



34th

Bi-annual Report

**Developments in
European Union
Procedures and Practices
Relevant to
Parliamentary Scrutiny**

Prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to:

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for Union Affairs of Parliaments
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Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union

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BACKGROUND

This is the Thirty-fourth Bi-annual Report from the COSAC Secretariat.

COSAC Bi-annual Reports

The XXX COSAC decided that the COSAC Secretariat should produce factual Bi-annual Reports, to be published ahead of each ordinary meeting of the Conference. The purpose of the Reports is to give an overview of the developments in procedures and practices in the European Union that are relevant to parliamentary scrutiny.

All the Bi-annual Reports are available on the IPEX website by navigating to the respective meeting.

The two chapters of this Bi-annual Report are based on information provided by the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States and the European Parliament. The deadline for submitting replies to the questionnaire for the 34th Bi-annual Report was 25 September 2020.

The outline of this Report was adopted by the meeting of the Presidential Troika of COSAC, held on 13 July 2020 in Berlin via videoconference.

As a general rule, the Report does not refer to all Parliaments or Chambers that have responded to a given question. Instead, illustrative examples are used.

Note that, in some cases, respondents are able to provide more than one answer to multiple choice questions. Any perceived disparity in the total number of answers to a question and the total number of respondents can thus be accounted.

Complete replies, received from 36 out of 39 national Parliaments/Chambers of 27 Member States and the European Parliament, can be found in the Annex on the COSAC website.

Note on Numbers

Of the 27 Member States of the European Union, 15 have a unicameral Parliament and 12 have a bicameral Parliament. Due to this combination of unicameral and bicameral systems, there are 39 national parliamentary Chambers in the 27 Member States of the European Union.

Although they have bicameral systems, the national Parliaments of Austria, Ireland and Spain each submit a single set of replies to the questionnaire, therefore the maximum number of respondents per question is 37, including the European Parliament. There were 36 responses to the questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 1: CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

The first chapter of the 34th Bi-annual Report seeks to gather ideas in preparation of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

According to the large majority of Parliaments/Chambers, the question of the future of the EU had been addressed through various forms of citizens' participation in their respective countries, with public dialogues and local debates, public hearings, expert fora as well as internet platforms to collect proposals or submit petitions specifically referred to by respondents. A few Parliaments/Chambers indicated unusual formats like the voicing of opinion through complaint books or a public discussion with politicians in a shopping mall.

When asked whether the results of these formats were put into practice in their country, e.g. in the form of a legislative measure, a communication strategy or in some other way, about a third of respondents replied positively, while the remaining two thirds stated that this was not the case.

The majority of responding Parliaments/Chambers took the view that representatives of civil society and COSAC should be involved in the Conference together with the EU institutions, national Parliaments and citizens. In addition, half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers supported the possible involvement of representatives of academia. Some Parliaments/Chambers set a special focus on young citizens, e.g. children, pupils and the European Youth.

All responding Parliaments/Chambers shared the view that decentralised events or activities in the Member States and its regions should take place in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

When expressing their views about the form the events held in the Member States should take, Parliaments/Chambers predominantly pointed out the importance of digital platforms to widen the outreach of the Conference, especially in view of the pandemic situation.

When asked which three topics should be addressed during the Conference, institutional aspects ranked first in the replies given by Parliaments/Chambers, followed by green transformation and the rule of law.

The large majority of Parliaments/Chambers agreed that the Conference should be able to put topics on the agenda, in addition to the thematic framework defined by the Joint Declaration of the European Institutions.

Two thirds of the Parliaments/Chambers expressed the view that the Conference should address institutional issues.

The majority of respondents did not wish to have the debates constrained by existing Treaties. In this regard, a number of Parliaments/Chambers offered their view on the issue of possible treaty changes, identifying a number of areas that could benefit from action or amendment, including the introduction of additional powers for managing cross-border crises, especially regarding health threats.

Almost all responding Parliaments/Chambers agreed that it would be helpful for national Parliaments to have an exchange of views on the rule of law reports, issued by the European Commission in

September 2020. Most Parliaments/Chambers intended to deal with these reports through debate at committee level.

CHAPTER 2: LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The second chapter of the 34th Bi-annual Report of COSAC dealt with lessons learnt from the pandemic, specifically how Member States and the EU supported the economic recovery through aid packages at European level, directed at public budgets, companies and employees, with the aim to overcome the crisis, to build up resilience and to ensure the EU would be fit for the future.

Almost half the respondents thought that the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) should be granted extended competences, comparable to developments in the case of FRONTEX, whereas most of the remaining respondents had no opinion on the matter.

Parliaments/Chambers opted for different solutions for reducing the EU's dependence on third countries for procurement of protective equipment, medications and pharmaceutical precursors, with relocating production processes to the EU proving to be the most popular choice.

Conditions for border closure and the movement of goods and people, alongside the exchange of information were among the different views offered by Parliaments/Chambers in relation to a possible coordinated approach in order to more effectively contain the spread of disease in a pandemic situation, though a number of respondents acknowledged the reasoning behind having national measures in such situations.

The overwhelming majority of respondents considered it advisable to adapt the legal framework for future crisis scenarios arising from an outbreak of an infectious disease or from other comparable serious crisis situations, with several proposing an improved legal framework.

According to the answers provided, half the Parliaments/Chambers were considering how Member States could network more effectively in the field of research and innovation and how they could ensure improved data exchange in the health sector, whereas the other half were not.

All respondents confirmed that their Member States had adopted economic stimulus packages.

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers reported that their Member States decided for a mix of measures from both the expenditure and the revenue side, with many referring to a variety of measures. A large number of Parliaments/Chambers stated that during certain periods some measures focused on specific sectors, with respondents providing different examples of measures that had proven particularly effective in mitigating the consequences of the pandemic, including part-time work, online education and teleworking; extraordinary COVID-19 family leave and special provisions for elder people; restrictions on free movement of persons; and obligatory health protective measures.

With respect to European measures, a large number of respondents named the SURE instrument (“Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency”) as a particularly effective measure.

Green and digital transition, employment, innovation, health, research and development were identified by the responding Parliaments/Chambers as the main policy areas which should be

prioritised when establishing the package of measures to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic at EU level.

When asked about their preferences related to linking the allocation of EU-funds to compliance with CO₂ emissions thresholds, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers did not have an opinion on the matter. The rest of the respondents were divided on the matter, with a few in favour and an almost equal number against such possibility.

The majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers were in favour of introducing new EU own resources, in addition to those based on non-recycled plastic waste, with new EU own resources based on a digital tax receiving the largest support from the responding Parliaments/Chambers.

The idea of withholding a substantial proportion of EU funds, e.g. from the Cohesion Fund, in the case of a clear risk of serious infringements concerning the rule of law that jeopardised the EU's financial interests, received support from almost half of the responding Parliaments/Chambers. Some Parliaments/Chambers, however, advised caution in approaching this issue. When it came to choosing from the suggested procedures for activating such a mechanism, qualified majority in the Council was supported by six Parliaments/Chambers, while unanimity and reverse qualified majority in the Council was backed by five Parliaments/Chambers respectively.

In the area of Artificial Intelligence (AI), data and digital future, half of the respondents listed the application of digital technologies to at least one of these fields: the public administration, education and health services.

In terms of the potential or areas of application in the field of Europe's digital future, the vast majority of respondents agreed that the creation of a digital single market constituted an opportunity for economic recovery by generating growth and creating jobs.

When expressing their views about the use of video conference systems for interparliamentary cooperation, various respondents indicated that physical meetings could not be replaced by videoconferencing systems and the majority of the respondents expressed no opinion on the use of a uniform European conference tool.

With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures that should be avoided in the future, most of the responding Parliaments/Chambers mentioned the uncoordinated closing of borders, uncoordinated measures on the free movement of people and goods, as well as the disproportionate distribution of essential medical devices and medicines.

CHAPTER 1

CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE 34th BI-ANNUAL REPORT seeks to examine the concept and the agenda setting of the planned Conference on the Future of Europe.

Concept for the Conference

1.1.a Twenty-nine out of 35 Parliaments/Chambers stated there had been formats in their respective countries for citizen participation on the question of the future of the EU in the last few years. Six of them declared not having organised any official events (Belgian *Sénat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Polish *Senat*, Polish *Sejm*, Slovenian *Državni svet*).

In France, citizens' consultations on the future of the EU were organised at the initiative of President Emmanuel Macron and in view of the 2019 European elections. Debates and participatory democracy events were held in France from April to October 2018. Additionally, the French Government organised the “Great National Debate”, which called on French citizens to voice their opinions concerning future political issues through complaint books, local debates, regional or national thematic conferences and a website where proposals could be made. This debate also raised points about the future of Europe. Most recently, the French *Sénat* had set up an internet platform to deposit petitions and collect signatures. Furthermore, according to the French *Assemblée nationale*, democratic conventions for the reform of Europe had taken place, for which a separate working group had been set up within the EU Affairs Committee of the French *Assemblée nationale*.

The German *Bundestag* noted that, at the initiative of the German Federal Government and the federal state governments, a series of events titled "Citizens' Dialogues on the Future of Europe" took place throughout Germany between May and October 2018. In the discussions, Members of the federal and state governments as well as State Secretaries engaged with citizens. Similar programmes were organised by civil society cooperation partners and senior officials from various federal ministries. According to the German *Bundesrat*, the *Länder* had organised various events in different formats, e.g. “Expert Forums” and “Specialist Forums” - to which representatives from the science and business communities, trade unions, the cultural sector and the media were invited to engage with citizens - as well as a public discussion held in a shopping mall with local and European politicians.

In the Czech Republic, citizens’ consultations in the format of moderated discussions and conferences were organised mostly by the Government and NGOs (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Czech *Senát*). The Swedish *Riksdag* reported that, in Sweden, it was also mainly the Swedish Government that had organised various activities to increase participation, knowledge and commitment regarding EU-related matters. These activities were directed at pupils, teachers, journalists, elected representatives, public agencies, social partners, municipalities, regions, universities, education associations and youth movements.

For the Finnish *Eduskunta*, citizens’ participation was a matter of public hearings, with broad and open participation, including the use of online virtual fora. The Estonian *Riigikogu* and the Danish *Folketing* both noted that their respective EU Affairs Committees had organised public hearings and debates. The Danish *Folketing* said it had conducted deliberative polls. Likewise, the issue of the future of the EU had been put on the agenda of several meetings of the Committee on European

Affairs at the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* and thus provided public information. An online debate on the future of the EU had also taken place. Additionally, direct dialogues with citizens on EU issues, so-called “national consultations”, took place annually since first initiated by the Hungarian government in 2010. The Slovak *Národná rada* reported that the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic had organised a series of discussion events titled "National Convention on the European Union". The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* said that, between July and November 2018, a series of citizens’ consultation events had been coordinated by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee, a government agency.

According to the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, the Dutch government had requested research institutes to conduct public consultations on the EU and its agenda in 2018. These consultations took place in the form of research, questionnaires and citizens' dialogues.

The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* stated that several conferences with citizens’ participation had been organised between May and September 2018. The first citizens’ consultation on the future of the EU, entitled "The Europe that Children Want", was dedicated to Romanian children and youth.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* noted that discussions on the future of the EU had been organised in a number of formats including debates with experts and representatives of public organisations at committee meetings, national and international conferences involving Lithuanian citizens or discussions between Members of Parliament and their voters.

The Spanish *Cortes Generales* stated that multiple dialogues with citizens on the question of the EU’s future were held from 2017 to 2019 as town hall meetings. Since 2013, the European Commission representation in Madrid had continued to foster the organisation of these dialogues. Likewise, the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, the Latvian *Saeima*, the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, and the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* indicated that the Representation of the European Commission in their respective countries had organised public debates. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* specified that Portugal had organised a series of events called “Meetings with Citizens Aiming at the Debate on the Future of the European Union” ("Meetings with Citizens", "Associated Meetings" and "Europe in Schools") in collaboration with the European Commission. According to the Latvian *Saeima*, in 2018, citizens had made active proposals and had offered ideas on how they would want to live in Europe in a series of public discussions, both on-site and online. Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, as well as the EU information point coordinators, had promoted and organised numerous discussions throughout Latvia.

The European Parliament pointed out that it had held public hearings on European citizens' initiatives. There was also the possibility for citizens to petition the European Parliament and to participate and express their views at regular or *ad-hoc* events, such as European Youth Events; Eurobarometer polling and citizens’ agoras; in open consultations on regular law-making; and during citizens’ dialogues and consultations organised by the European Commission and Member States, attended by Members of the European Parliament.

In the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, the presentation of the “White Paper on the Future of Europe” was followed by a public debate promoted by the Parliament's website and debates in committee meetings. A committee conference on the future of the EU was attended by scholars, diplomats, social stakeholders and members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), as well as representatives of the political groups.

In view of the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe, the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* noted the launch of an “Austria Dialogue on the EU” at government level in July 2020 to which all Austrians were invited to contribute ideas on EU topics. The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* referred to the plan of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs which was conducting preparatory meetings with representatives of the cultural and academic world. The EU Affairs Committee of the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* had adopted a document as its contribution in shaping Italy’s position with regard to the Conference on the Future of Europe, noting the importance of, firstly, foreseeing a major involvement of citizens in the debate on the future of Europe, including through the use of modern technologies and social media and, secondly, using more citizens’ initiatives and exploring the possibility of having forms of direct participation regarding European choices, such as, for example, through referendums.

1.1.b When asked about the experiences of Parliaments/Chambers with the above mentioned formats, a significant number of Parliaments/Chambers replied that experiences were largely positive, with the Danish *Folketing* underlining that the participating citizens and Members of Parliament were very enthusiastic about the debates, which were perceived as enlightening by both sides. The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, the Slovakian *Národná rada* and the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* emphasised the lively and active participation, while the German *Bundesrat* stressed that the overall question asked (i.e. “In what kind of an EU do we want to live in the future?”) had led to a constructive and future-oriented discussion. It also noted that the formats had shown that sufficient room for citizens’ questions and statements was crucial for a fruitful and satisfactory interaction. The Danish *Folketing* also noted that the purpose of public hearings was to engage in debate and to raise awareness of European policy issues, rather than to present specific output in the form of written resolutions.

Some Parliaments/Chambers, however, declared that there had been no result (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Polish *Senat*) or that no reply could be given (Belgian *Sénat*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*).

A few Parliaments/Chambers clarified that the activities mentioned in their replies to the previous question were conducted without their direct involvement (Czech *Senát*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Swedish *Riksdag*), with some of them further specifying that the above mentioned activities were organised by the Government (Czech *Senát*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Swedish *Riksdag*).

The Czech *Senát* noted that, according to a Czech government's report, citizens emphasized that the EU should respect the principle of subsidiarity. Citizens also expressed the wish for more information and for the EU to better explain its proposals and policies. According to the Dutch government, the results showed that there was broad support for EU membership among citizens (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*). However, citizens also expected better functioning of the EU. The consultations also showed that, according to the Dutch respondents, the EU should focus on broad, cross-border issues, like immigration, climate, international crime and reducing the costs of the EU and countering waste (Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and Dutch *Tweede Kamer*). Likewise, the German *Bundestag* stated that the results gave rise to a predominantly positive picture of Europe despite some points of criticism, adding that it was clear that most citizens would like to see more European integration in a large number of policy areas and preferred pan-European solutions to national responses. According to the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, the experiences in Romania were similar. The conclusions showed

that Romanians wished their country would engage more in EU affairs. The debates with citizens from all over the country highlighted a positive perception about Romania's EU membership and showed a broad support for the European project based on common values.

The Estonian *Riigikogu* stated that the aforementioned discussions provided a conceptual background and contributed to how the topic on the future of Europe could be taken forward. The Slovenian *Državni zbor* declared that public presentations of opinions had been organised in the National Assembly on various EU topics.

The French *Sénat* stated that, in France, each of the above mentioned meetings were the subject of a report submitted to the National Commission for Public Debate (CNDP), which produced a public summary. The conclusions were submitted to the French Government on 4 December 2018. Since January 2020, 46 petitions had been submitted, but none of them had reached the threshold of 100,000 signatures. The French *Assemblée nationale* added that the experience was an opportunity to involve parliamentarians in discussions on the future of Europe.

A dedicated working group was set up in the Lithuanian *Seimas* to summarise the results of the discussions on the future of the EU. In addition, the Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a draft opinion on the evaluation of the proposals on the future of the EU and the interests of the Republic of Lithuania.

According to the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, the national consultations in Hungary had contributed to vivid parliamentary debates and intense public debate in general, and the results provided the necessary political support for governmental initiatives and measures. The conferences helped to form and channel opinions on the horizontal issues of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* also gave positive feedback, citing, among other things, the promotion of public debates and the establishment of an *ad hoc* parliamentary committee to monitor the process of defining the Portugal 2030 strategy. At international level, the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* took part in an interparliamentary meeting on the topic "Citizens' Consultations".

The European Parliament stated that the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) had held an exchange of views with the Council Presidency in April 2019, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions on their findings and recommendations with regard to their respective activities and reports on Citizens' Dialogues and Citizens' Consultations on the future of Europe, elaborating on ideas to make such activities permanent and lasting.

1.1.c When asked whether these results were put into practice in their country, e.g. in the form of a legislative measure or a communication strategy, the majority (20 out of 31 Parliaments/Chambers) stated that they were not, while the remaining 11 replied positively.

Some of those who responded positively specified that in some cases the result took the form of a legislative measure (French *Sénat*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*) or at least took note of the opinions expressed and included them in the legislative process (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*). Furthermore, the Slovenian *Državni zbor* added that a working body could organise public presentations of opinions and invite experts. The European Parliament adopted two resolutions on the Conference on the Future of Europe in 2020.

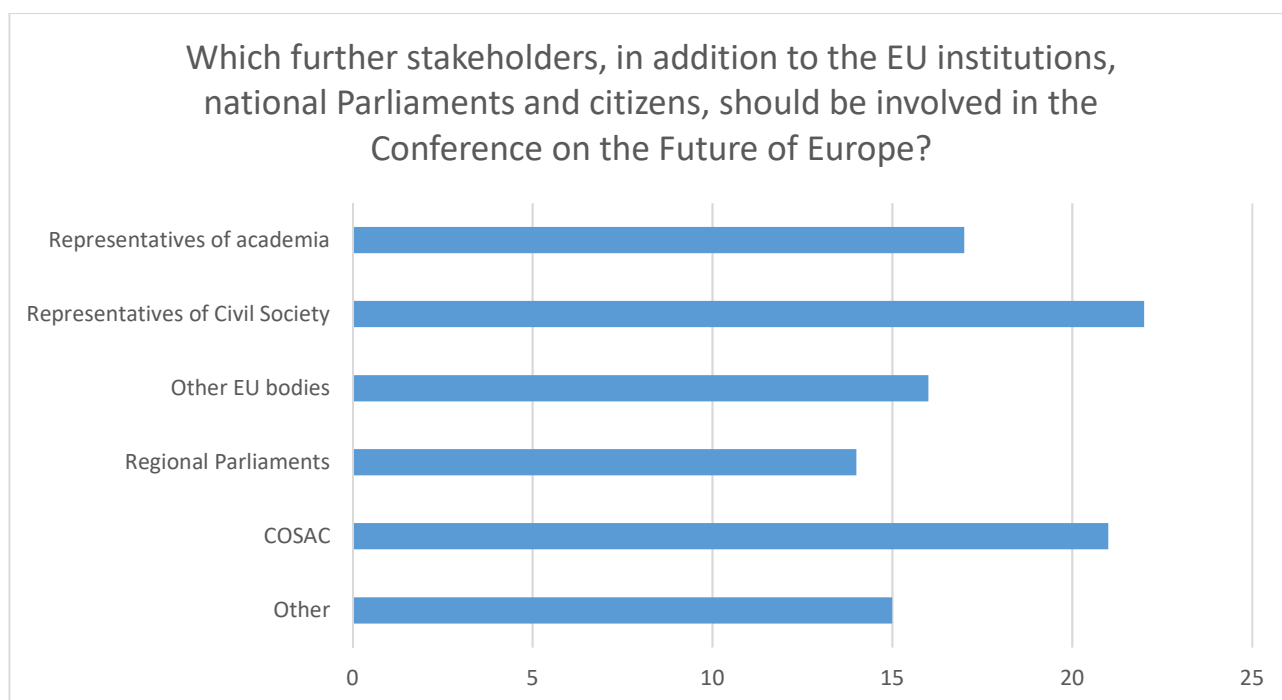
According to the Lithuanian *Seimas*, some of the provisions of the above-mentioned documents were reflected in Lithuania's negotiating positions in the EU Council.

The results of the consultations have been included by the Dutch Government in its strategy in the negotiations for the Leaders Agenda, the informal Council meeting in Sibiu in 2019 and in its policy paper “State of the European Union” (Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*). Likewise, both the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* and the Romanian *Senat*, stated that the aim of these consultations was to contribute to the debate at the Informal Summit of Heads of State or Government of the European Union held in Sibiu on 9 May 2019.

The German *Bundesrat* said that the contributions from the Citizens' Dialogue were collated and formed the bases for the State Government's Guiding Principles on Europe which were presented in public and were published.

The results of the Swedish Government's activities to increase participation in the EU vary from case to case (Swedish *Riksdag*). For example, the participants may have committed to strengthen knowledge about the EU within their own organisation or to spread information about their EU-related activities to a greater extent. The Latvian *Seimas* used results as part of a public dialogue on the specific policy items.

1.2.a The majority of responding Parliaments/Chambers (22 out of 34 respondents) thought representatives of civil society (e.g. NGOs, creative artists, associations) should be involved in the Conference on the Future of Europe, in addition to the EU institutions, national Parliaments and citizens. The involvement of COSAC was supported by 21 respondents, whereas 17 Parliament/Chambers also supported an involvement of representatives of academia. The involvement of EU bodies (e.g. the Committee of the Regions or the European Economic and Social Committee) was supported by 16 respondents, while the involvement of regional Parliaments was requested by 14 Parliaments/Chambers.



Asked to name other possible stakeholders whose involvement would be desirable, four Parliament/Chambers mentioned young citizens in particular (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Sénat*, Finnish *Eduskunta*, German *Bundestag*).

Some Parliaments/Chambers suggested the involvement of local and regional elected representatives and authorities (Finnish *Eduskunta*, French *Sénat*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellion*, Latvian *Seimas*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Swedish *Riksdag*).

The Danish *Folketing* stressed the need to involve all parts of society in debate activities and events, adding that national Parliaments should be involved on an equal footing with the EU institutions when organising the conference and drawing conclusions. The Lithuanian *Seimas* also mentioned the involvement of representatives of national Parliaments, stating they should be involved in the management body of the Conference. According to the Latvian *Seimas*, the Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU at the COSAC Conference would be best suited to represent them in the management body of the Conference.

