STUDY ON PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY NETWORKS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND SOUTH EAST EUROPE

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ACRONYMS

ACP-EU JPA	Asia Caribbean Pacific EU Joint Parliamentary Association
AFET	Foreign Affairs Committee (EP)
AII PD	Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative
AIPA	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
APF	Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CEI PD	Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative
CFAC	Conference of Foreign Affairs Committees
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
C-i-O	Chairperson-in-Office
CM	Committee of Ministers (of CoE)
CoE	Council of Europe
COSAC	Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the EU
COSAP	Western Balkans Conference of Committees on European Integration/Affairs of States participating in Stabilisation and Association Process
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CPF	Cetinje Parliamentary Forum
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DCAF	Democratic Control of Armed Forces
DPN	Danube Parliamentarians Network
D-SEE	Delegation for Relations with South-East Europe (EP)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights (CoE)
ECPRD	European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation
EDG	European Democrat Group
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EMPA	Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
ENPI	European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EUROLAT	Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly
EURONEST-PA	EU-Neighbourhood-East (EURO-NEST) Parliamentary Assembly
EUSAIR	EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region

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EUSDR	EU Strategy for the Danube Region
GOPAC	Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption
GUAM PA	Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova Parliamentary Assembly
IAO	Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Orthodoxy
ICM	Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting (EP)
IfS	Instrument for Stability
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
IPA CIS	Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States
IPA Eur-AsEC	Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community
IPEX	Inter-Parliamentary EU information eXchange
IPI	International Parliamentary Institution
IPM	Inter-Parliamentary Meeting (EP)
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
JCM	Joint Committee Meeting (EP)
JPC	Joint Parliamentary Committee
JPM	Joint Parliamentary Meeting (EP)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NATO PA	Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPC	Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance and European Integration of Western Balkans
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Right (OSCE)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPAL	Observatory of Parliaments after the Lisbon Treaty
OSCE PA	Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PA OCST	Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty
PA	Parliamentary Assembly
PAAU	Pre-Accession Actions Unit (EP)
PABSEC	Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PAM	Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
PA-UfM	Parliamentary Assembly Union for the Mediterranean
PNoWB	Parliamentary Network on the World Bank
PUIC	Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Member States

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RACVIAC	Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (Croatia)
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RoP	Rules of Procedure
RSPC SEE	Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in South East Europe
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAPC	Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee (EP)
SEE	South East Europe
SEECP PA	Parliamentary Assembly of the SEE Cooperation Process
SEECP PD	Parliamentary Dimension of the SEE Cooperation Process
SG	Secretary General
SOC	Socialist Group
TSCG	Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance
UEL	Group of the Unified European Left
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNU-CRIS	United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies
WB	Western Balkans
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

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1 Introduction

International Parliamentary Institutions (IPIs) are becoming a global phenomenon. Since the end of the Cold War, they have rapidly multiplied in number and under a diversity of forms.

In the Western Balkans, there exist several initiatives related to parliamentary cooperation including, for instance, the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum (CPF), the Conference of the European Integration Parliamentary Committees participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP), the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension, amongst others.

In order to determine the most efficient way to support parliamentary cooperation, the European Commission / DG Enlargement has commissioned a Study on regional parliamentary cooperation.

This document is the first part of the Study and contains the mapping of the existing Parliamentary Assemblies and parliamentary initiatives for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans and South East Europe at large. The mapping exercise foresees in an institutional analysis of all parliamentary cooperation platforms for the region, including the institutional landscape in which they operate, other parliamentary cooperation structures and synergies with the European integration process.

The second part of the Study is an overview of the current parliamentary capacity building initiatives, included in a second, separate document.

This Study is based upon an in-depth review of the relevant literature on IPIs and a series of interviews with senior parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and officials of various institutions and organizations in Ankara, Belgrade, Bucharest, Istanbul, Podgorica, Prishtina, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, Tirana and Zagreb, as well as interviews with Members of the European Parliament and senior staff of the European Commission, the EEAS and the European Parliament. I would like to thank them for their time, insights and hospitality.

I also would like to thank the group of academics researching the IPIs in Europe and worldwide for our stimulating exchanges, in particular Dr. Stelios Stavridis, ARAID Senior Research Fellow at the University of Zaragoza, Dr. Jofre Rocabert from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich and Dr. Lorinc Redei from the University of Texas.

Finally, I would like to thank the colleagues from the European Commission / DG Enlargement for the advice and support given throughout 2014.

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2 Executive Summary

This mapping and analysis of regional parliamentary institutions in the Western Balkans (WB) and South East Europe (SEE) takes place against the background of growing interest in the role of International Parliamentary Institutions (IPIs). As the world has become more global, the number of IPIs, their role and influence are increasing. In Europe, including in the WB and SEE, the number of regional parliamentary initiatives has multiplied over the past 25 years. They have become informal channels of communication and parliamentary diplomacy in a region which was once haunted by conflicts; and are becoming more institutionalized instruments of oversight on multilateral policy-making.

The first substantial chapter of this Study explores the definition and origins of inter-parliamentary cooperation initiatives, followed by a review of different ways of categorizing the inter-parliamentary cooperation initiatives. Because of their variety in origins and functioning, IPIs display different features in terms of institutional and organizational patterns, rules and procedures, legal status, membership, resources and powers. Due to this complexity, different categorizations have been proposed. In this Study, we present two approaches which are relevant for the purpose of the mapping and analysis of the regional parliamentary cooperation initiatives in the Western Balkans and South East Europe.

In order to be able to review in-depth the individual regional inter-parliamentary initiatives, a clear analytical framework is required. Hence, this Study assesses each initiative against four dimensions: 1) constitutional status, 2) degree of institutionalization, 3) institutional authority, 4) synergies with other parliamentary initiatives. The four dimensions were selected based upon the current academic research on IPIs while taking into account the specific context of the Western Balkans and South East Europe.

This analytical framework on parliamentary cooperation has been applied to fifteen case-studies of parliamentary cooperation. The fifteen initiatives were selected because of one or more of the following reasons: (1.) they have a geographical focus on the WB or SEE; (2.) the parliaments of the WB and SEE constitute a very significant portion of the membership; and (3.) they are considered by the parliaments of the WB as politically most important. As a result, the Study does not include general IPIs such as e.g. the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

For the purpose of this Study, the geographical area of the Western Balkans and South East Europe has been defined as follows. Under "Western Balkans", we understand this to be the area covering the former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia and

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plus Albania; this is: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo*[1]. Under "South East Europe", we understand this to be the area covered by the South East Europe Cooperation Process and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). This is the Western Balkans plus Slovenia, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.

Based upon this analytical and geographical framework, we analyzed the following fifteen case-studies:

1. Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)
2. Western Balkans Conference of the Committees on European Integration/Affairs of the States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP)
3. Conference of Foreign Affairs Committees (CFAC)
4. NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA)
5. Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)
6. Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM)
7. SEECP Parliamentary Assembly (SEECP PA)
8. Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII-PD)
9. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
10. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)
11. Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative (CEI-PD)
12. Cetinje Parliamentary Forum (CPF)
13. Danube Parliamentarians Conference (DPC)
14. Conference of Speakers of Parliament of Western Balkans (CSPWB)
15. Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance and European Integration of the Western Balkans (NPC)

The review of these fifteen parliamentary platforms has enabled us to identify a number of trends for each of the four dimensions of the above mentioned analytical framework.

-- *Constitutional status.* A sharp increase in the number of IPIs was noticed as of 1990. The end of the Cold War and the democratization of Central and Eastern Europe enhanced regional cooperation and contributed to an increase in regional parliamentary cooperation structures. The initiative for the establishment of the IPIs and parliamentary networks originates clearly with the participating parliaments themselves. In terms of their objectives, all selected IPIs and parliamentary networks aim for regional cooperation, more than half of them work towards European (EU) integration and most initiatives facilitate political dialogue among their members.

-- *Institutionalization.* On membership, it is noted that the five macro-regional IPIs (NATO PA, OSCE PA, PACE, PAM, UfM-PA) have between 27 and 57 member countries; while ten initiatives have fewer than twenty member countries. There are three IPIs which include all 28 EU Member States: OSCE PA, PACE, UfM-PA. EU Candidate Countries are included in all initiatives but not evenly: from one Candidate Country up to all five Candidate Countries. Regarding the governing structures, most IPIs function either based upon the rotating chairmanship, or foresee in the election of the chairperson. The only exceptions are the initiatives with a permanent host parliament which assumes the permanent chairmanship. In

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*[1] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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most of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, specific Rules of Procedure (RoP) have been agreed upon, as these constitute an important instrument of institutionalization.

The majority of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks have a fixed, permanent Secretariat and a minority has a rotating Secretariat. The question about the type of Secretariat is of key importance: since IPIs meet infrequently and are not high on members' priority lists, the decisions, statements and agendas of such meetings are to a large extent determined by Secretariat staff. Since Secretariats cost money, the political will and financial means to contribute to the budget determine whether the IPI has a fixed, permanent Secretariat or a rotating Secretariat.

In cases where committees exist, they function based upon a system of rapporteurs. In terms of their thematic focus, several commonalities between committee structures of the IPIs have been identified.

The frequency of plenary and committee meetings is mostly once or twice a year. The only exception is PACE, which meets in plenary sessions 4 times a year. In addition, PACE meets 3 times a year in the format of Standing Committee (a smaller body which can however adopt Resolutions, Recommendations and Opinions exactly like the Assembly), and several other times (from 4 to 5) at the level of Committees.

The decision-making practices show similarities as well. Although consensus has been stipulated in the RoP in only six cases, the political culture seems to indicate a practice of trying to achieve consensus as much as possible. The only IPIs where voting constitutes an established practice are PACE and NATO PA.

A review of the transparency of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks reveals that there is still a way to go. Only six of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks have their own website. Only in one case (PACE), draft documents (resolutions, reports) are publicly available; while the other initiatives only make final documents publicly available. In most cases the plenary meetings are open to the public; while the Committee meetings are generally closed.

-- *Institutional Authority.* All selected IPIs and parliamentary networks are autonomous and free to consider any issue and adopt their own RoP. They are free to elect their President, except in the cases when it is determined that the Speaker of the Parliament of the country holding the rotating chairmanship of the governmental dimension assumes automatically the presidency of the IPI. This is the case for the SEECP PA and AII-PD. In cases when the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks have a Secretary General, s/he is freely elected by the institution itself.

Focusing on IPIs which have a relationship with a governmental dimension, the decision-making power clearly lies with the governmental dimension of the international organization. In all cases, the power of the Parliamentary Assemblies is of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate.

While the IPIs hold a diversity in many areas (formal status, number of members, Secretariat, etc.), there is a very noticeable pattern in the very limited 'hard powers' that the IPIs hold. There are two main exceptions. First, they all have the power to set their own budget; and second, PACE is the clear outlier as it has a lot more powers than all the other IPIs. It is also one of the few IPIs which has functioning and formally recognized political groups. Although it is not the only characteristic for a powerful IPI, to a large degree a parliamentary assembly is only capable of wielding power if it has some sort of political group dynamics -- as can also be

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observed in the European Parliament. However, most IPIs function based upon national delegations, representing the national interest, rather than political groups.

Although in most cases the reports and resolutions of the IPIs are not legally binding, they are often seen as a "soft diplomacy" tool. In several IPIs, the senior representative of the parliamentary dimension can attend meetings of the governmental dimension. The interaction between the governmental and parliamentary dimensions is more intensive and the influence of the Parliamentary Assembly stronger in cases when the Secretariats are based in the same city or premises.

The agenda setting role of most IPIs towards the governmental dimension is weak. None of the selected IPIs has a formal oversight role towards the governmental dimension of the international organization to which they are committed on by which they are recognized. However, for instance, PACE does have the right to formulate oral and written questions. The CEI has its own funds for financing cooperation projects; but nevertheless the CEI-PD Committees have not been able yet to discuss in detail some of the major CEI projects; and oversight is at its very initial stages still.

The IPIs have, generally speaking, no influence over appointments of senior persons in the governmental dimension. While the IPIs generally do approve their own budget, their institutional weakness is especially obvious with regard to a lack of direct budget control over the organizations' executives. IPIs mostly have the authority to approve new members to the IPI. However, IPIs hardly have any decision- making power in the accession process of new members to the international organization. Exceptionally, PACE has considerable influence in the accession process of the Council of Europe.

-- *Synergies.* Most opportunities between different IPIs have been identified in the Committee work. There are also opportunities to strengthen the Secretariats of Parliamentary Dimension in cooperation with the Governmental Dimension.

In addition to the fifteen regional parliamentary platforms, listed above, there exist also cooperation platforms of the European Parliament with the parliaments from the Western Balkans as well as the cooperation networks between national parliaments of the EU Member States, which Candidate Countries participate in as observers. These EU-related cooperation platforms have been analyzed as far as the involvement of the parliaments from the Western Balkans is concerned. The following ten initiatives at the most important ones:

1. Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC)
2. Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments
3. Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy
4. Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Economic and Financial Governance of the EU
5. Delegations of the EP, visiting the Candidate Countries and potential candidates
6. Inter-parliamentary meetings organised by the EP with national parliaments, including Inter-parliamentary Committee Meetings
7. Joint Parliamentary Meetings, co-chaired by the Presidents of the EP and the Presidency Parliament
8. The European Centre for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD)
9. InterParliamentary EU information eXchange (IPEX)
10. EP Directorate for Democracy Support's Pre-Accession Actions Unit (PAAU).

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This Study analyzed the participation by the parliaments of the Candidate Countries in the activities of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Council Presidency during the last two years, from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2014. Four countries were Candidate Countries for the entire two-years period: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The Montenegrin Parliament has demonstrated the strongest commitment to joining the Parliamentary Dimension of the Council Presidency: it was part of 25 of the 37 meetings held, followed by Serbia (21 meetings) and Turkey (23 meetings). Least interest was demonstrated by the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which participated in only 8 out of 37 meetings.

This Study thus reviewed twenty-five parliamentary cooperation platforms: fifteen regional platforms and ten EU-related platforms which are relevant for the parliaments of the Western Balkans. The Study highlights the importance of regional parliamentary cooperation for the European integration prospect of the Western Balkans and for the process of consolidation of democratic institution building in the region. We have identified opportunities for better institutional synergies between the selected IPIs.

In summary, the substantial increase since 1990 in the number and role of regional parliamentary cooperation initiatives indicates that relations among the states of SEE and the WB are gradually becoming more intertwined and interdependent. The parliamentary dimension of various inter-governmental structures has added a level of legitimisation to the process, provided a parliamentary context and contributes to a sense of common regional belonging. One can even claim that it has become standard practice to establish a parliamentary dimension to any new type of international cooperation because it would look undemocratic not to establish one.[2] This, as indicated by the above review, is an insufficient guarantee for the proper functioning and authority of the IPIs, resulting in a lack of clarity in terms of impact on policy making. In addition, the visibility of many IPIs and parliamentary networks remains a considerable challenge, within the participating parliaments and in the wider society.

Therefore, and with a view to supporting the IPIs to become more effective, this Study outlines recommendations on the 'design' and functioning of the IPIs in the Western Balkans and SEE:

1. SEECP PA: fully operational and central parliamentary platform for the region, supported by EC & EP

2. Parliamentary support to the two macro-regional strategies

3. Inclusiveness of regional parliamentary platforms

4. Secretariat of regional parliamentary platforms

5. Committees of regional parliamentary platforms

6. Implementation and follow up to reports and recommendations

7. Relationship with governmental dimension

8. Women's participation in regional parliamentary platforms

9. Transparency of regional parliamentary platforms

10. Parliament liaison person in Brussels for Candidate Countries

11. Participation in Parliamentary Dimension of Council presidency meetings

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[2] Observations from email correspondence with Dr. Lorinc Redei, October 2014.

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3 Analytical framework on international parliamentary institutions and parliamentary networks

The analysis and mapping of regional parliamentary institutions and networks in the Western Balkans and South East Europe takes place against the background of growing interest in the role of International Parliamentary Institutions (IPIs) worldwide. The number of IPIs is growing, and their role and influence in international relations in a globalizing world are increasing. Also in Europe, including in South East Europe, the number of regional parliamentary initiatives has multiplied.

In this chapter we will discuss: (3.1.) the definition and origins of parliamentary cooperation initiatives, (3.2) different ways of categorizing them, and (3.3) the conceptual framework for analyzing the individual regional parliamentary platforms. In this chapter, we will thus capture the complexity of the IPIs through a review of different ways of categorizing them; followed by outlining a conceptual framework to review the selected fifteen individual regional parliamentary platforms.

3.1 Definition and origins of parliamentary cooperation initiatives

The current academic literature has produced a number of definitions to capture the various different international parliamentary assemblies, platforms and networks. One can distinguish between networks of parliamentarians, on the one hand, and International Parliamentary Institutions (IPIs), on the other hand. As the networks bring together parliamentarians as individuals and IPIs bring together the institutions, most of our analysis has been focussed on the IPIs.

Dr. Robert Cutler[3] provided an extensive definition of IPIs, with four distinct features. *"An IPI is an international institution that is (1.) a regular forum for*

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[3] Dr. Robert M. Cutler is Senior Research Fellow, Institute of European, Russian & Eurasian Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa. He is also Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence (Boston). He was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (B.Sc.), Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies (Gallatin Fellow) and The University of Michigan (Ph.D.), and has held research and

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multilateral deliberations on an established basis of an either legislative or consultative nature, (2.) either attached to an international organization or itself constituting one, (3.) in which at least three states are represented by parliamentarians, (4.) who are either selected by national legislatures in a self-determined manner or popularly elected by electorates of the Member States."[4]

However, an important element is missing in this definition, since it captures only what IPIs are, but not what they do. Thus, Professor Sabic Zlatko[5] developed a definition of IPIs which is slightly broader. He sees IPIs as *"institutions in which parliamentarians co-operate with a view to formulating their interests, adopting decisions, strategies or programs, which they implement or promote, formally and informally, in interactions with other actors, by various means such as persuasion, advocacy or institutional pressure."[6]* For the purpose of this Study, we will take into account both definitions of IPIs.

The historical emergence of IPIs, from a global perspective, represents a complex puzzle. Since the end of the Cold War, the number of IPIs and their diversity of forms have grown rapidly.[7]

The first expression of IPIs dates back to the establishment of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1889. Together with the Nordic Council and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) – under previous names – and respectively set up in 1907 and in 1911, these were the only three IPIs that existed prior to 1945.[8]

After the Second World War, the first regional parliamentary integration process occurred with the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the European Parliament. The Latin American Parliament was created in 1964, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1974, the Central American Parliament in 1975, the African Parliamentary Union in 1976, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization in 1977 and the Andean Parliament in 1979.

After the end of the Cold War, there was a proliferation of IPIs and a 'renaming and rebranding' of existing ones. The Parliamentary Conference of the EEC-ACP Association -- that was set up in 1963 -- was upgraded and renamed in 2000 as the ACP-EU JPA. The North Atlantic Assembly -- which was set up in 1955 as a private parliamentary club called the 'Conference of NATO Parliamentarians' and

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teaching appointments at major universities in the United States, Canada, France, Switzerland, amongst others.

[4] Cutler, R., *The OSCE's Parliamentary Diplomacy in Central Asia and the South Caucasus in Comparative Perspective*, Studia Diplomatica 59, 79–93 (2006).

[5] Zlatko Šabic is a Professor of International Relations at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

[6] Sabic, Z., *Building Democratic and Responsible Global Governance: The Role of International Parliamentary Institutions*, 61 Parliamentary Affairs, 255–271 (2008)

[7] Information for this section was found in: Confelice, A. and Stavridis, S., The European Parliament as an International Parliamentary Institution (IPI), European Foreign Affairs Review 19, no. 2, (2014), 145-178.

[8] The Nordic Inter-parliamentary Union now takes place in the Nordic Council set up in 1952. The Empire Parliamentary Association was renamed in 1948 as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The creation of the IPU that took place in 1889 began as an association of parliamentarians.

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changed its name in 1967 into the North Atlantic Assembly -- was renamed in 1999 as the 'NATO PA'. In 2007, the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) that had been set up in 1977 was re-named the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA).

Currently, a new phase of regional integration is taking place, which calls for IPIs to play a role in interregional or sub-regional relations, such as with the Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative (CEI PD), the Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionic Initiative (AII PD), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), and the recently established Parliamentary Assembly of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP PA).

3.2 Categories of parliamentary cooperation initiatives

The variety of parliamentary assemblies, platforms and networks often display different features in terms of institutional and organizational patterns, rules and procedures, legal status, membership, resources, functions and powers. There is thus a need to develop a conceptual framework to categorize and describe the different parliamentary assemblies, platforms and networks. Due to this complexity, different categorizations have been proposed. In this paper, we will present two, slightly different conceptual frameworks: the approach by Dr. Claudia Kissling[9] from the University of Marburg and the approach by Dr. Andrea Cofelice[10] on behalf of the UNU-CRIS project. Both approaches are complementary and relevant for the purpose of mapping and analysis of the regional parliamentary cooperation initiatives in the Western Balkans and South East Europe.

3.2.1 Categorization according to Kissling: networks, organizations, agencies and organs

Based on the parliamentary platforms' legal status, level of institutionalization, independence and powers, Kissling[11] adopts a sophisticated approach by identifying four different categories: inter-parliamentary NGOs or networks of parliamentarians; international or regional parliamentary organizations; international or regional parliamentary specialized agencies; and parliamentary organs of international or regional organizations. The main differences between these four categories are:

* Networks of parliamentarians: bring together individual parliamentarians.

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[9] Claudia Kissling formely worked at the German Bundestag and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, was then Research Fellow at the Universities of Bremen and Berlin and is now Managing Director of the MArburg University Research Academy at Philipps-Universität Marburg. She is also a board member of the Committee for a Democratic UN (KDUN).

[10] Andrea Cofelice is a researcher at the University of Padua's Human Rights Centre and a PhD candidate in Political Science-Comparative and European Politics at the University of Siena.

[11] Kissling, C., "The Legal and Political Status of International Parliamentary Institutions", in: Lucio Levi, Giovanni Finizio and Nicola Vallinoto (ed.), *The Democratization of International Institutions*, First International Democracy Report, Routledge, Oxon, 2014.

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- Parliamentary organizations: are stand-alone institutions and are not part of any international or regional governmental system.
- Parliamentary specialized agencies: are to a limited extent integrated into and linked to an international governmental organization's system.
- Parliamentary organs of international or regional organizations: serve as the parliamentary arm of international, regional or supranational organizations.

In the next pages, we will describe in further detail the four categories and provide examples from the region of the Western Balkans and South East Europe, or relevant to the region.

Networks of parliamentarians or Parliamentary NGOs are the type of parliamentary cooperation which consists of, more or less, loosely structured entities to associate parliamentarians at the regional, supra-regional or international level. The parliamentary network is composed exclusively of parliamentarians as individuals, and is thus different from a platform bringing together delegations representing the parliament as an institution. However, sometimes parliaments might provide financial support to enable their members to attend the meetings of the association. Another distinct feature of this type of parliamentary cooperation is the absence of any institutional link to the executive. In some cases, through the association, single parliamentarians of diverse parties have grouped together in order to lobby governments, society or business regarding specific issues. The associations are often set-up under national law and consequently lack international personality.

Although Kissling does not explicitly distinguish between these two sub-categories, we wish to distinguish between (1.) associations organized by parliamentarians themselves, and (2.) networks of parliamentarians (and parliamentary staffers) facilitated by external organizations and often emerging from capacity building initiatives.

Examples of this first type of parliamentary networks are the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Association of Senates of Europe (bringing together Presidents of the Upper House of bi-cameral parliaments in Europe); the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO), Cetinje Parliamentary Forum (CPF) and the Danube Parliamentarians Conference (DPC).

Examples of the second type of parliamentary networks are the issue-related parliamentary networks, such as the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), which has a branch in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia; the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), which has a specific "Balkans Chapter"; the Regional network of Women caucus of Western Balkans Parliaments, organized by the OSCE field-missions in SEE; the Regional network of Committees on Security & Defence of the Western Balkans, facilitated by the foundation 'Democratic Control of Armed Forces' (DCAF); the Regional network of Committees on Budget, Finance and European Integration of the Western Balkans - facilitated by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD); the Conference of Parliamentarians on Security and Defence - organized by RACVIAC.[12]

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[12] RACVIAC is a regionally-owned and Croatia-based Centre for Security Cooperation. It promotes security dialogue and security sector reform, arms control, European and Euro-Atlantic integration as well as confidence and security building measures. It has around 30 activities every year, including a large, annual conference on parliamentary oversight of the security sector. Its members are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. It has

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<u>Parliamentary organizations</u> are stand-alone institutions, independent from national governments and not part of any international or regional governmental system. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to develop any legislative or oversight functions with regard to governmental institutions at the international level. The founding act is approved by parliament (not the government), either as a simple decision by parliaments or as an international parliamentary treaty.

The most striking feature of these organizations from a legal point of view is that most of them possess an international personality *sui generis*. Membership is established through delegations of parliament; there is thus no individual MP membership. Parliamentary organizations usually have more independence and freedom regarding membership selection.

Parliamentary organisations have a number of specific governing features, which they have full authority over, such as their statutes and rules of procedure, the setting up of functional bodies and Secretariats, the delegation of representatives by national parliaments or by officially set-up member groups within national or regional parliaments, and the budget of the organization.

The largest international parliamentary organization is the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). In the context of the EU's Eastern Partnership with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, an EU-Neighbourhood-East (EURO-NEST) Parliamentary Assembly has been created, composed of Members of the European Parliament and Members of the national parliaments of the neighbourhood countries. In the absence of an executive counterpart, this platform can be considered a parliamentary organization.

Other examples of international or regional parliamentary organizations are the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), Western Balkans Conference of the Committees on European Integration/Affairs of the States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP) and Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Member States (PUIC).

<u>Parliamentary specialized agencies</u> are the third type of parliamentary cooperation. Much of the above mentioned features in regards to parliamentary organizations are also valid for parliamentary specialized agencies, including the international personality sui generis. The main difference of specialized agencies as compared to parliamentary organizations is that they are, to a limited extent, integrated into and linked to an international governmental organization's system. This means that they are regularly mentioned in governmental resolutions (e.g. Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly - EMPA) and in the Statute of the governmental organization (e.g. South-Eastern Europe Cooperation Process), or through anchoring in an international treaty of the related Inter-Governmental Organization (e.g. Francophone Parliamentary Assembly, APF, and Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, PABSEC). For the NATO PA, recognition by NATO can be said to be customary.

In terms of the mode of establishment, most specialized agencies are created by a decision, or resolution of, officially involved parliamentarians or a declaration of the Speakers of Parliaments (e.g. PABSEC). Some, however, are created through

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also associate members and observers. The Assembly of Kosovo has not been invited yet to the parliamentary conferences of RACVIAC. See: www.racviac.org

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an international parliamentary treaty (e.g. Parliamentary Dimension of the SEE Cooperation Process).

Membership of specialized agencies is established through parliamentary delegations per state or region. All of the specialized agencies have statutes and/or Rules of Procedure, governing organs and often their own budget. The objectives of parliamentary specialized agencies are often related to the harmonization of legislation, the strengthening of regional integration, and foreign policy issues.

None of the specialized agencies has acquired full (quasi-) legislative powers or co-decision rights with governmental organs and they mostly do not have the right to (quasi-)legislative or, at least, political-legislative initiative for rules to be adopted for the whole system. They can only adopt resolutions, recommendations, proposals, declarations, opinions, decisions, appeals, or memoranda addressed to governments or governmental organs. Some of these, however, are adopted in response to formal requests of governmental organs or of international organizations, such as the opinions of APF, the NATO PA and PABSEC.

In summary, examples of parliamentary specialized agencies are thus the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF); NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA); Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC); Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) / Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM); SEECP Parliamentary Assembly; Parliamentary dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII).

The fourth type of parliamentary cooperation consists of parliamentary platforms which serve as the parliamentary organs or parliamentary arm of international, regional or supranational organizations. Examples are the European Parliament, as integral part of the institutions of the European Union, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. These assemblies were set up or confirmed by an international treaty and/or embedded in an international treaty for the governmental organization as a whole. The parliamentary institution is subordinated to a superior system of an international or regional organization, and is part of its system.

These parliamentary institutions generally have their own statutes, their own subdivisions (organs) and their own budget, even though most lack exclusive decision-making power in respect to their budget. Consequently, many parliamentary institutions of this type maintain some degree of independence, even though they function as organs of international or regional organizations.

Compared to the parliamentary organizations and parliamentary agencies, they are in a better position in regard to rule-making and oversight power vis-à-vis their related international organizations. However, they only possess these powers to the extent granted by the parent organization. Legally spoken, they only partake in the international personality of the parent organization. The scope of this power indeed varies. Some organs can only adopt recommendations addressed to governmental bodies. Reporting, attendance or addresses of parliamentary and governmental organs are required or can be requested; or the assemblies have the right to address oral and/or written questions to governmental organs or can hear them. As a rule, the budget of the parliamentary assembly is not decided by the assembly if that body is financed through governments. This is only different when the financial sources of the assembly's budget stem from the national parliaments themselves.

PACE is the first parliamentary assembly that was set up as an organ of an international organization. It has a *de facto* legal right of co-decision in the

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accession of new members to the Council of Europe, which was especially significant during the accession time of the East European countries in the 1990s. Within the framework of the European Union, the European Parliament has gradually been given more competences and co-decision powers, in particular with the Lisbon Treaty. In addition, the European Parliament has co-decision powers in the accession of new members of the EU.

Examples of parliamentary platforms as organs of international or regional organizations are thus the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE); European Parliament (EP); OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA); Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative (CEI PD); GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) Parliamentary Assembly (GUAM PA); Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS); Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Collective Security Treaty (PA OCST); and the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community (IPA Eur-AsEC).

3.2.2 Categorizing according to Cofelice: networks, organizations, organs and interregional cooperation

A second slightly different categorization has been developed in the framework of the UNU-CRIS research project, by Andrea Cofelice.[13] In addition to the networks of parliamentarians, there are the IPIs, consisting of international parliamentary organizations and international parliamentary organs, the category on inter-regional cooperation. Kissling's category of 'agencies' (in-between organizations and organs) has not been kept as a separate category here. In a joint article of Andrea Cofelice and Stelios Stavridis[14], the "international parliamentary organizations" are called "international parliamentary associations" (IPAs), but its content is the same. Following is a summary of the second categorization.

The first group of the transnational networks of parliamentarians may be defined as voluntary associations of national parliamentarians, acting not in their official capacity but rather as private individuals who happen to be national parliamentarians and then translate information and analysis from the network into parliamentary activity within their national legislatures. Transnational parliamentary networks have very few, if any, real powers. Their function mainly consists of strengthening the ability of national parliamentarians to exercise their oversight functions at the national level in matters of an international nature, lobbying governments and national legislatures to accede to international legal instruments, as well as promoting confidence building and parliamentary socialization.

Within the group of IPIs, there are, first of all, the international parliamentary organizations. They are stand-alone parliamentary platforms, not formally affiliated with any intergovernmental organization, ruled by a formal founding act generally agreed upon by national parliaments (occasionally governments), whose members are national parliamentarians who act in their official capacity and have been designated as delegates by national legislatures. They meet on a regular basis, and the statute may provide for a formal structure (including a permanent

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[13] Cofelice, A., International Parliamentary Institutions: Some Preliminary Findings and Setting a Research Agenda, UNU-CRIS Working Papers 2012/03, 37 p.; www.cris.unu.edu

[14] Cofelice, A. and Stavridis, S., The European Parliament as an International Parliamentary Institution (IPI), European Foreign Affairs Review 19, no. 2, (2014), 149-153.

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headquarters), giving members the right to periodically elect a governing body and a Secretariat in order to ensure the continuity of their work.

The way in which they are established may vary. In some instances, an inter-governmental treaty forms the basis of their establishment. However, in the majority of cases, the institution is established by a decision of the parliaments involved or an international parliamentary treaty.

In terms of their powers, they generally have a deliberative capacity, consisting of the formulation of non-binding resolutions that at best can be developed into soft law.

In addition, parliamentary organizations may have the right to conclude international treaties, private law contracts, headquarters or mission agreements with states; the right to dispatch electoral observation and fact-finding missions; the right to receive petitions from citizens; specific powers dealing with the harmonization of national legislations; and consultative and oversight powers.

Within the group of IPIs, there are also the <u>international parliamentary organs</u>. They are institutional branches of regional / sub-regional organizations, established through an intergovernmental agreement (either the same treaty as the international organisations they belong to, or a separate treaty), whose members may be appointed by national assemblies or directly elected to that office. International parliamentary organs may be endowed, at the same time/simultaneously, with a certain degree of oversight, co-legislative, budgetary and consultative powers.

Within the group of IPIs, an additional category is emerging to deal with the phenomenon of inter-regional relationships. IPIs have already begun to coordinate interregional consultation and to consolidate interregional cooperation. In this domain, a possible subdivision into two forms of interregional parliamentary cooperation can be envisaged: 1- <u>Inter-regional parliamentary forums</u>: the Afro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue, the *Acuerdo de cooperacion entre la Asamblea parlamentaria del Consejo de Europa (APCE) y el Parlamento latinoamericano (Parlatino)*, the Euro-Arab Parliamentary Dialogue, the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership (ASEP) Meeting, and the EU-Africa parliamentary dialogue under the Joint Africa-EU Strategy; 2- <u>Institutionalized inter-regional parliamentary assemblies</u>: the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EUROLAT) and the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly. However, the first group does not have a permanent character and the second can be considered mainly as a specific outcome of the EP's "parliamentary diplomacy" efforts, at least for the moment.

3.3 Conceptual framework for analyzing the individual regional parliamentary platforms

The above categorizations are only two (of several) typologies trying to capture the complexity of a phenomenon. While these typologies help us to explain and to map the development of IPIs, they also struggle with the nuances of each of the individual IPIs.

The categorizations draw attention to several important issues, such as the IPIs' relationship to international organisations, their oversight and decision making powers, their internal organization, selection of membership, etc. These issues require further in-depth review when analyzing the individual regional parliamentary platforms. While the functioning of some specific IPIs might be

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looked at by external actors with scepticism and be perceived as ineffective, the problem often seems to lie in the executive dominance of international organisations that goes together with weak IPI competences, resources and institutionalisation.

So, in order to be able to conduct a review of the individual regional parliamentary platforms, there is need for a comprehensive analytical framework. To this end, we will make use of the conceptual framework in the recent research on the institutionalization and authority of IPIs by Mr. Jofre Rocabert of the Centre for Comparative and International Studies in Zurich.[15] Based upon this research, we will analyze the individual regional parliamentary platforms against four dimensions: constitutional status, institutionalization, institutional authority, and synergies with other initiatives. For each of these dimensions, we have identified a number of criteria and indicators. The criteria and indicators are based upon the research of Rocabert, but have also been slightly adjusted and expanded upon where considered necessary to be able to capture the specificity of the IPIs in a European context.

The following is a short introduction to the four dimensions, criteria and indicators.

The first dimension, constitutional status, refers to the IPI's kind of relationship with an international organization: entirely independent of it (parliamentary organization, in Kissling's typology), committed to and/or recognized by the international organization (parliamentary agency, in Kissling's typology), or formally a part of the international organization (parliamentary organ, in Kisslink's typology). The information on the constitutional status of the IPI can be found in the institutions' foundational documents or other basic legal documents. These documents often also provide information about whether the establishment of the IPI was an initiative by the Executive, the parliaments or both. The first dimension also looks into the stated objectives of the IPI: regional cooperation, European (EU) integration and/or political dialogue.

The second dimension, the institutionalisation of IPIs, holds the largest collection of indicators. It refers to the extent the IPI operates effectively. We will examine (1.) the capacity of parliamentary platform to act on the basis of its membership and the type of membership: number of EU member states, members from SEE and Candidate Countries, provisions for observers and special guests, provisions for guaranteed representation of women, and the type of seat distribution: according to proportionality, "degressive proportionality" which over-represents smaller parliaments and under-represents larger parliaments, or equality in the number of seats for all member parliaments; (2.) the internal governing structures: if there is a President elected by the IPI (or alternatively assigned automatically by the parliament of the country holding the chairmanship of the governmental international organization), if there is a Bureau or collective governing body, rotating chairmanship, and if RoPs for the IPI exist; (3.) the type of Secretariat of the IPI: fixed Secretariat or rotating Secretariat at the national parliaments, with permanent staff, and whether the Secretariat has its own budget composed of contributions by all member parliaments or whether the host parliament only covers the costs; (4.) the role of the committee system, if that has been created; (5.) the frequency of plenary and committee meetings; (6.) the decision-making rules; (7.) the nature of the parliamentary factions (ideological groups and/or national delegations); (8.) and the level of transparency: whether the IPI has its own

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[15] Rocabert, J.; Schimmelfennig, F.; Winzen, T., The Rise of International Parliamentary Institutions? Conceptualization and First Empirical Illustrations; ECPR *Joint Sessions, Salamanca, 10-15 April 2014, unpublished paper, 21 p.*

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website; whether draft documents and final documents are publicly accessible and whether plenary and committee meetings are open to the public and CSOs.

The third dimension, <u>institutional authority</u> of IPIs, refers to the powers and competencies of IPIs as well as their autonomy of operation. In terms of the autonomy of operation of the IPIs, we will review (1.) the extent to which the individual IPIs have influence over areas such as setting their own priorities and consider any issue; (2.) freedom to organize its own proceedings, including amending the Rules of Procedure; (3.) the freedom to elect its own President or Chair; (4.) freedom to select its Secretary General (SG) and permanent staff. It is worth noting that there may be trade-offs related to an IPI's constitutional status and institutional authority: formal status in an international organization is necessary for obtaining institutional competences, yet it may reduce autonomy.

In terms of powers and competencies, we will review (1.) the extent to which the individual IPIs have decision-making powers with international organizations; these powers can be situated between: No formal rights, Information about decision-making agenda, Obligatory consultation, Right to a response to consultation, Veto rights, Sole decision-making; (2.) the agenda-setting role of the IPI in relation to international organizations and whether it has the right to address resolutions to the international organization or has the right to place decision proposals on the agenda of the international organization; (3.) oversight powers; (4.) IPIs' role in appointments within international organization; (5) decision-making power in terms of the IPI's own budget; or (6.) its influence over the overall budget of international organization; (7.) its power to approve treaty changes of international organizations; (8.) its role in approving or accepting new members in the IPI; (9.) its role in approving or giving opinion on accepting new members in international organizations.

Finally, some comments will be made on <u>potential synergies</u> between different IPIs. Some IPIs have a formal status with the United Nations or gained observer status at the United Nations General Assembly. Some IPIs have observer status at other IPIs or have established institutional cooperation with other IPIs. Under this section, we will also explore possibilities for further synergies and address the question of potential overlap and risk of duplication in the work of the selected IPIs.

This is the conceptual framework which will form the basis for the analysis of the individual IPIs and Parliamentary Networks in the next chapter. In addition, where possible, specific analysis will be added as relevant to a specific IPI based upon our own observations, interviews conducted with senior staff of the IPIs and review of relevant literature. While the above conceptual framework will be applied horizontally across all IPIs, a number of additional comments as identified for one IPI or the other will be added.

In summary, the following check-list will be applied. A summary table matching the check-list with the findings on the selected IPIs has been compiled and included at the end of this chapter of the Study.

Chart 1: Check-list for analysis of selected IPIs and networks

Four dimensions of the analysis	
Criteria / dimension	*Indicator / criteria*
I. Constitutional status	
1.1 Date of establishment	Date of formal creation according to agreed document

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1.2	Affiliation to international organ.	Independent of, committed to, recognized by, part of internat. org.
1.3	Initiative of establishment of IPI	by Parliaments, Executives or mixed
1.4	Objectives of IPI	1. Regional cooperation 2. European (EU) integration 3. Political dialogue
II. Institutionalization		
2.1	Membership and composition	1. Total number of parliaments as full member 2. Number of EU Member States 3. Number of parliaments from SEE 4. Number of Candidate Countries 5. Observers, guests, affiliated members,... 6. Provisions of guaranteed representation of women 7. Seat distrib.: Proportional, degressive proportionally, equally
2.2	Governing structures	1. President elected by IPI 2. Collective Bureau / Presidency / Standing Committee 3. Rotating chairmanship among member parliaments 4. RoPs exist
2.3	Secretariat	1. Fixed Secretariat or rotating Secretariat 2. Permanent staff for the IPI, or not 3. Budget: from parliament budget contribution, governmental organization, other
2.4	Committee structure	1. Number of standing or permanent committees 2. Committees have rapporteurs
2.5	Frequency of meetings of plenary and committees	1. Fixed minimum amount of plenary meetings 2. Fixed amount of Committee meetings
2.6	Decision making rules	1. Written decision-making rules 2. Consensus decision making, or not?
2.7	Factions	1. Number of national delegations or factions 2. Are there ideological factions or political groups?
2.8	Level of transparency of IPI	1. Own web-site of IPI, or not 2. Draft documents accessible to public via internet 3. Final and approved documents accessible to public via internet 4. Plenary meetings are open to public and CSOs 5. Committee meetings are open to public and CSOs

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III. Institutional authority		
3.1	Autonomy	1. Free to consider any issue 2. Free to determine its own RoP 3. Free to elect its own President or Chair 4. Free to select its SG and permanent staff
3.2	Powers	1. Decision making with int. org.: negative, information, consultations, response, veto, sole decision maker 2. Agenda-setting of int.org.: resolutions, decisions proposals 3. Oversight powers 4. Role in appointments of int. org. 5. Decision on own budget of IPI 6. Influence budget of international organization 7. Approve treaty changes of internat. org. 8. Power over accepting new members in IPI 9. Power over accepting new members in int. org.
IV. Synergies with other initiatives		
4.1.	Formal status at U.N.	Yes / no
4.2.	Observer to other IPIs	Yes / no
4.3.	Institutional cooperation w. other IPIs	Yes / no

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4 Analysis of regional parliamentary cooperation in the Western Balkans and South East Europe

4.1 Geography of Western Balkans and South East Europe

The above mentioned conceptual framework for analyzing the regional parliamentary platforms will be applied to a number of selected initiatives relevant to the regions of the Western Balkans (WB) and South East Europe (SEE).

Under "Western Balkans", we understand this to be the area of former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia, plus Albania; that is: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo. Under "South East Europe", we understand this to be the area covered by the South East Europe Cooperation Process and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). That is the Western Balkans plus Slovenia, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.

It is important to note that the SEE includes five EU Member States (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Slovenia), five Candidate Countries (Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey), two potential Candidates (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and one country in the EU Neighbourhood area (Moldova). While the Western Balkans includes one EU Member State (Croatia), four Candidate Countries and two potential Candidates, it is important to mention that the Candidate Countries are not limited to Western Balkans, since Turkey is also a Candidate Country, alongside Iceland (though this country is not mentioned further in this context since it has decided to put on hold its accession process to the EU). The following chart provides a summary of the geography of the WB and SEE.

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	EU Member States	EU Candidate Countries	EU Potential Candidates	EU Neighbour-hood Area	Western Balkans	South East Europe
ALBANIA		X			X	X
B i H			X		X	X
BULGARIA	X					X
CROATIA	X				X	X
GREECE	X					X
KOSOVO			X		X	X
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		X			X	X
MOLDOVA				X		X
MONTENEGRO		X			X	X
ROMANIA	X					X
SERBIA		X			X	X
SLOVENIA	X					X
TURKEY		X				X

Chart 2: Geography of Western Balkans and South East Europe

4.2 Selected cooperation platforms

For the individual analysis of parliamentary cooperation platforms, we have made a selection of cooperation platforms which have a regional focus on the Western Balkans or South East Europe, or where the parliaments of the Western Balkans and South East Europe constitute a significant portion of the membership. We have selected those cooperation platforms which are considered most important by the parliaments of the Western Balkans. As such, the analysis does not include general IPIs which have no specific geographical link to the Western Balkans or South East Europe.

We have thus selected the following fifteen parliamentary platforms:

Parliamentary Organizations
✓ Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)
✓ Western Balkans Conference of the Committees on European Integration/Affairs of the States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process (COSAP)
✓ Conference of Foreign Affairs Committees (CFAC)

Parliamentary Agencies
✓ NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA)
✓ Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)
✓ Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM)
✓ SEECP Parliamentary Assembly (SEECP PA)

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✓ Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII-PD)

Parliamentary Organs

✓ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
✓ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)
✓ Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative (CEI-PD)

Networks of Parliamentarians

✓ Cetinje Parliamentary Forum (CPF)
✓ Danube Parliamentarians Conference (DPC)
✓ Conference of Speakers of Parliament of Western Balkans (CSPWB)
✓ Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance and European Integration of WB (NPC)

In addition to these regional parliamentary platforms, there exist also cooperation platforms of the parliaments from the Western Balkans with the European Parliament and with national parliaments of the EU Member States.

These EU-related cooperation platforms will be discussed in the next chapter (Chapter V).

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	ACRONYM	ALBANIA	BiH	BULGARIA	CROATIA	GREECE	KOSOVO	The former Yugoslav Republic of MACEDONIA	MOLDOVA	MONTE NEGRO	ROMANIA	SERBIA	SLOVENIA	TURKEY
Parliamentary Organizations														
1	PAM	X	X		X	X		X		X	ASSO	X	X	X
2	COSAP	X	X				GUEST	X		X		X		GUEST
3	CFAC		X		X			X		X		X		
Parliamentary Agencies														
4	NATO PA	X	ASSOC	X	X	X	OBSERV.	ASSOC	ASSOC	ASSOC	X	ASSOC	X	X
5	PABSEC	X		X		X				X		X	X	X
6	PA-UfM	X	X		X	X				X			X	X
7	SEE CP PA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	AII PD	X	X		X	X				X		X	X	
Parliamentary Organs														
9	PACE	X	X	X	X	X	GUEST	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
10	OSCE PA	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11	CEI PD	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Networks of Parliamentarians														
12	CPF	X	X		X		GUEST	X		X		X	X	
13	DPC		X	X	X					X	X	X	X	
14	CSPWB	X	X				X	X		X		X		

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15	NPC	X	X				OBSERV.	X		X		X		

Chart 3: Overview of membership of International Parliamentary Institutions (IPIs) and Networks of Parliamentarians

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4.3 Analysis of selected International Parliamentary Institutions and networks

4.3.1 Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean

- Created in: 1990 (as Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean) and 2005 (as Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean)
- Acronym: PAM
- Web-site: http://www.pam.int/
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey.
- Members from EU: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia.

Constitutional Status

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) is the parliamentary institution that brings together the parliaments of all countries of the Mediterranean region. It is an international, autonomous, inter-state, organization with its own international legal personality and capacity. It has been created by the decision of the national parliaments of the Mediterranean region. PAM enjoys the status of Observer to the United Nations General Assembly.[16]

PAM was established in 2005, following fifteen years of cooperation among the states of the Mediterranean region. Cooperation focused on themes of common interest, such as political, socio-economic and environmental issues. The process, known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), began in 1990 under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The main objective of PAM is to forge political, economic and social cooperation among the member states in order to find common solutions to the challenges facing the region, and to create a space for peace and prosperity for the Mediterranean peoples. PAM aims to be the centre of excellence for regional parliamentary diplomacy and promotes political dialogue between the parliaments concerned.

In 2008, the "Charter of the Mediterranean" was unanimously adopted at the PAM 3rd Plenary Session in Monaco and is now the PAM's political manifesto.

Institutionalization

The PAM has 27 full Member States, with a further 4 Associate Member States (Georgia, the Holy See, Romania and the Russian Federation), and 12 international and/or regional organizations with Observer Member status. Full membership is open exclusively to Mediterranean countries, which are represented on an equal footing, which means that each national delegation has (maximum) five members with equal voting and decision-making powers. Spain is the only Mediterranean country not yet part of PAM, though its MPs attend PAM events, and bilateral consultations are taking place at the presidency level between the Cortes and PAM. Recently also the parliaments of Moldova and Iraq, and the SMOM, have expressed interest either in joining PAM as Associated Members or as partners. In addition, the Parliament of Gibraltar has also recently requested to attend PAM events as a guest, and discussions have started with the UK Parliament and Spain to identify an *ad hoc* form of possible representation.

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[16] UNGA Res. A/64/124 of 16 December 2009.

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The individual members forming part of national delegations must be members of their national parliaments. National parliaments may also appoint alternates. The Members may also designate former parliamentarians, who served as delegates to PAM, to follow the work of the Standing Committees as Honorary members of their delegation.

The PAM has no guaranteed representation of women. Its RoP state in general terms that "*members shall include male and female parliamentarians in their delegation*," and that "*members shall make every effort to ensure that both genders are represented in the Bureau.*" PAM takes it as a task to promote policies for the empowerment of women in all aspects of life by sensitising national parliaments to the question of gender equality and the problems faced by women hindering their participation in society. Also a PAM ad-hoc committee dedicated to women has been established in 2006, as foreseen in its statutes, to promote gender issues.[17]

PAM has granted, under the principle of reciprocity, Observer status to inter-parliamentary and international organizations that are active in the Mediterranean region, such as LAS, PABSEC, PA-CIS, PACE, PUIC, IPU, Arab Parliament, Asian Parliament and PA-UfM; and has invited as Special Guests representatives of institutions and individual experts. Representatives of Associated Members, Observers, Special Guests and experts, may be invited to follow the work of the Standing Committees without the right to vote. A special cooperation links PAM and the Mediterranean fora of the NATO PA, PACE and OSCE PA.

The PAM full members include the parliaments of all five EU Candidate Countries (Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey) and one potential Candidate Country (Bosnia and Herzegovina). PAM includes thus ten members of the SEECP: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey. Representatives of Kosovo have, in the recent past, requested to attend a PAM economic event. PAM had agreed, in consultation with the Serbian Parliament.

The governing structures of the PAM consist of the (General) Assembly, the Bureau, the President and vice-Presidents. The Assembly elects a President and four vice-Presidents for a term of two years. Unless appointed by consensus, the President is elected by secret ballot. The candidate who obtains a four-fifths majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected. The Assembly also elects a President for each of the three Standing Committees for a term of two years. The Presidents of the Standing Committees also carry the title of vice-President of PAM. The Bureau is composed of the President of the Assembly, four vice-Presidents and the Presidents of the three Standing Committees. The Bureau has as main priorities to inject policy guidance, prioritize and steer activities of the PAM.

The Secretariat assists the PAM President, the PAM Bureau and all members in the execution of their mandate and is responsible for the follow-up to the decisions taken by the Assembly, providing coordination, assistance and support to the work of the Committees and all other bodies established under PAM. The Secretariat interacts with national delegations, as well as with regional and international bodies sharing an interest in the Mediterranean region. It stimulates the activities of the Assembly and also coordinates the awarding of the PAM Prize dedicated to individuals or institutions whose work is considered important for the Mediterranean region. The Secretary General is appointed by the Assembly on the proposal of the Bureau. The appointment is for a term of four years, and can be extended. The Secretariat of PAM was established in Malta in November 2007. The PAM Secretariat has set up Focal Points in each National Member Parliament and Partner Organizations to facilitate information flows, coordinate with national parliamentary timetables, and other issues to be addressed. PAM is also present with Offices of Permanent Observers (PAM Ambassadors) to the UN in New York,

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[17] http://www.pam.int/welcome.asp?m=assembly&id=278

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Geneva, Vienna and the LAS in Cairo. Offices are being opened in Paris, Rome and Brussels.

Each Member Parliament of the PAM is expected to contribute financially to the budget of the organization based upon an agreed scale of contributions. Also Associate Members are expected to make an annual contribution. The 2014 budget was 90% funded, missing out on the contributions from countries in conflict or internal political stalemate, such as Syria, Libya and Egypt.

The RoP mention the work of an External Auditor entrusted with auditing the PAM accounts; and the audit reports are circulated electronically to the member parliaments, as part of the Annual Report.

PAM conducts most of its work within the Standing Committees, which provide opinions and recommendations:

- Standing Committee on Political and Security-related Cooperation (First Committee)
- Standing Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation (Second Committee)
- Standing Committee on Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights (Third Committee)

Each Member Parliament has the right to participate with at least one member in each one of the three Standing Committees. The Standing Committees examine all matters referred to them in pursuance of a decision taken by the Assembly, or in case of emergency, by the Bureau or the President. The Assembly may appoint two rapporteurs, one from the northern and one from the southern Mediterranean, for each Standing Committee who will prepare a draft resolution.

The PAM may also set up ad-hoc Committees or Special Task Forces to tackle a particular topic (e.g. Middle East, Migration, Free Trade, Terrorism, Climate Change, Natural Resources Management, Energy and Gender issues, etc…).

The frequency of meetings has been determined as well. Unless it decides otherwise, the Assembly shall meet once a year in an ordinary session (the Plenary). The Bureau meets at least three times a year. The Standing Committees meet at least once a year to prepare proposals and reports to be submitted to the Assembly. According to the RoP, the meetings of the Standing Committees shall be held no later than two months prior to the regular Annual Session of the Assembly.

The decision-making rules of PAM are clear. In principle, decisions of the Assembly shall be taken by consensus. In instances where it is not possible to reach consensus, the Assembly shall take decisions by a four-fifths majority of the votes cast. Each delegation shall be entitled to five votes, provided at least two members are present at the time of voting. If only one delegate is present, he or she shall be entitled to cast only one vote.

The RoP foresee that "questions of urgency" may be placed on the agenda of the Assembly at any time on the proposal of the Bureau. Such questions of urgency shall be proposed in the form of a draft resolution, which must be adopted by at least two thirds of the national delegations present and voting.

The Assembly votes by a show of hands, except in cases where a roll-call vote or secret ballot is requested. For the election of the Bureau members, voting is by secret ballot, if requested.

PAM is composed of national delegations which count up to five members. There are no provisions for other factions, such as political groups.

The level of transparency of PAM can be summarized as follows. The General Assembly sessions (plenaries) are open to the public, unless otherwise decided by the Assembly. Committee meetings are closed to the public, unless decided otherwise. The meetings of

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the Bureau are held 'in camera'. PAM also organizes a number of seminars and conferences, which are open to parliamentarians, experts and the public.

PAM has its web-site where the general public can find information on the establishment of PAM and the composition of delegations. The site also includes the final versions of reports, recommendations and the statutory documents. It is continuously updated with political statements, mission reports and press releases. It has an annual calendar of past and upcoming meetings. Draft reports and draft recommendations are not uploaded on the external web-site, but accessible on the internal web-site for PAM member parliaments.

Institutional Authority

PAM is fully independent. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP, elect its leadership and select its Secretary General. While the agenda of each Annual Session of the Assembly includes consideration of the reports of the three Standing Committees, the selection of the topics is a reflection of current policy challenges for the Mediterranean region, e.g. migration, climate change and conflicts.

The power of the PAM is of a deliberative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate. The resolutions, recommendations and reports, once adopted by the PAM Assembly, are transmitted to the relevant stakeholders for consideration. Although the reports and resolutions are not legally binding, they are a "soft diplomacy" tool when dealing with parliaments, governments and civil society in the region. Since PAM has no international governmental counterpart, it cannot exercise any "oversight" on the executive. Its soft power depends a lot on its expertise and the advocacy by its members. Nevertheless, PAM high-level missions regularly meet with Heads of States and Governments, Ministers and senior officials.

Its UN Observer status allows PAM to consult regularly and formally with UN, EU and LAS senior officials and play an active role of parliamentary diplomacy in relation to the different international initiatives and operations being carried out in the region, such as the Middle East peace process, the Syrian crisis, Peacekeeping operations, negotiations in Cyprus, the Balkans, Libya and the West Sahara. Furthermore, this status has, *inter alia*, enabled the Assembly to facilitate the travel of some Arab MPs to Israel as part of a PAM delegation and, for the Speaker of the Knesset to address a PAM Plenary in an Arab country.

PAM has taken specific initiatives to increase its influence:

- Regularly attend and contribute to the High-Level segments, and relevant meetings and conferences, of the UN General Assembly and other UN bodies.
- At the request of the United Nations Security Council, and under the provisions of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, PAM assists in the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2178 of 24 September 2014 on Counter Terrorism in the Mediterranean region. Specific UN/PAM programmes are dedicated to the Maghreb, Middle East and South-East Europe / Balkans, as priority areas;
- Service the Parliamentary Dimension of the 5+5 Dialogue among Western Mediterranean countries [18]; and attend the Summits and Ministerial meetings of this organization;

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[18] The Western Mediterranean Forum, commonly referred to as 5+5 Dialogue, was officially launched in Rome in 1990 as an informal sub-regional forum which main aim was to foster relations between European countries and the newly born Arab Maghreb Union. The 5+5 Dialogue comprises Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia. As a trans-Mediterranean cooperation initiative, the rationale of the 5+5 Dialogue is to provide an informal forum in which the five EU member states and the five Maghreb countries have the chance to discuss subjects of topical interest for the region and to identify new areas for practical cooperation.

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- Support External Trade, Investments and Job Creation in the Mediterranean through the activities of a dedicated PAM Panel on Investments and Trade Facilitation, established in Lisbon in 2010. In this framework, cooperation agreements and partnerships are in place with the UN Economic and Trade cluster, the European Commission, the ECB, the EBRD, the EIB, FMI, the WB, the WMO and the private sector;

- Observe parliamentary and presidential elections and referenda, as done in Tunisia and Jordan;

- Coordinate the action of international parliaments in the preparation of a common position at the 2015 Paris Summit on Climate Change, as already done for COP 15 in Denmark;

- Launch of "Mediterranean Day" on 21st March, when special events are held in national Member Parliaments to celebrate "*Mediterraneity*";

- Assign "Mediterranean Prize" in acknowledgement of outstanding contributions in furthering the interests of Mediterranean peoples;

- Conduct Biannual Meeting of Secretaries-General hosted in rotation by a Member State;

- Conduct Annual and *ad hoc* Meetings with Ambassadors and other high-level delegations visiting Malta, to develop coordination strategies, prepare for international meetings and brief on PAM activities;

- Conduct of regular meetings with Ambassadors on the occasion of PAM events outside Malta;

- Organize parliamentary dialogue with national Member Parliaments and regional institutions through comparative surveys, exchanging information and best practices, and undertaking field missions;

- Call for the "Fez Programme on Intercultural and Inter-religious Dialogue Building", to be regularly updated and included in the agenda of all Member Parliaments;

- Support External Trade and Investments in the Mediterranean through a dedicated PAM panel; Support harmonisation of national legislation. *Inter alia*, at the 4th Plenary Session (Istanbul 2009) proposals were initiated to harmonise national legislations in two fields: the Resolution on the Definition of Terrorism calls for acts related to terrorism to be punishable as criminal offences in criminal law as such in all PAM Member States; the Resolution on 'Women in Political Life in the Mediterranean calls' on parliaments to reform family law as the starting point for increased participation and for the civil rights of women. At present, at the request of the UN Security Council, PAM is working at the harmonization of national legislations on the issue of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters from ISIS", and Parliamentary Oversight of Security Services.

- In 2011, at the request of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, PAM also organized a major regional parliamentary conference on the risks associated to and response mechanisms relating to accidents resulting from deep-sea drilling in the Adriatic Sea and South-East Mediterranean, following the oil spill occurred in the Gulf of Mexico. The conclusions of the meeting also proposed a series of new joint legislative measures by all costal countries concerned.

- Implement political support programmes. In 2010-2011, at the request of the UN, there were technical missions to and dedicated consultations with Bosnia and Herzegovina to contribute to the constitutional reform process, connected to the Daytona Agreement. Since then, an active cooperation has been established with main stakeholders such as the UN, the US Administration, the Office of the German Chancellor, the Swiss Parliament, NATO, the European Council and the OSCE. In 2012 and 2014, there were requests by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Libya for the coordination of international assistance to

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be provided to the Libyan National Congress in forming its staff and parliamentarians through study tours. There were also fact-finding missions by the PAM Bureau, *inter alia*, to Gaza (2009) and Damascus (2013). Many political missions took place to Algeria, Egypt, Holy See, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Russian Federation, Syria, Tunisia and the USA in 2013 and 2014.

In its Strategic Plan 2013-2017, PAM intends to take additional initiatives:
- Support the democratization process in Arab Spring countries and the integration process in the Balkans;
- Observe parliamentary and presidential elections and referenda;
- Coordinate efforts to establish a "Mediterranean Community of Energy".

Synergies with other initiatives

When discussing synergies with other initiatives, one needs to refer primarily to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (PA-UfM), related to the Barcelona Process. While the existence of the two institutions shows that Euro-Mediterranean relations have become more 'parliamentarized', there is need for clear understanding of the specifics of each institution.

As the UfM-PA has a clear European approach to the Mediterranean region and includes the European Parliament as well as the more northern EU member states, the PAM has a Mediterranean centred approach and is closer to the UN system. While the UfM-PA has suspended the Parliament of Syria, the PAM works with the parliaments of all UN members, which enables it to engulf in various initiatives of parliamentary diplomacy and mediation, including conveying messages from the leadership of the United Nations and the EU to the representatives of the Syrian Government and Parliament. PAM has established a practice of hands-on approach to various political questions, for instance by working with the Lebanese Parliament to change legislation on the working conditions and contracts for Palestinian refugees in the country. It is also worth noting the differences between the Secretariat function of the two organizations. The Secretariat of the UfM-PA is of administrative nature and is linked to the troika of chairmanships of the organization. The Secretariat of the PAM is more of a political nature, has a mandate to take action upon its own initiative and represent the organization. It can also enter into international agreements. Interestingly, the work of the committees of the two initiatives has most potential for developing synergies. While PAM has a Committee on Political and Security-related Cooperation, UfM-PA has a Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights. While PAM has a Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation, UfM-PA has a Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education and a Committee on Energy, Environment and Water. While PAM has a Committee on Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights, UfM-PA has a Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture.

Further synergies with relevant stakeholders dealing with energy need to be developed, in particular as PAM was requested to facilitate the work required to establish a "Mediterranean Community of Energy".

So far, PAM has already contributed to several EuroMed Ministerial meetings on industry, transport, energy and environment, as well as to other dedicated activities organized by the G8, the European Union, UNIDO, the Association of the Mediterranean Regulators for Electricity and Gas (MEDREG), Med-TSO (created with PAM's support), UfM, 5+5 Forum, OME, Energy Charter, Crans Montana Forum and national governments (PAM officially addressed the opening of the Malta/EU Energy Conference 2014 and facilitated the session on "EuroMed integration of markets and policies" at the Ministerial Meeting on Energy in Rome on 19 November 2014) in terms of energy. PAM

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also actively follows the discussions among Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt, and the US, on the exploitations of the new gas fields in the East Mediterranean.

Similarly, synergies with relevant stakeholders dealing with trade policies, including the UfM and EC, are being developed, as PAM promotes the establishment of the Mediterranean Free Trade Area, in cooperation with the three United Nations Economic Commissions with a mandate in the countries of the Mediterranean region. On various occasions, when central and northern European members of EMPA first, and PA-UfM later, blocked in those bodies initiatives aimed at establishing financial investment institutions dedicated to the Mediterranean, PAM, at the request of EU southern member states, unanimously adopted and implemented specific resolutions and political actions aimed at avoiding those vetoes, and deal directly with the G8 to find and implement alternative solutions, such as the Deauville Partnership.

In 2010, UfM PA and PAM exchanged the Observer Status. This is gradually contributing to more cooperation and complementarity.

Some caution is required in terms of setting up new structures. The PAM Strategic Plan 2013-2017 recommends resuming a regular conference, modelled on the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, where Presidents of PAM Member Parliaments, including a dedicated session for members of the 5+5 Dialogue and eventually one for those of the South-East European Cooperation Group, can engage in direct exchanges and bilateral talks every two years. The added value and relevance of such a new high-level platform of Speakers of Parliament needs to be considered, in view of similar platforms of Speakers of Parliament, e.g. within the PA-UfM, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative Parliamentary Dimension and the new Parliamentary Assembly of the SEE-CP, which, however, have different memberships and geopolitical interests from those of PAM.

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4.3.2 Western Balkans Conference of the Committees on European Integration/Affairs of the States participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process

- Created: 2005
- Acronym: COSAP
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia (up to mid 2013), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[19], Montenegro, Serbia; Guests: Kosovo, Turkey.
- Members from EU: -

Constitutional Status

The Western Balkans Conference of the Committees on European Integration/Affairs (COSAP) was established in 2005 by the parliaments of countries aspiring to become members of the EU: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia & Montenegro. It is not linked to any international organization or executive agency. Its objectives are representing a regional forum for regular exchange of views concerning the Stabilization and Association Process, the EU membership agenda of the countries in the Process, as well as the EU enlargement process. COSAP objectives include regional cooperation, European integration and aspects of capacity building.

Institutionalization

Members of COSAP are the Committees for European Integration / Affairs of Parliaments participating in the Stabilization and Association Process. Participants are thus coming from states which are not members of the EU. Once a country accedes to the EU, such as Croatia in mid 2013, it no longer participates in COSAP. Each delegation to COSAP is composed at most by six members of the parliament's Committee for European Integration / Affairs. The COSAP Rules of Procedure have no provisions for guaranteed representation of women. Also observers, experts and special guests can participate in COSAP meetings. These include, for instance, representatives of the COSAC, the European Parliament, the EU Delegation in the country chairing COSAP, and Embassies of the Member States of COSAP. Often, the RCC and RSPC are present as well.

The governing structures of COSAP are, in essence, the chair of the Conference, who is the Chairperson of the Committee for European Integration / Affairs of the presiding member country. According to the RoP, the COSAP chairmanship rotates every six months among member parliaments.

There is no permanent Secretariat of COSAP and no permanent staff. The Secretariat of the host Parliament prepares the meetings and ensures all necessary conditions for the meetings to take place. The Secretariat prepares the documents for the Conference in the English language and in the official language(s) of the presiding country. There is no specific budget for COSAP meetings. The host country covers the costs for the organization of the Conference and the delegations cover their own costs. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation has provided limited support to the host country (e.g. the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2013) in organizing the meeting.

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[19] The Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a member of COSAC under the name: Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia

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The RoP foresee in the possibility of COSAP working groups, but in practice the COSAP plenary conference is the only operational forum.

The COSAP meetings are held every six months. However, the frequency has been interrupted on several occasions. For instance, after the 5th meeting in March 2009, the 6th meeting only took place in March 2012 and the 7th meeting in March 2013. The 8th and 9th meetings took place with intervals of six months. The RoP include provisions for extraordinary meetings upon the request of the majority of chairpersons of Committees for European Integration.

Decisions on the Joint Statement are made by consensus by all delegations present. Consensus among all members is required for admission of new members. As Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have become EU Candidate Countries, the political commitment to make COSAP an effective platform seems to increase as well; hence the re-starting of the 6-months schedule of meetings.

The only factions at COSAP are the national delegations. There are no ideological or regional factions.

In terms of transparency, the RoP stipulate that the meetings are open to the public, unless otherwise determined. So far, very few, if any, members of the general public attended or observed COSAP meetings. At the end of each meeting, written minutes are produced, for internal information of the participating parliaments. The Joint Statement is sent to the COSAP participating parliaments, to COSAC, to the European Parliament and to other bodies pursuant to the decision of the Conference. Often the Joint Statement is posted on the web-site of the parliament which hosted the Conference. There is no dedicated COSAP website which holds the institutional memory of COSAP.

Institutional Authority

COSAP determines its own agenda and is free to consider any issue. Reviewing the last two meetings, one can see that a wide range of very diverse issues were discussed. During the 8th Conference in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the COSAP agenda included: the role of the national parliaments and the parliamentary committees on European issues for better use of the Instrument of pre-accession aid – IPA 2 (2014-2020), visa liberalization, functioning of the Central-European Agreement on Free Trade – CEFTA, discussion on the EU Enlargement Strategy (2013-2014) and the Progress Reports on Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Turkey. Six months later, at the 9th Conference in Montenegro, the Joint Statement addressed issues such as cross-border cooperation, rule of law, road and railway infrastructure, unemployment, trade integration, public administration reform , improving the system of financial management and control of the EU pre-accession funds.

Although all of these issues are important, and since COSAP meets only once every six months [or sometimes once a year] there is need for a more clear focus in the selection of the issues on the agenda and for consistent follow-up, if COSAP wants to have a real policy impact. It is thus significant that, during the Montenegrin COSAP chairmanship, consensus was reached on a modification to the COSAP agenda by including in the first session of every meeting a discussion on the fulfilment of obligations from the Joint Statement of the previous meeting.

The Joint Statement of the 9th COSAP "*points to the need for stronger parliamentary communication with the EU Member States, with the aim to deepen diplomatic relations and give more information on the degree of fulfilment of obligations arising from the Stabilization and Association Agreement."* In this respect, closer coordination with COSAC in terms of agenda setting would be beneficial for COSAP. While the parliament of the country holding the presidency of the European Council often participates in

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COSAP meetings, there is little evidence of the mechanism or impact of coordination between COSAP and COSAC.

COSAP has full autonomy in determining its RoP and decides on its chair via the system of rotating chairmanship. The current chair is the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The powers of COSAP in the European integration process of the Western Balkans are limited. It is mainly of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among participants. The RoP of COSAP explicitly mention the consultative nature of COSAP: "the *exchange of views within the framework of the Conference will in no way suspend or encroach upon the competences of the national parliamentary committees and parliaments of the member countries of the Conference*"; and that the "*activities and the positions taken by the Conference will in no way commit national parliaments, except when they are explicitly accepted.*" The main outcome of COSAP is the Joint Statement, which includes recommendations and requests to either the national governments or the European Commission and Parliament.

COSAP takes decisions on its own membership. This issue has become particularly relevant in view of the 2013 requests by Turkey and Kosovo for full membership, which so far have occasionally been invited as 'special guests'. The Skopje chairmanship in 2013 put the applications on the agenda of COSAP and, based upon the EU-brokered 2012 Belgrade-Pristina agreement on regional fora, drafted proposals to amend the Rules of Procedure to enable Kosovo to become a member of COSAP, in a similar way as happened for the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), by replacing 'member states' by 'participants'. Due to the consensus rule for such decisions, the membership applications could not be decided and were forwarded to the Montenegrin COSAP chairmanship (first half of 2014). As the Montenegrin EU Integration Committee did not take any initiative on this issue, it was passed on to the Serbian COSAP chairmanship (second half of 2014). So far, the EU Integration Committee of the Serbian National Assembly has taken no initiative on this issue either; hence the membership requests by Kosovo and Turkey are still pending.

Synergies and Recommendations

To improve the relevance and the impact of COSAP meetings, there is need to strengthen the link with COSAC, in particular since the Candidate Countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey attend the COSAC meetings in the capacity of observers. Only the potential Candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo cannot attend COSAC as observers. We would therefore recommend connecting the timing and venue of COSAP to COSAC meetings, in two formats.

Firstly, it would be useful for the COSAP representatives from the Western Balkans Candidate Countries --Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia -- to have a half-day meeting prior to COSAC meetings. The Western Balkans Candidate Countries can discuss and adopt a short statement relevant to the agenda of COSAC and informally distribute it to COSAC. Secondly, following the COSAC meeting, the regular COSAP meeting can be organized, bringing together the Candidate Countries and the potential Candidates. The COSAP meeting can then review the outcomes of the COSAC meeting and discuss other COSAP issues under the regular COSAP chairmanship.

As COSAC meets four times a year, including twice in plenary session, in the country holding the Council Presidency, this proposal means that COSAP needs to align the venue and timing of its meetings with COSAC. The country chairing COSAP would continue to chair the meeting of COSAP, though not in its "own" city.

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This formula will result in closer programmatic alignment of COSAP with COSAC, and ensure Candidate Countries' closer interaction with Member States as well as with the potential Candidates. It will enable COSAP to remain a relevant platform as the number of Candidate Countries increases while the association process differentiates between the Candidate Countries. For COSAP representatives from Candidate Countries, it requires less travelling since COSAP takes place in the city of COSAC meetings, while the potential Candidates gain additional opportunities for informal meetings with parliamentarians from other countries not present at stand-alone COSAP meetings.

Finally, it is recommended that the required consensus-based decision is taken related to the full participation and equal membership of the Assembly of Kosovo to COSAP, in line with the 2012 EU-brokered Belgrade-Pristina agreement on regional fora. An inclusive decision will enable COSAP to remain the relevant body of Committees on European Integration/Affairs of all parliaments participating in the Stabilisation and Association Process.

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4.3.3 Conference of Foreign Affairs Committees

- Created: 2012
- Acronym: CFAC
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[20], Montenegro, Serbia.
- Members from EU: Croatia

Constitutional Status

The Conference of Foreign Affairs Committees held its inaugural meeting in December 2012, bringing together the Foreign Affairs Committees of the national parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The initiative for the creation of the Conference has been taken by the chairpersons of the Committees of the countries which are part of the "Igman Initiative", though it is independent from the respective governments which participate in the "Igman Initiative".

The objective of the CFAC is improving inter-parliamentary cooperation and regional dialogue on foreign policy issues. Parliamentary coordination on foreign policy issues is aimed at contributing to better relations between the peoples of the region and provides support to the European integration process of each of the countries.

Institutionalization

The founding members of the CFAC are the Foreign Affairs Committees of the parliaments of the so-called "Dayton-countries", which include EU Member States (Croatia), Candidate Countries (Montenegro and Serbia) and potential Candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The CFAC is not limited to the initial four members. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was accepted as a new member in September 2014 and the Slovene Parliament was invited as well (but couldn't attend the September 2014 meeting). At the same meeting, all members of the CFAC supported the extension of the CFAC to other countries in the region, on which occasion Albania and Kosovo were mentioned. There exists no formula of 'guests' or 'observers'.

The CFAC aims for a light model of institutionalization. At its founding meeting, the parliamentary cooperation models of the Nordic, Benelux and Baltic countries were studied in detail. It was concluded that this initiative does not aim to create a new Parliamentary Assembly but instead enhance the cooperation between the national parliament committees. The CFAC does not want to create cooperation structures prior to initiating actual patters of cooperation. To this end, five meetings have been organized so far, each time in a different capital and in rotation: Zagreb (October 2012), Sarajevo (March 2013), Belgrade (July 2013), Podgorica (February 2014) and Sarajevo (May 2014). An evaluation and stock-taking meeting took place in September 2014 in Zagreb.

The governing structure of the CFAC is thus light as well. There is no President or chairperson-in-office of the initiative. Instead, there is a rotating chairmanship by the parliament hosting the specific meeting. There is also no troika formula of chairs, nor a Presidency or Bureau.

There is no permanent Secretariat of CFAC and no permanent staff. The Secretariat of the host Parliament prepares the meetings and ensures all necessary conditions for the meetings to take place. The Secretariat prepares the documents for the Conference in the

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[20] The Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a member of CFAC under the name: Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia

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English language and in the official language(s) of the presiding country. There is no specific budget for CFAC meetings. The host country covers costs for the organization of the conference and the delegations cover their own costs.

The Secretariat functions of the CFAC are exercised by the staff of the Foreign Affairs Committee hosting a specific meeting on a rotating basis. The committee staff of the hosting parliament are responsible for issuing invitations and preparing documents. So far, the documents are prepared and meetings conducted in the Bosnian / Croat / Montenegrin / Serbian language(s). The costs for organizing and participating in the meetings of the CFAC are covered from the budgets of the participating parliaments, without donor support, so far.

The CFAC has no Committee structure but, during its past meetings, has established cooperation with functional committees of the participating national parliaments. Each parliament has taken the lead on one thematic area in order to establish regional cooperation and host one joint conference of the Foreign Affairs Committees with the functional committee which has that thematic area within its mandate: Bosnia and Herzegovina for energy policy; Croatia for economic cooperation and transport; Montenegro for ecological policies; Serbia for human rights and cultural heritage. With the Foreign Affairs Committees as a driving force, the participation of the functional committees ensured sufficient expertise input to the meeting to enable a meaningful regional dialogue between the countries. However, the thematic diversity of the CFAC resembles the thematic diversity of the CPF.

As the CFAC is still in its initial phase, no fixed frequency of meetings has been established yet. During the last two years, there was a meeting every six months. The frequency with which the CFAC will continue to meet and at which level of institutionalization is yet to be determined.

As mentioned above, the decision making within the CFAC is consensus-based, in terms of agenda setting, frequency of meetings and admission of new members.

The transparency of the initiative is based upon the specific approaches of the participating parliaments. This means that the Press and Public Relations Department of each of the participating parliaments provide a short brief on the parliament's web-site.[21] There is no specific web-site of the CFAC. Agendas, contributions, summaries or concluding statements are not publicly available. For the time being, the meetings are not open to the public or CSOs.

Institutional Authority

The CFAC is a fully autonomous inter-parliamentary platform. It is free to consider any issue; and has autonomously decided on the themes it is exploring with the relevant functional committees. During the fourth meeting of the CFAC, and due to the absence of representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the events in the country at the time, the representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the parliaments of Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia expressed their concern about the threat posed by the expressed social and political dissatisfaction. During the September 2014 meeting in Zagreb, the representatives of the Foreign Affairs Committees discussed how the creation of regional policies, including on infrastructure and energy, are a prerequisite for regional cooperation. They also discussed the importance of consensus of all parliamentary parties on membership in the EU as the foundation of successful negotiations as well as the importance of raising enlargement policy higher on the list of priorities of the EU.

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[21]

http://www.skupstina.me/~skupcg/index.php/en/skupstina/potpredsjednici/aktuelnosti/item/1334-ucesce-potpredsednika-branka-radulovica-na-sestoj-konferenciji-predsednika-parlamenata-zemalja-zapadnog-balkana-druga-sesija

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The powers of the CFAC in the countries' foreign policy are limited. It is mainly consultative in nature, providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among participants.

In view of our recommendation to make the SEECP PA the central parliamentary platform for the region, we suggest that the work of the CFAC be coordinated with and aligned to the work of the SEECP PA.

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4.3.4 Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- Created in: 1955
- Acronym: NATO PA
- Web-site: http://www.nato-pa.int/
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey
- Members from EU: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, France, United Kingdom, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia.

Constitutional Status

The first "Conference of Members of Parliament from the NATO Countries" was held in 1955. In 1966, the 12th Conference agreed to rename the organisation as the North Atlantic Assembly. In 1999, the Assembly was renamed "NATO Parliamentary Assembly".

NATO's recognition of the NATO PA can be said to be customary,[22] starting from the recommendation of the North Atlantic Council of 1967 to set up informal relations with the North Atlantic Assembly, the following responses of the Secretary General of NATO to Assembly recommendations and resolutions, and the special legal status accorded to the PA by the Belgian Parliament in 1974. In 1974, the "Ottawa Declaration" of the Allied governments also endorsed the Assembly's work without naming it directly. Since 1997, NATO PA Presidents have participated in and addressed the NATO Summits of Heads of State and Government. Although it is not formally part of NATO, the NATO PA is factually recognised by the NATO through a variety of practices, for example regular speeches of the NATO Secretary General in the NATO PA sessions, and the Assembly President visiting the NATO summits of heads of state and government. Moreover, in 1997, the Assembly was entrusted with monitoring the implementation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter on a Distinctive Partnership. At the Annual Session in November 2004 in Venice, Italy, which marked the beginning of celebrations of the Assembly's 50th Anniversary, the entire North Atlantic Council for the first time joined members of the Assembly for a special plenary meeting.

The objective of NATO PA is to provide a link between the NATO authorities and the parliaments of the member states. Through its discussions, it helps to promote a common feeling of Atlantic solidarity in the various legislative assemblies and to further the aims and values of the Atlantic Alliance.

Institutionalization

The NATO-PA is made up of 257 delegates from the 28 NATO member countries. Each national delegation is based on the country's size and reflects the political composition of the parliament, therefore representing a broad spectrum of political opinion.

Delegates are nominated by their parliaments according to their national procedures. Every member may have an alternate who may vote in his or her place. Members and alternate members are appointed, where possible, for a minimum period of one year. The NATO PA has no provisions for guaranteed representation of women.

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[22] Kissling, C., "The Legal and Political Status of International Parliamentary Institutions", in: Lucio Levi, Giovanni Finizio and Nicola Vallinoto (ed.), *The Democratization of International Institutions*, First International Democracy Report, Routledge, Oxon, 2014.

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In addition to NATO-country delegates, delegates from thirteen associate countries, four Mediterranean associate countries, as well as observers from eight other countries take part in its activities, bringing the total number of delegates to approximately 360.

Associate membership is intended for EU Members which are not NATO members and other members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, though not all. There needs to be a clear track-record of democratic political system, in line with the criteria of PACE. The process of dealing with membership requests foresees that the Standing Committee takes the initial decision: with simple majority for observer status and with 3/4 majority for associate member. The full Assembly then ratifies it with simple majority.

The NATO PA Standing Committee decided in 1994 that the NATO and NATO PA processes of enlargement should be aligned. In other words, the PA doesn't go ahead and upgrade a country to full member before NATO has done so. No country has applied first for NATO PA membership before being granted NATO membership. However, at the latest NATO PA session in Vilnius, NATO PA called upon NATO to give Georgia the Membership Action Plan, to assist BiH in activating the Membership Action Plan, to open the way for Montenegro's membership of the Alliance, and to encourage Skopje and Athens to solve the 'name issue'.

Associate members are able to participate in almost all Committee and Sub-Committee activities, all Rose-Roth seminars, and Plenary Sessions. At Plenary Sessions, associate members can present resolutions and amendments to resolutions. They can also serve as Special Associate Rapporteurs on Committees to present their perspectives in NATO-PA reports. They are not, however, eligible to vote on reports, resolutions or Assembly leadership, nor do they contribute to the Assembly's budget.

NATO PA full members from SEE are Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey. NATO PA full members thus include the Parliaments of two EU Candidate Countries (Albania, Turkey). The three other EU Candidate Countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and the potential EU Candidate Country (Bosnia and Herzegovina) are NATO PA Associate Members. Before a "guest" at NATO PA, in 2014 the Assembly of Kosovo became a partner parliament and observer delegation to NATO PA.

There are no gender requirements for delegations to NATO PA. The issue never had much traction.

The governing structures of the NATO PA are the Assembly, Bureau and Standing Committee. Their roles, responsibilities and ways of election are described in detail in the NATO PA Rules of Procedure.

The Assembly meets twice a year, in a Spring session and an Autumn session.

The Bureau of the Assembly meets three times a year and consists of the President, five Vice-Presidents and the Treasurer. Before the closing of the annual session, the Assembly elects the President, the Vice-Presidents and, every other year, the Treasurer. The President, the Vice-Presidents and the Treasurer may be re-elected. The President and the Vice-Presidents shall be eligible for re-election once, and the Treasurer twice. Members of the Bureau are ex-officio members of all Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups.

The President represents the Assembly. He is the leading officer of the Assembly. He is kept informed of all political, organizational and financial developments. He arbitrates on any question of concern to the Assembly in the intervals between Bureau meetings, Standing Committee meetings and Assembly sessions.

The Standing Committee consists of one member from each member country, nominated by each member delegation. The President, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer and the Chairmen of the Assembly's Committees are entitled to vote in the Standing Committee only if they are the representative of their delegation on the Standing Committee.

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The Standing Committee co-ordinates and approves all Assembly activities and specifies the rights and obligations of non-member delegations. It examines and approves the budget and financial statements before their adoption by the Assembly as a whole, and it ensures that the Assembly management is in accordance with its political priorities and financial means.

NATO PA has its Secretariat in Brussels, composed of 29 staff, overseen by the Secretary General. The International Secretariat performs a dual function: on the one hand, it conducts much of the research and analysis necessary for the substantive output of the Assembly's Committees, and on the other, it provides the administrative support required to organize sessions, seminars, Committee meetings, and other Assembly activities. In addition to its research and administrative functions, the International Secretariat maintains a close working relationship with NATO, other international organizations and research institutes. The Secretary General is appointed by the Standing Committee for a period of two years and may be re-appointed four times. The Standing Committee also determines the number and grade of the employees in the International Secretariat.

NATO PA has its own budget, paid from contributions of budgets of member parliaments in most cases (the US, the UK, Greece and Norway pay their contribution from the government's budget). Only for a couple of countries, the government pays the membership contribution (e.g. US Congress). All contributions have been paid in full. RoP foresee suspension rights in case a country doesn't pay its contributions but it has never to be used. A discussion has taken place about whether non-member delegations should also be asked to contribute to the budget, on either a voluntary or a mandatory basis. In the end it was decided not to do that, for two reasons. Firstly, no taxation without representation: if non-members have no voting rights, they shouldn't pay. Secondly, non-members fund various activities, such as hosting meetings. For instance, Georgia has offered to host one of the sessions next Spring and the proposal has been accepted. NATO PA financial books are audited by the NATO Board of Auditors, which is an independent audit institution composed of auditors of the member states. The audit reports on NATO PA are sent to the member parliaments, which are free to share them with their governments. NATO missions receive each year an annual report from the NATO Board of Auditors which includes a summary of all their audit reports (including a summary of their report on the NATO PA).

NATO PA has set up the following General Committees:

- Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security; with a Sub-committee on Democratic Governance
- Defence and Security Committee; with a Sub-committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation and a Sub-committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities
- Economics and Security Committee; with a Sub-committee on Transition and Development, and a Sub-committee on transatlantic economic relations
- Political Committee; with a Sub-committee on Transatlantic relations and a Sub-committee on NATO partnerships
- Science and Technology Committee; with a Sub-committee on Energy and Environmental Security

In the course of the annual session, each Committee elects from its members a Chairman, up to three Vice-Chairmen and a General Rapporteur.

In 2002, NATO PA established the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee. This Committee consists of the Standing Committee and the leaders of the delegation from the Russian Federation. The Committee met twice a year during the Assembly's Sessions. Following Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and its decision to annex Crimea in March 2014, regular institutional relations with the Russian Parliament, including in the framework of the NATO-Russia Parliamentary Committee, were broken off. The

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Russian Associate membership has been withdrawn. Russia has no formal status anymore with NATO PA.

Also in 2002, the Ukraine-NATO Inter-Parliamentary Council was created. Each of the Assembly's five Committees nominates two members to serve on the Ukraine-NATO Inter-Parliamentary Council and two members who serve as alternates. Delegates appointed by the Committees can serve a maximum of three consecutive years. Since 2004, NATO PA monitored all Ukraine presidential and parliamentary elections.

In 2008, following the conflict between Russia and Georgia, NATO PA established a Georgia-NATO Inter-Parliamentary Council to coordinate NATO PA activities related to Georgia. The Council consists of the delegation of Georgia and of the Assembly Bureau. Through its cooperation with the Georgian Parliament, NATO PA supports Georgia's reform agenda and its efforts to prepare for eventual membership of NATO.

The creation of these three NATO PA Councils (with Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia) was called for in the founding documents of the NATO Commissions with these three countries. There is a clear parallel, as the NATO PA Councils mirror the NATO commissions.

In 1996, NATO PA created the Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group, a forum for co-operation and discussion with the parliaments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region focussed on political, economic, social and security issues. In 2004-2005, the Assembly also decided to bolster its relations with parliaments in the MENA region. At the Venice session, the Standing Committee created the new status of Mediterranean Associate Members, opening the door for increased co-operation with MENA parliaments. The new status was granted to Morocco, Algeria, Israel and Jordan. In 2009 the NATO PA Standing Committee changed the name of the Mediterranean Associate Delegations into "Regional Partner and Mediterranean Associate Delegations".

The frequency of meetings has been well established over the years. The Assembly meets twice a year for four days of plenary sessions. The Bureau meets three times a year prior to the Standing Committee meetings. A committee can meet when convened by its chairperson, subject to the Assembly's programme of work as established by the Standing Committee. In practice, committees meet in the course of the annual session, thus twice a year. Two or more Committees may, either on the initiative of their Chairmen or at the suggestion of the Standing Committee, make arrangements for the joint study of subjects of common interest to them

The decision-making rules in NATO PA can be summarized as follows. Subject to the approval of the Assembly, the Standing Committee may decide, by a three-quarter majority of its members present and eligible to vote, to invite delegations from parliaments of countries which are not members of the Atlantic Alliance to participate in the work of the Assembly as associate delegations, or as regional partners and Mediterranean associate members. The Standing Committee decides the size of associate delegations and the number of associate delegates nominated to each Committee of the Assembly.

Delegations from other parliaments and inter-parliamentary assemblies may, with the consent of the Standing Committee and subject to the approval of the Assembly, be invited by the President to attend sessions of the Assembly as parliamentary observers. Subject to the discretion of Chairmen of Committees, parliamentary observers may participate in meetings of the Assembly's Committees.

On all these decisions, members vote as individuals (not as national delegations). The required majority for all votes shall be a simple majority of the votes cast. A Committee shall normally vote by show of hands using the voting card. In exceptional circumstances the Chairman may decide to hold a roll-call vote of members of the Committee by delegation. Elections are always by secret ballot.

NATO PA is composed of national delegations which have between three (e.g. Luxembourg, Slovenia) and 36 members (United States). Between these two extremes all

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other countries are grouped depending on their population size. If we compute the ratio of population per seat, that of the U.S. is 8,805,556 people/seat while Luxembourg's is 180,000 people/seat, it gives us clear indication that smaller countries are over-represented compared to larger countries. The seat distribution is thus according to system of "Degressive proportionality", which means that smaller countries are over-represented and larger countries are under-represented.

NATO PA has no formal provisions for political groups. However, there are three informal, self-organised and self-managed political groups which meet twice a year during the two sessions: a conservative, a socialist and a liberal group. The American delegation does not participate in the political groups.

The level of transparency of NATO PA can be summarized as follows. Unless the Assembly decides to the contrary, all its sittings shall be public. Committee meetings shall be open to invited non-members of the Assembly unless otherwise decided by the Committee concerned. The Chairman of a Committee shall have the right to invite non-members of the Assembly to address the Committee. Observers may attend Committee meetings by invitation of the Chairman.

NATO PA has an extensive website where the general public can find information on the establishment of NATO PA, the composition of delegations and committees. The site also includes the final versions of Committee reports, Committee meeting summaries, policy recommendations, mission reports, seminar reports, special publications, official speeches and transcripts. It has an annual calendar of past and upcoming meetings, and the annual financial statements.

Institutional Authority

NATO PA has substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the NATO Council. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP, elect a President and select its Secretary General and staff.

The power of the NATO PA is of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate. NATO PA considers its main task to support national MPs by providing expertise on various matters relevant to national parliaments dealing with issues such as e.g. defence budget and troop deployments. This is particularly relevant for smaller parliaments or partner parliaments. Contrary to other IPIs or the EP, NATO PA's added value is not so much to create collective decisions at supra-national level, but rather support national MPs in their task in relation to security matters.

The NATO PA recommendations and reports are transmitted to the relevant stakeholders for consideration. Although the reports and resolutions are not legally binding, they are a "soft diplomacy" tool.

NATO PA can adopt several types of documents:

- A **declaration** is a formal expression of the view of the Assembly and is presented directly to the plenary sitting by a member of the Assembly upon the request of the President and with the approval of the Standing Committee.

- A **recommendation** is addressed to the North Atlantic Council asking it to take certain action in pursuit of the aims of the Assembly and in the expectation of a reply from the Council.

- A **resolution** gives formal expression to the view of the Assembly on a matter which does not call for action by the North Atlantic Council. Resolutions may be addressed to all or to a limited number of governments of NATO, to all or some of the parliaments of the member countries, to governments and parliaments of non-member countries which have associate delegations or regional partner and Mediterranean associate member delegations, as well as to international organizations.

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- An **opinion** expresses the view of the Assembly in answer to a formal request from the North Atlantic Council or from an international organization on a matter within the Assembly's competence.
- An **order** of the Assembly deals with the internal organization of the Assembly and its Committees.

Because NATO PA is formally independent from NATO, there is no obligatory consultation of the NATO PA on the accession of new member states. Nevertheless, the NATO PA became actively involved in the process of NATO enlargement as a substantial majority of members consistently demonstrated their support for the "open door" policy of NATO. In parallel, aspirant countries used the Assembly as a channel to build support for their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The requirement for parliamentary ratification gave an additional emphasis to NATO PA debates on enlargement. The Assembly was directly concerned with assisting in the process of ratification of the Protocols of Accession signed at the end of 1997, which culminated in the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to the Alliance in March 1999; as well as with the subsequent enlargements, including the most recent ones by Croatia and Albania.

Because NATO PA is formally independent from NATO, there is no policy or financial oversight over NATO by the PA. However, NATO PA has managed to exercise indirect influence. The Assembly's programme of specialised seminars and training programs for parliamentary staff initiated in 1990 by then President of the Assembly Congressman Charlie Rose and Senator William Roth, provided timely practical assistance in the development of parliamentary mechanisms, practices and 'know how' essential for the effective democratic control of armed forces. The Rose-Roth Initiative today remains the Assembly's primary tool for engagement with delegations from non-NATO member countries.

By integrating parliamentarians from non-member nations into its work, the Assembly helped build bridges with the new political forces in countries of the former Warsaw Pact, and assisted in the development of parliamentary democracy throughout the Euro-Atlantic area.

NATO PA has thus established a growing network of partners. Over the years, the Assembly has developed formal and informal relations with a growing number of parliaments in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Mediterranean and Middle East, and all the way to the Pacific. Today, some 30 parliamentary delegations participate in various Assembly activities.

Synergies with other initiatives

Cooperation takes place at various levels. (1.) Reports of other PAs, in particular PACE, are used as source of information for some of the Committees. (2.) OSCE PA, PACE, EP and PAM have delegations to the NATO PA: they can attend meetings but cannot put forward reports or amendments to resolutions. EP has slightly more rights than other IPIs in the sense that they can present reports, at the initiative of the Committees, or present other texts. (3.) The SGs of PACE, OSCE PA and NATO PA have attempted to cooperate and coordinate more closely their capacity building support to parliaments in the Arab Spring countries, with a view to avoiding duplication. But in recent years, it turned out that only the EP has been more actively engaged and could solicit interest from the parliaments of Arab Spring countries. The SGs have agreed on a joint calendar of events -- uploaded at OSCE PA site -- and agreed that when needed Strasbourg PACE venue can be used by the other PAs. (4.) NATO PA also engages on election observation, but only in coordination with other observation missions of OSCE PA, ODIHR, PACE and EP;

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and only upon invitation of the country and where NATO PA members see an interest to be part of the election observation (e.g. Ukraine, Georgia, BiH, Serbia).

A central component of NATO PA's outreach effort is the Rose-Roth programme, consisting of three to four seminars per year. For two to three days, members of parliament from NATO member and partner countries meet with government officials, representatives from NATO and other international organisations, as well as experts from universities, think tanks and NGOs, to discuss one specific security issue of common interest. While seminars originally focused primarily on civil-military relations, including the democratic control of armed forces, today, they focus primarily on regional security issues in the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond. Recent themes for seminars have included stability in the Western Balkans, unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus, Afghanistan, Central Asian security, and Arctic security, among others. By bringing together parliamentarians from NATO countries with their counterparts in non-member parliaments, the Rose-Roth seminars help build a sense of partnership and co-operation at the legislative level. They also help improve mutual understanding among legislators of their various problems and perspectives. The Rose-Roth seminars are organized in cooperation with the host parliament and, where appropriate, other institutions.

In the last four years, three Rose-Roth seminars were organized in cooperation with the parliaments from the Western Balkans: "South Eastern Europe: Creating New Momentum", 6-8 October 2010, Skopje; "Anchoring Stability in the Western Balkans: Fulfilling the Promise of Euro-Atlantic Integration", 15-17 October 2012, Sveti Stefan; Security and Democratisation in the Western Balkans: Consolidating Stability, Pushing Reforms", 18-20 March 2014, Sarajevo.

DCAF has worked with NATO PA in offering long-term capacity building on security related issues to parliaments in SEE, through induction seminars for new parliamentarians taking place each year in Brussels and Rose Roth Seminars in different locations.

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4.3.5 Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

- Created in: 1993
- Acronym: PABSEC
- Web-site: http://www.pabsec.org/
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Turkey
- Members from EU: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania

Constitutional Status

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC) was created in 1993 in Istanbul by the Speakers of Parliaments, in response to the Declaration on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) by the Heads of State and Government during their Summit in June 1992, and has instituted a new regional cooperation process. The 1998 Charter of the BSEC Organization defines PABSEC as a Related Body, providing support to the Black Sea cooperation process on a consultative basis.

Being an inter-parliamentary consultative body of the BSEC, the PABSEC has been uniting the efforts of national parliaments to pursue the following aims, as stated in the PABSEC Rules of Procedure:

- to secure the understanding and adoption by the peoples of the ideals and aims of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation;
- to provide a legal basis for economic, commercial, social, cultural and political cooperation among the member countries;
- to enact legislation needed for the implementation of decisions taken by the Heads of State or Government or by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs;
- to provide assistance to national parliaments so as to strengthen parliamentary democracy;
- to promote cooperation with other international and regional organizations.

PABSEC attempts to play its unique role in the Black Sea area, where the EU, NATO, OSCE and the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) all are involved and there have often been tensions between them; most recently with the crisis in and around Ukraine. Last year, in 2013, PABSEC celebrated the 20th anniversary of its establishment.

Institutionalization

At the 1993 Istanbul Speakers' conference, nine parliaments adopted the "Declaration on the Establishment of PABSEC": Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. Later on, PABSEC was joined by Greece (1995), Bulgaria (1997) and Serbia & Montenegro (2004). In 2006, after Montenegro declared its independence, the Republic of Serbia became the legal successor of the former state, both in the BSEC and the PABSEC.

Any country sharing the objectives of BSEC can apply for membership. There is no requirement of geographical proximity to the Black Sea.

PABSEC includes the parliaments of three EU Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Romania -- both Chambers), three EU Candidate Countries (Albania, Serbia, Turkey) and three countries which recently signed the Association Agreement with the EU (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine). PABSEC is thus of significant importance to the EU and its policies. The other three PABSEC members are the parliaments from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia (State Duma and Federation Council). The Parliamentary Assembly is composed of 76 parliamentarians representing twelve BSEC Member States.

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The People's Assembly of Egypt, the Knesset of the State of Israel, the National Assembly of France and the French Senate, the German Bundestag, the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus have an observer status in PABSEC.

The governing structures of the PABSEC are the General Assembly, the Standing Committee, the Bureau and the President.

The General Assembly convenes twice a year. The venue of the General Assembly is the country of the President of the PABSEC, who is the Speaker of the Parliament of a member country by rotation for a period of six months. In its sittings, proposals of the Standing Committee, recommendations, declarations, opinions, decisions and reports of the Committees and/or election of the candidates for the Bureau are submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

The Standing Committee consists of the PABSEC President, Vice-Presidents, Chairmen of Committees and Heads of National Delegations. The Standing Committee supervises the implementation of the Assembly decisions, draws up the agenda, calendar and venue of the Assembly meetings, coordinates the activities of Committees, endorses the budget of the Assembly, ensures coordination between the BSEC and the PABSEC and cooperation between the PABSEC and other international organizations.

The Bureau of the Assembly consists of the President and five Vice-Presidents. It meets twice a year, on a day preceding Spring Session and the Autumn Session of the General Assembly. Its meetings are held in the country of the President of the PABSEC.

The President of the Parliamentary Assembly is the Speaker of the parliament of a member country by rotation for a period of six months. At the end of the 2014, the Hellenic Parliament will hand over the Presidency to the Moldovan Parliament.[23] The President of PABSEC represents the Assembly at BSEC Summits, Meetings of BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other international gatherings.

Following a decision made at the first Plenary Session in Istanbul, in 1993, the PABSEC International Secretariat is seated in Istanbul, Turkey. The International Secretariat is an executive and technical body called upon to secure permanent links with the PABSEC national parliaments, organization and arrangement of all meetings, preparation of draft documents and their timely circulation. It also serves as a central communications link among the PABSEC parliamentary delegations, between BSEC and its related bodies and the Parliamentary Assembly, and between PABSEC and other institutions and international organizations. The Secretariat currently counts 15 local and international staff. In case there is a vacancy, the Vacancy Notice is sent to the participating parliaments, which can nominate their candidates.

The PABSEC budget is prepared by a Draft Budget Audit Commission consisting of three MPs, assisted by the vice-president of PABSEC in charge of financial matters, the Secretary General and one deputy-Secretary General. After the Standing Committee has endorsed the draft budget, it is forwarded to the General Assembly for final approval. The national contributions to the PABSEC budget take into account the size of the population and are in accordance with the decision on the Scale of Mandatory Annual Contributions as decided by the Council of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States.[24] The International Secretariat manages the budget and is led by the Secretary General.

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[23] Actually, the Moldovan Parliament was supposed to take over Presidency in May 2014 but due to the elections in autumn 2014 in Moldova, upon the request of Moldovan Speaker, it was decided by the Standing Committee to prolong the Hellenic Presidency till end of 2014. This happened for the first time in PABSEC history.

[24] The Scale of Mandatory Annual Contributions foresees in three groups of countries. Group I (Greece, Romania, Russia, Ukraine and Turkey) contribute 13.8 % each or 69 % sub-total. Group

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The Secretary General is elected for a term of office of three years by the General Assembly upon the proposal of the Bureau by secret ballot. To be elected, the SG needs to secure a majority of votes of individual members of the Assembly and majority of votes of national delegations. Three Deputy Secretaries General are also elected by the General Assembly for a term of office of three years.

The Assembly set up three specialized committees: (1.) the Economic, Commercial, Technological and Environmental Affairs Committee; (2.) the Legal and Political Affairs Committee; and (3.) the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee. Each Committee elects from among its members the Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, each from a different national delegation. Each Committee designates a Rapporteur on each subject. Subjects are chosen from a list drawn up and periodically updated according to the main themes and projects on the BSEC agenda.

Over the years, PABSEC has provided support to the BSEC Organization by adopting recommendations on subjects of utmost importance for the implementation of the projects of multilateral economic cooperation elaborated by the BSEC.

PABSEC has also embraced the following issues: democracy and rule of law, combating organized crime and terrorism in the region, protection of the Black Sea environment, forging cultural and educational cooperation between the member countries, setting social guarantees, strengthening cooperation at the level of civil society, and cooperation with other European and international organizations.

The Rapporteur of each Committee is responsible – on the basis of the information provided by the PABSEC national delegations - for preparing a draft report and a draft recommendation which are presented to approval by the Committee. The staff of the International Secretariat often play a vital role in providing expertise and compiling a first draft of the reports, based upon correspondence with the national delegations through, amongst others, specific questionnaires.

The frequency of meetings of the plenary session and committees has been well established over the years. The General Assembly convenes twice a year in ordinary plenary session (Spring and Autumn sessions). A session consists of meetings of the Bureau and the Standing Committee in the first day, and the plenary meeting of the General Assembly in the next two days.

The decision-making rules in PABSEC are as follows. The Standing Committee makes decisions according to the principle of unanimity (consensus). The Committees approve final reports and draft recommendations by the majority of votes cast prior to submitting them to the General Assembly for discussion and adoption. Also the General Assembly decides by the majority of votes cast. Decisions on amending the Rules of Procedure, allowing observers or a position in relation to a specific country are taken unanimously.

The Parliamentary Assembly is composed of 76 parliamentarians representing twelve BSEC Member States. PABSEC is composed of national delegations which count between 4 members (e.g. Albania) and 12 members (Russia). There are no provisions for other factions, such as political groups.

The level of transparency of PABSEC can be summarized as follows. The General Assembly sessions are open to public, unless otherwise decided by the Assembly. Committee meetings are closed to public, unless decided otherwise. The meetings of the Bureau are held 'in camera'. PABSEC also organizes a number of seminars and conferences, which are open to parliamentarians, experts and the public.

II (Bulgaria, Serbia) contribute 6.9 % each or 13.8 % total. Group III (Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova) contribute 3.44 % each or 17.2 % sub-total.

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PABSEC has its web-site where the general public can find information on the establishment of PABSEC, the composition of delegations and committees. The site also includes the final versions of reports, recommendations, declarations and the statutory documents. It has an annual calendar of part and upcoming meetings. Draft reports, draft recommendations and draft declarations are not uploaded on the web-site.

Institutional Authority

PABSEC has a substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the BSEC governmental dimension. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP and select its Secretary General and staff. The chairmanship of PABSEC is based on the rotating principle, in alphabetical order of the name of the member countries.

The powers of the Parliamentary Assembly are of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate as well as assessment of BSEC activities.

The resolutions, recommendations, opinions and reports, once adopted by the PABSEC General Assembly, are transmitted to the BSEC Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for information.

It is a reflection of the influence, or soft power of PABSEC; though there are no mechanisms of accountability to the PABSEC by any BSEC governmental platform. On two occasions, each time after a period of 5 years, the PABSEC Secretariat has reviewed the progress in the implementation of the PABSEC reports and recommendations.

Currently, there are attempts to initiate more regular interaction between the BSEC working groups and PABSEC Committees as they debate and consider various policy questions or themes. The PABSEC International Secretariat maintains a close working relationship with the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, also seated in Istanbul.

PABSEC and its Committees have potential for further development in the oversight role over policies and projects affecting the Black Sea region.

The BSEC (and PABSEC) is an organization that, by avoiding security issues such as regional conflicts, has managed to bring all countries in the wider region together as members despite longstanding tensions and even wars between BSEC members, notably Russia and Georgia, or Azerbaijan and Armenia. In addition, as external analysts on BSEC conclude, Russia tends to be viewed as being very assertive within the organization and there are occasional accusations that the BSEC is Turkey's bid for regional hegemony.[25]

Nevertheless, parliamentarians have maintained an open channel of communication during the PABSEC meetings. For instance, in 1996 in the framework of the functioning of PABSEC, MPs from Armenia and Azerbaijan visited each other. In 2010, the Speakers of Turkey and Armenia had an extensive bilateral dialogue in the framework of PABSEC. PABSEC has thus contributed to the sharing of perceptions and the strengthening of the spirit of co-operation by facilitating the exchange of ideas and experiences between national parliaments. Members of national delegations gathered in the PABSEC have carried out reciprocal election monitoring missions.

Synergies with other initiatives

The PABSEC has established contacts with various international organizations and parliamentary assemblies, many of them having also the observer status with the PABSEC. Among them are the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Commonwealth of Independent States (IPACIS), the

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[25] Weaver, C. and Hajizada, M., The Democratization of the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly and the implications for conflict-resolution in the wider Black Sea region; Policy Brief, Centre for International and European Studies, Kadir Has University Istanbul, 2011, 6 pg.

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European Parliament, the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community (IPA EURASEC), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary European Security and Defence Assembly (Assembly of WEU), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union Belarus-Russia (PA UBR), the Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative (PD CEI), the Parliamentary Union of the Islamic Countries (PUIC), the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy (IAO), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic-Speaking Countries (TURKPA) and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC). The Assembly signed the Agreement on Cooperation with the IPA EURASEC and the Protocol of Cooperation with the IPACIS, both meant to speed up regional inter-parliamentary cooperation.

One of the priorities of the PABSEC's activities has been strengthening the cooperation with the European Parliament. The PABSEC considers strengthening cooperation with the European Parliament as an inseparable component of the efforts by the BSEC towards dialogue and interaction with the European Union. The representatives of the European Parliament have participated in the plenary sessions of the General Assembly since 2000 on a regular basis, while PABSEC delegations have visited the European Parliament. The discussions between the PABSEC and EP are not aimed at adopting joint statements or recommendations, but rather exchange of views.[26] During the discussions with PABSEC, the EP is represented by the vice-president/AFET rapporteur or the EURONEST PA co-president, ad hoc delegation from D-EEA (Delegation for relations with Switzerland, Norway and to the EU-Iceland JPC and the European Economic Area JPC.

On the occasion of the 40th session of the PABSEC held in Baku in2012, the MEP representing the EP stressed the importance of the Black Sea for Europe, reflected in the Black Sea Synergy - an initiative that was launched by EU in 2007 - after the accession of Bulgaria and Romania, to develop cooperation between the EU and the Black Sea countries. The need to strengthen cooperation between the EP, PABSEC and Euronest PA was mentioned, in view of the EU`s Joint Operational Programme for Cross Border Cooperation "Black Basin", funded by the ENPI, and in relation to the question of energy security through various joint initiatives, including the Energy Community, INOGATE Project and the Eastern Partnership. In 2010 and 2013, the PABSEC Legal and Political Affairs Committee met at the EP premises in Brussels.

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[26] When discussing the PABSEC reports, recommendations or other documents it has been observed that EU Member States and Candidate Countries attach particular importance to the policies and legislation of the EU, while Russia expresses reservations in case PABSEC documents would make references against EU-Russia Summit decisions.

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4.3.6 Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean

- Created in: 1998 (as Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum), 2004 (as Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly) and 2010 (as PA-UfM)
- Acronym: PA-UfM
- Web-site: http://www.paufm.org/
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Slovenia, Turkey
- Members from EU: all 28 EU Member States & European Parliament

Constitutional Status

As the parliamentary institution of the UfM, the PA offers a framework for multilateral cooperation among parliamentarians of the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partner countries. It aims to contribute to enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the public with a view to adding democratic legitimacy and support to regional cooperation.

The UfM was launched at a summit in Paris in July 2008. It eventually absorbed the previous Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP or Barcelona Process), which had provided a framework for multilateral cooperation in the region since 1995. The Barcelona Declaration had proclaimed three sets of objectives: a political and security partnership, an economic and financial partnership and a social, cultural and human partnership. The UfM was created in order to give the cooperation fresh impetus.

Six concrete projects were selected as priorities for the UfM: de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea; maritime and land highways; solar energy; regional research programmes; joint civil protection programme for disasters; and business development for small and medium-sized enterprises. Another innovation of the UfM is its permanent institutional architecture: a two year Co-Presidency is held by the European External Action Service and one of the Southern Mediterranean partner countries.

Institutionalization

The process of the establishment and institutionalization of the PA-UfM went through several phases. A first phase started with the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum in 1998. In 2004, the Forum was transformed into the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA). Following discussions at governmental level on the creation of the UfM as of 2008, the EMPA changed its name in 2010 and became the PA-UfM.

First convened in Brussels in October 1998 to provide the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with a parliamentary dimension, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum was attended by parliamentarians from the EP and the national parliaments of the EU Members and Southern Mediterranean partners. The basis for parliamentary dialogue within the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum is found in the 1995 Barcelona Declaration itself, which invited the European Parliament "to take the initiative with other parliaments concerning the future Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Dialogue, which could enable the elected representatives of the partners to exchange ideas on a wide range of issues." The first Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum in October 1998 met under the joint chairmanship of the President of the EP and the President of the Moroccan Chamber of Representatives. A rotating Presidency between one parliament from the

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Northern component of the Assembly and a parliament of the Southern Mediterranean holds till today.

The conversion of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum into a genuine Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) was proposed in an EP resolution and approved by the fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers (Valencia, April 2002). The EMPA's inaugural sitting was held in Greece in March 2004.

At the sixth plenary session, held in Amman in March 2010, EMPA's name was changed to Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (PA-UfM), thus underlining its anticipated role as the parliamentary body of the UfM, with a focus on democratic control and its consultative role.

The members of the PA-UfM are parliamentarians appointed by the parliaments of the partner countries participating in the Barcelona process as well as the European Parliament. The PA-UfM comprises 280 parliamentarians from 43 countries. There are 132 EU members (83 members of the 28 EU national parliaments, on the basis of equal representation of three members per EU national parliament, except for the UK delegation which has two members[27], and 49 members of the European Parliament), eight members from the parliaments of the European Mediterranean partner countries (two members for each of the delegations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco, and Montenegro), 130 members of the parliaments of the ten founding Mediterranean partners, on the basis of equal representation, and ten members from the Mauritanian Parliament. In this way, the members are equally distributed between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean:

Chart 4: Membership of the Union for Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

Northern partners	EU	EU national parliaments (28)	83	**140**
		European Parliament	49	
	Non-EU	Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Monaco Montenegro	8	
Southern partners	Founding partners	Algeria Egypt Jordan Israel Lebanon Morocco Palestine[28] Syria Tunisia Turkey	130	140
	New partner	Mauritania	10	

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[27] The UK Parliament does not participate in the work of the Assembly, hence this exception to the three-seat rule.

[28] This designation does not entail any recognition of Palestine as a state and is without prejudice to positions on the recognition of Palestine as a state.

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The PA-UfM has no guaranteed representation of women. Its RoP state that "the member parliaments shall undertake to ensure that women parliamentarians are represented in their delegations, in accordance with the legal provisions of each country." However, one of the five Committees of the PA works on women's rights in Euro-Mediterranean countries.

The PA-UfM includes the parliaments of three EU Candidate Countries (Albania, Montenegro, and Turkey) and one potential Candidate Country (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Thus it includes seven members of the SEECP: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Turkey.

The Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Arab Parliament, Libya, the European Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee and the Euro-Mediterranean regional and local Assembly (ARLEM) are among the Assembly's permanent observers.

The RoP of the PA-UfM stipulate provisions for who can become observer, including "*the representatives of the national parliaments which are not Mediterranean, but which are Candidate Countries, provided that the European Union has officially commenced discussion and negotiations with the country concerned in view of its accession to the EU*". Based upon this Rule, the Candidate Countries Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia could apply to become observer to the PA-UfM once they effectively commence negotiations for EU accession.

The governing structures of the PA-UfM are the General Assembly, the Bureau and the President.

The General Assembly convenes at least once a year in the place chosen at each meeting by the General Assembly. In its sittings, the General Assembly adopts resolutions or recommendations on all aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation that concern the executive organs of the UfM, the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the national governments of partner countries. The resolutions or recommendations are prepared by the Committees.

The coordination of the Assembly's work is the responsibility of its Bureau. This Bureau consists of four members: two appointed by the Southern Mediterranean partner countries, one appointed by the EU national parliaments and one appointed by the European Parliament (which is thus a permanent member of the Bureau). The term of office of the members of the Bureau is four years; this mandate is not renewable and is incompatible with the office of a member of a government.

Whenever required, the Bureau may issue declarations after its meetings, which provide an insight into the priorities of the PA-UfM. For instance, the declaration after its meeting on 1st of April 2014 referred to the tragic incidents with migrants arriving in Lampedusa, Ceuta, Melilla. The Bureau proposed to dispatch a fact finding mission to Ceuta and Melilla to witness the humanitarian situation and report back to the PA-UfM; and decided that the second Meeting of Presidents of the Parliaments of the UfM-PA in October 2014 and the 11th Plenary session of the PA-UfM, in 2015, will dedicate part of their work to the migration and asylum policies in the Euro Mediterranean Region. It is a clear example of the way in which the Bureau sets policy and political priorities for the PA as a whole.

The annual Presidency is held in rotation by each of the four members of the Bureau, ensuring parity and alternation between south and north chairs. The three other members of the Bureau are Vice-Presidents. The presidency of the Bureau was held by the EP (2012-2013), followed by Jordan (2013-2014) and Portugal (2014-2015).

The RoP of the PA-UfM stipulate that the Bureau and the other bodies of the Assembly shall be assisted in the preparation, proper conduct and follow-up of the Assembly's work by a Secretariat, coordinated by the Presidency-in-Office at the time, in cooperation with the preceding Presidency and the branch of the Secretariat located in Brussels. This small-scale Secretariat was established in 2013 under the stewardship of the EP's 2012-

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2013 Presidency of the Assembly to coordinate the Assembly's activities and manage its operational budget of the Assembly. The Secretariat support functions for the PA-UfM are not vested in the UfM Secretariat in Barcelona. However, in 2013, EP President Schulz and UfM Secretary General Sijilmassi agreed on initiating an operational collaboration through the various divisions of the Secretariat and the concerned parliamentarian committees of the AP-UfM, with the aim of promoting projects that cater, above all, for job creation and socio-economic development in the Mediterranean region.[29] As a result, a contact person has been appointed to liaise between the PA and Barcelona Secretariat, as part of an attempt to refocus the PA-UfM Committees' activities on UfM projects. So far this has been especially the case of the Committee for Energy, Environment and Water and, to a less extent, the Women's Rights Committee.

The Assembly has adopted a financial regulation laying down the basic rules governing the establishment and implementation of its operating budget. It foresees that the Bureau shall adopt the annual draft budget, which shall be submitted by the Working Group on Financing of the Assembly and Revision of the PA-UfM Rules of Procedure after having the consensus of the PA UfM member delegations. The draft budget shall be submitted to the Assembly, who shall adopt it definitively at its next plenary meeting. National parliaments contribute to the budget of the PA-UfM. For the current budget year (2014-2015), budgetary appropriations amount to € 474,000. They shall cover costs related to interpretation and meetings' organization.

The PA-UfM has five standing committees:

- Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights;
- Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education;
- Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture;
- Committee on Energy, Environment and Water;
- Committee on Women's Rights in Euromed Countries.

The Parliamentary committees consist of 56 members, including 28 members from the Mediterranean partner countries of the EU and 28 European members (19 members of the EU national parliaments and 9 members of the European Parliament).

The 27 delegations of the EU national parliaments which shall have three members each may express their interest in three committees. The UK delegation and the four delegations of non-EU national parliaments may express their interest in two committees out of the five committees.

Each parliamentary committee elects from among its members a chairman and three vice-chairmen. Their term of office is, in principle, two years. Committees appoint rapporteurs on specific items of their agenda. The rapporteurs report to the committee concerned.

The RoP foresee that each parliamentary committee shall meet at least once a year. In practice, most committees meet three times per year. The nature of their meetings often relate to information sharing on initiatives and policies relevant to the region, political dialogue on current developments and review and endorsement of draft resolutions prior to the meeting of the General Assembly. For instance, ahead of the Amman 2014 Plenary session, the Committees prepared the following resolutions and recommendations:

- on asset recovery and efforts to tackle corruption in Europe and the southern Mediterranean countries post-2011 (by the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights)

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[29] http://ufmsecretariat.org/the-parliamentary-assembly-of-the-ufm-and-the-ufm-secretariat-to-establish-an-operational-collaboration/

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- on Financing of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Microfinance and its role in the Mediterranean (by the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education)
- on Education and Mobility, Radio/TV Broadcasting and Press and Innovative Approaches to Culture (by the Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture)
- on Energy Efficiency; Renewable Energy Sources; Environmental and Water (by the Committee on Energy, Environment and Water)
- on Women and Job Creation in the Euro-Mediterranean region; Situations of Syrian women in refugee camps in the neighbouring countries (by the Committee on Women's Rights).

Often, the Committees also conduct discussions with executives of international organizations or private sector (EBRD, European Investment Bank, national government minister, EC-official,...).

The decision-making rules are as follows. The PA-UfM adopts resolutions or recommendations – though these are not legally binding – on all aspects of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation that concern the executive organs of the UfM, the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the national governments of partner countries. Texts are approved by consensus and when more than half of the delegations of each of the two components – European and non-European – of the Assembly are present. When this is not possible, decisions can be taken by a qualified majority of two thirds. In practice, when there is no consensus, decisions are generally postponed. Only at the 2009 Brussels plenary meeting, the recommendation on the Gaza conflict was adopted with one vote against (Israel).[30]

The Parliamentary Assembly is composed of delegations from each national parliament and the European Parliament. Nevertheless, the influence of the political groups within the EP is significant. According to the research by R. Pace and S. Stavridis, the preponderance of MEPs from non-Mediterranean EU member states means that Mediterranean MEPs often find themselves in a minority when determining their group's stand on political issues in the EMPA / PA-UfM — notwithstanding that a conscious effort is made to promote Mediterranean MEPs to positions of leadership in committees dealing with the Mediterranean.[31]

The level of transparency of the PA-UfM can be summarized as follows. The proceedings of the Assembly are public, except where otherwise decided.

The PA-UfM has its web-site where the general public can find information on the establishment of the PA-UfM, the composition of delegations and committees. The site includes the final versions of reports, recommendations, declarations, minutes of (most of the) committee meetings and the statutory documents. It has an annual calendar of past and upcoming meetings.

However, draft reports, draft recommendations and draft declarations are not uploaded on the web-site. There is no easy accessible comprehensive overview, with a search function,

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[30] Information on the main decisions taken at EMPA/PA-UfM plenaries (1998-2011) and the dynamics occurred at the 2008 Athens meeting can be found in: Stavridis, S., Pace, P. and Ajenjo, A., *The Origins, Structures and Functions of the Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Latin American Inter-parliamentary Assemblies* , in Costa O., Dri C. and Stavridis S. (eds.), "Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization. The role of Inter-Parliamentary Institutions", Palgrave, 2013, p. 201-230.
[31] Pace, R. and Stavridis, S., The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, 2004 – 2008: Assessing the First Years of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Barcelona Process, *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21:2, 2010, p. 90-113.

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of reports, recommendations, declarations of the Committees and plenary sessions. The RoP provide little guidance on enhancing the transparency of the PA-UfM.

Institutional Authority

The PA-UfM has a substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the UfM governmental dimension. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP, adopt its own budget and elect its President and vice-Presidents.

The powers of the Parliamentary Assembly are of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate as well as assessment of UfM activities, projects and policies. However, its priorities and remain, by and large, disconnected from the core UfM activities (ie projects), despite the efforts of the European Parliament's Presidency (2012-2013) to reinforce the Parliamentary's oversight of the Barcelona-based UfM Secretariat. Similarly, the Assembly needs to do a better job in monitoring the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements, which are the backbone of the EU-Mediterranean bilateral and regional relations.

The RoP of the PA-UfM explicitly stipulate that the deliberations of the Assembly shall not be legally binding.

Prior to its formal establishment, the PA-UfM attempted to have a larger influence, beyond the consultative role. At its 2008 meeting in Jordan, the EMPA approved a resolution in which it called on the Euro-Mediterranean ministers to not only agree to establish the EMPA as the parliamentary dimension of the UfM but also for a formal, legal basis to be provided, linking the executive branch with the parliamentary one in the process. In other words, *the EMPA proposed that decisions by the executive branch of the UfM should be open to the scrutiny of parliamentarians within the EMPA*. The ministers took note of the EMPA's resolution, but concluded "The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean requires a strong parliamentary dimension. Therefore the Ministers underline that the *position of the EMPA should be further consolidated* and its work better articulated with the other institutions of the Partnership." In other words, the attempt to become the official parliamentary arm of the UfM failed. And as such, the resolutions, recommendations, opinions and reports, once adopted by the General Assembly, are transmitted to the UfM Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs *for consideration*.

When discussing the institutional authority of the PA-UfM and its potential to bring democratic legitimacy to the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, it is worth mentioning that, over the years, the wider question was raised whether it is possible and even desirable to engage in a parliamentary dialogue in the absence of real democratic interlocutors, as many southern Mediterranean states are only, at best, restricted democracies. The "socialization effect," which works in settings, in which democratic, undemocratic or partly democratic states belong to common institutions, is often mentioned as a reason for engagement.[32]

As the UfM-PA's objectives and aims are to pursue the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the original Barcelona Process aim of developing a zone of peace, stability, democracy and economic growth, one of the key UfM-PA contributions is that it has continued to meet even when the UfM intergovernmental meetings had been boycotted by Syria and Lebanon in the 2000s, or suspended (until 2013, when a series of Ministerial sectoral meetings were organized by the UfM Secretariat and the European Commission).

A close scrutiny of the work of the Parliamentary Assembly shows that none of the major conflicts in the region features amongst its priorities, such as the questions of Cyprus, the

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[32] Pace, R. and Stavridis, S., The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, 2004 – 2008: Assessing the First Years of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Barcelona Process, *Mediterranean Quarterly* 21:2, 2010, p. 90-113.

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Western Sahara and the Middle East peace process (although these topics may be discussed by the Assembly, either during its annual plenary session or by its political committee). Regarding the Middle East peace process, it is also fair to note that, even when the issue was discussed on occasions, it paralysed all other work in the Assembly.[33] Nevertheless, the PA-UfM is one of the few parliamentary bodies where Israelis, Palestinians and other Arab elected representatives sit down together and have a platform to discuss.

The huge number of specific projects and initiatives in the region (as well as their institutional framework that includes the Parliamentary Assembly) indicates that relations among the states of the Euro-Mediterranean basin are gradually becoming more and more intertwined and interdependent. The parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process has added a level of legitimisation to the process, provided a parliamentary context and contributes to a sense of common regional belonging. However, the visibility of the UfM-PA remains a considerable challenge, within the participating parliaments and in wider society.

Synergies with other initiatives

When discussing synergies with other initiatives, one needs to refer primarily to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), which groups twenty-five states and is not related to the Barcelona Process. The PAM stems from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) interest in the Mediterranean. The PAM Secretariat is based in Malta.

While the existence of the two institutions, UfM-PA and PAM, shows that Euro-Mediterranean relations have become more 'parliamentarized', there is also a risk of duplication. The raison d'être and objectives of the two parliamentary assemblies need to be better explained and their activities differentiated from each other in order to maximize collaboration and avoid unnecessary duplication. Despite the risk of thematic overlap with PAM, one needs to take into account the different approaches and composition of the two institutions, i.a. that the EP participates in one initiative (UfM-PA) and not in the other (PAM).

If the participating countries want both PAs to continue operating, synergies could be considered in streamlining the thematic areas of work, perhaps with fewer MPs involved in both assemblies; possibly the same MPs for countries which participate in both assemblies, opening the way for a clustering of meetings.

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[33] Stavridis, S. & Pace, R*., The EMPA and parliamentary diplomacy in the Mediterranean: a preliminary assessment;* in: Stavridis, S. & Fernandez Sola, N., Factores Politicos Y De Seguridad En El Area Euro-Mediterranea University of Zaragoza, 2009, 17 p.

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4.3.7 Parliamentary Assembly of the South East Europe Cooperation Process

- Created in: 2014
- Acronym: SEECP PA
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey; and Kosovo as permanent and equal participant.
- Members from EU: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Slovenia

Constitutional Status

The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly was established in Bucharest in May 2014 following an extensive process of consultations aimed at transforming and further institutionalizing the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension. The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly was established in accordance with the Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, signed in 2000 in Bucharest, the *Memorandum of Understanding* for *Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE,* signed in 2008 in Sofia, Joint Declaration adopted in 2013 in Ohrid and the Final Declarations of the Conferences of Speakers of Parliaments of the SEECP Participating States. The SEECP Parliamentary Assembly is linked to the SEECP, as an international cooperation platform of states of the SEECP region, but is separate from the SEECP governmental dimension.

The SEECP PA has outlined its goals and aims, based upon the principles of regional ownership and European integration:

- Initiation of different forms of exchange of experiences in the field of legislation and its harmonization with the EU acquis, developing and coordinating practices for interaction with the SEECP Governmental dimension, and strengthening of dialogue with civil society in the region;
- Assuming the role of umbrella for achieving synergy of the activities of the regional initiatives and forms of cooperation regarding the economic and social development, development of the infrastructure and energy, internal affairs and justice, cooperation in the field of security, and development of human capital;
- Encouraging, following and monitoring the realization of the goals and priorities defined by the rotating SEECP Presidency and the Regional Cooperation Council, as an institutional structure for transposition of the political declarations and decisions into specific projects and programmes;
- Intensification of the parliamentary diplomatic activities and establishing links with the regional, European and international organizations, institutions and foundations.

Institutionalization

The SEECP Parliamentary Dimension went through a two-stage process of consolidation and institutionalization. The first phase covers the period from the first to the last Conference of Speakers of SEECP Parliaments (1996-2013) and the second phase covers the period of the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the SEECP (2013-2014). In 1996 there were seven founding parliaments of the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension. In the following years, five more parliaments joined the process; and in 2014, there were 12 parliaments which jointly established the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.[34]

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[34] Founding parliaments in 1996 were Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, State Union of Serbia & Montenegro, Turkey. They were joined by Bosnia

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The first phase commenced in 1996, when the need for parliamentary cooperation among the SEECP member countries was first pointed out at the 1996 Sofia Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. It was followed by the first Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Athens in 1997. For the first time, the concept of "*regular meetings at the highest parliamentary level*" took shape, with "*meetings held on a rotation principle using the model of Speakers of Parliament meetings held by European Union Member States*". It was therefore proposed that the host country should at the same time hold the Chairmanship-in-Office and act as coordinator of South East European parliamentary cooperation.[35]

The 2000 Bucharest meeting of SEE Heads of State and Prime Ministers adopted the "Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, and Security", which i.a. recommended stronger inter-parliamentary dialogue.

After an interruption of four years, the second Conference of Speakers of Parliaments took place in Skopje in 2001 and agreed on some procedural mechanisms for parliamentary cooperation. The next Conference of Speakers in 2002 in Tirana mentioned for the first time the proposal for the creation of a Parliamentary Assembly. Since the establishment of the Stability Pact for SEE, parliamentary cooperation became one of its core objectives and a Stability Pact Parliamentary Cooperation Task Force was established, with the aim of setting up sustainable working structures among SEE parliaments.

The fourth Conference of Speakers of Parliament took place in Sarajevo in March 2004, shortly after the European perspective for the Western Balkans was reaffirmed at the 2003 Thessaloniki meeting of SEECP Heads of State and Government, which accelerated the process of stabilization and association. The Speakers put strong emphasis on parliamentary cooperation and the exchange of experience to speed up the necessary reforms and transposition of the acquis. For the first time the idea of more active participation of women in the work of parliaments and in inter-parliamentary cooperation was stressed.

The fifth Speakers Conference took place in 2006 in Athens, followed by the sixth Conference in 2007 in Zagreb. At the meeting in Zagreb, in order to ensure continuity in developing parliamentary cooperation at the change of the rotation presidency, the format of the Troika of former, current and next president was introduced. At the same meeting, Bulgaria was designated to host the Regional Focal Point for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE, renamed in 2008 to Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE. At the time, the idea of transforming the Stability Pact was beginning to take shape, alongside the proposal for the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

During the seventh Conference in Sofia in 2008, the MoU on Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation was signed with the aim to promote further capacity building and institutional strengthening of the SEE countries. During the eighth Conference in Antalya in 2010 the proposal of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to establish a SEECP Parliamentary Assembly was welcomed, and a working group established with the aim of developing guidelines and modalities for setting up the PA, including an MP and the national coordinator for each participating parliament.

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and Herzegovina (2001), Croatia (2005), Moldova (2006), Montenegro (2007), Slovenia (2010). Kosovo's participation as of 2014 will be discussed further in the text.

[35] One of the guiding rules of the SEECP is that the official documents contain only the names of the capitals of the countries in the headline and the personal names of the participants. The countries are designated only by their national flags. The same is stipulated in the SEECP PA's RoP.

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Looking back, it can be said that the Conferences of Speakers of Parliament of SEECP have contributed to better understanding and dialogue among the countries; but the declarations of political will to resolve specific issues or achieve certain objectives often remained without practical consequence. Often the Declarations of the Speakers were not supported by actions on the level of parliamentary committees at national level. The alignment of policies and initiatives of the governmental and parliamentary dimensions of SEECP was incomplete and partial. In order for the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension to remain meaningful and be able to achieve tangible results, further institutionalization through the creation of the PA was considered by the Speakers as the logical next step.

After extensive consultations by the Working Group during the chairmanships of Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Romania , the SEECP PA was inaugurated in May 2014 in Bucharest. The following is a review of the level of institutionalization achieved through the creation of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly.

The Rules of Procedures are the basic document that, to a large extent, describes the degree of institutionalization of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. The RoP are based upon the provisions of the documents adopted by the Conference of Speakers of the SEECP in Ohrid in 2013, when the final decision was taken to institutionalize the SEECP Parliamentary Dimension through the establishment of the PA, based upon the agreed pathway as prepared by chairmanship of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

According to its RoP, the Members of the PA are the parliaments of the SEECP Participating States. The delegations of the parliaments are headed by the Speakers of the parliament/parliamentary chamber and have three to five representatives. Each delegation is composed of at least 30% of the less represented gender. On the occasion of a new term of a parliament after elections, the list with the members of the parliamentary delegation is sent to the President of the SEECP PA. Each member of a national delegation has a substitute member who will replace him/her when he/she is prevented from participating. Every delegation has a national parliamentary coordinator who performs the function of secretary. In coordination of the SEECP PA Secretariat, the national coordinators constitute the SEECP PA logistics support network.

The RoP stipulate that the governmental dimension of the SEECP shall be invited to participate, through its Chair in Office, in the Sessions of the SEECP PA. There are also provisions for observers and special guests to the plenary sessions of the SEECP PA.

The Assembly of Kosovo participated as Special Guest of the Chairman-in-Office in the plenary part of the May 2014 inaugural meeting of the SEECP PA in Bucharest, but could not join the constitutive sessions of the three General Committees (mentioned further). In June 2014, the Summit of Heads of States and Government of the SEECP took place in Bucharest, and discussed Kosovo's request to become a member of SEECP. Based upon the 2012 Belgrade-Pristina agreement on Kosovo's participation in regional fora, and following discussions between the Foreign Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo on the issue of Kosovo's inclusion in the SEECP, a common understanding was reached. It enabled the Summit to "*decide to invite Kosovo to participate on a permanent basis in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms.*"[36] Based upon the conclusions of

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[36] The full text of the June 2014 Summit Declaration reads as follows: "*3.3 Regarding the request of Kosovo to join SEECP, given the commitment to further enhance the role of SEECP on the basis of regional ownership and all-inclusiveness and recognizing the historic agreements reached in the framework of the EU facilitated dialogue, namely the First Agreement on principles governing the normalization of relations and Arrangements regarding regional representation and cooperation, we welcomed the participation of Kosovo in SEECP activities over the last year and we decided to invite Kosovo to participate on a permanent basis in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms. The Annex of the Charter of the South-East European*

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the SEECP Summit, it can now be expected that the Assembly of Kosovo will join the SEECP PA at all levels and activities, including by designating its Delegation to the SEECP PA, its member to the Standing Committee, to three General Committees, to the Ad Hoc Working Group, and appoint a coordinator for the SEECP PA. Once this is done, the SEECP PA can be considered a fully inclusive regional parliamentary platform for the whole region of South East Europe.

The governing structures of the SEECP PA are the President, the Bureau of the Assembly, and the Standing Committee. The SEECP PA President is the Speaker of the parliament or parliamentary chamber of the country holding the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office for a one year term. The Bureau of the Assembly shall be established according to the principle of the Troika (the Speakers of Parliament of the countries holding the current, previous and upcoming SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office, acting as Vice-Presidents) and shall have the role of coordinating the activities of the SEECP PA. The Standing Committee shall be composed of the members of the Troika, the Chairpersons of the General Committees of the SEECP PA and one member of each national delegation. The Standing Committee shall ensure the continuity of the work and the efficient functioning of the SEECP PA between the sessions. To that aim, the Standing Committee shall hold biannual meetings and shall adopt the draft programme, the draft agenda for the plenary sessions, and shall appoint rapporteurs who shall prepare the draft documents.

The SEECP PA has created three General Committees: 1) Economy, Infrastructure and Energy, 2) Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation, and 3) Social Development, Education, Research and Science. They are composed of members of the national delegations. Every national delegation has at least one member in each of the General Committees. The presence of at least two thirds of the members nominated by the national delegations constitutes the quorum for the General Committee sessions. The General Committees will be chaired, during the first year, by senior parliamentarians from Bulgaria (Committee 1), Turkey (Committee 2) and Romania (Committee 3). The General Committees proposes to the Standing Committee Rapporteurs for every issue under consideration.

At the inaugural session in Bucharest, the PA adopted an annual work plan which, amongst others, outlined the frequency of meetings of the General committees. It stated that there will be one meeting per year of each of the three General Committees. Compared with other Parliamentary Assemblies which have established Committees, the holding of one Committee meeting a year seems far too limited to enable sufficient time for deliberations and to generate substantial content-based reports and recommendations.

The role and responsibility, location, staff and budget of the Secretariat of the SEECP PA are an important aspect of the institutionalization of the PA and have been discussed by the participating parliaments over a longer period of time. The RoP stipulate that the Secretariat will be headed by a Secretary General who shall be elected by the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly. All other issues on the procedural aspects of the elections of the Secretary General and other officials, the functions, composition and budget of the Secretariat need to be agreed upon during the coming year by the representatives of the participating parliaments, which will meet in an "ad hoc working group" with the aim of finding consensus on the Rules of the Secretariat dealing with these matters. The size of

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Cooperation Process is to be interpreted and applied accordingly, in order to allow the participation of Kosovo in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms. We acknowledge that such participation greatly contributes to the strengthening of the regional cooperation, stabilization and security in the region.

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the overall budget and of the national contributions will also be discussed by the "ad hoc working group".

So far, Bulgaria and Turkey had the most outspoken position on the location of the Secretariat. For several years, both countries are offering to and insisting on hosting the Secretariat of the SEECP PA. Bulgaria is currently hosting the RSPC SEE, based upon the 2008 *Memorandum* of Understanding for *Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE*, and wants the 2008 agreement on the location of the RSPC extended for the location of the Secretariat of the PA. Turkey wants to host the Secretariat as well, and is offering to cover all costs over the next five years.

Until having a fully functional Secretariat and an operational budget, a set of transitional arrangements have been agreed upon and inserted in the RoP. *T*he national parliament holding the Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly shall serve, with assistance of the RSPC SEE, as an ad hoc Secretariat for the Plenary Session, the Standing Committee, the President and the Bureau of the Assembly while the national parliament holding the Chairmanship of a General Committee or of an ad hoc Working Group shall also fulfil the tasks of an ad hoc Secretariat for the respective body of the Assembly.

While the transitional arrangements might have provided temporary breathing space for the Ad Hoc Working Group to build consensus among all delegations on the development of the Secretariat, there is a risk that the one-year transitional arrangement will be maintained longer and will undermine the potential and the momentum to turn the SEECP PA into an effective body which can deliver quality outputs in terms of oversight, policy setting and political dialogue. Without a functioning Secretariat with permanent staff, expertise resources for the General Committees and an operational budget for more regular meetings, it will be very hard to make the SEECP PA deliver on its promising start.

In its RoP, the SEECP PA has agreed on a clear set of decision-making rules. Each delegation has a single vote. All relevant documents mentioned of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly are adopted by consensus. The decisions on the organizational, technical, procedural matters related to the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly functioning can be adopted by a simple majority vote of the present delegations.

The SEECP PA is structured based upon the national delegations. There are no provisions for other factions, such as political groups, as is the case in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Subsequently, most opinions expressed by the delegations will thus be opinions guided by the national interest.

The level of transparency of the SEECP PA is limited. Currently, the SEECP PA does not have a web-site where the general public can find information on the establishment of the SEECP, the items under discussion, the reports and decisions of the SEECP PA. The RoP contain no provisions on making these documents publicly available on a future web-site of the PA.

The level of accessibility of the SEECP PA is limited. The RoP state that the plenary sessions are open to the public, except when the SEECP PA decides otherwise. In addition, it is stated that the meetings of the General Committees and their documents shall not be open to the public. This provision is different from other Parliamentary Assemblies, such as PACE which has stipulated that the PACE Committees are open to the public unless decided otherwise.

The access for CSOs to the Committees is not entirely clear. On the one hand, it is said that CSOs can address the plenary session, upon invitation of the Chair and after consultation with the members of the Bureau, and that the same rules apply to the General Committees. On the other hand, the provision that meetings of the General Committees and their documents are not open to the public seems to create a lack of clarity as to

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whether and how CSOs can have access or contribute to the work of the General Committees.

Institutional Authority

The SEECP PA has a substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the SEECP governmental dimension. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP and budget and select its Secretary General and Staff. The only exception to its institutional autonomy is the chairmanship, as the SEECP PA aligns itself with the overall rotating chairmanship of the SEECP. The Speaker of Parliament of the country holding the chairmanship-in-office of the SEECP will be the President of the SEECP PA for the one year period of the chairmanship-in-office.

The powers of the Parliamentary Assembly are of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among participants.

The SEECP PA has strong potential, through the work of its committees, to develop its oversight role over regional policies and programs. It could, for instance, develop mechanisms to increase its potential for information review and discussion on the EU's structural and pre-accession funds, and discuss annual reports and projects within the SEE CP region of various international organizations, including the RCC. The SEECP PA's Joint Declarations or Communiqué can be developed based upon the work in the Committees, and be strengthened by provisions on appropriate tracking of follow-up on its implementation.

Synergies with other initiatives

While the SEECP PA is currently finalizing the process of its institutionalization, it has strong potential to become the leading parliamentary platform for the region. There are four reasons for this assertion.

Firstly, it is a fully regionally-owned initiative, with a long history proving the sustained interest of the participating parliaments. Secondly, its objectives include both regional cooperation and European integration. The connection between these two objectives makes it an attractive institution to become a leading parliamentary platform for the region. Thirdly, its geography covers the region of South East Europe, including EU member states, candidate countries and potential candidates. Fourthly, the SEECP is one of the few initiatives which is fully inclusive, meaning that it includes Kosovo on permanent and equal basis - and this is the case since the June 2014 Summit of Heads of State and Government.

In order to become an efficient leading parliamentary platform, synergies with other initiatives need to be established, and potential overlap or duplication addressed. While merging of Secretariats and chairmanships of various inter-parliamentary initiatives would be hard to agree upon, it might be possible to establish synergies by better aligning the composition of national delegations to various parliamentary assemblies or platforms, in particular aligning the membership of national MPs to similar Committees in various parliamentary assemblies and platforms. Subsequently, this would make it possible to achieve better coordination of proposals and positions expressed in the Committee meetings of different parliamentary platforms, potentially clustering them in time and place. This would also have budgetary advantages for the parliaments.

Other ways to establish synergies between different parliamentary assemblies and platforms relate to the sharing of timelines, agendas, reports and resolutions, potentially also the draft versions of these documents, between the Secretariats of these initiatives. This will enable more relevant agenda-setting and determine the specific added value of the debates on issues in one inter-parliamentary initiative or assembly as compared to another.

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Recommendations to Strengthen the SEECP PA

Different from the review of the other IPIs, a specific set a recommendations to strengthen the SEECP PA is proposed here. The reason for proposing these recommendations is the fact that it is the newest parliamentary assembly, aims at both regional cooperation and supporting the European integration agenda of the region, it is all-inclusive for the whole territory of SEE, it has full ownership by the region; and it is therefore recommended that it becomes the central parliamentary platform for the region. These recommendations are offered to the C-i-O of the SEECP and the President of the SEECP PA as well as all delegations to the SEECP PA and their national coordinators. These recommendations are to be considered together with the general recommendations at the end of this Study.

Institutional framework
1. Agree on the Seat of the Secretariat of the SEECP PA soonest; allocate sufficient resources to the budget of the SEECP PA with a view to enabling a functioning Secretariat with permanent staff, expertise resources for the General Committees and operational budgets for more regular meetings of Committees. The size of the overall budget and of the national contributions needs to be agreed upon ASAP by the SEECP PA "ad hoc working group";
2. Develop a comprehensive Annual Work Plan for the SEECP PA, which foresees in at least two in-person General Committee meetings per year and possibly one additional virtual/Skype Committee meeting. In addition, the delegation secretaries will regularly hold virtual/Skype discussions in preparation and follow-up to the General Committee meetings and conduct regular electronic correspondence. Each participating parliament will ensure ICT facilities (Skype connection) for the possible virtual/Skype Committee meeting and the virtual/Skype discussions by delegation secretaries. The RoP of the SEECP PA will be amended and incorporate language to enable virtual/Skype Committee meetings and virtual/Skype discussions between delegation secretaries;
3. Initiate consultations with the SEECP C-i-O to ensure that the President of the SEECP PA and Secretary General will have a standing invitation to participate in the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the SEECP, in a similar way as the Governmental Dimension of the SEECP is invited to participate, through its C-i-O, in the Sessions of the SEECP PA (ref. RoP 13);
4. Invite Kosovo to designate its Delegation to the SEECP PA, to assign a member to the Standing Committee, to the three General Committees, to the Ad Hoc Working Group, and to appoint a coordinator for the SEECP PA; and ensure that the Assembly of Kosovo is invited to the forthcoming meetings of each of these Committees / group of the SEECP PA. Issuing these invitations is in line with the Declaration of the June 2014 Bucharest Summit of Heads of State / Government of the SEECP which "*decided to invite Kosovo to participate on a permanent basis in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms*" and stated that "*the Charter of the South-East European Cooperation Process is to be interpreted and applied accordingly, in order to allow the participation of Kosovo in the SEECP activities and meetings, at all levels and on equal terms.*"
5. Initiate consultations with the European Parliament on the most appropriate format for an institutionalized cooperation and regular exchange of information with the SEECP PA, including participation of MEPs at the plenary session of the SEECP PA

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and at the meetings of the three General Committees, an annual meeting of the President and SG of the SEECP PA with the EP President and SG; Secretariats' exchange of information, etc.);

6. Commission a Feasibility Study on options for the further, gradual institutionalizing the SEECP PA in the next three to five years, taking into account an expert review of the process of institutionalization of other regional parliamentary assemblies and building upon the proceedings of the ad-hoc working group established at the inaugural session of the SEECP PA;

7. Conduct a legal review of the options and requirements for the SEECP PA becoming the parliamentary arm and an official organ of the SEECP based upon the "Charter on Good Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe", as signed in Bucharest in 2000 and amended in 2007, as well as the Declarations of the SEECP governmental dimension (Heads of State and Foreign Ministers). Options on becoming the parliamentary arm and an official organ of the SEECP can take into account, amongst other things, the modalities of the institutional relationship between the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE);

8. Provide input to the "Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the SEECP" in terms of the role of the new SEECP PA within the overall SEECP architecture;

9. Establish institutional / organizational synergies [incl. composition national delegations; timing and venue of meetings] with other parliamentary assemblies and regional initiatives, including the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum, COSAP, Central European Initiative Parliamentary Dimension, Adriatic Ionian Initiative Parliamentary Dimension, Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Danube Parliamentarians Network, Conference of Foreign Affairs Committees [of BiH, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia], Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (Pa-UfM), and the Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance and European Integration of the Western Balkans;

10. Enhance cooperation with PACE through: (1.) address of SEECP PA President to European Conference of Speakers of Parliament co-organized by EP and PACE, (2.) occasional joint meeting of SEECP Committee(s) with PACE Committee(s); (3.) sub-regional meeting of Secretaries General of the parliaments participating in SEECP PA on issues of the role of the Leadership (SG and deputy SG) of Administration of Parliament in EU accession and required change-management, with the support of PACE and ECPRD -- thus bringing together SGs of Member States and non-Member States;

Legislation

11. Develop and agree upon a clear coordination and information sharing mechanism with existing initiatives supporting the participating parliaments in the legal approximation with the EU *acquis*, such as the Western Balkans COSAP, RSPC SEE, Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance and European Integration of the Western Balkans, the European Parliament's Pre-Accession Action Unit, EC/IPA-funded twinning projects, EC/TAIEX assistance, bilateral assistance, etc.

12. Request the Secretariat of the SEECP PA to initiate an on-line, regularly updated and accessible database of information on parliamentary capacity building initiatives related to EU integration and legislative approximation, thus contributing to the

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SEECP PA role in assisting the participating parliaments to harmonize their own legislative framework with the EU *acquis*; this recommendation requires further discussion with ECPRD on the content of their web-site;

13. Request the Secretariat of the SEECP PA, with the support of the network of national coordinators of the participating parliaments, to assist in connecting committee staff, researchers and legal experts of the parliaments of the five EU Member States within the SEECP PA with their counterparts in EU Candidate Countries and potential candidates;

Oversight

14. Enhance the capacity of the General Committees and their members to conduct consultations and effectively initiate oversight with international and regional Executive organs and international institutions, based upon RoP 14 of the SEECP PA;

15. Initiate communication and develop agreements with international and regional Executive organs and international institutions to ensure their participation at General Committee meetings of the SEECP PA with a view to strengthening the General Committees' oversight role through, amongst others, the Committee's discussion of the organizations' annual reports, policies and projects within the SEECP region, based upon RoP 14 of the SEECP PA;

16. Develop a working relationship with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Directorate Generals (DGs) within the European Commission (EC) on issues relevant to the functioning of the SEECP PA General Committees; invite representatives of the EEAS and EC-DGs to share information on policies and on completed and ongoing projects relevant to the SEECP region; and develop mechanisms of information sharing and discussion on the EU's structural and pre-accession funds (new IPA and ENI 2014-2020 framework)[37] in the SEECP region as relevant to the proceedings of the different General Committees;[38]

17. Request the SEECP C-i-O to report to the SEECP PA on annual basis on the follow-up given by the SEECP Governmental Dimension to the reports, resolutions and recommendations adopted by the SEECP PA; In addition, every third year the Secretariat of the SEECP PA will draft a three-years overview report on the follow-up by the participating parliaments to the reports, resolutions and recommendations adopted by the SEECP PA taking into account a questionnaire provided to the participating parliaments as well as information gathered from national and international institutions relevant to the proceedings of the SEECP PA;

18. Request the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), based upon the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2014-2016 and the South East Europe 2020 Strategy, to introduce and discuss RCC projects and programs with the General Committees of the SEECP PA; and suggest the RCC, as operational arm of the

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[37] This recommendation builds upon the proceedings of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly which exercises soft oversight on the use of EDF-funds and thus enhances transparency of EDF funds through its debates, question time and resolutions. http://www.acp.int/content/acp-eu-joint-parliamentary-assembly

[38] This recommendation is in line with the SEECP June 2014 Summit Declaration in which the Heads of State reaffirmed their "*commitment for a sound use of EU funding, taking into account the regulations applicable to the status of SEECP participants (EU member states, candidates, potential candidates and associates) and insist on the importance of promoting meaningful projects taking advantage of the new IPA and ENI 2014-2020 framework.*"

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SEECP, to be available to facilitate -- upon the request of the President of the SEECP PA, Committee chairpersons or rapporteurs -- targeted technical expertise to the General Committees - either by experts of the RCC Secretariat or by experts from other organizations approached through the RCC.

Transparency and Outreach

19. Provide resources to develop and implement a communication strategy on the work of the SEECP PA, in close cooperation with the Communications and Public Relations Departments of the SEECP participating parliaments;

20. Establish the web-site of the SEECP PA as soon as possible. Pending agreement on location, budget and RoP of the SEECP PA Secretariat, one of the participating parliaments with the most developed ICT capacities can be asked to take on this duty, with a view to transferring the web-site to the permanent Secretariat once operational; We recommend that the current C-i-O takes immediate action on this;

21. Develop the SEECP PA's engagement with regional and international CSOs, by developing a system of accredited CSO's to the SEECP PA, inviting the accredited CSOs to attend plenary meetings and General Committee meetings, providing them with the relevant documents and ensuring an annual consultative meeting with the President of the SEECP PA or with the Standing Committee of the SEECP PA (or, alternatively, create a Consultative Council with a dedicated session during each plenary session);

22. Ensure transparency of the work of the SEECP PA to the general public, by making the agendas, conclusions and reports -- final documents as well as draft documents -- related to the plenary session and General Committees accessible via the web-site of the SEECP PA.

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4.3.8 Adriatic Ionian Initiative - Parliamentary Dimension

- Created in: 2000
- Acronym: AII-PD
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia.
- Members from EU: Croatia, Italy, Greece, Slovenia.

Constitutional Status

The Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII) was founded in May 2000 at a Summit in Ancona (Italy). The Foreign Ministers of Albania, BiH, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia in the presence of the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, adopted the "Ancona Declaration" with a view to fostering peace and security in the Adriatic and Ionian region by promoting sustainable economic growth and environmental protection and by protecting the cultural heritage of the region.

Following the democratic changes in Belgrade in October 2000, the then "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" was admitted as a member of the AII. After the dissolution of the "State Union of Serbia and Montenegro", Serbia and Montenegro have continued their membership of the AII.

In 2008, the AII Governmental Dimension decided that the AII activities will take place within four roundtables: 1. Tourism, culture and inter-university cooperation; 2. Transport and maritime cooperation; 3. Environment and fire protection; 4. Cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises. The Speakers' Conference endorsed this direction.

The AII established two institutional mechanisms of cooperation: the "Adriatic and Ionian Council" (AIC), which convenes at the level of Foreign Ministers; and the "Committee of Senior Officials" whose task is to consider ways of implementing ideas on co-operation within the AIC framework.

In April 2001, the first meeting of Speakers of Parliament of AII member countries took place. Although the founding document of the AII does not refer to any Parliamentary Dimension, the Speakers adopted a Declaration, in which they outlined their objectives. The main objectives are:

- *"To develop inter-parliamentary cooperation between the States participating in the Initiative, at the level of Presidents/Speakers of Parliaments and at the level of mutual parliamentary bodies' cooperation; and subsequently to hold a presidential meeting once during the presidency of this Initiative of each of the Participant States;*
- *To encourage mutual parliamentary cooperation concerning the issues of the economy, maritime affairs, transport and communication, environmental protection, science and culture, as well as to encourage the development of appropriate forms of trans-border cooperation in matters of shared interest;*
- *To support the respective governments in their pursuit of inter-state cooperation aimed at combating any form of organized crime, money laundering, trafficking of drugs, arms and weapons, as well as counteracting any and all forms of terrorism;*
- *To alert the respective populations to environmental protection concerns so as to preserve and enhance the remarkable natural wealth and scenic beauties of the area of the AII, which is the precondition of tourism and its related activities;*
- *To promote the entire Adriatic Ionian area's legislation approximation to the acquis communautaire with a view to harmonizing legal norms in the States in the territory of Europe, as a precondition to facilitating mutual cooperation."*

In 2015, the AII will celebrate its 15th anniversary.

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Institutionalization

So far, the AII-PD has functioned at a low-level of institutionalization. However, the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)[39] has accelerated the reflection on the institutional functioning of the AII-PD and has encouraged a gradual process of transformation. The following paragraphs will analyze the current low-level of institutionalization and the process of transformation.

Currently, the AII has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Slovenia and Serbia. This entails four EU Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, and Slovenia), three Candidate Countries (Albania, Montenegro, and Serbia) and one potential candidate (BiH). It covers the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Italy and Greece, without the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo. Serbia, which is neither a "coastal state" of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, as are the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo, is nevertheless a full member of the AII because it is the successor state of the previous Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), later State Union of Serbia and Montenegro; and Serbia decided to continue its membership of the AII after the dissolution of the State Union. Different from the SEECP, neither the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia nor Kosovo are part of the AII and AII-PD, neither as members, nor as observers or guests. It is understood that the current relationship between Athens and Skopje does not contribute to considering options for the inclusion of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the AII. However, the process of normalization of relations between Prishtina and Belgrade and the 2012 EU-brokered agreement on the inclusion of Kosovo in regional fora raises the possibility of discussing Kosovo joining the AII and AII-PD, as well as joining the governing structures, stakeholder consultations and projects of the EUSAIR.[40]

The AII-PD functions as a platform of the Speakers of Parliament of the AII-PD countries. On occasions, also a Deputy Speaker or one senior MP participated in the AII-PD on behalf of the national parliament. In exceptional circumstances such as impeding parliamentary elections, the Speaker did not attend the meeting but was represented by the country's ambassador to the host country.

Due to its low level of institutionalization, there are no formal governing structures of the AII-PD, except the chairmanship, which rests with the Speaker of Parliament of the country holding the rotating chairmanship of the Governmental Dimension of the AII. There is no practice of troika formula of current, previous and next chairperson; and there are no Rules of Procedure of the AII-PD.

The AII-PD does not have its own Secretariat. The Permanent Secretariat of the AII is located in Ancona (Italy). The Secretariat was established in 2008, upon an offer by the Italian Government to host the seat of the AII. Experience from last couple of years indicates that the Permanent Secretariat mainly supports the Governmental Dimension of the AII, meaning the work of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Committee of Senior Officials and the four Round Tables. Its role in support of the AII-PD is undefined. It was thus significant that the 2013 Speakers' Conference pointed at the need for enhancing cooperation between the governmental and parliamentary levels, and expressed the wish to establish a closer cooperation with the AII Permanent Secretariat. Pending this closer

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[39] The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is expected to be endorsed by the Council during October 2014. The official launching event is foreseen for 18 November 2014.

[40] The inclusion of Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the projects and activities of the EUSAIR is worth considering. Reference can be made to the recent cooperation partnership between Universities and Research Centres of the Adriatic Ionian Region, called "Structured University mobility between the Balkans and Europe for the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region" (S.U.N.B.E.A.M.), and which includes the University of Prishtina.

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cooperation, and since the start of the AII-PD, the administrative and logistical support for the AII-PD meetings are performed by the Secretariat of the national parliament whose Speaker holds the rotating chairmanship of the AII-PD. As a result, no permanent staff are assigned to the AII-PD. Therefore, the activities of the AII-PD strongly depend on the commitment and the resources of the Parliament of the country which holds the AII rotating chairmanship.

The usefulness of an AII-PD Secretariat becomes more obvious when addressing issues of institutional memory. For instance, the 2012 Belgrade AII-PD Speakers Conference "*emphasized the importance of the implementation of agreed arrangements and regional positions through concrete steps, such as creating a regional parliamentary database."* This seems to suggest the creation of a database to follow up on the implementation of agreed arrangements and regional positions. Such a function is more likely to be achieved through the services of a permanent Secretariat instead of a temporary Secretariat linked to the rotating chairmanship.

Currently, the AII-PD does not have its own, separate budget. Each member's parliament is responsible for financing its own expenses connected with AII-PD meetings. The costs incurred in the organisation of meetings shall, as a rule, be borne by the host country.

The AII-PD does not have Committees. However, in recent years an intensive discussion occurred on the need to broaden the involvement of the parliaments of the member countries beyond the participation of the Speakers at the annual Speakers' Conference. In 2012, during the Belgrade Speakers' Conference, the Concluding Statement discussed the further institutionalization of parliamentary cooperation in the AII but "*agreed that the proposed activities should be complementary to existing initiatives and should not produce additional costs to the assemblies; mentioned the possibilities of forming an ad hoc or permanent parliamentary delegation (PD model CEI), and the possibility of cooperation between, already existing, adequate working bodies of the Parliaments (COSAC/COSAP model)."* In 2013, during the Brdo Speakers' Conference, the Concluding Statement "*calls upon the Albanian Presidency to convene in the Autumn a meeting of the Parliamentary Dimension, composed of ad hoc delegations, with the task to monitor progress of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy*." Such a broader meeting of ad hoc delegations has not yet taken place. Instead, during the Albanian Presidency it was confirmed and decided to set up "*ad hoc Parliamentary Representations to follow the work of the AII and the progress of new EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region - EUSAIR, in close contact with the Permanent Secretariat"* and the next Presidency, to be held by BiH in 2015, was asked to call a first meeting of these "ad hoc representatives".

The debate on the institutionalization of the AII-PD takes place against a dilemma about two, almost conflicting, tendencies. On the one hand, the parliaments wish to increase the ownership of the AII-PD beyond the Speakers and to involve more parliamentarians; and parliaments are aware of the increased agenda and role of the AII-PD in view of the launch of the EUSAIR. On the other hand, there are budgetary limitations, there is a risk of duplication with other regional parliamentary platforms and the Secretariat support is too weak to underpin an enhanced AII-PD role.

To overcome this dilemma, there is a need to clarify the mandate of the parliamentary representatives, the format and frequency of meetings, number of Members per participating parliament and required staff resources. While the current Speakers' Conference implies that the AII-PD always functions at the most senior level, it does not facilitate practical, hands-on follow up on the issues identified as priority for the AII. As the EUSAIR is already and will become even more the main priority of the AII, the parliamentary representatives can play an important role in sensitizing their national parliaments, the various line ministries and the regions in their country on the importance and the deliveries of the EUSAIR.

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The Speakers' intention to "follow the progress of EUSAIR" seems to confirm the need to become more involved in the implementation of the EUSAIR, by raising awareness, mobilizing other stakeholders, monitoring the priority setting of the line ministries in the national governments towards achieving the EUSAIR, and making suggestions and recommendations on the further implementation of the EUSAIR.

In this context, it is worth noting that the EC Communication on the EUSAIR reads that the EUSAIR should "*mobilise and align existing EU and national financing as well as attracting private investments. In particular, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) as well as the Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA) will contribute to the implementation of the Strategy*".[41] The parliamentary coordinators can be instrumental in conceptualizing an initial oversight role by the AII-PD on the EUSAIR. So far, the parliaments and the Speakers of the AII member countries have not taken part in the stakeholder consultations in the preparations of the EUSAIR, so the methods of potential oversight by the national parliaments of the AII-PD and the new ad hoc parliamentary representatives need to be further clarified.

Some coordination with the oversight role by the European Parliament will be required, in particular since there are MEPs coming from four Members of the AII, while making use of the opportunities for oversight by the national parliaments of all members of the AII, EU members as well as non-EU members. So far, the European Parliament has shown strong interest in the development of the EUSAIR and adopted in June 2013 the so-called 'Milana report' on a fisheries strategy in the Adriatic and Ionian seas.[42]

If the Speakers consider that the AII-PD should receive more support from the Permanent Secretariat of the AII, in particular in relation to information on the EUSAIR and involvement in the policies, specific guidelines on the type of support by the Permanent Secretariat need to be developed; and the parliamentary representatives can play a useful role in initiating this discussion with the SG of the AII.

To make the AII-PD more operational and ensure involvement of the parliaments in the EUSAIR, it would be useful that the AII Secretariat in Ancona includes one staff member for the AII-PD. This person would be the focal point vis-à-vis the rotating chairmanships of the AII-PD, provide information relevant to the work of the parliamentary representatives, follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the AII-PD, enhance the outreach and communication of the AII-PD, develop a comprehensive web-page for the AII-PD and be in charge for the institutional memory of the AII-PD.

Currently, the level of transparency of AII-PD is limited. The sessions of the Speakers' Conference are not open to the public. There are not transcripts or minutes of the discussions. Each meeting results in a Joint Statement, which is often prepared in advance and tabled for the Speakers' approval.

The AII-PD does not have its own web-site. There is a small section on the Parliamentary Dimension included in the web-site of the AII. It lists the Joint Statements of each of the Speakers' Conferences. No other information on the AII-PD is publicly available. Sometimes, the web-site of some of the participating parliaments includes a short article or couple of pictures related to the participation of the respective national Speaker to the annual meeting. On occasion, the web-site of the Parliament holding the AII Presidency provides more information on the Speakers' Conference hosted at the Parliament premises.[43]

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[41] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-690_en.htm?locale=FR

[42] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2013-0234+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

[43] http://www.parlament.al/web/Speaker_of_Parliament_Mr_Ilir_Meta_participates_in_the_Conference_of_the_Speaker_of_Parliaments_of_16951_2.php

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Institutional Authority

The AII-PD institutional authority is dependent on the relationship with the AII Governmental Dimension. The Governmental Dimension of the AII consists of the Council of Foreign Ministers which meets annually and is the highest body of the AII. The Committee of Senior Officials coordinates AII activities and prepares meetings of the AII Council. The Senior Officials' Committee meets as appropriate. Decisions are adopted by consensus.

So far, there have been sixteen meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers, twenty-two meetings of the Committee of Senior Officials and ten Meetings of the Speakers of Parliament. During each of the rotating chairmanships, the Speaker consulted with the Foreign Minister on the issues discussed at the Speakers' Conference. As a result, many issues included in the Final Declaration of the Speakers' Conference are linked to issues of relevance to the Council of Foreign Ministers.

Although the AII-PD is free to consider any issue, due to the above mentioned coordination most issues on its agenda since 2001 can be clustered around: regional and European cooperation, political and security issues, economic, cultural and social affairs, and parliamentary cooperation.

