IPEX – Report to the Conference of European Union Speakers

Copenhagen 29-30 June 2006

The IPEX Steering Group, which I have had the honour to chair since 2001, is pleased to announce the completion of the first phase of IPEX, the tool for Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange, which is a result of recommendations and requests following the Conference of the Speakers of the European Union in 2000.

As of 1 July 2006, the web site (www.ipex.eu) is operational and open to all national parliaments in Europe and to the European Parliament. A new permanent organisation, the IPEX Board, has taken over the responsibility for running IPEX and the IPEX Correspondents have participated in special training sessions in order to fulfil their tasks.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the National Parliaments and to the European Parliament for the resources that have so generously been made available to this project and which have made it possible to see it through to a successful end.

Anders Forsberg

Chair of the IPEX Steering Group

Secretary General

Swedish Parliament

Report

Background

The remit of IPEX

In a memorandum adopted by the Conference of the Speakers of the European Union Parliaments in Rome on 22-24 September 2000, a recommendation was made to promote cooperation and exchange of information between institutions and parliaments in the Union. The administrations of the parliaments were requested to look more closely into the matter.

At a subsequent meeting of the Secretaries General in Stockholm in March 2001, a working group was set up to look into ways to promote closer links between European Union parliaments.

Objectives

The objective of IPEX is stated in the Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation in the EU, which were agreed upon by the Conference of Speakers in The Hague in 2004.

Section II – Framework:

IPEX

"The objective of IPEX…is to support Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for the electronic exchange of EU-related information between parliaments in the Union including a calendar of meetings and forums for exchange of views on subsidiarity control. Each parliament/chamber has an IPEX correspondent to represent the parliament."

In the conclusions from The Hague conference, it was also stressed that IPEX will serve as an important tool for the exchange of information, for example by directly distributing legislative proposals from the European Commission to the IPEX database.

Steering Group – Comments

The success or failure of IPEX is of course dependent on how much the web site and the database are used and how accurate and updated the information in the database is. To this end, the Steering Group thinks it essential that the circle of National Parliaments, that are willing to take on a more active responsibility for IPEX is as wide as possible. The new organisation promotes such a shared responsibility.

The technology as such, e.g. the maintenance of the database servers, will mainly be the responsibility of the European Parliament.

We are pleased to note that the European Commission looks very favourably on this project and has expressed its willingness to cooperate with IPEX.

Guidelines

The Secretaries General, at their meeting in Copenhagen 9-10 February 2006 approved the Guidelines[1] upon which the organisation of IPEX is based.

According to these Guidelines, the Secretaries General appoint the Board, including the chair, for a one-year period, running from one Speakers' Conference to the next.

Organisation

The Board

Tasks

The Board ensures the ongoing and effective management and maintenance of the IPEX system

Structure

According to the Guidelines, the Board consists of representatives from

   a) The National Parliaments hosting the previous, current and upcoming Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments (three)

   b) Other National Parliaments (up to four)

   c) The European Parliament (one)

COSAC and the ECPRD participate as associate members.

The Secretaries General, in accordance with item 1.2 of the IPEX Guidelines, appoint the chair of the Board and other board members.

Composition 2006/2007

The Board consists of representatives from **Denmark** (chair), Hungary, The Slovak Republic, The European Parliament, France, The United Kingdom, Italy and Finland

COSAC and the ECPRD participate as associate members

The Central Support Function

The Central Support Function acts as a "helpdesk" and as such, it deals with technical questions and with questions relating to the decision-making process in the Union. It further assists the IPEX Correspondents in questions concerning this process in their national parliament and its relation to that of the Union.

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[1] Please refer to page 6

The Board appoints the members and the chair of the Central Support Function for the same period.

IPEX Correspondents

Each parliament/chamber has appointed an *IPEX Correspondent*. The function of the correspondent is to be responsible for the updating and the accuracy of the information of that country's data on the IPEX web site and to liaise between the national parliament in question and the IPEX Central Support. Each parliament decides of course on its own internal organisation.

At the invitation of the Board, the Correspondents meet once a year to exchange views on the IPEX work.

Building blocks

The Web Site

The IPEX Web Site (www.ipex.eu) is the hub around which IPEX revolves. The site is constructed in close cooperation with the IT-department of the European Parliament. The contents and maintenance of it is the joint responsibility of the Board, The Central Support Function and the national IPEX Correspondents.

