

**Meeting of the IPEX Correspondents
16 November 2012
The Hague**

On the tasks of the IPEX Correspondents

IPEX Correspondents from the national parliaments,
Madam Secretary General,

Members of the IPEX Board,

Guests,

In my capacity as chair of the IPEX Board, I would like to welcome you most warmly to this year's meeting of the IPEX Correspondents here in The Hague.

I am sure that I speak on behalf of all participants in beginning by thanking the *Tweede Kamer* of the Netherlands and in particular its Secretary General, Ms Biesheuvel-Vermeijden, most sincerely for being prepared to host our meeting in The Hague today. It is a great pleasure for us to be here as your guests!

Around a year ago, you as correspondents met in Ljubljana to discuss initial experiences with the new IPEX 2.0 website, which was launched in summer 2011.

My impression – which I hope you can confirm – is that public access to the new website has been a resounding success.

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With all its new features, and particularly with its new design and the fact that it is so easy to use, the website has been well received.

I know that my colleagues the Secretary Generals, along with the Speakers, agree with me on this.

In February and April 2012 in Warsaw, they made it clear that they view IPEX as an increasingly reliable instrument of parliamentary dialogue.

And, incidentally, you can actually read this view on the IPEX website itself in the conclusions of the conferences.

One good example which confirmed this assessment was the treatment of the “Proposal for a Council Regulation on the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services” [COM (2012) 130 final], known as the Monti II Regulation.

By the deadline for subsidiarity checks on 22 May 2012, IPEX had managed to present all – and I do mean all – reasoned opinions issued by the national parliaments.

IPEX also comprehensively presented the proceedings later on, once the subsidiarity objections had been lodged.

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And the national parliaments were able for the first time to achieve the necessary number of objections for a “yellow card”.

In this way, the national parliaments were able to force the Commission on the basis of the Lisbon Treaty to re-examine the proposal.

What a resounding success!

And this success can be attributed not least to the existence of IPEX and the work you do as correspondents.

As you know, the Commission has now withdrawn its proposal.

This is an impressive example of the ways that you as correspondents can contribute to a positive development of our system by publishing the opinions of your parliaments – and of course, by making them available in English and French.

It demonstrates the importance of the human factor, alongside the necessary technical infrastructure.

Our aim, our mission, should be to ensure that we are even more up to date, even quicker, and that we create even greater transparency and clarity in publishing data and documents.

At the meeting in Warsaw in February, your administrative bosses, the Secretaries General, agreed to make available to the national IPEX

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correspondents the personnel, financial and technical resources needed for this, so that they can adequately carry out their duties.

In a letter to the Secretaries General, which I copied to you, I reminded my colleagues of this commitment in advance of today's meeting.

I attached to my letter a document which was drafted at the Central Support meeting on 22 September 2012.

This document sets out the tasks which you as IPEX correspondents are intended to carry out in your chambers and parliaments.

I should like to make some comments on this:

Your first and most important task is to make available to interested persons, and in particular to other national parliaments, information from your parliaments connected with the rights of our parliaments anchored in Protocols 1 and 2 to the Lisbon Treaty.

This information is displayed both in the "documents" section of the website and in the "news" section.

It may also be important for third parties to know how your parliament works with respect to the European Union. The "National

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Parliaments” section is available to you for this. Here, you can describe the work of your chamber or parliament.

And, naturally, providing information from your parliaments goes hand in hand with the task of keeping your own members of parliament, the parliamentary groups and the parliamentary staff informed about what is happening in the other parliaments. In this context, I should like to remind you that you were asked to publish on IPEX a table showing the legal instruments, responsibilities and deadlines of relevance for subsidiarity monitoring in your chamber or parliament.

In doing this, you also enhance their ability to assert their rights vis-à-vis the European institutions.

You as correspondents are therefore responsible for ensuring a two-directional dialogue on EU issues and particularly on subsidiarity. On the one hand, you are responsible for transmitting information from your parliament to the IPEX world of the other national parliaments, to the members of parliament, staff members and other correspondents there.

On the other hand, however, you are also responsible for passing on information within your own parliaments to the members of parliament, parliamentary groups and parliamentary staff.

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And we as the Board would also like you to take on a second task.

This task is directly connected with what I have already mentioned and could be defined as “promoting IPEX”.

I am talking about the creation within your chamber or parliament of a network to link you with those interested in IPEX or to stimulate interest amongst members of staff, representatives of the parliamentary groups and committees who deal with European affairs.

I assume that you yourselves are familiar with the legal provisions, structures and procedures concerning European and national parliamentary procedures in the framework of the Lisbon Treaty.

In addition, our information officer, Mr Racoti, is also always available to you as a contact person.

It is up to you and the structures in your parliaments to decide how you want to shape this IPEX network – as a permanent body, a circle of friends and interested persons, or by making yourself available as a point of contact for the committees or the parliamentary groups.

Should you require support, please approach your Secretary General.

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As mentioned, I have explicitly asked all your Secretaries General in writing, in line with the agreements reached by the Speakers and Secretaries General, to actively support you in your work and to find a suitable form for the creation of IPEX networks in your parliaments.

In addition, we want to present to you during the course of this meeting a further proposal.

The idea is that representatives of the IPEX bodies should make themselves available to every one of you as direct points of contact.

Because some of the problems you are facing may be more easily dealt with, and solutions found, within a smaller circle.

Our aim as the Board is thus for you to be not only a **correspondent** but also an **ambassador** for IPEX.

You should be ambassadors within your parliaments, working to enhance networking and dialogue on EU issues – which, we all agree, seem to increasingly shape day-to-day life in our parliaments.

So please build networks. Try and ensure an ongoing dialogue. Pass on your knowledge about the legislative provisions, structures and procedures of the European Union to others in your parliaments in

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order to boost the number of people interested in, and indeed enthused by, these numerous and fascinating European issues.

The process of tackling the European financial and economic crisis and the steps taken towards further integration in the EU have demonstrated the challenges which we as national parliaments face!

And I should also like to mention a further area of your work: as members of the network of correspondents, you maintain contact with your colleagues, as you are doing today.

Perhaps the collective commitment to European integration serves as a starting point for you to cooperate more closely with certain persons due to similarities which exist or the desire to exchange best practice.

And linguistic, political, cultural or professional similarities, along with your familiarity with one another from the many correspondents meetings, may enable you to coordinate your work with each other more closely.

I should also like to mention the ECPRD network in this context. Please do actively use this network too!

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Technology can help you with certain tasks, such as the transmission of certain information, and can reduce your work load by carrying out the routine tasks for you.

I am thinking here of the use of the xml data transfer language, which allows information and documents to be transmitted to IPEX in an automated fashion.

This saves time and is reliable.

A number of parliaments have already found it very useful.

This is part of the commitment entered into by the Secretaries General to make available the necessary technical resources.

I would like to call on you to ensure that all chambers and parliaments get involved in the xml project.

On this topic, we have the agenda item “Best practices of national Parliaments with xml” which is planned for later today.

But technology is only ever as good as the people using it.

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In other words as the extent to which you as IPEX Correspondents get involved in our collective IPEX project, lend your commitment and feed in your knowledge and skills to our common IPEX project.

On this note, I wish our meeting every success. May you return to your home cities full of enthusiasm, having gained insight and established interesting contacts.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention.