

## Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments 29 January 2024, Madrid

### ***IPEX ANNUAL REPORT 2023***

*prepared by the Czech Chairmanship of IPEX Board*

*Approved by the IPEX Board on 19 January 2024*

#### **Foreword**

IPEX is a digital system and a network of people and an important forum for sharing information and best practices. Due to the termination of the 3-year cycle of the current IPEX Rolling Work Programme, the Czech Chairmanship focused on the completion of implementation of the Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023, its evaluation and preparation of the new cycle for years 2024-2026. The IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023 has been successfully implemented, the main achievement being the launch of the new IPEX v3 database which has indeed been a qualitative leap for the operability and usefulness of IPEX. However, the 2023 user study also showed that there is still room for improvement. Therefore, now it is time for further development of IPEX v3 or its fine-tuning in accordance with the users' needs and expectations.

The Czech Chairmanship is looking forward to fulfilling the last third of its term in office before handing over the rotating Chairmanship to our Spanish colleagues.

#### **1. Meetings under the Czech Chairmanship of IPEX Board**

The following meetings were held during the Czech Chairmanship of the IPEX Board:

- Three IPEX Board meetings on 2 June 2023, 13 October 2023, and 19 January 2024, two as videoconference and one as an in-person meeting in Brussels.
- The Annual IPEX Correspondents' meeting on 2 and 3 November 2023 in Prague.
- One IPEX Now meeting focused on promotional activities on 13 December 2023.
- Working group meetings, held as videoconferences and in-person meetings.

#### **2. Composition of the IPEX Board**

According to the IPEX Guidelines, the 2023/2024 composition of the IPEX Board is as follows:

##### **Ex-officio members:**

- The Czech Republic (Chamber of Deputies, Senate), until the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States on 21–23 April 2024
- Spain (Spanish Parliament)
- Hungary (National Assembly)
- Sweden (Swedish Parliament)

- European Parliament

#### **National parliaments willing to participate in the Board and its activities:**

- Austria (Federal Council, National Council)
- Bulgaria (National Assembly)
- Cyprus (House of Representatives)
- Denmark (Danish Parliament)
- France (National Assembly, Senate)
- Germany (Bundestag)
- Greece (Hellenic Parliament)
- Ireland (Houses of the Oireachtas)
- Italy (Chamber of Deputies, Senate)
- Luxembourg (Chamber of Deputies)
- The Netherlands (Senate)
- Poland (Sejm, Senate)
- Portugal (Assembly of the Republic of Portugal)
- Romania (Chamber of Deputies, Senate)
- Slovenia (National Assembly)

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

The order of the presidencies foresees that Spanish Parliament will take over the Chairmanship of IPEX from the Czech Parliament at the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the European Union Member States, which will take place in April 2024.

### **3. IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023 and its evaluation**

The creation of a work programme is essential to ensure continuity and maintain focus between rotating chairmanships. Current IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023 was adopted by the IPEX Board in March 2021.

To implement the Rolling Work Programme, the Board established 3 working groups, each with its own action plan. The following three working groups established in relation to work programme have been active during the Czech Chairmanship:

1. Working Group on Content, chaired by Ms Ilse van den Driessche and Mr Yves Carl;
2. Working Group on Training, chaired by Ms Livia Spada;
3. Working Group on Promotion and Social Media, chaired by Ms Tuula Zetterman and Mr Yiannis Tsagadopoulos.

Based on the proposal of the Czech Chairmanship and in order to evaluate the implementation of the current work programme and prepare its new cycle, the Board decided on its meeting on 2 June 2023 to establish ad-hoc working group on IPEX Rolling Work Programme outside of the scope of the current Work Programme (chaired by Czech Chairmanship).

#### **Working Group on Content - IPEX through the eyes of its users: Take Two (2023 users survey)**

The task of preparing the first follow-up to the Baseline Study was given to the Working Group on Content by IPEX Board as a part of the Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023. The questionnaire

intended as a follow-up to the baseline study 2020 was designed as a basis for both the 2023 users' survey and for possible future follow-up studies. The General Survey for all users was launched at the Users' Conference in Lisbon on 20 March 2023. The questionnaire was subsequently available online until 20 April 2023 and potential respondents received a link to the survey on several occasions. In total, 74 users filled in the general questionnaire.