The Database

The core of the IPEX Web Site is its database. The database is automatically fed with legislative proposals and information from EU institutions, mainly from the European Commission. National Parliaments supply data to the database from the national level.

The Calendar

The Central Support Function will maintain a calendar of EU Interparliamentary conferences and other important events.

The Bulletin Board

Provisions have been made for the introduction of a bulletin board within the web site. The bulletin board will probably be implemented at a later stage.

Subscription

A subscription service will be introduced at a later stage, through which Correspondents and other interested parties will be notified automatically by e-mail or by other suitable means, about updates of the database, based upon information in their user profile,

Guidelines for IPEX

Preamble

IPEX, the InterParliamentary EU information eXchange, was created following recommendations and agreements by the Conference of European Union Speakers in Rome in 2000[2] and in The Hague in 2004[3].

Objectives

The objective of IPEX is to support Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for the electronic exchange of EU-related information between parliaments in the Union. In particular, the IPEX web site contains a database for the exchange of information about parliamentary scrutiny in EU affairs including aspects of subsidiarity, a calendar of Interparliamentary meetings and forums for the exchange of views.

Composition

IPEX is open to National Parliaments (Chambers) in the member states and candidate countries of the European Union and to the European Parliament. COSAC and the ECPRD are invited to join IPEX on an associate basis.

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[2] In a memorandum adopted by the Conference in Rome on 22-24 September 2000, the Speakers proposed measures to promote cooperation and the exchange of information between institutions and parliaments in the Union. The Speakers requested that the administrations of the respective parliaments should look into the matter in more detail.

[3] Guidelines for Interparliamentary Cooperation in the EU as agreed upon by the Conference in The Hague, 2004.

1 Organisation

1.1 The Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments

The Conference of European Union Speakers lays down the objectives of IPEX.

1.2 Secretaries General of European Union Parliaments

The Secretaries General[4] of European Union Parliaments

- oversee IPEX

- agree on the guidelines and on major changes to the IPEX system

- appoint members of the IPEX Board

- appoint the chairman of the IPEX Board among the ranks of the Secretaries General from Parliaments on the IPEX Board

1.3 The IPEX Board

The IPEX Board is appointed for a one-year period, running from one Speakers' Conference to the next.

1.3.1 Tasks

The Board

- ensures the ongoing and effective management and maintenance of the IPEX system

- monitors the IPEX web site

- oversees the Central Support Function

- meets once a year with the IPEX Correspondents

- is responsible for relations with the European Commission, other EU institutions and bodies outside the European Union

- submits an annual report to the Secretaries General about the current status of IPEX

- appoints the members and chair of the Central Support Function

1.3.2 Composition of the Board

The Board consists of up to eight members representing

- The National Parliaments hosting the previous, current and upcoming Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments (three)[5]

- Other National Parliaments (up to four)

- The European Parliament (one)

COSAC and the ECPRD participate as associate members.

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[4] Whenever "Secretary General" is mentioned in this text, this shall include "other equivalent senior official appointed by the Speaker to represent the parliament/chamber in meetings of the Secretaries General"
[5] In the case of bicameral systems, it is up to each parliament to decide on the representation

1.4 The Central Support Function

The Central Support Function manages all tasks that are relevant to the IPEX web site, editorial as well as technical.

1.4.1 Tasks

- Daily maintenance of the IPEX web site

- Overall management of users

- Assistance to the IPEX Correspondents

- Technical and editorial changes and developments

- May upon the request of the parliament hosting the Speakers' Conference assist in the updating and maintenance of the calendar of Interparliamentary cooperation

- Other tasks, assigned by the IPEX Board

1.4.2 Composition of the Central Support Function

The Central Support Function comprises four members from national parliaments represented on the Board and one from the European Parliament. Other national parliaments may assist in the functioning of the Central Support.

1.5 The IPEX Correspondents

The IPEX Correspondents are appointed by the Secretary General of each parliament/chamber taking part in IPEX.

1.5.1 Tasks - responsibilities

The IPEX Correspondents are responsible for the contributions from their parliament/chamber to the IPEX system. This includes responsibility for

- organising the input to the databases etc from their parliament/chamber

- the correctness of the links and other items of information about their parliament/chamber on the national part of the IPEX web site

- the management of users in their parliament/chamber

- IPEX information and support in their administration

- the exchange of best practices

2 Revision of the guidelines

The revision of these guidelines is the responsibility of the Secretaries General of the European Union parliaments.

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