Of particular relevance is the role of the Speakers in advocating for more EC support to projects in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. The 2010 Ancona meeting of AII Foreign Ministers and the 2010 Bari Speakers Conference pressed the European institutions to develop a European Union macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas in the European southern flank, similar to the one adopted for the Baltic Sea macro-region. The emergence of the EUSAIR, with related funds for implementation, is to a large extent the result of the advocacy of the Foreign Ministers towards the European Commission, with the support from the Speakers' Conference. As mentioned above, the Brdo 2013 Speakers' Conference's intention "*to monitor progress of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy*" raises not only questions of capacity, but also sets out the agenda of the AII-PD for the years to come. The AII and AII-PD are now almost entirely directed towards the launch and implementation of the EUSAIR. The topics of the EUSAIR, and of the AII-PD in case it wants to monitor progress on the Strategy, are:

- **Blue Growth**, aiming at boosting innovative marine and maritime growth by promoting jobs and business opportunities in the Blue economy;
- **Connecting the Region**, aiming at improving connectivity in terms of transport and energy;
- **Environmental Quality**, focusing on coastal and marine biodiversity and pollution of the sea, as well as on transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity; and
- **Sustainable Tourism**, aiming at developing the full potential of the Region in terms of innovative quality tourism while boosting businesses and creating stable jobs

During the last fifteen years, the Speakers' Conference regularly spoke out in favour of the EU Enlargement Strategy, in the run-up to, and after the adoption of the 2003 Thessaloniki Agenda. While political statements in support of EU enlargement to the countries of the Western Balkans are important, the statements of the AII Speakers Conference were very similar in nature to the statements of the Speakers' Conference of the SEECP.

Unlike other regional platforms, there are no provisions for a presence of the Parliamentary Dimension of AII at the governmental meetings of the AII. The parliamentary representatives would be well placed to develop a proposal on this.

The formal powers of the AII Parliamentary Dimension are of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate among the Speakers on the themes relevant to the AII. Current practice foresees that the Final Declarations are transmitted to

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the AII Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for consideration. Until today, there has been very little sub-regional, collective parliamentary oversight by the AII-PD on the AII governmental dimension, which is engaged in supporting projects in various areas of cooperation, also through the mobilisation of financial resources providing greater possibilities for studying, financing and executing national and international projects. The oversight of the European resources invested in the Adriatic and Ionian Region mainly takes place within the context of the regular oversight by the European Parliament.

Synergies with other initiatives

In 2013, various regional cooperation initiatives including AII, CEI, BSEC, RCC and UfM met to exchange information about their activities. The coordination meeting was mainly directed towards sharing information. To make the coordination more effective, a focus on joint projects and synergies between specific policy areas would be useful. Joint projects and synergies will need to take into account the specificity and complementary approach of each institution; e.g. while AII projects are directed towards its direct link to the seas (maritime transport, maritime tourism), other organizations, such as CEE, are more directed towards inland projects (land transport facilities, continental tourism).

At the parliamentary level, similar synergies could be addressed, though they don't exist yet. The AII-PD has little or no cooperation with other regional or international parliamentary assemblies or initiatives, such as the CEI-PD and SEECP-PA.

There is a risk of duplication of the AII-PD with other platforms in relation to the possible oversight role over EUSAIR. The CEI-PD has a General Committee on Economic Affairs, which has competence on agriculture, small and medium sized enterprises, transport and telecommunication, interregional and cross-border co-operation, reconstruction and development, environment and landscape protection, energy and tourism. These topics are also core topics of the EUSAIR. It is to be noted that all countries of the AII, except Greece, are also members of the CEI. Potential synergies through clustered meetings can be envisaged.

Similarly, the newly launched SEECP-PA has a Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy. It is to be noted that all countries of AII, except Italy, are also part of the SEECP. Potential synergies through clustered meetings could be envisaged here as well.

In view of our recommendation to make the SEECP PA the central parliamentary platform for the region, we suggest that the work of the AII-PD be coordinated with and aligned to the work of the SEECP PA and its three General Committees.

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4.3.9 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

- Created in: 1947
- Acronym: PACE
- Web-site: http://www.assembly.coe.int
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey
- Members from EU: All 28 EU Member States

Constitutional Status

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which held its first session on 10 August 1949, is the oldest international parliamentary assembly with a pluralistic composition of democratically elected members of parliament established on the basis of an intergovernmental treaty.

The Assembly is one of the two statutory organs of the Council of Europe (CoE), which is composed of a Committee of Ministers (the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, meeting usually at the level of their Deputies), the permanent representatives (Ambassadors) and an Assembly. The Council of Europe also encompasses the European Court of Human Rights, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, the NGO Conference, the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest and many other bodies.

The statutory aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity among its members through common action, agreements and debates. The conditions for membership are pluralistic democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Only those countries, which fulfil these criteria, can accede.

The European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), and its Protocols, are the backbone of the CoE and its work. An important instrument to help members build and sustain effective democracy is the European Commission on Democracy through Law, i.e. the Venice Commission. In the area of rule of law, the CoE has set up committees to improve the efficiency of justice in member states, addressing the structure of member states' judiciaries as well as the competence of judges and prosecutors. The CoE also develops common standards for the rule of law, easing cooperation between states to fight crime across borders. The CoE houses the European Court of Human Rights, the most advanced court for the protection o human rights.

Institutionalization

PACE consists of a number of parliamentarians who also sit in the national parliaments of each CoE member state. There are currently 47 member states. Whilst in the Committee of Ministers each member state has one vote, in the Parliamentary Assembly the number of representatives and consequently of votes is determined according to a number of criteria, including the size of the country. The biggest number is eighteen, the smallest two. The seats are thus assigned according to a system of "degressive proportionality", which over-represents smaller countries and under-represents larger countries.

There are 318 full members of PACE, and an equal number of substitute members, making a total of 636. The full members and substitute members are appointed to the PACE in a manner which is left to be decided by each national parliament. The balance of political parties within each national delegation must ensure a fair representation of the

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political parties or groups in their national parliaments. Failing this, the credentials of the delegation can be challenged by the Assembly.

Since a resolution of 2003, the delegations also have to include a percentage of "members of the under-represented sex at least equal to that in the home parliament, or at least one member of each sex."

All members of the SEECP PA are also members of the PACE. Kosovo participates in various programs and activities of the Council of Europe and was accepted as full member of the Venice Commission in 2014. Members of the Kosovo Assembly can also participate in the work of PACE in some circumstances.

The Knesset of Israel, the Parliament of Canada and the Parliament of Mexico participate in the work of the PACE as observers. There is also another status which is called Partner for Democracy. So far it has been granted to the parliaments of Morocco, Kyrgyzstan and Palestine. PACE also has provisions for the status of Special Guest, which was created in 1989 order to facilitate the process of accession of the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. This status belongs to the past. Nowadays there is only one country, Belarus, which has applied for Special Guest status, but the examination of the application has been frozen for years due to the country's human rights record.

The governing structures of the PACE are the Bureau and the Presidential Committee. The Assembly meets for week-long plenary sessions in Strasbourg. Following a debate and voting, the Assembly adopts three types of text: 1. Recommendations – these are addressed to the Committee of Ministers and require a two-third majority to be adopted; 2. Resolutions – are addressed to any other recipient and require a simple majority of voters to be adopted; 3. Opinions – on membership applications and Council of Europe draft conventions.

The Bureau consists of the President, twenty Vice-Presidents, the Chairpersons of the political groups or their representatives as well as the Chairpersons of the general PACE Committees or their substitutes. The duties of the Bureau are manifold: preparation of the Assembly's agenda, reference of documents to committees, arrangement of day-to-day business, relations with other international bodies, etc.

The Standing Committee consists of the Bureau and the Chairpersons of national delegations. It is generally convened at least twice a year and its main task is to act on behalf of the PACE when the latter is not in session. At least the two meetings of the Standing Committee per year take place normally in the CoE member states holding the chairmanship of the Committee of Minister of the CoE.

The Joint Committee is the forum set up to co-ordinate the activities of, and maintains good relations between, the Committee of Ministers and PACE. It is composed of a representative of each member Government and representatives of PACE (the members of the Bureau and one representative of each parliamentary delegation of member states not represented on the Bureau).

The PACE is served by a 90-member Secretariat, based in Strasbourg, which assists members to carry out their work. The PACE elects the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the CoE on the basis of a shortlist made up by the Committee of Ministers. The PACE elects the Secretary General of the Assembly for a five-year term of office. The Assembly gives an opinion on the CoE budget, but its opinion is not binding. The Assembly does not have a separate budget. However, within the envelope which is allocated to it, it is autonomous in its decisions.

The PACE has eight committees, with related sub-committees which can change from year to year[44]:

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[44] As of the January 2015, there will be a ninth committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights

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1. Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
2. Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights
3. Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development
4. Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
5. Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media
6. Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination
7. Committee on Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)
8. Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

Committees are composed of representatives or substitutes of the Assembly. All committees (with the exception of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States, known as the Monitoring Committee) have an equal number of alternates of the same nationality. Other members of the same nationality can replace absent members of the committee.

Nominations to committees are proposed by national delegations and ratified by the PACE, the Monitoring Committee being an exception.

At the beginning of each session, i.e. in January of each year, the committees are reconstituted and elect their chairperson and three vice-chairpersons. The chairperson can be re-elected twice.

The frequency of meetings of the plenary session and committees has been well established over the years. The Assembly meets four times a year for week-long plenary sessions in Strasbourg. According to the RoP, a committee can meet when convened by its chairperson on his/her own initiative, at the request of one-third of the committee members or at the request of the President of the Assembly.

PACE decision-making rules are as follows. A two-thirds majority is required for questions such as a draft recommendation or opinion to the Committee of Ministers or the adoption of an urgent procedure. In respect of a draft resolution and any other decision, a majority of the votes cast is required.

Only members duly designated by the national delegation and who have signed the register of attendance for the specific sitting shall be entitled to vote. Alternates can vote in committees only when their full member is not present. The Assembly normally votes by using an electronic voting system.

The PACE has two types of factions: national delegations and political groups. At present the Assembly counts five political groups: the Socialist Group (SOC); the Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD); Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE); the European Conservatives Group (EC) and the Group of the Unified European Left (UEL). Political groups have to commit themselves to respect the promotion of the values of the Council of Europe, notably political pluralism, human rights and the rule of law. To form a group, at least twenty members of at least six different delegations have to decide to do so. Members of the Assembly are entirely free to choose the group they wish to join. Before deciding they can attend meetings of one or several groups and should not be bound by their national party label but choose the group which best suits their political affinities. There are also a number of members who belong to none of the groups (they are Non-Registered, NR). The President of the Assembly and the leaders of the groups form the Presidential Committee of the PACE.

PACE has two networks that are very active, on sexual violence against children and on violence against women. During the January 2015 session, a new network will be launched, on combating racism and intolerance.

The level of transparency of PACE can be summarized as follows. The Assembly sessions are open to the public, unless otherwise decided by the Assembly. Committee meetings are closed to the public, but the committee is free to admit anybody to its

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meeting whom it wishes. Committees are entitled to establish and are responsible for developing working relations with NGOs which carry out activities within their specific terms of reference. In practice, in all committees which work on standard setting and normative issues there is always representation by NGOs and civil society organizations. To this one also has to add the Conference of International NGOs, an institution within the CoE. It provides an institutionalized framework for the organization's cooperation with international NGOs and allows for the representatives of European civil society to contribute to the CoE's decision- making processes.

PACE has an extensive web-site where the general public can find information on the establishment of PACE, the composition of delegations and committees. The site also includes the final and draft versions of reports, recommendations, opinions and resolutions as well as all statutory documents. It has an annual calendar of past and upcoming meetings.

Institutional Authority

PACE has a substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the CoE governmental dimension. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP, elect a President and select its Secretary General.

The powers of the PACE are substantial. Using its powers under the founding Statute, the Assembly can:

- Demand action from 47 European governments, who must jointly reply (as Committee of Ministers)
- Conduct probes to uncover new facts about human rights violations
- Question Presidents and Ministers on any topic it chooses
- Observe elections
- Negotiate the terms on which states join the Council of Europe
- Inspire new national laws
- Request legal opinions on the laws and constitutions of member states
- Sanction a member state by recommending its exclusion or suspension, or challenge the credentials of a delegation or its members

As mentioned above, PACE can deliver three types of conclusions. There are Recommendations, which act as policy proposals to the Committee of Ministers, for actions to be undertaken by it. Resolutions express the Assembly's positions on any kind of questions and can be addressed to any recipient (Members States, governments, parliaments and other institutions). Opinions express the PACE's position on issues, such as the accession of new member states or the text of new draft conventions. However, PACE's decisions are not binding and its powers are mostly limited to deliberation. In fact, for the better part PACE exercise a kind of "soft", moral authority over the CoE. This affords it some influence but not a great degree of hard power.

Though its deliberations are not binding, PACE holds a constant dialogue with governments, national parliaments, other international organisations and civil society which "sets the agenda". The Assembly did launch the first initiatives in the standard setting work of the Council. In general, the Assembly plays a role in political action aiming to foster the signature and ratification of CoE conventions. In respect to policy formulation the Assembly has been described as the organization's think tank. Its recommendations are at the root of over one third of the conventions adopted by the Council of Europe.

PACE has managed to acquire an important role in the process of accession of new member states. In more detail, the accession process usually begins with a request to the Secretary General of the CoE, who transmits it to the Committee of Ministers for consideration. The latter consults the Parliamentary Assembly, which examines whether

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the candidate fulfils all the necessary requirements. This is done by a visit to the state in question by parliamentary committees. The acceptance of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by new candidates is equally a compulsory membership criterion (since 1994). Full membership is granted on the condition that the ECHR is signed immediately upon accession and that it is ratified within 12 months of the signature date. Both the obligation to accede to the Convention and the accession procedure were Assembly initiatives. Finally, the Opinion adopted by the PACE determines the invitation from the Committee of Ministers to the state to become a full member. While PACE has no veto power over the decision of the Committee of Ministers, it has it informally, for instance by delaying its Opinion on the invitation to join.

The budget and financial affairs of the CoE remain a responsibility of the Committee of Ministers. When policies are defined by the CM on the basis of a budget the PACE has a say in terms of recommendations. Then the CM assesses its own priorities and tries to accommodate the PACE to the extent possible. However, this remains a decision made solely by the CM which does not have to account to the PACE for ignoring its recommendations. Having a greater influence over the budget is a long-standing request of the PACE which has been repeatedly resisted by the CM. In a similar way, any co-decision of PACE is rejected by the Committee of Ministers, but PACE is able to ask for follow-up action on its recommendations.

The PACE has no formal rights to oversee the other bodies of the Council of Europe. However, PACE members have the right to formulate oral and written questions to the Committee of Ministers, and the Committee of Ministers is obliged to report about its activity to the Assembly and reply to the questions raised by its members. The ability to address questions is not guaranteed in the foundational treaty. Literature reports that this is a "gained right", probably established through the Secretary General.

The PACE elects the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the CoE. On several occasions it has been the case that the Assembly has rejected proposals from the Committee of Ministers, making its veto right effective. PACE also elects the Secretary General of the Assembly, the judges at the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights.

In its 60-plus years of existence, PACE's role as a "human rights watchdog", a motor of ideas and a forum for debate has triggered positive change and helped to steer the continent towards a set of shared values. Until the mid 1970s, PACE was the strongest IPI, when the European Parliament gained more power and influence due to the accelerating European Union integration process.[45]

Among the PACE's most important achievements are: 1) Ending the death penalty in Europe by making it an accession condition; 2) After 1989, helping ex-Communist countries move towards democracy; 3) Endowing Europe with common symbols: the European flag and anthem; 4) Inspiring a host of national laws also by pressing for new conventions; 5) Acting as a forum for debating controversial social or political issues.

Synergies with other initiatives

The PACE has developed its contacts with other international parliamentary assemblies such as the European Parliament, the OSCE PA, the IPU, Benelux, the Nordic Council, PABSEC, CIS and others.

For many years the Assembly has also been operational as a parliamentary forum for a certain number of intergovernmental organisations, in particular the OECD, and has

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[45] Cofelice, Andrea & Stavridis, Stelios. 'The European Parliament as an International Parliamentary Institution (IPI)'. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19, no. 2 (2014): 145–178.

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developed close relations with specific organisations such as the EBRD and many of the specialised agencies of the United Nations.

While PACE is the oldest regional IPI in Europe, in recent decades several other regional and sub-regional initiatives have been created, such as the CEI-PD, AII-PD, SEECP PA. Some of the committees of these regional or sub-regional initiatives often have (partly) similar areas of responsibility, and issue reports and recommendations on policy areas also covered in PACE committees, such as in the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (with a sub-committee on Rule of Law) and the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (with a sub-committee on Environment and Energy). Assigning, in part, some of the same parliamentarians to different IPIs might help in facilitating synergies on content, and possibly in coordinating agendas of meetings.

PACE holds a regular European Conference of Presidents of Parliament.[46] Consideration can be given to organizing formal or informal meetings of the Speakers at sub-regional level, such as at the level of AII-PD and PABSEC, alongside the PACE Conference of Presidents of Parliament.

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[46] https://www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/International-delegations/ECPP-2014/

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4.3.10 Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

- Created in: 1990
- Acronym: OSCE PA
- Web-site: www.oscepa.org
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Turkey
- Members from EU: all 28 EU member states

Constitutional Status

The Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE is the parliamentary dimension of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe whose 57 Participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

The primary task of the OSCE PA is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation, as part of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the OSCE area. Recognized as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area.

The Parliamentary Assembly was originally established by the 1990 Paris Summit with the aim of promoting greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments of the participating states. The constituent session of the Parliamentary Assembly took place in Budapest in July 1992.

The proposal to create the OSCE PA was initiated by the United States of America. One aim was to improve initial ideas for a joint parliamentary assembly with that of the Council of Europe -- as the USA is not a Council of Europe member and would have been limited to an observer status in such common assembly -- and ensure that everyone could participate on an equal basis.[47] Today, with its 57 participating states, the OSCE PA has 10 more members than the PACE.[48]

The objectives of the OSCE PA are stated in the preamble of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure:

- assess the implementation of OSCE objectives by participating states;
- discuss subjects addressed during meetings of the Ministerial Council and summit meetings of OSCE Heads of State or Government;
- develop and promote mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts;
- support the strengthening and consolidation of democratic institutions in OSCE participating states;
- contribute to the development of OSCE institutional structures and of relations and co-operation between existing OSCE institutions.

To pursue these objectives, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly employs a variety of means: an Annual Declaration with a number of resolutions and recommendations is adopted each year at the Annual Session; committee work addresses important

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[47] Gawrich, A., *Could the Junior Learn from the Senior? Comparing Institutional Capacities of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE*. Paper for the 8th Pan-European Conference on International Relations: *One International Relations or Many? Multiple Worlds, Multiple Crises*; Warsaw, Poland, 18th – 21st September 2013, 26 p.

[48] Compared to PACE, these are the 10 additional participating states in the OSCE PA: Belarus, Canada, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United States of America, Uzbekistan.

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contemporary international issues; different programmes, including an extensive Election Observation Programme, and various seminars, have been designed to develop and strengthen democracy; and delegations are sent on mission to areas of latent or active crisis.

Institutionalization

The OSCE PA is composed of MPs from countries which have signed the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Charter of Paris (1990) and which are participating in the work of the OSCE. The OSCE PA brings together 323 parliamentarians from across the 57-nations OSCE region. The highest number of members in a national delegation is seventeen; and the lowest number of members is two.

MPs are appointed by their national parliaments. Parliaments may also appoint alternate Members whose numbers shall not exceed the number of the Members.

The RoPs remain silent on the question of the balance of political parties within each national delegation, as some of the participating states can hardly be considered multi-party democracies. The RoPs make one reference to gender considerations by stating that "each national delegation should have both genders represented." Still, there are no further provisions for guaranteed representation of women in the OSCE PA. However, the OSCE PA was an active partner at the June 2014 OSCE's Gender Equality Review Conference, and included gender considerations in the July 2014 Baku Final Declaration of the OSCE PA.

All members of the SEECP PA are also members of the OSCE PA. The Assembly of Kosovo is not a member of the OSCE PA, because Kosovo is not a participating state of the OSCE.

The OSCE PA has developed extensive co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the European Parliament and the Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, all of which have observer status in the OSCE PA. The OSCE recognizes 11 countries as Partners for Co-operation; and their national parliaments are invited to the OSCE PA as Partners for Co-operation.

The governing structures of the OSCE PA are the plenary meeting of the Assembly, Standing Committee, Bureau, the OSCE PA President, and the Secretariat with its Secretary General.

The OSCE PA plenary meeting takes place once a year, in July during the Annual Session, where Members elect Assembly officers and adopt declarations and resolutions that inform the work of the OSCE and national parliaments. Past declarations included recommendations that led to the creation of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Economic and Environmental Co-ordinator position.

The Standing Committee meets during the Annual Session, Winter Meeting and Autumn Meeting. The Standing Committee consists of the President of the Assembly, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the Officers of the General Committees and the Heads of National Delegations. The Standing Committee prepares the work of the Assembly in between sessions, having the right to meet between sessions. It takes such action as it deems necessary for the activities of the Assembly to be carried on during the Assembly's sessions. The Standing Committee may adopt resolutions to be forwarded to the Ministerial Council of the OSCE. The Standing Committee may appoint ad hoc Committees for specific purposes, prescribing their term of office, composition and mandate.

The Bureau includes the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, the Officers of the three General Committees and the President Emeritus. They are all elected by the

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Assembly at the Annual Sessions. The Bureau is responsible for ensuring that the decisions of the Standing Committee are carried out.

The previous OSCE PA President was from the Western Balkans, Mr. Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Montenegrin Parliament. In July 2014, he was succeeded by Mr. Ilkka Kanerva from Finland.

The OSCE PA has its own International Secretariat. Under the direction of the Secretary General, the Secretariat supports the President and PA leadership and organizes all meetings, election observation missions and diplomatic visits. The Secretary General is elected, on the proposal of the Bureau, by the Standing Committee by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by secret ballot. The election is for five years and may be renewed twice by a majority of the votes cast by secret ballot in the Standing Committee.

The International Secretariat consists of 18 permanent staff members and eight research fellows based at a headquarters office in Copenhagen, provided by the Danish Parliament, and a liaison office in Vienna, headed by a Special Representative with ambassadorial rank. The headquarters and the liaison office function as international diplomatic missions. Representatives of the liaison office participate in meetings of the OSCE executive structure, including the regular meetings of the Permanent Council. The Secretariat serves as a communications link between national delegations and OSCE Institutions and as an information hub for Assembly Members as well as the general public.

According to the RoP, it is the duty of the Treasurer, assisted by the Secretary General, to present to the Standing Committee a draft budget of the OSCE PA for the following financial year. The Standing Committee approves the annual budget, which is made available to the Assembly at its Annual Session. The OSCE PA does not receive contributions from the OSCE unified budget. The OSCE PA is financed by the national parliaments of the OSCE participating states, according to the formula used to divide the costs at intergovernmental OSCE level. If the OSCE PA's accounts show that a participating state has not made its due contribution for a period of 9 months, Members of its delegation are not be allowed to vote until the contribution has been received. The Budget has been frozen between 2008 and 2014 at 2.8 million EUR, but has been unfrozen since. Therefore new or increased activities have been limited.

The work of the Assembly is divided into three General Committees, which generally correspond to the three main sections of the Helsinki Final Act: 1. Committee on Political Affairs and Security; 2. Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; 3. Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions.

All Members of the General Committees are nominated by the National Delegations, ensuring a balanced composition of the General Committees. Members of the Assembly are Members of at least one General Committee. Membership of General Committees is ratified by the Standing Committee or the Bureau. General Committees elect a Chair, a Vice-Chair and a General Rapporteur, who are the Officers of General Committees, at the close of the sitting at each Annual Session for the following year.

In terms of the powers and duties of Committees, they examine OSCE issues relevant to their area of competence. They examine the reports submitted by the General Rapporteurs and act upon the draft resolutions. The Vice-Chairpersons of General Committees are tasked with any follow-up activities.

The frequency and length of meetings of the plenary session, standing committee and general committees has been well established over the years. The OSCE PA meets once a year in an Annual Session for no more than five days during the first ten days of July. The Annual Session consists of meetings of the Standing Committee, General Committees and plenary meetings of the Assembly. The OSCE PA also meets once a year in a Winter Meeting for no more than three days during the first two months of the year. The Winter Meeting consists of meetings of the Standing Committee, the General Committees of the

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Assembly and the joint meeting of the three Committees. The OSCE PA also holds its Autumn Meeting once a year for no more than three days. The Autumn Meeting consists of meetings of the Standing Committee and Special Conferences and (as a rule) a Mediterranean Forum.

The decision-making rules in the OSCE PA can be summarized as follows. The OSCE PA Bureau takes its decisions by two-thirds majority vote. Decisions in the Standing Committee are taken according to the principle of consensus-minus-one. As this committee is one of the leading bodies, prominent innovations or critical reports would be difficult to approve. Yet, plenum resolutions can be adopted by simple majority voting, which is positive for the output of resolutions.

The plenary session votes on the nominated candidates for the offices of President, Vice-President and Treasurer. Those candidacies must be supported by twenty-five or more Members. The President shall be elected by secret ballot, and may be re-elected once to the same office. The Vice-Presidents are also elected by secret ballot for a mandate of three years. Also the Treasurer is elected by secret ballot. The Assembly votes on recommendations by show of hands, except in cases where a roll-call vote or secret ballot is required.

The OSCE PA is composed of national delegations. The RoP has no provisions for other factions, such as political groups. Although three and sometimes four political groups in the OSCE PA exist, they have no formal status, are less organized and less important. That is because parliamentarians from North America, Central Asia and, to some extent, Russia prefer to see themselves as independent from such groupings. There are also other informal interest groups which may in fact have a stronger effect, such as the PA members that are also members of NATO PA, the Nordic Group, the Mediterranean states or the francophone countries. The work of the informal groups mainly concerns support of candidates for the various officer positions in the elections held during the Annual Session. Upon the initiative of the President of the Croatian and Montenegrin Parliaments, the Parliamentary Delegations from Western Balkans countries of the OSCE PA met informally for the first time in May 2014 in Zagreb and the second time in July 2014 during the Annual Session to discuss common strategies and candidates for senior positions within the OSCE PA. However, as Ambassador Nothelle pointed out, *"In the OSCE PA the success or failure of a candidacy depends far more on personality, record of work in the PA, good working relations with the International Secretariat, and, crucially, the candidate's acceptability to both the Americans and the Russians than it does membership of a group."*[49]

The level of transparency of the OSCE PA can be summarized as follows. The General Assembly sessions are open to the public, unless otherwise decided. Standing Committee and General Committee meetings are open to the public, unless decided otherwise. The meetings of the Bureau are closed, unless decided otherwise.

The OSCE PA has an extensive website where the general public can find information on the establishment of the OSCE PA, the composition of delegations and committees. The site also includes the final versions of reports, recommendations, opinions and resolutions as well as all statutory documents. It has an annual calendar of past and upcoming meetings.

Institutional Authority

In analyzing the institutional authority of the OSCE PA, one needs to consider two preliminary remarks on the institutional authority of the OSCE itself. Firstly, the OSCE is strongly shaped by its intergovernmental self-conception, in which participating states

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[49] Nothelle, A., The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – Driving Reform. *OSCE Yearbook 2006.* Baden-Baden, p. 347-373.

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have not transferred any decision- making power to a supra-national level (as is the case in the EU). At the same time, the OSCE continues to struggle for recognition of its unique role and contribution in the intergovernmental institutional framework in the European area. Secondly, on many occasions, democracy promotion by the OSCE has been under severe criticism by Russia and some other participating states. Their argument is that the OSCE has been biased and has "lectured" its Eastern members on how to establish democracy in their countries, while neglecting human rights violations and limitations in democratic procedures in the West. Nevertheless, the OSCE has established a track record in norm setting and sharing best practices in democracy building.

The OSCE PA has a substantial autonomy vis-à-vis the OSCE governmental dimension. It is free to consider any issue, adopt its own RoP, elect a President and elect its Secretary General, who appoints the staff. The freedom to consider any issues is reflected in the reports and resolutions of the PA, as well as the "supplementary items" and "questions of urgency" which are introduced to plenary meetings. They have come to play a far greater role in political discussions than the generally well-balanced reports and resolutions produced by the rapporteurs of the General Committees.[50]

The Charter of Paris (1990) stressed the institutional independence of the OSCE PA, which on occasions later turned out to be an institutional weakness. One revealing example is the struggle of the OSCE PA, which has its Secretariat located in Copenhagen, to open a liaison office at the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna. Once the OSCE PA representative had the rank of ambassador, he succeeded in getting full access to all OSCE meetings in Vienna, including the Permanent Council.

As the OSCE has no constituent document and no legally binding standards, there is no formal basis for any parliamentary control towards other OSCE institutions and there is no control of power towards the intergovernmental level. Therefore, there are no formal duties of consultation between the intergovernmental and the parliamentary level.

The OSCE PA attempted to increase communication with the intergovernmental level unilaterally. First, it started to officially inform the Council of Ministers about its decisions. Second, it established unilaterally the right of its parliamentarians to address parliamentary questions to the Council Ministers, yet without any duty to answer these questions. Nevertheless, all written questions are normally replied to.[51] Third, despite very controversial intergovernmental debates, it gained in 2002 the right to inform the OSCE Permanent Council about its resolutions.[52] The Permanent Council is the intergovernmental working body, consisting of the permanent representatives of the OSCE participating states in Vienna. In other words, the OSCE PA has gradually developed a set of practices of dialogue and cooperation with the other bodies of the OSCE, in order to give visibility and relevance to its work. Moreover, the PA also stimulates political debate through the regular participation of the OSCE C-i-O in the Assembly's annual meeting, or by the fact that any member of the Ministerial Council has the right to attend the Assembly's sessions and to speak in debates. The OSCE PA president or representative also speaks at the Ministerial Council.

The budget and financial affairs of the organization of the OSCE as a whole remain a responsibility of the Committee of Ministers. The OSCE PA has no oversight or

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[50] Nothelle, A., The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – Driving Reform. *OSCE Yearbook 2006.* Baden-Baden, p. 347-373.

[51] Gawrich, A., *Could the Junior Learn from the Senior? Comparing Institutional Capacities of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE*. Paper for the 8th Pan-European Conference on International Relations: *One International Relations or Many? Multiple Worlds, Multiple Crises*; Warsaw, Poland, 18th – 21st September 2013, 26 p.

[52] The Special Representative and the other staff of the PA's Vienna Liaison Office regularly take the floor in all meetings referring to PA decisions and recommendations, including during the preparations for the Ministerial Council Meetings.

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approving authority over the budget of the OSCE. Nevertheless, the OSCE Secretary General presents the budget to the PA Standing Committee at its Autumn Meeting and answers questions from the floor. The PA is also entitled to give the OSCE its written recommendations, and has a Special Representative on the OSCE Budget.

Despite this, discussion of the PA's statement is still not included as an item on any formal agenda. Still, since 2004 the Vienna Liaison Office of the OSCE PA has taken part in the consultations of the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance (ACMF) of the Permanent Council.

The power of the OSCE PA is very limited in the absence of any tools related to conditionality or sanctions inside or outside the organization, or the power to make appointments. By contrast, the PACE could increase its power due to its accession powers and the large number of accessions to the CoE during the 1990s, which was not the case for OSCE. Here, most of the post-Socialist countries were already participating states and new members came mostly from the disintegration of countries, such as in former Yugoslavia, without similar accession procedures. The PACE votes on appointments of judges at the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights. The OSCE PA has no similar powers of any sort. Nevertheless, both regional organizations can be regarded as having similar moral and expert authority concerning international human rights and democracy norms.

A significant segment of the work and authority of the OSCE PA stems from its involvement in election observation activities. More than 4,000 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA have observed more than 100 elections since 1993. Through its participation in electoral observation missions, the PA has gained visibility internationally and has increased its internal profile in the OSCE. When the OSCE PA observes an election, the OSCE C-i-O appoints, upon the proposal of the OSCE PA President, a senior Member of the Assembly as the Special Co-ordinator to lead the OSCE short term observer mission and present the statement of the observation mission on behalf of the whole organization. Because the head of each election observation mission needs the approval of the OSCE C-i-O, there is a certain control over the mission, despite the fact that the intergovernmental level does not financially support the missions. On the other hand, such an appointment procedure enhances the authority attached to the findings and recommendations of the election observation mission.

Within the OSCE, disputes have occurred between the PA and the ODIHR with regard to election observation. The PA qualified the parliamentary type of election observation as the more important, political form and that of ODIHR as of simple technical character, despite the fact that the PA is often logistically dependent on the ODIHR in the field of election observation. The dispute over who should lead the monitoring teams, which responsibilities fall on which organisation, issues of budget and logistical support, as well as the responsibility for issuing the final political statement, were addressed in the 1997 Copenhagen Cooperation Agreement between the two organs: the PA leadership leads short term missions and the ODIHR leadership covers long term missions. The statement on behalf of the whole of the OSCE is given by the parliamentarian appointed by the C-i-O.

One special operational activity of the OSCE PA is the sending out of parliamentarians in OSCE crisis countries, so called *democracy teams, parliamentary teams or ad hoc teams*. The teams pursue dialogue between state institutions and civil society groups and collect information for plenary debates and resolutions, starting with the former Yugoslavia in 1993. The PA teams continued this cooperation, even during the suspension of (then) Yugoslavia in 1994-95 at the intergovernmental OSCE level. At this point, one might consider the independence of the PA an advantage as it enables ongoing parliamentary dialogue. Yet, this OSCE PA instrument is sometimes dependent upon extra-budgetary contributions of participating states and the budget is therefore restricted. Another target

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country has, been Belarus in 1996. The teams were sent by the Standing Committee, based upon a consensus decision. In contrast to election observation, this is no "naming and shaming" instrument, but more dialogue-oriented. Hence, a consensus is more easily reached. During the last year, parliamentarians from Russia and Ukraine have met regularly through the OSCE PA.

There is even more flexibility according to the instrument of the Special Representatives. These are appointed by the PA's President and therefore no consensus is required. The idea is to foster confidence building. The instrument is increasingly used, currently for issues like Afghanistan, Central Asia, Border Co-operation, Gender Issues, Human Trafficking Issues, Mediterranean Affairs, Migration, National Minorities, South Caucasus, South East Europe and the OSCE Budget. Obviously this instrument is mainly used a lot for issues which are controversial at the intergovernmental level. The OSCE PA has a Special Representative for South East Europe, Mr. Roberto Batelli from Slovenia.

Since 2007, the PA established the position of Special Representative for Central Asia, with a mandate to encourage active participation by parliamentarians from Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), as well as Mongolia, in the work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; encourage the exchange of parliamentary practices in the region, through frequent inter alia parliamentary field visits from various OSCE regions to Central Asia. The impact of the Special Representatives has been much determined by the personality taking the position. The first OSCE PA Special Representative for Central Asia was quite active.

Analyzing the work of the PA in Central Asia, one needs to conclude that the OSCE PA is endowed with limited tools for democracy promotion in a region where democracy is mostly unwanted by the leaderships and poorly developed among other constituencies. The membership within the OSCE for the Central Asian countries has been seen as a means to include this region in institutional formats where Western countries take part, offering the possibility of influencing events in these countries. The OSCE's rule of consensus at the governmental level has undermined any possibility for more muscular action, but has also kept it as a platform for dialogue across important cultural and political divisions. The role of the OSCE PA in the context of Central Asia has simultaneously dealt with this difficult regional environment and the limitations of parliamentary action within the organisation. However, it is the low profile of its activities that remains so attractive for countries like the ones in Central Asia. In that sense the PA has sought to maintain avenues of dialogue, even if the contribution to democracy promotion has remained mainly limited to processes of socialisation.[53]

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[53] Simão, L., *The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Promotion of Democratic Governance in Central Asia: A Critical Appraisal,* Paper published by Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal, January 2014, 21 .

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4.3.11 Central European Initiative - Parliamentary Dimension

- Created in: 1989
- Acronym: CEIPD
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[54], Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia.
- Members from EU: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

Constitutional Status

The origin of the Central European Initiative lies in the creation of the 'Quadragonale' in Budapest on 11 November 1989 whose 'founding fathers' were Italy, Austria, Hungary and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The initiative aimed at overcoming the division between the (then) blocks by re-establishing cooperation links, among countries of different political orientations and economic structures. At the first Summit in Venice in 1990, Czechoslovakia was admitted and the initiative was renamed 'Pentagonale'. In 1991, with the admission of Poland it became the 'Hexagonale'. The organisation was renamed Central European Initiative (CEI) in 1992. On the same occasion, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia were admitted as member states. Today, the CEI is a regional intergovernmental forum committed to supporting European integration through cooperation between and among its member states and with the EU, other interested public institutions or private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as international and regional organisations. In order to offer a solid contribution to European integration, the CEI combines multilateral diplomacy and project management, both as donor and recipient. Its institutional and geographical position enables the CEI to act as a bridge between macro-regions.

Cooperation among the parliaments of CEI member states has always been an important part of the CEI. The Parliamentary Dimension, along with the Governmental and the Business Dimensions, is positioned as one of the three pillars of the CEI. The Parliamentary Dimension of the CEI is an integral part of the functioning and structure of the CEI as a whole.

The Parliamentary Dimension pursues the following aims:
- contributing to the accomplishment of the objectives of the CEI, in agreement and in close co-ordination with the Governments and the other bodies of the Initiative;
- strengthening multilateral co-operation among CEI member states at parliamentary level;
- establishing and deepening partnership structures based on the principles of parliamentary democracy and the respect for human rights, in accordance with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the OSCE Process;
- strengthening the participation of all member states in the process of European integration;

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[54] The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a member of CEI under the name: Macedonia.

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- promoting economic co-operation as well as promoting environmental protection in compliance with the principle of sustainable development.

In 2014, the CEI celebrates its 25th anniversary, and is one of the oldest sub-regional cooperation initiatives in Europe.

Institutionalization

Throughout the years, the institutional establishment of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension has undergone a process of transformation, which has been formalised with the adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension (last updated in 2009).

The Members of the CEI-PD are members of the parliaments of the 18 member states of the CEI: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. This group of countries includes ten EU member states and eight countries which are not within the EU (Western Balkan countries and countries of the so-called European neighbourhood - Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova), which makes this initiative especially significant in the process of acceleration of the European integration of non-EU CEI member states.

The CEI covers ten countries from the SEE Cooperation Process. Kosovo is not part of the CEI, neither as a member and nor as an observer or guest. The same applies for the Assembly of Kosovo vis-à-vis the CEI-PD.

CEI is operating under the system of annual rotating presidency (from 1st January to 31st December). Ukraine presided over the Initiative in 2012, Hungary in 2013 and Austria holds the presidency in 2014. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will chair the CEI in 2015.

Members of the Parliamentary Dimension are appointed by their national parliaments. The RoP stipulate that "*membership of the Parliamentary Dimension shall be restricted to the CEI member states having democratically elected parliaments. The standard to be applied shall be the same as for membership to the Council of Europe*." However, this is not applied consistently in the case for Belarus. In 1993, the Belarusian parliament was granted Special Guest status at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), but was stripped of it in 1996 following a referendum that approved the use of the death penalty in the country. Contrary to this decision of PACE, the Parliament of Belarus is still a full member of the CEI-PD.

Each national delegation is entitled to at least three seats in the CEI-Parliamentary Assembly. The number of seats (between three and seven) is based on the population of the member states.

The governing structures of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension include several bodies: the Parliamentary Assembly; the Parliamentary Committee; the Standing Committee; and the President.

The Parliamentary Assembly meets once a year for the Autumn session. It meets in the country holding the Presidency of the CEI for that year. The Parliamentary Committee meets once a year for the Spring session in the country holding the Presidency of the CEI for that year. Each delegation sends two delegates to the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee.

The President of the Parliamentary Dimension of CEI is the chairperson of the national delegation of the country holding the CEI presidency. The presidency of the Parliamentary Dimension thus rotates annually. The President convenes, presides over and guides debates of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Standing Committee; ensures compliance with the Rules of Procedure; maintains order; invites speakers to take the

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floor; ascertains whether a quorum exists; puts questions to the vote and announces the results of the votes.

The Chairpersons of the national delegations of the countries holding the proceeding and the succeeding Chairmanship are Vice-Presidents of the Parliamentary Dimension. The Standing Committee consists of the President and the two Vice Presidents of the Parliamentary Dimension, the Chairpersons of the General Committees and the Chairpersons of national delegations.

The Secretariat of the CEI has been established in Trieste upon an offer by the Italian Government to host its seat, with the aim of giving a certain form of institutionalisation to the Initiative. The CEI Secretariat operates with the legal status of an international organisation, based on a Headquarters Agreement concluded between the Italian Government and the CEI Presidency. While the CEI Secretariat can fulfil tasks assigned by the CEI Summit, MFA Meeting, the Chairman-in-office and the Committee of National Coordinators, it does not serve as the Secretariat for the CEI-PD. There is no centralized place or person in charge of the institutional memory of the CEI-PD. The parliaments holding the Presidency usually form a Secretariat (or secretariat-type support function) for the organisation of the Parliamentary Committee and Parliamentary Assembly, as well as all the other activities of the President. The work of the committees is organised by the Chairperson of the Committee and the Secretariat of the national delegation. Therefore, the activity of a committee strongly depends on the commitment of the respective Chairperson. According to the CEI-PD Rules of Procedure, documents which were elaborated in the committees shall be forwarded to the Parliamentary Assembly. However, this is very seldom the case. Although the CEI-PD is an institutionalised body within the CEI, it lacks some organisational features such as a central Secretariat. Subsequently, the CEI-PD does not have a Secretary General.

