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Relations between the EP and national parliaments

European Parliament resolution on relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments in European integration (2001/2023(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the meetings arranged by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs with the European affairs committees of the national parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries on 20 and 21 March 2001 and 10 and 11 July 2001,
 - having regard to the recent statements by a number of Heads of State or Government on Europe's future,
 - having regard to the contribution by the XXIVth COSAC in Stockholm on 22 May 2001,
 - having regard to the French Senate's report of 13 June 2001 on a second European chamber,
 - having regard to the resolution adopted by the Committee of the Regions on 14 November 2001 on the preparations for the Laeken European Council and the further development of the European Union within the framework of the next Intergovernmental Conference,
 - having regard to the contribution by the XXVth COSAC in Brussels on 5 October 2001,
 - having regard to the text adopted by the Follow-up conference on the parliamentary dimension of the European security and defence policy on 7 November 2001 in Brussels,
 - having regard to the Conference of the Presidents of the parliaments of the European Union and the candidate countries on 16 and 17 November 2001 in Stockholm,
 - having regard to the extraordinary meeting of COSAC in Brussels on 30 November and 1 December 2001,
 - having regard to the Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union,
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market (A5-0023/2002),
- A. whereas the Declaration on the future of the Union annexed to the Treaty of Nice cites the role of the national parliaments as one of four issues to be addressed and stresses its importance and topicality,

- B. whereas the democratic deficit is likely to become more acute in the Union because of lack of progress on democratic scrutiny of the integration process and recent developments in a number of areas,
- C. concerned at the serious imbalance that has arisen between the powers conferred on executive institutions and technical bodies and the scope afforded to parliaments as a whole to participate in and scrutinise the legislative decisions and political choices of the Union,
- D. whereas it is necessary to strengthen the parliamentary component of the European institutional system in order to remedy the democratic deficit and ensure greater democracy in the Union,
- E. whereas the Member States' power of ratification (either by their national parliaments or by referendum) is not affected by the Convention established by the Laeken European Council,
- 1. Is convinced that the concerns of the national parliaments with regard to the European Union make it necessary to define better and more clearly their power vis-à-vis their respective governments and the European Union, in particular regarding:

- strengthening their power vis-à-vis their respective governments,
- giving parliaments a new role enabling them to exercise responsibilities in constitutional matters,
- establishing closer, more effective cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament,

and, with particular reference to their power vis-à-vis their respective governments:

- guidance of national ministers and governments in their work in the Council,
 - monitoring by the national parliaments of the positions of national ministers and governments in the Council,
 - guidance by national parliaments of the implementation of European policy in the Member States, particularly with regard to European programmes and European funds,
 - monitoring by national parliaments of the implementation of European policy in the Member States, particularly regarding the effects of such policy and the financial management of funds allocated by the EU,
 - national parliaments' guidance and monitoring of the correct implementation of European directives and regulations;
2. Points out that the European Parliament does not see itself as the exclusive representative of the citizens and guarantor of democracy and that the role of the national parliaments is very important;

3. Points out that the peoples of the Union are represented to the full by the European Parliament and the national parliaments, each in its own realm; consequently the necessary parliamentarisation of the Union must rely on two fundamental approaches involving the broadening of the European Parliament's powers vis-à-vis all the Union's decisions and the strengthening of the powers of the national parliaments vis-à-vis their respective governments;
4. Points out that the Treaty of Maastricht and the Treaty of Amsterdam have paved the way for this parliamentarisation;
5. Stresses once more that in order for the necessary democratisation and parliamentarisation to take place, codecision by the European Parliament is essential in all legislative areas;
6. Considers it particularly important for national parliaments to use fully their power of scrutiny in all cases where there is no codecision;
7. Notes with concern that the parliaments elected by the people at national and European elections must jointly ensure that the governments do not create new intergovernmental rights and instruments from which the parliaments are excluded, e.g. 'open coordination' or 'co-regulation';
8. Calls for membership of the European Parliament to be incompatible with the holding of a seat simultaneously in a national or regional parliament;

Strengthening the powers of the national parliaments vis-à-vis their governments

9. Hopes that the protocol on the role of the national parliaments annexed to the Treaty of Amsterdam will be amended, as requested by the COSAC meeting in Versailles, as far as advance information for the national parliaments and the possibility of their intervening during the preparation of European legislation via their national governments in the Council are concerned;
10. Proposes that information on best practices used in the national parliaments should be adequately disseminated and optimal conditions established for information-exchanging, for mutual understanding of each others competences and activities and recourse to new technologies;
11. Affirms its willingness to contribute to an in-depth dialogue with the national parliaments at the time of the adoption of the Commission's programme with a view to ensuring that the principle of subsidiarity is adhered to in the Community legislative process;

Securing closer cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament

12. Points out that COSAC is an important vehicle for exchanges and convergence between the national parliaments and the European Parliament, the full potential of which has not yet been exploited; is convinced, however, of the need to guarantee representation on the European Parliament's delegation to COSAC which takes greater account of political pluralism;

13. Proposes that cooperation between the parliamentary committees of the national parliaments and the European Parliament in all European integration-related sectors should be developed and placed on systematic footing, not least in the areas of the common foreign and security policy, economic and monetary Union, the area of freedom, security and justice and constitutional affairs;
14. Emphasises that it would be desirable to step up and improve the exchange of information between the European Parliament and the national parliaments in relation to questions concerning the CFSP or the European Security and Defence Policy, in order to make more extensive dialogue between them possible;
15. Proposes that an interparliamentary agreement be drawn up between the national parliaments and the European Parliament as a means of introducing formal cooperation arrangements, which might include:
 - outline reciprocal commitments with regard to programmes of multilateral or bilateral meetings on European issues of common interest or of a general or sectoral nature,
 - the exchange of information and documents;
16. Notes that within the framework of meetings of European political groups and political parties more frequent and more regular contacts are being established within European groupings of all political persuasions and welcomes the fact that these meetings are being placed on a more systematic footing and can thus strengthen and enrich democratic life at both national and European level; stresses the importance of a statute for European political parties, since these have a central role to play in the European Union's movement towards greater democracy;

The decision-making process must not become more cumbersome

17. Considers that the creation of a chamber composed of representatives of the national parliaments would not solve the problems experienced by some parliaments in scrutinising the European policy of their governments in particular, but would only serve to prolong the Community legislative procedure, to the detriment of democracy and transparency;
18. Points out, furthermore, that dual legitimacy – a Union of States and peoples - already finds expression at European level in the legislative sphere through the participation of the Council and the European Parliament, that is not advisable to make the decision-making process more cumbersome or more complicated and that is necessary to avoid a confusing superposition in the respective roles of European and national institutions;
19. Highlights the importance of the agreed participation of representatives of the European Parliament and national parliaments in the future Convention on a constitution for the European Union; hopes that vigorous debate will lead to their agreeing on a common approach at the Convention, so as to speak as far as possible with one voice in conveying the views of the peoples of Europe with regard to Europe's political future

Preparation of the future of the European Union by the Convention

20. Welcomes the institutionalised participation of the national parliaments, the European Parliament, the Commission and representatives of the heads of state and government in the Convention, a development which makes it possible to be optimistic about effective preparations for reform of the treaties;
21. Is in favour of the emergence - even at this stage through the Convention established by the Laeken European Council - of a constituent power exercised jointly by the national parliaments, the Commission, the European Parliament and the governments of the Member States, which would not only allow effective preparation of reform of the treaties but would also give European integration efforts greater legitimacy and would thus mark a new chapter in the role of parliaments in European integration by introducing a major institutional innovation;

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22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and to the Council and Commission, the Heads of State or Government, and the parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries.