



42nd

Bi-annual Report

**Developments in
European Union
Procedures and Practices
Relevant to
Parliamentary Scrutiny**

Prepared by the COSAC Secretariat and presented to:

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for Union Affairs of Parliaments
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Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union

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BACKGROUND

This is the Forty-Second Bi-annual Report from the COSAC Secretariat.

COSAC Bi-annual Reports

The XXX COSAC decided that the COSAC Secretariat should produce factual Bi-annual Reports, to be published ahead of each ordinary meeting of the Conference. The purpose of the Reports is to give an overview of the developments in procedures and practices in the European Union that are relevant to parliamentary scrutiny.

All the Bi-annual Reports are available on the IPEX website, either by accessing this [overview](#) or by navigating to the respective [meeting](#).

The three chapters of this Bi-annual Report are based on information provided by the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States and the European Parliament. The deadline for submitting replies to the questionnaire for the 42nd Bi-annual Report was 18 September 2024.

The outline of this Report was adopted by the meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, held on 28-29 July 2024, in Budapest.

As a general rule, the Report does not refer to all Parliaments or Chambers that have responded to a given question. Instead, illustrative examples are used.

Please note that, in some cases, respondents are able to provide more than one answer to multiple choice questions. This may explain any perceived disparity in the total number of answers to a question and the total number of respondents can thus be accounted for.

Complete replies, received from 39 national Parliaments/Chambers of 27 Member States and of the European Parliament, can be found in the Annex on the [COSAC webpage](#) on the IPEX website.

Note on Numbers

Of the 27 Member States of the European Union, 15 have a unicameral Parliament and 12 have a bicameral Parliament. Due to this combination of unicameral and bicameral systems, there are 39 national parliamentary Chambers in the 27 Member States of the European Union.

Although they have bicameral systems, the national Parliaments of Austria, Ireland and Spain each submit a single set of replies to the questionnaire, therefore the maximum number of respondents per question is 37, including the European Parliament. There were 37 responses to the questionnaire.

ABSTRACT

Chapter 1: The state of the European Union in the year of institutional transition and the 15-year application of the Treaty of Lisbon

The first chapter of the 42nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC deals with issues pertaining to the special characteristic of a transitional semester, the priorities of the next EU institutional cycle, and provides a stock-taking about the application of the Treaty of Lisbon, focused on the role of national Parliaments in EU affairs.

In the first set of questions (questions 1.1-1.3) Parliaments/Chambers were asked if they are involved in the nomination of national candidates for the European Commission, for the General Court and the Court of Justice, and for the European Court of Auditors, respectively. Ten Parliaments/Chambers replied that they are involved in the nomination process of the Commissioner, out of which nine have a debate at committee level, two in plenary, and in one case a resolution is adopted. Eleven Parliaments/Chambers replied that they were involved in the process of nominating candidates for the General Court and the Court of Justice, and nine Parliaments/Chambers reported being involved in the nomination of the candidate for the Court of Auditors.

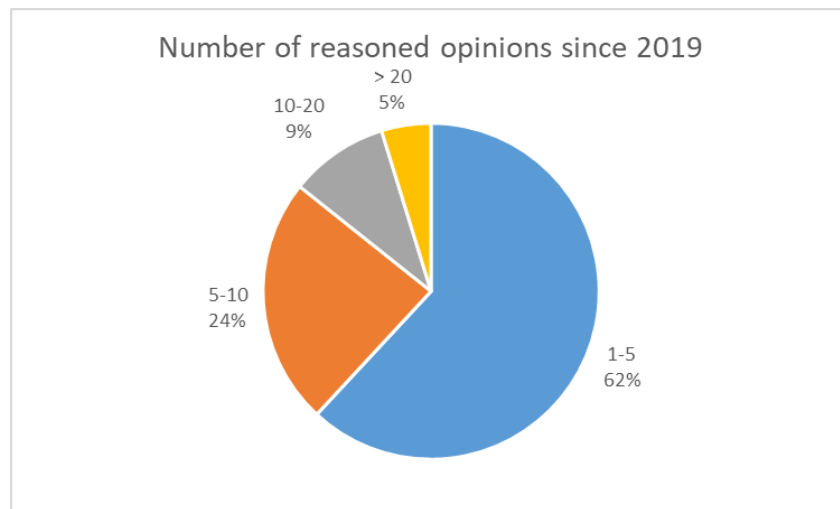
Parliaments/Chambers were also asked if Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected in their country take part in meetings in their national Parliaments/Chambers. Twenty six Parliaments/Chambers replied that MEPs do, in most cases (25 replies) at the level of the committee on EU affairs.

In the following two questions, Parliaments/Chambers were asked if they discuss the government position to be taken ahead of meetings in the European Council, and if they discuss the government's briefing on the outcome of the same meetings. Twenty seven Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they do discuss the government position ahead of European Council meetings, again in most cases at the level of the committee on EU affairs (22 replies). Consequently, 19 replied that the question is discussed through a debate on committee level. As for the governments' briefings on the outcome of the European Council meetings, 28 Parliaments/Chambers replied that these are discussed. Here, too, 22 replied that it is done at the level of the committee on EU affairs, and 20 indicated that it takes the form of a debate on committee level.

The second part of the chapter starts with a question concerning Parliaments/Chambers' engagement in discussing the annual Commission Work Programme (CWP). Out of 37 respondents, 33 Parliaments/Chambers indicated that the CWP is discussed, in almost all cases (31 replies) at the level of the committee on EU affairs. In about half (16 of 33) it is discussed in another or other committees, and just more than a third (12 out of 33) debate it in plenary meetings. In 11 cases, the process leads to the adoption of a resolution. The next question concerns whether Parliaments/Chambers has adopted a position on the EU strategic agenda 2024-2029. Five Parliaments/Chambers replied that they had done so.

The next set of questions concerned the principle of subsidiarity and the application of Protocol No. 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Asked if Parliaments/Chambers apply the rules set out therein, 20 out of 36 Parliaments/Chambers replied that they did. Parliaments/Chambers were then given the option of choosing one or several among seven pre-defined alternatives of what the main reasons were for the reported subsidiarity concerns. Most replies (14) indicated either "General concerns" or "More effective measure on national or regional level". Parliaments/Chambers were then asked how many reasoned opinions they had

adopted since 2019; two thirds (13 out of 21 replies) indicated between one and five reasoned opinions adopted during this time-frame.

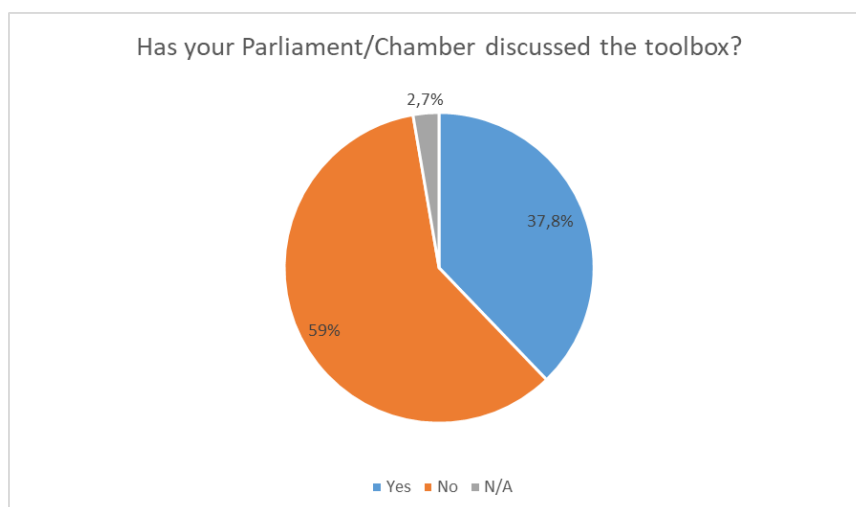


Lastly, Parliaments/Chambers were asked if they had discussed the so-called green cards and red cards since 2019. Out of 36 respondents, 18 replied that they had discussed the green cards, and nine Parliaments/Chambers replied that they had discussed the red card.

Chapter 2: European demographic trends and national and Union responses

The second chapter deals with questions of demography. It concentrates on the toolbox presented by the European Commission, entitled Demographic change in Europe (COM (2023) 577), and also maps relevant measures taken on the level of Member States.

The first question of the chapter is whether Parliaments/Chambers have discussed the Commission toolbox or not. Twenty two responded that it had not been discussed at all. In ten Parliaments/Chambers it has been discussed at the level of the committee on EU affairs; in seven, at the level of another committee or committees; and in three cases it has been discussed in plenary. Parliaments/Chambers were also asked if they had adopted any opinion or position on the toolbox, to which four replied yes.



