent need to be on a mandatory transparency register.</p> <p>Once organised, committees notify Parliament's President and provide detailed information regarding the hearing, Experts' hearings shall be organised in Parliament's premises and during the ordinary meeting time of committees (Article 1 Rules on</p>	<p>testimony from managers in the public sector and public authorities as prescribed by Rule 143, paragraph 2.</p> <p><b>Formal hearings</b> Depending on the persons being heard (for example, Ministers or members of the European Commission), the Parliamentary Committee may opt for a formal hearing, i.e. a hearing with full publicity regime, which includes stenographic and summary reporting and the broadcasting of the session via the internal television circuit or other audiovisual means of transmission (broadcast on the Chamber's satellite channel and/or web-tv). In each Committee, usually at the beginning of their term of office, hearings of Ministers take place "on the programmatic lines of their Ministry", often in a joint meeting with the corresponding Senate Committee.</p> <p><b>Informal hearings</b> If, on the other hand, the Committee wishes to do so, or if the subject to be heard does not fall within the types of subjects identified by the Regulations for the purposes of a formal hearing, the hearing is informal. Informal hearings are usually preferred to formal ones in a procedural context connected to the examination or discussion of a measure or act, due to the greater agility of this instrument for the purposes of legislative investigation. For example, they may hold informal hearings with persons representing important sections of civil society, professional bodies and, indeed, with anyone who has expertise in the subject being examined. For these hearings, no written reports are provided, but transmission on the Chamber's web channel may be arranged. Each Committee may arrange, in agreement with the Presidency of the Chamber, the transmission on web-TV of the sessions devoted to informal hearings, subject to the consent of the person being heard and with the consent, of Political Groups (at least corresponding to three quarters of the members of the Chamber).</p> <p><b>Fact-finding investigations</b></p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Public Hearings). In these hearings, experts are usually allowed to make a first statement followed by a debate in which committee members may raise questions. As regards the allocation of speaking time in committee Parliament's Rules of Procedure (Rule 216 (4) only refers to Rule 171 (2) RoP) during a hearing, thus leaving a wide margin of discretion to the Committee Chair to decide on how to organise the debate. Hearings are normally public.</p> <p><b>Public hearings' on European Citizens initiatives</b> present some peculiarities as they are organised by the competent EP's standing committee, on a decision made by Parliament's President on a proposal from the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (Rule 222 (1) RoP), so they do not need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau. The hearings should be organised within three months of the submission of the European Citizens initiative to the Commission.</p> <p><b>Pre-appointment hearings</b> do not have to receive the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau and the competent committees enjoy a wide range of freedom as regards their organisation and conduct, except the hearings held within the appointment procedure of the Commission, which are thoroughly regulated by Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Hearings held in the European Parliament's committees during the election procedure of the European Commission distinguish themselves from all other pre-appointment hearings, not only because they are conducted before Parliament gives its vote of consent to the Commission as a whole, but also because they involve nearly all EP's standing committees and governing bodies and they have become a major political event. Two major steps take place before the hearings themselves: i) Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee examines the declaration of financial interests presented by each Commissioner-designate to confirm that there is no conflict of interests in connection with their future portfolio</p>	<p>Hearings also take place as part of fact-finding investigations, which Committees undertake within their sphere of competence and following an agreement with the Presidency of the Chamber, inviting any person able to provide useful elements, with the "aimed at acquiring information and documents that are deemed useful for parliamentary business." (Rules of procedure, art. 144).</p> <p><b>Further information on hearings (in form of discussions or Q&amp;A sessions) with experts on particular subjects/issues</b> - From <a href="#">ECPRD 3458 - Organisation of hearings in Parliaments</a> - August 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative committees regularly organise hearings</li> <li>• How many hearings per year is each legislative committee allowed to organise? There is no limitation</li> <li>• How many hearings per year is each legislative committee actually organising (on average)? 47</li> <li>• Mainly related to general issues of committee's area of competence, seldom related to particular ongoing legislative dossiers</li> <li>• What is the usual length of such hearings? 1h 20m</li> <li>• Such hearings are usually held within committee meetings</li> <li>• Journalists are allowed to follow the hearings in a separate room via TV streaming</li> <li>• Modality: opening presentations by several experts, followed by Q&amp;A session(s) in blocks</li> <li>• How many experts are usually invited per each of such hearings (as a rule or average)? 3-4</li> <li>• Who are the experts invited to such hearings? a) academic experts; b) representatives of national stakeholders</li> <li>• Generally the members of the Committee make a list of experts they would like to hear and then the Committee Bureau chooses</li> <li>• No allowances are paid to the experts</li> <li>• Are there moderators at such hearings? yes, the Chair</li> </ul> <p><b>Changes due to Covid crisis</b></p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>ii) and Commissioners-designate are asked to answer several questions in writing before the hearing. Each hearing lasts three hours. Commissioners-designate make an opening statement of no more than 15 minutes. A session of questions and answers follows, in which Members are allowed to ask up to 25 questions, with follow-up questions to be asked immediately by the same MEP within their allocated time. Speaking time is allocated to Members taking into account the size of each political group</p> <p>Temporary <b>inquiry committees</b> may also hold hearings as part of its investigative activities on 'alleged contraventions or maladministration in implementation of Union law'. Members of the institutions and other bodies of the EU and members of the Member States' governments may be invited by inquiry committees to take part in their proceedings (Article 3 (2) of Decision 95/167/EC). Although the wording of the current provision does not seem to impose a legal obligation. In any case, Parliament has at its disposal some other powerful tools, including the motion of censure (Article 234 TFEU and Rule 127 RoP), that it can use against the Commission in case their members decide not to appear in front of inquiry committees. As regards some other EU institutions or bodies (e.g. the Council or the European Council) and national governments, Parliament can use different means to exert political pressure, including by using a "shaming and blaming" strategy.</p>	<p>In the first phase of the epidemiological emergency in the spring of 2020, in correspondence with a general reduction in the legislative and non-legislative activity of the Chamber, there was also a reduction in the number of hearings, both formal and informal, limited in particular to issues and measures related to the health emergency: subsequently the hearings were confirmed as one of the tools most used by Committees in order to acquire information on issues of their interest, including of course issues related to the pandemic itself.</p> <p>Since March 2020 (for informal hearings) and November 2020 (for all types of hearings), it has been possible for both Committee members and persons interviewed to participate remotely in hearings. (For further information concerning sanitary measures, see also the point "Procedure for setting parliaments' priorities" in the Section 1 "Plenary Reform and Agenda-setting").</p> <p>The methods of remote participation have been provided for on an experimental basis in relation to the epidemiological emergency, but at the moment no deadline has been set for their application and therefore it is not possible to say whether they will be maintained at the end of the emergency period.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy setting, fact-finding and scrutiny</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rules of procedure</a>, rules 143.2, 144</li> <li>• <a href="#">ECPRD 1791</a></li> <li>• Chamber's note "Regolamento"</li> </ul>
<b>Scrutiny and control powers</b>	<p>Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers. These include <b>(1) exercise oversight over other institutions, (2) monitor the proper use of the EU budget and (3) ensure the correct implementation of EU law.</b></p> <p><b><u>Control over the Council</u></b></p>	<p><b>Policy setting</b></p> <p>Parliament exercises a policy-setting function in respect of the Government, primarily by means of the vote of confidence. Before it begins to govern, every Government must first obtain a vote of confidence in Parliament, which grants or denies it by voting on a motion of confidence that is based on the programme</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>The President of the European Parliament has the right to speak at the start of each European Council, setting out Parliament's position on the subjects to be addressed by the heads of state and government. After each summit, the President of the European Council presents a report to Parliament on the outcome.</p> <p>At the beginning and end of each six-month presidency, the President of the Council of the European Union discusses the Presidency's programme with MEPs in plenary. MEPs can table written and oral questions to the Council and can ask it to initiate new policies. The Presidency of the Council often meets the Chairs of Parliament's political groups and frequently takes part in committee meetings to present its programme, report on its achievements and discuss them with MEPs. In addition, twice a year, the High Representative reports to the European Parliament about foreign affairs and security policies and their financial implications.</p> <p><b><u>Control over the Commission</u></b></p> <p>The Parliament has the right to approve and dismiss the Commission. A candidate for the position of Commission President is proposed by the Member States' governments based on the results of the European elections. The candidate is then elected by the Parliament. The Commission as a whole, including the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is subject to a vote of consent by Parliament. The Commission can be forced to resign if the EP adopts a motion of censure. It can censure the Commission and ultimately dismiss it.</p> <p>The Parliament keeps a close eye on the Commission's work, scrutinizing its reports on EU policies, legislation and the budget. Commissioners are often required to appear before MEPs, at committee meetings or in plenary, to defend their</p>	<p>communicated to the Houses of Parliament by the incoming Government.</p> <p>Deputies and Senators may move a motion of no confidence in the government at any time. The motion of no confidence must be countersigned by at least one tenth of the members of one of the two Houses of Parliament. Further, the Government may call a vote of confidence in order to compel the House to reconfirm its support in relation to a specific text being considered by the House (with certain limitations, in the case of the Chamber of Deputies, as indicated in Rule 116). Votes of confidence are also by roll-call. An interval of at least 24 hours must pass between the proposal of a vote of confidence in the Chamber of Deputies and the holding of the vote itself.</p> <p><b><i>Is the dismissal of a single member of government possible?</i></b></p> <p>The Constitution (article 94) establishes that a motion of no-confidence in the Government must be signed by at least one tenth of the members of the Chamber and cannot be put to discussion before three days from its presentation. Substantially similar is article 115 of the Rules of the Chamber. The motion must also be motivated and voted on by roll call. The Regulations also provide that <u>the same discipline applies to motions requesting the resignation of an individual Minister</u>, i.e. motions of individual non-confidence.</p> <p>In the absence of an express provision in the Constitution, the Constitutional Court has ruled on the full compatibility of the motion of individual non-confidence with the constitutional system (sentence no. 7 of 1996), in relation to the conflict of attributions raised by the former Minister of Justice Mancuso, against whom the Senate had approved a motion of no-confidence on October 19, 1995. In that judgment the Constitutional Court stated that:</p> <p>"(a) it is incumbent upon each Chamber to pass a motion of no-confidence even with respect to an individual Minister;</p> <p>b) it shall be for the President of the Republic, on the proposal of the President of the Council of Ministers, to replace the Minister against</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>policies, explain what action they intend to take and answer questions.</p> <p>Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, which regularly submits reports to it, including an annual report on EU activities and the implementation of the budget. At every plenary session, the President of the Commission is present for Question Hour, during which MEPs question him or her on current affairs. Once a year, the Commission President gives a State of the Union address at the plenary. Parliament regularly invites the Commission to initiate new policies, and the Commission is required to reply to oral and written questions from MEPs.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Justice</u></b> The EP can ask the Court to take action against the Commission or the Council if they have acted in a way that is contrary to the provisions of EU law. The Parliament is able to seek a prior opinion from the CJEU on the compatibility of an international agreement with the Treaty. In addition, the Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish specialised courts attached to the General Court to hear and determine at first instance certain classes of action or proceeding brought in specific areas.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank (ECB)</u></b> The ECB President reports to Parliament on monetary issues in a quarterly Monetary Dialogue. The ECB also prepares an annual report on monetary policy which is presented in Parliament. Parliament adopts a resolution on this annual report. MEPs may put questions for written answer to the ECB. Parliament is also consulted in the procedure to appoint members of the ECB's Executive Board.</p>	<p>whom a Chamber of Deputies has passed a motion of no-confidence, when he or she does not resign."</p> <p>The Chamber (as well as the Senate) also possesses other instruments with which to define guidelines specifying or completing the programme underlying the relationship of confidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>motions</b>, which may be used to propose a debate and a deliberation on the Floor of the House and which contain a specific guideline addressed to the Government;</li> <li>• <b>resolutions</b>, which may be used on the Floor of the House to conclude debates on Government communications or those in which motions are discussed. In a Committee, a resolution takes on an autonomous nature and allows sectoral policies to be defined in the respective areas of competence;</li> <li>• <b>other motions</b> instructing the Government on how to implement the laws, which may be presented during the discussion of bills.</li> </ul> <p><b>Scrutiny</b> <b>Written questions</b> are addressed to the Government by one or more parliamentarians in order to ascertain whether a given fact is true, whether the Government is informed thereof and what action, if any, it intends to take (Rule 128, paragraph 2). Questions may involve an oral answer given on the Floor of the House or in the Committees, or a written answer. Among the different questions there are the so-called questions with immediate answers (similar to the British Question Time) on the Floor of the House (with live TV broadcasting) or in the Committees and whose procedure is faster and more immediate than the normal procedure.</p> <p><b>Interpellations</b>, which only take place on the Floor of the House, are written, substantiated questions addressed by individual parliamentarians to the Government concerning its conduct on given issues and the action the Executive intends to take (Rule 138, paragraph 2).</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>The new supervisory responsibilities of the ECB are matched with additional accountability requirements under the SSM Regulation. The practical modalities for this are governed by an inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between Parliament and the ECB. The accountability arrangements include the attendance of the Chair of the Supervisory Board at the competent committee, the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON); answering questions asked by Parliament; and confidential oral discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the competent committee upon request. In addition, the ECB prepares an annual supervisory report, which is presented to Parliament by the Chair of the Supervisory Board.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Auditors</u></b> Parliament shall be consulted before the appointment of the members of the Court of Auditors by the Council. The Court assists Parliament and the Council in exercising their role of controlling the implementation of the budget. The annual reports and special reports serve as the basis for Parliament's yearly discharge exercise.</p> <p>The Court's Members are invited to present their reports at committee meetings (Parliament's CONT Committee and other specialised committees), and to reply to questions raised by MEPs. Each year the Court of Auditors and CONT hold several meetings at which CONT members discuss with the Members of the Court their political priorities, the Court's annual work programme, detailed arrangements for cooperation, etc. Once a year, the ECA President attends a meeting of the European Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs to present the ECA's annual work programme and invite all committees to submit their suggestions for the next programming exercise. Parliament also makes suggestions on these issues in its annual resolutions on the Court of Auditors' discharge. The Court of</p>	<p>In practice, the Government, also at the request of the Groups, may disclose urgent information to the Chamber of Deputies on matters that are particularly important or topical.</p> <p><b>Fact-finding investigations</b> Committees have the power to carry out fact-finding investigations into matters that fall within their scope of competence in order to gather elements useful to their work and to the work of the Chamber of Deputies as a whole, and may hold hearings with any person who is able to offer evidence useful for the purposes of the enquiry. A verbatim report is published of the meetings of Committees acting in an investigating capacity.</p> <p><b>Enquiries</b> One of the prerogatives of the Chamber of Deputies is to hold enquiries into matters of public interest by setting up Committees of Enquiry (including joint Committees), which have the same powers and limitations as judicial authorities.</p> <p><b>Other parliamentary bodies with scrutiny responsibilities</b> There are also Committees for guidance, scrutiny and control, established by law, which carry out functions in relation to specific sectors or subjects. Examples of this are the <i>Parliamentary Commission for the general direction and supervision of radio and television services</i>, the <i>Commission for the supervision of the tax registry</i>, the <i>Parliamentary Commission for the control of the activity of the bodies managing compulsory forms of social security and assistance</i>, the <i>Parliamentary Committee for the control of the implementation of the Schengen Agreement</i> and the <i>Parliamentary Committee for the Security of the Republic</i>.</p> <p><b>Government instruments submitted for opinion</b> The law specifies that Parliament should give its opinion on many Government legislative instruments. Generally speaking, the opinion is required for all appointments of presidents and chairpersons of</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Auditors presents the annual report on the previous year's budget to the Council and to the Parliament. Based on this report, Parliament decides whether or not to approve the Commission's handling of the EU budget, by granting the budget discharge.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> The Parliament elects the European Ombudsman. The Ombudsman reports back to the EP and presents an annual report to the MEPs. The Ombudsman may be dismissed by the Court of Justice at Parliament's request in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b><u>Budget</u></b> Parliament remains one of the two arms of the budgetary authority (Article 314 of the TFEU). It is involved in the budgetary process from the preparation stage, notably in laying down the general guidelines and the type of spending. It adopts the budget and monitors its implementation (Article 318 of the TFEU). It gives a discharge on the implementation of the budget (Article 319 of the TFEU). Finally, Parliament has to provide its consent to the multiannual financial framework (MFF) (Article 312 of the TFEU). The MFF for 2014–2020 is the first to be covered under the rules laid down in the TFEU.</p> <p><b><u>Implementation of EU law</u></b> According to Article 226 of the TFEU, Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of EU law. The same article provides that the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the right of inquiry are to be determined by Parliament itself, acting by means of regulations on its own initiative after obtaining the consent of the Council and the Commission. Until such a regulation is</p>	<p>public authorities and for all draft legislative decrees that allow the exercise of delegated powers for more than two years.</p> <p>Further, many laws require the preliminary opinion of Parliament in relation to the enabling provisions for their implementation (legislative decrees, rulings and other provisions).</p> <p>In this case, the Government, having approved its legislative instruments (be it a proposed appointment, draft legislative decree or regulation), passes it to the Houses of Parliament whose Presidents assign it to the appropriate Standing Committees (though in some cases, special Committees, including joint Committees, may be set up for the purpose). The Committees examine the instrument and issue an opinion on it.</p> <p><u>Sources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy setting, fact-finding and scrutiny</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Parliamentary confidence in the Government</a></li> <li>• Chamber's note "Regolamento"</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>adopted, the right of inquiry is exercised in accordance with a 1995 inter-institutional agreement annexed to Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Parliament has repeatedly expressed the need to improve communication and cooperation between the three institutions in order to be able to fulfil its mandate based on Article 226 of the TFEU. In 2014, it adopted a position on a proposal for a regulation on the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry. However, the negotiations between the three institutions on the proposal have constantly been in a deadlock. Consequently, in April 2019, Parliament adopted a resolution, in which it considers that the Council and the Commission have failed to comply with the principle of inter-institutional cooperation and invites them to resume on the matter with the newly elected Parliament.</p>	
<p><b>Appointment procedures</b></p>	<p>The role and the prerogatives of the European Parliament have evolved and increased over time, not only as regards legislative powers and oversight but also in relation to the procedures to nominate, vet and appoint people to other senior positions in EU institutions, agencies and other bodies. Parliament's role varies from case to case depending on the legal basis. Parliament's scrutiny of such candidates, in various different forms, helps in ensuring the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of the process as well as its transparency. What is today codified in the EU Treaties, secondary legislation and Parliament's Rules of Procedure, is mostly the result of a set of Parliamentary processes that became established practices over the years. This demonstrates that Parliament has managed to use its political leverage to expand and formalise its power to nominate and appoint the holders of senior positions. Despite the heterogeneity of procedures, some common patterns may be highlighted, in particular, that candidates and nominees generally appear in front of the relevant committee(s) of the European Parliament,</p>	<p><b>Parliamentary control over Government's appointments</b>  Parliamentary control over appointments in public bodies is governed by Law No. 14 of 1978, which in Article 1 provides that: "The President of the Council of Ministers, the Council of Ministers and individual Ministers, before proceeding, according to their respective competences, to appointments, proposals or designations of presidents and vice-presidents of institutes and public bodies, including economic ones, must request the parliamentary opinion provided for by this law". Article 3 of the same law then provides that "the body responsible for the nomination, proposal or appointment may proceed, after the lapse of the terms established by the regulations of the two Chambers, even if the opinion of the Committees has not been given".  Rules of procedure of the Chamber of Deputies provide that the President of the Chamber of Deputies shall assign the relative request to the competent Committee and inform the Assembly at the first session following the presentation of the request.  With regard to acts of nomination, proposal or designation, the Committee issues its opinion within twenty days from the</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>first making a statement and then answering questions from Members.</p> <p><b><u>European Commission</u></b> The Lisbon Treaty Article 17(7) TEU provides that Member State governments propose the other Commissioners, who are then nominated by the Council in common accord with the President-elect of the Commission. Each candidate then appears for a three-hour hearing in front of the Parliament's committee(s) responsible, as stipulated in Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Before a hearing can take place, candidates must answer a written questionnaire and present their declaration of interests. The declarations of financial interests are examined by Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs, which needs to confirm the absence of any conflict of interest. After that, the Commission as a whole still needs to obtain consent from Parliament by a majority of the votes cast, by roll call before being appointed by the European Council, by qualified majority.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Auditors</u></b> According to Article 286(2) TFEU the Council adopts the list of members of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) following proposals from Member States and after consulting the European Parliament. Despite Parliament having a consultative role only, it can influence the outcome. The Member States may prefer to withdraw a candidate than face a formal negative vote by Parliament. The relevance of Parliament's role also comes from the fact that hearings of the nominees are in public in committee, and their answers to the questionnaire are published, creating significant political weight and pressure on the candidates' performance.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Justice</u></b> Parliament has no role in the appointing procedure for Judges or Advocates-General of the European Court of Justice (ECJ).</p>	<p>assignment, which may be extended once, for no more than ten days, by the President of the Chamber. The opinion is communicated to the President of the Chamber, who transmits it to the Government. The activity carried out by the parliamentary commissions in this case is advisory. In fact the Government, in the event that the Committees do not express an opinion within the regulatory deadlines, is free to proceed and, in the event of a contrary opinion, may also depart from it.</p> <p><b>Appointments falling within the direct competence of Chamber and Senate</b> In a number of cases, it is envisaged that the parliamentary assemblies themselves should elect all or part of the members of certain public bodies, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authority for Communications Guarantees</li> <li>• Italian Data Protection Authority</li> <li>• Board of Directors of RAI (the national public broadcasting company)</li> <li>• Presidential Board of the Court of Audit</li> <li>• Parliamentary Supervisory Committee of Cassa Depositi e Prestiti</li> <li>• Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment</li> </ul> <p>Elections falling within the competence of the two Chambers in joint session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Constitutional Court</li> <li>• Members of the Superior Council of the Judiciary</li> </ul> <p><b>Appointments by Presidents of Chamber and Senate</b> In other cases members of public bodies and Authorities are appointed by the Presidents of the two Chambers, according to various procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Italian Competition Authority</li> <li>• Commission for the implementation of the law on the right to strike in essential public services</li> <li>• Independent Authority for Children and Adolescents</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>However, according to Article 255 TFEU it proposes one member of the panel entrusted with the duty of vetting the nominees.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> According to Article 228 TFEU the European Ombudsman is directly elected by Parliament for the duration of its legislative term, i.e. a five-year period. This appointment is completely under the aegis of Parliament and Member States have no role at all.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank</u></b> Parliament also has a role in the appointments procedure for members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) as well as of the Supervisory Board of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM). For the former, Parliament provides an opinion, while for the latter Parliament has a more stringent role. Article 283(2) TFEU states that the ECB Executive Board will be appointed by the European Council on a recommendation from the Council after consulting the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the ECB.</p> <p><b><u>Agencies' board members and Executive Directors</u></b> The European Parliament exercises its oversight power over EU agencies through various procedures including, but not limited to, budgetary discharge, involvement in the appointment of their Executive Directors and Management Board members.</p> <p><b><u>European Data Protection Supervisor</u></b> According to Article 53 of EU Regulation 2018/1725, Parliament and Council shall appoint the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) for a five-year term by common accord, on the basis of a public list of at least three candidates drawn up by the European Commission following a public call for submission of candidatures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary Budget Office</li> </ul> <p><u>Source</u>: Chamber's note "Regolamento"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As far as RAI-Radiotelevisione italiana is concerned, the Parliamentary Committee responsible for the general guidelines and supervision of the radio and television services indicates seven members of the Board of Directors of the company, electing them with a vote limited to one. The remaining two members, including the chair person, are instead designated by the majority partner (the Ministry of the Economy and Finances); the appointment of the chair person becomes effective only after the approval of the Committee has been obtained</li> </ul> <p><u>Source</u>: <a href="#">ECPRD876</a></p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p><b><u>European Public Prosecutor's Office</u></b>  The first European Chief Prosecutor was appointed in 2019. According to Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, Parliament and Council shall appoint by common accord the European Chief Prosecutor, based on a number of criteria following an open call for candidates published in the Official Journal. A selection panel, a member of which shall be proposed by Parliament, draws up a shortlist of qualified candidates to be submitted to Parliament and to the Council.</p> <p><b><u>European Anti-Fraud Office</u></b>  Article 17 of Regulation No 883/2013 on the investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) recognises Parliament's role in the appointment procedure of the European Anti-Fraud Office Director-General as well as its Supervisory Committee. Following amendments adopted in December 2020, the Regulation states that the Director-General is appointed by the  European Commission for a seven-year term. In order to do so, following a public call for applications, the Commission draws up a list of suitably qualified candidates, based on the Supervisory Committee's favourable opinion, then Parliament and Council agree on a shortlist of three candidates based on which the Commission appoints the Director-General. The five independent members of the Supervisory Committee are also appointed by common accord of Parliament, Council and Commission - Article 15(2) of Regulation 833/2013. Finally, the recent amendments introduced the figure of Controller of procedural guarantees, attached to the Supervisory Committee, appointed by the Commission after consultation of Parliament and the Council.</p>	
<b>Question time</b>	Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of up to 90 minutes on one or more specific	The question time in Plenary is regulated by the article 135-bis of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies:

