

IPEX ANNUAL REPORT 2014

MEETING OF THE SECRETARIES GENERAL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS

13 March 2015

Rome

Ms Daiva RAUDONIENĖ

Secretary General of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania
Chair of the IPEX Board

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Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

as the successor of Mr Jonas MILERIUS, former Secretary General of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and Chair of the IPEX Board, whose term expired in November 2014, I am pleased to report to you today on the activities of IPEX and the IPEX Board in 2014.

Following the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2013, the Lithuanian Seimas took over the Chairmanship of the IPEX Board from the German Bundestag after the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments held on 6-8 April 2014 in Vilnius. I would like to take this opportunity to kindly thank Dr Horst RISSE, Secretary General of the German Bundestag and his team for their excellent work chairing the IPEX Board for four years and for the smooth handover of the Chairmanship to Lithuania.

From the Chair's perspective it has been a fruitful and remarkable year for IPEX. Therefore, I would like to sincerely thank the members of the IPEX Board, the IPEX Central Support and the IPEX Information Officer for their active work and good cooperation for the sake of IPEX.

In 2014 the IPEX Board mainly focused on the following priorities:

- 1) New IPEX Guidelines;
- 2) New hiring procedure for the IPEX Information Officer;
- 3) Debate on the role of IPEX;
- 4) Improvement of the IPEX website.

Throughout 2014, the Seimas and the IPEX Board organised the following nine events:

- 1) **Three IPEX Board meetings** (25 April 2014 and 27 June 2014 – in Vilnius, 14 November 2014 in the European Parliament in Brussels);
- 2) **Five IPEX Central Support meetings** (24 April 2014, 26 June 2014 and 9 October 2014 – in Vilnius; 26 September 2014 – the meeting was held via teleconference and 13 November – in the European Parliament in Brussels).
- 3) **Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting** on 9-10 October 2014 in Vilnius.

In addition four **Working Groups** on IPEX-related matters have been active during the year 2014:

- 1) The Working Group on the modification of the IPEX Guidelines, chaired by Mr Mongin FORREST, IPEX Board member from the Danish Folketing, completed its work and drafted new IPEX Guidelines, which are presented to you today, Dear Colleagues, for adoption. I will return to this issue later in my speech;
- 2) The Working Group on the hiring process of the IPEX Information Officer, chaired by Ms Iuna SADAT, IPEX Board member from the Belgian Senate, completed its work and the Belgian Senate signed an employment contract with Mr Calin RACOTI, IPEX Information Officer, for the period of 2015-2016. I will also give a more detailed review on this issue shortly;
- 3) The Working Group for the IPEX Users Conference in 2015, chaired by Mr Mongin FORREST, completed its work and on 26 January 2015 the first IPEX Users Conference was held in the Danish Folketing. I will briefly present to you the findings of the Conference in a short while;
- 4) The Working Group on the Improvement of the IPEX website, chaired by Ms Regina WĄSOWICZ, IPEX Board member from the Polish Sejm, has so far submitted seven important proposals to the IPEX Board and continues its work.

I would like to thank the IPEX Board members who chaired the Working Groups for their active involvement, sincere efforts and dedication in reaching the goals set by the IPEX Board.

Dear Colleagues,

Priority No. 1 for the IPEX Board in 2014 was the drafting of the new IPEX Guidelines. Aiming to bring the IPEX platform forward, the IPEX Board set up a Working Group dedicated to the **modification of the IPEX Guidelines**. The Working Group, chaired by Mr Mongin FORREST, IPEX Board member from the Danish Folketing, undertook considerable efforts and proposed the new IPEX Guidelines to the IPEX Board. After an extensive debate in the Board the new IPEX Guidelines were approved. They are now submitted to you for adoption later on today.

The main changes in the new IPEX Guidelines relate to the governing structure of IPEX, the appointment of a rotating Chair of the IPEX Board, suppression of the IPEX Central Support and the new framework for hiring of the IPEX Information Officer. The new IPEX Guidelines will bring the platform to a new level granting a more efficient and constructive work of IPEX.