The CEI-PD does not have its own, separate budget. Each member state is responsible for financing its own expenses connected with CEI activities, including the parliamentary activities. The costs incurred for the organisation of meetings shall, as a rule, be borne by the host country.

The CEI-PD has the following three General Committees:

➢ General Committee on Political and Home Affairs, having competence on political matters of mutual interest, combating organised crime and terrorism, civil protection, migration, minorities, human dimension.

➢ General Committee on Economic Affairs, having competence on agriculture, small and medium sized enterprises, transport and telecommunications, interregional and cross-border co-operation, reconstruction and development, environment and landscape protection, energy, tourism.

➢ General Committee on Cultural Affairs, having competence on culture and education, science and technology, youth affairs, human resources development and training, information and media.

Members of General Committees are appointed by national delegations. The Chairpersons and the Vice Chairpersons of each General Committee are elected by a simple majority of delegations in a secret ballot. The term of office of the Chairpersons and the Vice Chairpersons of each General Committee lasts one year and is renewable twice.

According to the RoP, each General Committee holds a meeting at least 35 days before the Parliamentary Assembly and prior to the Parliamentary Committee meeting (thus twice a year). A General Committee appoints a rapporteur for each subject, who is responsible for the preparation of the report of the General Committee and for presenting it to the Parliamentary Assembly. In practice, the records of the Committees are mixed. It

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is seldom the case that the three committees hold two meetings a year. The results in terms of concrete follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations are very limited.

The decision-making rules in CEI-PD are as follows. According to the RoP, the Parliamentary Assembly may adopt decisions if the majority of the National Delegations is present. The Standing Committee may adopt decisions if the majority of its members is present. Decisions of the Standing Committee are taken according to the principle of *consensus-minus-one*; though in practice decisions are taken by consensus. According to the RoP, a General Committee may adopt decisions if one third of its delegations is present; and General Committee decisions may be taken by majority of the delegations present. In practice decisions are taken by consensus.

At each of its sessions, the Parliamentary Assembly adopts a Final Declaration. According to the RoP, the majority required for the adoption of the Final Declaration is two thirds of the votes cast provided that at least the majority of its members is present. As a general rule, each delegation has a single vote. In practice, Final Declarations are adopted by consensus, after a very short discussion endorsing the text prepared in advance.

The CEI-PD is composed of 84 parliamentarians representing 18 Member States. The number of members per national delegation is as follows: three MPs for Montenegro, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, BiH, Croatia and Moldova; five MPs for Slovakia, Bulgaria, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Belarus and Serbia; seven MPs for Romania, Poland, Ukraine and Italy.

The level of transparency of CEI-PD can be summarized as follows. The Parliamentary Assembly sessions are open to the public, unless otherwise decided by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly. General Committee meetings are closed to the public, unless decided otherwise.

The CEI-PD does not have its own web-site.[55] There is a small section on the Parliamentary Dimension included in the web-site of the CEI. However, there is no up-to-date or basic information on the composition of the national delegations and committees of the Parliamentary Dimension. The site includes the final declarations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the last couple of years; but there is no comprehensive overview, with a search function, of reports, recommendations or declarations of the three Committees, Standing Committee and Parliamentary Assembly over the course of the years. The web-site has an annual calendar of meetings. Draft reports, draft recommendations and draft declarations of the CEI-PD are not uploaded on the web-site. The RoP provide little guidance on enhancing the transparency of the CEI-PD.

To make the CEI-PD more operational, it would be useful that the CEI Secretariat in Trieste includes one staff member for the CEI-PD. This person would be the focal point vis-à-vis the rotating chairmanships of the CEI-PD, provide information relevant to the work of the Committees, follow-up on the conclusions and recommendations of the CEI-PD, enhance the outreach and communication of the CEI-PD, develop a comprehensive web-page for the CEI-PD and be in charge of the institutional memory of the CEI-PD.

Institutional Authority

Since the CEI-PD is an integral component of the CEI institutional architecture, its institutional authority depends a lot on how it manages the relationship with the CEI Governmental Dimension. The Governmental Dimension of the CEI consists of the Meeting of the Heads of Government (CEI Summit), Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Meeting of the Political Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of CEI

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[55] Some parliaments holding the Presidency have a special web-page (or part of the parliamentary web-page), dedicated exclusively to their Presidency. Sometimes, it is a part of the MFA web-page of the CEI Presidency. It all depends on how devoted the country is to its CEI Presidency.

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Member States, Committee of National Co-ordinators, Working Bodies (Networks of Focal Points, Project Implementation Groups, ad hoc Task Forces, etc.), Executive Secretariat and as a specialised instrument the Secretariat for CEI Projects (CEI/EBRD Secretariat).

The CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedures describe the modalities of the co-operation between the Governmental and Parliamentary Dimensions: *"A joint session of the enlarged CEI Troika at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the enlarged Troika of the CEI Parliamentary Committee will be organised on the occasion of the MFA Meeting to permit a general debate on the strategic goals and challenges of the CEI as well as on the contributions of the Parliamentary Dimension to the overall work of the organisation. The Presidency of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension will be invited to participate in all high-level meetings organised by the CEI with the right to take part in the debate. Under no circumstance will the enhanced co-operation with the Parliamentary Dimension entail any financial commitments of the Governments of the CEI member states or the CEI Secretariats."*

In the past, it seems that the President of the Parliamentary Dimension has not always been invited to participate in high level meetings organised by the CEI. In April 2013, the Parliamentary Committee of the CEI-PD adopted a resolution in which it called upon the Governmental Dimension of the CEI to invite the President of the CEI-PD to meetings of the Heads of Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Reference was made to the CEI Guidelines and RoP to remind governments to organize a joint meeting of the enlarged Governmental CEI Troika with the chairpersons of the Parliamentary Delegations of the same countries (enlarged Parliamentary Dimension Troika), as was the practice in 2011 and 2012 but not in 2013.

In terms of the themes and topics it wishes to consider, the CEI-PD seems to have a large degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, review of the final declarations indicates that the CEI-PD closely follows the topics discussed at governmental level as well, such as cross-border connections and employment (2013).

The powers of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension are of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate among MPs as well as assessment of CEI activities and programs. The resolutions, recommendations, opinions and reports, once adopted by the CEI-PD General Assembly, are transmitted to the CEI Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for consideration.

The CEI-PD attempts to initiate soft forms of oversight on the governmental dimension, which is engaged in supporting projects in various areas of cooperation, also through the mobilisation of financial resources, providing greater possibilities for studying, financing and executing national and international projects.

The CEI, unlike most other initiatives, has its own funds for financing or co-financing cooperation projects, though not the CEI-PD. In addition to the regular annual contributions of the member states, CEI activities are financed from a special fund, the CEI Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). With financial support of the European Commission and the EBRD, the overall financial impact of the CEI through the implementation of projects is considerable.[56]

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[56] CEI activities are mainly focused on realization of concrete cooperation projects in the region. They are being carried out on the basis of CEI Plan of Action for a certain period of time, in the following areas: economic development (climate, environment, energy, SMEs, tourism, multimodal transport, sustainable agriculture), development of human potential (human resources, information society and media, intercultural cooperation and minorities, science and technology) and interregional cross-border cooperation. CEI focal points (experts from CEI member states) have crucial role in selecting high quality projects.

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Some of the policies are discussed in the three Committees of the CEI-PD, resulting in the resolutions and recommendations. An example is the Final Declaration of the 2013 Parliamentary Assembly of the CEI PD which, i.a., "*calls upon CEI Member States to strengthen territorial cooperation with greater involvement and accountability of regional and local authorities in programming and funds management by utilising the possibilities envisaged under the new EU rules for the regional policy*"; and *"urges the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to utilize the Connecting Europe Facility as a more effective strategy in the field of infrastructure as an appropriate financial scheme aiming at better funding of the connection between the infrastructure of the CEI region and the rest of Europe."* However, the Committees haven't been able to discuss in detail some of the major CEI projects. Oversight is at its initial stages and the results are not yet very tangible. So far, no (internal or external) review of the progress in the implementation of the CEI-PD recommendations has been conducted. This would be a useful initiative for a future President of the CEI-PD, with the support of the CEI-PD staff member in Trieste, as recommended above.

Synergies with other initiatives

In 2011, the CEI obtained observer status in the United Nations General Assembly. This improved its overall prestige in the region. However, in the absence of a Secretariat for the CEI-PD, very little relevant information from the United Nations General Assembly or other UN agencies has been made available or has contributed to the work of the CEI-PD.

The CEI-PD has established contacts with various international organizations and parliamentary assemblies, many of them also having observer status with the CEI-PD. Among them are the European Parliament, OSCE PA, PACE, Baltic Assembly, PABSEC, Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS, Parliamentary Assembly of the SEECP. The CEI-PD has established a sub-committee on relations with international and regional parliamentary organisations to work with these other parliamentary platforms.

At the annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly of CEI in Budapest in 2013, the importance of the existing macro-regional strategies such as the "Strategy for the Danube Region" and "Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region" was highlighted. CEI member states were invited to continue joint cooperation within macro-regional strategies on the basis of common interests and support the initiative on "Adriatic-Ionian Strategy". Taking into account the conclusions of the Final Declaration of the 2013 Parliamentary Assembly of the CEI-PD, synergies can be explored with the Adriatic Ionian Initiative - Parliamentary Dimension and the Danube Parliamentarians' Conference.

The new SEECP PA would be well placed to develop and discuss proposals on clustering meetings of various parliamentary platforms contributing to the macro-regional strategies in the above-mentioned regions. This is in line with our recommendation to make the SEECP PA the central parliamentary platform for the region.

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4.3.12 Cetinje Parliamentary Forum

- Created: 2004
- Acronym: CPF
- Web-site:http://www.skupstina.me/index.php/en/medjunarodna-saradnja/cetinjski-parlamentarni-forum
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
- Members from EU: Croatia

Constitutional Status

The Cetinje Parliamentary Forum is a regional initiative of parliamentary cooperation of Western Balkans countries on their way towards EU accession, founded in accordance with the Conclusions of the Thessaloniki Summit of the EU and Western Balkan countries held in June 2003.

CPF was launched by the Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro in cooperation with the (then) Parliament of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in February 2004. It is not linked to any international organization or executive agency.

The aim of CPF is to promote cooperation, transfer knowledge and experience and strengthen relations in order to maintain continuity in terms of closer parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy in the region, to improve bilateral and multilateral relations, and bring together representatives of legislative institutions in the countries that share a common historical and cultural heritage, and the European perspective.

Institutionalization

The CPF invites to its activities the parliaments from the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as parliamentarians from other countries, experts and guests. The Assembly of Kosovo is invited to the CPF events and has participated in some of them. Through the years of its existence, the CPF has gathered over 500 MPs from the region and from member states of the European Union.

There are no specific national parliament delegations to the CPF. Parliamentarians are selected and participate as relevant to the topic of the meeting. As such there are no provisions for guaranteed representation of women; though the CPF has organized dedicated sessions on the question of gender equality. For instance, in 2010 the 10th meeting of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum was dedicated to the theme of 'Women, Peace and Security' on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. A follow-up conference on the same topic took place in 2012. Various experts and guests have participated in meetings of the CPF, including the RCC and the RSPC.

The current governing structures of CPF are very informal and, in essence, depend on the policies of the Montenegrin Parliament. There is no elected or rotating chairmanship of the CPF. Therefore, throughout the region of the Western Balkans the CPF is perceived as a Montenegro-driven initiative, even though its objectives are directed towards the region.

In April 2013, Montenegro launched an initiative for the establishment of the "Western Balkan Six" group (WB-6) with the aim of institutionalising a new framework for cooperation between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. It was envisaged that a Parliamentary Assembly of the Western Balkans Six would be established, which would be composed of 10 representatives from each of the members respectively and which would be a logical next step in the institutional development of the CPF. This was eventually

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transformed into the Enhanced Cooperation within the Stabilisation and Association Process, the first meeting of which was hosted by Montenegro in 2014. No new arrangements for the CPF were agreed upon.

The Secretariat of the CPF is based at the Montenegrin Parliament in Podgorica. The Secretariat prepares the meetings and makes documents available in English and Montenegrin languages. In the absence of a department of inter-parliamentary or foreign relations in the Montenegrin Parliament, the Secretariat of the CPF is situated with the Office of the Secretary General of Parliament. The Montenegrin Parliament covers the costs of the Secretariat and staff of the CPF; while participants in CPF conferences cover their own costs. The OSCE, FES, UNDP and WFD support the proceedings and organization of CPF meetings.

The frequency of the CPF meetings is uneven and depends on political and organizational opportunities. In the initial years 2004 and 2005 there were three meetings per year. There was one meeting in 2007 and in 2009, followed by three meetings in 2010, one in 2011, two in 2012 and one in 2014.

In recent years, CPF made an attempt to find synergies with other regional parliamentary cooperation platforms and co-organized joint meetings. In 2009, CPF and COSAP co-organized a joint meeting. In 2010, CPF co-organized a meeting with the Parliamentary Dimension of the Central European Initiative. In 2010 and 2011, CPF held a joint meeting with UNDP and the Centre for the Control of Small Arms in South Eastern Europe (SEESAC). The joint meetings are a reflection of the different phases of development of the CPF in its search for the most effective mechanism for exchange of knowledge and best practices, and strengthening cooperation among the participating parliaments.

As the Montenegrin Parliament is interested in restructuring the CPF, a proposal for the institutionalization of the CPF was developed in 2013. It foresaw in the creation of an international Secretariat of the CPF, the appointment of international staff to the CPF Secretariat, the creation of three parliamentary committees, the adoption of Rules of Procedure of the CPF, the launch of its own web-site, etc. In the absence of the anticipated financial support for the proposal through IPA, the institutionalization of the CPF has been put on hold. The creation of the SEE CP Parliamentary Assembly in May 2014 and the ongoing discussion on the Secretariat for the SEE CP PA have given way to a reflection process on the future role of the CPF. While waiting to see how the new SEE CP PA will function, the practice of holding an annual conference of the CPF continued in June 2014.

In the current context, the transparency of the CPF is very much linked to the information available on the web-site of the Montenegrin Parliament, which includes the Final Declaration of all CPF conferences.

Institutional Authority

CPF determines its own agenda and is free to consider any issue. Reviewing the last couple of meetings, one can see that a wide range of very diverse issues were discussed, including European integration, regional cooperation in terms of culture, education and environment; parliament's role in combating corruption and organised crime; women, peace and security; the role of parliament in the system of export and import of arms; parliamentary oversight of defence and the security sector; environmental protection and sustainable development, etc.

The powers of CPF in regional cooperation in the Western Balkans are limited. It is mainly of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among participants. CPF aims towards oversight of regional policies and challenges. The main outcome of the CPF is the Joint Statement, which includes recommendations and requests to either the national governments or international actors.

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As with COSAP, a mechanism to discuss and track progress in the follow-up to the conclusions by the participating parliaments would be welcome.

In view of our recommendation to make the SEECP PA the central parliamentary platform for the region, we suggest that the work of the CPF be coordinated with and aligned to the work of the SEECP PA and its three General Committees.

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4.3.13 Danube Parliamentarians' Conference

- Created in: 2013
- Acronym: DPC
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia.
- Members from EU: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

Constitutional Status

The Danube Region is a functional area defined by its river basin. Since the 2004 and 2007 waves of EU enlargement, the Danube Region has largely become an EU space, though with specific challenges and potential. Socio-economic development, competitiveness, environmental management and resource- efficient growth can be improved, security and transport corridors modernised. An EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)[57], as adopted in 2011, intends to contribute to EU objectives, reinforcing major EU policy initiatives, especially the Europe 2020 strategy.

The governments of 14 Danube countries (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine)[58] cooperate in order to develop projects and actions that meet the challenges of the Danube Region. The EU Strategy has Four Pillars and each comprises Priority Areas. These are:

> *(1) Connecting the Danube Region*
>
> • To improve mobility and multi-modality: inland waterways; road, rail and air links
>
> • To encourage more sustainable energy
>
> • To promote culture and tourism, people-to-people contacts
>
> *(2) Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region*
>
> • To restore and maintain the quality of waters
>
> • To manage environmental risks
>
> • To preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the quality of air and soils
>
> *(3) Building Prosperity in the Danube Region*
>
> • To develop the knowledge society through research, education and information technologies
>
> • To support the competitiveness of enterprises, including cluster development
>
> • To invest in people and skills
>
> *(4) Strengthening the Danube Region*
>
> • To step up institutional capacity and cooperation
>
> • To work together to promote security and tackle serious and organised crime

While the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is an initiative of the European Commission and 14 governments of the region, the first Conference of Danube Parliamentarians took place in July 2013 in Ulm (Germany). Parliamentarians from 10

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[57] http://www.danube-region.eu/component/edocman/communication-of-the-commission-eusdr-pdf

[58] The EU Strategy for the Danube Region states that geographically the Strategy concerns primarily these 14 countries but that it remains open to other partners in the Region.

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countries participated: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria), Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Ukraine.

Participants agreed that *"a Danube Parliamentarians' Conference should meet at regular intervals so that national and regional parliaments in countries along the Danube can remain closely involved in the EUSDR and in the Danube Region regarding on-going development and implementation of the EUSDR".* Regular exchange among the Danube Region parliaments would also offer the possibility of promoting transparent and democratic decision-making structures and processes in the Danube Region.

The aim of the Danube Parliamentarians' Conference is to mobilize the parliamentarians to increase awareness among their own constituency and to improve relations among citizens and governments, as well as local and national administrative structures.

Institutionalization

In October 2014, the second Conference of Danube Parliamentarians took place in Budapest and decided on the format of institutionalization of the initiative. The agreed structure is threefold:

1. Consultation mechanisms between Governments and their respective national/state Parliaments [though these mechanisms do not entail any obligation on parliaments]

1) National/state parliaments invite at least once a year the National Contact Point (NCP) of the EUSDR to give the Members of Parliament an up-date on the state of play of the EUSDR and on the achievements of the Annual Forum of the EUSDR[59]; 2) Each Parliament establishes a permanent exchange mechanism, e.g. by appointing a contact person from its administrative staff who will have regular contact with the office of the NCP and disseminate the information; 3) The Parliamentary Contact Point (PCP) will be in charge of channelling requests from MPs towards the Office of the NCP; 4) Parliamentary Contact Points may also assist in facilitating interaction between MPs from other countries of the EUSDR

2. Consultation mechanism between the European Parliament and the national/state Parliaments of the countries participating in the EUSDR

Taking into consideration the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Participating States of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and of the European Commission (Vienna, 26 June 2014) regarding the better involvement of the European and national Parliaments in the EUSDR[60] and in order to foster cooperation between the parliamentary dimension of the EUDSR and the European Parliament, interested MEPs are invited to the Annual Conference of Danube Parliamentarians. There is a proposal that the European Parliament considers holding a yearly session for consultation on the Danube Region Strategy.

3. Future framework of the Danube Parliamentarians Conference (DCP)

The DPC will be organized on yearly basis. A country willing to host the next Conference may signal its intention to the organizers of the upcoming Conference. If a rotating chair of the EUSDR with an agreed rotation principle is introduced at the governmental level, such a principle will be considered mutatis mutandis also in the organization of the DPC. It is proposed that the agenda is kept flexible and subject to the discretion of the respective host country; and that the agenda of each Annual Conference includes updates on the state of implementation of the EUSDR. In

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[59] The Annual Forum of the EUSDR is the annual meeting of the representatives of the EU and of the governments participating in the EUSDR. The most recent meeting was held in Vienna, June 25-26, 2014.

[60] http://www.danube-region.eu/communication/news/616497-joint-statement-mfa

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addition, initial steps are taken to connect the governmental and parliamentary dimension of the EUSDR, by recommending that a representative of the host country of the Annual DPC gives an overview on the work done and the conclusions to the Annual Forum, and by sharing the Final Document of the DPC with the governmental dimension / Annual Forum.

While the DPC expressed the need for a clear structure without creating an additional institution, a number of important issues of institutionalization have been left open, such as:

- Number of participants per participating parliament or country; political plurality and gender balance of the parliament delegations;
- Number of MEPs invited to the DPC and status of MEPs in terms of approving the Final Declaration;
- Decision making rules on approving Final Declarations or other resolutions: vote by individual MPs, by parliament delegation or by country delegation? Majority or consensus decisions?
- Clarification at which level the annual chairmanship is executed (at level of Speaker, level of a designated Committee or at the level of an individual MP on behalf of the parliament?);
- Mechanism to keep the institutional memory of the DPC, beyond the Final Declaration;
- Secretariat function, budget;
- How to provide transparency of the DPC, possibility of a web-site, etc.
- In which way and with what means will parliamentarians "raise awareness among their own constituency" on the EUSDR -- as this one of the main reasons for the creation of the DPC;
- Information sharing and synergies with other regional parliamentary initiatives such as CEI Parliamentary Dimension and SEECP Parliamentary Assembly, as well as link with the AII Parliamentary Dimension.

As is the case with the involvement of the AII-PD with the EUSAIR, also for the EUSDR the parliaments want to become more involved. In June 2014, the Foreign Ministers of the countries participating in the EUSDR "welcomed the emerging parliamentary dimension of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region".

As the parliaments are looking for a cost-efficient, streamlined work structure and don't want to create an additional institution, a similar dilemma to that of the AII-PD arises. While the parliaments wish to increase the ownership of the EUSDR and enhance the role of the parliaments in this, they are faced with budgetary limitations and a risk of duplication and overlap with other regional parliamentary platforms. In the absence of specifically dedicated resources and Secretariat support, it remains unclear what specific results can be expected of the DPC, beyond the sharing of information. The possibilities for policy or project related input or parliamentary oversight are very slim in the absence of the required resources to do so.

Institutional Authority

The DPC institutional authority will depend a lot on the relationship with the national governments and European Commission, which have access to the relevant information.

While the DPC will have the freedom to consider any issue, most issues on its agenda will depend on the way the EUSDR will be implemented. So far, it is too early to give any final evaluation of the institutional authority of this new inter-parliamentary initiative.

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In view of our recommendation to make the SEECP PA the central parliamentary platform for the region, we suggest that the work of the DPC be coordinated with and aligned to the work of the SEECP PA and its three General Committees.

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4.3.14 Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Western Balkans

- Created in: 2004
- Acronym: CSPWB
- Web-site: -
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia (until 2013), Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[61], Montenegro, Serbia.
- Members from EU: Hungary (host and organizer)

Constitutional Status

The Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the countries of the Western Balkans (CSPWB) is an initiative by the Hungarian Parliament.

Since more than a decade, Hungary considers as one of her top priority foreign policy areas the enhancement of the democratic changes in the Western Balkans and the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries of the region. To this end, the first conference of this kind was organized upon the Hungarian initiative on the sidelines of the EU Speakers' meeting in February 2004 in Budapest. The event took place within the same framework in May 2005. Since then, the Hungarian National Assembly organizes the WB Speakers' Conference every other year. Accordingly it took place both in 2007, 2009, 2011 and most recently in 2013. The next one is scheduled to take place in Autumn 2015.

The goals of the Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Western Balkans is (1.) to strengthen the EU perspective amongst the states of the Western Balkans; (2.) the contribute to cementing the security and good neighbourly relations in the region; (3.) to foster the training of MPs and parliamentary officials of the Parliaments of the Western Balkans.

As an initiative under the auspices of the Hungarian Parliament, the CSPWB is to be distinguished from a similar meeting of Speakers of Parliament of the Western Balkans, organized by the Speaker of the European Parliament and taking place as a Joint Parliamentary Meeting (JPM) in Brussels.

Institutionalization

The participants of the CSPWB are the Speakers of the Parliaments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Croatia was invited in 2013 for the last time since it had already earned EU membership.

The initiative welcomed as observers the President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and in 2013 for the first time, the Speakers of Parliaments of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The CSPWB has a very light model of institutionalization. It does not aim to create a new structure, but rather offer a platform where Speakers of the WB can meet. The invitations and organization are handled by the Hungarian Parliament. The meetings are built on the active participation of the Speakers, hence the sessions are co-chaired with the Speakers from the Western Balkans, and keynote speakers take the floor at the beginning of every session.

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[61] The Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a member of CSPWB under the name: Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

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There is thus a very light governing structure of the initiative. There is no troika formula of chairs, nor a Presidency or Bureau. The agenda is developed by the Hungarian Parliament in consultation with the Speakers of the Western Balkans.

The CSPWB consists of two sessions, normally a morning one on EU issues and an afternoon one devoted to security policy. In October 2013 the title of the first session was "EU integration: Results and Aspirations", and that of the afternoon one was "Security Policy Co-operation in the Western Balkans: Contributing to European Stability".

At the end of the conferences no document is adopted but the host Speaker draws conclusions. He/she later informs the leadership of the EU institutions, the rotating EU Presidency and the NATO Secretary General about the event in written form.

There is no specific Secretariat of the CSPWB other than the staff of the Hungarian Parliament. It prepares the meetings and ensures all necessary conditions for the meetings to take place. There is no specific budget for the meetings. As the host country, Hungary covers all costs for the organization of the conference and the delegations cover their travel costs.

The frequency of meetings has been established as once every two years. Since no final Declaration is being adopted, there are no specific decision-making rules.

The transparency of the initiative is based upon the specific approaches of the participating parliaments. This means that the Press and Public Relations Department of each of the participating parliaments provides a short brief on the parliament's web-site.[62] There is no specific web-site of the CSPWB. Agendas, contributions, summaries or concluding statements are not publicly available. The meetings are not open to the public or CSOs.

Institutional Authority

The CSPWB is a fully autonomous inter-parliamentary platform. It is free to consider any issue; and autonomously decide on the themes it wishes to include in the agenda.

The impact of the CSPWB on the countries' foreign policy or their EU accession process is limited. It is mainly of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among participants. It enables a series of bilateral meetings between Speakers of the participating parliaments and thus contributes to political dialogue.

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[62]http://www.skupstina.me/~skupcg/index.php/en/skupstina/potpredsjednici/aktuelnosti/item/1334-ucesce-potpredsednika-branka-radulovica-na-sestoj-konferenciji-predsednika-parlamenata-zemalja-zapadnog-balkana-druga-sesija

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4.3.15 Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance and European Integration of the Western Balkans

- Created in: 2009
- Acronym: NPC
- Web-site: http://www.npcbalkan.net/index.php
- Members from SEE: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[63], Montenegro, Serbia. The Assembly of Kosovo currently has an observer status in the Network.
- Members from EU: -

Constitutional Status

The NPC (Network of Parliamentary Committees for Economy, Finance and European Integration of Western Balkans) was formed in 2009 with the aim of strengthening parliamentary cooperation among parliaments from the Western Balkan region and the goal to promote competitiveness, economic growth and European integration.

The Network was created by the parliaments of the region themselves during the realization of the OECD/GTZ project *Improving the Process Of Economic Reform Legislation in Western Balkan countries,* and initially included the Committees on Economy and Finance. In 2013, the parliaments decided to formalize the governing structures of the Network and to extend an invitation to the European Integration Committees of the participating parliaments.

Institutionalization

Members of the Network are the Committees from the Parliament of Albania, Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Parliamentary Assembly of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, National Assembly of Republic of Srpska, Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Parliament of Montenegro and the National Assembly of Serbia. The Assembly of Kosovo has observer status in the Network.

There are no provisions of guaranteed representation of women in the Network, since the membership depends on the composition of the parliamentary committees as decided by the parliaments themselves.

Each of the eight participating parliaments is represented on an equal level, both in the Board and in the activities of the NPC.

In 2013, the NPC decided to set up its governance and organisational structure. The Network is governed by a Network Board of MPs from the Western Balkans parliaments. The principal activity of the NPC Board is to provide operational guidance and supervision of the organization in between the NPC annual meetings. The Board adopts the strategy and work programme, reviews progress in the course of the year and provides proposals and initiatives with the view of further development of regional cooperation.

The Chairpersonship of the Board is rotated on a six month term. Each participating parliament appoints one representative board member and one alternate representative. Network membership guidelines, Rules of Procedure and a work plan for the NPC were also developed in 2013.

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[63] The Assembly of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a member of NPC under the name: Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

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The Secretariat will be responsible for the administrative functions of the organization. The RoP of the Network state that the Westminster Foundation for Democracy assumes the role of the interim Secretariat until NPC is established as a legal entity or until 31 March 2015, whichever comes first. The regional Secretariat is based in Skopje. It has three staff members, financed from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy under its Western Balkans programme.

Currently, the Network includes 25 parliamentary committees from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Sometimes meetings include representatives or chairpersons of Committees of Finance, Economy and European Integration together, sometimes it includes only representatives of one of these committees. Sometimes it involves all eight participating parliaments, sometimes, and more and more frequently, the network operates through bilateral and tri-lateral meetings, based upon thematic priorities and interests of the participating parliaments.

The NPC board meets every three months. Additional meetings may be called upon the suggestion of the Board Chairperson. Conferences or workshops take place on a regular basis, according to the work plan, and are often organized alongside the quarterly Board meeting. There is also an annual NPC conference, bringing together representatives of all committees that participate in the work of the Network to review work from the past year and provide suggestions and direction to the Board for future Network activities.

Meetings of the Board shall take place upon availability of a quorum. The quorum is five out of eight of the represented parliaments. Decisions of the Board are taken by consensus. If a matter concerns some parties only, decision are taken by consensus of these parties. In case of organizational issues concerning the meetings of the Board, the latter takes decisions by a two thirds majority of the members present and voting.

Documents related to the items of the agenda shall be available in English by rule at least two weeks before the meeting and translated versions in the respective languages of Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia at least one week before the meeting. The NPC has its own web-site, and it includes announcements and final reports / conclusions of conferences and workshops. It has a calendar, photo gallery and membership overview. Draft documents are not accessible via the web-site.

Institutional Authority

The NPC is a fully autonomous inter-parliamentary initiative. It is free to consider any issue; and autonomously decides on the themes it wishes to include in the agenda. It is free to draft and revise its RoP and decide on its chairmanship.

The powers or competencies of the NPC in regional cooperation in the Western Balkans are limited. It is mainly of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experiences among participants. The main outcome of the NPC activities is the Joint Statement or Declaration, which includes recommendations and requests to either the national governments or international actors. As with other regional cooperation networks, a mechanism to discuss and track progress in the follow-up of the conclusions by the participating parliaments would be welcome.

In the past years, there were few programmatic or information sharing links between NPC and the CPF, COSAP and SEE CP Parliamentary Assembly, though each of these initiatives aims to contribute to the European perspective of the Western Balkans countries. The NPC conducted a first discussion on the work of COSAP at its regional meeting of chairpersons of European Integration Committees in September 2014 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the coming years, as of 2015, the WFD has proposed that the NPC directs its approach towards cooperation with COSAP and the SEECP PA, in particular its General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy. Once

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operational, this approach can substantially contribute to better synergies and a strengthened knowledge basis for the committees involved.

In view of our recommendation to make the SEECP PA the central parliamentary platform for the region, we suggest that the work of the NPC be coordinated with and aligned to the work of the SEECP PA and its three General Committees.

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4.4 Cross-IPI commentary on regional parliamentary cooperation

Based upon the above review of the fifteen selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, a series of cross-institutional observations has been identified, with the aim of summarizing the main trends. This summary is not necessarily comprehensive but attempts to highlight some findings considered relevant for this Report. The summary is structured based upon the four dimensions covered in the individual organizational analysis. *See overview chart 5 at the end of this section.*

4.4.1. Constitutional status

Reviewing the year of establishment of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, a sharp increase was noticed as of 1990: ten initiatives were created since 1990 while only five initiatives existed prior to 1990. The end of the Cold War and the democratization of Central and Eastern Europe enhanced regional cooperation and contributed to an increase in regional parliamentary cooperation structures. One can claim that it has become standard practice to establish a parliamentary dimension to any type of international cooperation, not necessarily because of a pressing functional need but due to the fact that it would look undemocratic not to establish a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation.

The initiative for the establishment of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks is clearly with the participating parliaments, in all cases except for the three parliamentary organs of international organizations: OSCE PA, PACE and CEI-PD, which were created upon the initiative of the governments of the states concerned.

Analyzing the affiliation to an international organization for the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, as could be expected, the three parliamentary organizations (PAM, COSAP, and CFAC) and the four networks (CPF, DPC, CSPWB, NPC) have no link to an international governmental organization. Three parliamentary organs (OSCE PA, PACE and CEI-PD) are part of the governmental set-up and the remaining five initiatives are either committed to or recognized by an international organization: NATO PA, PABSEC, PA-UfM, SEECP PA, AII-PD.

In terms of their objectives, all selected IPIs and parliamentary networks aim for regional cooperation, eight of them encourage and work towards European (EU) integration and thirteen initiatives facilitate political dialogue among their members. Worth mentioning is the PA-UfM, where Israelis, Palestinians and other Arab elected representatives sit down together; the SEECP-PA, where MPs from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece sit together; the PABSEC, where MPs from Russia and Georgia meet; the OSCE PA, where MPs from Russia and Ukraine meet. Western Balkans MPs meet additionally in the AII-PD, SEECP-PA, CEI-PD, CSPWB, CFAC, CPF, COSAP and NPC.

4.4.2. Institutionalization

To summarize the main trends related to the institutionalization of the selected fifteen IPIs and parliamentary networks, we will look into the above-mentioned eight criteria.

On membership, it is noted that in the five macro-regional IPIs (NATO PA, OSCE PA, PACE, PAM, UfM-PA) there are between 27 and 57 member countries; while ten initiatives have fewer than twenty member countries. There are three IPIs which include all 28 EU Member States: OSCE PA, PACE, UfM-PA. EU Candidate Countries are

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included in all initiatives but not evenly: from one Candidate Country up to all five Candidate Countries. Kosovo is a member/full participant in two initiatives (SEECP PA, CSPWB), observer in two initiatives (NATO PA, NPC), guest in three initiatives (COSAP, PACE, CPF) and not included in the remaining eight initiatives.

In the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, there are some provisions on participation of women in four cases (PACE, OSCE PA, SEECP PA and PAM); and these provisions are still weak in terms of guaranteed representation of women. There are no provisions for women's participation in the other eleven selected IPIs and parliamentary networks at all. In terms of seat distribution among participating parliaments, there seems to be a balance between cases with equal representation and cases with "degressive proportionality".

Regarding the governing structures, it turns out that most IPIs function either based upon the rotating chairmanship, according to an agreed procedure, or foresee the election of a chairperson. The only exceptions are those initiatives with a permanent host parliament which assumes the permanent chairmanship (CPF; CSPWB). In most of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, specific RoPs have been agreed upon, as these constitute an important instrument of institutionalization.

The selected IPIs and parliamentary networks demonstrate no uniformity in terms of the set-up of their Secretariat: nine initiatives have a fixed, permanent Secretariat and six have a rotating Secretariat. In five cases, the common budget is covered by contributions of the participating parliaments. In one case (PACE), the Secretariat functions based upon the unified governmental budget and in eight cases the host parliaments assume all costs of the initiative. The question about the type of Secretariat is of key importance: since IPIs meet infrequently and are not high on members' priority lists, the decisions, statements and agendas of such meetings are to a large extent determined by Secretariat staff. Since Secretariats cost money, the political will and financial means to contribute to the budget determine whether the IPI has a fixed, permanent Secretariat or a rotating Secretariat.

The committee structure of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks varies between no committees, and three, five or eight standing committees. In those cases where committees exist, they function based upon a system of rapporteurs. In terms of their thematic focus, several commonalities and similarities have been identified. A first example relates to the PAM and PA-UfM. PAM has a Committee on Political and Security-related Cooperation, while UfM-PA has a Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights. PAM has a Committee on Economic, Social and Environmental Cooperation, while UfM-PA has a Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education and a Committee on Energy, Environment and Water. PAM has a Committee on Dialogue among Civilizations and Human Rights, while UfM-PA has a Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture. A second example of commonalities and similarities in committee structures relates to the SEE-CP and CEI-PD. The CEI-PD has a General Committee on Political and Home Affairs, while the SEECP PA has a General Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Security Cooperation. The CEI-PD has a General Committee on Economic Affairs, while the SEECP PA has a General Committee on Economy, Infrastructure and Energy. The CEI-PD has a General Committee on Cultural Affairs, while the SEECP PA has a General Committee on Social Development, Education, Research and Science.

The frequency of plenary and committee meetings is mostly once a year (in eight cases) or twice a year (in five cases). The only exception is PACE, which meets four times a year.

The decision making practices among the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks show similarities as well. Although consensus has been stipulated in the RoP in seven cases, the

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political culture seems to indicate a practice of trying to achieve consensus as much as possible. The only IPIs where voting constitutes an established practice are PACE and NATO PA.

The factions in most of the selected IPIs are the national delegations. Only two IPIs have political groups: PACE and OSCE PA; though in the latter case their influence is very limited. Most IPIs have very limited power and policy influence, with the exception of PACE. PACE is also the only IPI with functioning and formally recognized political groups. Although it is not the only characteristic for a powerful IPI, to a large degree a parliamentary assembly is only capable of wielding power if it has some sort of political group dynamics -- as can also be observed in the European Parliament. However, most IPIs function based upon national delegations, representing the national interest, rather than political groups.

A review of the transparency of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks reveals that there is still a way to go. Seven of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks have their own website. Only in one case (PACE), draft documents (resolutions, reports) are publicly available; while fourteen of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks only make final documents publicly available. In eleven of the selected cases the plenary meetings are open to the public; while the committee meetings are generally closed, except in one case (NATO PA).

4.4.3. Institutional Authority

Under 'institutional authority', we discuss autonomy and issues of powers and competencies. In terms of the autonomy, all selected IPIs and parliamentary networks are autonomous and free to consider any issue and adopt their own RoP. They are free to elect their own President, except in the cases when it is determined that the Speaker of the Parliament of the country holding the rotating chairmanship of the governmental dimension assumes automatically the presidency of the IPI. This is the case for the SEECP PA and AII-PD. In cases when the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks have a Secretary General and staff, they are freely elected by the institution itself.

To summarize the main trends related to the powers and competencies across IPIs, we will focus on the eight IPIs which have a relationship with a governmental counterpart: NATO PA, PABSEC, PA-UfM, SEECP PA, AII-PD, PACE, OSCE PA, CEI-PD. The reason is that the institutional authority of an IPI depends very

much on its relationship with the governmental dimension of the international organization.

In all eight cases, the decision-making power clearly lies with the governmental dimension of the international organization. In all cases, the power of the Parliamentary Assemblies and Parliamentary Dimensions is of a consultative nature, providing a platform for discussion and debate. The recommendations and reports adopted by the IPIs are transmitted to the relevant stakeholders and the governmental dimension, for information or consideration. Although the reports and resolutions of the IPIs are not legally binding, they are often seen as a "soft diplomacy" tool. The RoP of the PA-UfM even explicitly stipulate that the deliberations of the Assembly shall not be legally binding.

As it has become an emerging norm to establish a parliamentary dimension to any new international cooperation platform -- not due to the perceived functional need but due to the fact that it would look undemocratic not to establish one. In turn, the powers and competencies granted to IPIs by the governmental dimension are kept at a "minimum level", resulting in little tangible impact on policy making.

In several IPIs, the senior representative of the Parliamentary Dimension can attend meetings of the Governmental Dimension. However, in the case of the AII-PD there are

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no provisions for the presence of the Parliamentary Dimension at the governmental meetings of the AII. In the case of the CEI, the RoP describe the modalities of the co-operation between the Governmental and Parliamentary Dimensions; but that is no guarantee for effective cooperation between the two levels, as the experience of the CEI-PD shows. The interaction between the Governmental and Parliamentary Dimensions is more intensive and the PA influence stronger in the case where the Secretariats are based in the same city or premises, as is the case for the Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, based in Istanbul. By contrast, the OSCE PA is based in Copenhagen and the OSCE Permanent Council is based in Vienna.

The agenda setting role of most of the IPIs as regards the governmental dimension is very weak. The only exception is PACE, which maintains constant dialogue with governments, national parliaments, other international organisations and civil society. PACE has successfully played a role as Europe's "moral conscience" and is widely known as a "school of democracy and human rights" with regard to its parliamentarians from Central and Eastern Europe. Its recommendations are at the root of over one third of the conventions adopted by the Council of Europe. Although both OSCE PA and PACE can be regarded as having similar moral and expert authority concerning international human rights and democracy norms, PACE's influence has been increasing during the last 15 years due to an increased use of recommendations and opinions, and PACE's right of consultations regarding planned CoE treaties, which is not the case for the OSCE PA.