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>horizontal themes to be decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited to participate by the Conference of Presidents shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners to be invited shall be limited to two per part-session. However, it shall be possible to invite a third Commissioner, depending on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall, as far as possible, ensure that Members that hold different political views and that come from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn.</p> <p>The Member shall be given one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. That Member may put a supplementary question, lasting no longer than 30 seconds and having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner shall then be given two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided under paragraph. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p>	<p>"1. Questions tabled for immediate answer shall be dealt with once a week, usually on Wednesdays. Within the framework of each order of business the President or Deputy President of the Council of Ministers shall participate twice in sittings devoted to questions tabled for immediate answer, while the Minister or Ministers with responsibility for the subjects covered by the questions submitted shall participate once.</p> <p>2. No later than 12 o'clock on the day preceding the one in which the questions referred to in paragraph 1 are to be dealt with, one deputy for each Group may submit a question through the Chairperson of the Group to which he or she belongs.</p> <p>3. The parliamentary questions referred to in paragraph 1 shall consist of one single question, formulated in a clear and concise manner on a subject of general import, characterised by urgency or particular political topicality. When questions are to be answered by the President or Deputy President of the Council of Ministers, such questions shall be related to matters within the sphere of responsibility of the President of the Council of Ministers as defined by article 95, paragraph 1, of the Constitution. In other cases, the President of the Chamber shall invite the Minister or Ministers responsible for the subjects on which the highest number of questions have been tabled. Groups that have tabled questions on different subjects may submit others, addressed to the Ministers invited to reply, within an appropriate time limit as laid down by the President of the Chamber.</p> <p>4. Each deputy tabling a question may speak to it for no longer than one minute. A member of the Government shall reply to each of the questions tabled, for no longer than three minutes. After this, the questioner or another deputy from the same Group shall have the right to respond, for no longer than two minutes.</p> <p>5. The President of the Chamber may arrange for the televised broadcasting of the questions described in this Rule.</p> <p>6. The powers attributed to the President of the Chamber by articles 139 and 139-bis2 shall remain unchanged.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p>7. Questions tabled following the procedure set out in this Rule may not be tabled again as ordinary questions"  Source: <a href="#">Rules of procedure</a>, rule 135 bis</p> <p>See also the point "Question time" in the Section 1 "Plenary Reform and Agenda-setting".</p>
<b>Transparency of legislative procedures</b>	<p>Primary law lays down some principles, which need to be respected by the EU institutions. The institutions are to conduct their work as openly as possible (Article 15(1) TFEU), with the Parliament (Article 15(2) TFEU) and Council (Article 16(8) TEU) meeting in public, the latter specifically 'when it deliberates and votes on a draft legislative act'. In addition, institutions must ensure the publication of documents relating to legislative procedures, and allow citizens and EU residents to access the types of documents as enshrined in Article 15(3) TFEU and Article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. This fundamental right is also reflected in secondary law adopted in 2001 – Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. It stipulates that legislative documents are in principle public, with some limited exceptions.</p> <p>The Commission's proposals are published on the day the College adopts them. In the EP, working documents, draft reports and opinions as well as amendments tabled by individual Members or political groups are published in all official languages even before a vote takes place in a committee or in the plenary. Final texts adopted at committee and plenary level are made available to the public closely after the vote. In addition, 4 column-documents of political trilogues can be made available on request under Reg. 1049/2001. The result of the negotiations (the so called compromise agreement or text) is published before the final vote in plenary.</p>	<p><b><i>Publications of official documents</i></b>  <b><i>At which stages are official documents on legislative procedures made available publicly?</i></b></p> <p>Parliamentary documents include documents published by Parliament for the purpose of disclosing the activities carried out by MPs in the Lower House and by the various parliamentary bodies. They include: minutes of the proceedings, verbatim reports (summary and full reports) of sittings, bulletins of parliamentary bodies, messages by the Presidents of the Houses, printed documents with the texts of bills, proposed parliamentary enquiries or proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure, reports presented to the Floor of the House by committees, the final conclusions of fact-finding enquiries conducted by committees and the official documents of the parliamentary oversight body.</p> <p>Parliamentary acts also encompass documents that are created outside the Chamber of Deputies but are intended for its use and are published by it as part of its own output. These include: messages from the President of the Republic, requests for authorisation to prosecute an MP, decrees on which the Audit Court has expressed reservations, and the many reports that, pursuant to many laws, have to be forwarded to Parliament from the Government, the Bank of Italy, the Audit Court, CNEL, independent authorities and so on.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>While the EP receive the Council mandate for negotiating, the mandate does not provide information on the individual position of the Member States. The Ombudsman conducted an inquiry into the transparency of the legislative process of the Council (OI/2/2017/TE) in March 2017. The report stated that the Council failed to systematically record identities of Member States expressing positions in legislative files in preparatory level bodies. Moreover, the Council automatically assigned 'LIMITE' status to files of ongoing deliberations – meaning for internal use only – in violation of the principle of widest possible public access to documents established by the CJEU's case law. Thus, in the context of trilogues, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council review the 'LIMITE' status of documents setting out its position – the third column – to make it publicly available before trilogues take place. The Court of Justice considered, in the abovementioned case, that the Council was wrong to refuse public access to parts of a note from its Secretariat that contained amendments tabled by a number of Member State governments. The Court clarified that the EU's rules on access to documents "aim to ensure public access to the entire content of Council documents, including, in this case, the identity of those who put forward proposals". The Ombudsman welcomed the Council's confirmation that, as a consequence of the Court's ruling, legislative documents containing Member States' positions are now disclosed upon request, "save in exceptional and duly justified cases". The Ombudsman suggested that the Council update its rules of procedure to reflect this practice. Of course this commitment means little, if Member States' positions are not recorded appropriately in the first place. The Ombudsman therefore made the following recommendation to the Council: The Council should systematically record the identity of Member State governments when they express positions in preparatory bodies.</p>	<p><b>Plenary:</b> The sittings of the Chamber of Deputies are public. This is established by Article 64 of the Constitution. It conforms to the principle of popular sovereignty, and allows citizens to familiarise themselves with the position and activity of their representatives and to form an opinion on matters of political debate. As to the question of how to put into practice the constitutional principle that sittings should be open, in the first place, it is possible to attend live debates from public galleries above the plenary hall. It is possible also to read verbatim reports of debates, which are always available from the Chamber of Deputies website on the same day as they are held, and in printed version on the day after.</p> <p><b>Committees:</b> Verbatim reports of the sittings of Committees are also published, both in printed publications and on the internet. The sessions are also transmitted live on the internet, on radio and on the Chamber of Deputies satellite television channel. Particularly important debates are broadcast on public television.</p> <p><b>Sources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Publicity of work</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rules of procedures</a>, rule 63</li> <li>• [Previous study, p. 43-46]</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal meetings:</b> These take place within the <u>Restricted Committee</u> (a body, composed in such a way as to guarantee the proportional participation of minorities, which each Commission may appoint during the examination of a bill) and within the <u>Committee of Nine</u> (appointed at the end of the discussion in the Committee, composed in such a way as to guarantee the proportional participation of minorities, for the discussion before the Assembly and for the examination of new amendments presented directly in the Assembly). No form of publicity is provided for these meetings, except for the publication of the schedules of their meetings.</p> <p><u>Source: Chamber's note "Regolamento"</u></p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
		<p><b><i>In bicameral parliaments: At which stage does the lower chamber receive information on the positions of the upper chamber and in which detail?</i></b></p> <p>The "perfect bicameralism" of Italian legal system, in which the Chamber and the Senate are endowed with the same powers, does not provide for the position of one Chamber to be communicated to the other Chamber during the legislative process before the bill is approved with a final vote by one of them. Only after approval of the measure by one Chamber is the approved text transmitted to the other branch of Parliament, which in turn will begin its examination. <u>Source</u>: Chamber's note "Regolamento"</p>
<p><b>Resolving conflicts of competences between committees</b></p>	<p>(RoP 211) If a standing committee declares itself not to be competent to consider an item, or if a conflict arises over the competence of two or more standing committees, the question of competence shall be submitted to the Conference of Committee Chairs within four weeks of the announcement in Parliament of the referral to committee.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents shall take a decision within six weeks after the submission of the question on the basis of a recommendation from the Conference of Committee Chairs, or, if no such recommendation is forthcoming, from the latter's Chair. If the Conference of Presidents fails to take a decision within that period, the recommendation shall be deemed to have been approved.</p> <p>The committee Chairs may enter into agreements with other committee Chairs concerning the allocation of an item to a particular committee, subject, where necessary, to the authorisation of an associated committee procedure under Rule 57.</p>	<p><b><i>Who takes the decision on the competent committee?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>If there is a conflict of competences, what is the procedure to solve it?</i></b></p> <p>"1. The President of the Chamber shall refer to the appropriate Committees according to subject matter the bills on which they shall report to the House, and shall inform the House thereof. If, in the two days following the announcement, a Group Chairperson or ten deputies propose that a bill be referred to a different Committee, the President shall enter this proposal in the agenda; the House, having listened to one speaker against and one in favour, shall decide by show of hands." [...]</p> <p>3. After referral, two Committees may ask the President of the Chamber to allow joint consideration of a bill.</p> <p>4. Any questions of jurisdiction arising between two or more Committees shall be submitted to the President of the Chamber. If he or she deems it necessary, the President may submit the question to the Committee on the Rules of Procedure</p> <p><b>Source:</b> <u>Rules of procedures</u>, rule 72</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Where a question of competence is referred to the Conference of Presidents pursuant to Rule 211, and the Conference of Presidents, on the basis of Annex VI, considers that the matter falls almost equally within the competence of two or more committees, or that different parts of the matter fall within the competence of two or more committees, Rule 56 shall apply with the following additional provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the timetable shall be jointly agreed by the committees concerned;</li> <li>-the rapporteurs concerned shall keep each other informed and shall endeavour to agree on the texts they propose to their committees and on their position regarding amendments;</li> <li>-the Chairs and rapporteurs concerned are bound by the principle of good and sincere cooperation; they shall jointly identify areas of the text falling within their exclusive or shared competence and agree on the precise arrangements for their cooperation;</li> <li>-the committee responsible shall accept without a vote amendments from an associated committee where they concern matters which fall within the exclusive competence of that associated committee; if the committee responsible fails to respect the exclusive competence of the associated committee, that associated committee may table amendments directly in plenary; if amendments on matters which fall within the shared competence of the committee responsible and an associated committee are not adopted by the committee responsible, the associated committee may table those amendments directly in plenary;</li> <li>-in the event of a conciliation procedure in respect of the proposal, Parliament's delegation shall include the rapporteur of any associated committee.</li> </ul>	<p>"1. If the President of the Chamber deems it useful, he or she may request a Committee's opinion on a bill referred to another Committee, before the bill is decided upon. The Committee responsible may, subject to the consent of the President of the Chamber, seek the opinion of another Committee.</p> <p>1.bis. If a bill referred to a Committee contains measures that fall to a significant degree within the sphere of responsibility of another Committee, the President of the Chamber may decide that the opinion of the latter be printed and annexed to the report written for the House."</p> <p><u>Source:</u> <u>Rules of procedures</u>, rule 73</p> <p>"The Committee on the Rules of Procedure: chaired by the President himself or herself, is composed of at least 10 Deputies (Rule 16, paragraph 1) and is responsible for issuing opinions regarding the interpretation of the Rules of Procedure, resolving conflicts of powers between Committees and considering proposals relating to the Rules"</p> <p><u>Source:</u> [Previous study, p. 32]</p> <p><b><i>What are the deadlines? How long can it take in extremis?</i></b></p> <p>No specific deadlines are envisaged for the resolution of conflicts of competence between Committees, other than those dictated by the time required for the examination of measures included in the calendar of work of the Assembly.</p> <p><u>Source:</u> Chamber's note "Regolamento"</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<p><b>Changes to committee competences and structures in response to the current crisis situation</b></p>	<p>The EP did not change the structure and the competences of its committees, due to the pandemic. In principle, it is allowed for the EP to change its committee structure at any given time; however, the established practice is that it modifies the structure and/or the competences of its committees shortly before the end of each legislative period, in order to keep up with the changing circumstances and increase its effectiveness in the subsequent legislative term.</p> <p>The last adaptation to the composition of the committees took place on 8 July 2021. Following changes in its composition, Parliament increased the number of seats in its special and inquiry committees, and adopted a new distribution among political groups. Following several changes in the political groups' composition and to ensure that all MEPs can participate in the work of committees and delegations, ten committee seats are allocated to non-attached Members: four additional seats are created, and six existing ones will be reallocated. The plenary adapted the numerical strength of the four committees based on the decision of the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>A new seat will be created in each of the Special Committees on Beating Cancer (BECA), on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (INGE), and on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA). They will now be composed of 34 members each. The fourth new seat will be created in the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport within and outside the EU (ANIT), which will now be composed of 31 members.</p> <p>The new nominal composition of Parliament's committees will be decided by the political groups and non-attached members, and will be communicated to the plenary in a subsequent session.</p>	<p><b><i>Have there been any adaptations to the structure of parliamentary committees as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic?</i></b></p> <p>There have been no adjustments in the composition of Parliamentary Committees as a result of the epidemiological emergency from Covid 19. <u>Source:</u> Chamber's note "Regolamento"</p> <p><b><i>Are adaptations to the committee structure possible, for example after elections or at any other points in time, or are these even done regularly?</i></b></p> <p>Rules of procedure provide that from the date of their constitution, the Standing Committees are renewed every two years and that their members may be reappointed. Political Groups may replace the members of the Commissions even before the biennial renewal. <u>Source:</u> Chamber's note "Regolamento"</p> <p><b><i>When have the committee structures been reformed/changed for the last time?</i></b></p> <p>Article 22 of <a href="#">Rules of procedures</a> was modified on 1 August 1996 for the last time. <u>Sources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rules of procedures</a>, rule 22</li> <li>• <a href="#">Tavola cronologica modifiche Regolamentoo</a></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Which criteria are taken into account for the designation of committees and their competences (e.g. the legislative workload)?</i></b></p> <p>"At the start of each Parliament, 14 Standing Committees are established. Rule 22 sets the number of Standing Committees and defines their scope of competence, which is specified in greater detail in a circular issued for this purpose by the President of the Chamber of Deputies. Each of the 14 standing committees, therefore, has a remit that covers a given sector of the general institutional sphere and its powers are limited thereto."</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Parliament's Rules of Procedure provide that the composition of the committees "shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament". When it comes to the criteria for setting up a parliamentary committee or changing its competences, there are no formal guidelines available. Political Groups are free to define such criteria as they consider fit for purpose. Possible criteria in this context would be the 'workload of parliamentary committees', 'match of policy areas between the European Commission's work programme and the competences of parliamentary committees', 'reduction of conflicts of competences', and of course, the 'interest of Members'.</p>	<p><u>Sources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rules of procedures</a>, rule 22</li> </ul> <p>[Previous study, p. 31]</p>

### 3. Enhancing Parliamentary Diplomacy

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<b>Relations with the executive</b>	<p>Article 36 of the TEU requires the High Representative to consult Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the CFSP and to inform Parliament of the policy's evolution. Parliament holds twice-yearly debates on CFSP progress reports and puts questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative.</p> <p>Parliament's right to be informed and consulted about the CFSP/CSDP was further strengthened by the High Representative's declaration of political accountability in 2010. The declaration provided, inter alia, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the status of the 'Joint Consultation Meetings' (JCMs), which allow a designated group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to meet counterparts from the Council's Political and Security</li> </ul>	<p>The Italian Chamber of deputies cooperates on a regular basis with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the International Cooperation. The cooperation implies the exchange of information and documents related to the international activity of the Chamber. The cooperation implies also contacts with the Italian diplomatic missions and corps.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Committee (PSC), the EEAS and the Commission to discuss planned and ongoing civilian CSDP missions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirming the right of Parliament's 'special committee' to have access to confidential information relating to the CFSP and the CSDP. This right is based on an inter-institutional agreement of 2002;</li> <li>• Holding exchanges of views with heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials during committee meetings and hearings of committees of Parliament;</li> <li>• Mandating the High Representative to appear before Parliament at least twice a year to report on the current state of affairs regarding the CFSP/CSDP and to answer questions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to this political dialogue, Parliament exercises its authority through the budgetary procedure. As one arm of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament must approve the annual CFSP budget. Parliament also helps to shape the relevant external financial instruments through a process of trilateral negotiations with the Council and the Commission.</p> <p>Parliament regularly scrutinises the operations of the EEAS and provides it with suggestions on structural issues, ranging from its geographical and gender balance to its interaction with other EU institutions and the diplomatic services of the Member States. Parliament also holds regular discussions with the High Representative and the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) appointed for certain regions or issues. Parliamentary committees, which helped to set up the EEAS, also exchange views with the EEAS's newly appointed heads of delegation.</p> <p>Parliament also has a role to play in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. Parliament's</p>	

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	consent is required before the Council can conclude such agreements.	
<b>Interparliamentary delegations</b>	<p>The European Parliament's interparliamentary delegations are official groups of Members who build ties to countries, regions or organisations outside the European Union (EU). The European Parliament currently has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one term to the next. The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner.</p> <p>There are two main types of delegations: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations. Standing delegations belong in three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations.</p> <p><b>Parliamentary assemblies</b> are regular, formal meetings of elected representatives from several parliaments. Currently, 5 of Parliament's 44 delegations participate in parliamentary assemblies.</p> <p><b>Interparliamentary committees</b> are mostly bilateral. European Parliament delegations meet their counterparts from a country/countries in formal meetings, held on a regular basis. Interparliamentary committees differ according to the type of bilateral agreement establishing them, between the EU and the respective country. These include Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees.</p> <p>Other <b>interparliamentary delegations</b> form the largest group of delegations (25 out of the total number of 44 delegations), which work with relations with individual</p>	<p>Parliamentary delegations to international assemblies</p> <p>The International Assemblies are made up of delegations from national parliaments. The number of representatives from the various Member States corresponds to their population size and varies within a fixed range from minimum to maximum. In as far as the availability of seats allows, the national delegations must be as representative as possible of the political groups within national parliaments. The delegation may remain in office up to a maximum of six months beyond the end of Parliament to guarantee continuity in international forums.</p> <p>The Italian Parliament has five joint Senate-Chamber of Deputies delegations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: 18 members and 18 substitutes;</li> <li>• the NATO Parliamentary Assembly: 18 members;</li> <li>• the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE): 13 members;</li> <li>• the Parliamentary Assembly of the Central European Initiative (CEI): 7 members;</li> <li>• the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA): 3 members;</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>countries or a group of countries. The 'interparliamentary meetings' – in which the delegations meet with their counterparts – are not held on a regular basis, and do not have their own rules, although they follow the general provisions for delegations.</p> <p>According to Rule 223(5) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Conference of Presidents adopts the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs.</p>	
<b>Diplomacy on human rights</b>	<p>The EP attaches great importance to the protection of human rights both inside and outside the Union and has used its power of promoting respect for fundamental rights.</p> <p>In Europe and around the world, Parliament acts as a guardian of liberties and democracy, and strives to uphold human rights and freedoms. It is particularly sensitive to the issue of tolerance, and fights determinedly against all forms of discrimination, whether based on sex, race, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, political opinion, handicap, age or sexual orientation. It takes a stand against racism and xenophobia and constantly highlights the need for compliance with European gender equality standards.</p> <p>MEPs also use their full power to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected, and the rights of children protected. While the EP supports efforts to coordinate police and judicial action, which is the only effective way to counter these cross-border threats, it refuses to allow citizens' rights to bear the brunt of a policy based entirely on security considerations. Parliament also ensures that human rights are protected in the EU's external economic and trade agreements.</p>	<p>Human rights with respect to international relations are matter of competence of the Standing Committee for Foreign and Community Affairs.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee on Human Rights, established within the Committee for the entire legislative period, deals with the matter operating in the frame of a fact-finding inquiry or by hearing individuals, NGOs, agencies, etc.</p> <p>Human rights are also matters for bills, motions, resolutions, interrogations and of a wide range of parliamentary initiatives.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>The EP holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has adopted a host of resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights.</p> <p>The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee on Human Rights defend human rights outside the European Union and fight against the death penalty with the support of other key players in the Parliament.</p> <p><b>Sakharov Prize:</b> It is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network the EU assists laureates, who are supported and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes.</p> <p>The prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil-society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, long-serving prisoners of conscience, a film-maker, the UN as a body and even a child campaigning for the right to education. It promotes in particular freedom of expression, the rights of minorities, respect for international law, the development of democracy and the implementation of the rule of law. Several laureates, including Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.</p> <p>The European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize, with its EUR 50 000 endowment, at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Each of the Parliament's political groups may nominate candidates, as may</p>	

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>individual MEPs (the support of at least 40 MEPs is required for each candidate). The nominees are presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Development Committee and the Human Rights Subcommittee, and the members of the full committees vote on a shortlist of three candidates. The final winner of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents.</p>	
<b>Democracy support</b>	<p>As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament is particularly committed to supporting sustainable democracies throughout the world. This commitment is regularly highlighted in Parliament's resolutions. Democracy support activities focus on a small number of priority countries and are closely associated with the Parliament's role in election monitoring in these priority countries and other non-EU countries. Parliament almost always organises democracy support activities around the electoral cycle, so as to establish a better link between election observation and complementary activities such as mediation, election follow-up, parliamentary support activities and human rights action.</p> <p>In 2012, the European Parliament decided to create the Directorate for Democracy Support. In setting up this directorate as part of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, four units were created, these are: the Democracy and Election Actions Unit, the European Parliament Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit, the Human Rights Action Unit and the Pre-Accession Unit.</p> <p>In 2014, Parliament set up a Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that provides political guidance for all activities supporting democracy (Decision of Conference of Presidents of 13 September 2012). It consists of 15 MEPs and is co-chaired by the chairs of Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Development. Parliament's vice-</p>	<p>The Italian Chamber of Deputies participates in several programmes intended to foster parliaments of countries in democratic transition. This activity is carried out through European twinning projects or other international platform like INTERPARES.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>presidents responsible for human rights and democracy and the Sakharov Network and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights are ex officio permanent members.</p> <p>The comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA) places more emphasis on pre-election dialogue and the follow-up to election observation. This includes following up on recommendations of the Election Observation Mission. In order to boost the institutional capacity of parliaments in third countries, Parliament organises training programmes and study visits for members and officials of third-country parliaments. Parliament has also built up a mentoring system involving MEPs and newly elected parliamentarians from priority countries. Providing support for mediation and dialogue were added as new types of interventions, with a view to preventing election-related conflicts and violence.</p> <p>Activities – although decided and supervised by the DEG – must be approved by the Conference of Presidents (CoP). The CoP adopted implementing provisions on democracy support and election observation activities in February 2019. According to this document, the DEG co-chairs may, for example, submit requests for authorisation for outgoing missions and for high-level conferences in the European Parliament's premises to the CoP at least four weeks prior to the activity concerned. In addition, the DEG co-chairs may submit requests, including urgent ones, to the CoP to mandate a Member or Members to act as an envoy or mediator or to authorise the establishment of a Jean Monnet Dialogue with a third country, under the guidance of a lead Member or Members</p>	
<b>Mediation of foreign conflicts</b>	Members of the European Parliament engage in a wide range of mediation, conflict prevention and dialogue activities that complement the EU's overall approach.	

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p><b>The Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy</b>  The European Parliament prides itself in having a 'culture of dialogue', a set of norms and rules that require political opponents to engage in dialogue to bring about a compromise. Efforts have been made to 'export' this culture of dialogue to non-EU parliaments, through a mediation and consensus-building process known as the 'Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy'. Named after one of the founding fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet dialogues often – although not always – take place at the historical Jean Monnet House. Located in rural France, far away from the media attention characterising either Brussels or national capitals, Monnet's house has proven to be an ideal location for constructive dialogue among opposing political factions. Four series of dialogues with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) have taken place so far.</p> <p><b>Young political leaders programme</b>  The European Parliament is committed to building strong and lasting relations with future leaders outside of the European Union. A programme targeting young political leaders was set up in 2015. The young political leaders programme (YPL) expands on existing activities organised by Parliament, such as the annual fora for young leaders from the European Neighbourhood (Maghreb, Middle East, Eastern Partnership), and the young political leaders initiative for the Sudan. The programme cooperates with young political activists, including political party representatives, civil society actors and young business leaders in the European Neighbourhood countries, priority countries agreed under the comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA), and ad hoc countries requiring assistance in the area of parliamentary conflict prevention and democracy support. Recent YPL activities have targeted young leaders from Israel and Palestine, the Maghreb,</p>	

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the western Balkans, Armenia and Azerbaijan.	
<b>High-level visits by foreign dignitaries</b>	<p>The term 'official visit' refers to visits by Heads of State, high-level Religious Leaders, or any personality invited to address a formal sitting of Parliament.</p> <p>Visits by Heads of State and Government, Presidents of Parliaments, and others holding equivalent ranks which do not include an address to a formal sitting shall be considered as working visits.</p> <p>Invitations to make an official visit to Parliament are issued by the President after consultation with the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>On the basis of established practice, the Heads of State of the EU Member States have an open invitation to pay an official visit to Parliament.</p> <p>An official visit generally comprises the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Welcoming ceremony including official photo in front of the flags, playing of the visitor's national anthem followed by the EU anthem, and signature of the Parliament's Distinguished Visitors' Book,</li> <li>➤ Bilateral meeting between the President of Parliament and the visiting Head of State,</li> <li>➤ Official exchange of gifts,</li> <li>➤ Address to a formal sitting of Parliament, which is usually scheduled to last 30 minutes,</li> <li>➤ Official lunch (or dinner) hosted by the President of Parliament,</li> <li>➤ Press conference (if requested).</li> </ul>	<p>The President of the Chamber receives on a regular basis Speakers from other Parliaments, Prime ministers, Heads of State. Usually, they are not invited to take the floor in the plenary hall to deliver a speech.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>Camera dei Deputati</b>
	<p>An official visit by a Head of State of an EU Member State may incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A reception for the MEPs and/or parliamentary staff of the Member State concerned organised by the respective Permanent Representation,</li> <li>➤ Meetings (if requested) with political group leaders or Members of Parliament.</li> </ul> <p>The red carpet is rolled out at the protocol entrance, for visits by Heads of State and High-Level visitors of equivalent rank. Official visits are managed by the protocol unit (DG PRES).</p>	
<b>Multilateral and international parliamentary fora</b>	<p><b><u>Euronest</u></b> EU works hand-in-hand with its six Eastern Partners to support European integration reforms and foster stability, security, democracy and prosperity across the continent. Established in 2011, the Euronest PA is the parliamentary forum tasked with the scrutiny over this ambitious policy, while promoting the active participation of civil society actors. It brings together the 60 Members of the European Parliament who sit in the Delegation to the Euronest PA, and 50 Members from the national parliaments of our Eastern Partners, i.e. 10 delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively. For the time being, although Belarus is an active Eastern Partner, its National Assembly has not yet been invited to send its 10 delegates to the Euronest PA, because it does not fulfil the necessary, democratic requirements to do so. Nevertheless, the absence of Belarusian parliamentarians expected to be only be provisory.</p> <p>The Euronest PA includes the plenary, chaired by two Co-Presidents, the Bureau, four standing committees (on political affairs, economic integration, energy security and social affairs) and three working groups (a group on Belarus, ad hoc group on</p>	<p>Parliamentary diplomacy has considerably intensified owing to the increasing commitments of Italy resulting from bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as to the globalization process which affects not just the economy but also the political sphere. The Chamber of Deputies' system of international relations operates within the various bilateral, multilateral and international fora, and its ever greater scope and reach reflect the increasing interdependence of all the geo-political areas of the planet.</p> <p>The Parliament's network of inter-parliamentary relations has become a mainstay of political dialogue and has broadened the experience and knowledge of law-makers, in a society where problems are increasingly of a cross-border nature.</p> <p>All the bodies of the Chamber of Deputies take part in international activities, beginning with the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the Bureau, and including also Parliamentary Committees and their Chairpersons, Delegations to International Assemblies and Parliamentary Cooperation Committees with foreign parliaments set up under the terms of Cooperation Protocols.</p> <p><b>Bilateral agreements and Cooperation Protocols</b></p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>Association Agreements, and a group on Rules of Procedure). It meets once a year for a plenary session, alternating between the European Parliament's premises and the Eastern Partnership countries.</p> <p><b>ACP</b> The European Parliament's Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (DACP) is the EP part of the joint undertaking set up by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Agreement was signed in 2000 in Cotonou (Benin) by the EU Member States and 78 member countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Its aim is to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.</p> <p>The Agreement sets up three joint institutions: the Council of Ministers, the Committee of Ambassadors and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentary institution, the "ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly" (ACP-EU JPA), is composed of equal numbers of EU and ACP representatives, and comprised of both the 78-member EP DACP Delegation and 78 members of parliament of the ACP countries.</p> <p>The Delegation participates together with ACP members in the activities of the Assembly (sessions, Bureau and committee meetings, regional meetings, fact-finding missions and election observation missions).</p> <p>At the EP level, the Delegation also meets regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg to prepare the joint activities and monitor the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the situation in the ACP countries and prospects for the future of the partnership.</p>	<p>The Chamber of Deputies system of bilateral relations entails:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings hosted by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Parliamentary Committees or other bodies of the Chamber with foreign delegations or diplomatic representatives visiting the Chamber of Deputies;</li> <li>• Visits abroad by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Parliamentary Committees or other bodies of the Chamber;</li> <li>• Meetings in Italy or abroad of Cooperation Committees with foreign Parliaments set up under Cooperation Protocols;</li> <li>• Cooperation with the administrations of foreign parliaments.</li> </ul> <p>Bilateral Cooperation Protocols with parliaments of foreign countries enhance the stability and quality of bilateral relations. Over the years, the Chamber of Deputies has signed 23 cooperation protocols with parliaments of countries identified as a priority in Italy's foreign policy.</p> <p><b>Administrative cooperation</b> Administrative cooperation with foreign parliaments is a priority concern of the Administration of the Chamber of Deputies. It has the dual purpose of fostering exchanges with such parliaments and of helping to strengthen the representative bodies of new and emerging democracies.</p> <p>The Italian Chamber of Deputies has also specific experiences in the twinning field. The Chamber co-led along with the Parliament of Hungary the consortium in the Turkish twinning of 2007-2008; co-led along with the French Parliament a twinning programme with Tunisia which was run from 2016 to 2019; acted as junior partner, cooperating with the Hellenic Parliament as main partner, in the twinning programme with the Parliament of Albania which was held in 2017-2018. The Chamber is acting as junior partner,</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p><b><u>EuroLat</u></b>  The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits resolutions and recommendations. These are addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. This Partnership was established at the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1999. Today, EuroLat debates, monitors and reviews all questions relating to the partnership.</p> <p>The Assembly also works generally to strengthen links between the two regions and address issues of bi-regional and international concern. EuroLat debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights, migration, fighting poverty, promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology and the environment and climate change. Half the members - 75 - come from Latin American regional parliaments and the other half - again, 75 members - come from the European Parliament. EuroLat has four Standing Committees. The work of these committees serves as the basis for most of the Assembly's decisions. The Committees and Executive Bureau meet at least twice a year, with one of these two sessions running in parallel with EuroLat's full annual Plenary Session.</p> <p><b><u>EuroMed</u></b>  The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean institution provides a forum for the elected representatives of the EU and its southern neighbours around the Mediterranean to cooperate.</p> <p>The Assembly describes three principal aims for its work: Fostering dialogue amongst elected representatives from both</p>	<p>cooperating with the Hellenic Parliament as main partner, in the twinning programme with the Parliament of Armenia 2020-2022.</p> <p><b><u>Multilateral cooperation</u></b>  The Chamber of Deputies plays an active role in instilling a parliamentary dimension into intergovernmental cooperation involving Italy, including cooperation linked with the European Union's Neighbourhood policies. The priority area of multilateral cooperation consists of the Euro-Mediterranean area, the fulcrum of which is the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PAUFM).</p> <p>The Chamber of Deputies also cooperates with the countries of the new Eastern Partnership, as well as with countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Chamber of Deputies attends the periodic Conferences of Speakers of Parliaments, in particular those of the Lower Houses of the Parliaments of G7 and EU countries. With an observer status, the Chamber of Deputies takes part in intergovernmental conferences promoted in the context of the United Nations and other international organisations (WTO, OSCE, the World Bank, the IMF etc.), as well as in special thematic conferences organised by national parliaments.</p>