In the second part of the second chapter, Parliaments/Chambers were asked questions on national measures regarding demographic issues. The first question let Parliaments/Chambers choose one or several of four pre-selected alternatives detailing what measures had been adopted to address some aspects of demographic issues. A majority of Parliaments/Chambers (22 out of 28 replies received)

replied that they had adopted targeted government support-schemes for newborns, while 20 indicated that they had adopted housing schemes for young families.. Somewhat fewer (13) indicated the adoption of a special tax-reductions system for large families, and nine replied that their Parliaments/Chambers had adopted legislation on the reduction of the personal income tax for families of more than three children.

Parliaments/Chambers were also asked if they have a committee responsible for demographic issues, to which 16 out of 34 responded affirmatively. Out of these, 14 are a standing or specialised committee; in one case, demography is dealt with in a subcommittee. Most Parliaments/Chambers indicated that demographic issues are not discussed on a regular basis.

Chapter 3: The enlargement of the European Union

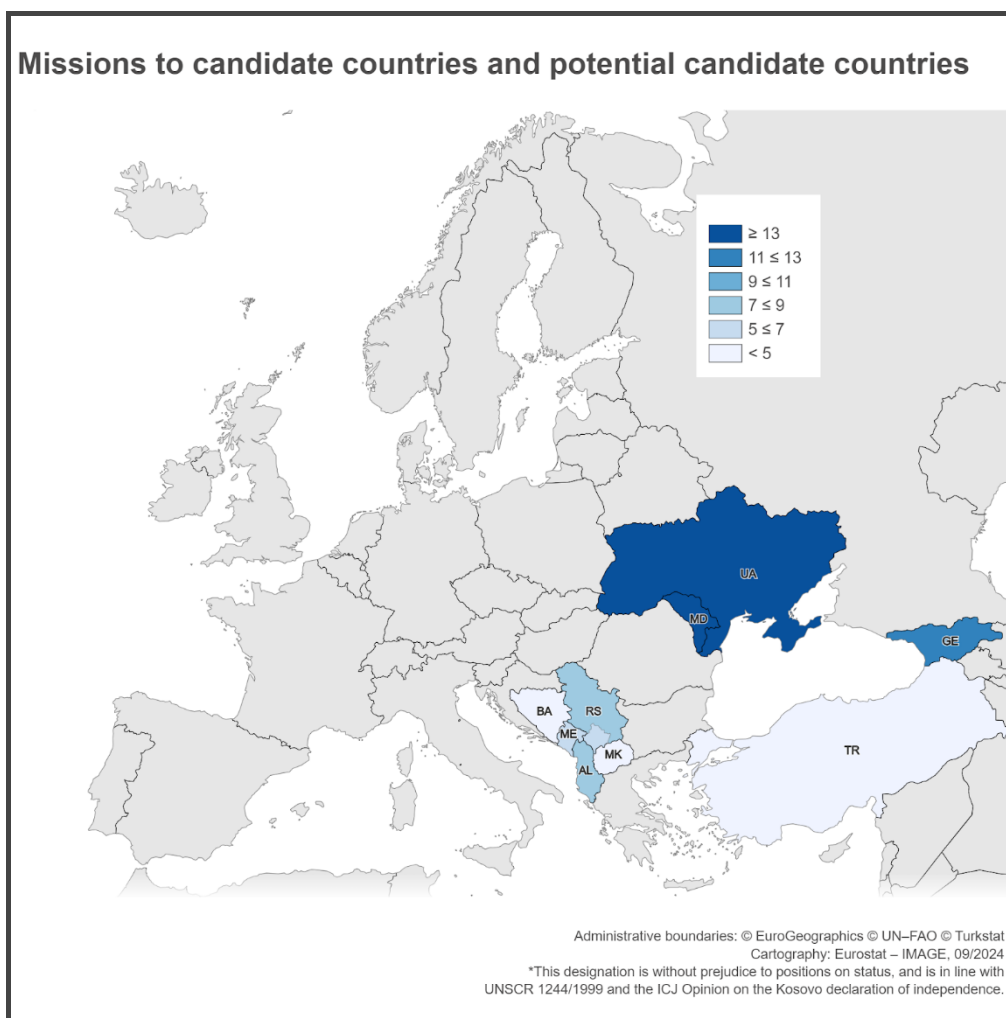
The third and last chapter of the Bi-annual Report focuses on the enlargement of the EU, and actions taken by the Parliaments/Chambers within this policy area.