Based on the results from the questionnaire, the Working Group on Content prepared the follow-up study called "[IPEX through the eyes of its users: Take Two](#) (2023 users survey)" which was presented during the Board meeting in October 2023. The study shows that over time, IPEX has become a real one-stop shop for interparliamentary cooperation in the EU, which was confirmed by the overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) to the questionnaire. However, the study also shows that there is still room for improvement in terms of sharing information and uploading, especially for the sections on news, research and information, and Democracy Support Network. In particular, the study suggests a number of actions to be considered for the next Work Programme, including:

- Identifying and involving of the staff of the sectoral committees of the national Parliaments within the activities of IPEX;
- Increasing the visibility of IPEX promotional materials and of IPEX logo;
- Providing additional information available on IPEX, e.g., overview of each Parliament's EU-priorities, sharing of more information on IPEX through the Democracy Support Network, improving of the Calendar section, adding the responses of the European Commission to the reasoned opinions, adding information on the state of the legislative process, etc.;
- Providing more support to IPEX Correspondents, e.g., by additional networking and/or training;
- Encouraging the translation of published texts of summaries thereof into English;
- Improving the comparability of information through standard templates;
- Encouraging the national Parliaments to use technical solutions, such as automated processes in uploading information;
- Making the uploading of certain documents mandatory and shortening the deadlines timeline for uploading them;
- Introducing more standardisation for uploaded documents and developing general guidelines to improve the comparability of information;
- Avoiding duplication of uploaded information.

Suggestions for further action in 2023 users survey serve as an important input for the 2024-2026 Rolling Work Programme. In addition, a targeted online questionnaire for the scientific community was prepared and is ready to be distributed in good time, in collaboration with the WG on promotion.

### **Working Group on Promotion and Social Media**

Working Group on Promotion and Social Media has continued working on the visibility of IPEX in various ways: social media posts on Twitter/X and distribution of leaflets during the EU interparliamentary conferences. The working group also contributed with questions to the Baseline Study and the COSAC 39<sup>th</sup> bi-annual report, with the aim to identify promotional activities based on the needs of the users. During the Swedish Presidency, videos about the conferences organized by the Presidency were posted on the initial IPEX webpage in order to support the visibility of IPEX and attract more attention to IPEX. Preparatory work for a survey to be published on the IPEX website on further exploring the needs of the IPEX target user base has also been done. Moreover, the WG continues working on engagement with potential IPEX influencers.

## **Working Group on Training**

According to the IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023 and the Working Group's Action Plan, the objectives of the Working Group on Training are to produce and update user manuals, hold annual training/feedback sessions and advise in the use of IPEX v3 to the IPEX National Correspondents. In line with this, the Working Group has produced written training materials ("HOW TO" guides) mainly focusing on the basic operations and has regularly updated the materials so they reflect the technical reality of v3. In addition, the Working Group is preparing guides on the new Search implementation in the Legislative Database and, in cooperation with the Working Group on Promotion and Social Media, training videos. The Working Group has also assessed ways of how to make the materials more visible and easily accessible to the IPEX Correspondents. In line with the second objective, the Working Group has convened online training sessions in smaller groups, provided training upon request by individual Parliaments and organised training sessions during the IPEX Users Conference (March 2023) and the IPEX Correspondents Meeting (November 2023). With the current IPEX Working Programme coming to an end, the Working Group is analysing available resources and planned technical developments to take up new activities for the next IPEX Work Programme, with a particular emphasis on the tasks and duties of IPEX Correspondents and their needs related to training and training materials.

## **Working Group on IPEX Rolling Work Programme – Evaluation of RWP 2021-2023 and preparation of new RWP 2024-2026**

In accordance with the mandate given to the Working Group by Board, the Working Group since June 2023 analysed how the current Work Programme is being implemented and how the Working Groups fulfil their actions plans (actions fully implemented, partially implemented, items not completed and items which could be moved to another RWP). Based on the discussions, the Working Group prepared the evaluation of the current RWP 2021-2023 which was submitted to Board in January 2024. According to the prepared evaluation, the IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023 has been successfully implemented, the main achievement being the launch of the new IPEX v3 database which has indeed been a qualitative leap for the operability and usefulness of IPEX. According to this evaluation of the current Work Programme, Working Groups on Content, Training and Promotion and Social Media accomplished the majority of their objectives set out in their action plans for the years 2021-2023. Some objectives have been partially achieved, due to their long-term nature or due to processes which are underway, and some objectives represent a continuous process and should be included in the next Work Programme. Consideration should therefore be given to maintaining the existing Working Groups in the next Work Programme for 2024-2026 and, if necessary, extending their focus. All major improvements have been completed, however, further fine-tuning of IPEX v3 is an ongoing process. In this context, the focus should be on developing it to reflect the latest technological possibilities. To this end and following the discussion at the IPEX Board meeting in October, the creation of a new IPEX v3 System Improvement Working Group should be considered. This Working Group would support the work related to planned improvements of IPEX v3, and their alignment, if any, with the work of Working Groups and report to the IPEX Board.