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
	<p>shores of the Mediterranean; Enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the citizens. Adding democratic legitimacy and political support to regional cooperation.</p> <p>As a north- south forum, the Assembly brings together 44 parliaments – the 43 parliaments of the countries in the Union for the Mediterranean, and the European Parliament. The Assembly consists of 280 members. The Assembly is directed by a "bureau", made up of four members, who coordinate the work of the Assembly and draft its budget. The bureau remains in place for four years before new members are appointed. The Assembly has five standing committees.</p>	

#### 4. Relations with citizens / Communicating effectively

	European Parliament	Camera dei Deputati
<b>Public perceptions of parliaments</b>	<p>The European Parliament communicates to varied audiences across 28 different countries. Understanding these audiences' point of view is crucial for Parliament's communication activities to be efficient and effective. This means that DG Communication must first establish a clear idea of who these audiences are, what is important to them and via which channels to reach them. DG Communication bases its work on a robust audience insight and a data driven approach to define and evaluate its output. This is ensured by a rigorous analysis of evidence concerning audiences and channels, including an in-depth research of relevant target groups to understand their behaviour. A core part of this analysis is the continuous and in-depth monitoring of public opinion across the European Union. This key strategic activity not only aids the European Parliament's communication strategy but also</p>	<p>No opinion polls have been carried out by the Institution to find out the public's perception of Parliament.</p>

supports the political and legislative work of Parliament's elected Members.

Public opinion is assessed via the EU institutions' joint Eurobarometer survey tool. The European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies use this instrument to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. Eurobarometer provides quality and relevant data for experts in public opinion, researchers, media and the public. Initiated in 1974, the Eurobarometer tool has since then evolved and expanded significantly with different survey tools. The combination of the wide range of topics covered consistently over a long time, the regularity of publications and geographical coverage makes the Eurobarometer a uniquely rich source of knowledge and information in the European Union.

The European Parliament started in 2007 to commission its own Eurobarometer surveys within the joint inter-institutional framework. DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU), is responsible for designing, commissioning and analysing the surveys. Conducted regularly and at least twice per year since 2007, they focus on the one hand on citizens' perceptions and expectations towards EU action, and the main challenges the Union is facing. An annual 'Parlemeter' survey measures the European Parliament's public image and role as well as public opinion with regard to EU membership and its benefits. A dedicated set of EP Eurobarometer surveys gauges Europeans' interest in the European elections every five years. Pre- and post-electoral surveys measure citizens' interest in these elections and the key issues at stake as well as voting behaviour and motivation.

Published surveys offer unrestricted access to the full data set, including all national, regional and socio-demographic results,

	<p>allowing for a detailed analysis. POMU as responsible unit will produce an in-depth analytical report as well as a range of supporting products such as presentation, national factsheets or infographics. The data is also used for briefing members on available audience insight relevant to topics on the plenary agenda, distributed ahead of each session to all MEPs. Individual trainings and data-related briefings can be requested by Members.</p> <p>POMU applies the data at its disposal also for contributing to DG Communication's data-driven communication approach by designing relevant audience segmentation and targeting strategies and by assisting DG COMM services to implement this segmentation analysis in their communication activities.</p> <p>The second unique task of POMU is the regular collection and analysis of voting intention trends in all EU Member States. In cooperation with Parliament's Liaison Offices in the Member States, POMU compiles publicly available voting intention polls conducted by reliable institutes in each EU MS. A proprietary database allows POMU to monitor developments in Member States and to produce regular briefings for Parliament's leading bodies (Bureau, CoP, SGs). In the run-up to the European elections, POMU enlarges its activities with a view to election night. A high-level assembly of election results from all Member States allow POMU to produce precise seat projections and to ensure positioning the European Parliament as the sole focal point in the European Union to receive aggregated and detailed election results.</p>	
<p><b>New patterns in relations with the media in response to the current crisis</b></p>	<p><b>Impact of the Covid:</b> Parliament is the only EU institution which has remained open for journalists throughout the pandemic. Commission and Council have been operating in a fully remote mode since March 2020, whilst Parliament adopted a hybrid approach - facilitating remote participation to parliamentary</p>	<p>During the pandemic, the Chamber of deputies was forced to cancel all political, cultural, social meetings or exhibitions in order to prevent the transmission of the Sars Cov2 virus. Even journalists working in the press room had to change their way of covering the activities of the House.</p>

meetings and press conferences, but without excluding the possibility for journalists to come in person to the pressroom, to interview MEPs or simply to work from the EP's press centre.

Whilst the physical presence of the media in Parliament's premises has naturally fallen significantly over the past 12 months, online participation in media events (especially online briefings) has increased enormously. In 2020 the Media services organised 589 media events, compared to 436 in 2015 (first year of last legislative term). Online briefings were barely used at all pre-Covid, largely due to the unavailability or unfamiliarity of appropriate technology to operate such platforms.

Online meetings and briefings also opened up access to journalists in the Member States to follow EP activities directly and thus blurred the distinction between national media and Brussels correspondents. More exchanges with journalists from other countries mean 'Europeanisation' of the debate.

In addition, it is easier to invite MEPs as well as high-level external speakers to online events, as they can simply connect from wherever they are.

Therefore, online and hybrid media events will remain a key element of the media strategy in the future. The technology and format can be further refined to enhance the experience and quality.

**Enhanced role for media relations in the Member States:**

Reinforced press work in the Member States is necessary to reach out to media in the national newsrooms. Not all media have correspondents in Brussels - and in Brussels there is a growing competition for news (Council, EC, NATO...). In particular, in the Member States, the EP has been focusing on:

In addition in the Chamber of deputies there is an iconic place called Transatlantico, where traditionally politicians and reporters meet and talk about the most important issues. From the outset of the pandemic, to allow all the 630 MPs to take part in parliamentary sessions in compliance with social distancing rules, the Transatlantico became a part of the Plenary Hall: 120 deputies have their seat in Transatlantico. At the mean time the Chamber of deputies managed to guarantee to the press the possibility, during the pandemic, to meet MPs in the areas outside the Plenary Hall..

Against this backdrop, the epochal challenge for the Chamber was how to communicate to the Italian people that the Parliament had never stopped working despite the health emergency and what lawmakers were doing to address the coronavirus challenge.

During lockdown, Montecitorio's web site hugely increased its number of viewers, by streaming all Committee hearings and providing information and data on the different measures debated and enacted by the House. The Chamber of deputies social-media accounts have covered every single event, with a special focus on Government communications to the House.

	<p><b>National media:</b> TV and radio programs; specialised media/magazines/programs (women, consumers...) and specialised journalists in mainstream media (environment, digital specialist in press agencies and others).</p> <p><b>Native digital media:</b> online only platforms, including media that exist only on social media and influencers active in political/societal debates</p> <p><b>Regional media,</b> when and where relevant.</p> <p><b>Targeted information:</b> DG COMM works with the broad catalogue of EP agenda, MEPs and events to cater a specific offer to each kind of media. Not everything for everybody all the time, but every day some news for some journalists who might be interested. DG COMM offers content, but also services (multimedia centre, facilities in BRU and STR, EPRS research...) and help journalists to build their story: pitching it, finding the right MEP, choosing data and relevant local angles. It invites journalists to BRU and STR to make them experience the richness of the institution from the media point of view. The EP reaches out to them via media tours, trainings and similar activities on the ground. It provides editorial content, raw or edited, but always un-biased, politically balanced, reliable and accessible. It promotes transparency and openness as a distinctive feature of the EP press service.</p>	
<p><b>Fighting disinformation and hate speech</b></p>	<p>The political work of the European Parliament addresses disinformation and hate speech through non-legislative and legislative measures such as the current draft Digital Services Act. The European Parliament services take very seriously any attempt to target the institution or its members with disinformation or any actions to misrepresent their defined positions. While services undertake specific actions to counter disinformation, the most effective defence against false narratives and foreign influence</p>	<p>In the final document of the cognitive investigation, carried out by the IX Commission for Transport and Communications of the Chamber of Deputies, concerning the new technologies in telecommunications, with particular regard to the transition to the 5G and the management of big data, approved in the session of 9 July 2020, specific considerations are reported on the problematic aspects concerning the responsibility of the so-called "over the top" operators and the creation of a legal framework of reference on the</p>

operations is to ensure communication of **proactive factual narratives** related to the work and decisions of Members. To this end, Parliament's services communicate in all official working languages and through a variety of media and platforms to ensure maximum reach.

The Secretariat of the Parliament established an **inter-DG task force against disinformation** to streamline cooperation between different DGs and services. This ensures more joined up action in response to disinformation threats.

The EP's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) developed its **capacity to monitor, analyse, alert and devise counter strategies** in response to disinformation and deceptive narratives that target the institution and its members. This concerns both human resources and investing in software to assist with monitoring and analysis. It also relates to close cooperation and training with leading civil society/academic experts in the field.

DG COMM cooperates closely with the other DGs (EPRS, EXPO and ITEC e.g.) and other EU institutions via an **informal "tripartite" arrangement**. It participates in the **European Commission Network Against Disinformation** and shares information with EU Member State governments via a secure **"Rapid Alert System"**. Furthermore, it cooperates on a regular basis with leading experts in civil society. With the support over other DGs, mainly DG EPRS and DG EXPO, DG COMM develops its dedicated media and social media monitoring and analysis capacity as well as its media literacy capacity.

- Upon request, DG COMM and DG EPRS offer **personal training to MEPs** on disinformation issues, including on data analysis;

matter of countering disinformation, It distinguishes this phenomenon from others which, although also deriving from the 'horizontal' nature of the network and the freedom of expression it allows, are ontologically different (including hate speech, terrorist propaganda, incitement to suicide, revenge porn and child pornography).

Among the various elements of interest, the extremely positive results achieved through the use of artificial intelligence tools to combat certain phenomena (such as the dissemination of terrorist propaganda, pornography, child pornography) were emphasised on the one hand, and on the other hand the need for human intervention in areas where the protection of the principle of freedom of expression comes into consideration, such as in the case of hate speech and disinformation.

The Chamber of Deputies also intended to deal with the issue of analysing and combating fake news through the approval, at first reading, on 28 July 2020, of the unified text of the proposed laws C. 1056, C. 2103, C. 2187 and C. 2213, concerning the establishment of a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the massive dissemination of false information (currently under consideration by the Senate).

The Commission's tasks include investigating 'disinformation activities', also carried out through the creation of false digital identities or the production and communication of such information and content in a personalised form by persons who use user data for this purpose, as well as the conditions under which these activities are carried out, also verifying whether the disinformation activity is attributable to persons, groups or organisations, including those with an international structure, which also avail themselves of the financial support of domestic or foreign subjects with the aim of manipulating information and influencing public opinion, particularly on the occasion of elections or referendums, and also to verify the purposes of these activities with reference to their use to reinforce feelings of hatred, discrimination or violence or even with reference to health emergencies. It is also intended to verify the effects that the use of artificial intelligence may have on the matter,

- Regular offering by DG COMM and DG EPRS of **training for accredited parliamentary assistants and EP staff members;**

- **Specialised Trainings** in partnership with EU institutions, to prepare colleagues dealing with communication in the European Parliament Liaison Offices;

- **Awareness raising and capacity building exercises for external audiences** including visitors groups, youth groups and the Together.EU network. In addition, the House of European History 'Fake or/for Real exhibition' helps raise awareness;

- **Seminars with media representatives and MEPs** to discuss disinformation as a threat to democracy and how to support media as well as fact checking;

- **Cooperation with civil society, fact checkers and academia.** Parliament services work on initiatives that foster closer cooperation and exchange of best practice. For example, in 2019 the European Parliament services organised a conference for fact checkers. Parliament officials also participate in follow-up initiatives to support this work, such as the **European Digital Media Observatory**. In 2021, an external expert provided a series of trainings with the goal of developing updated frameworks for assessing and responding to disinformation;

- In addition to these seminars and trainings, regular information is provided on the work of the INGE Special Committee (press releases, briefings, press conferences), supported by DG EXPO.

A news page is available on EP's news portal and regular social media posts promote the importance of factual information and explain "How to spot when news is fake" based on a flagship infographic of DG EPRS.

the validity of the existing regulatory instruments to combat it, the existence and suitability of the internal procedures prepared by the media and service providers of telematic social networks and other analogue and digital platforms for the removal of false information and unlawful content from their platforms, as well as the procedures for handling reports and complaints submitted by users, also with reference to the balance with the principles of freedom of expression and of the press. Finally, specific attention is devoted to the issue of self-regulation.

	<p>DG COMM has developed strong policy against any kind of aggression on its platforms since joining the different social media channels. It has been working on best practices and has established a clear moderation policy that is implemented on all corporate accounts. The community management team from DG COMM enforces it on Parliament's channels without the unnecessary removal of content or censorship. Users can always contact the team and refer to the rules guiding our online presence. The key aspect of the policy is that while we welcome all sides of the debate, we do not allow any form of hate speech on our accounts so it remains a safe place for conversation.</p>	
<p><b>Social Media strategies</b></p>	<p>DG COMM's Directorate for the Media animates the following <b>social-media platforms</b> for the European Parliament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facebook</b> : 2.6 million fans</li> <li>• <b>Twitter (in 24 languages)</b>: 1.7 million followers</li> <li>• <b>LinkedIn</b>: 546 497 followers</li> <li>• <b>Instagram</b> : 288 120 followers</li> <li>• <b>Reddit</b> : 6624 followers</li> <li>• <b>Flickr</b>: 2 677 followers</li> <li>• <b>Pinterest</b> : 6650 followers</li> </ul> <p>The <b>social media team</b> is composed of web-editors on various time resources allocations (it's an additional task to their main news publishing in 24 languages mission).</p> <p>There is also an IT developers for social-media also in charge of maintaining and developing the EP Newshub, project manager with an expertise in IT development and data privacy and social-media producers working on all platforms. Unit also produces news and non/news videos and other materials for the social media. The social media team is as well supported by the digital intelligence and community management teams.</p>	<p>The Chamber of Deputies has a dedicated social media team that works seven days a week to show live recordings and committee meetings, communicate the progress of Parliament's work and historical and cultural content and events. Montecitorio is present on the following social-media platforms: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.</p> <p><b>Youtube</b> The "cameradeideputati" channel offers a complete overview and extensive documentation on the activities of the Chamber over the years. There are more than 1,000 videos, on daily life in Montecitorio, official visits by dignitaries from all over the world, exhibitions and student visits. There are currently more than 45,000 subscribers to the channel and the last six months have seen more than 6,000 new followers.</p> <p><b>Facebook</b> Since 2015, the FB page of the Chamber of Deputies has been continuously growing in numbers, now reaching almost 100,000 followers. The Facebook fan base is largely made up of men (61%) in the 25-55 age group. Each year the FB page is populated by 1,000 posts.</p>

All social-media activities are part of the editorial workflow of the Directorate for the Campaigns, with a weekly review in the 'agency' meeting. They are also part of the larger coordination on the level of Directorate General: Editorial Committee (CED) and more frequent Restricted-Editorial Committees (CED-R) during Plenary and Committees weeks. Both CED and CED-R are chaired by the advisor to the DG and Spokesperson of the European Parliament, who provides **editorial and political oversight** of the social media activities.

The Web Communication Unit and its social-media experts provide **trainings to MEPs and their staff**. These include the following:

- Training sessions by lead actors of the social-media field, with personalised support and inputs by Web Communication Unit's staff
- Analysis of the social-media presence of MEPs
- Personal coaching on social media
- Topic requested by MEP (setting up a social media account, use of statistics, best practices, etc.)
- One to one tailor made sessions

During the pandemic, Facebook live events reached millions of views and interactions: on 30 April 2020, the Health Minister's communications had more than half a million viewers.

#### **Twitter**

In the last two years, the Twitter account has hugely grown in terms of followers, publication of content and interactions. Nowadays, followers are more than 325,000; every year we count almost 3,500 tweets and 40,000 interactions. Twitter is a valuable vantage point to follow the activities in the Plenary and also in the Committees and take a comprehensive look at the content of the measures debated and enacted by the House. At the same time, the Twitter channel also focuses on important historical political figures, like former Presidents of the Chamber, while offering specific contents to highlight the history of the Chamber itself.

#### **Instagram**

The main goal for the Chamber of deputies with respect to the Instagram platform is to promote events held at Montecitorio by using a different form of language. That is why, in the Montecitorio account, there are many photos of proceedings on the Floor of the House, in the Committees as well as other daily activities. Many posts are dedicated to cultural campaigns, promoting temporary exhibitions, and sharing with citizens paintings, sculptures and other artistic treasures hosted in the House.

The fan base today amounts to about 70,000 followers with more than 200,000 interactions per year.

#### **Linkedin**

In June 2021, Montecitorio decided to land on LinkedIn in order to approach another kind of audience in the social-media galaxy. This social platform has evolved from its beginnings, when it was a sort of open space for head hunters and job seekers. LinkedIn has become a high-level social media platform with a specific professional language, in which updates on the parliament's activities can find a good audience. The Chamber is now creating its

		own network (10,000 followers in the first few weeks) and preparing knowledge-based itineraries, by publishing posts, videos and infographics.
<b>Hybrid events</b>	<p>In order to facilitate hybrid EP presentations/talks that combine on-site and online participation and engagement, the EP plans to have the seminar rooms in the new ZWEIG visitors' area (if possible, also in some of the current conference rooms in Spaak building) equipped with high-performance cameras and a trigger microphone system that will support targeted audience interaction. All seminar rooms will furthermore be equipped with professional webcams for streaming presentations, allowing for example the MEPs, staff and visitors to interact with those who couldn't travel to Brussels.</p> <p>Other communication events, as for example Europe Day, European Youth Seminars, Multilingualism Day, press conferences, various events held by EPLO, etc. will be organised in the future in a hybrid format.</p>	<p>In March 2020, the political-administrative management bodies, in compliance with the measures aimed at containing the spread of the Covid-19 virus, suspended the holding of institutional and cultural events in presence that normally take place within the Chamber's premises.</p> <p>Starting from the second half of 2020, new ways of organising events, so-called hybrid events, without the participation of the external public, broadcast via web or through live television, with in-person and remote interventions, have been tested. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the virtual initiative "Don't ask me. Non è importante" held on 25 November 2020 on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, with speeches in the presence of the President of the Chamber of Deputies Roberto Fico and the Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies Maria Edera Spadoni, and a videoconference speech by Graziella Mazzoli, President of the anti-violence centre "Cerchi d'acqua";</li> <li>- the virtual initiative "Notes of Memory", held on 22 January 2021 for the celebration of the Holocaust Memorial Day, introduced by a speech in the presence of the President of the Chamber of Deputies Roberto Fico and continued with remote speeches by Noemi Di Segni, President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, and Francesco Lotoro, pianist, composer and conductor;</li> <li>- the closing ceremony and final award ceremony of the competition "From parliamentary classrooms to school classrooms. Lessons in the Constitution", which took place on 26 May 2021, attended by the Presidents of the two branches of Parliament and the Minister for Education, and remotely by a number of students representing the schools that won the competition;</li> </ul>

		<p>- the conference to mark the anniversary of the Ustica massacre "Il dolore e la politica" (Grief and politics), held on 21 June 2021, which included speeches in the presence of the President of the Chamber of Deputies Roberto Fico, the President of the Association of relatives of the victims of the Ustica massacre Daria Bonfietti and the writer Luigi Manconi, with recorded speeches and a remote intervention by Cardinal Matteo Zuppi.</p> <p>It should also be noted that as part of the initiatives dedicated to young people and schools, the Chamber organised remote meetings between MPs and students. In this way, the 'training days' for schools, which had been immediately suspended due to the pandemic, were restarted in December 2020.</p>
<b>Digital offer to visitors</b>	<p>The Digital Citizens' Journey to the European Parliament is an innovative DGCOMM project that uses state-of-art technologies and will launch three main experiences for citizens. The Immersive Online Experience allows citizens visit the European Parliament's people and places, delivered in navigable 360-degree environment with overlays to present micro-interactions and multimedia content. The Virtual Role Play Game is a 'choose-your-own-adventure style' journey to get to know EP law making through the eyes of an MEP. This involves a graphic narrative structure and responsive game engine that allows players explore multimedia content, frame issues before debate, propose amendments and vote. It has chapters, which cover work in committees, political groups and Plenary. The Virtual House of European History will consists of a 3D-tour of the House and virtual exhibition space with an online collection. Additional digital features are being considered.</p>	<p>On the website of the Chamber of Deputies it is possible to take a virtual tour of Palazzo Montecitorio, which allows you to see the places where the parliamentary bodies (Chamber and Committees) meet and the rooms where the Palace's high representatives are located. Along the tour there are in-depth information on the historical and artistic profiles of the rooms and the works of art they contain.</p> <p>In December 2020 a new satellite site of the Chamber's website was published, accessible at the address <a href="http://arte.camera.it">arte.camera.it</a>, which provides detailed information on the works of art present in the Chamber's buildings (paintings, sculptures, drawings, tapestries and frescoes).</p> <p>In the coming months, the Chamber, on the initiative of the Committee for External Communication and Information, intends to make available a visual tour of its premises, which will include short videos, to which further in-depth content in digital format will be linked. In this way, an itinerary will be created that allows the 'visitor' a dual, flexible and modular level of visit: a brief and concise navigation of the places through the simple viewing of the videos or a more in-depth navigation, which allows one to explore the historical and artistic profiles of the itinerary itself.</p>
<b>Members' activities on</b>	<p>All the MEPs have a dedicated section on the official website of the European Parliament. It makes their contact details available</p>	<p>The Chamber's website includes an individual page for each Member where the public can access</p>

**official  
parliamentary  
websites**

and provides basic information on their background (for instance date of birth, CV, parliamentary career and financial interest) and on their assistants (names and contact information). In addition, the parliamentary website can include links to social media platforms used by MEPs and can give details about their political activities namely about the speeches they deliver in plenary, the reports they prepare, the parliamentary questions they raise and the motions they table. MEPs also publish the meetings they hold with third parties.

The data related to Members via the website is reviewed and updated on an ad-hoc basis. The supervision of the website is done by the Bureau and the Secretariat (Secretary General, DG PRES and DG COMM), who have the overall responsibility for the content management.

There is a possibility to download the information about the MEPs in different formats such as XML, PDF or Word.

Based on a comparative study, which was recently done by the EPRS and DG COMM on members' activities on parliamentary websites in the EU, it can be concluded that the EP's website is among those that are the most transparent and make the most information available to the public.

- Personal data (name, date and place of birth, education and employment)
- Political data (about his election)
- Parliamentary data (his or her political group, responsibilities in committees or other parliamentary bodies)
- Links to personal website or social network

In addition, each individual page includes, uniformly for all MPs, two links to:

- Annual declarations of financial interests (including tax returns)
- Parliamentary activities: speeches in plenary and in committees, parliamentary questions, motions, bills signed by the Member, proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure, proposed parliamentary enquiries

On the Chamber's website you can also find voting records for plenary, amendments.





# European ***Democracy in Action***

French Assemblée Nationale  
European Parliament  
Increasing impact and effectiveness

**EDITOR**

European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE**

Marie Lecerf, Philippe Perchoc  
Citizens' Policies Unit  
European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS)  
European Parliament  
B-1047 Brussels  
E-mail: [EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:EPRS-StrategyInnovation@europarl.europa.eu)

**LANGUAGE VERSIONS**

Original: EN

Manuscript completed in September 2021  
Brussels, © European Parliament, 2021  
Cover illustration: © vector\_master - Fotolia.com

**DISCLAIMER**

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.

# CONTENTS

1. PLENARY REFORM AND AGENDA-SETTING.....	344
2. STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY PREROGATIVES.....	371
3. ENHANCING PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY .....	390
4. RELATIONS WITH CITIZENS / COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY.....	407

## MAIN FINDINGS

### 1. Plenary reform and agenda-setting

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<b>Structure of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>There are specific time slots fixed for each day of part-session - generally Strasbourg sessions start on Monday at 17:00 and end on Thursday at 16:00, while Brussels sessions start at 15:00 on Wednesday and end at 13:00 on Thursday. Part-session days may last until 23:00 or, less often, until 24:00.</p> <p>Each agenda of the part-session contains time slots for debates - divided into morning and afternoon/evening slots - and votes generally scheduled at noon from 12:00 to 14:00 and followed by oral explanations of votes. Key debates and topical debates are specifically earmarked in the agenda; key debates are usually scheduled on Tuesday or Wednesday morning, while topical debates on current affairs (Rule 162) are scheduled on Wednesday afternoon at 15:00 and should last for 1h30. Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law take place once every month, on Thursday morning of the Strasbourg part-session.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session comprises a section explaining the various parliamentary procedures, a summary of the items on the agenda and, for each time slot of a sitting, a breakdown of the items with details of the documents being considered, the procedure to be used, information on speaking time and</p>	<p>The agenda is the list of subjects that an assembly must deal with during a sitting.</p> <p>In the framework of the rationalised parliamentarism instituted by the 1958 Constitution, the agenda of the assemblies, in contrast to the regimes that preceded the Fifth Republic, was largely a government initiative. Since the 2008 revision, the agenda has been shared.</p> <p>The Constitutional Act of 23 July 2008 enshrined in Article 48 of the Constitution an agenda shared between the assemblies and the Government. Since then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "two weeks of sittings out of four shall be reserved as a matter of priority, and in the order that the Government has set, for the examination of texts and debates whose inclusion in the agenda it requests";</li> <li>• in each assembly (the National Assembly and the Senate), "one sitting week out of four" is reserved as a priority "for the monitoring of the Government's action and the evaluation of public policies", and one sitting day per month for an agenda determined on the initiative of the opposition or minority groups.</li> </ul> <p>The determination of the agenda was the prerogative of each assembly before 1958 and, until 2008 and in the context of rationalised parliamentarism, was essentially the responsibility of the Government:</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>deadlines for tabling texts and requests for separate, split and roll-call votes.</p> <p>Plenary sessions under COVID-19 have been organised at the beginning of the pandemic in a reduced format, with a limited number of items for debates and votes and with voting being done remotely. The system for remote voting has evolved in the months following the start of the pandemic to allow for automatic counting of votes and therefore more voting sessions.</p> <p>Changes introduced in plenary as a reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic were remote voting already as of March 2020, with a system than was largely improved over time, and remote interventions in debates as of October 2020, from its liaison offices.</p> <p>There is currently a process ongoing in the House of reforming the structure of the plenary agenda and format of debates, aiming of rendering plenary sessions more attractive to Members and incentivise them to attend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it fixed the list and the order in which it wanted each assembly to examine bills and proposals for legislation;</li> <li>• it could modify the agenda at any time by means of a letter of amendment.</li> </ul> <p>The Government could thus control parliamentary initiative by imposing its own pace of work on Parliament, and give priority to the texts it wanted to see completed.</p> <p>Nevertheless, in practice, the Government still has priorities since it can request, during the two weeks of sittings reserved for Parliament, the inclusion of finance bills and social security financing bills (LFSS), or during the parliamentary week not devoted to scrutiny, the priority inclusion of texts transmitted by the other assembly for at least six weeks.</p> <p>Moreover, the holding of at least one sitting per week devoted to questions from members of parliament and answers from members of the Government has been enshrined in Article 48 of the Constitution.</p> <p>Since the 2008 revision, the holding of questions to the Government has been extended to extraordinary sessions. During the ordinary session, this provision applies to both the weeks of sittings on the government agenda and those on the parliamentary agenda.</p> <p>At present, there are two Government question sessions per week in the National Assembly (on Tuesday and Wednesday at 3 p.m.). They are broadcast on the Parliamentary Channel (France Télévisions stopped broadcasting them in 2017) and on the internet.</p> <p>The organisation of the work of the National Assembly is determined by the Conference of Presidents. Each assembly is sovereign in setting the days and times of its sittings. The Conference of Presidents also organises the conduct of sittings (in particular the duration of the general debate and the distribution of speaking time between the political groups).</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<b>Strategic programming</b>	<p>The Parliament exerts influence on the political and legislative agenda through both regular dialogue with the Commission ahead of the presentation of its annual work programme, and the negotiations of an annual joint declaration and multiannual joint conclusions on inter-institutional priorities.</p> <p>The strategic planning in the European Parliament, leading to actual plenary sessions, is an elaborate process that starts at the beginning of each legislature and consists mainly of three stages: long, medium and short-term planning.</p> <p>Parliament is fully independent in organising its own plenary agendas, which are based on a carefully orchestrated mix of close cooperation and interaction with the other European institutions. Parliament needs to be informed, and takes into account, the planning of the work of the Commission and the Council, ensuring the synchronisation regarding the conclusion, adoption and signature of legal acts, responses to/by the other institutions and high level debates.</p> <p>1. Long-term planning (1 year and beyond)</p> <p>In order to ensure both coherence and adaptability, the services of DG Presidency follow closely, and deliver, on the annual and multiannual programming of the institutions, having for basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission Work Programme: An annual exercise that covers all proposals expected to be delivered by the Commission in a given year;</li> <li>• The Joint Declaration on legislative priorities, which results in an agreement between the three institutions on legislative priorities for a given year. The Joint Declaration</li> </ul>	<p>The Constitution provides that Parliament meets as of right in ordinary session, which opens on the first working day of October and ends on the last working day of June. During the ordinary session, the number of sitting days may not normally exceed 120.</p> <p>The President of the Republic may convene by decree the Parliament in extraordinary session on a specific agenda, at the request of the Prime Minister or a majority of deputies.</p> <p>The timetable for the work of the National Assembly and the agenda of the sittings are established by the Conference of Presidents within the framework set by the Constitution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two weeks out of four are thus reserved for the examination of texts and debates whose inclusion in the agenda has been requested by the Government;</li> <li>• one week out of four is reserved for monitoring the Government's action and evaluating public policies;</li> <li>• one sitting day per month is devoted to an agenda drawn up on the initiative of the opposition and minority groups;</li> <li>• and at least one sitting per week for questions to the Government.</li> </ul> <p>In terms of programming, since 2018, the Spring of Evaluation aims to become the focal point for the National Assembly's public policy evaluation work by strengthening the procedures for examining the settlement bill.</p> <p>The Finance Committee adopts an evaluation program at the beginning of the year. Within this framework, each special rapporteur works on an evaluation topic that he or she has proposed, conducting the necessary investigations and hearings.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>Tracker is used as to monitor the implementation of the legislative priorities in the Joint Declaration;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The multi-annual Foresight Report: A new instrument, through which the Commission brings forward its multiannual political vision and strategy for the Union and its main priorities;</li> <li>• The Multiannual Conclusions – signed by the three institutions for the first time in December 2020 – on the priorities until the end of the 9th legislature.</li> </ul> <p>2. Medium-term planning (6 months)</p> <p>The services follow closely the work of the parliamentary committees and the other institutions, especially the proposals adopted in the Commission, the progress of trilogues with the Council and the agendas of the European Council. The following points are taken into account in the medium-term planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commission presents, in the “Liste des points prévus” (LPP), its list of proposals to be adopted in the College of Commissioners several months in advance. This gives Parliament the possibility to plan reports or plenary debates either in advance or as a reaction to them. Some major Commission proposals can serve as a basis for monothematic plenaries (European Green Deal in December 2019 and Recovery and Resilience Facility in July 2020);</li> <li>• The Council of the European Union sets its agenda of priorities every six months with every new Presidency, which also affects Parliament’s work especially in co-</li> </ul>	<p>All ministers are then interviewed by the Finance Committee at the end of May/beginning of June and questioned on the performance of the public policies for which they are responsible.</p> <p>Finally, in the public session, these questions are examined during a week of scrutiny, both by placing subjects on the agenda by the political groups and by organizing a debate.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>legislation. All incoming Presidencies present their programme of activities in Parliament;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The European Council meetings determine the political debates for both the preparation and for the conclusions in the European Parliament. The European Council President presents the conclusions of the meetings in the Parliament (Article 15 TEU);</li> <li>• Other international events that might become subjects for debate in Parliament are also taken into account (e.g. G7, G20, UN sessions);</li> <li>• In addition, the progress of reports in the parliamentary committees is followed closely. All files are checked and an indicative plenary planning is set.</li> </ul> <p>3. Short-term planning (1 month)</p> <p>The result of the short-term planning one month before the actual plenary session is the very first draft of the plenary agenda. The services make sure that all items included in the plenary agenda are both agreed at political level and are ready from a technical point of view.</p> <p>The plenary agenda contains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treaty obligations and obligations arising from Inter-institutional Agreements;</li> <li>• Legislative reports;</li> <li>• Non-legislative reports;</li> <li>• Other input from committees, e.g. oral questions, resolutions or other specific items (petitions, immunities, etc.);</li> <li>• Various forms of debates with the other institutions (Council and Commission Statements, Commission</li> </ul>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>interpellations, debates with the High Representative, topical debates);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual events and prizes, such as the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights and the Lux Audience Award for European Films.</li> </ul>	
<b>Setting parliaments' priorities</b>	<p>The definition of Parliaments priorities falls under the responsibility of the Conference of Presidents and political Groups.</p> <p>The governing bodies – the Conference of Presidents and Conference of Committee Chairs – have regular exchanges with the Commission ahead of the preparation of its annual work programme. This allows Parliament to exert its influence on the work programme via political initiatives and calling for legislative proposals, which are the prerogative of the Commission.</p> <p>As explained above, since 2016, the three institutions have agreed to work and agree each year on a joint declaration on inter-institutional programming and, at the beginning of each term, on joint conclusions on multiannual programming (through the inter-institutional agreement on better law making, to implement the provisions of Article 17 TEU).</p> <p>This has enabled Parliament to further influence the political and legislative agenda and the timing of such submissions.</p> <p>The agenda of a part-session starts as a working document on the basis of recommendations from committees and points that are cyclical in a yearly session. Once input is received from political groups, a preliminary draft agenda is drawn up and presented to the Conference of Presidents in view of the adoption of the draft</p>	<p>The National Assembly's Procedure for setting parliaments' priorities and the agenda of sittings are established by the Conference of Presidents within the framework set by the Constitution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two weeks out of four are thus reserved for the examination of texts and debates whose inclusion in the agenda has been requested by the Government;</li> <li>• one week out of four is reserved for monitoring the Government's action and evaluating public policies;</li> <li>• one sitting day per month is devoted to an agenda drawn up on the initiative of the opposition and minority groups</li> <li>• and at least one sitting per week for questions to the Government.</li> </ul> <p>As regards the changes introduced as a reaction to the Covid-19 crisis, France could not activate a constitutional state of emergency (state of siege) because this presupposed the existence of a violent and armed threat, while presidential powers require the existence of a threat to the independence or the integrity of the state. Notwithstanding this, French primary law provides for a state of emergency (Law No 55-385 of 1955) which, although formulated in ways that could include social unrest or a public calamity, it was argued that it could also apply to a pandemic. In spite of this, France decided not to activate that state of emergency, probably due to the</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>agenda, approximately one month before the part-session in question. The Conference of Presidents then adopts the final draft agenda at its last meeting on the Thursday before the part-session.</p> <p>Whilst there are often items on the agenda which are comprised of a Council and/or Commission statement, the two institutions do not have the right to claim certain time slots for debates or declarations. This remains the prerogative of the Conference of Presidents, which adopts the final draft, and the House, which adopts the agenda at the opening of each part-session.</p>	<p>negative connotation it had acquired after the 2015 Bataclan attacks, when it was prolonged four times. France decided instead to introduce a state of public health emergency created ad hoc and ex novo in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, by Law No 2020-290 of 23 March 2020.</p> <p>The French National Assembly used the room for manoeuvre afforded by existing parliamentary rules to reduce the number of members of parliament that could be present at sittings through political agreements, which preserved the original distribution of power among different political families.</p> <p>Parliamentary oversight over the declaration and extension of statutory regimes was intense in France.</p> <p>during the second wave of the pandemic, parliamentary oversight in relation to the declaration of a public health emergency seems to have been weakened in France, as highlighted, among others, by the National Commission on Human Rights (Commission Nationale Consultative Des Droits de l'homme, Avis Etat d'urgence sanitaire et Etat de droit, 28 April 2020, CDHX2011093V). Current Article L3131-13 of the Health National Code provides for the declaration of a public health emergency by a Decree adopted in the Conseil des Ministres on a report presented by the Health Minister. A public health emergency was therefore again declared in France as of 17 October 2020, without any formal involvement of the national Parliament (Decree No 2020-1257 of 14 October 2020, declaring a public health emergency). According to Article L3131-13 of the French Health National Code, the French Parliament is only required to become involved if the public health emergency is prolonged after an initial period of one month, as any extension of the declaration is to be authorised by a law.</p> <p>Apart from the French National Assembly participation in the management of the crisis through the adoption of new or the amendment of existing legislation enabling the national authorities</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>to adopt the measures needed to address the pandemic, the French Parliament has also maintained significant legislative and budgetary activity even during the worst peaks of the crisis to exercise their budgetary powers during the health crisis to provide the government with the financial flexibility needed to address the pandemic and its consequences.</p> <p>The main purpose of the law adopted on 15 May 2020, which includes 33 authorisations to legislate by ordinance, is to deal with the major health crisis that France is experiencing and the seriousness of the consequences of this crisis on the life of the country, by means of various measures in addition to those already taken on the basis of emergency law no. 2020-290 of 23 March 2020 to deal with the Covid-19 epidemic. The measures it contains concern a wide variety of areas, such as the postponement of the entry into force of reforms or experiments, the extension of elective mandates (except for mandates resulting from political elections), measures to deal with difficulties in the functioning of the courts, measures necessary for the continuity of military and security missions or the continuation and resumption of economic activity.</p> <p>In parallel, since the beginning of the crisis, in order to carry out its evaluation and monitoring mission in its areas of competence, the Foreign Affairs Committee has continued its work by audio and video conference. It organises public hearings, working meetings, sends questionnaires to institutions and international organisations concerned by the management of the crisis and its consequences, and has set up three working groups. This system has enabled the committee to hear from nearly one hundred people in two months. The committee's work focuses on the European and international aspects of the covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the committee's bureau meets every week to adapt its work as closely as possible to the evolution of the crisis.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>Since 25 March 2020, the Committee has been holding public hearings, which are broadcast on the National Assembly's video portal. Hearings were held with personalities directly involved in the management of the crisis - ministers, heads of the crisis centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, heads of organisations, etc. - but also with intellectuals and experts who could enlighten the committee on particular aspects of the crisis - geostrategic issues, analysis of the international health system, China's policy, etc.</p> <p>Secondly, in order to examine certain questions in greater depth and to engage in an operational dialogue, the commission organises working meetings with a guest who is likely to shed light on one of the thematic or geographical aspects of the crisis. It met with administrative officials (Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, Director General of the Treasury, geographical directors of the Quai d'Orsay), French ambassadors and foreign ambassadors in France.</p> <p>Finally, the committee set up three thematic working groups to monitor the actions carried out by the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs during this period. They heard nearly eighty personalities who had been closely involved in managing the crisis.</p>
<b>Content of the plenary agenda</b>	<p>The plenary agenda contains debates on legislative and non-legislative files presented in the form of reports, as well as statements from the Council and the Commission or from the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, oral questions, topical debates, debates on breaches of human rights and rule of law, votes and explanations of votes. . There are no plenary sessions reserved only for legislation or only for non-legislative debates.</p> <p>While setting the agenda, political groups often interlink dossiers in order to have joint debates on 'thematic packages'.</p>	<p>The Conference of Presidents sets the agenda. Within the framework thus defined by the Constitution, the Assembly's agenda is set by the Conference of Presidents which, under the chairmanship of the President of the National Assembly, brings together the six Vice-Presidents, the chairmen of all the political groups, the eight chairmen of the standing committees, the general rapporteur of the finance committee and the chairman of the European Affairs Committee. The Government is represented, usually by the Minister responsible for relations with Parliament. The role of the Conference of Presidents is to draw up the provisional timetable for the work of each parliamentary session, to set the agenda for the current week and the three following ones and to organise in concrete terms</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>Since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretation.</p> <p>Topical debates and major interpellations are not held at all during this period.</p>	<p>(speaking time and order of appearance, for example) the discussion of the texts examined in the Chamber.</p> <p>The nature of the debate depends on the nature of the task performed by the deputies: in the Chamber, the Assembly votes on the law, but also controls the action of the Government and evaluates public policies.</p> <p>1. Voting on the law</p> <p>The discussion of a legislative text in the sitting is organised in several phases: the examination of any procedural motions; the general discussion; the discussion of the articles and the amendments attached to them. The rules are not the same depending on whether or not the programmed legislative time procedure is used.</p> <p>2. Monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>Members may also exercise in the Chamber their constitutional mission of monitoring the action of the Government and evaluating public policies. Moreover, Article 48 of the Constitution, in its wording in force since 1 March 2009, devotes one week out of four sittings to scrutiny and evaluation, subject to the examination of finance bills and social security financing bills, for which the Government has priority.</p> <p>In addition, under the terms of the last paragraph of Article 48 of the Constitution, "at least one sitting per week, including during extraordinary sessions (...), is reserved by priority for questions from members of parliament and replies from the Government".</p> <p>These monitoring and evaluation activities may take various forms in the sitting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the questioning of the Government's responsibility;</li> <li>• the control week;</li> <li>• statements followed by a debate;</li> <li>• resolutions; and</li> <li>• questions.</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<b>Conduct of plenary debates</b>	<p>Speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session.</p> <p>The agenda is divided into different "time slots", which can include one or several debates. There is usually no fixed time for each debate. A notional speaking time is allocated to rapporteurs, rapporteurs for opinion, authors of oral questions, major interpellations and topical debates and to other institutions (Council, Commission, etc.).</p> <p>The speaking time available for each political group is also indicated on the agenda. This information is used by the political groups in allocating speaking time and drawing up their lists of speakers. Members speak in the order of the relative size of their political groups.</p> <p>Members who wish to speak in a debate on the plenary agenda should ask their political group to allocate them speaking time. Alternatively, they may ask to speak in a more spontaneous manner under the catch-the-eye or blue card procedures (see below).</p> <p>Members who have not spoken in a debate may, at most once per part-session, hand in a written statement of not more than 200 words, which will be appended to the verbatim report of the debate.</p> <p>There are several types of debates: committee reports (full debate), committee reports (short presentation), Statements by the other Institutions (Council, Commission, Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), oral questions to the Council,</p>	<p>With the exception of speeches which are 'grafted' onto the agenda and whose purpose is to deal with 'incidental' matters, the nature of the sittings differs according to the nature of the debates. Sittings devoted to political debates or the general discussion of legislative texts - including the discussion of 'procedural motions' under Rule 91 of the Rules of Procedure - give rise to speeches of a general nature. The examination of the articles of bills or proposals for legislation is punctuated by technical discussions. The scrutiny procedures, which have been thoroughly renewed in recent years, provide an opportunity for questions and rapid exchanges with members of the Government.</p> <p>1. Interventions of a general nature Speeches of a general nature, most often made from the rostrum, take place under the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in most cases, the Conference of Presidents decides to organise the corresponding phase of the debate: it sets the overall duration, depending on the importance of the subject and the observations of the group chairmen. This time shall be divided among the groups according to a corrected proportional system, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, so as to guarantee a minimum amount of time for the smaller groups;</li> <li>• each group chairman shall then announce, within the time limit set by the Presidency, the names of the speakers he or she has designated for the debate in question and the time allocated to each of them. As a general rule, each group shall reserve a substantial part of its time for a spokesperson whom it shall put at the head of its speakers;</li> <li>• at the discretion of the Chair, the order of speakers is then determined so as to allow for alternation between the groups. In this way, as the debates proceed, each group is assured of the sought-after position of "first speaker" in turn.</li> </ul>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union, debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, major interpellations for written answer, question time, public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives.</p> <p>Procedures in debates</p> <p>- Catch-the-eye - Rule 171(6)</p> <p>With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short speeches (1 minute maximum) by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs at the end of a debate.</p> <p>- Blue card procedure - Rule 171(8)</p> <p>The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.</p> <p>Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of political group speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" or blue cards.</p> <p>- One-minute speeches - Rule 172</p> <p>For a period of not more than 30 minutes during the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a prepared list, the President</p>	<p>During the sitting itself, the President is responsible for ensuring that each speaker respects the time allocated to him or her. In order to better control their speaking time, the members who speak from the rostrum have a 'ruler', a series of small-lighted dots that light up every ten seconds as the last five minutes of their speech elapse.</p> <p>Until recently, there was no limit to the time a member could defend a procedural motion - an objection to admissibility, the purpose of which is to have the proposed text recognised as contrary to the Constitution, a preliminary question, the purpose of which is to have it decided that there is no need to deliberate, or a motion for referral back to committee - so that the defence of such motions could be used as a technique of obstruction. Since an amendment to the Rules of Procedure in June 1999, the duration of this intervention may not exceed one and a half hours at first reading, half an hour at second reading and a quarter of an hour during subsequent readings, unless the Conference of Presidents decides otherwise. The Conference of Presidents decided in May 2000 that, during sittings reserved for a private member's agenda, the defence of a motion may not exceed a quarter of an hour in order to avoid the whole sitting being devoted to the discussion of procedural motions.</p> <p>2. Interventions on articles and amendments</p> <p>The examination of the articles of bills and related amendments gives rise to more specific and technical interventions.</p> <p>On the articles themselves, each member may, on his or her own initiative, register for a maximum of five minutes. The Assembly then moves on to the discussion of amendments to the article.</p> <p>The following may then speak for five minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the author of the amendment;</li> <li>• the chairman or rapporteur of the committee responsible;</li> <li>• the chairman or rapporteur of the committee asked for an opinion;</li> <li>• the Government (whose time is not limited);</li> </ul>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>calls Members who wish to draw Parliament’s attention to a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of 1 minute each.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, and in accordance with the President’s decision on exceptional measures enabling the European Parliament to carry out its duties and exercise its prerogatives under the Treaties, the procedures described above were not used in in plenary debates. This was due to the restricted time available for debates, as well as the constraints linked to remote interventions in debates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one speaker against the amendment.</li> </ul> <p>Although this phase of the debate is highly regulated, it often leads to lively and close exchanges. In the interests of discussion, chairpersons often allow interruptions to allow arguments to be confronted. In addition, as provided for in Rule 56 of the Rules of Procedure, they may ‘allow a speaker to reply to the Government or the committee’. Some important amendments thus give rise to extensive discussions.</p> <p>3. The questions</p> <p>Under the terms of Article 48, paragraph 2, of the Constitution, ‘at least one sitting per week shall be reserved by priority for questions from Members of Parliament and the Government’s replies’.</p> <p>In order to implement this constitutional requirement, the Rules of Procedure provide, on the one hand, that the Conference of Presidents shall determine the weekly sitting devoted to questions from members of parliament and the Government’s replies and, on the other hand, that the Tuesday morning sitting shall be reserved, unless the Conference of Presidents decides otherwise, for oral questions without debate or a private member’s agenda.</p> <p>Questions have, in principle, a dual purpose: to monitor government policy and to enable members to obtain information on it. However, given their resonance with public opinion - questions to the Government are broadcast live on television - they are also an opportunity for the political groups and their spokespersons to express their point of view, whether supportive or critical, of government action.</p> <p>Questions to the Government or without debate take place in very different ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• every Tuesday and Wednesday, and alternately from 3 to 4 p.m. and from 3 to 4.05 p.m., questions to the Government are called. All the ministers are present on the ‘ministerial bench’. This important moment in the parliamentary week provides an opportunity to</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>address current national and international issues. The Prime Minister is frequently called upon to speak to explain or defend his policy. One hour before the sitting, each group sends the relevant department a list containing the names of the authors of questions and the ministers questioned. Since the beginning of the 10th legislature, the subject of questions is no longer tabled in advance. The time of the sitting is distributed among the groups according to their numerical importance. The Government's response time is deducted from the groups' time. Questions are called in an alternating order by political group, which varies each sitting, allowing each group to speak first regularly. On average, some twenty-five questions are called each week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the oral questions on Tuesday mornings take a more traditional form. The conditions under which they are tabled, notified and published are set by the Bureau, while the sittings themselves are organised by the Conference of Presidents. Questions are tabled in advance, sent to the relevant minister and published in the Official Journal as an annex to the full report. During the sitting, the deputy has seven minutes to speak and may speak again after the minister if there is some time left. Oral question sessions allow members to address issues of interest for them, particularly of regional or local interest, more easily than during questions to the Government, where the groups play a decisive role. As a result, only the members who have submitted questions usually attend these sessions. As for the Government, it is not always represented by the minister competent to intervene on the subject in question. In recent times, oral questions without debate have lost their weekly rhythm. A reform of the Rules of Procedure in June 1999 means that they alternate with a sitting devoted to a private member's agenda, either under Article 48(3) of the Constitution or under the supplementary agenda, while the number of questions that can be called at each sitting concerned has been increased to twenty-five.</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		In any case, question procedures, through the dialogue they allow, have profoundly renewed the modalities of parliamentary control. They are also largely responsible for the 'question-and-answer' system introduced in the discussion of the annual finance law, which makes it possible to scrutinise the management of a ministerial department.
<b>Voting procedures and treatment of amendments</b>	<p>Voting on draft legislation takes place at the first available voting time (voting session) following the close of a debate on that piece of legislation, unless the agenda specifically provides for a later vote. Non-contentious draft legislation is sometimes put straight to the vote without a debate, in which case the vote may be earlier in a part-session. The timing of the vote may also be influenced by other factors such as availability of texts in all official languages.</p> <p>Amendments to draft legislation may be voted in plenary. Amendments may be tabled by a "low threshold", constituted either by a political group or by a number of individual Members equivalent to 5% of Parliament's membership. Such amendments are voted alongside any amendments proposed by the committee responsible in its report.</p> <p>Rule 159 provides, however, that if a committee has adopted its position on the draft legislation with less than 10 percent of the committee members opposing, the legislation is adopted without further amendments by plenary. A "medium threshold" consisting of 10% of the House may however veto this and insist on the right to table amendments.</p> <p>In first reading, the vote on amendments is always followed by a final vote on the Commission's draft legislation as a whole. Amendments and the final vote require a majority of the votes cast for adoption. In second reading amendments require a</p>	<p>The discussion of a legislative text in the sitting is organised in several phases: the examination of any procedural motions; the general discussion; the discussion of the articles and related amendments. The rules are not the same depending on whether or not the programmed legislative time procedure is used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedural motions</li> </ul> <p>Motions for prior rejection (the purpose of which is to have it recognised that the text is contrary to one or more constitutional provisions or to have it decided that there is no need to deliberate, and the adoption of which entails the rejection of the text) and for referral back to committee (the effect of which, if adopted, is to suspend the debate until the end of the session) are not allowed, (the effect of which, if adopted, is to suspend the debate until the committee presents a new report) are examined before the general debate, except in the case of a sitting reserved for the opposition or a minority group, in which case they are discussed at the end of the general debate.</p> <p>Since the amendments to the Rules of Procedure in June 2006 and May 2009, the defence of a motion is limited to thirty minutes at first reading and fifteen minutes from the second reading onwards, unless the Conference of Presidents decides otherwise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general debate</li> </ul> <p>The general debate is organised by the Conference of Presidents, which sets the overall duration of the debate, depending on the importance of the subject and the observations of the group chairpersons. This time is distributed among the groups according to</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>majority of Parliament's component Members (i.e. more than half the House as constituted) for adoption. In second reading, the draft legislation (Council position) is deemed adopted unless amended or rejected, and there is no final vote on the Council position as a whole.</p> <p>If inter-institutional negotiations lead to a provisional agreement on a draft legislative text, that agreement is put to the vote as single vote with no further amendment, unless the House explicitly decides otherwise.</p> <p>Oral amendments may be moved in plenary by individual Members, although these may be opposed on procedural grounds (lack of full translation into all languages) by Members representing 5% of the House.</p> <p>There is no automatic cooling-off period between a final vote in committee on a report and the adoption by plenary. The timing of the plenary vote is determined by the Conference of Presidents (Group Chairs) and the plenary itself as part of the agenda decision-making process. A cooling-off period does take place, however, between the conclusion of inter-institutional negotiations on a draft legislative act and its final vote in plenary.</p> <p>As indicated above, since the start of the pandemic, explanations of votes could only be submitted in writing due to a reduction in the available time for plenary sessions brought about by limitations in interpretations.</p>	<p>a system based on corrected proportionality, which guarantees a minimum amount of time for the smaller groups.</p> <p>Each group chairperson shall announce, within the time limit set by the Presidency, the names of the speakers he or she has designated and the time allocated to each of them. As a rule, each group reserves a substantial part of its time for a spokesperson, who is usually placed at the head of the list of speakers.</p> <p>At the discretion of the Chair, the order of speakers is determined in such a way as to allow for alternation between the groups. In this way, as the debates proceed, each group is assured of the sought-after position of 'first speaker' in turn.</p> <p>During the sitting, the President is responsible for ensuring that each speaker respects the time allocated to him or her. In theory, speakers should only speak from the rostrum for important speeches and should not read out their speeches (but this rule is hardly respected). Members speaking from the rostrum have a stopwatch placed next to the microphones. A red light in the same place flashes when the speaking time is up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speeches on articles and amendments</li> </ul> <p>The examination of the articles of bills and related amendments gives rise to more specific and technical interventions.</p> <p>On the articles themselves, each member may, on his or her own initiative, register for two minutes. The Assembly then moves on to the discussion of amendments. The following may speak for two minutes: the author of the amendment; the chairperson or rapporteur of the committee responsible; the chairperson or rapporteur of the committee asked for an opinion; the Government (whose time is not limited); a speaker against the amendment.</p> <p>This phase of the debate, although highly regulated, frequently generates lively exchanges. In the interest of the discussion, the presiding officers often allow interruptions. In addition, as provided for in Rule 56 of the Rules of Procedure, they may 'allow a speaker to</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>reply to the Government or the committee'. Some important amendments thus give rise to extensive discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of programmed legislative time</li> </ul> <p>The programmed legislative time procedure, provided for in Rules 49 and 55 of the Rules of Procedure, enables the Conference of Presidents to set the duration not only of the general debate but also of the whole text, including its articles. This is an option. The programmed legislative time is not applicable to finance laws and social security financing laws as well as to constitutional laws.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents determines the time allocated to the groups and non-attached Members. The speaking time of the committees and the Government is not limited.</p> <p>The time is set according to the principles laid down in the Rules of Procedure, which are intended to preserve the right of expression of the groups in general and the opposition groups in particular (which are allocated approximately 60 % of the groups' time). Group chairpersons have prerogatives which allow them, where appropriate, to obtain an increase in the time allocated to the groups (so-called extended or exceptional programmed legislative time) or even to oppose the implementation of programmed legislative time. Since time is aggregated, most speeches are not subject to any time limit (e.g. speeches on procedural motions, on an article or on an amendment).</p> <p>All Members' speeches are deducted from the groups' time, except for those of the chairperson and rapporteur of the committee responsible and, where appropriate, of the rapporteurs of committees asked for an opinion, as well as those of the group chairpersons up to a maximum of one hour when the overall time set by the Conference of Presidents is forty hours or less, and up to a maximum of two hours beyond that.</p> <p>When a group has used up the time allocated to it, its Members shall not be allowed to speak. Any amendment tabled by a Member</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>belonging to that group shall then be put to the vote without debate. The chairperson of the group may no longer request a public vote, except on the text as a whole. However, the President of the sitting shall request the opinion of the committee and the Government on the amendments tabled by the members of that group in order to inform the vote of the Assembly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Votes</li> </ul> <p>During the examination of a legislative text in the sitting, all votes are public and are expressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- by show of hands (or by sitting and standing if there is any doubt about the count);</li> <li>- by ordinary public ballot (this vote is taken as of right by decision of the President or at the request of the Government, the committee responsible or the chairperson of a political group; it may also be decided by the Conference of Presidents when it wishes to organise a 'formal' vote, in practice for the vote on all the most important texts); it is taken by electronic means.</li> </ul>
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners is limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are</p>	<p>The procedure for questions to the government was devised by the Conference of Presidents and was implemented in 1974, outside the Rules of Procedure, initially at the rate of one-hour sitting per week. Since the introduction of a single parliamentary session in 1995, two one-hour sittings are devoted to them, on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, even during the budgetary debate.</p> <p>The organisation of the Government question time was changed in February 2008: the time devoted to each question, including the minister's reply, was reduced from 5 to 4 minutes, with stopwatches installed in the Chamber so that everyone could check compliance with this rule.</p> <p>This reduction allows 15 questions to be asked per sitting instead of the previous 12, and parity between the majority and the opposition is achieved over 2 sittings, with 15 for the majority and 15 for the</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p> <p>The Member has 1 minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner 2 minutes in which to reply. The Member formulating the question may put a supplementary question of a duration of 30 seconds, having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>In practice, this provision was not used during the 8th and 9th parliamentary term.</p> <p>With regards to Council representatives, there is a possibility to hold specific question hours with the Council in accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents (Rule 137/3).</p> <p>The use of Question time is, however, being discussed again in the reform exercise initiated in the Parliament, in particular in the Focus Group on Plenary reform.</p>	<p>opposition. Non-attached Members may ask a question every two months.</p> <p>During the sitting, the President calls questions in an order that alternates between a question from a majority group and one from an opposition group, with the first question going to an opposition or minority group.</p> <p>Unlike oral questions, questions to the Government are not tabled, notified or published in advance. In principle, their content is not communicated to the Government, only the names of the authors are transmitted to it one hour before the opening of the sitting. The spontaneous nature of the questions and the presence of all the members of the Government ensure a large audience for these sittings, which, moreover, thanks to their televised broadcast, constitute a high point in parliamentary news.</p> <p>The content of questions is free (only insults and threats are prohibited). In practice, the duality of oral questions and questions to the Government means that questions of local interest are reserved for the former and general political questions for the latter.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents of 28 June 2012 updated the arrangements for the organisation of questions to the Government. Two one-hour sittings, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 3 p.m. during ordinary sessions, and only one on Tuesday or Wednesday during extraordinary sessions, will be devoted to the 'question time'.</p> <p>The time available per speaker is now set at 2 minutes, which allows for 30 questions in two sessions, 15 for the majority.</p> <p>The first question of each sitting is allocated to the opposition and minority groups according to a rotation calculated over 10 sittings. Members who do not belong to a group may speak at the rate of one question every eight sittings, in last position.</p>
<b>Procedure for written questions</b>	Members, political groups and committees are entitled to submit questions for written answer to the President of the European Council, to the Council, the Commission and to the Vice-President	Provided for in the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, the procedure for written questions is an individual prerogative of

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union (Rule 138 RoP).</p> <p>Admissibility criteria are referred to in Annex III RoP, mainly EU competence, competence of the addressee, general interest, contain an understandable interrogation, not exceed 200 words, not contain offensive language, not relate to strictly personal matters, not contain more than 3 sub-questions, no similar or identical question tabled and answered in the previous 6 months. In addition, data protection regulations shall be respected.</p> <p>Deadlines for answering: 3 weeks for priority questions; 6 weeks for non-priority questions. Nevertheless, as those deadlines have never been agreed with the institutions addressees of the questions, they are considered by the latter as non-binding on them, but as mere targets. Delays are extremely frequent.</p> <p>Questions for oral answer are a completely different procedure (cf. Rule 136 RoP). These are never answered in writing, even if they lapse without having been scheduled for debate in Plenary. They can only be tabled by a political group, a parliamentary committee or at least 5% of EP's component Members.</p> <p>Major interpellations for written answer (Rule 139 RoP) are a "hybrid" instrument, as they can be scheduled for debate if they have not been answered, but also if they have been answered (different rules apply). They can only be tabled by political groups. Annex III does not apply to Oral questions and Major interpellations. There are specific rules regarding length, deadlines, etc.</p>	<p>Members. It is the only parliamentary procedure of its kind that is exercised outside the sitting and whose effect is deferred.</p> <p>Written questions are put by a Member to a Minister; only those concerning the general policy of the Government are put to the Prime Minister.</p> <p>Written questions must be summarily drafted and limited to the elements that are strictly essential for understanding the question. They must not contain any personal imputation against named third parties. Moreover, the principle of separation of powers and the non-accountability of the President of the Republic prohibits written questions questioning his actions.</p> <p>The text of written questions is submitted to the President of the National Assembly, who notifies the Government. Since 2008, Members submit their questions electronically using a special internet portal. Written questions are published every week, during sessions and out of session, in a special fascicle of the Official Journal, which also includes the Ministers' answers to the questions previously asked. Since 1 January 2016, this fascicle has been dematerialised and the authentic version can be consulted on the National Assembly website.</p> <p>In principle, the answers to the questions have no legal value and are not binding on the administration, except in tax matters where they are considered to express the administrative interpretation of the texts.</p> <p>Because of its simplicity and unlimited nature, and facilitated by new IT facilities, the written question procedure has met with great success. It allows Members to intervene whenever they wish (even during the intersessional period) and as often, as they wish with Ministers on issues that often directly affect their constituents. The consequence has been an inflation in the number of written questions: from 3 700 written questions tabled in 1959 to 12 000 in</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>Members, political groups, parliamentary committees can table a maximum of 20 questions for written answer over a rolling period of 3 months. They can only table one priority question per calendar month (which is also counted in the 20 questions over the 3 month rolling period). A question can be co-tabled by several Members but it will be counted in the quota of each individual Member. Members can also “support” other Members’ questions, and in this case this will not be counted in the respective quota. The number of major interpellations is limited by the Conference of Presidents (proportional to the “weight” of each political group) but there is no limit to the number of Oral questions tabled.</p> <p>Parliamentary questions are submitted by using a web form (QP webform) and signed by Members with an electronic signature (DiSP). They are managed by the administration, with the help of a specific application (QPPLUS).</p> <p>Every parliamentary question is published on the EP website ( <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/parliamentary-questions.html</a>), under the Plenary part and in the Register of public documents, when it is forwarded to the institution addressee of the question. Questions can also be accessed from the profile of every author (Member). Replies to questions for written answer are published as links to each question and in the Register of public documents. Questions and answers are available in the language of the author(s) and in English. Regarding Oral questions and Major interpellations, if they are scheduled for debate in Plenary, a link to the debate and to the Minutes is published.</p>	<p>1994, 20 066 in 2015 and 39 258 since the beginning of the 15th legislature.</p> <p>The average response time was 180 days as of 30 September 2015. The overall response rate was around 70%.</p> <p>Several procedural changes have been made to improve the response rate and response times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the publication of lists of questions that have not been answered within two months;</li> <li>- the possibility for Members to renew written questions that have remained unanswered for more than three months;</li> <li>- the introduction of the procedure of ‘reported questions’ which allows presidents of political groups to choose, according to a distribution key per group, 25 questions which are ‘reported’ in the Official Journal and to which the Ministers undertake to reply within ten days. This procedure, which was very effective during the 12th legislature, seized up from the 13th legislature onwards.</li> </ul> <p>To encourage the Government to remedy the deterioration in response rates and deadlines, in a context of a continuous increase of the number of written questions, the reform of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly adopted on 28 November 2014 amended Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure, which now stipulates that: ‘the Conference of Presidents shall, before the start of each ordinary session, set the maximum number of written questions that may be put by each Member until the start of the following ordinary session’.</p> <p>For the 15<sup>th</sup> legislature (2017-2022), the Conference of Presidents set the maximum number of questions that may be tabled by each Member for the period at 52.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the 15th legislature, of the 31 909 written questions tabled, only 22 356 have been answered, i.e. 70% of them.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		A motion for resolution No. 3297 has been tabled on 3 September 2020 to amend the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly in order to remove the ceiling on the number of written questions.
<b>Seating order and presence</b>	<p>The Conference of Presidents shall decide how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated to the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the Union (Rule 37).</p> <p>According to the Rules of Procedure, at the beginning of each legislature, political groups have an allocated number of seats for their Members as decided by the Conference of Presidents. Each Member of the European Parliament has his own seat in the Chamber, as indicated by his respective political group. Small changes may occur in the seating plan from one part-session to the next, due to changes in political group affiliation of Members. Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the pandemic, due to social distancing restrictions, the seating plan of Members has had to be adapted and seats were mostly reserved for Members who intervened in debates. Any remaining seats were allocated to Members present on a free seating basis within the allocation foreseen for their respective political groups. Furthermore, Members speak from the central rostrum (without their mask).</p> <p>In order to attract the attention of Members for their participation on debates of particular general importance, the Conference of Presidents can indicate them as key debates with a consequence that no other meetings may be organised in parallel.</p>	<p>Following a tradition created by the first National Assembly during the French Revolution, the 'left-wing' parties sit to the left as seen from the President's seat; the 'right-wing' parties sit to the right. The seating arrangement thus directly indicates the political spectrum as represented in the Assembly.</p> <p>The choice of the location of each Member is made in two stages. First, the President of the Assembly and the representatives of the political groups decide on the distribution of the groups in the Chamber. The division is then done by sector.</p> <p>Once this division has been made, the president of each political group distributes his or her elected representatives as he or she wants. The Assembly has no say in the matter.</p> <p>The President of the Assembly and the representatives of the groups also determine the place of the non-attached Members. It is customary for them to be grouped together in the same place, but sometimes they are separated.</p> <p>At the beginning of each new legislature, the Members take their final places during the Prime Minister's general policy statement, when he presents his programme and commits the government. Before this date, the placement of the Members follows the alphabetical order.</p> <p>Each seat has a number. Some of the seats have commemorative plaques in memory of well-known former Members. There are about sixty of them in the National Assembly.</p> <p>According to Rule 159 (added in 1994) of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly Members may excuse themselves from attending a particular sitting. Requests must be made in writing, giving reasons, and addressed to the President.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>Taking into account cases where the delegation of vote has been given, votes on motions of censure and apologies submitted, the fact of having taken part, during a session, in less than two-thirds of the public votes cast entails a deduction of one-third of the official allowance for a period equal to that of the session; if the same deputy has taken part in less than half of the votes, this deduction is doubled (4,320 in the first case and more than 8,500 in the second).</p> <p>There is another penalty for the absence of MPs from parliamentary committees, introduced in 2009 following the 2008 constitutional revision. In the event of more than two monthly absences from a committee convened every Wednesday morning (reserved for work in the standing committee), except in specific cases, the MP member must pay a fine of 25% of his or her allowance. This was 1,441.95 euros gross per month on 1 February 2017 and represents a quarter of the total monthly allowance of the elected representative. This reform has significantly increased the participation of elected representatives in committee work. This reform has significantly increased the participation of elected representatives in committee work. It does not apply, as stipulated in Article 42 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, to 'the members of the Bureau of the Assembly, with the exception of the secretaries, the group chairmen, and the Members elected in a constituency outside mainland France'. The excuse also applies to Members who are also members of international (NATO) or European (Council of Europe) assemblies.</p>
<b>Meetings in parallel to plenary sessions</b>	Meetings of committees should not be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, save for very few exceptions agreed by the president. Political group meetings can be organised in parallel to plenary sessions, except for Tuesday and/or Wednesday morning if key debates are scheduled.	Standing committees are generally subject to a very strong time constraint. In principle, they do not sit at the same time as the Assembly's public sitting, except to complete the examination of a text on the agenda, in accordance with the first paragraph of Rule 41 of the Rules of Procedure. However, this principle is very difficult to respect, especially since the introduction of the single ordinary session (in 1995) has concentrated public sittings on three days

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>Rules for meetings in parallel to plenary sessions are set by the Decision of the Conference of Presidents of 14 May 1998.</p> <p>As a <b>general rule</b>, no other meeting may be held simultaneously. Therefore, no meeting of a parliamentary body nor any other meeting involving Members shall be authorised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• during voting time;</li> <li>• during formal sittings;</li> <li>• on Wednesdays mornings during Strasbourg part-sessions and on Wednesdays from 15.00 to 16.30 during Brussels part-sessions or during any other debate of particular general importance defined as such by the Conference of Presidents.</li> </ul> <p>However, there are the following <b>exceptions</b> from this rule:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Conference of Presidents and the Bureau, and any working party thereof, must be able to meet, where appropriate, at any time.</li> <li>• The Quaestors shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Committee Chairs shall be authorised to meet from 14.00 to 16.00 on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg.</li> <li>• The Conference of Delegation Chairs shall be authorised to meet on Tuesday afternoons during part-sessions in Strasbourg provided such meetings do not coincide with a key debate.</li> <li>• Political groups shall be authorised to meet during part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels in specific time slots (different for Strasbourg and Brussels) as defined in Annex III to the Bureau decision of 4 July 2005 on Rules governing meetings of the political groups.</li> </ul>	<p>(Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). Wednesday morning is reserved for committee work. Almost all committee meetings take place on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees shall be authorised to meet in Strasbourg on Mondays and Thursdays. Monday meetings shall be authorised from 19.00 to 22.30. Committees shall be authorised to hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Brussels only in exceptional cases and subject to the availability of interpretation resources. Such meetings may be held on Wednesdays from 19.00 to 22.00.</li> <li>• Finally, delegations to the Conciliation Committee may hold meetings simultaneously with a plenary sitting in Strasbourg and Brussels if the constraints of time limits and Council availability so dictate and provided that such meetings do not coincide with voting time or a formal sitting.</li> </ul>	
<b>Parliaments' calendars</b>	<p>Parliament's work is structured according to a calendar divided into weeks of different colours, each corresponding to a different type of parliamentary activity: pink for committee meetings, red for plenary part-sessions, blue for political group meetings and turquoise for constituency weeks (external parliamentary activities).</p> <p>Every year the Parliament holds 12 four-day plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Its Members meet in parliamentary committees in Brussels, where additional two-day plenary sessions are held.</p> <p>The plenary session is the highlight of the parliamentary month with all the Members assembling either in the Chamber in Strasbourg or, for additional, shorter sessions, in Brussels. The reports adopted in committees are once again debated, amended and adopted to reflect the Parliament's official position. In addition to adopting reports, Members adopt resolutions and directly question Commission or Council</p>	<p>150 days per year (for both ordinary and extraordinary sessions)</p> <p>The Assembly sits on the basis of one ordinary session starting on the first working day of October and ending on the last working day of June. According to Article 28(2) of the Constitution, the number of days of sitting during an ordinary session must not exceed 120 days. When the National Assembly is convened and, in particular, during the ordinary session, it is not always in sitting. In fact, it sits according to a calendar organized by the week, by the day of sitting and by the sitting. Certain sittings are given over to a specific agenda.</p> <p>Article 28(2) of the Constitution allows the Assembly to determine their weeks of sittings, which, in practice, essentially allows them to determine the weeks when they will not sit (during holiday periods or an election campaign, for instance). The days and hours of sittings shall be determined by the Rules of Procedure (Article 28 (4)).</p> <p>The plenary sittings take place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, afternoons and evenings, and on Wednesday afternoons and evenings.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>representatives on topical issues. Heads of State or Government and personalities from all over the world may also attend the plenary sessions.</p> <p>Pink weeks are dedicated to committee meetings, the forum where Members coming from different political groups discuss draft legislation, propose amendments, consider Commission and Council proposals and draw up reports to be presented to the plenary.</p> <p>In weeks that are marked blue Members meet with other members from their political group. The political groups in Parliament bring together Members coming from different national political parties, sharing the same political stance and affiliations. During the political groups' meeting, Members discuss their positions on proposed legislation, to be debated and voted on during plenary. They scrutinise reports from Parliamentary committees, table amendments and agree on a group position.</p> <p>During turquoise week, MEPs undertake activities outside the Parliament (external parliamentary activities). They work either in their constituency in their home country, where they have the opportunity to interact with their electorate, or in Parliamentary delegations, responsible for maintaining relations with non-EU countries.</p> <p>Of course, this calendar is implemented with some degree of flexibility in duly justified cases (e.g. committee meetings in plenary or group weeks to vote on urgent legislation, extraordinary plenary sittings, etc.)</p> <p>For 2020:</p>	<p>On a proposal from the Conference of Presidents, the Assembly may decide to hold further sittings, provided the maximum number set by Article 28 (2) of the Constitution is not exceeded.</p> <p>The time of the sittings is the following: 9.30 a.m. - 1 p.m. in the morning, 3 p.m. - 8 p.m. in the afternoon, and 9.30 p.m. - 1 a.m. at night.</p> <p>However, the Assembly may decide to extend sittings either on a proposal made by the Conference of Presidents for a specific agenda or on a proposal made by a lead committee, by a political group chairperson, by the President or by the Government in order to proceed with a debate in progress.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>Number of working days in total: 174  Number of daily sitting*: 51 (including 2 extraordinary sessions in form of daily sittings held on 27 May and 23 July)  Number of sitting hours: 259 h 43</p> <p>N.B.: The length of daily sittings may differ depending on the indication in the calendar (Ex. Monday for Strasbourg session and Wednesday and Thursday for the Brussels session are considered only as a half-working days).</p> <p>Number of working days for committee meetings: 58  Number of working days for political group meetings: 32  Number of working days outside of the parliament (external parliamentary activities): 38</p>	

## 2. Strengthening parliamentary prerogatives

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<p><b>Organisation of Hearings</b></p>	<p>The European Parliament's Committees may invite the Commission and other EU institutions and bodies to their meetings. Apart from that, they may organise public hearings with experts for different purposes and shall organise public hearings on European citizen's initiatives once they have gathered the necessary citizens' support. Pre-appointment hearings are also relevant in the European Parliament's Committees work, especially the ones held during the appointment procedure of the European Commission. The European Parliament inquiry committees may also invite different categories of witnesses to provide evidence.</p> <p>Rules applicable to the organisation and scheduling of hearing by EP's committees are quite flexible. If a committee decides to invite the <b>Commission, the Council or other EU institutions</b> to one of its meetings, the availability of those institutions may play a relevant role when deciding when to place the item on the agenda. Notwithstanding, the Commission has committed to give priority to its presence at parliamentary sessions when requested to appear (Framework Agreement on relations between the EP and the COM, point 35).</p> <p>Similarly, when deciding on whether to organise an <b>experts' hearing</b>, committees do need to consider that those hearings, no matter if they are organised by standing committees, inquiry or special committees, or subcommittees, need the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau (Rule 25 (9) RoP). Proposals to organise hearings are usually discussed by committee coordinators before being submitted to Parliament's Bureau (Rule</p>	<p>A special or standing committee may summon any person it deems necessary to hear, subject to, on the one hand, matters of a secret nature and concerning national defence, foreign affairs, internal or external state security, and on the other hand, respect for the principle of the separation of judicial authority and other powers. The committees frequently hear members of the government, including the Prime Minister, European Commissioners, experts, representatives of socio-professional stakeholders and any other personality. During the 14th legislature, 2 837 hearings were organised by the standing and special committees.</p> <p>Any person whose hearing a committee of enquiry has deemed useful is obliged to comply with the summons issued to him or her, if necessary, by a bailiff or an agent of the public force, at the request of the committee chairperson. With the exception of minors of sixteen years of age, they shall be heard under oath. He or she shall also be required to give evidence, subject to the provisions of Articles 226-13 and 226-14 of the Criminal Code. The provisions of the third paragraph of article 41 of the law of 29 July 1881 on the freedom of the press are applicable to him/her.</p> <p>The hearings held by the committees of enquiry are public. The committees shall organise this publicity by the means of their choice. However, they may decide to apply secrecy. In this case, the provisions of the last paragraph of this article shall apply.</p> <p>The persons heard by a committee of enquiry shall be allowed to consult the minutes of their hearing. This communication shall take place on the spot when the hearing has been conducted in secret. No corrections may be made to the record. However, the person concerned may submit his or her observations in writing. These</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>214 RoP). According to the Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings (18 June 2003), each parliamentary committee shall submit a draft 6-months program of experts' hearings to the Conference of Committee Chairs twice a year. Individual authorisations for hearings not included in the 6-months program may also be granted and have to be submitted to the Bureau four weeks in advance of the hearing after notifying the Conference of Committee Chairs. In urgent cases, Parliament's President may directly give the authorisation (Article 3 Bureau's Rules on Public Hearings). Committees can only cover the expenses of a maximum of 16 experts' guests per year (12 for subcommittees) and experts and the organisations they represent need to be on a mandatory transparency register.</p> <p>Once organised, committees notify Parliament's President and provide detailed information regarding the hearing, Experts' hearings shall be organised in Parliament's premises and during the ordinary meeting time of committees (Article 1 Rules on Public Hearings). In these hearings, experts are usually allowed to make a first statement followed by a debate in which committee members may raise questions. As regards the allocation of speaking time in committee Parliament's Rules of Procedure (Rule 216 (4) only refers to Rule 171 (2) RoP) during a hearing, thus leaving a wide margin of discretion to the Committee Chair to decide on how to organise the debate. Hearings are normally public.</p> <p><b>Public hearings' on European Citizens initiatives</b> present some peculiarities as they are organised by the competent EP's standing committee, on a decision made by Parliament's President on a proposal from the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs (Rule 222 (1) RoP), so they do not need the prior authorisation of</p>	<p>comments shall be submitted to the Committee, which may decide to include them in its report.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>Parliament's Bureau. The hearings should be organised within three months of the submission of the European Citizens initiative to the Commission.</p> <p><b>Pre-appointment hearings</b> do not have to receive the prior authorisation of Parliament's Bureau and the competent committees enjoy a wide range of freedom as regards their organisation and conduct, except the hearings held within the appointment procedure of the Commission, which are thoroughly regulated by Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Hearings held in the European Parliament's committees during the election procedure of the European Commission distinguish themselves from all other pre-appointment hearings, not only because they are conducted before Parliament gives its vote of consent to the Commission as a whole, but also because they involve nearly all EP's standing committees and governing bodies and they have become a major political event. Two major steps take place before the hearings themselves: i) Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee examines the declaration of financial interests presented by each Commissioner-designate to confirm that there is no conflict of interests in connection with their future portfolio ii) and Commissioners-designate are asked to answer several questions in writing before the hearing. Each hearing lasts three hours. Commissioners-designate make an opening statement of no more than 15 minutes. A session of questions and answers follows, in which Members are allowed to ask up to 25 questions, with follow-up questions to be asked immediately by the same MEP within their allocated time. Speaking time is allocated to Members taking into account the size of each political group</p> <p>Temporary <b>inquiry committees</b> may also hold hearings as part of its investigative activities on 'alleged contraventions or</p>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>maladministration in implementation of Union law'. Members of the institutions and other bodies of the EU and members of the Member States' governments may be invited by inquiry committees to take part in their proceedings (Article 3 (2) of Decision 95/167/EC). Although the wording of the current provision does not seem to impose a legal obligation. In any case, Parliament has at its disposal some other powerful tools, including the motion of censure (Article 234 TFEU and Rule 127 RoP), that it can use against the Commission in case their members decide not to appear in front of inquiry committees. As regards some other EU institutions or bodies (e.g. the Council or the European Council) and national governments, Parliament can use different means to exert political pressure, including by using a "shaming and blaming" strategy.</p>	
<p><b>Scrutiny and control powers</b></p>	<p>Parliament has a range of supervisory and control powers. These include <b>(1) exercise oversight over other institutions, (2) monitor the proper use of the EU budget and (3) ensure the correct implementation of EU law.</b></p> <p><b><u>Control over the Council</u></b></p> <p>The President of the European Parliament has the right to speak at the start of each European Council, setting out Parliament's position on the subjects to be addressed by the heads of state and government. After each summit, the President of the European Council presents a report to Parliament on the outcome.</p> <p>At the beginning and end of each six-month presidency, the President of the Council of the European Union discusses the Presidency's programme with MEPs in plenary. MEPs can table written and oral questions to the Council and can ask it to initiate</p>	<p><b>Control over the government</b></p> <p>The Fifth Republic set up a hybrid political regime with characteristics of both a presidential regime, such as the election of the President by direct universal suffrage, and a parliamentary regime, notably the possibility for the National Assembly to hold the Government to account.</p> <p>Article 20 of the 1958 French Constitution provides that the Government 'shall be accountable to Parliament in accordance with the terms and procedures set out in Articles 49 and 50'. These terms and procedures reconcile governmental accountability and stability. Article 50 limits the power of censure solely to the National Assembly: 'When the National Assembly passes a resolution of no confidence, or when it fails to endorse the government programme or general policy statement, the Prime Minister shall tender the resignation of the government to the President of the Republic'.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>new policies. The Presidency of the Council often meets the Chairs of Parliament's political groups and frequently takes part in committee meetings to present its programme, report on its achievements and discuss them with MEPs. In addition, twice a year, the High Representative reports to the European Parliament about foreign affairs and security policies and their financial implications.</p> <p><b><u>Control over the Commission</u></b></p> <p>The Parliament has the right to approve and dismiss the Commission. A candidate for the position of Commission President is proposed by the Member States' governments based on the results of the European elections. The candidate is then elected by the Parliament. The Commission as a whole, including the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is subject to a vote of consent by Parliament. The Commission can be forced to resign if the EP adopts a motion of censure. It can censure the Commission and ultimately dismiss it.</p> <p>The Parliament keeps a close eye on the Commission's work, scrutinizing its reports on EU policies, legislation and the budget. Commissioners are often required to appear before MEPs, at committee meetings or in plenary, to defend their policies, explain what action they intend to take and answer questions.</p> <p>Parliament exercises democratic control over the Commission, which regularly submits reports to it, including an annual report on EU activities and the implementation of the budget. At every plenary session, the President of the Commission is present for Question Hour, during which MEPs question him or her on</p>	<p>Article 49 of the French Constitution lays down three procedures for making government accountability an issue of confidence before the National Assembly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making the government's programme or a statement of general policy an issue of confidence in the government. This procedure is initiated by the Government and must be discussed in the Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister alone may make the government's programme or a statement of general policy an issue of confidence in the government before the National Assembly. According to Article 152 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, it is the task of the Conference of Presidents to organise the debate. The latter must decide on the overall time allotted to political groups and to non-aligned Members of the parliament. An absolute majority of the votes cast is required.</li> <li>• The tabling of a motion of censure initiated by Members. Members may table a motion of censure through the President of the National Assembly. To be admissible, such a motion must be signed by at least one tenth of the Members of the Assembly (i.e. 58 members where all constituencies are represented). Nonetheless, in order to avoid the over-use of such motions, each Member may only sign such a motion three times during a single ordinary session and once during a single extraordinary session (motions of censure following the making of a bill an issue of confidence in the government are not included in this count. The dismissal of a single member of the government is not possible). After the tabling of the motion, no signature may be added or removed (Rule 152). Three motions of censure as per Article 49 (2) of the Constitution were initiated by Members since the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> legislature.</li> <li>• Making the adoption of a bill an issue of confidence in the government</li> </ul> <p>In the context of the examination of a bill in public session in the National Assembly, Article 49 paragraph 3 of the Constitution can</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>current affairs. Once a year, the Commission President gives a State of the Union address at the plenary. Parliament regularly invites the Commission to initiate new policies, and the Commission is required to reply to oral and written questions from MEPs.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Justice</u></b> The EP can ask the Court to take action against the Commission or the Council if they have acted in a way that is contrary to the provisions of EU law. The Parliament is able to seek a prior opinion from the CJEU on the compatibility of an international agreement with the Treaty. In addition, the Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish specialised courts attached to the General Court to hear and determine at first instance certain classes of action or proceeding brought in specific areas.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank (ECB)</u></b> The ECB President reports to Parliament on monetary issues in a quarterly Monetary Dialogue. The ECB also prepares an annual report on monetary policy which is presented in Parliament. Parliament adopts a resolution on this annual report. MEPs may put questions for written answer to the ECB. Parliament is also consulted in the procedure to appoint members of the ECB's Executive Board.</p> <p>The new supervisory responsibilities of the ECB are matched with additional accountability requirements under the SSM Regulation. The practical modalities for this are governed by an inter-institutional agreement (IIA) between Parliament and the ECB. The accountability arrangements include the attendance of the Chair of the Supervisory Board at the competent committee,</p>	<p>allow a law to be adopted without a vote. This procedure allows the Prime Minister, after deliberation by the Council of Ministers, to engage the responsibility of the government on the vote of a finance bill or a social security financing bill, or of another bill or a draft law under debate in the National Assembly.</p> <p>Since the constitutional reform of 23 July 2008, apart from finance bills or social security financing bills, Article 49 (3) can only be used on one text during a single parliamentary session. Before this revision of the Constitution, the government could use it as often as it wanted and on any text.</p> <p><b><u>Monitoring of the implementation of laws and assessment of legislation and public policies</u></b> Follow-up on the implementation of laws has become one of the main missions of Parliament. It has a double aim: to check the implementation of the laws passed, and to influence the concrete conditions of their application.</p> <p>For a decade now, parliamentary monitoring of the implementation of laws has extended to the assessment of the legislation in accordance with the new approach to public action. This takes into account the effects and the social impact of the decisions taken, in terms of the objectives set and the means invested. Several mechanisms have been set up since 1996 in order to meet these new demands. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the presentation before standing committees of implementation reports concerning laws which require the publication of rules of a regulatory nature;</li> <li>• the setting-up of assessment and monitoring missions within the standing committees e.g., the Assessment and Monitoring Mission (MEC), which is an assessment and monitoring mission in charge of evaluating each year the results of certain public policies, set up within the Finance Committee of the National Assembly, and</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON); answering questions asked by Parliament; and confidential oral discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the competent committee upon request. In addition, the ECB prepares an annual supervisory report, which is presented to Parliament by the Chair of the Supervisory Board.</p> <p><b><u>Court of Auditors</u></b> Parliament shall be consulted before the appointment of the members of the Court of Auditors by the Council. The Court assists Parliament and the Council in exercising their role of controlling the implementation of the budget. The annual reports and special reports serve as the basis for Parliament's yearly discharge exercise.</p> <p>The Court's Members are invited to present their reports at committee meetings (Parliament's CONT Committee and other specialised committees), and to reply to questions raised by MEPs. Each year the Court of Auditors and CONT hold several meetings at which CONT members discuss with the Members of the Court their political priorities, the Court's annual work programme, detailed arrangements for cooperation, etc. Once a year, the ECA President attends a meeting of the European Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs to present the ECA's annual work programme and invite all committees to submit their suggestions for the next programming exercise. Parliament also makes suggestions on these issues in its annual resolutions on the Court of Auditors' discharge. The Court of Auditors presents the annual report on the previous year's budget to the Council and to the Parliament. Based on this report, Parliament decides whether or not to approve the</p>	<p>the Assessment and Monitoring Mission for the Laws Governing Social Security Financing Laws (MECSS), which is responsible for checking the application of the laws concerning the financing of social security and of assessing all questions concerning the finances of social security, set up within the Social Affairs Committee of the National Assembly and the Senate;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the setting-up, by the reform of the Rules of Procedure of 27 May 2009, of the Commission for the Assessment and Monitoring of Public Policies (CEC) which enables the National Assembly to implement the mission of assessment explicitly recognized by article 24 of the Constitution. To carry out its missions, the CEC has the following functions. It ensures the assessment of a broad range of public policies: It must be informed of the conclusions of fact-finding missions; and It may put forward proposals for the agenda of the week given over to monitoring and assessment.</li> </ul>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>Commission's handling of the EU budget, by granting the budget discharge.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b>  The Parliament elects the European Ombudsman. The Ombudsman reports back to the EP and presents an annual report to the MEPs. The Ombudsman may be dismissed by the Court of Justice at Parliament's request in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><b><u>Budget</u></b>  Parliament remains one of the two arms of the budgetary authority (Article 314 of the TFEU). It is involved in the budgetary process from the preparation stage, notably in laying down the general guidelines and the type of spending. It adopts the budget and monitors its implementation (Article 318 of the TFEU). It gives a discharge on the implementation of the budget (Article 319 of the TFEU). Finally, Parliament has to provide its consent to the multiannual financial framework (MFF) (Article 312 of the TFEU). The MFF for 2014–2020 is the first to be covered under the rules laid down in the TFEU.</p> <p><b><u>Implementation of EU law</u></b>  According to Article 226 of the TFEU, Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged contraventions or maladministration in the implementation of EU law. The same article provides that the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the right of inquiry are to be determined by Parliament itself, acting by means of regulations on its own initiative after obtaining the consent of the Council and the Commission. Until such a regulation is</p>	

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>adopted, the right of inquiry is exercised in accordance with a 1995 inter-institutional agreement annexed to Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Parliament has repeatedly expressed the need to improve communication and cooperation between the three institutions in order to be able to fulfil its mandate based on Article 226 of the TFEU. In 2014, it adopted a position on a proposal for a regulation on the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry. However, the negotiations between the three institutions on the proposal have constantly been in a deadlock. Consequently, in April 2019, Parliament adopted a resolution, in which it considers that the Council and the Commission have failed to comply with the principle of inter-institutional cooperation and invites them to resume on the matter with the newly elected Parliament.</p>	
<b>Appointment procedures</b>	<p>The role and the prerogatives of the European Parliament have evolved and increased over time, not only as regards legislative powers and oversight but also in relation to the procedures to nominate, vet and appoint people to other senior positions in EU institutions, agencies and other bodies. Parliament's role varies from case to case depending on the legal basis. Parliament's scrutiny of such candidates, in various different forms, helps in ensuring the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of the process as well as its transparency. What is today codified in the EU Treaties, secondary legislation and Parliament's Rules of Procedure, is mostly the result of a set of Parliamentary processes that became established practices over the years. This demonstrates that Parliament has managed to use its political leverage to expand and formalise its power to nominate and appoint the holders of senior positions. Despite the heterogeneity of procedures, some common patterns may be highlighted, in</p>	<p>The President of the National Assembly appoints to functions that are essential for the proper functioning of the Republic. In application of the Constitution, he appoints, after the opinion of the Law Committee, a member of the Constitutional Council at the time of each triennial renewal and two of the six personalities called to sit on the panels of the High Council of the Judiciary with jurisdiction over judges and prosecutors. It also appoints one or more members of various councils and independent administrative authorities (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, Conseil général de la Banque de France, Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés, Autorité des marchés financiers, Autorité de régulation des communications électroniques et des postes, Haute Autorité pour la transparence de la vie publique, etc.). In addition, certain texts entrust it with the task of appointing one or more Members to sit on extra-parliamentary bodies (Commission for</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>particular, that candidates and nominees generally appear in front of the relevant committee(s) of the European Parliament, first making a statement and then answering questions from Members.</p> <p><b><u>European Commission</u></b>  The Lisbon Treaty Article 17(7) TEU provides that Member State governments propose the other Commissioners, who are then nominated by the Council in common accord with the President-elect of the Commission. Each candidate then appears for a three-hour hearing in front of the Parliament's committee(s) responsible, as stipulated in Parliament's Rules of Procedure. Before a hearing can take place, candidates must answer a written questionnaire and present their declaration of interests. The declarations of financial interests are examined by Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs, which needs to confirm the absence of any conflict of interest. After that, the Commission as a whole still needs to obtain consent from Parliament by a majority of the votes cast, by roll call before being appointed by the European Council, by qualified majority.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Auditors</u></b>  According to Article 286(2) TFEU the Council adopts the list of members of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) following proposals from Member States and after consulting the European Parliament. Despite Parliament having a consultative role only, it can influence the outcome. The Member States may prefer to withdraw a candidate than face a formal negative vote by Parliament. The relevance of Parliament's role also comes from the fact that hearings of the nominees are in public in committee, and their answers to the questionnaire are published, creating</p>	<p>Access to Administrative Documents, National Consultative Ethics Committee for the Life Sciences and Health, etc.).</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>significant political weight and pressure on the candidates' performance.</p> <p><b><u>European Court of Justice</u></b> Parliament has no role in the appointing procedure for Judges or Advocates-General of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). However, according to Article 255 TFEU it proposes one member of the panel entrusted with the duty of vetting the nominees.</p> <p><b><u>European Ombudsman</u></b> According to Article 228 TFEU the European Ombudsman is directly elected by Parliament for the duration of its legislative term, i.e. a five-year period. This appointment is completely under the aegis of Parliament and Member States have no role at all.</p> <p><b><u>European Central Bank</u></b> Parliament also has a role in the appointments procedure for members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank (ECB) as well as of the Supervisory Board of the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM). For the former, Parliament provides an opinion, while for the latter Parliament has a more stringent role. Article 283(2) TFEU states that the ECB Executive Board will be appointed by the European Council on a recommendation from the Council after consulting the European Parliament and the Governing Council of the ECB.</p> <p><b><u>Agencies' board members and Executive Directors</u></b> The European Parliament exercises its oversight power over EU agencies through various procedures including, but not limited to, budgetary discharge, involvement in the appointment of their Executive Directors and Management Board members.</p>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p><b><u>European Data Protection Supervisor</u></b>  According to Article 53 of EU Regulation 2018/1725, Parliament and Council shall appoint the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) for a five-year term by common accord, on the basis of a public list of at least three candidates drawn up by the European Commission following a public call for submission of candidatures.</p> <p><b><u>European Public Prosecutor's Office</u></b>  The first European Chief Prosecutor was appointed in 2019. According to Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, Parliament and Council shall appoint by common accord the European Chief Prosecutor, based on a number of criteria following an open call for candidates published in the Official Journal. A selection panel, a member of which shall be proposed by Parliament, draws up a shortlist of qualified candidates to be submitted to Parliament and to the Council.</p> <p><b><u>European Anti-Fraud Office</u></b>  Article 17 of Regulation No 883/2013 on the investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) recognises Parliament's role in the appointment procedure of the European Anti-Fraud Office Director-General as well as its Supervisory Committee. Following amendments adopted in December 2020, the Regulation states that the Director-General is appointed by the European Commission for a seven-year term. In order to do so, following a public call for applications, the Commission draws up a list of suitably qualified candidates, based on the Supervisory Committee's favourable opinion, then Parliament and Council agree on a shortlist of three candidates based on which the Commission appoints the Director-General. The five independent</p>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>members of the Supervisory Committee are also appointed by common accord of Parliament, Council and Commission - Article 15(2) of Regulation 833/2013. Finally, the recent amendments introduced the figure of Controller of procedural guarantees, attached to the Supervisory Committee, appointed by the Commission after consultation of Parliament and the Council.</p>	
<b>Question time</b>	<p>Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of up to 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes to be decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.</p> <p>The Commissioners invited to participate by the Conference of Presidents shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners to be invited shall be limited to two per part-session. However, it shall be possible to invite a third Commissioner, depending on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.</p> <p>In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.</p> <p>Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall, as far as possible, ensure that Members that hold different political views and that come from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn.</p>	<p>The procedure for questions to the government was conceived by the Conference of Presidents and was implemented in 1974, outside the Rules of Procedure, initially at the rate of one-hour sitting per week. Since the introduction of a single parliamentary session in 1995, two one-hour sittings are devoted to them, on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, even during the budgetary debate.</p> <p>The organisation of the Government question time was changed in February 2008: the time devoted to each question, including the Minister's reply, was reduced from 5 to 4 minutes, with stopwatches installed in the Chamber so that everyone could check compliance with this rule.</p> <p>This reduction allows 15 questions to be asked per sitting instead of the previous 12, and parity between the majority and the opposition is achieved over two sittings, with 15 for the majority and 15 for the opposition. Non-attached members may ask a question every two months.</p> <p>During the sitting, the President calls questions in an order that alternates between a question from a majority group and one from an opposition group, with the first question going to an opposition or minority group.</p> <p>Unlike oral questions, questions to the Government are not tabled, notified or published in advance. In principle, their content is not communicated to the Government, only the names of the authors are transmitted to it one hour before the opening of the sitting. The spontaneous nature of the questions and the presence of all the</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>The Member shall be given one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. That Member may put a supplementary question, lasting no longer than 30 seconds and having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner shall then be given two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.</p> <p>Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided under paragraph. The President may rule on their admissibility.</p>	<p>members of the Government ensure a large audience for these sittings, which, moreover, thanks to their televised broadcast, constitute a high point in parliamentary news.</p> <p>The content of questions is free (only insults and threats are prohibited). In practice, the duality of oral questions and questions to the Government means that questions of local interest are reserved for the former and general political questions for the latter.</p> <p>The Conference of Presidents of 28 June 2012 updated the arrangements for the organisation of questions to the Government. Two one-hour sittings, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 3 p.m. during ordinary sessions, and only one on Tuesday or Wednesday during extraordinary sessions, will be devoted to the 'question time'.</p> <p>The time available per speaker is now set at 2 minutes, which allows for 30 questions in two sessions, 15 for the majority.</p> <p>The first question of each sitting is allocated to the opposition and minority groups according to a rotation calculated over ten sittings. Members who do not belong to a group may speak at the rate of one question every eight sittings, in last position.</p>
<b>Transparency of legislative procedures</b>	<p>Primary law lays down some principles, which need to be respected by the EU institutions. The institutions are to conduct their work as openly as possible (Article 15(1) TFEU), with the Parliament (Article 15(2) TFEU) and Council (Article 16(8) TEU) meeting in public, the latter specifically 'when it deliberates and votes on a draft legislative act'. In addition, institutions must ensure the publication of documents relating to legislative procedures, and allow citizens and EU residents to access the types of documents as enshrined in Article 15(3) TFEU and Article 42 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. This fundamental right is also reflected in secondary law adopted in 2001 – Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. It</p>	<p>Bills and proposals for legislation must be examined by both houses of parliament (the National Assembly and the Senate).</p> <p>The text is first examined by the parliamentary standing committee responsible for the area concerned by the future law. It appoints a rapporteur who studies the text and draws up a report. The rapporteur, like the other members of the committee, may propose changes to the text of the future law. These are called amendments. The report is then adopted by the committee. The bill or draft law, after being placed on the agenda, may be examined by the first assembly where it was tabled (National Assembly or Senate) at the end of a minimum period of six weeks after its tabling.</p> <p>The constitutional revision of July 2008 instituted a sharing of the agenda, which is set by each assembly, which conditions the examination of texts. Depending on the case, the Members or</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>stipulates that legislative documents are in principle public, with some limited exceptions.</p> <p>The Commission's proposals are published on the day the College adopts them. In the EP, working documents, draft reports and opinions as well as amendments tabled by individual Members or political groups are published in all official languages even before a vote takes place in a committee or in the plenary. Final texts adopted at committee and plenary level are made available to the public closely after the vote. In addition, 4 column-documents of political trilogues can be made available on request under Reg. 1049/2001. The result of the negotiations (the so called compromise agreement or text) is published before the final vote in plenary.</p> <p>While the EP receive the Council mandate for negotiating, the mandate does not provide information on the individual position of the Member States. The Ombudsman conducted an inquiry into the transparency of the legislative process of the Council (OI/2/2017/TE) in March 2017. The report stated that the Council failed to systematically record identities of Member States expressing positions in legislative files in preparatory level bodies. Moreover, the Council automatically assigned 'LIMITE' status to files of ongoing deliberations – meaning for internal use only – in violation of the principle of widest possible public access to documents established by the CJEU's case law. Thus, in the context of trilogues, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council review the 'LIMITE' status of documents setting out its position – the third column – to make it publicly available before trilogues take place. The Court of Justice considered, in the abovementioned case, that the Council was wrong to refuse public access to parts of a note from its Secretariat that contained</p>	<p>Senators first vote on each article and amendment, before voting on the text as a whole.</p> <p>Once adopted, the text is transmitted to the second assembly. The second assembly examines the text according to the same rules, after a period of four weeks after its transmission (fifteen days if the Government initiates the accelerated procedure).</p> <p>Amendments can also be voted on. The amended text must then be sent back to the first assembly to be examined again. During this back-and-forth phase, known as the parliamentary shuttle ('la navette'), between the National Assembly and the Senate, only the amended articles are considered.</p> <p>The bill or draft law is deemed to have been adopted when the two assemblies vote it on in the same terms.</p> <p>In the event of disagreement, the Government may convene a joint committee (CMP). This procedure is initiated after two readings of the text by each assembly unless the Government has initiated the accelerated procedure. In the latter case, the committee meets after a single reading.</p> <p>The CMP is composed of seven Members and seven Senators who must propose a joint text, which is then voted on by each assembly. In the event of failure, a new reading of the text takes place in both assemblies, and the Government may give the final word to the National Assembly.</p> <p>At this stage, any decision taken is final, whether the text is adopted or rejected.</p> <p><b>Publication</b></p> <p>The laws come into force, throughout the territory, on the day they fix or, failing that, the day after their publication in the 'Journal Officiel de la République française' (JORF).</p> <p>However, the date of entry into force of the provisions of a law requiring implementing measures coincides with the date of entry</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>amendments tabled by a number of Member State governments. The Court clarified that the EU's rules on access to documents "aim to ensure public access to the entire content of Council documents, including, in this case, the identity of those who put forward proposals". The Ombudsman welcomed the Council's confirmation that, as a consequence of the Court's ruling, legislative documents containing Member States' positions are now disclosed upon request, "save in exceptional and duly justified cases". The Ombudsman suggested that the Council update its rules of procedure to reflect this practice. Of course this commitment means little, if Member States' positions are not recorded appropriately in the first place. The Ombudsman therefore made the following recommendation to the Council: The Council should systematically record the identity of Member State governments when they express positions in preparatory bodies.</p>	<p>into force of those measures. Finally, in the event of an emergency, laws may enter into force as soon as they are published. Since 1 January 2016, the Official Journal has been exclusively digital and can be accessed from <a href="http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr">www.legifrance.gouv.fr</a>. However, before publication in the Official Journal, the law has to be promulgated. Once it has been passed by Parliament or the National Assembly alone, the law is passed on to the government. The President of the Republic then has fifteen days to promulgate it, this period being suspended if the matter is referred to the Constitutional Council. The President may take advantage of this period to ask Parliament to deliberate again on the adopted law. This power was only used in 1983, 1985 and in February 2003, for the reform of the voting system for regional and European elections. Promulgation is the act by which a law finally adopted by Parliament, or approved by the people through a referendum, becomes enforceable. It takes the form of a decree by the President of the Republic, countersigned by the Prime Minister and the Ministers who will be responsible for implementing the law. The President cannot refuse promulgation. The form of promulgation depends on the way in which the law was adopted, specifying for example whether the Assembly had the last word, or whether the Constitutional Council was seized. Once enacted and published, the law may require implementing measures (decrees).</p>
<b>Resolving conflicts of competences between committees</b>	<p>(RoP 211) If a standing committee declares itself not to be competent to consider an item, or if a conflict arises over the competence of two or more standing committees, the question of competence shall be submitted to the Conference of Committee Chairs within four weeks of the announcement in Parliament of the referral to committee.</p>	<p>If there is a conflict of competences between two standing committees, the Assembly decides which committee will be competent. This is very rare and the last example dates back to 1979. The virtual absence of conflicts of competence can be explained in part by the flexibility of the procedure for referral for opinion, which gives each standing committee the freedom to give an opinion on all or part of a text referred to another standing committee.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>The Conference of Presidents shall take a decision within six weeks after the submission of the question on the basis of a recommendation from the Conference of Committee Chairs, or, if no such recommendation is forthcoming, from the latter's Chair. If the Conference of Presidents fails to take a decision within that period, the recommendation shall be deemed to have been approved.</p> <p>The committee Chairs may enter into agreements with other committee Chairs concerning the allocation of an item to a particular committee, subject, where necessary, to the authorisation of an associated committee procedure under Rule 57.</p> <p>Where a question of competence is referred to the Conference of Presidents pursuant to Rule 211, and the Conference of Presidents, on the basis of Annex VI, considers that the matter falls almost equally within the competence of two or more committees, or that different parts of the matter fall within the competence of two or more committees, Rule 56 shall apply with the following additional provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the timetable shall be jointly agreed by the committees concerned;</li> <li>-the rapporteurs concerned shall keep each other informed and shall endeavour to agree on the texts they propose to their committees and on their position regarding amendments;</li> <li>-the Chairs and rapporteurs concerned are bound by the principle of good and sincere cooperation; they shall jointly identify areas of the text falling within their exclusive or shared competence and agree on the precise arrangements for their cooperation;</li> </ul>	<p>Thus, on the Finance Bill referred to the Finance Committee, the seven other standing committees give their opinion each year. However, outside the Finance Act, the 'referral for opinion' procedure is rare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 'frustrating' nature of the referral for opinion, which represents, for the committee and its rapporteur, a relatively large amount of work for a result that is often rather slim;</li> <li>• the possibility given to Members who are not members of a committee to attend the work of another committee (previously only the rapporteur for an opinion could attend in an advisory capacity).</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>-the committee responsible shall accept without a vote amendments from an associated committee where they concern matters which fall within the exclusive competence of that associated committee;. if the committee responsible fails to respect the exclusive competence of the associated committee, that associated committee may table amendments directly in plenary; if amendments on matters which fall within the shared competence of the committee responsible and an associated committee are not adopted by the committee responsible, the associated committee may table those amendments directly in plenary;</p> <p>-in the event of a conciliation procedure in respect of the proposal, Parliament's delegation shall include the rapporteur of any associated committee.</p>	
<p><b>Changes to committee competences and structures in response to the current crisis</b></p>	<p>The EP did not change the structure and the competences of its committees, due to the pandemic. In principle, it is allowed for the EP to change its committee structure at any given time; however, the established practice is that it modifies the structure and/or the competences of its committees shortly before the end of each legislative period, in order to keep up with the changing circumstances and increase its effectiveness in the subsequent legislative term.</p> <p>The last adaptation to the composition of the committees took place on 8 July 2021. Following changes in its composition, Parliament increased the number of seats in its special and inquiry committees, and adopted a new distribution among political groups. Following several changes in the political groups' composition and to ensure that all MEPs can participate in the</p>	<p>The 1958 Constitution attempted to strictly regulate the standing committees in order to limit their influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hence the setting of the number of standing committees by the Constitution itself; set at six, this was significantly lower than that observed in the other parliaments of the European Union; a break was thus marked with the practice of the Fourth Republic, where there were eighteen committees;</li> <li>• hence also their desire to make recourse to a special committee the rule and referral to a standing committee the exception, as provided for in Article 43 of the Constitution in its initial wording.</li> </ul> <p>However, parliamentary practice has not followed suit because special committees have proved to be difficult to handle (for the Government, loss of the reference points existing in a standing</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>work of committees and delegations, ten committee seats are allocated to non-attached Members: four additional seats are created, and six existing ones will be reallocated. The plenary adapted the numerical strength of the four committees based on the decision of the Conference of Presidents.</p> <p>A new seat will be created in each of the Special Committees on Beating Cancer (BECA), on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (INGE), and on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA). They will now be composed of 34 members each. The fourth new seat will be created in the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport within and outside the EU (ANIT), which will now be composed of 31 members.</p> <p>The new nominal composition of Parliament's committees will be decided by the political groups and non-attached members, and will be communicated to the plenary in a subsequent session.</p> <p>Parliament's Rules of Procedure provide that the composition of the committees "shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament". When it comes to the criteria for setting up a parliamentary committee or changing its competences, there are no formal guidelines available. Political Groups are free to define such criteria as they consider fit for purpose. Possible criteria in this context would be the 'workload of parliamentary committees', 'match of policy areas between the European Commission's work programme and the competences of parliamentary committees', 'reduction of conflicts of competences', and of course, the 'interest of Members'.</p>	<p>committee, parallel operation of the standing committees, the latter putting the brakes on the constitution of a body that divests them of some of their prerogatives, possible slowing down of the legislative procedure linked to the interest of a special committee in prolonging the examination of a text, insofar as it ceases to exist with the adoption of that text).</p> <p>The constitutional revision of 23 July 2008 increased the maximum number of standing committees to eight and, in order to establish the practice, made the referral of a text to a standing committee the rule and the setting up of a special committee the exception.</p> <p>Rule 36 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, which lays down the names and powers of the standing committees, has been amended accordingly, the increase from six to eight committees being achieved by splitting each of the two committees which each had a quarter of the members of the Assembly: the Committee on Cultural, Family and Social Affairs and the Committee on Economic Affairs, the Environment and Local Government. The result is a more balanced distribution of Members among the eight committees, with one eighth of the Assembly's membership (73) per committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee on Cultural Affairs and Education;</li> <li>• Committee on Economic Affairs;</li> <li>• Committee on Foreign Affairs;</li> <li>• Committee on Social Affairs;</li> <li>• Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces;</li> <li>• Committee on Sustainable Development and Regional Planning;</li> <li>• Committee on Finance, the General Economy and Budgetary Control;</li> <li>• Committee on Constitutional Law, Legislation and the General Administration of the Republic.</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>The National Assembly is free to define the scope of the standing legislative committees, but this scope is necessarily broad in order to avoid excessive specialisation.</p> <p>As before, each Member may be a member of only one standing committee.</p> <p>At the beginning of the legislature, and then each year at the beginning of the ordinary session, the Assembly appoints the members of the standing committees on the basis of proportional representation of the political groups and on the proposal of the chairpersons of these groups. Each committee shall appoint a bureau consisting of a chairperson, four vice-chairmen and four secretaries to head it. The Finance Committee shall also appoint a general rapporteur and may only elect as its chairperson a Member belonging to an opposition group. The composition of the bureau of each committee endeavours to reproduce the political configuration of the Assembly and to ensure the representation of all its components.</p>