The first three questions of the chapter concerns whether, and on what level and in what way, Parliaments/Chambers have discussed some of the recent Communications from the European Commission concerning enlargement. Thus, 28 Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they have discussed the European Commission annual enlargement package of 2023 (COM(2023) 690); most (24) had done so at the level of the committee on EU affairs. Seventeen Parliaments/Chambers had furthermore discussed the Communication on a new growth plan for the Western Balkans (COM(2023) 691) (out of these, 14 had done so at the level of the committee on EU affairs), and 22 indicated that they had discussed the Communication on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews (COM(2024) 146), mostly (in 20 cases) at the level of the committee on EU affairs.

Parliaments/Chambers were then asked whether cooperation with the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries exist, to which 34 Parliaments/Chambers responded affirmatively. Different types of cooperation were mentioned in the replies: formalised bilateral cooperation arrangements; political cooperation carried out through bilateral visits and meetings; parliamentary friendship groups and activities focused on democratic cooperation and parliamentary capacity development.

When asked whether they had organised any missions to the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries since 1 January 2023, 30 Parliaments/Chambers replied affirmatively. Eight Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had organised missions to the parliaments of five or more candidate and potential candidate countries; eight to two to four countries, ten to only one candidate or potential candidate country and four Parliaments/Chambers replied positively without providing further details. Based on the information provided, the following missions to the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries since 1 January 2023 had taken place: Albania (7), Bosnia and Herzegovina (4), Georgia (12), Moldova (14), Montenegro (5), North Macedonia (4), Serbia (8), Türkiye (3), Ukraine (16) and Kosovo¹ (5).

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



When asked whether they had hosted delegations from the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries since 1 January 2023, 33 Parliaments/Chambers replied affirmatively. Nine Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had hosted delegations from the parliaments of five or more candidate and potential candidate countries. Based on the information provided in the questionnaire the following delegations from the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries since 1 January 2023 had been hosted: Albania (10), Bosnia and Herzegovina (7), Georgia (15), Moldova (16), Montenegro (10), North Macedonia (6), Serbia (4), Türkiye (2), Ukraine (19) and Kosovo² (6).

Parliaments/Chambers were also asked if they had adopted a position on the future of enlargement of the EU. Out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers, 23 replied that they had. The last question concerned whether Parliaments/Chambers participate in EU-funded parliamentary capacity building programmes for the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries. A total of 19 Parliaments/Chambers replied affirmatively.

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

CHAPTER ONE

THE STATE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE YEAR OF INSTITUTIONAL TRANSITION AND THE 15-YEAR APPLICATION OF THE TREATY OF LISBON

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE 42nd BI-ANNUAL REPORT deals with the special characteristic of a transitional semester and provides some overview on how Parliaments/Chambers have engaged with the priorities of the next EU institutional cycle. In addition, it provides a stock-taking about the application of the Treaty of Lisbon, focused on the role of national Parliaments in EU affairs.

1. The relations of national Parliaments with certain European institutions

1.1. In the first question in this chapter, the Parliaments/Chambers were asked whether they participated in the nomination process of the Commissioner-designate proposed by their respective governments. Out of 37 replies 10 confirmed that they participated in the nomination process, whilst 25 replied negatively. Two (Finnish *Eduskunta* and the European Parliament) marked the question as not applicable.

The 10 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively were then asked to indicate at what level the nomination process of the candidates took place:

- Committee on EU affairs: 9
- Other committee/committees: 1
- Plenary: 2

Some Parliaments/Chambers provided extra information on the level of participation in the nomination process of the Commissioner-designate. The Austrian *Nationalrat* replied that the Main Committee of the *Nationalrat* is in charge of reaching an agreement with the government on the question of the appointment during a committee meeting which is not public. A public debate was however also held just before this meeting in the Main Committee on EU Affairs. The Main Committee has the same composition but different tasks from the Main Committee on EU Affairs.

Furthermore, the respondents were then asked to indicate in what way the nomination process of the candidates takes place:

- Debate at plenary level: 2
- Debate at committee level: 9
- By adopting a resolution: 1
- By adopting a mandate for the Government: 0

The Estonian *Riigikogu* and Lithuanian *Seimas* noted that in their parliaments, the matter is discussed during a plenary session. The Lithuanian *Seimas* also adopts a resolution. Three other Parliaments/Chambers (Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Polish *Sejm* and Slovenian *Državni zbor*) explained that the parliamentary procedure does not lead to an outcome which is binding for their governments, while the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor* highlighted that the opinion issued by the European Affairs Committee on the candidate must be taken into consideration before the final decision on the candidate is made by the government. The European Parliament remarked that while it is not involved in the nomination process of the Commissioners-designate *stricto sensu*, it highlighted its “ex-post” role in the confirmation of the Commission college as a whole, and its established practice of holding hearings with the individual candidates.