Working Group also prepared the text of the new RWP 2024-2026, taking into consideration the evaluation of the current RWP 2021-2023 and results of 2023 users survey and its suggestions for further actions. The text of the RWP 2024-2026 was adopted by the Board on 19 January 2024 for adoption.

#### 4. Preparation of new IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2024-2026

The RWP 2024-2026 implements the Digital Strategy adopted by the Secretaries General in 2017. It also tries to continue in the philosophy of the previous RWPs and seeks to raise awareness of the role of IPEX in the context of interparliamentary cooperation, address users' needs, ensure the technical accuracy of the IPEX database, and the usefulness, accessibility, and reliability of the entire IPEX network.

With all major improvements now complete, the RWP 2024-2026 should focus on further improving or fine-tuning of the IPEX v3. The RWP 2024-2026 should therefore ensure not only that the website is running properly and smoothly, including the resolution of any technical issues, but also that the IPEX v3 is further improved, reflecting the latest technological developments. More emphasis could also be placed on promoting of the use of automatic uploading of information to IPEX by national Parliaments which could help them to reduce the workload associated with the uploading of information to IPEX. According to the 2023 users survey, users can find relevant information from other Parliaments on IPEX, however, they also made many suggestions for additional information that could be available.

Moreover, IPEX is more than a website or database. It is also a network of Parliaments for the exchange of information and the circulation of documents to promote interparliamentary cooperation within the EU. However, 2023 users survey shows that IPEX network still has untapped potential that could be further enhanced, for example by involving new groups of users or additional networking activities. Therefore, the RWP 2024-2026 will focus also on the further development of IPEX network. In addition, RWP puts emphasis also on the training. As the development and fine-tuning of IPEX v3 is an ongoing process, the existing guides have to be continuously improved, and new training materials produced if needed. In addition, according to the 2023 users survey, it is also necessary to continue the professional training of National Correspondents and to find new effective ways of doing this. Last but not least, the RWP 2024-2026 pays attention also to the promotional activities in order to strengthen IPEX's visibility, not only search engine visibility, and social media presence to broaden its audience. It is therefore important for example to continue to produce new promotional materials or create a shareable content for social media. It is also necessary to continue with work on engagement with potential IPEX influencers.

#### 5. IPEX Users Conference in Lisbon<sup>1</sup>

On 20 March 2023, the Portuguese Parliament hosted the 3rd IPEX Users Conference. In this Conference, attended by nearly 50 officials from the national Parliaments of the European Union, from the candidate countries and from the European Parliament, the participants were challenged to answer the question "Who are the IPEX users?".

During the first session, dedicated to the evolution of IPEX, different users were able to share their experience with the platform over the 15 years of its development. The following session was dedicated to a brief interactive training for users on the main novelties and tools of IPEX v3. The IPEX Work Programme and the main achievements of the Board Working Groups were presented in the last morning session during which the participants were also invited to fill in the questionnaire available online about their experience with the platform.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Official summary of the Users Conference prepared by the Portuguese Parliament - <https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/download/file/8a8629a88730acfe018732b3c3b400a8/Summary%20-%20IPEX%20Users%20Conference.pdf>

The afternoon session was dedicated to the discussion on the different networks linked to IPEX (e. g. network of Permanent Representatives in Brussels, ECPRD network or a new cooperation network of the European Parliament, the Democracy Support Network, which has been integrated to the IPEX platform). In the final session, the Chair of the European Affairs Committee of the Portuguese Parliament delivered a keynote address on the topics addressed by the Users Conference and the main conclusions of the Conference were presented. There was also time for closing words from the Chairmanship-in-Office (Slovenia) and the future Chairmanship of IPEX (Czech Republic), as well as the announcement of the organization of the next Users Conference by the Italian Parliament.

## 6. Annual Correspondents Meeting in Prague

The Annual Correspondents Meeting was organised by the Czech Chairmanship and was held on November 2 and 3, 2023, in Prague. The first day of the meeting was dedicated to training workshops. Basic functionalities of the platform were presented to IPEX Correspondents (especially to new ones) by the IPEX Information Officer, who also described the latest major developments of IPEX and changes which these developments implemented, whereas the presentation paid attention particularly to changes in IPEX search mechanism.