A fundamental novelty of the new IPEX Guidelines is the proposed rotating Chairmanship of the IPEX Board. The current regulation resulted in an unclear situation for IPEX every year, when the one-year term of the IPEX Board was about to expire. The existing voluntary system does not contain any fixed schedule for the takeover of the Chairmanship of the IPEX Board. The open-ended nature of the appointment creates uncertainty for parliaments which might consider taking on the responsibility of the Chairmanship. With the rotating Chairmanship of the Board based on the Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments the new IPEX Guidelines would ensure a broader ownership of IPEX by national Parliaments. The rotating Chair of the IPEX Board would also contribute to a greater

involvement of national Parliaments in the activities of IPEX with the emphasis of a ‘shared responsibility’ for the common good.

Next, the elimination of the IPEX Central Support. It was created as a technical group in 2006 following the launch of the IPEX website. Originally IPEX had no Information Officer, and the plan was that the IPEX Central Support members would maintain the website and perform all the editorial work. Immediately following the launch of the IPEX website, it became apparent that at least one full time employee was needed. Following the hiring of an IPEX Information Officer, the role of the Central Support shifted towards that of a preparatory body for the Board meetings. Eliminating the Central Support would also lighten the burden of the Chair of the IPEX Board, as fewer mandatory meetings will have to be held. However the Chair may create *Ad-hoc* working groups according to the new proposal, which can meet either physically or remotely through video or audio conferences. This would improve the efficiency of IPEX and reduce costs.

Previously the IPEX Guidelines only stated that the IPEX Information Officer assisted the IPEX Central Support in its work. The new IPEX Guidelines foresee a more comprehensive and extended regulation of the IPEX Information Officer and sets out his tasks. Based on our current practice the new IPEX Guidelines also include the provisions for the financing of the IPEX Information Officer. The post is co-financed and the costs are equally shared by all participating national Parliaments.

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the whole IPEX Board I will kindly ask for your support for the proposed new IPEX Guidelines. The adoption of the new IPEX Guidelines is essential for the further development of IPEX. Your support for the new IPEX Guidelines would conclude a long debate and would serve as a sign of appreciation for the considerable efforts of our colleagues on the IPEX Board.

Dear Colleagues,

another priority the IPEX Board dealt with in 2014 that I would like to report to you is the **hiring process of the IPEX Information Officer**. After the takeover of the Chairmanship from the German Bundestag the Lithuanian Seimas had to propose a new hiring scheme for the IPEX Information Officer due to the expiring term of the post. A new IPEX Information Officer had to be appointed on 1 January 2015.

As you, Dear Colleagues, may recall the Lithuanian Seimas consulted the Secretaries General of the national Parliaments, members of the IPEX Board and the Central Support on the procedure to be applied for hiring the next IPEX Information Officer. As a result, the IPEX Board set up a Working Group and asked to prepare a proposal on the hiring process for the IPEX Information Officer. Thanks to the successful cooperation and support of the Belgian Senate an acceptable solution was found and the Belgian Senate signed a contract of employment with Mr Calin RACOTI, the current IPEX Information Officer, for the period 2015-2016. The contract is concluded under Belgian Labour Law. The IPEX Board appreciates the support all 28 national Parliaments of the EU for the proposed hiring arrangements for the

IPEX Information Officer and their letters of intent on the co-financing of the post for the period of 2015-2016.

Dear Colleagues,

Lately IPEX witnessed swift development and transformation from just a database to a complex network. Therefore, in 2014 the IPEX Board restarted an important debate on **the role of IPEX**. The Chair of the IPEX Board proposed to discuss this issue from various perspectives by a range of stakeholders. We suggested debating it also at the plenary session of the Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting held on 9-10 October 2014 in Vilnius. The practice of the IPEX Correspondents revealed that the staff of the parliaments considered IPEX as one of the main and most reliable sources of information about the interparliamentary activities in the EU.

Later on in November 2014 the issue was debated by the members of the IPEX Board. IPEX was seen by the Board members as a multifunctional platform – a network and a database – dedicated for internal use by the EU Parliaments, but at the same time available for the public – academics and other interested persons. The members of the IPEX Board underlined that the value of IPEX depended on timely uploading of information on all EU related parliamentary activities and not only on subsidiarity checks.

In 2014 the IPEX Board suggested putting the subject on the agenda of the first IPEX Users Conference as well. The IPEX Board agreed to return to the debate on the role of IPEX at its next meeting and plans to conclude the debate by the end of 2015.