1.2. When asked whether the Parliament/Chamber participates in the nomination process of the candidates of the General Court and the Court of Justice proposed by their governments, 11 indicated ‘yes’, whilst 24 indicated ‘no’, out of 37 in total. The Finnish *Eduskunta* and the European Parliament responded that the question was not applicable.

The 11 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively were then asked to indicate at what level in their Parliament/Chamber the nomination process is handled:

- Committee on EU affairs: 7
- Other committee/committees: 4
- Plenary: 1

Only the Lithuanian *Seimas* indicated that it holds a debate at all three levels: in the committee on EU affairs, in another committee or committees, and in plenary. The Slovenian *Državni zbor* specified that it is the Committee for Public Office and Elections that holds a debate on the subject. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* remarked that the European Affairs Committee issues a report, which is sent to the government, after its hearing with the candidate. In the case of the German *Bundestag* the Committee on the Election of Judges, consisting of 16 competent state ministers and 16 members elected by the *Bundestag*, selects judges by secret ballot (simple majority). In the Austrian *Nationalrat* the procedure for appointing a member of the General Court and the Court of Justice is the same as for appointing the Austrian member of the Commission, and members of the Court of Auditors.

1.3. Nine out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers replied that they participate in the nomination process of the candidate for the Court of Auditors proposed by their government. Twenty six Parliaments/Chambers indicated ‘no’, with the Finnish *Eduskunta* and the European Parliament noting that this question is not applicable.

The nine Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively were then asked to indicate at what level the nomination process is handled:

- Committee on EU affairs: 6
- Other committee/committees: 2
- Plenary: 1

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate in what way the nomination process takes place:

- Debate at plenary level: 1
- Debate at committee level: 8
- By adopting a resolution: 1
- By adopting a mandate for the Government: 0

When looking at the different parliamentary procedures applied by the Parliaments/Chambers, only the Lithuanian *Seimas* stands out by holding a debate at all three levels: the committee on EU affairs, another committee or committees, as well as plenary, with the option of adopting a resolution as a result. The Danish *Folketing* explained that the national procedure is based on a practice according to which the Speaker requests the Public Accounts Committee for an opinion. The opinion is obtained by the committee from the National Audit Office. Furthermore, the Bureau of the parliament prepares a recommendation to the government about the appointment of the Danish member. In the Austrian *Nationalrat* the procedure for appointing a member of the Court of Auditors is the same as for appointing the Austrian member of the Commission, and members of the General Court and the Court of Justice. In the European Parliament’s consultation process it is the Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) that organises a hearing of designated candidates and makes a recommendation to

the parliament as to whether the nomination should be approved. A non-binding vote takes place in CONT and in plenary by secret ballot and the Council is informed of the result.

1.4. When answering the question of whether the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected in their country take part in meetings of their Parliament/Chamber, 26 out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers responded affirmatively. In nine cases the reply was negative. The Finnish *Eduskunta* and the European Parliament treated the question as not applicable.

The 26 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively indicated that the MEPs participate in the parliamentary meetings at the following levels:

- Committee on EU affairs: 25
- Other committee/committees: 9
- Plenary: 5

Some Parliaments/Chambers shared additional information. The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* underlined that the Bulgarian MEPs may participate in the plenary sittings without the right to vote. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* noted that the Dutch MEPs take part in the yearly State of the European Union debate in the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, adding that depending on their expertise they can also be invited to special committee meetings. In the Danish *Folketing* and the Spanish *Cortes Generales*, the national MEPs are invited to the meetings of the EU affairs committees several times a year to discuss important EU matters. In the case of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Hungarian MEPs may attend plenary, the EU Affairs committee and the other committee sittings provided that the agenda contains points on EU matters. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* explained that the Austrian MEPs have the right to participate in the meetings of the EU affairs committees of both chambers. In the Austrian *Nationalrat*, MEPs may be invited to some types of debates of sectoral committees, and to specific debates in plenary, with the possibility of taking the floor. In the Austrian *Bundesrat* the President may give the right to speak to the Austrian MEPs either at meetings of the sectoral committees or the plenary when the agenda concerns the EU matters. The Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants* clarified that the Belgian MEPs may participate in the work of the committees of the Chamber. However in practice, the Belgian MEPs do rarely participate in its works because of overlap with the European Parliament agenda. In case of the Finnish *Eduskunta* it was explained that the Finnish MEPs do not have a possibility to take part in all committee sittings, but they might be invited as experts to the hearings in the Grand Committee (i.e., the EU affairs committee) and occasionally to the sectoral committees. The Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* noted that apart from participating in sittings of the Committee on EU affairs and sectoral committees, the Cypriot MEPs can meet with the President of the House.

