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IPEX



REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA  
Parliament

# IPEX ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

MEETING OF THE SECRETARIES GENERAL OF THE  
EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS

26 - 27 JANUARY 2020, HELSINKI

PRESENTED BY THE AUSTRIAN IPEX CHAIR

MR HARALD DOSSI

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT

## Foreword

Interparliamentary cooperation, exchange of information and networking between parliaments on different levels have gained more importance in recent years and IPEX has had a crucial role in this process: it is an essential forum for exchange of know-how and best practice.

IPEX, as Digital System and network of people is an effective instrument to foster interparliamentary collaboration and to promote EU affairs within our parliaments and beyond.

Considering the strengthened relations with the European Commission and the European Parliament, the manifold interparliamentary conferences have become part of the daily business of the MPs. The promotion of IPEX is important as it on the one hand supports the MPs' daily work and efforts in EU matters, and on the other hand it points out the national parliaments' activities in European affairs. IPEX can contribute to this by providing easily accessible, visible, current, reliable and relevant information about the EU activities of national parliaments regarding their scrutiny tasks and other initiatives.

The Austrian Chairmanship has focused on pushing forward and implementing the Work Programme and the Action Plans of the three working groups. Additionally, the Chairmanship has tried to foster the analysis of the IPEX networks, the cooperation with COSAC, the internal networks and the exchange of views between ECPRD and the IPEX colleagues. We have made a step further regarding activities on social media and the final implementation of the data protection regulations.

The Austrian Chairmanship will not conclude with the submission of this report. There is still the last third of the Austrian term ahead and we will continue our work and fulfil our responsibilities until the handover of the rotating Chairmanship to the Finnish colleagues.

## 1. Meetings during the Austrian Chairmanship

During the Austrian Chairmanship of the IPEX Board, the following meetings have taken place so far:

- Three IPEX Board meetings, two of them in Vienna, on 17 May 2019 and on 17 January 2020 and one meeting in Brussels on 18 October 2019.
- The Annual IPEX Correspondents' Meeting on 14 –15 November 2019 in Vienna.
- Eleven working group meetings and one joint meeting between two working groups in Brussels, as well as the working group meetings held via video conference.

The following working groups have been active or were established during the Austrian Chairmanship:

- 1) Working Group on Strengthening the Promotion of the IPEX Network, chaired by Ms Birgit von Pflug
- 2) Working Group on Enhancing the IPEX Network, chaired by Mr Mongin Forrest and then by Mr Yves Carl
- 3) Working Group on Improving the IPEX Digital System, chaired by Mr Jerry Hilbert
- 4) Working Group on Social Media, chaired by Ms Tuula Zetterman and Mr Bruno Dias Pinheiro

- 5) Working Group on the Preparation of the New Work Programme, chaired by Ms Katharina Stourzh

## 2. Composition of the IPEX Board

According to the IPEX Guidelines the composition of the IPEX Board in 2020/2021 will be as follows:

- Ex officio members of the Board:

Austria, (Austrian National Council, Austrian Federal Council), Chair of the Board until the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States on 17-19 May 2020 in Helsinki

Finland (Finnish Parliament), Chair of the Board after the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States on 17-19 May 2020 in Helsinki

Croatia (Croatian Parliament)

Germany (German Bundestag, German Bundesrat)

European Parliament

- Members willing to contribute to the Board and its activities

Belgium (Belgian Senate, Belgian House of Representatives)

Bulgaria (Bulgarian National Assembly)

Denmark (Danish Parliament)

France (French Senate, French National Assembly)

Greece (Hellenic Parliament)

Italy (Italian Senate, Italian Chamber of Deputies)

Luxembourg (Luxembourg Chamber of Deputies)

Poland (Polish Senate, Polish Sejm)

Portugal (Assembly of the Republic of Portugal)

Romania (Romanian Senate, Romanian Chamber of Deputies)

The Netherlands (Dutch Senate, Dutch House of Representatives)

Slovakia (National Council of the Slovak Republic)

Sweden (Swedish Parliament)

*[eventually to be changed after the Board Meeting]*

- New members willing to contribute to the Board and its activities:

Hungary (Hungarian National Assembly)

*[eventually to be added after the Board Meeting according to the Austrian Chair's request to all national parliaments/chambers]*

According to the IPEX Guidelines, the IPEX Information Officer, COSAC Secretariat, the ECPD, the European Commission and the Council also participate in, and contribute to, the IPEX Board meetings.

### 3. IPEX Work Programme 2017–2020

Following the Digital Strategy the Board has continued to intensively work on, and to take the next steps on, the three topics of the Work Programme (WG): *Strengthening the promotion of IPEX, Enhancing the IPEX Network and Improving the Digital System*

Regarding the activities to promote IPEX, two remaining actions, the tutorial videos and the printed handout regarding how to use IPEX, were put on hold until the technical improvements regarding the IPEX website have been implemented by the Working Group on Improving the Digital System, which is also supported by this WG. To get an overview of which activities have been implemented by the parliaments/chambers, a questionnaire was sent out before the Annual Correspondents' Meeting.

The WG on Enhancing the IPEX Network worked on different ways and instruments to foster cooperation and to facilitate the IPEX Correspondents' work and to make the IPEX procedures more transparent. The WG prepared one of the workshops for the Annual Correspondents' Meeting and, based on the Action Plan, has been preparing an outline for a Baseline Study on the EWS and the general scrutiny in relation to the IPEX procedures.

The WG on Improving the Digital System worked intensively on a new website and new functions in the database: The aim is to have a website which is a comprehensive and exhaustive source of information through the addition of new content and types of documents. Furthermore, the homepage is undergoing a major redesign, incorporating sections for important issues, documents with high activity, upcoming events, news, pictures and videos. Thus, the parliaments and other users will finally have an important new tool for information. The future website will also facilitate and offer new elements to promote IPEX and to reach out to the whole audience of IPEX users.

### 4. The new website

The new Digital System and the new website will certainly mark a turning point and new stage in the development of IPEX. It has to be underlined that this project has been made possible by the engagement and commitment of the European Parliament as it is completely covering the costs of the development of the new Digital System and the new website. The Board was informed about this in a first step at its meeting on 18 October 2019 and the financing was confirmed shortly after the Annual Correspondents' Meeting.

### 5. The implementation of the EDPR and GDPR regulations

Following the obligations of the EDPR and the GDPR after intensive consultations and support of the European Parliament and the European Parliament's Data Protection Officer, the Privacy Statement and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were approved by the Board in written procedure as decided at the Board Meeting on 17 May 2019. The function of the Privacy Statement is to inform data users on how the GDPR/EDPR are applied in the framework of IPEX, the MoU aims to determine the responsibilities of each data controller of the IPEX platform. Both documents were confirmed at the meeting on 18 October 2019. Consequently, the Privacy Statement and the MoU were presented at the Annual Correspondents' Meeting on 15 November 2019. Letters of Confirmation indicating approval have been requested of all 28 EU Member States as well as the Candidate Countries.

## 6. Launch of social media activities of IPEX

Based on a thorough preparation by the Working Group on Social Media Activities of IPEX and striving to communicate more actively about IPEX issues, it was decided at the Board Meeting on 18 October 2019 that a oneyear pilot phase would be started on the occasion of the Annual Correspondents' Meeting held in Vienna on 14-15 November 2019. It is planned to not offer any new information but rather to make use of the news and information that parliaments already produce either on their website or within the news section of IPEX. So the account @IPEXEU and the hashtag #IPEXEU have been introduced, the account is co-managed by the IPEX Information Officer and the two Board members in charge of the working group. Having in mind a stronger promotion of IPEX in general and a consistent external appearance in particular, the debate on refreshing the IPEX logo was launched in the Board Meeting on 17 January 2020.

## 7. Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting

The Annual Correspondents' Meeting was held in Vienna 14-15 November 2019. The meeting was moderated by Ms Heather Wokusch and was attended by 55 participants from 28 member states and the European Parliament. Two fellows from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of North Macedonia, who stayed at the Austrian parliamentary administration in the framework of the newly established Fellowship Programme of the Austrian Parliament together with the European Funds for the Balkans, attended the plenary meeting.

As a new aspect of the meeting suggested by the Correspondents themselves, a teambuilding activity was included in the programme. The teambuilding was combined with a brainstorming on IPEX issues to foster the contacts and the exchange of information about the handling of IPEX issues in the different parliaments/chambers and to reflect on recent achievements of IPEX, its future goals and its values. They were asked to discuss among themselves where they saw room for improvement, how to raise awareness about their work in their national parliaments/chambers as well as how to facilitate their contributions to IPEX. The spectrum of suggestions, wishes and ideas was manifold and ranged from closer networking via social media, teambuilding, fora and twin city models to more visibility and involvement within the administration. Last but not least, a powerful support from the hierarchy and more time and capacity were some of the mentioned key points.

The following key notes and presentations were dedicated to current important topics such as the implementation of the regulations on the GDPR and EDPR, the improvement of the Digital System and the new website including the launch of a new category of information available on IPEX. Two correspondents presented their tasks, concerns and their roles within their parliamentary administrations to initiate debates and exchanges of views.

Furthermore, the best practices on social media activities in the Swedish Parliament made visible how useful these tools can be to communicate parliamentary issues as long as the information is reliable, easily accessible and tailored to the recipient.

As to the best practices on the cooperation between ECPRD and IPEX in the national

parliaments/chambers it was underlined that both networks could derive inspiration from the other and create effective synergies despite the differences between the two networks.

## **8. The new Work Programme**

The Digital Strategy together with the first Work Programme are a guideline and mission to further develop IPEX in the best possible way and to continue to anchor it strongly within the framework of interparliamentary cooperation.

The new Work Programme will be based on the results of the first Work Programme 2017-2020 and shall ensure a swift and smooth continuation of the future strategic position of IPEX. The new Work Programme will address tasks from the first Programme including implementation of the new Digital System and the new website, promotion of IPEX related to the new website, findings of the Baseline Study of the EWS and general scrutiny conducted by the Working Group Enhancing the Network, further improvement of social media activities, and new developments within interparliamentary cooperation.

*[eventually to be further specified after the Board Meeting]*