The second day of the meeting was divided into two parts. In the first part, members of the Working Group on Training and Working Group on Promotion and Social Media presented to IPEX Correspondents training and promotional materials they had prepared so far. Afterwards, the representative of the European Parliament presented National Parliaments' Submission Tool, i.e., an online tool that national Parliaments can use for submitting their contributions under Protocol 1 and Protocol 2 to the European Parliament.

During the second part, the Correspondents were divided into two workshops. The first workshop was dedicated to IPEX v3 and its user-friendliness from the IPEX Correspondents' and Users' perspective. During the debate, the participants discussed for example the possibility of uploading the reactions of the European Commission to the national Parliaments' submissions on IPEX. In this regard, the issue of translation of some documents as well as potential use of the eTranslation service of the European Commission was mentioned. Using this tool as a plugin for translations could help national Parliaments with the translation of the summary of their documents. Participants also discussed the use of automated systems for uploading the information and how this system could facilitate the work of the IPEX Correspondents and reduce the manual workload as well as the possibility of improving the Calendar section.

The second workshop focused on IPEX Rolling Work Programme for years 2024-2026. In debate, most discussed points were related to the consistency of the information uploaded to the IPEX website by Parliaments, the lack of translations of uploaded documents, as many of them were still not available in English, or the possibility of setting up a new Working Group under the new Rolling Work Programme that will overlook the functioning of IPEX website. Moreover, the participants pointed out a lack of informal meetings that would enable to discuss IPEX related issues and exchange experience. In this context, they appreciated good practice introduced by the German Chairmanship – IPEX Now meetings.

## 7. IPEX Now meeting

Based on the discussion during the IPEX Correspondents meeting in Prague, the Czech Chairmanship of the IPEX Board decided to resume the organisation of IPEX Now meetings, the practice introduced

by the German Chairmanship in 2021/2022. These informal online meetings within the IPEX network should improve and intensify the exchange of information and best practices between the IPEX National Correspondents. Czech Chairmanship in cooperation with the Working Group on Promotion and Social Media organised IPEX Now meeting focused on promotional activities on 13 December 2023.

At the beginning of the meeting, the members of the Working Group on Promotion and Social Media briefly presented the work done by the Working Group, mentioning, for example, the preparation of visual identity of IPEX for social media, visual identity for conferences, IPEX Booklet, IPEX leaflets for presidency conferences or IPEX visual identity pack for Correspondents etc. The ensuing debate was focused on three following questions: 1) How do you promote IPEX in your Parliament: exchange of experiences? 2) Any challenges, within your Parliament, related to promotion of IPEX? 3) Ideas for new promotional materials?

During the discussion, participants mentioned, for example, the use of hypertext links to IPEX scrutiny pages when sending the information about the scrutiny to Members of Parliament, organisation of the training sessions for newly elected Members of Parliament which are focused also on IPEX, distribution of IPEX leaflets during mentioned training sessions or sharing knowledge about IPEX with trainees in order to promote IPEX also among the university students. Some participants also highlighted that promotional materials should contain text which is more comprehensible for normal IPEX users.

## 8. The future of IPEX

The Czech Chairmanship acknowledges that IPEX is developing into an effective platform for information exchange and evolving into a unique one-stop-shop for information on the European Union. The IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2021-2023 has been successfully implemented, the main achievement being the launch of the new IPEX v3 database which has indeed been a qualitative leap for the operability and usefulness of IPEX. However, the 2023 user study also shows that there is still room for improvement. The further development of IPEX v3 and its fine-tuning should therefore be a key priority of the IPEX Board in the forthcoming years. This endeavour should be supported by a new cycle of the IPEX Rolling Work Programme for years 2024-2026. After the adoption of the new cycle of the IPEX Rolling Work Programme, Working Groups approved by the Board should prepare their action plans which will elaborate the objectives of the new IPEX Rolling Work Programme in more detail.

In current times, we are witnessing unprecedented willingness of the EU to enable new countries to join the European community. Since June 2022, the European Council decided to grant candidate country status to Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia. Therefore, in the coming years, we also have to support new candidate countries in their integration into the IPEX platform and network. The Czech Chairmanship looks forward to future constructive cooperation with all new members of the IPEX platform.

### Annex:

- Written report of the IPEX Information Officer on the work of IPEX in 2023
- IPEX Rolling Work Programme 2024-2026