### 3. Enhancing Parliamentary Diplomacy

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<b>Relations with the executive</b>	<p>Article 36 of the TEU requires the High Representative to consult Parliament regularly on the principal aspects of and choices made under the CFSP and to inform Parliament of the policy's evolution. Parliament holds twice-yearly debates on CFSP progress reports and puts questions and recommendations to the Council and the High Representative.</p>	<p>In accordance with Article 24 of the Constitution, the Parliament monitors the action of the Government and evaluates public policies. Traditionally, the French National Assembly has little powers in the field of controlling the external action of France. The Parliament can control French diplomacy through its budgetary powers and through information missions.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>Parliament's right to be informed and consulted about the CFSP/CSDP was further strengthened by the High Representative's declaration of political accountability in 2010. The declaration provided, inter alia, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing the status of the 'Joint Consultation Meetings' (JCMs), which allow a designated group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to meet counterparts from the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EEAS and the Commission to discuss planned and ongoing civilian CSDP missions;</li> <li>• Affirming the right of Parliament's 'special committee' to have access to confidential information relating to the CFSP and the CSDP. This right is based on an inter-institutional agreement of 2002;</li> <li>• Holding exchanges of views with heads of mission, heads of delegation and other senior EU officials during committee meetings and hearings of committees of Parliament;</li> <li>• Mandating the High Representative to appear before Parliament at least twice a year to report on the current state of affairs regarding the CFSP/CSDP and to answer questions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to this political dialogue, Parliament exercises its authority through the budgetary procedure. As one arm of the EU's budgetary authority, Parliament must approve the annual CFSP budget. Parliament also helps to shape the relevant external financial instruments through a process of trilateral negotiations with the Council and the Commission.</p>	<p>The Foreign Affairs Committee is obviously the central actor of the Assembly's international activity. Its main activities are to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- examining bills authorizing the ratification of international treaties and agreements</li> <li>- hearing French and foreign personalities. During the XIVth legislature, the committee held 44 hearings of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2 hearings of foreign Heads of State, 3 hearings of foreign Prime Ministers, 11 hearings of foreign Ministers of Foreign Affairs and 10 hearings of representatives of European institutions;</li> <li>- creating information missions on issues relating to international relations or France's foreign policy. During the XIVth legislature, 28 information reports were published by the Foreign Affairs Committee, covering a very broad thematic and geographical scope;</li> <li>- to give its opinion on the friendship groups and study groups with an international vocation that are being considered for creation.</li> </ul> <p>But the Foreign Affairs Committee does not have a monopoly on international issues. The Finance Committee examines the appropriations allocated to the missions "External action of the State", "Official development assistance" and "Loans to foreign States", the Defence Committee is responsible for strategic issues, the Economic Affairs Committee for problems related to foreign trade, and it was the Law Committee that examined, in 2006, the last law on France's migration policy.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>Parliament regularly scrutinises the operations of the EEAS and provides it with suggestions on structural issues, ranging from its geographical and gender balance to its interaction with other EU institutions and the diplomatic services of the Member States. Parliament also holds regular discussions with the High Representative and the EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) appointed for certain regions or issues. Parliamentary committees, which helped to set up the EEAS, also exchange views with the EEAS's newly appointed heads of delegation.</p> <p>Parliament also has a role to play in monitoring the negotiation and implementation of international agreements. Parliament's consent is required before the Council can conclude such agreements.</p>	<p>In addition, the Government can engage its responsibility over a matter of foreign policy (as it did in 1991 about intervention in Iraq). It needs to get Parliament's approval of any military intervention outside France after 4 months.</p> <p>The French Parliament plays no role in the appointment of French ambassadors abroad.</p> <p>Finally, the European Affairs Committee, in addition to its responsibilities for examining EU acts, also examines questions relating to the Union's external policy and those concerning its enlargement.</p>
<b>Interparliamentary delegations</b>	<p>The European Parliament's interparliamentary delegations are official groups of Members who build ties to countries, regions or organisations outside the European Union (EU). The European Parliament currently has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one term to the next. The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner.</p> <p>There are two main types of delegations: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations. Standing delegations belong in three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations.</p>	<p><b>Role and means of the friendship groups (groupes d'amitié)</b></p> <p>The primary role of a friendship group, as its name indicates, is to weave a network of personal links between French parliamentarians, their foreign counterparts and the actors of the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country concerned. In 2021, the website of the Assemblée Nationale counts 154 groupes d'amitié.</p> <p>By conducting these activities, the friendship groups give a parliamentary dimension to traditional diplomatic relations. The missions or receptions they organize, as well as their hearings, can thus contribute to reactivating or enriching relations with the country concerned. The practice of successive Presidents of the Republic inviting one or more presidents of friendship groups during their trips to the country or countries concerned illustrates the importance of this form of inter-parliamentary exchange in bilateral relations.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p><b>Parliamentary assemblies</b> are regular, formal meetings of elected representatives from several parliaments. Currently, 5 of Parliament's 44 delegations participate in parliamentary assemblies.</p> <p><b>Interparliamentary committees</b> are mostly bilateral. European Parliament delegations meet their counterparts from a country/countries in formal meetings, held on a regular basis. Interparliamentary committees differ according to the type of bilateral agreement establishing them, between the EU and the respective country. These include Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees.</p> <p>Other <b>interparliamentary delegations</b> form the largest group of delegations (25 out of the total number of 44 delegations), which work with relations with individual countries or a group of countries. The 'interparliamentary meetings' – in which the delegations meet with their counterparts – are not held on a regular basis, and do not have their own rules, although they follow the general provisions for delegations.</p> <p>According to Rule 223(5) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Conference of Presidents adopts the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs.</p>	<p>Finally, friendship groups play an increasing role in the National Assembly's international relations policy. In this respect, they may be associated with the program for receiving foreign dignitaries at the Assembly, or with the organization of international symposiums. Friendship groups are also increasingly called upon to serve as a support point for interparliamentary cooperation initiatives undertaken by the National Assembly for the benefit of foreign parliaments.</p> <p>In practice, only their name distinguishes international study groups from friendship groups, the former being subject to the same rules and benefiting from the same resources as the latter. Friendship groups and study groups with an international vocation constitute the approved groups, their creation being subject to the approval of the Bureau of the National Assembly.</p> <p>Each approved group shall be assisted by an administrative secretary, appointed from among the civil servants of the National Assembly who have volunteered to perform these functions in addition to their usual administrative duties.</p> <p>Approved groups also benefit from financial resources. Each year, an appropriation is made available to finance, within the limits established by the rules set out below, missions and receptions previously authorized by the Board on the proposal of its delegation in charge of international activities, as well as receptions in honor of the country's ambassadors in France or of France in the country managed by the approved group or of foreign personalities (members of the country's parliament or government).</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>Since 1981, three criteria have been defined for the approval of friendship groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- existence of a parliament ;</li> <li>- the existence of diplomatic relations with France</li> </ul> <p>- The absence of the last of these criteria has not prevented the creation of friendship groups with certain countries (such as Switzerland, which only became a member of the UN in 2002) and it is traditional to approve a France-Québec group.</p> <p>The International Study Groups (ISG) were created in 1981 to provide a framework adapted to the situation of countries that do not meet at least one of the three conditions in principle required to create a friendship group. The IEAG formula is reserved for internationally recognized sovereign countries, with the exception of the IEAG on Taiwan and the one on Palestine.</p> <p><b>- Accreditation Procedures</b></p> <p>The rules set by the Bureau on this matter are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no friendship group may be formed prior to the Bureau decision to approve it;</li> <li>- at its first meeting (see below), the Bureau delegation in charge of international activities examines the list of friendship groups approved during the previous legislature and proposes their renewal, with or without modifications, with the Bureau ruling on this proposal.</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>The delegation then examines the requests for approval submitted during the legislature by the Members and, if it deems it appropriate, refers them to the Foreign Affairs Committee for an opinion; in the case of a new study group with an international vocation, the opinion of the Foreign Affairs Committee may be sought; this is always followed by the Bureau.</p> <p><b>Procedure for reconstituting friendship groups at the beginning of a new legislature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At its first meeting of the legislature, the Bureau's delegation responsible for international activities confirms the rules applicable to the approved groups, draws up their list (based on the list of groups approved during the previous legislature) and makes the numerical distribution of chairmanships among the political groups by proportional representation on the basis of the largest remainder, distinguishing between four major geographical areas (Europe, Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania);</li> <li>- at a meeting convened by the delegation chairman, the representatives of the political groups shall distribute the chairmanships by country;</li> <li>- in response to a request made by the delegation chairman, the political groups communicate the names of the holders of the presidencies that have been allocated to them, it being specified that a deputy may hold only one friendship group presidency;</li> <li>- Members are invited to indicate the approved groups to which they wish to belong;</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>- the presidents of approved groups receive the list of the members of their group. It is then up to them to convene, with the help of the administrative secretary assigned to them, the constitution meeting.</p> <p>The bureau of a friendship group shall include, in addition to the group chairman, vice-chairmen and parliamentary secretaries.</p> <p>The number of vice-chairmen is determined both by the total membership of the friendship group and by the membership of the Assembly's political groups, with those groups whose membership exceeds a certain threshold being entitled to additional vice-chairmen.</p> <p>The number of parliamentary secretaries, on the other hand, is between 6 and 10, depending only on the size of the friendship group.</p> <p>A Member of Parliament can only hold one chairmanship.</p> <p>The following is a summary of the main categories of activities of approved groups and the rules applicable to them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Missions and receptions</li> <li>- Meetings with French or foreign personalities</li> <li>- Taking part in interparliamentary cooperation</li> <li>- Regional cooperation</li> </ul>
<b>Diplomacy on human rights</b>	The EP attaches great importance to the protection of human rights both inside and outside the Union and has used its power of promoting respect for fundamental rights.	Members of the National Assembly are elected to represent the entire nation, and participate in the exercise of national sovereignty. The Assembly acts as a guardian of democracy and

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>In Europe and around the world, Parliament acts as a guardian of liberties and democracy, and strives to uphold human rights and freedoms. It is particularly sensitive to the issue of tolerance, and fights determinedly against all forms of discrimination, whether based on sex, race, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, political opinion, handicap, age or sexual orientation. It takes a stand against racism and xenophobia and constantly highlights the need for compliance with European gender equality standards.</p> <p>MEPs also use their full power to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected, and the rights of children protected. While the EP supports efforts to coordinate police and judicial action, which is the only effective way to counter these cross-border threats, it refuses to allow citizens' rights to bear the brunt of a policy based entirely on security considerations. Parliament also ensures that human rights are protected in the EU's external economic and trade agreements.</p> <p>The EP holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It has adopted a host of resolutions condemning governments that breach human rights.</p> <p>The EP's Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee on Human Rights defend human rights outside the European Union and fight against the death penalty with the support of other key players in the Parliament.</p> <p><b>Sakharov Prize:</b> It is the highest tribute paid by the European Union to human rights work. It gives recognition to individuals,</p>	<p>human rights. It plays an active part in the election observation mechanisms, doing so at the request of the authorities of the countries concerned. As an emblematic institution of democracy, the National Assembly has a natural role to play in the observation process given that its members are aware of the mechanisms of the electoral process. It is more and more frequently asked to take part in electoral observation missions. Since the beginning of the 1990s, its members have participated in around 200 such missions.</p> <p>A significant role in the protection of human rights and democracy is played by the parliamentary delegations. For instance, the Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities Between Men and Women has the task of informing the Assembly on government policy in respect of its consequences for women's rights and equal opportunities (Act No 99-585 of 12 July 1999).</p> <p>The delegation can make an auto-referral on any issue within the field of its remit and provide expert opinion, as well as, recommendations if needed. Its work is brought together in information reports, which are made public.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to protecting freedom of thought. Through the prize and its associated network the EU assists laureates, who are supported and empowered in their efforts to defend their causes.</p> <p>The prize has so far been awarded to dissidents, political leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil-society activists, writers, mothers, wives, minority leaders, an anti-terrorist group, peace activists, an anti-torture activist, a cartoonist, long-serving prisoners of conscience, a film-maker, the UN as a body and even a child campaigning for the right to education. It promotes in particular freedom of expression, the rights of minorities, respect for international law, the development of democracy and the implementation of the rule of law. Several laureates, including Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.</p> <p>The European Parliament awards the Sakharov Prize, with its EUR 50 000 endowment, at a formal plenary sitting in Strasbourg towards the end of each year. Each of the Parliament's political groups may nominate candidates, as may individual MEPs (the support of at least 40 MEPs is required for each candidate). The nominees are presented at a joint meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Development Committee and the Human Rights Subcommittee, and the members of the full committees vote on a shortlist of three candidates. The final winner of the Sakharov Prize are chosen by the Conference of Presidents.</p>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<p><b>Democracy support</b></p>	<p>As the only directly elected EU institution, the European Parliament is particularly committed to supporting sustainable democracies throughout the world. This commitment is regularly highlighted in Parliament's resolutions. Democracy support activities focus on a small number of priority countries and are closely associated with the Parliament's role in election monitoring in these priority countries and other non-EU countries. Parliament almost always organises democracy support activities around the electoral cycle, so as to establish a better link between election observation and complementary activities such as mediation, election follow-up, parliamentary support activities and human rights action.</p> <p>In 2012, the European Parliament decided to create the Directorate for Democracy Support. In setting up this directorate as part of the Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, four units were created, these are: the Democracy and Election Actions Unit, the European Parliament Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit, the Human Rights Action Unit and the Pre-Accession Unit.</p> <p>In 2014, Parliament set up a Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) that provides political guidance for all activities supporting democracy (Decision of Conference of Presidents of 13 September 2012). It consists of 15 MEPs and is co-chaired by the chairs of Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Development. Parliament's vice-presidents responsible for human rights and democracy and the Sakharov Network and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights are ex officio permanent members.</p>	<p>At the end of the 1980s, a significant number of countries were striving to establish democratic institutions. The National Assembly received requests from some of these countries to organise missions to observe their electoral operations. The criteria used to assess the appropriateness of such missions are as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the requirement of a formal request;</li> <li>• the exceptional nature of the elections, in particular because of the "political importance of the country";</li> <li>• the need for an opinion from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;</li> <li>• the guarantee of being able to follow the elections on the spot without constraints.</li> </ul> <p>In practice, the National Assembly is requested either directly, in the form of correspondence addressed to its President by the governmental or parliamentary authorities in place in the country concerned, by the President of the electoral commission, by the political parties in power or opposition parties taking part in the elections, or through the intermediary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which relays an official request transmitted to the French Embassy on the spot or emanating from international organisations in charge of co-ordinating the electoral process: the United Nations (UN), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union.</p> <p>The possibility of materially following the elections or, where appropriate, the electoral campaign alone, is considered essential when the Delegation prefers to give priority to this period, considering that the international authority responsible for organising the electoral process is able to guarantee the smooth running of the voting operations. Collaboration with the French embassy on the spot is necessary, the parliamentary delegation</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>The comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA) places more emphasis on pre-election dialogue and the follow-up to election observation. This includes following up on recommendations of the Election Observation Mission. In order to boost the institutional capacity of parliaments in third countries, Parliament organises training programmes and study visits for members and officials of third-country parliaments. Parliament has also built up a mentoring system involving MEPs and newly elected parliamentarians from priority countries. Providing support for mediation and dialogue were added as new types of interventions, with a view to preventing election-related conflicts and violence.</p> <p>Activities – although decided and supervised by the DEG – must be approved by the Conference of Presidents (CoP). The CoP adopted implementing provisions on democracy support and election observation activities in February 2019. According to this document, the DEG co-chairs may, for example, submit requests for authorisation for outgoing missions and for high-level conferences in the European Parliament's premises to the CoP at least four weeks prior to the activity concerned. In addition, the DEG co-chairs may submit requests, including urgent ones, to the CoP to mandate a Member or Members to act as an envoy or mediator or to authorise the establishment of a Jean Monnet Dialogue with a third country, under the guidance of a lead Member or Members</p>	<p>having to make contacts with the political forces present. The quality of the certificate of good democracy given by the Members who agree to carry out such a mission depends on 'the possibility for them to travel without constraint to the country visited and to make public, as soon as possible, their comments on the progress of the observation mission', as the Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote in the autumn of 1996 in reply to a letter from the Chairman of the Delegation.</p> <p>The presence of foreign parliamentary observers, alongside non-parliamentary observers such as diplomats, lawyers, members of international organisations or NGOs, is also an element of appreciation.</p> <p>In deciding whether to send an observation mission, it is necessary to be satisfied that a number of conditions necessary for the conduct of free and fair elections are potentially present, taking into account the state of political, economic and social development of the country concerned.</p> <p>These conditions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the existence of universal suffrage;</li> <li>• the presence of several political parties and the recognition of the rights of political opponents</li> <li>• the recognition of freedom of the press and free access to the media.</li> </ul> <p>The principle of "one man, one vote" must be respected and the population of the country called upon to vote without ethnic or territorial exclusion, which poses the problem of states where there is a civil war and where, as a result, elections cannot be held throughout the territory.</p> <p>The existence of political parties, the recognition of a multi-party system, and the participation of these parties in the election and the freedom of movement of political opponents must be guaranteed.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		<p>The existence of an independent and pluralistic press is also indicative of a state's willingness to engage in a genuine democratic process. If it is clear that freedom of the press is not guaranteed, that information to the population is truncated by limiting the possibilities of expression of all parties, the elections, even if conducted in a calm manner, risk being contested and the observers may find themselves at odds. They run the risk of having to accept the legitimacy of the outcome, while noting the absence of a pluralistic press and the unequal access of candidates to the media.</p>
<p><b>Mediation of foreign conflicts</b></p>	<p>Members of the European Parliament engage in a wide range of mediation, conflict prevention and dialogue activities that complement the EU's overall approach.</p> <p><b>The Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy</b>  The European Parliament prides itself in having a 'culture of dialogue', a set of norms and rules that require political opponents to engage in dialogue to bring about a compromise. Efforts have been made to 'export' this culture of dialogue to non-EU parliaments, through a mediation and consensus-building process known as the 'Jean Monnet dialogue for peace and democracy'. Named after one of the founding fathers of the European Union, Jean Monnet dialogues often – although not always – take place at the historical Jean Monnet House. Located in rural France, far away from the media attention characterising either Brussels or national capitals, Monnet's house has proven to be an ideal location for constructive dialogue among opposing political factions. Four series of dialogues with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (VRU) have taken place so far.</p>	<p>The Assemblée Nationale does not seem to conduct mediation actions comparable to the Jean Monnet Dialogue of the European Parliament.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p><b>Young political leaders programme</b></p> <p>The European Parliament is committed to building strong and lasting relations with future leaders outside of the European Union. A programme targeting young political leaders was set up in 2015. The young political leaders programme (YPL) expands on existing activities organised by Parliament, such as the annual fora for young leaders from the European Neighbourhood (Maghreb, Middle East, Eastern Partnership), and the young political leaders initiative for the Sudan. The programme cooperates with young political activists, including political party representatives, civil society actors and young business leaders in the European Neighbourhood countries, priority countries agreed under the comprehensive democracy support approach (CDSA), and ad hoc countries requiring assistance in the area of parliamentary conflict prevention and democracy support. Recent YPL activities have targeted young leaders from Israel and Palestine, the Maghreb, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the western Balkans, Armenia and Azerbaijan.</p>	
<b>High-level visits by foreign dignitaries</b>	<p>The term 'official visit' refers to visits by Heads of State, high-level Religious Leaders, or any personality invited to address a formal sitting of Parliament.</p> <p>Visits by Heads of State and Government, Presidents of Parliaments, and others holding equivalent ranks which do not include an address to a formal sitting shall be considered as working visits.</p> <p>Invitations to make an official visit to Parliament are issued by the President after consultation with the Conference of Presidents.</p>	<p>The Article 14 of the Parliament rules of procedures state that the Bureau of the National Assembly decides conditions on which external personalities can address the Assembly.</p> <p>With the exception of the US President in 1919, foreign heads of states and prime ministers were usually not invited to address the French Parliament.</p> <p>With the approval of the Bureau, a new policy was approved in 1993 and since then, foreign heads of states and prime ministers are regularly invited.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>On the basis of established practice, the Heads of State of the EU Member States have an open invitation to pay an official visit to Parliament.</p> <p>An official visit generally comprises the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Welcoming ceremony including official photo in front of the flags, playing of the visitor's national anthem followed by the EU anthem, and signature of the Parliament's Distinguished Visitors' Book,</li> <li>➤ Bilateral meeting between the President of Parliament and the visiting Head of State,</li> <li>➤ Official exchange of gifts,</li> <li>➤ Address to a formal sitting of Parliament, which is usually scheduled to last 30 minutes,</li> <li>➤ Official lunch (or dinner) hosted by the President of Parliament,</li> <li>➤ Press conference (if requested).</li> </ul> <p>An official visit by a Head of State of an EU Member State may incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A reception for the MEPs and/or parliamentary staff of the Member State concerned organised by the respective Permanent Representation,</li> <li>➤ Meetings (if requested) with political group leaders or Members of Parliament.</li> </ul> <p>The red carpet is rolled out at the protocol entrance, for visits by Heads of State and High-Level visitors of equivalent rank. Official visits are managed by the protocol unit (DG PRES).</p>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
<b>Multilateral and international parliamentary fora</b>	<p><b>Euronest</b> EU works hand-in-hand with its six Eastern Partners to support European integration reforms and foster stability, security, democracy and prosperity across the continent. Established in 2011, the Euronest PA is the parliamentary forum tasked with the scrutiny over this ambitious policy, while promoting the active participation of civil society actors. It brings together the 60 Members of the European Parliament who sit in the Delegation to the Euronest PA, and 50 Members from the national parliaments of our Eastern Partners, i.e. 10 delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively. For the time being, although Belarus is an active Eastern Partner, its National Assembly has not yet been invited to send its 10 delegates to the Euronest PA, because it does not fulfil the necessary, democratic requirements to do so. Nevertheless, the absence of Belarusian parliamentarians expected to be only be provisory.</p> <p>The Euronest PA includes the plenary, chaired by two Co-Presidents, the Bureau, four standing committees (on political affairs, economic integration, energy security and social affairs) and three working groups (a group on Belarus, ad hoc group on Association Agreements, and a group on Rules of Procedure). It meets once a year for a plenary session, alternating between the European Parliament's premises and the Eastern Partnership countries.</p> <p><b>ACP</b></p>	<p>The National Assembly is active in this field through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the implementation of inter-parliamentary cooperation which allows the National Assembly to provide technical assistance to parliaments that request its support;</li> <li>- the participation of the National Assembly in the work of international parliamentary assemblies of which it is a member: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a body created in 1889 and now comprising the parliaments of 170 countries and 11 associate members; Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO-PA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE-PA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie (APF), Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), or observer: Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC);</li> </ul> <p>The National Assembly is also part of several bilateral parliamentary commissions with the Russian Duma, the Chinese Parliament, the Algerian Parliament, the Moroccan Parliament, the Quebec Parliament and the Canadian Parliament.</p> <p>In 2019, a common French-German assembly has been approved, composed of 50 members of the National Assembly and 50 members of the Bundestag. It will follow the implementation of the Aachen treaty and the French-German ministerial council.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>The European Parliament's Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (DACP) is the EP part of the joint undertaking set up by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.</p> <p>The Agreement was signed in 2000 in Cotonou (Benin) by the EU Member States and 78 member countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Its aim is to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic political environment.</p> <p>The Agreement sets up three joint institutions: the Council of Ministers, the Committee of Ambassadors and the Joint Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentary institution, the "ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly" (ACP-EU JPA), is composed of equal numbers of EU and ACP representatives, and comprised of both the 78-member EP DACP Delegation and 78 members of parliament of the ACP countries.</p> <p>The Delegation participates together with ACP members in the activities of the Assembly (sessions, Bureau and committee meetings, regional meetings, fact-finding missions and election observation missions).</p> <p>At the EP level, the Delegation also meets regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg to prepare the joint activities and monitor the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement, the situation in the ACP countries and prospects for the future of the partnership.</p> <p><b><u>EuroLat</u></b></p>	