The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* expressed the wish for businesses to be involved in the Conference on the Future of Europe, while the Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* also mentioned Trade Unions.

The European Parliament stressed that the Conference process should be an open, transparent participatory process involving citizens, organised civil society and a range of stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level. In its Resolution of 15 January 2020, the European Parliament proposed that the process should be governed by a range of bodies with defined/*ad hoc* responsibilities and made a concrete proposal on the membership of the Conference Plenary (a maximum of 135 members from the European Parliament, Council representation, 2-4 members per Member State national Parliament); furthermore, civil society organisations and other experts from NGOs and academia as well as research centres should be invited to support the Conference process at the various levels. Representatives of the EU candidate countries should be involved in discussions too.

1.2.b All responding Parliaments/Chambers (28) shared the view that decentralised events or activities in the Member States and their regions should take place in the context of the Conference.

Asked to specify to what extent the outcome should be fed into the Conference, many Parliaments/Chambers emphasized that decentralised events should be one of the cornerstones of the Conference (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, French *Assemblée nationale*, German *Bundesrat*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Maltese *Kamra tad Deputati*, Polish *Senate*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*).

The Polish *Senate* suggested that the results of various decentralised events should be taken into account by the EU institutions when drafting future recommendations. The German *Bundesrat* called for the establishment of a feedback mechanism to ensure that the ideas put forward in the Conference were followed up. Both the German *Bundesrat* and the French *Assemblée nationale* further argued that the debate should lead to concrete actions at all relevant levels, which the Conference should fully integrate. The German *Bundesrat* went even further in its proposal and argued that, during each rotating Presidency of the Council, an event should take place outside the capitals to underline the local nature of the Conference. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Swedish *Riksdag* commented

that the Conference could serve as an opportunity to capture some thoughts and ideas via dialogues with citizens and develop ways in which the EU's strategic agenda could be conveyed further.

In contrast, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* said that results and conclusions from decentralised events, while useful, could not be binding, but should nevertheless be communicated to main events and be fed into the debate. Both the German *Bundestag* and the Maltese *Kamra tad Deputati* shared the view that the ideas should be organised systematically and dealt with according to subject matter as comprehensively as possible in the plenum of the Conference. The Belgian *Sénat* suggested that every activity could produce some conclusions to be sent to the Steering Group of the Conference, in order to be integrated in the final conclusions of the Conference.

Both the French *Sénat* and the Finnish *Eduskunta* had not yet taken a formal position on this issue, but were in favour of holding decentralised events.

The Slovenian *Državni zbor* and the Estonian *Riigikogu* suggested that the respective Member State and the responsible body of the Conference should decide how and to which extent input provided should be addressed.

Some Parliaments/Chambers stated that the activities should produce documents, which should be made available to the participants (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Czech *Poslanecká snemovna*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*) with the Czech *Poslanecká snemovna*, the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, and the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* suggesting that the outcome should be fed into the Conference through reports on the events. The Romanian *Senat* proposed a result in the form of contributions, inputs or recommendations, while the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* suggested that each event should be concluded with a declaration to be transmitted to the Conference. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* expressed the idea that national Parliaments and/or EU representations could facilitate the process, and a codification of the outcomes at national level could be communicated to the Conference.

The European Parliament proposed that several thematic Citizens' agoras reflecting the policy priorities should be held throughout the Conference process in different locations across the Union, in order to provide input for the Conference Plenary. Citizens' agoras should seek to find agreement by consensus and, where this is not possible, a minority opinion could be formed. The Latvian *Seimas* also considered that the content of the events should link with the Conference, so that the summaries and lessons learnt from separate events could contribute to the Conference. A robust framework should be put into place to ensure that outcomes from grassroots events land in the central event.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* suggested that the overall results should be seriously discussed at EU level, taking into account the reality of the Treaties.

1.2.c When expressing their views about the form the events held in the Members States should take, Parliaments/Chambers predominantly pointed out the importance of digital platforms to widen the outreach of the Conference, especially in view of the current pandemic situation.

In this regard, 14 Parliaments/Chambers suggested videoconferences (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Sénat*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, German *Bundestag*, German *Bundesrat*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Polish *Senat*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian

Camera Deputa ilor, Romanian *Senat*) and 13 Parliaments/Chambers recommended online questionnaires (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Sénat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Polish *Senat*, Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, Romanian *Senat*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*) as possible forms the events should take.

The European Parliament emphasised that consultations should be organised using the most efficient, innovative and appropriate platforms, including online tools. Likewise, the Finnish *Eduskunta* stressed the importance of making use of digital applications. According to the latter, open, transparent and broad communication and implementation of the conference would be crucial. The organisation should be as lean and efficient as possible, and should make use of already existing structures, procedures, and programmes. In this context, the European Parliament suggested to coordinate existing and new communication tools for digital and physical participation among the three institutions.

The French *Assemblée nationale* stressed, however, not to ignore the digital divide and therefore called for debates to be organised with a physical presence, even if on a small scale.

Moderated discussion rounds involving political representatives were recommended by 13 of the responding Parliaments/Chambers, as long as the situation relating to the pandemic permitted (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Sénat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Danish *Folketing*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Polish *Senat*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Senat*, Slovak *Národná rada*). Some respondents considered town hall meetings to be another format option (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Danish *Folketing*, German *Bundestag*, Romanian *Senat*).

The Swedish *Riksdag* explicitly supported the European Commission's ambition to encourage all citizens to become involved by means of an open and inclusive approach, adding that the focus should be on participation and civic engagement at national level. This was also supported by the Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, which stressed the importance of decentralised events in order to involve citizens locally.

Finally, the Belgian *Chambre des représentants* stated that this should be determined according to the means available, while the French *Sénat* stressed that all forms of debate would be conceivable, but their implementation would depend above all on the health situation.

A few Parliaments/Chambers stated that they did not have a position on the matter (Czech *Senát*) and/or that the matter had not yet been discussed (Danish *Folketing*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*).

Agenda-setting

1.3 When asked which three topics should be addressed during the Conference, institutional aspects ranked first in the replies, chosen by 12 out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers. While the better involvement of national Parliaments in the decision-making process of the EU bodies was mentioned by the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, the Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, the Danish *Folketing*, the German *Bundesrat* and the Polish *Senat*, several other Parliaments/Chambers specifically mentioned the aspect of transparency (the Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, the Danish *Folketing*, the Estonian

Riigikogu and the Italian *Camera dei deputati*). In the same context, the French *Assemblée nationale* highlighted the importance of interparliamentary relations. Both the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* as well as the German *Bundesrat* flagged the question of competence between the European Union and the Member States. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* and the German *Bundestag* underlined the European Parliament's right of initiative, while the German *Bundestag* further indicated the issue of transnational lists as well as the principle of leading candidates. Both the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* and the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* suggested to explore the possibility of making more decisions based on a qualified majority, in areas such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The issue of a broader participation of civil society and citizens in the decision-making process was explicitly stated by the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, the Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, the Polish *Senat*, and the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*.

Besides institutional aspects, the topics of green transformation (10 out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers), the rule of law (eight out of 36) as well as crisis management and digital innovation and competence (each chosen by seven out of 36 respondents) were named. The importance of addressing health-related issues was mentioned by six out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers. The Spanish *Cortes Generales* emphasized that health matters should be a central focus of the Conference. The Belgian *Sénat* expressed the view that the pandemic revealed a vulnerability affecting most Member States regarding health issues, which resulted in inconsistent ways of dealing with the crisis. In a similar vein, the German *Bundestag* proposed to discuss the strengthening of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Strengthening the European internal market and raising economic and employment issues, including a stable financial policy and fair taxation, as well as social justice and equality, were both considered important by six out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers. The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* stressed that the issue of youth unemployment should be given particular attention in this regard.

In the view of four Parliaments/Chambers, European values, fundamental rights and freedoms should be addressed in the context of the Conference (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Swedish *Riksdag*, European Parliament), while another four Parliaments/Chambers were of the opinion that Europe's role in the world should be a topic of the Conference (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, Spanish *Cortes Generales* and European Parliament).

The Lithuanian *Seimas*, the Swedish *Riksdag* and the Slovak *Narodna rada* emphasized that the European Council's Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 should serve as a guide for the Conference on the Future of Europe. The Lithuanian *Seimas* added that changes to the Treaties should not be the objective of the Conference.

Three Parliaments/Chambers named migration as a topic to be addressed in the context of the Conference (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* and Portuguese *Assembleia da República*).

A number of Parliaments/Chambers mentioned other topics:

-)] Demographic trends in Europe (Hungarian *Országgy lés* and Slovenian *Državni zbor*);
-)] Education and research (Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*);
-)] Lessons learnt from Brexit (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*);
-)] Enlargement (Hungarian *Országgy lés*);

- J Protection of European culture and national identity (Hungarian *Országgyűlés*);
- J Models of cooperation with neighbouring States of the EU (Polish *Senat*).

The Polish *Sejm* added that the Conference should not be restricted to pre-defined topics but should stay open to additions throughout the process.

Five Parliaments/Chambers stated that they had no official position as to which topics should be addressed.

1.4 A large majority of Parliaments/Chambers (22 out of 28) agreed that the Conference should be able to put topics on the agenda, in addition to the thematic framework defined by the Joint Declaration of the European institutions; six Parliaments/Chambers did not share this opinion.

1.5.a A majority of Parliaments/Chambers (20 out of 30) expressed the view that the Conference should address institutional issues. Ten Parliaments/Chambers were against such a move. When those who answered positively were asked about which institutional aspects in particular should be discussed, seven Parliaments/Chambers flagged the role of national Parliaments in the decision-making process. In this context, the German *Bundesrat* renewed its call for an extension of the time limit for reasoned opinions on the non-compliance of proposals for legislative acts. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* suggested that national Parliaments were to be consulted prior to Council Meetings. Six Parliaments/Chambers were of the opinion that the organisational structure of the EU Agencies had to undergo profound reform. In this regard, the Romanian *Camera Deputatilor* stressed the excessive proliferation of indicators while the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* pointed out the political versus the executive power of the European Commission and its possible limits. The European Parliament and the Italian *Camera dei deputati* considered it important to address the issue of completing the Economic and Monetary Union.

The lead candidate system and transnational lists were each mentioned by six Parliaments/Chambers. The Swedish *Riksdag* pointed out that, in 2018, the Council had rejected the European Parliament's proposal on a more institutionalised lead candidate process, combined with transnational lists of eligible candidates. Four Parliaments/Chambers pledged for the activation of the general passerelle clause to simplify the decision-making process, and three Parliaments/Chambers were in favour of the introduction of qualified majority voting in the Council. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* emphasized that treaty changes related to institutional aspects needed to be discussed without restrictions. The right of initiative for the European Parliament was raised both by the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* and by the German *Bundestag*.

1.5.b When asked if debates should be constrained by the existing treaties, thus excluding the option of amendments to the Treaties, the majority of Parliaments/Chambers (19 out of 27) was against such a move, while eight agreed with it.

If treaty changes were to be considered, seven out of 27 Parliaments/Chambers expressed the wish to strengthen the role of national Parliaments in the decision-making process. In this regard, both the German *Bundesrat* as well as the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* thought it necessary to extend the timeline for reasoned opinions to 12 weeks. The Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* stressed the need for feedback by the European Commission to reasoned opinions. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* and the Polish *Senat* suggested the introduction of the red and green card procedures.

