Task force on Assistance to the Parliaments of New and Emerging Democracies (NEDs)

Report to the Secretaries General of the EU Parliaments

> *The Conclusion of the Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments in Copenhagen in 2006 (**points 24-26**) applauded the concrete results of the working group (hereafter the WG) on technical assistance to parliaments in new and emerging democracies and recommended that the Slovak Presidency act upon the conclusions contained in the final report of the WG.*
>
> *To this end the Speakers asked "the Secretaries General to conclude the necessary agreements to follow up the aim of creating an efficient and cost-effective exchange of information between national parliaments, the European Parliament and the services of the European Commission within the framework of existing networks and tools at European and global level".*
>
> *Finally the Speakers asked the "Slovak Presidency in cooperation with the Danish and Italian Parliaments, to undertake whatever steps they deemed necessary with the European Commission in this respect".*

In order to fulfil the mandate of the Speakers, the Slovak, Danish and Italian Parliaments set up a task force which is open to the participation of representatives from other EU parliaments.

The Task force has met 3 times, in November 2006 and January and March 2007 and operated mainly via the internet.

The task force cooperated closely with the IPEX Board for the issues concerning the possible development of a database on NEDs in the IPEX. In particular, the Task force discussed the matter with the Board on 29 January 2007 and 6 March 2007.

In addition the Task force held specific meetings with:

- the Director of the Directorate for the relations with the National Parliaments of the European Parliament, Mr Nowina Konopka in order to discuss the role of the the ECPRD and the possible coordination between IPEX and ECPRD in promoting the exchange of information on NEDs between the Parliaments;
- Mr Ketelsen, the official of the European Commission whom Mr Barroso has designated as responsible for relations with the WG on NEDs in order to discuss the feasibility and implementation of the proposals envisaged in the

Final report of the working group on NEDs, which was presented at the Speakers Conference in Copenhagen in June 2006.

The Task force elaborated a **Feasibility Study** (*see annex II to this Report*) concerning the possible creation of a database on NEDs in the IPEX web site. The Feasibility Study is currently being examined by the IPEX Central support which will assess the timing and the resources required for its implementation.

The objectives and principles that the Task force followed and the main findings of its activity are summarized in Annex I and II.

On the basis of its current findings the Task force recommends that the Secretaries General of the EU parliament Conference adopt the following lines of action:

a) underline the need to ensure the exchange of information between the National Parliaments, the European Parliament and the European Commission in view of their capacity as donors;

b) mandate the Task force in cooperation with the Board of IPEX (Inter-Parliamentary EU Information Exchange) to:
   - fully assess the Feasibility Study of the possible development in the IPEX web site of a database on the assistance to NEDs, taking into account possible cooperation with the ECPRD;
   - submit a proposal on the creation of a NED information database to the Speakers Conference in Bratislava in May 2007;
   - explore other means of collecting the information required for supporting cooperation with the EU Commission in this field;

c) recommend that EU Speakers:
   - ask the Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the Council of Europe to assess the possibility of tasking the ECPRD (European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation) with the drafting of a project – in cooperation with the IPEX - with the purpose of ensuring the exchange of information on NEDs Europe-wide;
   - ask the InterParliamentary Union to assess the feasibility of a global information network on assistance to NEDs, preferably in cooperation with IPEX and ECPRD. The cooperation with ECPRD and IPU would be useful in collecting information on the beneficiaries' needs as well;

d) mandate the Slovak Parliament with the support of the Danish and Italian Parliaments to continue its talks with the European Commission on the following issues:
   - a procedure on how advance consultation with the representatives of the parliamentary administrations when drafting programmes, projects and strategies for technical assistance that involve parliamentary assistance,

- the exchange of information with EU parliaments about programmes, calls for tender, requests for parliamentary assistance submitted directly to the national parliaments etc.
- the possibility of issuing invitations to tender concerning technical assistance to NEDs which would be restricted to parliamentary administrations and which could possibly be less burdensome in terms of procedures, administration etc. for the national parliaments;

e) assess the possibility that the participation of EU Parliaments in Twinning programmes – when two or more are involved – be based on an equal footing in decision making and equal sharing of the intellectual and professional capacities;

f) explore if and how the national parliaments can be considered as eligible partners under the financial regulation;

g) recommend that the Speakers' Conference take the appropriate initiatives to obtain a commitment by Mr Barroso to this respect.