On the other hand, in terms of its agenda-setting role, it is worth mentioning that a significant segment of the authority of the OSCE PA stems from its involvement in election observation activities, sending out parliamentarians in OSCE crisis countries as democracy teams, parliamentary teams or ad hoc teams, and the instrument of the Special Representatives.

None of the selected IPIs has a formal or explicit oversight role regarding the governmental dimension of the international organization to which they are committed or by which they are recognized. However, for instance, PACE does have the right to formulate oral and written questions, and the Committee of Ministers is obliged to report activity to the Assembly. NATO PA has managed to exercise indirect influence over NATO through its Rose-Roth seminars. The OSCE PA has increased communication with the intergovernmental level unilaterally, by officially informing the Council of Ministers about its decisions and by establishing (unilaterally) the right of its parliamentarians to address parliamentary questions to the Council Ministers, yet without any duty to answer these questions. Nevertheless, all written questions are normally replied to. The CEI has its own funds for financing or co-financing cooperation projects; but nevertheless the CEI-PD Committees have not been able to discuss in detail some of the major CEI projects; and oversight is at its very initial stages.

The IPIs have, generally speaking, no influence over appointments of senior people in the governmental dimension, with the exception of PACE. The PACE appoints the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the CoE on the recommendation of the CM, which has the right of proposal. On several occasions, PACE has rejected proposals, making its veto right effective. The PACE also elects the Secretary General of the Assembly, the judges at the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights.

While the IPIs generally approve their own budget, their institutional weakness is especially obvious with regard to a lack of direct budget control over the organizations' executives. Nevertheless, PACE makes recommendations on the budget priorities of the CoE. Similarly for the OSCE, the OSCE PA has no authority over the OSCE budget. Still, the OSCE Secretary General presents the budget to the PA Standing Committee at its Autumn Meeting and answers questions from the floor. The PA is also entitled to give

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the OSCE its written recommendations; though the discussion of the PA's statement is not included as an item on any formal agenda.

IPIs mostly have the authority to approve new members to the IPI. However, IPIs hardly have any decision-making power in the accession process of new members to the international organization. Exceptionally, PACE has indirect influence on the accession process in the CoE.

4.4.4. Synergies with other initiatives

To summarize the main trends related to synergies with other initiatives, it has been identified that four of the selected IPIs have a formal relationship with the United Nations: PAM, PACE, OSCE PA, CEI PD. Most IPIs are observers to other IPIs; or have an institutional cooperation with them.

However, a risk of duplication has been identified in the Committee work and consultations of several IPIs. Further synergies can be recommended with the aim of rationalizing time and resources allocated by national parliaments to IPIs.

On the other hand, the substantial increase since 1990 in the number of regional parliamentary cooperation initiatives indicates that relations among the states of South East Europe and the Western Balkans are gradually becoming more and more intertwined and interdependent. The parliamentary dimension of various inter-governmental structures has added a level of legitimisation to the process, provided a parliamentary context and contributes to a sense of common regional belonging. However, the visibility of many IPIs and parliamentary networks remains a considerable challenge, within the participating parliaments and in wider society.

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Chart 5: Summary of Analysis of Selected IPIs and Networks of Parliamentarians

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	PAM	COSAP	CFAC	NATO PA	PABSEC	PA-UfM	SEECP PA	AII-PD	PACE	OSCE PA	CEI-PD	CPF	DPC	CSPWB	NPC
I. Constitutional Status															
1.1. Year of establishment	2005	2005	2012	1955	1993	2010	2014	2000	1947	1990	1989	2004	2013	2004	2009
1.2. Affiliation to internat. org	no	no	no	recogn.	recogn.	recogn.	commit	commit	part of	part of	part of	no	no	no	no
1.3. Initiative of establishment	parl	parl	parl	parl	parl	parl	parl	parl	gov	gov	gov	parl	parl	parl	parl
1.4. Objectives of the IPI															
1.4.1. Regional cooperation	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
1.4.2. European (EU) integrat.	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
1.4.3. Political dialogue	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
II. Institutionalization															
2.1. Membership, composition															
2.1.1. Total full member parl	27	5	4	28	12	43	13	8	47	57	18	6	10	7	7
2.1.2. Number EU member st.	8	0	1	22	3	28	5	4	28	28	10	1	7	1	0
2.1.3. Number SEE parl.	9	5	4	7	7	7	13	7	12	12	10	6	6	6	5
2.1.4. Candidate Countries	5	4	2	2	3	3	5	3	5	5	4	4	1	4	4
2.1.5. Guests, observers?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes
2.1.6. Guarant. women repres.	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
2.1.7. Seat distribution	equal	equal	equal	degres	degres	degres	equal	equal	degres	degres	degres	equal	no info	equal	equal
2.2. Governing structures															
2.2.1. President elected by IPI	yes	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes

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2.2.2. Collective bureau	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes
2.2.3. Rotating chairmanship	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
2.2.4. Written RoP exist ?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes
2.3. Secretariat of the IPI															
2.3.1. Fixed or rotating?	fixed	rotat	rotat	fixed	Fixed	fixed	rotat	rotat	fixed	fixed	rotat	fixed	rotat	fixed	Fixed
2.3.2. Permanent staff?	yes	no	no	yes	Yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	Yes
2.3.3. Parl. budget contribut.	parl	host p	host p	parl.	Parl	parl	host p	host p	gov	parl	host p	host p	host p	host p	parl
2.4. Committee structure															
2.4.1. Number of committees	3	no	no	5	3	5	3	no	8	3	3	no	no	no	3
2.4.2. Cmts have rapporteurs?	yes	N/A	N/A	yes	Yes	yes	yes	N/A	yes	yes	yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2.5. Frequency of meetings/ y.															
2.5.1. Minimum of plenaries	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	4	1	1	2	1	1	1
2.5.2. Minimum of cmt mtgs	1	N/A	N/A	2	2	1	1	N/A	4	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	4
2.6. Decision-making rules															
2.6.1. Written rules on decis	yes	yes	no	yes	Yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	Yes
2.6.2. Consensus rule?	no	yes	yes	no	No	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	N/A	Yes
2.7. Factions in the IPIs															
2.7.1. Number of factions/del.	27	5	4	28	12	44	13	8	47	57	18	N/A	N/A	N/A	8
2.7.2. Political groups or not?	no	no	no	no	No	no	no	no	yes: 5	yes: 4	no	no	no	no	No
2.8. Level of transparency															
2.8.1. Own web-site	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes
2.8.2. Draft documents public?	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
2.8.3. Final documents public?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2.8.4. Plenary meetings open?	yes	yes	no	yes	Yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes
2.8.5. Cmt meetings open ?	no	N/A	N/A	yes	No	no	no	N/A	no	no	no	N/A	no	no	no
III. Institutional Authority															
3.1. Autonomy															
3.1.1. Free to consider issue	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3.1.2. Free to determine RoP	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3.1.3. Free to elect President	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	N/A	N/A	N/A	yes
3.1.4. Free to select SG & staff	yes	yes	N/A	yes	yes	yes	yes	N/A	yes	yes	yes	yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
3.2. Powers and competencies															
3.2.1. Decision making int. gov. org	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	No
3.2.2. Agenda-setting int. gov. org.	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	No
3.2.3. Oversight power	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	No
3.2.4. Appointments in int. gov. org	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	No
3.2.5. Decision own budget IPI	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3.2.6. Influence budget int.gov. org	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	No	no	no	no	yes	no	no	N/A	no	N/A	N/A
3.2.7. Approve treaty changes	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	No	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
3.2.8. Accept new member IPI	yes	yes	yes	no	Yes	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	yes
3.2.9. Accept member int. gov. org.	N/A	N/A	N/A	no	No	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	N/A
IV. Synergies w other initiat.															
4.1. Formal status at UN	yes	no	no	no	No	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	No
4.2. Observer to other IPIs	yes	no	no	no	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	No
4.3. Instit. coop. w. other IPIs	yes	no	no	yes	Yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	No
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

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	PAM	COSAP	CFAC	NATO PA	PABSEC	PA-UfM	SEECP PA	AII-PD	PACE	OSCE PA	CEI-PD	CPF	DPC	CSPWB	NPC

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5 Parliaments in the EU and in the Western Balkans and Turkey

This chapter will present an analysis of how both the European Parliament (EP) and national parliaments of EU Member States interact with the parliaments in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

5.1. European Parliament and Western Balkans Parliaments

Following the analysis of various IPIs and their interaction with the Western Balkans / SEE parliaments (Chapter IV), this chapter of the Study will bring the EP into the mapping. While the EP can be considered an IPI in itself[64], it also represents a 'sui generis' phenomenon, which is difficult to compare with other IPIs due to the powers of the EP, the direct election of its members and its supra-national character. Rather than analyzing the powers of the EP in general terms,[65] this Study will focus on the EP's competencies towards the Western Balkans and its interaction with the parliaments of the region.

5.1.1. The EP's role in international relations, in particular towards accession countries

In the EU's international relations, the EP plays a dual role: an institutional role through which it exerts parliamentary control over the EU's Foreign Policy actors, and an international role through which it engages directly with the outside world through parliamentary diplomacy.[66]

As the EU Treaties place the EU foreign policy as a separate pillar within the inter-institutional system, the foreign policy of the EU is still firmly in the hands of its two executive actors, the Council and the Commission. However, the EU Treaties foresee that the Council has to seek the approval of the EP (and consult with the Commission) before it opens accession negotiations with a country. Equally, in

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[64] Cofelice, A. & Stavridis, S.,'The European Parliament as an International Parliamentary Institution (IPI)'. *European Foreign Affairs Review* 19, no. 2 (2014): 145–178.

[65] Rittberger, Berthold and Winzen, Thomas, The EU's multilevel parliamentary system, in: Mazey, Sonia and Richardson, Jeremy (eds.) *The European Union: Power and Policy-Making*, 2015 (forthcoming), ETH Zurich, 30 p.

[66] Redei, L., *Normative Parliamentarians: The European Parliament's Role in the EU's Foreign Policy Process*, Dissertation to obtain the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Central European University, Budapest, 2013, page i (abstract)

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order for the Council to close the accession process (signing of the Accession Treaty) it has to receive a favourable opinion of the Commission and the consent of the EP.[67] Candidate Countries have to conform to the Copenhagen criteria, which include democratic governance and the respect for human rights. Hence, the EP plays an active role in the evaluation of a country's democratic efforts through the EP's resolutions and declarations; as well as in shaping the overall EU Enlargement Strategy of the Union. These tasks are performed by the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET), the largest and one of the most sought-after committees in the EP. On behalf of the EP, it is responsible for following all issues related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), as well as issues concerning human rights, the protection of minorities and the promotion of democratic values in third countries.

Through its budgetary powers and parliamentary oversight, the EP exercises substantial influence over the EU's foreign policy process. Article 28 of the EU Treaties lays out the various budgetary rules for the EU's CFSP. It states that both administrative and operating expenditures of CFSP will be charged to the budget of the European Communities—a budget over which the Parliament and the Council jointly hold the purse-strings. In other words, the budgets for development aid, enlargement (pre-accession programs) and humanitarian aid all need to be approved by the EP as well as the Council. The EP is thus actively involved in all aspects of the CFSP budget, leaving aside all military and defence spending by EU missions which is financed through the participating member states, so the Parliament has no scrutiny over these areas.

"When the seven-year financial perspectives for 2007-2013 were negotiated, one of the demands of the EP was to improve parliamentary oversight over the external programs of the Union. In response, the Commission proposed bringing all the various types of external affairs expenditures under four financial instruments: one for EU Candidate Countries or potential candidates, one for the European Neighbourhood countries, one for development aid and cooperation and one for crisis situations."[68] The EP gained oversight over all external programs and financial instruments[69]: Members of AFET take part in the oversight of the ENPI, IPA and IfS instruments, the Development Committee is briefed on the DCI, and the Human Rights Subcommittee deals with the EIDHR.

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[67] With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament (EP) possesses the right of consent but not that of initiative on the following international agreements concluded by the EU: (1) association agreements; (2) agreement on EU accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; (3) agreements establishing a specific institutional framework by organizing cooperation procedures; (4) agreements with important budgetary implications for the Union; (5) agreements covering fields to which either the ordinary legislative procedure applies, or the special legislative procedure where consent by the EP is required.

[68] Redei, L., Ibid., pp. 73-74.

[69] "During the negotiations, the Parliament insisted that all the financial instruments be dealt with as a coherent package, and not as separate legislative acts. This was important because of the different legal bases that each instrument was based upon. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the Instrument for Stability (IfS) involved the Parliament as a co-legislator with the Council in a co-decision procedure. On the other hand, for the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), the Parliament only needed to be consulted. Finally, on the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Commission had originally proposed to reach funding decisions using a comitology procedure (which requires the opinion of a committee of experts, but not Parliamentary approval). Through a process of linkage, however, the EP ensured that the negotiations were treated as a single deal, thus giving it veto rights over certain files on which it had no *de juris* powers of rejection." Redei, L., Ibid., pp.73-74.

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"In sum, the EU Treaties assign very few formal powers of oversight or means of consultation to the EP over the details of foreign policy as conducted by the Council."[70] Yet in practice, the EP is much more influential than its formal powers would suggest, for instance through the inter-institutional agreements (IIAs), which are non-legal arrangements that spell out procedures and details of cooperation among the EU's institutional actors. The way how the EP managed to ensure that all the financial instruments be dealt with as a coherent package is an example of how the EP increased its influence and oversight.

In addition to the institutional role to exert parliamentary control over the EU's CFSP actors, the EP assumes an international role by engaging directly with the outside world through parliamentary diplomacy. This component of the EP's role-conception in foreign policy is one of a normative policy actor, which engages directly with third parties. The EP's participation in international election monitoring missions is part of this role.

AFET regularly invites to its meetings speakers which are external to the EU, many from the Candidate Countries. These meetings, held in public, offer the chance to air criticism on a country's policies, as well as debate how cooperation could be strengthened. An MEP such a Ms. Doris Pack, chairperson of the Delegation for Relations with South East Europe in the 2004-2009 EP mandate, was known for her outspoken opinions on the Candidate Countries.

At meetings among fellow politicians, "parliamentary behaviour is often a topic of discussion. For example, MEPs tend to harshly criticize any political party that boycotts its legislature in order to take its politics out into the street. As an illustration, at the fifth Inter-parliamentary Meeting with Serbia in Brussels in April 2011, the EP strongly condemned the hunger strike by opposition leader Tomislav Nikolic and urged his party to return from the streets to democratic politics within proper institutions. Such statements, which in a traditional intergovernmental setting would be considered interference in domestic affairs, set parliamentary diplomacy apart from other types of EU foreign policy performance."[71]

"In the case of Kosovo, the EP played the role of seeking to influence the other CFSP actors to adopt its policy preference of recognizing Kosovo's 2008 Declaration of Independence."[72] In a resolution adopted in 2012, the EP urges the five EU Member States [Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Slovakia and Spain] that have yet to recognize Kosovo's independence to do so.[73] "While the Council requires unanimity for CFSP decisions, parliamentary resolutions only need a simple majority of members to vote in favour. So even though some MEPs may not have shared the majority view, once a vote was held, the European Parliament could legitimately portray itself as an explicit supporter of Kosovo's independence."[74]

Due to the EP's parliamentary diplomacy role, foreign MPs visiting Brussels are eager to meet with various political groups in the EP, with the AFET chairperson and members, and to participate in the Joint Parliamentary Committee or any other inter-parliamentary structure with the EP (as described in the next section).

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[70] Redei, L., Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[71] Redei, L., Ibid., pp. 70-71. More info at this web-link http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/nl/news-room/content/20110419IPR18212/html/EP-Serbia-Meeting-calls-on-Tomislav-Nikoli%C4%87-to-end-his-hunger-strike

[72] Redei, L., Ibid., p. 4.

[73] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20120329IPR42140/html/MEPs-welcome-progress-of-Serbia-Kosovo-and-Montenegro-towards-joining-the-EU

[74] Redei, L., Ibid., p. 123.

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Because the EP is as active around the world within the EU institutional framework, the following sections will analyze the EP structures for interaction with parliaments of the Western Balkans.

5.1.2. Delegations with Western Balkans Parliaments

One of the main institutionalized platforms of interaction between the EP and the parliaments of the Western Balkans (and which are not yet EU member states) are the Delegations of the EP. Delegations maintain and develop the EP's international contacts with parliaments of states that are partners of the EU and contribute to promoting in third countries the values on which the EU is founded. They are composed of MEPs from all political groups, in proportion to their size in the EP.

Since 1994, there existed the Delegation for Relations with South-East Europe (D-SEE).[75] Since the European elections of 2004, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were "separated" from the D-SEE and country dedicated Delegations were created for each country. During the 2009-2014 EP mandate, there was a Delegation for Relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo; and a Delegation for Relations with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As far as Kosovo is concerned, in 2002 the EP decided to initiate informal inter-parliamentary relations. Official relations with the Assembly of Kosovo started in May 2008, following Kosovo's Declaration of Independence on 17 February 2008.

Between the European elections of 2009 and 2014, the D-SEE held 32 inter-parliamentary meetings. These two-day long meetings took place once in workplaces of the EP (Brussels or Strasbourg) and once in a partner country.

In the 2014 newly elected EP, the following Delegations have been created[76]:

- Delegation for Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

- Delegation to the EU-Albania Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC)

- Delegation to the EU-Montenegro Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC)

- Delegation to the EU-Serbia Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC)

- Delegation to the EU-former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)

The inter-parliamentary relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have an annual cycle (one meeting a year) and are based on voluntary decisions, awaiting the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs). The relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have a status of Inter-parliamentary Meetings (IPM).

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[75] The Delegation for Relations with South-East Europe is the "successor" to the Delegation for relations with the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which had been functioning since 1981, then renamed Delegation for Relations with the Republics of former Yugoslavia. It has been responsible for inter-parliamentary relations with five countries in South-East Europe, i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (then, State Union of Serbia-Montenegro and today: Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Albania was included in a three-country delegation with Romania and Bulgaria between 1991 and 1994, when it became part of the Delegation for Relations with South-East Europe.

[76] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/nl/dsee/home.html

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The relations with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia have been upgraded (from IPM status) in 2010 and in 2013 following the entry into force of the relevant SAAs. Consequently, MEPs and Parliamentarians from Albania, Montenegro and Serbia meet twice a year in separate Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees (SAPC) – identical as Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPC) which exist for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

In these meetings, the national MPs and the MEPs discuss issues addressed in the EC's Progress Reports and EP resolutions. Sometimes, there is fierce debate on the draft Joint Statement. For instance, in 2011 MPs from Serbia tried to water down the EP demand for a thorough revision of the Criminal Code or to revise the wording of the EP concerns on cancelling the Pride in Belgrade. In 2013, MPs from the ruling party and the opposition from Albania could not agree on a common approach and no Joint Statement with the EP was adopted. However, most of the time a Joint Statement is agreed between the MEPs and the national MPs of the applicant or Candidate Countries. "Because the national parliaments know that they need to earn the EPs' approval to join the EU, the Joint Statements adopted at the end of the meetings read like a to-do list for the applicant or Candidate Country."[77] The SAPC or IPM meetings are also, in a way, 'educational endeavours'; this is an attempt by the EP to 'socialize' the MPs from the Western Balkans into a European style of parliamentary politics.[78] In most countries concerned, IPM or SAPC meetings are high profile events which attract a lot of public and press attention.

The annual EP resolutions about the applicant and Candidate Countries are based upon the annual EC Progress reports and prepared by the EP rapporteur for the specific country. The EP rapporteur follows closely political developments through in-country visits and meetings in Brussels or Strasbourg. At the time when the EP resolution on a country is considered, the embassies of the respective countries can be quite active in meetings with the rapporteur and members of AFET.

5.1.3. Inter-parliamentary Committee Meetings; Joint Committee Meetings; Joint Parliamentary Meetings

The EP and the parliaments of the Candidate Countries interact with each other additionally through the institutionalized meetings of the EP with the national parliaments of EU member states, to which the Candidate Countries are invited as observers. There are three such meetings, with a similar but slightly different name: Inter-parliamentary Committee Meetings; Joint Committee Meetings; Joint Parliamentary Meetings.

1. Inter-parliamentary Committee Meetings[79]

Many EP Committees organise meetings with Parliaments of Member States on concrete issues or specific draft EU legislation (e.g. reform of the EU's agricultural policy). Meetings which are organised under the sole responsibility of the EP committees are referred to as Inter-parliamentary Committee Meetings (ICM). Every committee can decide on the degree of cooperation with national parliaments

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[77] Redei, L., Ibid., p. 97-98.

[78] Observations from email correspondence with Dr. Lorinc Redei, October 2014.

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http://www.europarl.europa.eu/webnp/cms/pid/11;jsessionid=708D2FD7587FB2D5ACBB066B1BBB45FE

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in the preparation of these meetings. In addition, the EP committees may invite their counterparts from national parliaments to workshops, hearings or debates during one of their regular committee meetings. All of these meetings are organised by the Secretariat of the competent EP committee with the support of the Directorate for Relations with national parliaments.

Candidate Countries are invited as observers. For example, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the EP organized an ICM on preventing violence against women on 5 March 2014. This ICM saw the participation, on the basis of observer status, of Turkey and Montenegro.

2. Joint Committee Meetings

Joint Committee Meetings (JCMs) are organised jointly by the EP and the national parliament of the country holding the rotating Council Presidency. JCMs bring together MPs and MEPs from corresponding committees to discuss matters of common concern. Hosted by the EP in Brussels, these meetings are co-chaired by the Chairpersons of the organising committees in the EP and the Presidency Parliament. They are based on the principle of partnership. The choice of topics, speakers and agenda are all agreed upon by the EP together with the co-organising national parliament.

JCMs organised in previous years have dealt with energy supply, the Single Market, education and culture, the future of European agriculture and development cooperation. One of the most recent JCMs "Future Priorities in the Field of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs" took place on 19 March 2014 in Brussels. The event was organised within the framework of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Hellenic Presidency of the Council of the EU by the EP Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the Committee on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice of the Hellenic Parliament. This JCM saw the participation, on the basis of observer status, of Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo.

3. Joint Parliamentary Meetings

Joint Parliamentary Meetings (JPM) are organised jointly by the EP and the national parliament of the country holding the rotating Council Presidency. Hosted by the EP in Brussels, these meetings are co-chaired by the Presidents of the EP and the Presidency Parliament. They do not aim to arrive at common conclusions but rather at improving parliamentary awareness of the need for oversight and control over decisions taken at EU level. They also seek to reinforce the links between MPs belonging to the same political families. JPMs deal with cross-cutting issues, such as the future of Europe, the economic crisis or sustainable development. The meeting format is especially suited for broader, more general discussions and requires complex and long preparations.

Within the JPM framework two meetings on the Western Balkans took place: in May 2008 during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council and in April 2011 during the Hungarian Presidency of the Council.[80]

The most recent JPM took place in December 2011 during the Polish Presidency. No JPM took place since. This reflects a general trend in inter-parliamentary cooperation to bring together specialised MPs to discuss specific issues. As part of the general "toolbox" of inter-parliamentary cooperation this meeting format could probably still be used again to address overarching topics, if need be.

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[80] This meeting should not be confused with the Hungarian Parliament initiative to regularly convene the Conference of Speakers of Western Balkan countries. The sixth Conference of Speakers of Western Balkan countries was held on 8 October 2013 in Budapest. More information: http://www.sabor.hr/leko-croatias-eu-entry-helped-break-the-ice-for-ot

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5.1.4. National Parliament Representatives to the European Parliament

The EP provides office space for National Parliament Representatives to the EP, while in its work the National Parliament Representative is fully independent from the EP and responsible (only) to its national parliament. A major task of each National Parliament Representative is to follow the procedure of a legislative proposal from its early stages, both at the Council (in cooperation with the Permanent Representation) and at the EP level; and to be part of the exchange of views between National Parliament Representatives on legislative topics and on all EU internal decision-making procedures, for instance the early warning mechanism on legislative proposals.

The question has been raised as to whether it is useful for a Candidate Country to send a representative of its national parliament to Brussels; and if so, at what moment in time and what could be his/her task.

The experience of Croatia, as the most recent accession country, is a useful point of reference. As a Candidate Country, the Croatian Mission to the EU included two diplomats who were in charge of following the work of the EP. Their main focus was on the AFET, dealing with questions of enlargement, and sometimes also on other committees for particular policy issues. Diplomats in charge of following the work of the EP had the following tasks:

- Follow the debates on enlargement and any other EP debate relevant to own country
- Contact the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs
- Contact the EP Secretariat
- Facilitate a more favourable opinion on the Candidate Country when debating EP resolutions
- Support meetings of Joint Parliamentary Committee EP - National Parliament
- Provide information to MEPs on the Candidate Country
- Follow general debates in the plenary session
- Organize visits of high officials of candidate country to EP and MEPs to own country
- Input to meetings of ambassadors in relation to EP

When its Accession Treaty was signed in December 2011, Croatia became an observer at the Council meetings and thus got access to the information from the EU's internal decision-making procedures. Once the Accession Treaty was signed, the Sabor was entitled to nominate its Permanent Representative to the EP (the so-called *liaison officer*). Croatia's *liaison officer* to the EP assumed its post in February 2013, and was immediately integrated to full extent into the informal network of National Parliament Representatives to the EP; and then also contributed to Croatia's lobby efforts for ratification of the Treaty among all EU member states.

While it could be problematic and potentially a conflict of interest for Candidate Countries, prior to signing the Accession Treaty, to be present at the informal meetings of the National Parliament Representatives, for instance when enlargement issues are discussed, it can be very useful for Candidate Countries to have a parliamentary liaison person in Brussels. Currently, some of the Missions to the EU of the Candidate Countries include a (junior) diplomat who follows developments in the EP on a part-time basis.

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For Candidate Countries, it can be useful to have someone in Brussels from the national parliament, in particular during the final phase of the EU accession negotiations, at which time the position of Parliamentary Liaison Officer becomes a full-time occupation.

Since it involves a lot of hands-on work, it is advisable to assign the task to a middle level parliamentary official, rather than to a very senior person.

5.1.5. EP's Pre-Accession Actions Unit (PAAU)

Within the EP Directorate for Democracy Support, the Pre-Accession Actions Unit works with parliaments of the WB and Turkey and provides technical assistance to strengthen the principal functions of parliaments; parliamentary organisation; administrative and institutional reform; understanding EU Acquis, EU policies and procedures; sharing of best practice. The PAAU has developed these activities:

- *Parliamentary Seminars*: Several seminars on issue-specific topics are organised by PAAU for MPs and staff of parliaments of enlargement countries, with active participation of MEPs, aimed at strengthening the parliamentary dimension of the region. Most seminars and conferences are organised jointly with parliaments of the region and in cooperation with the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE or other partners like the UK Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), which assists the Network of Parliamentary Committees for Economy Finance and European integration of the Western Balkans. One of the most recent seminars took place from 30 March - 1 April 2014 in Sofia on "the Role of Parliaments in the accession negotiations process including the scrutiny of pre-accession programmes". The topics of the seminars are based upon suggestions of the national parliaments of the region and approved by the EP's Democracy Support and Elections Coordination Group. The Group is co-chaired by the chair of AFET and chair of DEVE Committees.

- *Conferences*: Target MPs of the enlargement parliaments but they are also open to the public and involve the participation of civil society and are broadly covered by the media.

- *Workshops*: At the request of a regional parliament, bilateral information seminars/workshops for the members and staff of that parliament are organised in the region or in Brussels. This format provides more focused discussions covering parliament-specific topics with MPs from one country which may not be relevant to another parliament in the region.

- *Pre-Accession Fellowship Programme*: This programme, launched in 2013, aims at reinforcing the expertise and capacity of the parliaments of the Western Balkans and Turkey by providing fellowships of 4-6 weeks to staff of these parliaments at a relevant service of the EP. The Programme's purpose is to allow the fellows to become acquainted with the work of the EP and facilitate the sharing of the EP's best practice and experience with the parliaments concerned to help reinforce their administrative capacities on the way towards European integration.

- *Study Visits*: Study and exchange visits of MPs/staff of enlargement parliaments to Brussels, tailored to the needs of each Parliament, are organised each year upon request of the national parliaments, provided the financial and human resources are available.

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All Pre-Accession activities, except for the Pre-Accession Fellowship Programme, focus on members of the national parliaments of the Western Balkans and Turkey. In addition to the Members of the EP, other relevant stakeholders from the European Institutions, Council of Europe and international organisations participate in PAAU activities as experts and guest speakers.

Themes of PAAU activities are chosen in close consultation with the parliaments of the region and are in line with EP priorities. Every year, a meeting of national coordinators, officials of respective parliaments evaluate the EP support programme and discuss possible subjects for future activities.

Feedback from beneficiary parliaments to the EP support program has been very positive. The EP's decision to include Turkey in the program has added value as Turkish MPs and staff members actively participated in all PAAU activities in 2013 and 2014.

The support program has contribute towards strengthening the parliamentary democracy of the region by creating intra-regional platforms for interaction and information exchange between the EP and national parliaments as well as increasing the administrative capacities of these parliaments.

5.2. National parliaments of EU Member States and Western Balkans and Turkey

Following the analysis of the different formats and structures through which the EP interacts with the parliaments of the Western Balkans, this section will analyze through which formats and structures the national parliaments of the EU member states interact with the parliaments of the Western Balkans and Turkey. Most of these formats go through the institutionalized cooperation platforms between national parliaments of EU Member States, to which Candidate Countries are invited as observer.

5.2.1. Strengthened role of national parliaments, post-Lisbon

The national parliaments of the EU member states have a very substantial and growing role in the European policy making cycle.[81] The role includes, firstly, to provide ministers and national governments with prior guidance on their work within the Council and the European Council, in accordance with their national constitutional framework; secondly, to scrutinise the stances taken by ministers and national governments within the Council and the European Council, in accordance with their national constitutional framework; and, thirdly, to play an effective role in providing guidance on and scrutinising the implementation of directives and regulations.

Since the introduction of the Treaty of Lisbon, the role of the national parliaments of EU Member States has been strengthened, as reflected by the initiatives of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, namely parliaments' participation in aspects of the Presidency held by member states.[82] In addition to the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs

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[81] Winzen, T., National parliamentary control of European Union affairs: a cross-national and longitudinal comparison, *West European Politics* 35 (3), 2012, p. 657-672.

[82] Karlas, Jan., National Parliamentary Control of EU Affairs: Institutional Design after Enlargement, in: *West European Politics, 2012,* 35 (5), p. 1095-1113.

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(COSAC) and the EU Speakers' Conference, there is also the Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the inter-parliamentary thematic committee meetings.[83] In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon has introduced a novel practice of trio presidencies, namely groupings of three member states holding in turn the Presidency of the Council, each for one semester, over a period of 18 months, on the basis of a common program.[84]

In April 2014, the EP adopted a resolution[85] on the relations between the European Parliament and the national parliaments (2013/2185(INI)).[86] It mentions that the aim of EU inter-parliamentary cooperation is "*to foster the exchange of information and best practice between the national parliaments and the European Parliament, with a view to enabling all of them to exercise more effective scrutiny and contribute more fully, without undermining their respective competences; that a key function of such meetings is to allow the national parliaments to take account of the European perspective in national debates, and the European Parliament to take account of the national perspective in European debates*." As the EP noted itself, it is clear that the European inter-parliamentary system is still taking shape, so the EP felt obliged to "*reiterate that EU inter-parliamentary cooperation does not take the place of the normal parliamentary scrutiny exercised by the European Parliament*".

On the other hand, the EP welcomed the fact that, since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the cooperation between the national parliaments and the EP has intensified, in particular as regards the planning of inter-parliamentary committee meetings, the increase in the number of such meetings, the forwarding to members of the national parliaments and relevant political bodies of national parliament submissions (reasoned opinions and contributions), the introduction of video-conferences, the promotion of bilateral visits, technical improvements to the Inter-Parliamentary EU information eXchange (IPEX), the increase in the number of collaborative projects carried out under the aegis of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), visits by administrative officials and the exchange of information and of best practice.

In this section of the Study, we will briefly describe the institutionalized cooperation platforms between the national parliaments of the EU member states and the EP, to which Candidate Countries are invited as observers.

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[83] Further info at OPAL, Observatory of Parliaments after the Lisbon Treaty: the http://www.opal-europe.org/

[84] Winzen, Thomas; Roederer-Rynning, Christilla & Schimmelfennig, Frank, Parliamentary co-evolution: national parliamentary reactions to the empowerment of the European Parliament, in: Journal of European Public Policy, 2014, 21 p.

[85] The resolution was prepared by Mr. Carlo Casini, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament, rapporteur of the E.P. on relations between the European Parliament and National parliaments. The draft text was discussed at the COSAC Chairpersons meeting in Athens in January 2014.

[86] http://great-nephew4.rssing.com/browser.php?indx=3666141&item=7716

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5.2.2. Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC)[87]

The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) brings together the EU Affairs Committees of national parliaments, as well as Members of the EP.

COSAC plenary meetings take place twice a year. Each national parliament is represented by six Members. Each plenary meeting is prepared by a meeting of the EU Affairs Committee Chairpersons. The EP delegation to COSAC is co-chaired by one of the Vice-President responsible for relations with national parliaments and the Chair of the EP Committee on Constitutional Affairs. COSAC meetings usually take place in the capital of the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU.[88]

According to the Treaty of Lisbon, Protocol 1 on the Role of National Parliaments in the EU, COSAC may submit any contribution it deems appropriate for the attention of the EP, the Council and the Commission. COSAC in addition promotes the exchange of information and best practice between national parliaments and the EP. Contributions from the Conference do not bind national parliaments and do not prejudge their positions.

One of the primary issues of attention for COSAC is that of procedures and practices of scrutiny of European Union matters in the national parliaments. COSAC has looked at the procedures and practices in detail on several occasions, and developed a set of reports.[89] However, whilst inter-parliamentary cooperation has been blossoming in importance and a number of significant fora have been created in recent years, COSAC internal papers argue that COSAC had not evolved significantly during this time, in particular to look beyond procedures and also focus on EU-policies. Therefore, following the celebration of the 50th meeting of COSAC in October 2013, a report on the future of COSAC was prepared and then adopted by the national parliaments.[90] It reviewed where COSAC has been successful in the past, highlighted repeatable best practice, and provided an evaluation of a number of tools currently used by COSAC to stimulate exchange between national parliaments and with the EP. It discussed proposals on how the relationship between national parliaments and the EP could be further strengthened. It further analyses the need to update the Lisbon guidelines for inter-parliamentary cooperation and how COSAC may provide a useful input to future EU Speakers' Conferences.

In January 2014, the inaugural Meeting of the Chairpersons of the EU Affairs Committees of the Parliaments of the South with the participation of Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia was held in Nicosia. "COSAC South" has been created because of the ongoing financial crisis and its impact on the member states of the EU South. The objective is to convene the meeting twice a year, preceding each COSAC Chairpersons' Meeting.

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[87] http://www.cosac.eu/

[88] COSAC was established in May 1989 at a meeting in Madrid, where the Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU Member States agreed to strengthen the role of national parliaments in relation to Community matters by bringing together their Committees on European Affairs. The first meeting of COSAC took place on 16-17 November 1989 in Paris. COSAC was formally recognised in a Protocol on the Role of National parliaments in the European Union of the Treaty of Amsterdam which entered into force on 1 May 1999.

[89] http://www.cosac.eu/relevant-bi-annual-reports/2012/6/25/cosac-bi-annual-reports-on-the-scrutiny-of-eu-matters-in-nat.html

[90] http://www.cosac.eu/51-greece-2014/plenary-meeting-of-the-li-cosac-15-17-june-2014/

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According to COSAP RoP 3.2, the national parliaments of the EU Candidate Countries are invited to participate in COSAC plenary meetings with three observers each, and in the COSAC Chairpersons meeting with a maximum of two observers. In recent years, the Candidate Countries have participated in almost all COSAC meetings (see overview chart 6, further in this text). COSAP RoP 3.3. foresees the possibility to invite other national parliaments as special guests. So far, this provision was applied to enable the participation of Norway, but it has not yet been used to invite the potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. After Albania's acceptance as Candidate Country, only Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are left out from COSAC meetings.

The June 2013 plenary COSAC meeting extensively discussed EU enlargement issues, with the participation of the Acceding Country Croatia, and the Candidate Countries Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The review of the minutes of COSAC meetings and the preceding correspondence over the last two years indicate that the information from the Western Balkans COSAP meetings is not available in a systematic way to all COSAC delegates.[91]

With a view to strengthening the link between COSAC and COSAP, consideration can be given to the idea that the COSAC/COSAP representatives from the Western Balkans Candidate Countries hold a half-day meeting prior to COSAC meetings. The Western Balkans Candidate Countries can discuss and adopt a short statement relevant to the agenda of COSAC and informally distribute it to COSAC. Secondly, following the COSAC meeting, the regular COSAP meeting can be organized, bringing together the Candidate Countries and the potential candidates. The COSAP meeting can then review the outcomes of the COSAC meeting and discuss other COSAP issues under the regular COSAP chairmanship. This proposal requires that COSAP aligns the venue and timing of its meetings with COSAC. It is advisable that the final declaration adopted at COSAP meetings be distributed to all COSAC participants by the rotating COSAC chairmanship as part of the regular correspondence prior to COSAC meetings.

5.2.3. EU Speakers' Conference

This Conference brings together Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU member states and the President of the EP. Speakers of Parliaments of Candidate Countries are invited to participate as observers. In recent years, the Candidate Countries have participated in almost all Speakers Conferences.

The Conference meets each Spring in the country that held the Council Presidency during the second semester of the previous year. The Conference is preceded by a preparatory meeting of the Secretaries General of the participating national parliaments.[92] The EU Speakers' Conference has its own Rules of Procedure, known as Stockholm Guidelines.[93]

The EU Speakers Conference is the body which de facto assumes the leading role in inter-parliamentary relations.[94] Its purpose is to exchange opinions, information

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[91] Western Balkans COSAP is the Conference of the Committees for European Integration / Affairs of Parliaments participating in the Stabilization and Association Process.

[92]

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/webnp/cms/pid/8;jsessionid=485797AD50CF615C4EE005EAE5CB1686

[93] http://www.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/euspeakers/getspeakers.do?type=1

[94] Article 9 of Protocol (No 1) on the Role of National parliaments in the European Union of the Treaty of Lisbon reads "[t]he European Parliament and national parliaments [...]

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and experiences on topics related to the role of parliaments and the organisation of parliamentary functions. The Conference also aims to promote research activities and common action with respect to the forms and instruments of inter-parliamentary cooperation.

In April 2012, in Warsaw, the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments decided to establish the Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. In April 2013 in Nicosia, the Conference adopted the framework for the new Inter-parliamentary Conference.

5.2.4. Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy

The Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was established in the spirit of the strengthened role of national parliaments of the EU Member States and the EP.[95] The Inter-parliamentary Conference is composed of delegations of national parliaments of the EU member states and the EP. National parliaments are represented by six members each. The EP is represented by sixteen members. National parliaments of EU Candidate Countries and European member countries of NATO can be represented by a delegation composed of four observers.

The Inter-parliamentary Conference convenes once every six months in the country of the Presidency Parliament or in the EP in Brussels.[96] It is presided over by the Presidency Parliament, in close cooperation with the EP.[97]

As indicated in the overview chart 6 on the following pages, the Candidate Countries have a good attendance rate at the meetings of the Inter-parliamentary Conference. During the last 2 years (1 July 2012 - 30 June 2014), four meetings were held (in Pafos, Dublin, Vilnius and Athens). Montenegro attended all of them, followed by Serbia and Turkey attending three meetings and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia attending one meeting.

5.2.5. Inter-parliamentary Conference on Economic Governance

Based on Article 13 of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG) and following the inaugural Conference in Vilnius in October 2013, this Conference is aimed at further developing the cooperation of the Parliaments of the EU in relation to matters covered under the TSCG.

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together determine the organisation and promotion of effective and regular inter-parliamentary cooperation within the Union".

[95] Stavridis, S., The new Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the CFSP/CSDP, in: *The Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series,* Vol. 14 No. 12, July 2014 , 22 p.

[96] The most recent meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Conference in Athens in April 2014 adopted a final declaration expressing the views of the participating parliaments on foreign policy and security issues related to the developments in Ukraine, Syria and Egypt as well as developments on the European Council on Defence, EU Comprehensive Approach to external conflicts and crises, EU Maritime Security Strategy, CSDP in Africa, the role of parliaments and the deployment of civilian and military forces under CSDP, and Cyprus.

[97] The Conference's Rules of Procedure can be found at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/webnp/cms/pid/1932

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During its first meeting in 2013, the Conference talked about the after-crisis economic governance structure in the EU; bank unions and integration of the financial sectors in the EU; achievements and outlooks for budget consolidation and structural reforms in Europe. The second meeting in early 2014 addressed various topics such as, among others, addressing macro-economic imbalances in Europe, the democratic legitimacy of economic adjustment programs, financing the real economy and priorities for the next round of the «European Semester» process.

