The Role of National Parliaments in the European Union

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An information guide in association with the event at the Cardiff EDC, 20 November 2014
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This presentation provides hyperlinks to a selection of sources providing information on the topic of ‘The role of national parliaments in the EU’.

There is a debate across Europe as to what role national parliaments should play in policy-making in the EU – would an increased role for national parliaments enhance or reduce the democratic legitimacy of the EU?

Further information on this topic can be found through this link to European Sources Online.

[Hyperlinks are embedded in images throughout the guide]
These reports form the context of the speakers’ presentations at the Cardiff EDC event on 20 November 2014

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InterParliamentary EU information eXchange allows access to reports from national parliaments concerning EU legislative proposals and initiatives.

COSAC is the Conference of the Committees of the National Parliaments of the European Union Member States.
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The debate is not confined to the UK – the topic is discussed across the EU

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The relationship between national parliaments and the European Parliament remains contested in the area of economic governance

The Fiscal Compact, which was signed by 25 of the EU’s member states in 2012, foresaw the creation of an inter-parliamentary conference to enable national parliaments to discuss major issues of economic and financial governance. The third meeting of this Inter-parliamentary Conference for Economic and Financial Governance will be held on 29 and 30 September. Valentin Krellinger writes that diverging views on the internal organisation of the conference have so far prevented it from meeting the aims originally envisaged in the Fiscal Compact Treaty.

The UK government is desperate to strengthen the role of national Parliaments in Europe - but can’t get its own house in order

The Government - particularly the Tory wing of it - talks a very good game on the urgent need to strengthen the role of national parliaments in EU decision-making.

The UK Government (rightly) wants to negotiate a “red card” for national parliaments for example, giving them a chance to pull the democratic brake on EU proposals that go too far or aren’t proportionate. It has also talked about various other ways to strengthen the role of national parliaments and boosting scrutiny of EU laws in Westminster.

In his Bloomberg speech, David Cameron called for a “bigger and more significant role for national Parliaments” adding:

The struggle for democratic oversight in the EU

RELATD - National parliaments eclipsed by EU powers - Russia sanctions and the EU. What went wrong?

BY JAN COOPER

BRUSSELS - Hundreds of parliamentarians from across Europe, both from national parliaments and the European Parliament (EP), are gathering in Rome on Monday (29 September) in a bid to improve parliamentary oversight of EU policy making.

Referees or spectators?
National Parliaments and subsidiarity in the VIIIth European Parliament

The interest for a higher democratic accountability in the EU is stronger than ever. Simultaneously, the competences of the EU have been widened considerably following the Euro crisis. Today, governments face growing public pressure to enhance accountability of EU policies, or even to repatriate powers to the national level.

At the national level, parliaments use different techniques to scrutinise the EU. These include increasing the number of MPs involved in scrutiny, the role of committees, the use of scrutiny reserves, information rights, and the ability to table plenary debates. On balance, there is no single recipe for effective scrutiny.

A selection of recent articles and blogs

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Strengthening the role of national parliaments in EU decision-making is not the way to improve the EU’s legitimacy

Turnout at European Parliament elections has fallen significantly since the first elections in 1979. This has led some politicians and commentators to suggest that integrating national parliaments into the EU’s legislative process may be a more effective method for improving the EU’s legitimacy. Jon Worth argues that the logic underpinning such arguments is undermined by the fact that national elections have also witnessed a substantial drop in turnout over the same period. Moreover, in most EU countries citizens actually trust their own parliament less than the European Parliament, raising doubts over the ability of national parliaments to confer a greater degree of legitimacy.

The European Parliament is a failed experiment in pan-European democracy – national parliaments are the key to solving the democratic deficit

Strengthening the European Parliament has often been viewed as the best method of addressing the EU’s alleged ‘democratic deficit’. Stephen Booth writes that while this perspective has led to the Parliament’s powers being increased successively over recent decades, the effect of these reforms on democratic engagement among EU citizens has been limited. He argues that boosting the role of national parliaments in the EU legislative process would offer a far better route for returning democratic accountability closer to voters.

What role for national parliaments in EU law making?

Reforms over the last two decades, culminating in the Treaty of Lisbon, have established a dual accountability, as the basic mode of EU accountability. It requires that proposals are:

- approved by a large majority (QMV = 75% of the votes) in the Council, composed of national ministers accountable to national parliaments;
- also approved by the European Parliament, composed of directly elected MEPs.

This applies notably in the EU’s ordinary legislative procedure, budget procedure and for the approval of significant international agreements entered into by the Union. There are exceptions, in which the European Parliament has a lesser role and/or where unanimity is required in the Council, but in all cases, ministerial approval in the Council is required (1).

It is therefore natural that a national parliament’s main opportunity to shape or reject European legislation rests with its ability to determine its minister’s position and hold him or her to account (2).
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Further information can be found in the Cardiff EDC’s electronic information service *European Sources Online* (ESO):

- [The role of national parliaments in the European Union](#)
- [Where does power lie in the European Union?](#)
The Cardiff EDC provides a professional and neutral information service on the European Union and the wider Europe

Enquiry service – Publication of European Sources Online – Events
Further information: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/edc/

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