

2016-05-24

Speech by Speaker Urban Ahlin, the Swedish Riksdag
EUSC Session III on 24 May 2016
The role of national parliaments and interparliamentary cooperation

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear colleagues,

The national parliaments influence was strengthened with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Our parliaments have several crucial roles to play here, in particular through the opportunity to carry out subsidiarity checks, which was introduced, along with the possibility of issuing a subsidiarity warning.

My parliament examines all draft legislative acts that are sent to the Riksdag in accordance with the Protocol 2 procedure. Since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force we have scrutinised 561 draft legislative acts and submitted 55 reasoned opinions. Our reasoned opinions is one way for us to influence the Swedish Government in conducting EU policies.

The principle of subsidiarity is a central issue which deserves considerably greater attention than it has received to date, as it is actually about the distribution of power between the national parliaments and the EU. From a democratic angle, it is also important that Europe's citizens feel that decisions that are taken are not decided far away from them and that these decisions have proper support in our respective countries.

This leads me to the reform of the electoral law of the Union. This is a proposal which our national parliaments have a specific interest in and where several reasoned opinions have been issued. With due respect to uniform regulations, when it comes to how elections should be organised - I believe we have to say no. The inner workings of political parties should not be regulated at Union level. I would also question such regulation at the national level.

After six years, the subsidiarity control mechanism has yielded varying experiences. I firmly believe that the fact that the Riksdag carries out subsidiarity checks of all legislative proposals has served us well. The Riksdag's 15 committees closely scrutinise the legislative proposals

2016-05-24

that are presented and we also produce the greatest number of reasoned opinions of all national parliaments, on approximately 10 percent of the total number of proposals.

A natural consequence of this system is that our 349 MPs have to be informed of the subject matter of the proposals within their respective areas of responsibility before the negotiations between the legislators have even started. Further, in our system the Government is obliged to consult the Committee on EU Affairs regarding the conduct of negotiations in the Council prior to decisions in the Council. In these consultations we give our Government a red or a green card every Friday.

I think it is important to discuss how this cooperation has functioned to date. How, and in what form can greater information exchange in interparliamentary cooperation start to be discussed? Can or should our respective committees be induced to have contacts with each other as part of the subsidiarity control mechanism? How can we be on more equal terms with our respective Governments?

Another important tool is IPEX. The main responsibility for submitting information and updating the IPEX database lies with the relevant committee secretariats in the Riksdag. My administration has an automatic update of IPEX from our internal systems. IPEX has the potential of serving a valuable information sharing purpose if all national parliaments take necessary measures. The three yellow cards serve as a good example here – as soon as there is formal information to share, IPEX is updated. However, I understand this is not always the case. Updating IPEX should be a priority in our parliament's administrations to able us to use its full potential.

In my opinion, the question of greater cooperation between the national parliaments needs to be taken more seriously and discussed to a greater extent, and in this discussion we need to examine ourselves and look at what we have done and what more we can do in our endeavour to achieve better collaboration in this respect. How do we go about achieving greater efficiency and coordination of our cooperation?

It is gratifying that the forms for interparliamentary cooperation are continuously being developed. A Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol is now going to be established

2016-05-24

by the European Parliament and the national parliaments, and of course we will decide together how the group's work will be organised.

Parliamentary control of Europol is a matter that the Riksdag has followed for a long time. The responsible committee in the Riksdag - the Committee on Justice - has, in various contexts and forms expressed its views on how parliamentary control of Europol should function.

The fact that we Speakers are now appointing a working group that will further analyse this matter is excellent - an analysis that should be led by and conducted at the political level. I would like to emphasise that this work should be conducted on equal terms between the national parliaments and the European Parliament. It is important that we, as Speakers and those who monitor interparliamentary cooperation closely follow - and follow up – the work with the Scrutiny Group.

Colleagues, a final reflection. In my opinion we – Speakers – should reflect on why we meet in this conference. I think we should put more energy on exchange of best practises and maybe less on political differences. Let's debate less and talk to each other more. We need to share our experiences on valuable working methods and topics of common interest and to facilitate platforms for cooperation between our parliaments. What works and what doesn't?

Thank you, Mr Speaker.