

**Address by Mr. Indulis Emsis, Chairman of the Latvian Saeima, at the
Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments
Topic IV: Assistance to Parliaments of the NEDs
Bratislava, Saturday 26 May, 10:45–12:10, length 3 min.**

Mr. Chairman,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to appreciate the work done by the Task Force to improve exchange of information and coordination with other parliamentary bodies regarding this important area.

Our own experience shows how significant it is to receive assistance at a crucial time. But this assistance has to be of good quality, timely and much better coordinated. European Union member states have different experiences and different know-how. In order not to undermine our efforts we have to export our best knowledge. If we have better coordination we will avoid unnecessary duplication of our efforts.

In my opinion, a step ahead in the right direction is to launch joint projects involving several parliaments. Because of historical and geographical considerations, Latvia regards Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine as its development cooperation priorities. We firmly believe that these countries need closer EU attention because the EU can bring about changes.

Existing successful practices include cooperation among Nordic and Baltic parliaments or so called NB8 and cooperation among the three Baltic States. I would also like to mention the recent Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Latvian, Swedish and Moldovan parliaments regarding trilateral assistance cooperation.

Another point which I would like to raise today is the responsibility of the parliament in scrutinizing the government's EU policy. With regard to parliamentary role in assisting new and emerging democracies, another important sphere, in which we can provide parliamentary assistance, is to indicate to governments and to the Council that wrong or miscalculated decisions were made. A few days ago, I was speaking with our dear friend Nino Burjanadze, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament. She drew my attention to the unjust situation, which has emerged since the signing of the Visa Facilitation Agreement between the EU and Russia. As a result, people having Russian citizenship are more privileged than those having Georgian citizenship. Apparently, a similar situation now appears in Moldova. We should not allow such faulty decisions to take effect.

Thank you for your attention,