1.5. On the question of whether the Parliaments/Chambers discuss the government position to be taken on the European Council meetings in advance, 27 out of 36 indicated ‘yes’, whilst eight indicated ‘no’. The European Parliament noted that this question does not apply.

The 27 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively were then asked to indicate at what level the government position is discussed:

- Committee on EU affairs: 22
- Other committee/committees: 5
- Plenary: 9

Some Parliaments/Chambers shared additional information. The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* pointed out that the Committee on European Affairs may be briefed by the government on the European Council and EU Council meetings. The Slovenian *Državni zbor* explained that, when the agendas of the European Council meetings concern common foreign and security policy, the Committee on Foreign

Policy is engaged. In the Lithuanian *Seimas* the points on the agenda of the European Council and the General Affairs Council are debated at the joint sitting of the Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Moreover, the respondents were asked to indicate in what way it is discussed:

- Debate at plenary level: 9
- Debate at committee level: 19
- By adopting a resolution: 5
- By adopting a mandate for the Government: 8

In the Dutch *Eerste Kamer* the agendas and reports of the meetings of the European Council, accompanied by the government position, are debated in the European Affairs Committee meetings, with the possibility to put the report on the agenda of other committees when interest arises. If the committee decides to give a follow up, this is generally done through written consultation with the government. In the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* after the plenary debate, motions can be adopted that give direction to the government stance in the European Council. The Hungarian *Országgyűlés* discusses the government's position ahead of meetings in the European Council at in-camera meetings of the EU Consultative Body (consisting of the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers, the leaders of parliamentary groups and certain Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs).

1.6. Similarly to the previous question, 28 out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they discuss the government's briefing on the outcome of the European Council meetings. Nine Parliaments/Chambers answered 'no'.

The 28 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively were then asked to indicate at what level the Government position is discussed:

- Committee on EU affairs: 22
- Other committee/committees: 5
- Plenary: 11

According to the Rules of Procedure of the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, the Prime Minister may deliver a speech in the plenary session at the beginning of the sitting on the outcome of the European Council. In addition, the Minister for EU affairs is obliged to provide a briefing to the Committee on EU affairs. The Estonian *Riigikogu* explained that the European Union Affairs Committee always receives an overview of Estonia's positions from the Prime Minister before the European Council meeting, as well as a written review of the outcome which is discussed when requested by the committee.

In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate in what way it is discussed:

- Debate at plenary level: 11
- Debate at committee level: 20
- By adopting a resolution: 4

In the Austrian *Nationalrat*, members of the government may give a statement on EU matters in close temporal proximity to a meeting of the European Council or the Council of the EU in the plenary of the *Nationalrat* (twice a year). The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* receives written reports of the outcomes of the meetings of the European Council from the government. The reports are put on the agenda for the European Affairs committee meetings, with the possibility of further written consultation with the government. Similarly, written reports of the outcome of the European Council are provided to the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, but they are processed at the plenary sittings concerning the European Council meetings. In the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* a Ministerial statement is usually given by the Prime Minister in the plenary, followed by a debate. In the case of the European Parliament the President of

the European Council shall make a statement after each of its meetings, however it is up to the President of Parliament when, in what manner (full debate or brief and concise questions from MEPs) and whether to wind up the debate with a resolution.

2. The role of national Parliaments in EU affairs

2.1.1. When asked if the annual Commission Work Programme (CWP) is discussed in their Parliament/Chamber, 33 out of 37 respondents replied affirmatively. The CWP is almost always discussed at the level of the committee on EU affairs (31 out of 33 Parliaments/Chambers).

Moreover, in about half (16 out of 33) of the Parliaments/Chambers, the CWP is discussed in other committees. In just more than a third (12 out of 33) of the Parliaments/Chambers, the CWP is also discussed in plenary meetings.