The Presidency will submit to the Conference of Speakers in Bratislava a report on the implementation of the lines of action as described above as well as recommendations on the appropriate initiatives to be pursued with the ECPRD, IPU, and the European Commission.

ANNEX I

SUMMARY OF ISSUES DEVELOPED WITHIN THE TASK FORCE FOR IMPROVING THE EU PROCEDURES AND PROGRAMMES ON NEDS

On the basis of the final report of the Working Group of NEDs, which was presented at the Speakers' Conference in Copenhagen in June 2006, the Task force has prepared some principles and objectives for its action in with a view to the establishment of an effective exchange of information and for the improvement of the current procedures and practices for managing EU assistance programmes and funds.

TOOLS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

The Task force stresses the need to establish effective mechanism for the exchange of information on NEDs between Parliaments which would allow to: avoid duplication; improve the programming and effectiveness of the assistance provided by each EU parliament; foster, whenever appropriate and possible and without prejudice for the autonomy of each Parliament, the sharing of financial and human resources and promote more wide-ranging joint initiatives; offer a wider and more diverse range of experiences and know-how; disseminate best practices.

The Task force explored different tools and levels which could better ensure an effective and cost-saving exchange of information. Without choosing a specific option, the Task force reinforced the proposals laid down in the Final Report of the WG on NEDs which was applauded by the Speakers Conference - to organize the exchange of information at three different levels:

- the **EU level**: in this respect the central support of IPEX is presently assessing whether IPEX could extend the functions of its site to include information on such aspects;

- **Europe in broad sense:** at this level an important role could be played by the ECPRD (*European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation*), whose field of activity is coextensive with that of the Council of Europe. An appropriate mechanism of cooperation between IPEX and ECPRD should be established. To this end the appropriate steps should be taken with the Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the Council of Europe;

- the **global level:** a global information network in conjunction with IPEX, ECPRD and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) could be promoted, also through the recently established Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. To this end the appropriate steps should be taken with the IPU.

The Task force takes note of the position of the Director for the relations with the NP of the EP, Mr Nowina Konopka, who proposes to concentrate the exchange of information at European level directly in the **ECPRD** but has agreed to await the final results of the feasibility study concerning IPEX before taking a final position. In this respect it should be noted, that the European parliament is a member of IPEX and provides IT support in developing the IPEX website.

The Task force has carried out a feasibility study in order to assess the cost and the benefits of all the possible options. The study is currently being assessed by IPEX Central support. In particular, in choosing a definitive solution the Task Force recommends to take into account:

1) **The fundamental need to ensure the exchange of information primarily and specifically between the European Union Parliaments and Institutions**, with the following objectives:
   - promote the sharing of financial and human resources between EU Parliaments - as donor Parliaments - by promoting more wide-ranging joint initiatives;
   - offer the European Commission a package of information to be used to create direct forms of cooperation and take greater account of the particular skills and the know-how of the Parliaments and their administrations;
   - call for the improvement of the programming and effectiveness of the assistance provided by each EU parliament in order to avoid duplication and/or lack of initiatives.

2) **The *know-how* that IPEX, ECPRD and the IPU have acquired in the exchange of information between parliaments**.
   This would avoid the establishment of new project and structures and save costs and human resources, as the current technical tools and arrangements could be used.