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>The EuroLat Assembly adopts and submits resolutions and recommendations. These are addressed to several organisations, institutions and ministerial groups that are responsible for developing the 'EU-Latin American and Caribbean Bi-regional Strategic Partnership'. This Partnership was established at the first summit between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1999. Today, EuroLat debates, monitors and reviews all questions relating to the partnership.</p> <p>The Assembly also works generally to strengthen links between the two regions and address issues of bi-regional and international concern. EuroLat debates have focused on topics such as democracy and human rights, migration, fighting poverty, promoting social cohesion, innovation and technology and the environment and climate change. Half the members - 75 - come from Latin American regional parliaments and the other half - again, 75 members - come from the European Parliament. EuroLat has four Standing Committees. The work of these committees serves as the basis for most of the Assembly's decisions. The Committees and Executive Bureau meet at least twice a year, with one of these two sessions running in parallel with EuroLat's full annual Plenary Session.</p> <p><b><u>EuroMed</u></b> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean institution provides a forum for the elected representatives of the EU and its southern neighbours around the Mediterranean to cooperate.</p> <p>The Assembly describes three principal aims for its work: Fostering dialogue amongst elected representatives from both</p>	

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>shores of the Mediterranean; Enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the citizens. Adding democratic legitimacy and political support to regional cooperation.</p> <p>As a north- south forum, the Assembly brings together 44 parliaments – the 43 parliaments of the countries in the Union for the Mediterranean, and the European Parliament. The Assembly consists of 280 members. The Assembly is directed by a "bureau", made up of four members, who coordinate the work of the Assembly and draft its budget. The bureau remains in place for four years before new members are appointed. The Assembly has five standing committees.</p>	

#### 4. Relations with citizens / Communicating effectively

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
<b>Public perceptions of parliaments</b>	<p>The European Parliament communicates to varied audiences across 28 different countries. Understanding these audiences' point of view is crucial for Parliament's communication activities to be efficient and effective. This means that DG Communication must first establish a clear idea of who these audiences are, what is important to them and via which channels to reach them. DG Communication bases its work on a robust audience insight and a data driven approach to define and evaluate its output. This is</p>	<p>The Assemblée Nationale offers no access to public opinion polls it can conduct nor publishes any results.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>ensured by a rigorous analysis of evidence concerning audiences and channels, including an in-depth research of relevant target groups to understand their behaviour. A core part of this analysis is the continuous and in-depth monitoring of public opinion across the European Union. This key strategic activity not only aids the European Parliament's communication strategy but also supports the political and legislative work of Parliament's elected Members.</p> <p>Public opinion is assessed via the EU institutions' joint Eurobarometer survey tool. The European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies use this instrument to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. Eurobarometer provides quality and relevant data for experts in public opinion, researchers, media and the public. Initiated in 1974, the Eurobarometer tool has since then evolved and expanded significantly with different survey tools. The combination of the wide range of topics covered consistently over a long time, the regularity of publications and geographical coverage makes the Eurobarometer a uniquely rich source of knowledge and information in the European Union.</p> <p>The European Parliament started in 2007 to commission its own Eurobarometer surveys within the joint inter-institutional framework. DG Communication's Public Opinion Monitoring Unit (POMU), is responsible for designing, commissioning and</p>	

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>analysing the surveys. Conducted regularly and at least twice per year since 2007, they focus on the one hand on citizens' perceptions and expectations towards EU action, and the main challenges the Union is facing. An annual 'Parlemeter' survey measures the European Parliament's public image and role as well as public opinion with regard to EU membership and its benefits. A dedicated set of EP Eurobarometer surveys gauges Europeans' interest in the European elections every five years. Pre- and post-electoral surveys measure citizens' interest in these elections and the key issues at stakes as well as voting behaviour and motivation.</p> <p>Published surveys offer unrestricted access to the full data set, including all national, regional and socio-demographic results, allowing for a detailed analysis. POMU as responsible unit will produce an in-depth analytical report as well as a range of supporting products such as presentation, national factsheets or infographics. The data is also used for briefing members on available audience insight relevant to topics on the plenary agenda, distributed ahead of each session to all MEPs. Individual trainings and data-related briefings can be requested by Members.</p> <p>POMU applies the data at its disposal also for contributing to DG Communication's data-driven communication approach by designing relevant audience segmentation and targeting</p>	

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>strategies and by assisting DG COMM services to implement this segmentation analysis in their communication activities.</p> <p>The second unique task of POMU is the regular collection and analysis of voting intention trends in all EU Member States. In cooperation with Parliament's Liaison Offices in the Member States, POMU compiles publicly available voting intention polls conducted by reliable institutes in each EU MS. A proprietary database allows POMU to monitor developments in Member States and to produce regular briefings for Parliament's leading bodies (Bureau, CoP, SGs). In the run-up to the European elections, POMU enlarges its activities with a view to election night. A high-level assembly of election results from all Member States allow POMU to produce precise seat projections and to ensure positioning the European Parliament as the sole focal point in the European Union to receive aggregated and detailed election results.</p>	
<b>New patterns in relations with the media in response to the current crisis</b>	<p><b><u>Impact of the Covid</u></b></p> <p>Parliament is the only EU institution which has remained open for journalists throughout the pandemic. Commission and Council have been operating in a fully remote mode since March 2020, whilst Parliament adopted a hybrid approach - facilitating remote participation to parliamentary meetings and press conferences, but without excluding the possibility for journalists to come in</p>	<p>The Press Division is responsible for receiving journalists, informing them of the activities of the National Assembly and answering their questions about parliamentary proceedings.</p> <p>Each week, it publishes an "Agenda of the Assembly", fact sheets on the texts under discussion and factual press releases announcing, in particular, the opening to the press of committee, office or delegation meetings, the holding of press conferences or various events taking place on the Assembly grounds.</p>

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>person to the pressroom, to interview MEPs or simply to work from the EP's press centre.</p> <p>Whilst the physical presence of the media in Parliament's premises has naturally fallen significantly over the past 12 months, online participation in media events (especially online briefings) has increased enormously. In 2020 the Media services organised 589 media events, compared to 436 in 2015 (first year of last legislative term). Online briefings were barely used at all pre-Covid, largely due to the unavailability or unfamiliarity of appropriate technology to operate such platforms.</p> <p>Online meetings and briefings also opened up access to journalists in the Member States to follow EP activities directly and thus blurred the distinction between national media and Brussels correspondents. More exchanges with journalists from other countries mean 'Europeanisation' of the debate.</p> <p>In addition, it is easier to invite MEPs as well as high-level external speakers to online events, as they can simply connect from wherever they are.</p> <p>Therefore, online and hybrid media events will remain a key element of the media strategy in the future. The technology and format can be further refined to enhance the experience and quality.</p>	<p>To facilitate the work of journalists, it provides them with images of parliamentary proceedings.</p> <p>In March 2020, the Bureau of the National Assembly decided that journalists would be able to follow the work of plenary and committees only online, with the exception of the LCP-AN TV channel and the permanent correspondent of Agence France Presse. Only when the National Assembly was seating in plenary, a pool of one TV, one Radio, one written press and one photograph would be allowed to enter the Parliament. In June, a partial reopening was announced.</p> <p>Between October 2020 and July 2021, Committee meetings were not open to journalists. Since July 2021, the work of committees is once again open to journalists depending on seating options, limited because of COVID 19.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p><b><u>Enhanced role for media relations in the Member States</u></b></p> <p>Reinforced press work in the Member States is necessary to reach out to media in the national newsrooms. Not all media have correspondents in Brussels - and in Brussels there is a growing competition for news (Council, EC, NATO...). In particular, in the Member States, the EP has been focusing on:</p> <p><b>National media:</b> TV and radio programs; specialised media/magazines/programs (women, consumers...) and specialised journalists in mainstream media (environment, digital specialist in press agencies and others).</p> <p><b>Native digital media:</b> online only platforms, including media that exist only on social media and influencers active in political/societal debates</p> <p><b>Regional media,</b> when and where relevant.</p> <p><b>Targeted information:</b> DG COMM works with the broad catalogue of EP agenda, MEPs and events to cater a specific offer to each kind of media. Not everything for everybody all the time, but every day some news for some journalists who might be interested. DG COMM offers content, but also services (multimedia centre, facilities in BRU and STR, EPRS research...) and help journalists to build their story: pitching it, finding the right MEP, choosing data and relevant local angles. It invites journalists to BRU and STR to make them experience the richness of the</p>	

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>institution from the media point of view. The EP reaches out to them via media tours, trainings and similar activities on the ground. It provides editorial content, raw or edited, but always un-biased, politically balanced, reliable and accessible. It promotes transparency and openness as a distinctive feature of the EP press service.</p>	
<p><b>Fighting disinformation and hate speech</b></p>	<p>The political work of the European Parliament addresses disinformation and hate speech through non-legislative and legislative measures such as the current draft Digital Services Act. The European Parliament services take very seriously any attempt to target the institution or its members with disinformation or any actions to misrepresent their defined positions. While services undertake specific actions to counter disinformation, the most effective defence against false narratives and foreign influence operations is to ensure communication of <b>proactive factual narratives</b> related to the work and decisions of Members. To this end, Parliament's services communicate in all official working languages and through a variety of media and platforms to ensure maximum reach.</p> <p>The Secretariat of the Parliament established an <b>inter-DG task force against disinformation</b> to streamline cooperation between different DGs and services. This ensures more joined up action in response to disinformation threats.</p>	<p>The <b>law against the manipulation of information</b>, which aims to better protect democracy against various forms of intentional dissemination of fake news, passed its second reading in the National Assembly on 20 November 2018. The text tackles the massive and extremely rapid spread of fake news via digital tools, including social networks and foreign state-influenced media as propagation pipes.</p> <p>Particular attention is paid to campaign periods, just before and during elections, in order to focus the tools on the real danger, i.e. attempts to influence election results (as seen during the last US presidential election or the Brexit campaign). The following measures are foreseen during these periods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transparency obligation for platforms, which will have to report sponsored content, publishing the name of the author and the amount paid. Platforms that exceed a certain volume of connections per day will have to have a legal representative in France and make their algorithms public;</li> <li>• creation of a summary legal action to quickly stop the circulation of false news. It is the interim relief judge who will qualify the 'fake news', according to the definition of the law of 1881, with 3 criteria: the fake news must be obvious, massively and artificially disseminated, and must lead to the disturbance of public peace or the sincerity of a vote.</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>The EP's Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) developed its <b>capacity to monitor, analyse, alert and devise counter strategies</b> in response to disinformation and deceptive narratives that target the institution and its members. This concerns both human resources and investing in software to assist with monitoring and analysis. It also relates to close cooperation and training with leading civil society/academic experts in the field.</p> <p>DG COMM cooperates closely with the other DGs (EPRS, EXPO and ITEC e.g.) and other EU institutions via an <b>informal "tripartite" arrangement</b>. It participates in the <b>European Commission Network Against Disinformation</b> and shares information with EU Member State governments via a secure <b>"Rapid Alert System"</b>. Furthermore, it cooperates on a regular basis with leading experts in civil society. With the support over other DGs, mainly DG EPRS and DG EXPO, DG COMM develops its dedicated media and social media monitoring and analysis capacity as well as its media literacy capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upon request, DG COMM and DG EPRS offer <b>personal training to MEPs</b> on disinformation issues, including on data analysis;</li> <li>- Regular offering by DG COMM and DG EPRS of <b>training for accredited parliamentary assistants and EP staff members;</b></li> </ul>	<p>Outside election periods, the text creates a duty of cooperation for platforms, to oblige them to put in place measures against fake news and to make these measures public. The control of this duty has been entrusted to the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA), which will also be able to prevent, suspend or interrupt the broadcasting of television services controlled by or under the influence of a foreign State and which undermine the fundamental interests of the nation.</p> <p>The text focuses on deliberate attempts to manipulate information and will have no impact on the work of journalists, who can reveal information on matters of public interest at any time.</p> <p>It creates a more protective legal framework than a situation without a legal framework, where platforms censor content on their own, without even being required to explain the criteria for such censorship.</p> <p>The <b>24 June 2020 law</b>, which aims at <b>combating hateful content on the Internet</b>, creates an observatory of online hate, responsible for monitoring and analysing the evolution of hateful content, in conjunction with the operators, associations and researchers concerned. The observatory is placed under the authority of the Conseil Supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA).</p> <p>The bill passed by Parliament obliged online platform operators and search engines to remove within 24 hours, after notification by one or more persons, manifestly illegal content such as incitement to hatred, racist or anti-religious insults. For terrorist or child pornography content, the removal period was reduced to one hour. In its decision of 18 June 2020, the Constitutional Council censured these provisions.</p> <p>For terrorist or child pornography content, the Council considered that the determination of the illicit nature of the content was not based on its manifest nature but was subject to the sole assessment</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Specialised Trainings</b> in partnership with EU institutions, to prepare colleagues dealing with communication in the European Parliament Liaison Offices;</li> <li>- <b>Awareness raising and capacity building exercises for external audiences</b> including visitors groups, youth groups and the Together.EU network. In addition, the House of European History 'Fake or/for Real exhibition' helps raise awareness;</li> <li>- <b>Seminars with media representatives and MEPs</b> to discuss disinformation as a threat to democracy and how to support media as well as fact checking;</li> <li>- <b>Cooperation with civil society, fact checkers and academia.</b> Parliament services work on initiatives that foster closer cooperation and exchange of best practice. For example, in 2019 the European Parliament services organised a conference for fact checkers. Parliament officials also participate in follow-up initiatives to support this work, such as the <b>European Digital Media Observatory</b>. In 2021, an external expert provided a series of trainings with the goal of developing updated frameworks for assessing and responding to disinformation;</li> <li>- In addition to these seminars and trainings, regular information is provided on the work of the INGE Special Committee (press releases, briefings, press conferences), supported by DG EXPO.</li> </ul>	<p>of the administration, since the time allowed for the operator to comply did not allow it to obtain a decision from the judge. For the Council, the legislator is infringing freedom of expression, which is neither appropriate nor proportionate to the aim pursued. For content reported by individuals, the Council underlines the risk that operators will be encouraged to remove all contested content, including legal content. This is therefore a further infringement of freedom of expression.</p> <p>The censorship of these provisions entails the censorship of the provisions of the text that organised the implementation of the obligation to remove content.</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>A news page is available on EP's news portal and regular social media posts promote the importance of factual information and explain "How to spot when news is fake" based on a flagship infographic of DG EPRS.</p> <p>DG COMM has developed strong policy against any kind of aggression on its platforms since joining the different social media channels. It has been working on best practices and has established a clear moderation policy that is implemented on all corporate accounts. The community management team from DG COMM enforces it on Parliament's channels without the unnecessary removal of content or censorship. Users can always contact the team and refer to the rules guiding our online presence. The key aspect of the policy is that while we welcome all sides of the debate, we do not allow any form of hate speech on our accounts so it remains a safe place for conversation.</p>	
<b>Social Media strategies</b>	<p>DG COMM's Directorate for the Media animates the following <b>social-media platforms</b> for the European Parliament:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facebook</b> : 2.6 million fans</li> <li>• <b>Twitter (in 24 languages)</b>: 1.7 million followers</li> <li>• <b>LinkedIn</b>: 546 497 followers</li> <li>• <b>Instagram</b> : 288 120 followers</li> <li>• <b>Reddit</b> : 6624 followers</li> <li>• <b>Flickr</b>: 2 677 followers</li> <li>• <b>Pinterest</b> : 6650 followers</li> </ul>	<p>The National Assembly has three social media accounts – one on Facebook, one on Google+ and one on Twitter. Three officials from the Communication and Multimedia Information Department are responsible for managing these accounts and feeding them with content. The budget associated with this activity is between €1000 and 1500 per year and, used to buy visuals from AFP (Agence France Presse) and images from Thinkstock.</p> <p>Activities on the social medias are determined as the other communication activities. They are defined by the Bureau of the National Assembly and its delegation in charge of the</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<p>The <b>social media team</b> is composed of web-editors on various time resources allocations (it's an additional task to their main news publishing in 24 languages mission).</p> <p>There is also an IT developers for social-media also in charge of maintaining and developing the EP Newshub, project manager with an expertise in IT development and data privacy and social-media producers working on all platforms. Unit also produces news and non/news videos and other materials for the social media. The social media team is as well supported by the digital intelligence and community management teams.</p> <p>All social-media activities are part of the editorial workflow of the Directorate for the Campaigns, with a weekly review in the 'agency' meeting. They are also part of the larger coordination on the level of Directorate General: Editorial Committee (CED) and more frequent Restricted-Editorial Committees (CED-R) during Plenary and Committees weeks. Both CED and CED-R are chaired by the advisor to the DG and Spokesperson of the European Parliament, who provides <b>editorial and political oversight</b> of the social media activities.</p> <p>The Web Communication Unit and its social-media experts provide <b>trainings to MEPs and their staff</b>. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions by lead actors of the social-media field, with personalised support and inputs by Web Communication Unit's staff</li> <li>• Analysis of the social-media presence of MEPs</li> <li>• Personal coaching on social media</li> <li>• Topic requested by MEP (setting up a social media account, use of statistics, best practices, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>communication and the press and it belongs to the Communication and Multimedia Information Department to implement the guidelines set by the Bureau and its delegation. The articles published are exclusively factual, leave no room for interpretation, nor do they include comments of a political nature.</p> <p>Members and their assistants can request "ad hoc" training within the framework of the training programmes proposed by the National Assembly.</p> <p>The officials concerned by social media activities can follow courses on social media tools (Facebook, Google+, Photoshop and In design).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facebook</b> : 139 000</li> <li>• <b>Twitter (in 24 languages)</b>: 373 000</li> <li>• <b>LinkedIn</b>: 81 500</li> <li>• <b>Instagram</b> : 42 000 followers</li> </ul>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One to one tailor made sessions</li> </ul>	
<b>Hybrid events</b>	<p>In order to facilitate hybrid EP presentations/talks that combine on-site and online participation and engagement, the EP plans to have the seminar rooms in the new ZWEIG visitors' area (if possible, also in some of the current conference rooms in Spaak building) equipped with high-performance cameras and a trigger microphone system that will support targeted audience interaction. All seminar rooms will furthermore be equipped with professional webcams for streaming presentations, allowing for example the MEPs, staff and visitors to interact with those who couldn't travel to Brussels.</p> <p>Other communication events, as for example Europe Day, European Youth Seminars, Multilingualism Day, press conferences, various events held by EPLO..etc. will be organised in the future in a hybrid format.</p>	<p>One objective must govern any adaptation of the Assembly's working conditions: the preservation of its constitutional missions, as defined by Article 24 (1) of the Constitution: 'Parliament shall vote the law. It shall monitor the action of the Government. It evaluates public policies'. These functions are essential for the life and future of the Nation. On the one hand, because emergency laws are necessary in the event of a crisis; on the other hand, because the control function is all the more important as the management of the crisis leads to additional margins of manoeuvre for the Executive. This constitutional triptych constitutes the base of missions that must be preserved, even if the modalities of operation are different. As a consequence, the French National Assembly has decided to assume a 'hierarchy' of parliamentary functions and the suspension of activities related to the exercise of these constitutional missions when circumstances so require: It should be noted that such an approach was strictly implemented from mid-March 2020 by the Assembly's bodies, which adopted an overall approach of adapting the rules governing the functioning of the institution, giving priority to the exercise of the Assembly's essential tasks by maintaining questions to the Government and the debate on urgent legislation. All other activities were suspended (delegations, committees of enquiry, study groups, friendship groups, etc.). In addition, as part of the plan for the gradual resumption of parliamentary activity adopted by the Bureau on 5 May 2020, it was decided to postpone all visits, colloquies and events that were to be held on the premises of the National Assembly, friendship group missions abroad, within or outside the European Union, and the reception of foreign friendship group delegations, as well as the holding of study group and friendship group meetings by video conference. Four missions of friendship groups abroad and the reception of a delegation of a</p>

	European Parliament	French Assemblée Nationale
		foreign friendship group were thus postponed. Five international missions abroad and the reception of three missions at the Assembly were also cancelled. Meetings of international parliamentary assemblies attended by French MPs were held by videoconference or cancelled, as was the plenary assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.
<b>Digital offer to visitors</b>	The Digital Citizens' Journey to the European Parliament is an innovative DGCOMM project that uses state-of-art technologies and will launch three main experiences for citizens. The Immersive Online Experience allows citizens visit the European Parliament's people and places, delivered in navigable 360-degree environment with overlays to present micro-interactions and multimedia content. The Virtual Role Play Game is a 'choose-your-own-adventure style' journey to get to know EP law making through the eyes of an MEP. This involves a graphic narrative structure and responsive game engine that allows players explore multimedia content, frame issues before debate, propose amendments and vote. It has chapters, which cover work in committees, political groups and Plenary. The Virtual House of European History will consists of a 3D-tour of the House and virtual exhibition space with an online collection. Additional digital features are being considered.	A 'virtual walk' inside the Assemblée Nationale premises is available to visitors, thanks to a partnership with Google Street view. In addition, the audioguide for the physical visit is available beforehand and in four languages (FR, EN, DE, ES). Visitors can also access a 7 minutes video about the Palais Bourbon and a 11 minutes video about treasuries of the Assemblée Nationale library. The Assemblée Nationale also gives access to documents about its history, the history of the French democracy. Visitors can consult online databases about former members of the Assemblée Nationale and also a collection of greatest speeches in the history of the Parliament.
<b>Members' activities on official parliamentary websites</b>	All the MEPs have a dedicated section on the official website of the European Parliament. It makes their contact details available and provides basic information on their background (for instance date of birth, CV, parliamentary career and financial interest) and on their assistants (names and contact information). In addition, the parliamentary website can include links to social media platforms used by MEPs and can give details about their political	The Communication and Multimedia Information Department assumes the function of Webmaster. In carrying out this task, it acts in compliance with the instructions coming from the Bureau's delegation in charge of the communication and the press.  Member's information covered in the internet site include speeches made in the Chamber, reports, parliamentary questions, motions. It

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>French Assemblée Nationale</b>
	<p>activities namely about the speeches they deliver in plenary, the reports they prepare, the parliamentary questions they raise and the motions they table. MEPs also publish the meetings they hold with third parties.</p> <p>The data related to Members via the website is reviewed and updated on an ad-hoc basis. The supervision of the website is done by the Bureau and the Secretariat (Secretary General, DG PRES and DG COMM), who have the overall responsibility for the content management.</p> <p>There is a possibility to download the information about the MEPs in different formats such as XML, PDF or Word.</p>	<p>does not include attendance records for plenary sittings, voting records for plenary (except for public ballots), voting records for committee.</p> <p>Information on Member is presented in a uniform way for all Members.</p> <p>The activities referred to above are not quantified. For each Member, several bookmarks are available displaying the following items: videos (each intervention is filmed and available on demand, the questions asked by the Member, Member's reports, Member's bill (whether signed or cosigned), reports of plenary sittings or committee meetings when the Member made an intervention, votes in public ballots for/against/ abstention).</p> <p>The access page on information on Members is available at <a href="http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/qui">www.assemblee-nationale.fr/qui</a> under the heading "577 députés". The National Assembly has no formal relationship with third party organization providing publicly-available analysis of data on Members' activity. However, there are a few non-official sites on the internet that establish rankings based on the elements available on the National Assembly website.</p> <p>The information is available in XML and PDF.</p> <p>On the top of this information related to the parliamentary activities of each member, the Assemblée Nationale is also giving a central access point to the accounts on its members on the social networks.</p>

---

This EPRS study compares and contrasts features of the work of the European Parliament with those of five national parliaments. It concentrates on some of the aspects discussed in the EP President's Focus Group exercise, which has, throughout 2021, considered ways to modernise and improve the Parliament's way of working on several fronts: notably the organisation of plenary sessions; the exercise and protection of parliaments' prerogatives; parliamentary diplomacy; and the communication capacity of parliaments. The present study seeks to address these areas, with the aim of identifying where best practice exists and where there might still be room for improvement.

---

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorized, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.



PE 698.833  
ISBN 978-92-846-8788-6  
doi:10.2861/502048  
QA-08-21-377-EN-N