It can be noted that the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*, Romanian *Senat* and Swedish *Riksdag* are the only Parliaments/Chambers in which the CWP is discussed in the committee on EU affairs, in another committee or committees, and in plenary meetings.

Correspondingly, the way the CWP is debated is mainly through a debate at committee level (29 out of 32 respondents) and at plenary level (11 out of 32 respondents). As a result of these debates, a resolution is adopted in 11 Parliaments/Chambers. However, some Parliaments/Chambers reported different terminologies for the resulting document: the “European Working Programme” for the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, an “opinion” for the Finnish *Eduskunta*, a “conclusion” for the Lithuanian *Seimas* and a “statement” for the Swedish *Riksdag*.

The European Parliament responded that its Conference of Committee Chairs submits a Summary Report to the Conference of Presidents, representing the outcome of the regular dialogue between parliamentary committees and their respective Commissioners and Commission Vice-Presidents. This Summary Report includes the positions adopted by all parliamentary committees, which assess the state of play of the CWP and provide input for the forthcoming CWP. It also includes horizontal issues and key committees' messages to the Commission regarding the current CWP and the CWP for the year to come.

2.1.2. In a similar way to the previous question, Parliaments/Chambers were asked if they had adopted any position regarding the adopted [EU Strategic agenda 2024-2029](#). A large majority (30 out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers) replied negatively to this question. Five Parliaments/Chambers replied that they had adopted a position.

The Finnish *Eduskunta* (committee on EU Affairs, sectoral committees and plenary), Italian *Senato della Repubblica* (committee on EU affairs and plenary), Latvian *Saeima* (committee on EU affairs) and Slovak *Národná rada* (committee on EU affairs) each adopted a resolution or approved of the government's position after debates at committee or plenary level. The Lithuanian *Seimas* signalled that the matter was going to be debated soon by the Committee on European Affairs.

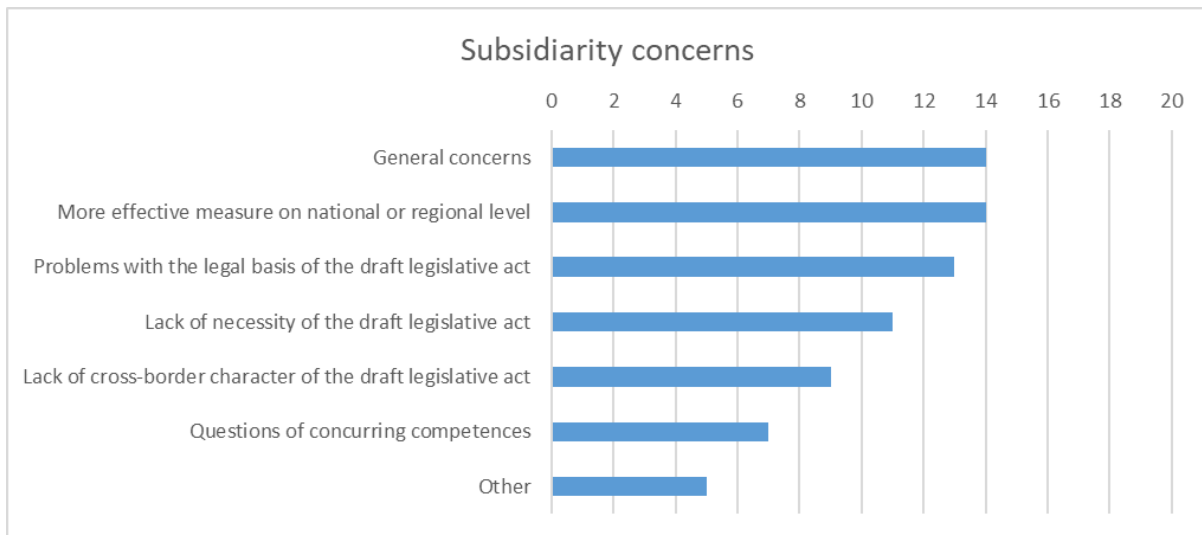
The Dutch *Eerste Kamer* detailed that it had not adopted a position on the strategic agenda 2024-2029. However, the Committee on EU Affairs had asked the government questions on the matter.

The European Parliament signalled that this topic had been discussed in a plenary meeting (April 2024) and that the Conference of Presidents could decide to add this in other plenary agendas.

