



European Institutions

Conference on the Future of Europe

Proposals on how to involve national parliaments

The European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament welcomes the idea of the Conference of the future of Europe, and sees it as a central goal to debate ways of making the EU more democratic. Increasing national ownership and understanding of EU policy is crucial for bridging the gap between citizens and EU institutions. The Committee believes that this may be achieved within the current framework of the Treaties.

The Commission has welcomed new efforts to enhance the engagement of national parliaments in EU policymaking – also referred to as ‘active subsidiarity’. As a contribution to this debate, the Danish Parliament would like to propose six initiatives:

1. To the Committee, ‘active subsidiarity’ would entail involving national parliaments at an early stage and going beyond the subsidiarity protocol of the Treaty. (National Parliaments often struggle with the current public consultations, because the questionnaire format is not well suited for general political input). National parliaments today thus lack a dedicated channel to the Commission through which political views may be expressed in a uniform manner. To facilitate this, the Commission should prepare tailored consultation documents to national parliaments, covering all significant EU initiatives. A summary of input received from national parliaments should be included in the subsequent legislative proposal. We believe that this would motivate national parliaments to be more active.
2. The European Ombudsman has pointed out the Council’s failure to record systematically the identity of Member States taking positions in the Council, including in its preparatory bodies. Access to such information would greatly assist National Parliaments in conduction of parliamentary control of their own governments. Thus, the Council should proactively make public all documents related to adoption of

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legislation at the time they are circulated to member states, including the minutes of COREPER and Council working groups.

3. The Committee finds impact assessments an important tool in ensuring quality in EU lawmaking. The EU institutions should introduce a mandatory impact assessment of all major amendments to Commission legislative proposals before the EU institutions enter into trilogue negotiations.
4. The EU's institutions should reconsider the practice of concluding legislation in trilogues. Acknowledging the efficiency of this informal process, it does, however, put serious constraints on the ability of national parliaments (and the public in general) to scrutinize how EU compromises are reached. More transparency in connection with trilogue negotiations is even more important as the vast majority of legislative proposals are passed in first reading agreements. The proposal is thus either to return to three readings, or at least – as recommended by the EU Ombudsman – make public the dates, agendas, positions and minutes from trilogues negotiations in order for national parliaments and civil society to hold governments/the Council to account.
5. The current possibility of national parliaments to ask the Commission questions is of great value for these in their work and should be continued. The Commission should introduce – as a general rule – a period of six weeks within which a question should be answered. The Commission should allow each national parliament to ask one/two question(s) as a “priority question” to be answered within three weeks.
6. The European Affairs Committee warmly welcomes the president of the Commission's promise to have all Commissioners visiting Member States within the next 2 ½ years. An additional suggestion for having more direct engagement between the Commission and national parliaments is for the Commissioner responsible for national parliaments to have the first Monday morning every month available for meetings with representatives from national parliaments. This would ensure a more steady and informal room for dialogue with national parliaments.

These are our contributions to the Conference of Europe.



FOLKETINGET

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Eva Kjer Hansen', is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Eva Kjer Hansen
Chairman of the European Affairs Committee
Danish Parliament