The Inter-parliamentary Conference is co-organised and co-presided by the national parliament holding the EU Presidency and the EP. It is organized within the framework of the EP Week, which also includes discussions on the European Semester, and various (related) inter-parliamentary committee meetings on Economic and Monetary Affairs, Employment and Social Affairs, and Budget.

The inaugural meeting of the inter-parliamentary conference saw the participation of Montenegro and Serbia. None of the Candidate Countries was invited / present at the second meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Conference.

Though these two Inter-parliamentary Conferences have just been established and are still in the process of consolidation, it is worth noting the remark of the EP in its resolution from April 2014. It is said: "*whereas following the establishment of the Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and of the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Economic Governance, as well as the consolidation of the role of inter-parliamentary committee meetings as the preferred channel for cooperation, COSAC should remain the forum for a regular exchange of views, information and best practice regarding the practical aspects of parliamentary scrutiny.*"

5.2.6. Countries' participation in activities of the parliamentary dimension of Council Presidency

In order to develop a more precise understanding of the role of the parliamentary dimension of the Council Presidency for the Candidate Countries, this section analyzes the participation in the activities of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Council Presidency by EU member states and Candidate Countries. The time period of this review is two years, which means the last four Council presidencies: Cyprus (second half 2012), Ireland (first half 2013), Lithuania (second half 2013) and Greece (first half 2014). The relevant information has been included in the Overview Chart 6 on the next pages.

The total number of activities under the parliamentary dimension of the six-months Council Presidency varies between seven (Greek presidency) to twelve (Lithuanian presidency). The participation of EU member states to the different events varies as well, between 13 member states to all 27/28 member states.

The meetings of COSAC, the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on CFSP and CSDP and the EU Speakers' Conference attract (almost) full participation by all member states. They are clearly seen as the most important in terms of political relevance and required presence.

The meeting of chairpersons of various committees is an important part of the agenda of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Council Presidency; and different Presidencies give priority to different thematic committee meetings. Almost all meetings are organized in cooperation with or with the participation of the EP. While almost all meetings take place in the country holding the Presidency, the last

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two Presidencies saw one or two meetings taking place in Brussels, co-chaired by the EP and the national parliament of the country holding the Presidency.

Over the period of the four consecutive Presidencies, a number of interesting observations can be made about the participation, as observer, of the four countries which were Candidate Countries during that time: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Croatia was an acceding country during the Cyprus and Irish Presidency before formally joining the EU at the beginning of the Lithuanian Presidency. Albania became a Candidate Country mid 2014, which is just after the two-year review period. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are not included in this review, as they are considered potential EU Candidate Countries, and are not invited as observers to these meetings.

Analyzing the participation of the four Candidate Countries, Montenegro has demonstrated the strongest commitment to joining the EU meetings, as it was part of 25 of the 37 meetings to which it was invited. In essence, three Candidate Countries have participated at almost the same rate: Montenegro (25 meetings), Serbia (21 meetings) and Turkey (23 meetings).

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has participated in only 8 out of 37 meetings. This is one out of four meetings to which it was invited. While the other three Candidate Countries seem capable of and prepared to invest a substantial amount of time and resources in joining these meetings, that does not seem possible for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which mostly concentrated on COSAC presence and the EU Speakers' Conference. The low participation of Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the Council Presidency activities seems to be one of the unfortunate consequences of the political crisis which followed events in the Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in December 2012, which exposed deep divisions among political parties and which still affects the political climate and the functioning of the Parliament.

Turkey participated in most of the meetings organized by the Presidencies of Ireland, Lithuania and Greece; but did not attend any meeting organized by the Presidency of Cyprus.

One Joint Committee Meeting during the Lithuanian and the Greek Presidency had the participation of Albania. The Joint Committee Meeting on Justice and Home Affairs during the Greek Presidency and hosted by the EP in Brussels had the participation of Kosovo as well.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Croatia participated in (almost) all meetings organized by the Cyprus and Irish Presidencies, in the year prior to its formal accession to the EU.

5.2.7. The European Centre for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD)

Since it was first established at the request of the Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies in 1977, the European Centre for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD) has been a useful tool for inter-parliamentary cooperation and information exchange. Comparative surveys launched by the national correspondents and seminars on particular topics offer all those involved the chance to learn from each other and receive information about parliamentary practices and legislative policies in other countries.

The ECPRDs members are the EP, PACE and the parliamentary chambers where the President is a member of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament.

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It thus includes the parliaments of all Candidate Countries and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina. They all have a national correspondent from among parliament staff. The potential candidate Kosovo is not part of ECPRD.

ECPRD is chaired jointly by the EP and the PACE. Its Secretariat is hosted by the EP Directorate of the European Parliament for Relations with National Parliaments.

One of the recent ECPRD seminars was dedicated to the issue of "Structures and Procedures with regard to the Code of Conduct for MPs and with regard to the Integrity of Parliamentary Staff" and took place on 8-9 May 2014 in Skopje. The Parliament of Montenegro is hosting the next ECPRD seminar about "The e-Parliament in action:

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Chart 6: Countries' participation in activities of the Parliamentary Dimension of the rotating Council Presidency

Event / meeting	Date	Place	No. EU MS	Acceding c. Croatia	EU Candidate Countries The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
2012/2: Cyprus Presidency of the Council								
1. Conference of the COSAC Chairpersons	July, 8-9	Limassol	26	X	X	X		
2. Inter-Parliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP	Sept, 9-10	Pafos	26	X		X	X	
3. Conference Justice Home Affairs Committee Chairs	Sept 23-24	Nicosia	19	X		X		
4. COSAC Plenary (48th)	Oct 14-16	Nicosia	27		X		X	
5. Chairpersons of the Committees of Agriculture	Nov 11-12	Nicosia	25	X			X	
6. Chairpersons of the Committees on Finance	Nov 25-27	Nicosia	22	X				
7. Chairpersons of the Committees on Human Rights	Dec 2-3	Nicosia	13	X				
8. Chairpersons of the Committees on Social Affairs	Dec 16-17	Nicosia	18	X			X	
9. Meeting of the Secretaries General	Febr 10-11	Nicosia	25	X		X	X	
10. EU Speakers' Conference	Apr 21-23	Nicosia	27	X	X	X	X	
Sub-total during Presidency Cyprus	*10 meetings*			*9*	*3*	*5*	*6*	*0*
2013/1: Ireland Presidency of the Council								
1. COSAC Chairpersons' Conference	Jan 27-28	Dublin	27	X	X	X	X	X
2. Chairpersons of Finance Committees	Febr 24-25	Dublin	27	X		X	X	X
3. Chairpersons' Agriculture & Fisheries Committees	Mar 10-11	Dublin	27	X		X		X
4. Inter-Parliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP	Mar 24-25	Dublin	25	X		X	X	X
5. Chairpersons of Employment, Enterprise, Innovation	Apr 28-29	Dublin	25	X		X	X	X
6. Chairpersons' Environment & Energy Committees	May 12-13	Dublin	22	X		X	X	X
7. Chairpersons' Communications, Education, Transport	June 16-17	Dublin	19	X		X		X
8. COSAC Plenary (49th)	June 23-25	Dublin	26	X		X	X	X
Sub-total during Presidency Ireland	*8 meetings*			*8*	*1*	*8*	*6*	*8*

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2013/2: Lithuania Presidency of the Council									
1.	COSAC Chairpersons' Conference	July 7-8	Vilnius	28		X	X		X
2.	Chairpersons of the Committees on Rural Affairs	July 21-22	Vilnius	23					X
3.	Inter-Parliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP	Sept 4-6	Vilnius	28		X	X	X	X
4.	Chairpersons Education, Science and Culture	Sept 26-27	Vilnius	14				X	X
5.	Interparl. Conference on Economic Governance	Oct 16-17	Vilnius	26			X	X	
6.	COSAC Plenary (50th)	Oct 27-29	Vilnius	28			X	X	X
7.	Chairpersons Committees Social Affairs & Labour	Nov 10-11	Vilnius	21				X	
8.	Chairpersons of Committees on Environment	Nov 24-25	Vilnius	19			X	X	X
9.	Chairpersons of the Committees on Foreign Affairs	Nov 27-28	Vilnius	19		X	X		X
10.	Joint Committee Mtg on EU Internal Energy Market	Dec, 17	Brussels	15					X
11.	Meeting of Secretaries General	Jan 26-27	Vilnius	24					
12.	Conference of Speakers	Aprl 6-8	Vilnius	27			X		X
	Sub-total during Presidency Lithuania	*12 meetings*				*3*	*7*	*6*	*9*
2014/2: Greece Presidency of the Council									
1.	Interparl. Conference on Economic Governance	Jan 20-22	Brussels	27					
2.	COSAC Chairpersons' Conference	Jan 26-27	Athens	28		X	X	X	X
3.	Chairpersons' Committees Justice & Home Affairs	Feb 16-17	Athens	22				X	X
4.	Chairpersons' Production, Trade & Maritime Affairs	Mar 16-17	Athens	21			X		X
5.	Joint Meeting Committees Justice & Home Affairs	March 19	Brussels	18			X		X
6.	Inter-Parliamentary Conference for CFSP and CSDP	Apr 3-4	Athens	24			X		X
7.	COSAC Plenary (51st)	June 15-17	Athens	27			X	X	X
	Sub-total during Presidency Greece	*7 meetings*				*1*	*5*	*3*	*6*
TOTALS 1 July 2012 - 30 June 2014		**37 meetings**	***			**8**	**25**	**21**	**23**
					Acceding c.	EU Candidate Countries			
					Croatia	The former Yugoslav Republic of	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey

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					Macedonia			

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best practices about ICT strategic planning, information security, mobility and cloud computing" on 06-07 November 2014 in Podgorica.

The Chart 7 as annexed to this Study foresees in an overview of the different ECPRD activities between January 2012 - July 2014 and the participation rate by parliaments of the Western Balkans and Turkey. A distinction has been made between participation in the event as such and the active contribution through a key-note speech or presentation. During this period, ECPRD organized 19 events. The participation rate is as follows: for Serbia (13), Turkey (12), Montenegro (10), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (9), Albania (7). Contributions through a key-note speech or presentation were provided as follows: Montenegro (3), Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) and Albania (0).

5.2.8. InterParliamentary EU information eXchange (IPEX)98

IPEX, the InterParliamentary EU information eXchange, is a platform for interparliamentary cooperation and exchange of information between EU national Parliaments and the EP. Especially, interparliamentary cooperation has grown in importance in the light of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon which envisages a stronger role for national parliament and especially in terms of scrutinizing the application of the subsidiarity principle.

The establishment of IPEX derives from a recommendation given by the EU Conference of Speakers in 2000. IPEX developed around a "Documents Database" which contains draft legislative proposals, consultation and information documents coming from the European Commission, national parliaments' documents and positions, as well as other information concerning the EU. The parliamentary documents are uploaded individually by each national Parliament, for which purpose IPEX has a EU-wise network of national IPEX Correspondents. IPEX is calculating and is offering at the same time the means for following the subsidiarity check deadlines.

IPEX also contains a Calendar of inter-parliamentary cooperation meetings and events in the EU and a section on national parliaments and the EP, providing links to relevant websites and databases in the field of inter-parliamentary cooperation, as well as specific procedures in EU Parliaments and is hosting the EU Speakers of Parliaments Conference website.

In 2011, the EU Conference of Speakers has endorsed the following priorities of IPEX:

- developing IPEX as a suitable and important platform for the exchange of EU-related information between the national parliaments;
- contributing to a strengthening of the national parliaments' right to receive information and participatory rights vis-à-vis their governments;
- making more frequent use of the EC's offer of political dialogue and establishing closer contacts between representatives of national parliaments and the EP and among IPEX correspondents;
- improving the transparency of parliamentary activities and making information available;

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[98] http://www.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/about/guidelines.do

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- making the data more up-to-date and reliable via the data transfer language xml;
- promoting IPEX to European citizens as a service providing information about inter-parliamentary action.

The EU Candidate Countries are part of the IPEX system, by default and following their status. In particular the IPEX calendar of inter-parliamentary cooperation meetings and events is relevant for the Candidate Countries. Access to the information is granted to the IPEX National Correspondent of the parliaments of the Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey have identified their IPEX National Correspondent. Albania and Serbia are in course of nominating or replacing their IPEX National Correspondent.

The IPEX National Correspondents are invited to the annual IPEX National Correspondents Meeting. The 2013 meeting was hosted by the Belgian parliament. There were 51 participants from 26 Member States and two Candidate Countries (Montenegro, Turkey). The 2014 meeting was hosted by the Lithuanian parliament, chairing the IPEX Board, and attended by one Candidate Country (Turkey).

5.3. What shapes the relationship of Western Balkans parliaments with the EU?

The relationship of the Western Balkans parliaments with the EP and the national parliaments of the EU member states is to a large extent determined by the progress of the country in its European integration process. The basic distinction falls between Candidate Countries and potential Candidate Countries, and between Candidate Countries which have opened specific chapters of the *acquis* and those which have not yet opened any chapter.

As noted above, the Candidate Countries (Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey) are included as observers in various European inter-parliamentary platforms, with the aim of increasing the detailed knowledge on European integration matters, but also to enhance the process of 'socialization' on what the European decision-making process entails and how the European policies are enacted. The potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo) are, to a large extent, left outside of any institutionalized interaction with the EP and national parliaments of member states.

The relationship of the Western Balkans parliaments with the EP and the national parliaments of the member states is also affected by the rapidly deepening European integration processes in the area of economic and fiscal policies, as is obvious from the "European semester" and the establishment of the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Economic Governance, based upon the TSCG.

The relationship of the Western Balkans national parliaments with the EP and the national parliaments of the EU member states is also determined by the post-Lisbon institutional context, in which not only the EP but also the national parliaments of the member states see their role increased. They are thus required to cooperate with each other more intensively, even though the European inter-parliamentary system is still taking shape and being fine-tuned along the way.

In this context, the need for national parliaments of Candidate Countries and potential candidates to prepare themselves for the accession period and their responsibility as a future member state becomes all the more important. For the parliamentary administrations, it means that there is need for a substantial group of qualified lawyers and technical experts who can participate in the EU legislative

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process, in particular the early warning system on the legislative proposals. National parliaments of member states are involved through the eight weeks time window to reflect and participate in the ordinary legislative procedure.

For the Candidate Countries, the participation as observers in various inter-parliamentary meetings and information exchange platforms provides an opportunity to make an in-depth assessment of current capacities of their own parliament and prepare a long-term planning of knowledge building in the parliament's administration. There is need for a functioning department of inter-parliamentary or international relations in each parliament of the Western Balkans.

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6 General Conclusions

In the region of the Western Balkans and South East Europe, there exists a complex network of inter-parliamentary cooperation, connecting national parliaments of EU member states, the European Parliament, parliaments of Candidate Countries and of potential candidates, Neighbourhood parliaments and beyond.

Inter-parliamentary Assemblies are an important part, yet the visible tip of the iceberg of parliamentary cooperation in the Western Balkans and South East Europe only. Underneath the inter-parliamentary cooperation through institutionalized Assemblies, there is a complex network of bi- and multi-lateral cooperation between parliaments and parliamentarians, conferences, working groups, parliamentary friendship groups and various Parliamentary Dimensions to inter-governmental cooperation structures.

In this Study, we have analyzed the initiatives which have a geographical focus on the Western Balkans or South East Europe, where the parliaments of the Western Balkans and South East Europe constitute a very significant portion of the membership, and/or which are considered most important by the parliaments of the Western Balkans. This Study brings together a comprehensive set of information on a set of 15 regional inter-parliamentary platforms; it proposes a conceptual framework to assess these platforms and applies it in a systematic way to each of them. Based upon this analysis, a number of trends across the various platforms have been identified, which result in a set of institutional recommendations.

This network of parliamentary cooperation contributes to enhance the role of parliaments and parliamentarians within a multi-level political society. It helps to identify best practices in order to learn appropriate ways for parliamentary bodies to improve their position within and beyond the nation state. In a context of democratically functioning national parliaments, the regional Parliamentary Assemblies and networks can contribute to the democratization of international governmental regimes. Although not being full parliamentary bodies, the Parliamentary Assemblies import several principles of parliamentary democracy into the realm of intergovernmental interaction. They provide for more

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transparency, more discussion, more accountability and more control of the decisions made in these organizations.[99]

In the region of the Western Balkans and South East Europe, regional initiatives were created to achieve specific political objectives relevant to the region, such as to enhance political reconciliation in a post-conflict context, to overcome political divides and encourage integration after the Cold War, to enrich and consolidate democratic norms and human rights standards, to enhance economic integration and to support countries in their European integration agenda. Regional parliamentary initiatives facilitate a process of 'socialization' with the EU institutional decision-making process by Candidate Countries.

However, as this Study has indicated, the role of parliamentary oversight over regional inter-governmental cooperation is an area on which exists least consensus among the countries which are member of international or regional institutions. An issue of debate seems to be how the IPIs are supposed to exert control or oversight. "One option is that the IPI has significant powers over the executive of the international organization (e.g. the EP). Another option is that the national parliaments come together to debate, but then each of them has to control their own executives (e.g. the NATO-PA). Finally, one can have international organizations that have parliamentary arms which meet for debate, but in the end, have control neither over the institution, nor much control over their own executives in the given policy area (the WTO Parliamentary Assembly comes to mind)."[100] In essence, it may be that IPIs are just an expression of the willingness of participating parliaments to stand up to their executives.[101]

As discussed in this Study, one can expect that the identifiable rules, composition, powers and status of IPIs have a big effect on their impact and importance. Yet, one thing to consider is that the IPIs' role may be as much informal as formal: they can act as a diplomatic back door channel between countries, or as a means to exert soft power and persuasion.[102] In terms of the formal institutionalization of IPIs, one of the key issues of importance is the type of Secretariat. "Since IPIs meet very infrequently and are not high on members' priority lists, the decisions, statements and agendas of such meetings are often determined by Secretariat staff."[103] If parliaments want to strengthen their influence through regional parliamentary cooperation, they will need to invest in a permanent Secretariat or in permanent parliamentary staff hosted at the Secretariat of the governmental dimension.

As time passes, a large number of regional cooperation initiatives has been created: each of them for specific objectives, against a specific historical background, upon the proposal of specific countries, with a Secretariat based in one country or another, with their own institutional mandate, organizational culture and RoP. As the number of inter-parliamentary cooperation platforms increases, so does the

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[99] Marschall, S., *European parliaments in transnational organizations: parliamentary cooperation beyond the European Union*, Paper prepared for the Conference 'Fifty years of Inter-parliamentary cooperation', 13 June 2007, Bundesrat, Berlin, organized by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 19 p.

[100] Observations from email correspondence with Dr. Lorinc Redei, October 2014.

[101] As Dr. Lorinc Redei observed, ACTA was rejected by the EP and some EU member state parliaments not because there was a WTO Parliamentary Assembly or a Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue that put this on the agenda, but because the parliaments individually dared to say no to their governments.

[102] Observations from email correspondence with Dr. Lorinc Redei, October 2014.

[103] Observations from email correspondence with Dr. Lorinc Redei, October 2014.

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demand on parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and parliaments as institutions to invest more resources in these initiatives. To address the risk of duplication and make the most rational use of the resources available, there is need to develop synergies in the composition, meeting schedule and planned outputs of the Committees attached to various Parliamentary Assemblies and Parliamentary Dimensions. Opportunities for better institutional synergies between a number of selected IPIs have been outlined in further detail in the recommendations section of this Study.

Many of the regional parliamentary cooperation platforms described in this Study contribute directly or indirectly to the European integration process. Candidate Countries, potential candidates and even Neighbourhood Countries benefit from the political discussions and the analysis shared among EU Member States and the non-member states. The importance and impact of the regional parliamentary cooperation platforms thus relate directly to the European integration process of the Western Balkans as well as the process of consolidation of democratic institution building in each of the countries of the Western Balkans and South East Europe.

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7 Recommendations

Based upon the analysis of the IPIs and parliamentary networks in the Western Balkans and SEE (Chapter IV) and the review of the interaction of parliaments of the WB and Turkey with the EP and the national parliaments of EU member states (Chapter V), this section of the Study outlines the recommendations for further political and institutional strengthening of parliamentary cooperation in the WB and SEE.

1) SEECP PA: fully operational and central parliamentary platform for the region, supported by EC & EP

Following the establishment of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly in May 2014, we recommend making the SEECP PA a fully operational body and the central parliamentary platform for the region, with support of the EC and EP. The reasons to do so are fourfold: 1) the SEECP PA is fully owned by the region, has a track record as such; 2) its objectives include both regional cooperation and European integration; 3) its geography covers EU member states, Candidate Countries and potential candidates - which enhances the chances for fruitful parliamentary cooperation on EU integration; 4) the SEECP PA is one of the few initiatives which is fully inclusive for the whole of SEE, meaning that it includes the Assembly of Kosovo on a permanent and equal basis.

To make the SEECP PA a fully *operational* body and building upon the political momentum of its creation, we recommend that the SEECP PA decides on the seat of its Secretariat soonest, allocates sufficient resources to the SEECP PA with a view to create a functioning Secretariat with permanent staff, expertise resources for the General Committees and operational budgets for more regular committee meetings.

Taking into account the European perspective for the Western Balkans, we highlight one of the options for IPA support[104], which is to provide institutional and expert assistance to the SEECP PA Secretariat, for instance by financially supporting the secondment on rotating basis of thematic and parliamentary experts from the parliaments of the Candidate Countries and potential candidates to the SEECP PA secretariat. Such IPA-project which will contribute to the institutional strengthening of and dialogue among parliaments.

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[104] Four options for IPA support to regional parliamentary cooperation have been described in the second document deriving from this Study.

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We recommend that the European Parliament seconds, initially for one year and extendable on an annual basis as long as deemed useful, one of its staff members to the Secretariat of the SEECP PA. The EP staff member will have substantial knowledge on EU institutions, policies and instruments, COSAC and regional cooperation mechanisms; provide technical and policy advice to the President, the three General Committees and the Secretary General and staff of the SEECP PA; and be based at the SEECP PA Secretariat on a permanent basis (salary, accommodation and per diem covered by the EP).

We recommend developing a comprehensive Annual Work Plan for the SEECP PA, which foresees at least two in-person General Committee meetings per year and possibly one additional virtual/Skype committee meeting. In this Study, a total of 22 recommendations have been made to make the SEECP PA fully operational; including recommendations on the oversight role of the SEECP PA, transparency and follow-up to resolutions and conclusions of SEECP.

To make the SEECP PA the *central* parliamentary platform for the region, there is need for a political consensus which endorses the political and resources advantages deriving from enhanced synergies between various parliamentary platforms and assemblies. We recommend establishing synergies by (1.) sharing of timelines, agendas, reports and resolutions, potentially also the draft versions of these documents, between the Secretariats of the initiatives and assemblies mentioned in this Study. This will enable more relevant agenda-setting and determine the specific added value of the debates in different assemblies; (2.) starting a pilot-project approach in discussing the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Region and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region at the Commissions of the SEECP PA, in cooperation with the chairmanships of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative Parliamentary Dimension and the Danube Parliamentarians' Conference. (3.) Based upon a review of the piloting, further synergies can be directed, as far as the IPIs and initiatives discussed in this Study, towards the work of the COSAP, CFAC, CEI-PD, CPF, CSPWB and NPC. As synergies, alignment and coordination takes shape, it can potentially lead towards proposals for putting specific inter-parliamentary initiatives under the SEECP PA umbrella. The Secretariat of the SEECP PA can then serve as a joint Secretariat for some of the above-mentioned initiatives. Therefore, a well equipped Secretariat for the SEECP PA can be budget-neutral for participating parliaments of SEECP. The proposal for SEECP PA as central platform relates to the above- mentioned initiatives and does not apply to the larger and more institutionalized IPIs: PAM, NATO PA, PABSEC, PA-UfM, PACE and OSCE PA.

We recommend that the EC - DG 'Enlargement Negotiations' shares this Study with the EP - AFET and with the President[105] and Delegations of the SEECP PA, with a view to supporting the President of the SEECP PA building political consensus on the SEECP PA as the central parliamentary platform for the region.

We recommend that the SEECP PA becomes the privileged interlocutor of the EC and EP in terms of parliamentary cooperation in the region of the Western Balkans and SEE. We recommend that the European Parliament initiates consultations on the most appropriate format for an institutionalized cooperation and regular exchange of information with the SEECP PA. We recommend that the EP participates in the plenary session of the SEECP PA and that MEPs participate in

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[105] From June 2014 to June 2015 the President of the SEECP PA is the Speaker of the Parliament of Albania, Mr. Ilir Meta. On daily basis, the coordinator is Mr. Taulant Balla, Member of Parliament of Albania.

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the three General Committees, more specifically through Members of the EP's Committees whose mandate corresponds with the thematic focus of the SEECP PAs' General Committees.

To strengthen synergies between the different initiatives, we recommend initiating cooperation between the SEECP PA and PACE through: (1.) address of SEECP PA President to the European Conference of Speakers of Parliament co-organized by EP and PACE, (2.) occasional joint meeting of SEECP Committee(s) with PACE Committee(s); (3.) sub-regional meeting of Secretaries General of the parliaments participating in SEECP PA on issues of the role of the Leadership (SG and deputy SG) of Administration of Parliament in EU accession and required change management, with support of PACE and ECPRD - thus bringing together SGs of member states and non-member states.

2) Parliamentary support to the two macro-regional strategies

Macro-regional strategies are developed by the European Commission and Council, with the involvement of the European Parliament, for, amongst others, the Adriatic-Ionian Region and the Danube Region. They represent an important opportunity to enhance economic development and to streamline priorities and resources for a specific macro-region.

We recommend that the national coordinators for the macro-regional strategies involve the national parliamentarians and parliament leaderships in the oversight of the implementation of the macro-regional strategies and the action plans.

As the adoption of the EUSAIR has accelerated the reflection on the institutional functioning of the AII-PD, we recommend that the parliamentary representatives of the AII-PD play a prominent role in sensitizing their national parliaments, the various line ministries and the regions in their country on the importance and the deliverables of the EUSAIR.

The new SEECP PA is well placed to draft and initiate proposals on clustering meetings of various parliamentary dimensions and assemblies, contributing to the two macro-regional strategies.

3) Inclusiveness of regional parliamentary platforms

The review of the selected fifteen IPIs and parliamentary networks indicated that their inclusiveness is partial and incomplete. Kosovo is a member/full participant in two initiatives (SEECP PA and CSPWB), an observer in two initiatives (NATO PA, NPC), a guest in three initiatives (COSAP, PACE, CPF) and not included in the remaining eight initiatives. With a view to enhancing inclusiveness, taking into account the 2012 Belgrade-Pristina agreement on Kosovo participation in regional fora and the achieved inclusion of Kosovo in the RCC and SEECP, it is recommended to enable Kosovo's full and equal participation in the AII and AII-PD, CEI and CEI-PD, CoE and PACE, UfM and PA-UfM, COSAP, CFAC, and NPC.

An international facilitator - possibly through the RCC, the EEAS, DG Enlargement Negotiations or the European Parliament - can be asked to assist in brokering agreements on the Assembly of Kosovo's inclusion in the above-mentioned parliamentary platforms.

It is advisable for the National Assembly of Serbia to actively support the Assembly of Kosovo's inclusion in these parliamentary platforms as part of Serbia's EU integration efforts under Chapter 35 of the accession negotiations.

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In addition, we recommend the Assembly of Kosovo's inclusion in the ECPRD, so that through its parliamentary correspondent it gets access to the same level of information and inter-parliamentary activities as all other parliaments of the Western Balkans.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia plays an active role in regional parliamentary cooperation. The review of the selected IPIs indicated that the Assembly of Macedonia is not a member and does not participate in the Adriatic Ionian Initiative Parliamentary Dimension and PABSEC. With a view to enhancing inclusiveness, it is recommended to enable the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's full and equal participation in the above-mentioned initiatives, without prejudging the outcome of any future settlement on the "name issue". In addition, we recommend the inclusion of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its Assembly in the EUSAIR, so that it gets access to the same level of information as other parliaments of the Western Balkans. This recommendation is in line with the latest EP resolution on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (January 2014).

4) Secretariat of regional parliamentary platforms

Within the group of selected IPIs and parliamentary networks, a majority of initiatives have a fixed, permanent Secretariat, or one host parliament holding the institutional memory for the initiative. In the case of a rotating Secretariat, the follow-up and institutional memory on past initiatives suffers most. It is therefore recommended, if human and material resources are available, to aim for a fixed, permanent Secretariat, either as a stand-alone Secretariat or as a staff person hosted at the premises of the Secretariat of the governmental dimension of the international organization.

This Study indicated that the interaction between the Governmental and Parliamentary Dimensions is more intensive and, consequently, the influence of the IPI is stronger when both Secretariats are based in the same city or premises.

Therefore, we recommend that the AII Secretariat in Ancona and the CEI Secretariat in Trieste include one staff member assigned to, respectively, the AII-PD and the CEI-PD. This person would be the focal point vis-à-vis the rotating chairmanships of the AII-PD / CEI-PD, provide information relevant to the work of the parliamentary representatives (AII-PD) or Committees (CEI-PD), follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the AII-PD / CEI-PD, enhance the outreach and communication of the AII-PD / CEI-PD, maintain a comprehensive web-site on the AII-PD / CEI-PD and be in charge of the institutional memory of the AII-PD / CEI-PD.

We recommend that the AII Secretariat and the CEI Secretariat start consultations with the Speakers of Parliament of the respective member countries with a view of developing specific guidelines on the type of support which the Secretariats can offer to the Parliamentary Dimension, including financing / hosting of one staff member assigned to the Parliamentary Dimension at the Secretariats in Ancona and Trieste.

5) Committees of regional parliamentary platforms

Most IPIs have established several committees, which in terms of their thematic focus, have several commonalities and similarities, as is the case with the PAM and PA-UfM, and the SEE-CP and CEI-PD.

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To address the risk of duplication and make the most rational use of time and resources available, it is recommended to develop synergies in the membership of the delegations from national parliaments, the meeting schedule and planned outputs of the committees attached to various Parliamentary Assemblies and Parliamentary Dimensions. Assigning, in part, some of the same parliamentarians to different IPIs might help in facilitating synergies on content, and possibly in coordinating agendas of meetings.

It is proposed that the Chairmanship-in-Office of the newest IPI, the SEECP-PA, develops more detailed proposals on committees' synergies, possibly with the assistance of the RCC.

6) Implementation and follow up to reports and recommendations

Most IPIs adopt, based upon the proceedings of their committees, reports and recommendations, which are then transmitted to the relevant stakeholders and the governmental dimension, for information or consideration. Most IPIs so far have not collected information systematically on the progress in the implementation of their recommendations at the level of the participating states / parliaments and at the regional level.

It is recommended that each IPI conducts every two to three years a review of the level of implementation of its resolutions. Such reviews can be conducted by the Secretariat of the IPI, as for PABSEC, or can be commissioned from an external expert.

In addition, we recommend that each national parliament establishes a tracking mechanism on the required follow-up to its participation in inter-parliamentary or international events, including on the adopted resolutions.

7) Relationship with the governmental dimension

None of the selected IPIs has a formal oversight role towards the governmental dimension of the international organization to which they are committed or by which they are recognized. However, some of the IPIs formulate oral and written questions to Ministers, inform the governmental dimension about their decisions, or participate in meetings of the governmental dimension.

Taking into account the relevant Statutes and RoP, we recommend that the President / Standing Bureau of the IPI facilitate the internal discussion within the IPI as well as a constructive dialogue with the governmental dimension with the aim of enhancing the communication and cooperation between the parliamentary and governmental dimensions. Additional opportunities for constructive dialogue with the governmental dimension are particularly relevant and achievable for the AII-PD in terms of the EUSAIR, DPC in terms of the EUSDR, CEI-PD and SEECP PA.

This Study prepared a comprehensive set of 22 recommendations on strengthening the SEECP PA, as included in the main text of this document. There are various proposals to enhance interaction between the SEECP C-i-O, RCC and the SEECP PA. The Study also proposes to initiate communication and develop agreements with international and regional institutions, amongst others, in relation to the oversight role of the General Committees of the SEECP PA. The comprehensive set of 22 recommendations can provide useful input to the SEECP PA Working Group on Procedures and Secretariat, and the 'Ad-hoc Working Group on the future of the SEECP' in terms of the role of the new SEECP PA within the overall SEECP architecture.

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8) Women's participation and gender in regional parliamentary platforms

With the exception of PACE, OSCE PA, SEECP PA and PAM, there are no provisions on guaranteed representation and participation of women in the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks. We recommend that the President / Bureau / Standing Committee of all other IPIs and networks initiates consultations with a view to including in their RoP specific provisions on guaranteed representation and participation of women, as well as other initiatives related to gender awareness and policies. EU concepts on gender equality, and non-discrimination of and rejection of violence against the LGBT community could be mentioned in the statues of the IPIs and networks.

9) Transparency of regional parliamentary platforms

A review of the transparency of the selected IPIs and parliamentary networks reveals that there is still a way to go, in terms of openness of the meetings, public access to information and outreach.

We recommend that the IPIs ensure that, in principle, all its plenary and committee meetings are open to the public, unless decided otherwise.

We recommend that each IPI and parliamentary network have their own web-site, which includes information on mandate and objectives, composition and structures, meeting schedule and calendar, agendas, reports, declarations and resolutions. We recommend that both draft documents and final versions of documents are made publicly accessible via the web-site; and that a search function for all documents be operational. We recommend that, where necessary, the RoP of the IPIs be amended to enable enhanced transparency.

We recommend increased efforts to upgrade the outreach and communication on the work of the IPIs and parliamentary networks, in strong partnership with the Press and Public Information Department of the participating parliaments.

Finally, the website of each IPI and parliamentary network should be accessible from the website of every member parliament in the region, as well as from the European Parliament website. We recommend that AGORA, inter-agency portal for parliamentary development, establishes links to the web-sites of all IPIs and networks discussed in this Study.[106]

10) Parliament liaison person in Brussels for Candidate Countries

For all Candidate Countries, information on the European policies and contact with European Parliament officials are of utmost importance. We therefore recommend that the parliaments of the Candidate Countries assign someone as their liaison person to the European Parliament, in particular as the EU accession negotiations gain pace.

Once the Candidate Country becomes a member state of the EU, the parliamentary liaison person joins the informal network of National Parliament Representatives with the European Parliament and is assigned office space in the European Parliament.

11) Participation in the Parliamentary Dimension of Council Presidency meetings

Candidate Countries are invited, as observers, to most of the activities of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Council Presidency. Taking note of the uneven

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[106] www.agora-parl.org

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participation by the parliaments of the Candidate Countries, we recommend that all Candidate Countries make utmost use of the possibilities offered by attending these meetings.

We recommend better alignment of the meetings of COSAP with the venue and timing of COSAC meetings; and we suggest that the final declaration adopted at COSAP meetings be distributed to all COSAC participants by the rotating COSAC chairmanship as part of the regular correspondence prior to COSAC meetings.

The Candidate Countries are part of the IPEX system. While the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey have identified their IPEX National Correspondent, Albania and Serbia have not yet done so. We recommend doing this as soon as possible.

To ensure that the national parliaments of Candidate Countries and potential candidates have sufficient capacity during the accession period and afterwards, we recommend that the parliamentary administrations recruit and train a substantial group of qualified lawyers and technical experts who can participate in the EU legislative process. With the help of current (and future) twinning projects and TAIEX programs, we recommend that the parliaments develop and keep up-to-date an in-depth assessment of their capacities and prepare a long-term planning of knowledge building in the parliament's administration. If not yet available, we recommend the establishment of a functioning department of inter-parliamentary or international relations in each parliament of the Western Balkans.

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ANNEX 2 Timeline of in-country visits in the Western Balkans and South East Europe

2014

February, 18 - 21   Sarajevo

February, 25 - 28   Sofia

March, 20 - 23   Tirana

March, 23 - 26   Zagreb

May, 5 - 8   Prishtina

May, 9 - 11   Bucharest

May, 18 - 21   Podgorica

June, 24 - 27   Ankara

June, 27 - 28   Istanbul

June, 29 - July, 3   Belgrade

September, 2 - 5   Skopje

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Chart 7: *Participation of Western Balkans and Turkey in ECPRD activities between January 2012 - July 2014*

2012 ECPRD activity overview					Western Balkans and Turkey: participation [P] and key-note speech or presentation [KNP]							
	Date	Topic	Place	Hosting parliament(s)	Albania	BiH	Croatia	Kosovo	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
1.	05/31 - 06/01	"Parli@ments on the Net X - Mobility, transparency and open parliament: best practices in Parliaments' web pages"	Madrid	Congress of Deputies and Senate	P	P			P		P	
2.	06/07 - 06/08	"The European Economic and Financial Crisis and the Role of Parliaments"	Rome	*Senato della Repubblica &* Camera dei deputati	P	P			P		P	P
3.	06/14 - 06/15	"Members' use of information and changing visions of the Parliamentary Library	Copenhagen	Folketinget	P	P	P		P		P	P
4.	09/06 - 09/07	"Building for parliament, (re)construction, maintenance, layout and design of parliamentary building"	The Hague	Tweede Kamer Der Staten-Generaal		KNP	KNP		KNP	KNP		
5.	09/13 - 09/14	"Parliamentary control of the Government in the Legislative Process"	Berlin	Bundesrat		P	P		KNP	KNP	P	P
6.	10/18 - 10/20	Annual Conference of Correspondents	Athens	Hellenic Parliament			P		P	P	P	P
7.	11/15 - 11/16	"The role of Open data, XML and Web 3.0 in the communication within Parliaments and in the society - The secure way of using your	Budapest	Hungarian National Assembly	P	P			P		P	

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| | own device in the Parliament" | | | | | | | | | | |

ANNEX 3 Participation of Western Balkans and Turkey in ECPRD activities

2013 ECPRD activity overview					Western Balkans and Turkey: participation [P] and key-note speech or presentations [KNP]							
	Date	**Topic**	**Place**	**Hosting parliament(s)**	**Albania**	**BiH**	**Croatia**	**Kosovo**	**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**	**Montenegro**	**Serbia**	**Turkey**
1.	04/03 - 04/05	"Parliamentary Research & Plurality of Information Sources available to MPs"	Prague	Chancellery of The Chamber Of Deputies	P	P				P		KNP
2.	05/02 - 05/03	"Parli@ments on the Net XI - Realising the digital parliament"	London	House of Commons & House of Lords	P	P	P			P	P	
3.	05/30 - 05/31	"Procedures and Practices for Debating and Approving Long Term National Strategies in Parl."	Talinn	Riigikogu		P	P		P	P		P
4.	05/31 - 06/01	"Parliamentary libraries and archives and their role in the preservation and	Paris	Senat	P	KNP			P	P	P	

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		conservation of the historical and cultural heritage of countries"											
5.	06/20 - 06/21	'New fiscal frameworks'	Vienna	Nationalrat and Bundesrat		**P**			**P**	**P**	**KNP**	**P**
6.	09/19 - 09/21	"Modern technologies to support parliamentary activities - traditions and challenges"	Saint Petersburg	Council of The Federation		**P**			**P**	**P**	**P**	**P**
7.	10/17 - 10/19	Annual Conference of Correspondents	Warsaw	Sejm & Senate		**P**	**P**		**P**	**P**	**P**	**P**
8.	11/28 - 11/29	"Share experiences and solutions for an ICT based Parliament"	Baku	National Assembly		**P**			**P**	**P**		**KNP**

2014 ECPRD activity overview					**Western Balkans and Turkey: participation [P] and key-note speech or presentation [KNP]**							
	Date	**Topic**	**Place**	**Hosting parliament(s)**	**Albania**	**BiH**	**Croatia**	**Kosovo**	**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**	**Montenegro**	**Serbia**	**Turkey**
1.	05/08 - 05/09	"Structures and procedures with regard to code of conduct for MPs and parliamentary staff"	Skopje	Sobranie		**KNP**	**P**		**KNP**	**KNP**	**P**	**P**

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2.	06/05 - 06/06	"Growing income inequality and democratic stability"	London	House Of Commons		P			P		P	P
3.	06/05 - 06/06	"Stenographic records: Hansard in 21st cent."	Ljubljana	Drzavni Zbor			P		P			P
4.	06/12 - 06/13	"From e-Parliament to smart-Parliament: How to improve citizen's participation using web technologies and social media? How can parl. RoP support transparency & participation? "	Rome	Camera Dei Deputati & Senato Della Repubblica		P			P	P	P	P
5.	10/16 - 10/18	Annual Conference of Correspondents	Belgrade	National Assembly	P	P	P		KNP	P	KNP	P
6.	11/06 - 11/07	" e-Parliament in action: best practices about ICT strategic planning, information security, mobility and cloud computing"	Podgorica	Parliament of Montenegro	P	P	P		P	KNP		KNP
Totals January 2012 - July 2014					9 x P	16 x P 2 x KNP	10 x P 1 x KNP		15 x P 4 x KNP	11 x P 4 x KNP	13 x P 2 x KNP	13 x P 3 x KNP
Prepared by: Ivan Petrushevski, ECPRD Correspondent, Skopje, 10.12.2014												

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