Dear Colleagues,

A year ago, on 26-27 January 2014, most of you participated in our meeting in the Plenary Hall of the Lithuanian Seimas. A couple of months later, on 9-10 October 2014, the IPEX Correspondents gathered in the same Plenary Hall for their **Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting**.

The event was attended by 46 participants from 25 Member States, the European Parliament and one Candidate Country.

The plenary meeting focused on the role of IPEX. Using this opportunity, I would like to thank the keynote speakers Mr Gerard HILBERT from the European Parliament, Mr Uwe JAENSCH from the German Bundestag, Mr Gianpaolo ARACO from the Italian Senate and Mr Mongin FORREST from the Danish Folketing for sharing their views on this important subject.

At the Annual IPEX Correspondents meeting two workshops were organized. The first dealt with “Procedures and instructions on uploading documents on IPEX” and the second dealt with “The role of IPEX Correspondent: best practices”.

The participants also convened within four Partnership Groups in order to discuss ways to raise awareness of IPEX among parliamentary staff and other topics of interest. The IPEX Correspondents were also invited to evaluate the initial draft of the *Manual for IPEX Correspondent*, prepared by the Lithuanian

Seimas. The final draft of the *Manual for IPEX Correspondent* is expected to be approved by the IPEX Board at its next meeting and made available to the IPEX Correspondents at the upcoming Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting in Austria. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our Austrian Colleague, Mr Harald DOSSI, and the Austrian Parliament for their willingness to host the next Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting in Vienna.

Dear Colleagues,

Please note that, in line with established practice, an overview of the Vilnius Annual IPEX Correspondents Meeting is published on the IPEX website.

In 2014 the IPEX Board welcomed another valuable initiative of the Danish Folketing to organize a conference dedicated to the users of IPEX. As a result, on 26 January 2015 the Danish Folketing hosted the first ever **IPEX Users Conference** in the Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen. It was attended by 69 IPEX users from 23 Member States, the European Parliament and 2 Candidate Countries, including 17 Permanent Representatives of national Parliaments in Brussels. The Conference was broadcast live which allowed an additional 288 people to follow it on-line.

The purpose of the IPEX Users Conference was to improve the utility of the IPEX platform and to better exploit its potential by learning about the needs of IPEX users with regard to the IPEX database and network. The ultimate goal of the conference was to ensure a good exchange of information amongst the EU Parliaments and a more effective contribution to the EU legislative process.

The first part of the conference was dedicated to the role of IPEX. The second part of the plenary debate dealt with the topic of “Using IPEX, views from the trenches” and the third part included four working groups on improving IPEX network and IPEX database, as well as the challenges regarding subsidiarity control and the language barrier.

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to draw your attention to a detailed report on the IPEX Users Conference which is distributed to you.

Dear Colleagues,

I would also wish to underline the importance of the work of the IPEX Board regarding the improvement of the IPEX website. Since its launch in 2011, the new IPEX website has been continuously improved and updated. The **improvement of the IPEX website** has been one of the main priorities of the IPEX Board also in 2014. According to the proposal of the IPEX Central Support the IPEX Board set up a Working Group, chaired by Ms Regina WĄSOWICZ, IPEX Board member from the Polish Sejm, dedicated to the improvement of the IPEX website. So far the Working Group has submitted seven important proposals to the IPEX Board and continues its work. Some of them have already been implemented. The members of

the IPEX Board, Central Support, IPEX Correspondents as well as IPEX users are also actively engaged in this process in order to ensure an effective, smooth and user-friendly functioning of the website. In this context I would like to take the opportunity to thank the European Parliament for its support and efforts in the further development of IPEX.

Dear Colleagues,

These are the main issues that the IPEX Board, chaired by my predecessor Mr Jonas MILERIUS, has been involved throughout our term in office. We look forward to continuing with these initiatives in the future in close cooperation with the Italian Parliament as the upcoming Chair of the IPEX Board.

Dear Colleagues,

Apart from the new IPEX Guidelines you have received Draft Conclusions on IPEX approved by the IPEX Board. The Conclusions specify the composition of the IPEX Board in 2015/2016 and deal with other important IPEX-related matters. I would like to ask you to support both documents – the new IPEX Guidelines and the Conclusions on IPEX.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your trust and cooperation. Thank you to the entire IPEX Team for their dedication, enthusiasm and engagement for the sake of IPEX.

Thank you for your attention.

I would be happy to take any questions or comments you may have.