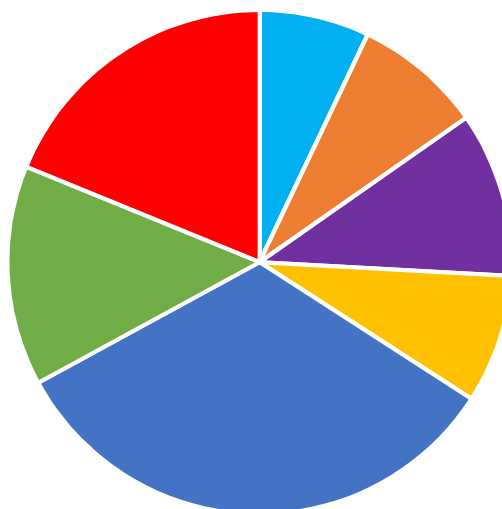
A number of Parliaments/Chambers indicated additional areas which could benefit from possible treaty changes:

- J Additional powers for managing cross-border crises, especially regarding health threats (Belgian *Sénat*, European Parliament); the European Parliament elaborated that new and strengthened instruments were necessary in order to be able to act without delay and coordinate the response at EU level, direct the necessary resources where most needed, be they material or financial, and enable the collection of quality, standardised data;
- J Qualified majority voting in the European Council (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* and Czech *Senát*); the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, in this context, specifically referred to the Article 7 procedure;
- J Single seat for the European Parliament (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*);
- J No bailout clause (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*);
- J Migration (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*);
- J Removal of the phrase “an ever closer union” from the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*);
- J Rule of law (Latvian *Saeima*).

Seven out of 27 respondents stated they neither committed to, nor excluded treaty changes in advance. The Finnish *Eduskunta* stated that it took a restrictive view to treaty changes at this stage. Viable proposals should be dealt with by representative bodies as foreseen by the Treaties. The Romanian *Senat* highlighted the necessity of clarifying the legal character of the Conference and the documents adopted in its framework, including its capacity to propose changes to the Treaties. Five Parliaments/Chambers had no opinion on the matter.

1.6.a When asked how their respective Parliaments/Chambers were going to deal with the Rule of Law Reports, the first of which the European Commission published at the end of September, the majority of respondents (28 out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers) said they were to be discussed in committees while 12 out of 36 said they were to be discussed in a plenary debate. Nine Parliaments/Chambers said the Report was going to be monitored, seven Parliaments/Chambers planned expert discussions on the Report. Another seven Parliaments/Chambers said they would introduce opinion procedures while six Parliaments/Chambers replied they were going to have public hearings on the Report.

How does your Parliament/Chamber intend to deal with the Rule of Law Reports?



■ Public hearings
 ■ Expert discussions
 ■ Monitoring
 ■ Opinion procedures
■ Debate in committee
 ■ Debate in plenary
 ■ Other

Sixteen out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers replied they were going to pursue a different path of action. Amongst those, nine Parliaments/Chambers said the Report needed to be examined by the EU Affairs Committee before a decision on a follow-up could be taken. Subsequently, possible means of dealing with the Report could be roundtable discussions (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*), committee and plenary debates (Czech *Poslanecká sn movna* and Czech *Senát*) and panel discussions (Latvian *Saeima*). The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* added that the Report was to be included in the yearly plenary debate on the State of the Rule of Law in the Netherlands and the debate on the government policy for Europe. The European Parliament further specified that the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) had initiated a legislative own-initiative report on the Establishment of an EU Mechanism on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights as a follow-up on the European Parliament resolution of October 2016, asking for a comprehensive and preventive mechanism in this field. LIBE had also established a Working Group to monitor breaches of democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights, and the fight against corruption within the EU.

1.6.b The overwhelming majority (30 out of 31 Parliaments/Chambers) agreed that it would be helpful for national Parliaments to have an exchange of views on these reports, while one disagreed.

1.6.c A number of Parliaments/Chambers shared additional views regarding the rule of law reports. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* said it had appointed rapporteurs on the rule of law who had met with their counterparts from Denmark and Finland to exchange views on the topic. The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and the Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* suggested to share best practices with other national Parliaments, while the Italian *Camera dei deputati* proposed to share information on infringement procedures regarding the rule of law. The European Parliament noted that the LIBE committee had asked for authorization to organize an interparliamentary committee meeting (ICM) on the European Commission rule of law report, which was planned to take place in November 2020. An important aspect to be discussed during this ICM was the impact of COVID-19 measures on democracy,

fundamental rights and the rule of law, given the important role of national Parliaments' scrutiny during this period.

The French *Sénat* stressed that the exertion of foreign influence on democratic processes, especially with regard to elections and disinformation, had to be included in the discussion and welcomed the commitment of the European Parliament in this regard, illustrated by the creation of the new Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU (INGE) as well as the European Commission's expressed will to include the matter in its European Democracy Action Plan.

1.7 Twelve Parliaments/Chambers shared concluding remarks on the chapter. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* pointed out that the adoption and implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans was a topic of interest for national Parliaments, and so was the alignment of the recovery package with the European semester. In a similar vein, the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* suggested a debate on the efficiency of the European response to the crisis, including such issues as the need for a supranational approach and details of an emergency legislative procedure. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* stressed that candidate and potential candidate countries should be able to participate in the Conference, given that enlargement was one of the most important issues regarding the future of Europe.

The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* as well as the Polish *Sejm* emphasized that the Conference should aim at reaching those who were not typically participants in such discussions, with particular attention to the youth. The *Sejm* also expressed its hope that the focus would be on issues of substance, more relevant to a future vision of Europe rather than focussing on institutional arrangements. In a similar vein, the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* underlined that the Conference should focus on a policy-first approach, with concrete concerns for citizens' lives at the core of its debates. The bottom-up approach of the Conference was also highlighted by the European Parliament, the latter also suggesting that, in the long run, a permanent mechanism for engaging with the citizens in contemplating the future of Europe should be envisaged.

The Slovenian *Državni zbor* stressed that in order for the Conference to accomplish tangible results, it should not set too many goals but rather make sure that it achieved its intended objectives, a sentiment echoed by the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, the German *Bundesrat* and the European Parliament pointed out that it was important for the Conference Plenary to be able to adjust to current developments and enable an open forum without a predetermined outcome. The European Parliament added that special Eurobarometer surveys could also be used to support the agenda setting of the Conference.

The Swedish *Riksdag* emphasized that the Conference should be regarded as a supplement to representative democracy, given that it was the parliaments and the elected party representatives that ultimately represented the citizens in political decision-making. The *Riksdag* added that a gender perspective needed to permeate the entire Conference.

CHAPTER 2

LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

THE SECOND CHAPTER OF THE 34th BI-ANNUAL REPORT aims to look at lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health

2.1 Asked whether the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) should be granted extended competences, comparable to developments in the case of FRONTEX, a significant number of respondents (17 out of 36) replied positively, with an almost equal number (16 respondents) expressing no opinion on the matter. Only two Parliaments/Chambers replied negatively.

2.2 When trying to identify a possible way forward for reducing the EU's dependence on third countries for procurement of protective equipment, medication and pharmaceutical precursors, Parliaments/Chambers pointed to different solutions, with some Parliaments/Chambers choosing more than one option. Of the given choices, relocating production processes to the EU proved the most popular, with 24 respondents opting for it. Stockholding coordinated at European level was the second most popular option, with 21 respondents backing it. Stockholding coordinated at national level was the least popular option, chosen by 11 respondents.

A number of respondents provided other suggestions. Some pointed out the need to ensure industrial autonomy, while respecting established business values, such as free international trade and the participation of SMEs and ensuring the production and manufacturing of key medication and medicinal products (German *Bundesrat*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, European Parliament) The German *Bundesrat* welcomed the European Commission's announcement in this regard (COM (2020) 456 final). The Swedish *Riksdag* on the other hand welcomed the fact that the EU's export restrictions on personal medical equipment to third countries had ceased, adding that remaining obstacles to freedom of movement within the internal market needed to be eliminated. The Estonian *Riigikogu* specifically referred to Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API), stating that European production capacity with regard to the latter would help reduce dependence on third countries, with possible incentives being the reduction of fees related to marketing authorisation conditional to the use of API produced in the EEA or other tax reliefs. The Estonian *Riigikogu* further stressed the need to consider the potential impacts on affordability of the final medicinal product and to take measures to mitigate the risks of higher prices and the possible negative effects on accessibility to medicine in Europe. The Polish *Sejm* also noted how the pandemic had shown Europe's dependence on third country suppliers of APIs, and recalled that the issue of securing an appropriate level of production within the EU would be a part of the Pharmaceutical Strategy being developed by the European Commission.

Enhanced cooperation mechanisms, information sharing between Member States and better coordination in general were also mentioned by a couple of respondents (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Lithuanian *Seimas*). The Lithuanian *Seimas* also called for a review of EU pharmaceutical legislation, and the supervision of the global production and supply chain of active medicinal

substances, somewhat echoed in the suggestion raised by the Maltese *Kamra tad-deputati* to have a production line based on globally harmonised specifications and guidelines.

The European Parliament was of the view that the creation of a European Health Response Mechanism (EHRM) would strengthen operational coordination at EU level and that Member States should exchange good practice in the area of stock management. The European Parliament underlined that the European Medicines Agency (EMA) could play an important role in preventing shortages of medicines at EU level during emergencies, and that therefore it should be given a broader mandate and increased resources.

Some Parliaments/Chambers favoured a combination of all suggested options (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Latvian *Saeima*), while others pointed out that their respective Parliament/Chamber had not adopted a formal position on the matter (Danish *Folketing*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*) or was not qualified to reply (Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*). The Polish *Sejm* indicated that, given that each measure played a separate role, it was impossible to indicate a preference for one or some over others.

2.3 Parliaments/Chambers offered a number of different views when asked what form a coordinated approach could take in order to more effectively contain the spread of disease in a pandemic situation.

A number of Parliaments/Chambers recognised the sense behind national measures in such situations. The Slovenian *Državni zbor* stated that the development of events had shown that the responses to the pandemic adopted by Member States varied depending on several national specifics, and whereas the general frame of coordination could be established at EU level, it was sensible to maintain national measures. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* echoed this sentiment, stating that the spread of the coronavirus was measured primarily on a national level and the necessary measures were also adopted on this level, so that all coordinative fora should focus on the health protection of citizens and support effective national measures. The Polish *Sejm* noted that Member States should have the right to use their own safety measures in addition to any coordinated approach adopted. The Swedish *Riksdag* called for joint action between Member States while ensuring that the division of competences between the European Union and its Member States regarding social, health and medical issues be fully respected.

Nevertheless, a number of other respondents called for a more coordinated approach, in relation to, among others, conditions for border closure and allowed travel (French *Assemblée nationale*, Latvian *Saeima*), common questionnaires for travellers, and common conditions for repatriation (Latvian *Saeima*), the epidemiologically safe free movement of goods and services and the application of standardised rules to determine the epidemiological safety of the Member States, as well as rules for cross-border movement of goods and people (Polish *Sejm*), closer coordination at the level of regional borders through working groups or the Committee of the Regions (German *Bundestag*), joint crisis plans (Slovenian *Državni svet*) or a joint assessment framework (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*).