3) **The establishment of appropriate forms of cooperation between IPEX and ECPRD, notably in the broader European area** which is an important theatre for the EU's external policy. To this end the ECPRD should be associated as soon as possible with the development of the new database in the IPEX web site.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND EU PARLIAMENTS

The Task force has assessed the feasibility of the options envisaged in the Final Report of the WG on NEDs. To this end it has taken into account the feed-back from the Commission as expressed by Mr Ketelsen and Mr. Queiro (EuropeAid Cooperation) during a meeting in February 2007. It was agreed that the

European Commission in conjunction with the Task force should explore the following issues further:

a) if and how the national parliaments could be considered **eligible partners** in the implementation of the regulations by the European Parliament and by the Council establishing a financial instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, which entered into force 1 January 2007;

b) a procedure to ensure that the European Commission **consults in advance** with the representatives of the parliamentary administrations when drafting programmes, projects and strategies for technical assistance which can involve EU parliaments. A database on NEDs in IPEX could be used in this respect;

c) how to **inform EU Parliaments** about programmes, calls for tender and any other relevant document and procedure for assistance (also to this end the IPEX database could be used);

d) assess the possibility of issuing **invitations to tender** concerning technical assistance to NEDs which are restricted to parliamentary administrations;

e) consider how the **requests for parliamentary assistance** submitted to the individual Parliaments are best brought to the attention of the Commission itself;

f) examine how the **Twinning programmes**, which are potentially the ideal frame for cooperation and assistance initiatives of EU Parliaments could be better used because they currently provide for competitive procedures which do not conform to the role and competencies of Parliaments.

Therefore the task force intends to assess the possibility that the participation of EU Parliaments in Twinning programmes – when two or more of them are involved - is based on an equal footing in decision making and equal sharing of the intellectual and professional capacities.

ANNEX II

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Introduction

In its meeting on 29 November 2006 the IPEX Board decided to set up a task force consisting of representatives from the Danish, Italian and Slovak Parliament (former members of the working group on new and emerging democracies). Participation in the task force is open to representatives from other EU parliaments. The Central Support may assist the task force in its work.

The mandate of the task force is to prepare system specifications for a database. The task force has re-established contacts with appropriate officials in the Commission.

A report from the task force shall be submitted to the Secretaries General prior to its meeting in Bratislava. The report will include system specifications and specific recommendations for the creation of a database. The Board decided that a decision to host the database on IPEX and/or ECPRD should be taken by the Secretaries General.

This study lays down the system specification for setting up a database for the exchange of information on the assistance to the NED in the IPEX web site.

In compliance with the Report of the WG on the technical assistance to parliaments in the new and emerging democracies - which was approved by the EU Speakers Conference in Copenhagen in 2006, the study proposes an efficient and cost-effective exchange of information between national parliaments, the European Parliament and the services of the European Commission.

The database envisaged should therefore primarily guarantee a specific exchange of information **amongst the European Union's parliaments**, with a threefold objective:
- to ensure that each interested Parliament get the relevant information about the technical assistance initiatives of other EU Parliaments;
- to create possible synergies and exploit the common European dimension in the Union's external policies;
- to offer the European Commission a well-designed package of information to be used to create direct forms of cooperation and take greater account of the particular skills and the know-how of the Parliaments and their administrations.

The options proposed in the feasibility study are inspired by the following principles:
- ease of use and simplicity;
- need for a quick and efficient development of the database in order to comply with the conclusion of the EU Speakers;

- avoiding the establishment of new and specific structure and save costs and human resources.

In compliance to those principles, the technical specifications:
- generally provide the recourse to the existing platform and system on which the IPEX web site is currently running. The implementation of the technical specifications should not imply a significant workload for either the IPEX Central support and the DIT of the EP or for the officials in the EU parliaments in charge of feeding the database as the current know how and arrangements could be used;
- the tools and methods for the exchange of information are very simple and user friendly as they are based on templates which can easily be filled – without any specific IT knowledge - by the competent officials in the EU Parliaments;
- the presentation and the organization of the information follow as far as possible the same criteria used for the database on scrutiny activities of EU Parliaments;
- the new section of the IPEX web site would allow the searcheability of the all information included in the new database on the basis of different criteria.

NEDs web template

This study proposes to publish information about "*Programmes & projects to assistance to the New and Emerging Democracies*" using the same platform and infrastructure used to host the IPEX web site: Jahia.

NEDs home page

The following pictures show the snapshots of the new section of IPEX website proposed in this study. Essentially this new section is composed of a new branch home page linked to the IPEX website's toolbar by means of the button with the "*NEDs*" label on (see the "*Picture 1 - NED's home page*").

Picture 1 - NED's home page

This "*branch home page*" is a dynamic web page that will be automatically composed doing a query to the database filtering information by country & chamber. Therefore this page will not be content-managed by the national parliament officials but it will be produced by the query on the information acquired by means of the forms in the "*Picture 5 - form to insert/update information about programme or project of assistance*" and "*Picture 6 - form to insert/update information about request of assistance*".

The "*NEDs home page*" will be composed of a list of the Countries/Chambers with at least one "*programme or project of assistance*" or at least one "*request of assistance*" received by an EU Parliament.

In "*Picture2 – National Parliament programme/projects or request of assistance list*" is shown the activities of the Chamber/Country chosen on the page shown in the "Picture 1 –NED's home page".

Picture 2 - National parliament programmes/projects or request of assistance list

This page, as the page in *Picture 1*, will be automatically produced by means of a query. The query has to select all titles and descriptions of the "programmes/projects of assistance" and all titles and descriptions of the "requests of assistance", filtered by country/chamber.

The results order could be one o more of the following (*this has to be chosen by the Central support*):

- Order by starting date of the programme/project
- Order by ending date of the programme/project
- Alphabetical order of title
- Beneficiaries/requiring country
- Other

The web page shown is composed of 2 sections: the top section contains a list of programmes and projects of assistance, the bottom section contains a list of requests of assistance addressed to the EU Parliaments.

Programmes & projects of assistance web page

In picture 3 below is shown the template concerning the programmes & projects of assistance details. It is composed of the same attributes inserted by means of the form shown in the Picture 5:

Picture 3 - programme or project of assistance details

Mandatory attributes:
Title: a short textual description about programmes or projects of assistance;
Description: a free text field used to give a summary about the programme;
Beneficiary(ies): a free text used to store information about the beneficiary(ies) Country/Chamber of the programme: it is not possible to define a domain of values as there is no information on such point in the IPEX database;

Donor(s): it is composed of a list of values, separated by a semicolon, chosen from the list of Country/Chamber used on IPEX database. Each selection made in this field will produce an entry in the contacts list with information extracted from the IPEX database;

Contact(s): this is a field composed of information added using the free text box in the form (*shown in Picture 5*); the contact points could also be extracted from the IPEX database using the donor(s) value selected by means of the select list in the form (*see the point above*) [NB: the information about contact point for each parliaments has to be defined in a specific table on the database]

Object: textual description about the object and scope of the programme or project of assistance;

Duration: it is a complex field composed of a starting date and an ending date: the dates are expressed in year and month (it is not necessary to use the day number);

Optional attributes:
Additional information: it is an optional field used to give more information about the programme or project of assistance.

Request of assistance web page

Picture 4 – Request of assistance details

In picture 4 above is shown the template of programme & project of assistance details. It is composed of the same attributes inserted by the means of the form shown in Picture 5:

<u>Mandatory attributes</u>
Title: a short textual description about the relevant programme or project of assistance;
Description: a free text field used to give a summary about the content and the scopes of the programme;
Requesting Parliament: a free text used to store information about the requesting Country/Chamber, it is not possible to define a domain of values because we haven't any information on the IPEX database about it (usually we will have just one Country/Chamber name not a list);
Requested Parliament: it is composed of one value chosen selecting a value from the list of Country and Chamber just used on IPEX database;
Contact(s): this is a field composed with the information added by means of the text box on the form in the Picture 5; the contact point information could also be extracted by IPEX database by using the requested parliament value (selected by means of the select list in the form);
Object: textual description about the object and the scope of the request of assistance;
Duration: it is a complex field composed of a starting date and an ending date, the dates are expressed in year and month, we will think it is not necessary to use the day number.

<u>Optional attributes</u>
`Additional information`: it is an optional field used to give more information about the request of assistance.