Uniform criteria for dealing with infections risks and tests (Estonian *Riigikogu*, German *Bundestag*) and new competences at EU level that would allow a European-wide response to cross-border health threats (Spanish *Cortes Generales*) were also referred to. The Spanish *Cortes Generales* also called for a plan for the prevention of natural risks to be implemented at European level and stressed the need for a coordinated approach that could more effectively contain the spread of disease in a pandemic situation, which would be possible in the framework of a Health Union. This would enable

the European Union to face possible outbreaks of COVID-19 or future pandemics, either through reform of the Treaties or through enhanced cooperation.

The exchange of information was deemed an important element in any coordination attempt by a number of Parliaments/Chambers (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*), and so was the sharing of data at the national and subnational level by public health authorities (Slovak *Národná rada*). The Italian *Senato della repubblica* called for the establishment of an emergency network. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* referred to the coordination between Health Ministers and Interior Ministers as well as between Heads of State. This was echoed by the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* welcomed proposals to enhance the ECDC in order to strengthen the EU's overall preparedness and response, and supported the development of an EU pandemic preparedness plan at the interregional level, as well as a Health Task Force, which the Lithuanian *Seimas* deemed particularly helpful for small Member States. The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* also supported the strengthening of the ECDC. The European Parliament called for a revised mandate for the ECDC to increase its budget, staffing and competences, thus enabling to draw up mandatory guidance for Member States and coordinate laboratory research in times of health crises.

A number of Parliaments/Chambers either had no opinion to express on the matter, or noted that the matter had not been debated in their respective Parliament/Chamber (Belgian *Senate*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Danish *Folketing*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*).

Research and Innovation

2.4 Opinions were divided when it came to the question of whether the funding level for the Horizon Europe research programme, proposed by the European Council on 21 July 2020, was sufficient. Out of the 34 respondents, 14 had no opinion to express on the matter, 11 thought funding was sufficient, whereas 9 did not.

2.5.a According to the report, the vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers (26 out of 33 respondents) had not examined the vaccine strategy presented by the European Commission (COM (2020) 245 final). Only seven Parliaments/Chambers had examined this strategy.

Asked to elaborate, the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* noted that while the strategy itself would be formally examined in preparation of the EU Health Council of 2 December 2020, the Netherlands had already been involved in the subject matter as one of the initiators of the Vaccine Alliance, together with France, Germany and Italy, which aimed at exploring promising initiatives for the development of a vaccine. The French *Sénat* noted that its European Affairs Committee had looked at this strategy as part of its report on the European Union and Health. While welcoming the report, it further noted that some Member States had already signed a deal granting them preferential access to an eventual vaccine with the company AstraZeneca a few days prior. In the Swedish *Riksdag*, the strategy had been the subject of deliberations between the government on the one hand and the Committee on Health and Welfare on the other, and of consultations in the Committee on EU Affairs. The prevalent position in the Swedish *Riksdag* that emerged was that internationally coordinated measures and cooperation at both EU and international level were welcome, but the focus of the common EU vaccination schedule should be on areas where cooperation at EU level gave added value. This may include support to research and development, coordinating production of vaccines in the EU, identifying possible production plants and implementing joint procurement processes, all the while

ensuring proper collaboration with industry. The Finnish *Eduskunta* noted that, in Finland, this matter fell solely within the competence of the government, which had duly informed Parliament about its standpoint, namely that the country would join the Agreement concerning collaboration in vaccine procurement. The Danish *Folketing* noted that its European Affairs Committee had also given its unanimous support of the mandate proposed by the Minister of Health on the adoption of the Proposal for a Regulation on the conduct of clinical trials with and supply of medicinal products for human use containing genetically modified organisms intended to treat or prevent coronavirus disease (COM (2020) 261 final). The Spanish *Cortes Generales* pointed out that the Post COVID Reconstruction Committee created in the Congress of Deputies had agreed on its Conclusions, approved by the Plenary, to guarantee the participation of Spain in all efforts to acquire a vaccine against COVID-19 and distribute it in a centralised fashion at European level.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* noted that while this specific proposal had not been discussed yet, several other proposals related to the Union's medical response to COVID-19 had indeed been discussed.

2.5.b The overwhelming majority of respondents (20 out of 25 Parliaments/Chambers) considered it advisable to adapt the legal framework for future crisis scenarios arising from an outbreak of an infectious disease or from other comparable serious crisis situations. Only five Parliaments/Chambers thought otherwise.

Asked which specific proposals their respective Parliament/Chamber had on this point, a number of respondents referred to an improved legal framework (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*). The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* called for emergency legislative and administrative procedures defining the role of EU institutions and Member States. The Belgian *Sénat* suggested that the management of cross-border crises could be a responsibility of the EU. Some respondents referred to better common rules on borders and mobility as well as health measures, including but not limited to the availability of medical material (Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, French *Sénat*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*). The German *Bundestag* called for the creation of coordinating bodies for crisis situations or, alternatively, the integration and linking of existing structures.

The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* called for a common European Strategy for tackling the pandemic crisis as well as future comparable crisis situations, and stressed the importance of cooperation between the European Parliament and national Parliaments in this regard, suggesting that the latter could contribute jointly to the debate by sending a common proposal, within the framework of COSAC.

The Maltese *Kamra tad-deputati* argued that the current crisis had shown that Decision No 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health was inappropriate for a crisis, as were the provisions for the Joint Procurement tools found therein.

A number of Parliaments/Chambers had no specific proposals yet (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Polish *Senat*).

2.6 When asked if Parliaments/Chambers were considering how Member States could network more effectively in the field of research and innovation and how they could ensure improved data exchange in the health sector, 16 of 31 Parliaments/Chambers responded affirmatively and about an equal number (15) negatively.

Asked to elaborate, the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, the French *Sénat*, and the Lithuanian *Seimas* welcomed the European COVID-19 data platform, noting that it facilitated the exchange of data during the crisis and helped to strengthen cooperation. While the German *Bundestag* and the German *Bundesrat* stated their support for a common Health Data Space, they also stressed the importance of paying attention to data protection and privacy aspects in this respect, concerns also shared by the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*. Parliaments/Chambers also stressed the need for adequate infrastructure (Estonian *Riigikogu*, German *Bundesrat*), as well as for compatibility and interoperability in the exchange of data (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Estonian *Riigikogu*). More specifically, the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* referred to the eHealth network that discussed innovative initiatives in the fields of interoperability and exchange of data. Another concern raised by the Polish *Sejm* related to the sources of the data and particularly to the EU's dependency on external sources when developing its research.

According to the German *Bundestag*, cooperation should be strengthened at all levels in the fields of health and research: local, national, European and international. As an example of improving coordination in the field of research and development at European and international level, the Spanish *Cortes Generales* referred to the ACT Accelerator initiative (Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator) and the Polish *Sejm* welcomed the European Open Science Cloud. The Spanish *Cortes Generales* expressed its support for a public health system that would be embedded in a European network and which would facilitate the operation of a system of relevant health indicators, statistical data and emergency health resources. The Lithuanian *Seimas* and the European Parliament identified the EU programme Horizon Europe as the most important EU initiative to support research and innovation. More specifically, the European Parliament underlined the significance of open science and reported that it had made several additions to the programme in the direction of more synergies and better EU cooperation. Investments and adequate funding in research and innovation were highlighted as significant by the Spanish *Cortes Generales*, while the European Parliament recalled its request for EUR 120 billion for Horizon Europe, in contrast to the EUR 75.9 billion proposed by the European Council. The European Parliament also made reference to the European Research Area (ERA), listing some potential areas where improvements could be achieved, specifically with respect to medicines, such as a stronger role for the European Commission and Member States in coordinating to avoid duplication; the establishment of an EU health academy network; clear regulatory framework for businesses; and a greater inclusion of SMEs in the medicine supply chain.

Reinvigorating the Economy

2.7 Asked if their Member States had adopted economic stimulus packages, all 35 respondents confirmed that such packages had been adopted. The focus in the areas addressed varied:

-) Securing both employment and businesses (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, German *Bundestag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*);
-) Supporting both households/families and businesses (and their liquidity), including the self-employed and SMEs (Belgian *Sénat*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, German *Bundestag*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*);
-) Focusing on employment (Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*), jobs, as well as helping the most vulnerable in society (Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*);

-) Focusing on liquidity, SMEs and employment (Romanian *Senat* and Slovak *Národná rada*).

The German *Bundesrat* and the Lithuanian *Seimas* also referred to support aimed at municipalities and local authorities.

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers reported that their Member States decided for a mix of measures from both the expenditure and the revenue side, e.g.:

-) Tax deferrals and/or tax reductions (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Danish *Folketing*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, German *Bundestag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Latvian *Saeima*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Swedish *Riksdag*);
-) Expenditure such as subsidies (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, German *Bundestag*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, Swedish *Riksdag*), including financial assistance to companies and equity investments (Danish *Folketing*);
-) Loan guarantees (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Sénat*, Danish *Folketing*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, German *Bundestag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Latvian *Saeima*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Slovak *Národná rada*) and facilitating interest-free or low interest loans (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Polish *Sejm*, Slovenian *Državni svet*);
-) Facilitating payment delays (Belgian *Sénat*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Czech *Senát*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Slovak *Národná rada*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*);
-) Deferrals of payment of social security contributions (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Czech *Senát*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Polish *Sejm*, Slovak *Národná rada*);
-) Allowing for (temporary short-term) unemployment benefits and for wage compensation schemes (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and Czech *Senát*, Danish *Folketing*, Latvian *Saeima*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Polish *Sejm*, Slovak *Národná rada*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*), including for sick days (Estonian *Riigikogu*) and other benefits (Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*) or family grants (German *Bundesrat*);
-) Reduction of electricity costs (German *Bundesrat*).

Five respondents stated that the main focus was on expenditure. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* indicated that the focus was placed on the expenditure rather than on tax relief, mainly through unemployment benefits and support for SMEs. While the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* reported about tax deferrals, both the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and Dutch *Eerste Kamer* noted that the focus was mainly on increasing expenditure with a mix of supporting labour costs, the self-employed, fixed-costs for SME's and support for private and public investments to create growth. Similarly, the Finnish *Eduskunta* reported an emphasis on expenditure support, including on private entrepreneurs, SMEs

and innovation. The Romanian *Senat* noted the focus on increasing expenditure, especially with the aim to support liquidity, SMEs and employment.

A large number of Parliaments/Chambers stated that, during certain periods, some measures focused on specific sectors such as:

-) Tourism and hospitality sectors (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Danish *Folketing*, Finnish *Eduskunta*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*);
-) Catering sector (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Finnish *Eduskunta*);
-) Culture and event industry sectors (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Danish *Folketing*, Swedish *Riksdag*);
-) The agricultural and forestry sector (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*);
-) Air traffic (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*);
-) Health sector (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Polish *Senat*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, Swedish *Riksdag*);
-) Banking sector (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*);
-) Media (Danish *Folketing*).

The Danish *Folketing* also reported that initiatives to mitigate the economic consequences of the pandemic included support for students and advancing public construction projects. The Swedish *Riksdag* also noted that support was provided to sports organisations, education providers, teachers and students.

The German *Bundesrat*, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* and the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* mentioned that for a certain period of time, the measures were directed to the sectors that were most adversely affected. The latter also set in place measures specifically targeting the health sector. The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* and the Romanian *Senat* reported that, while initially the measures were general in scope, the most recent measures focused on specific sectors, with the latter highlighting the horeca sector, the automotive sector and consumer electronics in particular.

The Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and the Czech *Senát* stated that there was no sector-specific approach in the measures taken. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* also noted that the latest package was general and not sector-specific.

The Croatian *Hrvatski sabor* stated that, irrespective of the sector, micro businesses could apply for support if they suffered at least 50 percent losses in comparison to the previous year.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* reported that an “Investment Premium Act” targeted especially green and digitisation investments. The French *Assemblée nationale* and the French *Sénat* referred to a EUR 100 billion investment plan which would be based on three pillars: environment, competitiveness and cohesion.

The Polish *Sejm* and Polish *Senat* referred to the “Anti-Crisis Shield” which provided, amongst others, the strengthening of the financial system and of public investments, besides the support for workplaces and entrepreneurs. The Polish *Senat* also mentioned extraordinary changes in court proceedings as a relevant measure that was taken.

This question was not applicable to the European Parliament.

2.8 Asked to name other economic or social policy measures that had proven particularly effective in mitigating the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, 13 of the respondents provided different replies. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, the Estonian *Riigikogu*, the French *Assemblée nationale* named part-time work as a relevant measure. The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* mentioned the direct stimulus for the employers which had also helped in curtailing resulting unemployment. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* and the French *Assemblée nationale* referred to measures promoted at EU level. The Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* noted the right to extraordinary COVID-19 family leave, as well as a ban on eviction and a freeze of rents. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* listed the restrictions on free movement of persons, special provisions for elderly people, obligatory health protective measures (such as face masks) and the provision of online education and teleworking. The French *Sénat* noted the maintenance of the European Central Bank's (ECB) liquidity and interest rate policy, as well as the temporary lifting of the public deficit ceiling to 3 percent of GDP. The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* replied that the effective reduction of the number of active infections helped the recovery and also noted the importance of all measures that kept enterprises and workers stand-by for a speedy resumption of the economic activities. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* reported that every resident in Malta received vouchers of a total amount of EUR 100. The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* mentioned the consistent dialogue with the business sector that had taken place. The Slovenian *Državni svet* noted solutions found in terms of the implementation of infrastructure and development projects at local level and funds available to healthcare providers.

A number of respondents repeated that the economic measures, already listed in light of their replies to the previous question on the Member States' economic stimulus packages, had alleviated the impact of the pandemic on the economy (German *Bundestag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*). More specifically, the German *Bundestag* referred to the part-time allowances and benefits linked to children and the loss of income due to the closure of schools and day-care centres; while also highlighting the support provided to hospitality, catering, culture and events sectors. The Latvian *Saeima* referred to the provisions of tax deferrals and of loan guarantees. The Polish *Senat* underlined the subsidies given to enterprises for employee remuneration costs and social security contributions in the event of a decline in sales revenues or in case of a reduction of employee's working time by 20 percent. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* referred to, amongst others, the lay-off scheme, the deferral of taxes, and moratorium of credits. The Romanian *Senat* noted in particular the salary support of employees sent into technical unemployment, the fiscal stimulus for medical personnel and the support to SMEs.

The Slovak *Národná rada* mentioned teleworking as a useful measure, in addition to highlighting the other economic stimulus measures, namely: improving the liquidity of businesses, allowing for postponement of payments and for sick leave benefits.

The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* reported that it had set up two Committees looking into the COVID-19 crisis: a permanent one and a special one, and noted that it supported the EU in mobilising

the World Health Organisation (WHO) with a view to facilitating the opening of a large-scale investigation into the origin of the virus.

The Finnish *Eduskunta* reported that, in August 2020, the government had launched an in-depth evaluation to assess the short- and long-term impacts of the economic stimulus packages.

The Belgian *Sénat*, the Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, the Czech *Senát*, the Danish *Folketing*, the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, the Lithuanian *Seimas*, the Slovenian *Državni zbor* and the Spanish *Cortes Generales* noted that there was no clear or official position on this.

This question was not applicable to the European Parliament.

2.9 When Parliaments/Chambers were asked which of the European measures to support national measures they considered to be particularly effective, a large number of respondents (14) named the temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) to address sudden increases in public expenditure for the preservation of employment (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, the Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, the Romanian *Senat*, Slovak *Národná rada*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, and the European Parliament).

Other popular replies about measures that were considered particularly effective included:

- J Relaxation of state aid rules (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, French *Sénat*, Hungarian *Országgy lés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Romanian *Senat*, Slovak *Národná rada*) and competition rules (German *Bundestag*);
- J Flexibility of EU fiscal rules including activation of the general “escape clause” of the Stability and Growth Pact (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, German *Bundestag*, Hungarian *Országgy lés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Romanian *Senat*, Slovak *Národná rada*, European Parliament);
- J Actions by the ECB including the Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme (PEPP) (German *Bundestag*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, European Parliament);
- J Actions by the European Investment Bank including the Pan-European Guarantee Fund (EGF) in response to COVID-19 (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Slovak *Národná rada*, European Parliament);
- J Flexibility and redirection of structural and other EU funds and support from the Corona Response Investment Initiative (CRII) (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Hungarian *Országgy lés*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Latvian *Saeima*, Slovak *Národná rada*).

In this respect, the Polish *Sejm* referred to the European Commission guidelines and recommendations package to help Member States progressively abolish travel restrictions, while the Polish *Senat* noted the proposal to amend Council Regulation (EU) 2016/369 on the provision of emergency support within the Union. The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* highlighted in particular

the support provided to the agricultural and food markets. The European Parliament also underlined the importance of launching the European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* and the Slovak *Národná rada* expressed their support for the outcome of the European Council of 17-21 July 2020. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* and the Italian *Camera dei deputati* expressed their support for the recovery plan for the EU, Next Generation EU. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, on the other hand, noted that the EU recovery plan had received reservations, especially on the principle of loan-based subsidies for Member States and the principle of conditionality with regards to structural reforms was central in the discussions. The German *Bundestag* noted in particular the InvestEU Programme, while the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* pointed to the EU4Health Programme.

The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* reported that the special Committee on the COVID-19 crisis would evaluate the measures and its report was still being drawn. The Finnish *Eduskunta* was also awaiting the evaluation conducted by the Finnish government on the short and long-term impacts of the economic stimulus packages.

A number of respondents replied that they had no (official) opinion on this (Belgian *Sénat*, the Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, the Danish *Folketing*, the Estonian *Riigikogu*, the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, the Spanish *Cortes Generales*). The Czech *Senát* indicated its overall support for the measures at EU level.

2.10.a Asked which priorities and focuses should be established at EU level when designing the package of measures to deal with the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, six Parliaments/Chambers stated that they did not have a position on the matter and/or that the matter had not yet been discussed.

Among the measures chosen by respondents, green and digital transition, employment, innovation, research and development, as well as health featured as the main policy areas which should be prioritised when establishing the package of measures to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic at EU level. With regard to employment, the French *Assemblée nationale* stressed the need to give special attention to the fight against unemployment and precariousness. Several Parliaments/Chambers called for a focus on the social dimension (Latvian *Saeima*), especially on alleviating social inequality (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* and Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*), social inclusion (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*) and fulfilling the objectives of the Pillar of social rights (Italian *Camera dei deputati*). In addition, the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* promoted protection of workers' rights, while the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* advocated support to enterprises to adapt to new business environments. The German *Bundesrat* and the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* expressed their support for SMEs. In the area of research and development, the Slovenian *Državni svet* supported greater emphasis on medical research and propulsion technologies as well as artificial intelligence (AI). A couple of respondents highlighted education as one of the desirable priority areas (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Slovenian *Državni svet*).

Several Parliaments/Chambers listed other priority economic areas, such as sustainability, resilience (Estonian *Riigikogu*, French *Sénat*, German *Bundesrat*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*), competitiveness (German *Bundesrat*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*) and convergence (German *Bundesrat*, Slovak *Národná rada*). The French *Sénat* called for the relocation of strategic production and ensuring technological and digital sovereignty, a

position to which the Slovenian *Državni svet* and the European Parliament also subscribed. The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* favoured reducing territorial inequalities and developing efficient infrastructure, whereas the Estonian *Riigikogu* asked for increasing the efficiency of crisis response. The European Parliament advocated diversifying supply chains and reorienting trade policies. The German *Bundesrat* called for strengthening the cohesion policy measures and for the continuation of EU guarantees to regional development banks, while the Polish *Sejm* endorsed the use of the cohesion policy instruments to eliminate negative effects of the economic slowdown.

The Polish *Sejm* expressed its support for the European Commission's proposal for a recovery plan, while the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* supported the priorities already agreed by the Member States within the context of the EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* welcomed the focus on the EU4Health programme, Recovery and Resilience Facility, Just Transition Fund, regional development under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Horizon Europe programme, as a good starting point in designing the package of measures.

The German *Bundestag* advocated the implementation of the reforms recommended in the European Semester, the promotion of coordinated economic and social policy measures and fiscal policy instruments.

Several Parliaments/Chambers expressed some more general remarks concerning the possible priorities within the package of recovery measures. The Finnish *Eduskunta* and the Estonian *Riigikogu* placed an emphasis on the overall strengthening of the single market. The Latvian *Saeima* stressed that measures should respond to urgent and mid-term needs of regions or Member States, and the Swedish *Riksdag* added that they should be targeted at the parts of the EU which have been hit the hardest, both economically and socially. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* and the Polish *Senat* acknowledged that the pandemic affected Member States, regions, businesses and professions differently, and argued that imposing top-down priorities could render them ineffective. While the Polish *Senat* emphasised that measures at EU level should cover all areas of economic and social life, the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* favoured focusing on the protection of lives and jobs as well as on the re-boosting of economic growth. The latter was also supported by the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* and the Swedish *Riksdag*.

The Romanian *Senat* considered that the post-crisis measures proposed by the European Commission should directly target the most affected categories - citizens, SMEs, public goods and services - and recognised the need for EU action in areas considered the responsibility of governments, such as funding public health systems and preparing the necessary professional personnel.

In addition to listing priorities that should be in focus when designing the package of measures to deal with the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic at EU level, several Parliaments/Chambers reflected on the method and the general framework.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* suggested monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the SURE instrument.

The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* underlined the principle of conditionality in relation to the European support packages.

According to the Finnish *Eduskunta*, transparency and good governance should constitute a guiding principle for devising the measures, whilst only those measures deemed most effective should be promoted. The Finnish *Eduskunta* considered the continuation of the discussion on ensuring debt-sustainability in Europe crucial.

The French *Sénat* encouraged the rapid validation of national recovery plans and the development of EU own resources system to support repaying the collective loan as well as the introduction of subsidies and guarantees depending on the extent of the recession caused by the crisis.

In the context of green and digital transition, the Italian *Camera dei deputati* called for a horizontal and cross-cutting approach to individual subjects.

In order to tackle the impact of the pandemic on the economy in a proper manner, the Polish *Sejm* stated that the reference period should start at the end of 2019 or at the end of the first quarter of 2020, and include Member States which were at the convergence stage in the criteria for allocation and expected economic growth loss. The Polish *Sejm* argued that a rapid refund from the EU budget for expenses sustained by beneficiaries of the cohesion policy could be a principal mechanism for combatting the negative effects of the pandemic.

The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* emphasised the need to maintain the balance between recovery measures and previously agreed objectives of the EU Strategic Agenda, and called for an effective mechanism for preventing the misuse of state aid and the negative impact on competition and entrepreneurship.

The Slovak *Národná rada* expressed the opinion that measures should ensure necessary flexibility and adequate timeframe to enable efficient allocation of resources, while co-financing rules should remain unchanged in the spirit of solidarity with less developed Member States and regions.

The Swedish *Riksdag* considered that the EU's measures to support recovery should be temporary, well-targeted, proportional and budget-restrictive, while, as far as possible, the support should rely on existing instruments and forms of funding and not on new EU own resources. Furthermore, the Swedish *Riksdag* maintained that the focus should be on the first years of recovery, and the support only used for crisis management and recovery. According to the Swedish *Riksdag*, support to the Member States should be compatible with the EU's economic policy framework, and, where appropriate, with the country-specific recommendations, and with the promotion of the EU's fundamental values as a condition. Moreover, the Swedish *Riksdag* considered that the support to private investments should have strong added-value, be demand-driven and financially sustainable.

The European Parliament recalled its resolution of 17 April 2020 where it called for a massive recovery package to transform the economy and strengthen its resilience, to support SMEs and to increase jobs and skills in order to mitigate the crisis impact on workers, consumers and families. The European Parliament also called for an ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), reform of EU own resources system to guarantee the recovery package and for the use of all means and unused finances in the current EU budget.

2.10.b Eleven of the responding 25 Parliaments/Chambers expressed their support for placing the climate protection and sustainability, alongside digitalisation, at the core of the package of measures designed to support recovery.

The Finnish *Eduskunta* stressed that the recovery plan should help the EU achieve its climate ambitions. The German *Bundesrat* underlined the importance of paying due attention to the competitive sustainability in the EU and noted that public investments should respect a green oath to 'do no harm', while particular importance should be given to an intact nature and high biodiversity.

In relation to digitalisation, the Italian *Camera dei deputati* argued that the circular economy strategy, especially the conversion of some sectors and the creation of new jobs, went hand in hand with the goals of digitalisation, especially data strategy and the creation of a European cloud, while the Italian *Senato della Repubblica* underlined that the pandemic highlighted the importance of more efficient data and information exchange systems, and stronger coordination between the Member States.

The Lithuanian *Seimas* underlined the necessity to take into account the needs and the impact of the crisis in the Member States when deliberating the allocation of funds from the Recovery Fund, and prioritised investments that contribute to structural reforms, green and digital transformation and enhanced healthcare. The Slovenian *Državni svet* called for an increased investment in digital transformation, AI and climate neutral technologies.

The French *Sénat* underlined the need to reconcile the fight against climate change, sustainable and economic development and social inclusion, and noted that the European Union should not deprive itself of any technology to achieve the ambitious objectives, in particular in terms of climate neutrality and energy efficiency.

Some Parliaments/Chambers had somewhat more reserved positions.

The Romanian *Senat* emphasised the need to strike a balance between the financial support provided by the EU to each Member State in order to achieve climate and sustainability goals and the financial needs and ability of each Member State, in such a way that the set goals do not exceed the financial support capacity of each Member State.

The Czech *Poslanecká sn movna* called for caution when linking the reaction to the pandemic to the measures for reviving the economy. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* argued that the survival of the actual economic activities and preservation of jobs should be the main priority. The Polish *Senat* saw the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as a deep interference in various sectors of the economy, which might relate to the expansion of the scope of the EU's competences, and considered it appropriate to subject the decision on determining the trajectory should be subject to subsidiarity assessment by national Parliaments, taking into account its feasibility within the energy mix of each Member State.

Three Parliaments/Chambers replied that the matter had not yet been discussed.

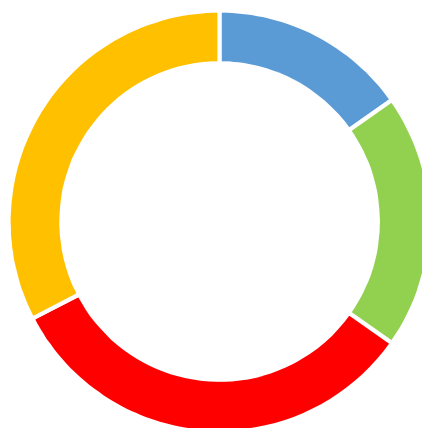
2.11 The majority of Parliaments/Chambers (20 out of 35) stated that they did not have an opinion on the issue of linking the allocation of EU-funds to compliance with CO₂ emission thresholds. Six respondents were in favour of linking the allocation of EU-funds to compliance with CO₂ emission thresholds, while seven Parliaments/Chambers were against such possibility. The Belgian *Chambre des représentants* acknowledged that compatibility with the Green Deal was an important prerequisite for granting stimulus funds.

2.12.a The majority of Parliaments/Chambers (20 out of 27) were in favour of introducing new EU own resources, in addition to the one based on non-recycled plastic waste, with seven respondents against.

2.12.b Following on the previous question, 19 out of 23 respondents welcomed the introduction of at least one new source of EU own resources.

- J A national contribution based on the common consolidated corporate tax base received support from seven Parliaments/Chambers (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, German *Bundestag*, Polish *Sejm*, and European Parliament).
- J Revenue from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme was backed by nine Parliaments/Chambers (Belgian *Sénat*, French *Assemblée nationale*, German *Bundestag*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, and European Parliament).
- J New EU own resources based on a digital tax were welcomed by 15 Parliaments/Chambers (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Belgian *Sénat*, Czech *Senát*, French *Assemblée nationale*, German *Bundestag*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Latvian *Saeima*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Polish *Sejm*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, Romanian *Senat* and Slovak *Národná rada*).
- J A border compensation mechanism for CO₂ costs incurred received support from 15 Parliaments/Chambers (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, Belgian *Sénat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Czech *Senát*, French *Assemblée nationale*, German *Bundestag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Latvian *Saeima*, Polish *Sejm*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*, Slovak *Národná rada*, European Parliament).

What form should additional new EU own resources take?



- A national contribution based on the common consolidated corporate tax base
- Revenue from EU Emissions Trading Scheme
- New EU own resources based on a digital tax
- A border compensation mechanism for CO₂ costs incurred

Five Parliaments/Chambers (Belgian *Chambre des représentants*, German *Bundestag*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, European Parliament) suggested additional sources of new EU own resources such as financial transaction tax. The Romanian *Senat* called for new own resources based on the taxation of large corporations with global coverage in the field of information

technology, and suggested a royalty calculated according to the amount of information that these companies extracted and used.

The German *Bundestag* emphasised that the exact nature of the new own resources presented by the European Council in July 2020 remained to be examined. The Finnish *Eduskunta* pointed out that its final position on the matter would depend on the overall impact of the proposal for new EU own resources. The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* outlined that new EU own resources should circumvent the transfer of excessive financial burdens to the less prosperous Member States. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* preferred new own resources based on revenue from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme only as originally proposed by the European Commission in 2018.

In more general terms, the Finnish *Eduskunta* considered that well-targeted environment-related taxes could be beneficial in directing activities with the EU towards commonly set climate and environmental goals, and proposed examining the possibilities for EU-level action supporting the finances of public sectors and transparency of the financial sector.

The French *Sénat* favoured the increase of the EU's own resources to allow for an ambitious MFF and to contain the progression of national contributions to the financing of the Union.

The European Parliament expressed support for the introduction of a basket of new own resources in order to generate genuine EU income to refinance the costs of the borrowing of funds under the European Recovery Instrument in the medium to long-term, with the aim of avoiding additional pressure on national budgets (through higher GNI-based contributions) and unnecessary downward pressure on investment instruments and expenditure programmes under the MFF. New own resources explicitly mentioned by the European Parliament comprised (income stemming from) the Emissions Trading System, the Financial Transaction Tax, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, a digital levy and the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base, while potential other candidates could be assessed.

The Polish *Senat* and the Spanish *Cortes Generales* stated that this question had not yet been discussed at the level of the competent Committee, and no *ad hoc* resolution had been approved on this specific topic, while the Finnish *Eduskunta* was not able to provide an unambiguous reply due to ongoing discussion in Parliament.

2.13.a Fourteen out of 32 respondents expressed support for the idea of withholding a substantial proportion of EU funds, e.g. from the Cohesion Fund, if there is a clear risk of serious infringements concerning the rule of law that would jeopardise the EU's financial interests. The Belgian *Sénat* stated that most members of the Senate's delegation to the Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs supported the idea. The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* added that the rule of law principle should be applied to the allocation of all EU funds.

The European Parliament recalled its first-reading position, adopted on 4 April 2019, on the Proposal for a regulation on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States, including amendments to specify the definition of a “generalised deficiency”.

Some Parliaments/Chambers advised caution when approaching this issue (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*), recalling the existing mechanisms for upholding the rule of law (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*), and warning against duplication of instruments or mechanisms (Polish *Sejm*,

Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*) or increasing conditionality that stifle implementation of the funds (Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*). The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* preferred a strong and transparent mechanism, applicable to all Member States on an equal footing. The Italian *Camera dei deputati* called for an assessment of the added value of the conditionality mechanism linking respect for the rule of law to the allocation of EU funds. The Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* argued that withholding of EU funds should be considered only after serious infringements have occurred, adding that the proposed *ex ante* withholding of funds seems to be lacking respect for institutional processes and guarantees on the part of the EU.

Several Parliaments/Chambers reflected on the matter in more general terms. The Estonian *Riigikogu* stressed the importance of ensuring the respect for the rule of law in all Member States. The Romanian *Senat* backed the establishment of a mechanism that would protect the EU budget when general deficiencies regarding the rule of law in the Member States affected or risked affecting EU budget. The Finnish *Eduskunta* stressed the importance of the proposal in terms of strengthening the EU's rule of law toolkit and protecting the financial interests of the EU. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* acknowledged that the effective respect of the rule of law constituted a prerequisite for ensuring sufficient protection of EU spending in Member States. The Slovenian *Državni svet* argued that an appropriate weight should be given to the unconditional application of the EU's values, including the rule of law, while the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* considered the protection of EU financial interests to be a common goal.

The need to define clear and objective criteria for activating the “sanctions” mechanism as well as to set a transparent assessment method was mentioned by the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, the Italian *Camera dei deputati* and the French *Sénat*. In addition, the French *Sénat* suggested to broaden the scope of reflection on the modalities, taking into account non-cooperative policies, especially at the social and fiscal level.

On the other hand, the Polish *Sejm* asked for the deletion of the proposed mechanism - which would link the EU budget payments to the breach of the rule of law - from the draft regulation, and argued that the introduction of a mechanism that would link the EU budget to the rule of law did not have grounds in the Treaties.

Five Parliaments/Chambers stated that they did not have an opinion on the matter, or that they had not yet discussed it.

2.13.b When asked to share their views on the appropriate procedure to activate the mechanism in the event of a clear risk of serious infringements concerning the rule of law that would jeopardise the EU's financial interests, 17 out of 30 Parliaments/Chambers opted for one of the following proposed options:

- J Qualified majority in the Council received support from six Parliaments/Chambers (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés* and Portuguese *Assembleia da República*).
- J Unanimity in the Council was favoured by five Parliaments/Chambers (Czech *Poslanecká sn movna*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* and Slovenian *Državni zbor*);

J Reverse qualified majority in the Council was backed by five Parliaments/Chambers (Belgian *Sénat*, Danish *Folketing*, French *Assemblée nationale* and Swedish *Riksdag*, European Parliament);

Six Parliaments/Chambers stated that they did not have an opinion on the matter, or that the discussion was either ongoing, or they had not had one.

While the Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* deemed it necessary to further analyse the overall proposal, the German *Bundestag* called for a voting procedure that would not allow a minority in the Council to block the mechanism, thus ensuring its effectiveness. The German *Bundesrat* stated that EU intervention was necessary in the event of a serious infringement concerning democracy and the rule of law in its Member States. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* suggested discussing this topic within the Conference on the future of Europe. The Polish *Sejm* underlined that the European Council should take the final decision whether to apply sanctions.

The Czech *Senát* expressed its disagreement with the proposed decision-making mechanism according to which the European Commission's proposal would be deemed to have been adopted by the Council, unless it decided, by qualified majority, to reject the proposal. The Czech *Senát* called for a procedure that would, on the one hand, not allow one or a small number of Member States to block the adoption of the decision by the majority, and, on the other hand, require the support of a qualified majority of Member States.

Digital Future of Europe and Secure Communication

2.14 In the area of AI, data and digital future, half of the respondents (16 out of 32 Parliaments/Chambers) listed the application of the digital technologies to at least one of these fields: public administration, education and health services.

In the area of public administration, respondents referred to the application of digital tools in the context of the online submission of applications, payment of taxes and fees (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*) and e-government in general.

With regard to the education area, the majority of the Parliaments/Chambers agreed on the importance of digital education, strengthening digital literacy in the education system (German *Bundesrat*), digitalisation of the learning process and tools (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*) and responsible research and innovation (Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*).

Regarding the health sector, respondents considered that the use of health data and artificial intelligence could contribute to combat the spread of infectious diseases, as well as to the remote health care, with the digitalization of medical assistance and prevention services.

Other potential areas of application were mentioned by the Parliaments/Chambers, such as industry and the development of SMEs (French *Assemblée nationale*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*) and faster development of vaccines (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*). Teleworking, e-learning, e-commerce and e-government (German *Bundesrat*), digitization of legal procedures and functioning of the Courts and civil and administrative procedures (European Parliament), reducing the regulatory burden and improving access to financing and markets (Romanian *Senat*) were also identified in this context.

In relation to SMEs, giving them access to AI was seen as a core element for a successful use and development of AI in Europe (German *Bundesrat*), and so were the potential areas of application on industrial production and strategic supply chains (Italian *Senato della Repubblica*). In this regard, the French *Sénat* stated that the deployment of 5G networks, accompanied by European security standards, had to be accelerated and coordinated at EU level in order to stimulate economic activity and competitiveness, including for SMEs, as part of the recovery.

Referring to the e-government feature, the Estonian *Riigikogu* suggested that an action plan be developed to ensure the Tallinn Declaration goals were accomplished, and considered it important to review the eIDAS Regulation, implementing it along with the Services directive and the Single Digital Gateway Regulation.

Other issues raised included data protection and cybersecurity, especially in relation to the availability of high-quality data and the tension between the use of data and privacy guarantees (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*). Shared databases in general (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*) and specifically the European Data Area - establishing a uniform organisational framework enabling the use of health data in a safe, transparent and effective manner for the purposes of health protection, research and development (Polish *Senat*) - were referenced as well.

The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* alluded to its current debate on the implementation of a Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Digital Area, and was looking forward to a fair and safe use of new tech and digital tools in order to manage cyber threats, produce action plans against disinformation, data protection and human-centric AI. The Polish *Sejm* also acknowledged the exchange of data as an essential factor, while stressing the need to safeguard data protection and cybersecurity.

Other considerations were taken regarding this topic, such as the importance of the digital development for the ecological transition, digital business models, internal market and the adaptation of the competition regulations to AI use and robotics. On this last topic, the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* envisaged digitalization as an opportunity to gain an advantage in some key emerging technologies, particularly in terms of cloud-domination and robotics, with shared research centres.

In some Parliaments/Chambers, the matter had not yet been discussed, so no opinion was issued on this topic (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Lithuanian *Seimas*). The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* noted that there were still ongoing discussions at plenary and committee level. The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* stated that it had a working group on AI, formed in September 2020, so conclusions had not been drawn yet.

2.15 Twenty-six Parliaments/Chambers (out of 28) agreed that the creation of a digital single market through the harmonisation of provisions for technology and online companies constituted an opportunity for economic recovery by generating growth and creating jobs.

Only two chambers did not view this as an opportunity.

2.16 The majority of the responding Parliaments/Chambers (21 out of 35) indicated that face-to-face meetings, or at least some aspects of such meetings, could not be replaced by videoconferencing systems, with some clarifying that these systems should be used as an alternative solution, for *ad hoc* meetings or in a mixed format, since it suited small discussion groups better.

The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* also saw merits in the digital communication between the national Parliaments in terms of time and financial savings, while the Hungarian *Országgy lés* was of the opinion that, in case of certain number and type of interparliamentary meetings, videoconferences should be given preference under the current situation.

For the European Parliament, there was no reason not to use the digital means whenever necessary for interparliamentary meetings or other forms of interparliamentary dialogue, but only in exceptional circumstances.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* pointed out the possibilities offered by these technological tools like connecting with keynote speakers or experts from their home bases which otherwise could not happen. In addition, the Danish *Folketing* posited that *ad hoc* meetings about a specific agenda, would be possible to conduct on short notice.

Some Parliaments raised concerns regarding the interpretation features and its limitations (Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*), differences between technical capabilities, like network speed (Latvian *Saeima*), and the difficulties to hold lively discussions, debates, negotiations, adoption of contributions/conclusions and the loss of the opportunity to interact and network (Czech *Senát*, German *Bundesrat*, Lithuanian *Seimas*).

Some Parliaments/Chamber referred to their work at committee and plenary level using videoconference tools (Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* , Slovenian *Državni svet*), while others pointed out the lack of consensus on the topic (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*) and the fact that there was no approved *ad hoc* resolution on the issue so far (Spanish *Cortes Generales*).

2.17 Fourteen out of 34 respondents were in favour of the development of a uniform European conference tool to enhance the digital sovereignty of the EU, while 19 had no opinion on the issue.

Respondents that replied positively mainly stressed that enabling simultaneous interpretation on this tool, as well as ensuring data protection compliancy would be important. The Hungarian *Országgy lés* expressed the view that discussions on this issue should be held jointly and best practices should be assessed before any specific idea could be shared on the topic, while the Portuguese *Assembleia da República* was in favour of the implementation and funding rules being decided at the European level.

On the funding theme, the German *Bundestag* indicated that a model similar to that governing the COSAC Secretariat could be envisaged, while the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* suggested the costs should be centrally covered by the EU.

The German *Bundestag* also suggested the matter could be brought to the attention of the working group on videoconferencing in the context of the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments.

The Finnish *Eduskunta* replied negatively to this question, and argued that developing an *ad hoc* tool would probably be hard on time and resources, since the procurement and use of technology was done at the discretion of each Parliament and, as such, the Speakers would only recommend interoperability systems.

Similarly, the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* agreed that several videoconference tools had already been successfully used, yet it was too early to decide on a uniform tool since it could not be

compatible with all the systems. The Latvian *Saeima* was in favour of exploring and enhancing the security and data protection of the already existing tools, instead of creating new ones.

The Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, agreed that a uniform European conference tool might enhance communication between the Parliaments, and called for more compatibility between the existing systems or a European standard.

Whiteboard

In conclusion, Parliaments/Chambers were asked to reflect on the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, at national and EU level, evaluating their success and pointing out shortcomings.

2.18.a Respondents offered a range of actions which, in their opinion, had proved to be successful in tackling the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The EU Institutions' responses to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were welcomed by a number of Parliaments/Chambers (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Senat*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, and European Parliament). Emphasis was placed on the decisive steps in tackling the crisis, such as:

-)] The SURE initiative (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*);
-)] Measures adopted by the ECB, activation of the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact, flexibility in the use of structural funds and relaxation of state aid rules (Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*) and
-)] Increased flexibility of the rules relating to the fiscal sector of the EU (Estonian *Riigikogu*);
-)] Establishment of the EU Recovery Instrument (Lithuanian *Seimas*);
-)] The Recovery and Resilience Facility (Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*);
-)] Temporary layoff schemes (French *Assemblée nationale*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*);
-)] The Eurogroup package of 9 April 2020 (Portuguese *Assembleia da República*).

The Estonian *Riigikogu* praised the leading role of the European Commission in the search for the COVID-19 vaccine, while the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* considered the EU vaccine strategy as a very promising development and concluded that ensuring swift and reliable access to vaccines for the population showed the importance of cooperation within the EU. The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* also highlighted addressing the vaccine issues as one of the successful responses.

Other responses to the crisis that Parliaments/Chambers had deemed successful related to:

-)] Cross-border cooperation (Finnish *Eduskunta*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*);
-)] Dialogue (Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*) and exchange of information (Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*);
-)] Large-scale testing (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Luxembourg *Chambre des Députés*, Polish *Sejm*);
-)] Coordination of procurement, safeguarding the supplies of medical and protective equipment (German *Bundestag*, Slovenian *Državni svet*, and European Parliament) and

- J Reducing the dependence on third countries (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*), increased use of digital technology (Slovenian *Državni svet*), in particular teleworking (Cyprus *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Slovenian *Državni zbor*);
- J Quick adaptation to online meetings and videoconferencing (Slovenian *Državni zbor*) and communication in general (Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*).

The Finnish *Eduskunta* underlined early and broad containment measures and the adaptation to the situation, for example by enhancing the preparedness of the healthcare system and increasing the capacity of the intensive care units. The Italian *Senato della Repubblica* stressed the coordination of the national health systems as well as grants and relief measures for workers and enterprises. The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* expressed its support for the setting-up of data exchange networks on the research findings between researchers in the EU. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* championed restrictions on free movement of persons, special regulations for elderly and vulnerable people aimed at protecting their lives and health, and measures for protecting jobs and supporting sectors most hit by the crisis. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* acknowledged local production of medical equipment and direct procurement from specific countries or manufacturers and praised the evidence-based measures such as wearing facemask, handwashing and control of mass events. The Latvian *Saeima* also preferred decisions based on empirical data and in a semi-automatized manner. The Polish *Sejm* praised Member States for funding the COVID-19 research.

Reflecting on the further steps to be taken, the Lithuanian *Seimas* emphasised that the EU Recovery Instrument should be available to all Member States, based on objective and realistic criteria that reflected the impact of the crisis, while the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* called for a revision and scrutiny of the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the SURE initiative. The French *Assemblée nationale* contemplated that the temporary layoff schemes could serve as an example for a social Europe of the future.

2.18.b Most of the responding Parliaments/Chambers mentioned the uncoordinated closing of borders, uncoordinated measures on the free movement of people and goods (with repercussions on the internal market), as well as the mismatch on the distribution of essential medical devices and medicines as measures to be avoided in the future with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other measures that should be avoided according to some Parliaments/Chambers included the restriction of transport (Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor*) and the imposition of general lockdowns as opposed to targeted and specific actions to contain the spread of the virus (Italian *Camera dei deputati*), the disinformation in the media and cuts in the research and development funding programmes (Polish *Sejm*) and hesitance in the decision-making (Latvian *Saeima*).

The Romanian *Camera Deputa ilor* thought the European Commission was too slow in communicating the status of the pandemic, as well as mitigation plans to Member States, a sentiment shared by the Polish *Senat*). The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* did not agree with the “one fits all” approach and the attempt at disregarding national competences.

The European Parliament lamented the inability to act collectively, and emphasised the need for enhancing the disaster risk management, preparedness and prevention as well as a common approach to travel measures.

At European level, the Italian *Camera dei deputati* stressed the need to avoid the premature reactivation of the Stability and Growth Pact. The Finnish *Eduskunta* stated that legal uncertainty and inconsistent application of rules were not desirable features of a Union based on the rule of law.

Three Parliaments/Chambers had not discussed the matter yet or did not have an official position (Belgian *Sénat*, French *Sénat* and Spanish *Cortes Generales*).

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