Forms to insert and update information

In the picture below is shown the snap-shot of HTML forms used to insert and update information on the database about NED programme & project and request of assistance. The forms are very similar because the attributes list of the programme & project are the same as the attributes list for the request of assistance.

The updating forms will be protected by logon procedure used by the correspondents to access to the editing section of the IPEX web site.

The donor(s) parliament - during updating procedure of information about programmes or project of assistance - or the requested parliament(s) - during updating procedure of information about a request of assistance - will be extracted by logon account information, as it can be viewed in the pictures below (see the "*donor*" and "*requested parliament*" note on the form shown in the pictures below).

Picture 5 - form to insert/update information about programme or project of assistance

Italian Parliament - Chamber of Deputies

Title: Insert here the request title

Description: Insert here the description of the request, Insert here the description of the request, Insert here the description of the

Attributes & description of the request

Requesting Parliament: Insert here the name of the requesting parliament (i.e. Romanian Senat)

Requested Parliament: Italian Chamber of Deputies *(automatically defined by the login account information)*

Contact point: Insert here contacts and references (free text)

Object(s): Insert here more information about the request (free text)

Duration:

from: Select a year / 2000 / 2001   Select a month / Jan / Feb

to: Select a year / 2000 / 2001   Select a month / Jan / Feb

Additional information

Insert here the object of the project or programme (free text)

Save   Cancel

Picture 6 - form to insert/update information about request of assistance

XML example

In the code below is shown an example of and XML document with information about programme or project of assistance. It intends to give an idea of the information hierarchy.

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<nedsProgramme
      countryId="parliament id extracted by Ipex database"
      countryLabel="it"
      chamber="Chamber of Deputies">
  <title>Twinning with Romania</title>
  <description>Description about programme of assistance</description>
  <beneficiaries>
    <beneficiary>Romanian Senate</beneficiary>
  </beneficiaries>
  <donors>
    <donor id="id extracted by Ipex database">French Senat</donor>
    <donor id="id extracted by Ipex database">Hungarian Nat
Assemble</donor>
    <donor id="id extracted by Ipex database">Italian Senat</donor>
  </donors>
  <contactPoints>
    <contactPoint href="mailto:name@example.com">other
reference</contactPoint>
    <contactPoint href="skype:ipex.eu?call">Ipex Central Support Skype
call</contactPoint>
  </contactPoints>
  <object>Description about object of the programme or project of
assistance  </object>
  <duration from="Dec-2005" to="Dec-2009"/>
  <note>Free text to give more information</note>
</nedsProgramme>
```

In the code below is shown an example of an XML document with information about request of assistance.

```xml
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<nedsRequest>
  <title>Request of technical assistance .....</title>
  <description>Description about request of assistance</description>
  <requestingParliament>name of the requesting
parliament</requestingParliament>
  <requestedParliament
      id="id extracted by Ipex database"
      country="it"
      chamber="Chamber of Deputies">Italian Chamber of
Deputies</requestedParliament>
  <contactPoints>
    <contactPoint href="mailto:name@example.com">other
reference</contactPoint>
  </contactPoints>
  <object>Description about object of the request of
assistance</object>
  <duration from="Dec-2005" to="Dec-2009"/>
  <note>Free text to give more information</note>
</nedsRequest>
```

Further Developments

Some specific templates and forms could be created for ensuring the inclusion in the IPEX database of information about the relevant activities of the European Commission on the technical assistance to NEDs.

Such information could be uploaded in the IPEX database by the European Commission itself by using the appropriate forms which could be developed following the requirements set out in this study.

The modalities and the content of information from the Commission should be defined as soon as contacts with the competent Commission services are started.

Information & questions to the DIT

Jahia is a Content Management System so it should be possible to manage the information envisaged in this study.

However, on the next Central Support meeting it is necessary to discuss some questions with the DIT of the EP for a further assessment of the timing and of the modalities for the feasibility of the project.

A searching form template will be sent to the DIT after this meeting; it will be essentially composed of a free text field and a field filled with values extracted from the database (similar to the form for insert/update information).