2.2. Regarding the subsidiarity checks, as stipulated by [Protocol No. 2](#) on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, since 2019 more than half of the Parliaments/Chambers

(20 out of 36) responded they did apply them, while 15 responded they did not. This question did not apply to the European Parliament.

2.2.1. Following up on the previous question, respondents were asked what the main reasons were for the reported subsidiarity concerns (general concerns: 14; more effective measure on national or regional level: 14; problems with the legal basis of the draft legislative act: 13; lack of necessity of the draft legislative act: 11; lack of cross-border character of the draft legislative act: 9; questions of concurring competences: 7; other: 5). In the chart below, the answers from the 20 Parliaments/Chambers that replied positively can be seen:

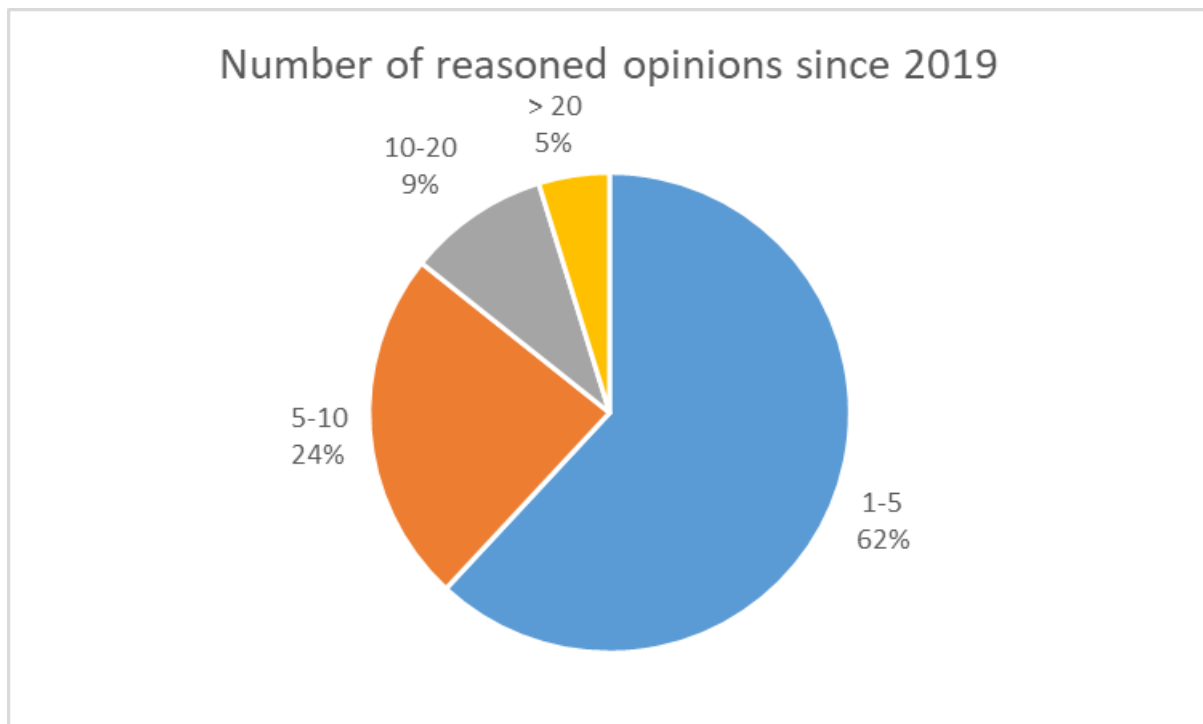


Some Parliaments/Chambers also noted other concerns they had raised in the framework of the subsidiarity checks. These were:

- lack of added value;
- lack of proportionality;
- too many delegated acts;
- national competence/matter is best regulated at the national level;
- insufficient reasoning on the part of the Commission to explain why the matter should be better dealt with at EU level than at national level.

2.2.2. When asked how many reasoned opinions had been adopted since 2019, two thirds (13 out of 21) of the Parliaments/Chambers that responded indicated an amount between one and five. Five Parliaments/Chambers responded between five and ten (Czech *Senát*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Italian *Camera dei deputati* and Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*), two Parliaments/Chambers responded between 10 and 20 (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and French *Sénat*) and one Parliament/Chamber responded more than 20 (Swedish *Riksdag*).

The Spanish *Cortes Generales* and German *Bundestag* noted that no reasoned opinions had been adopted since 2019.



2.3. Half of Parliaments/Chambers (18 out of 36 respondents) noted that they had discussed the issue of the so-called green card since 2019. The discussions were most often (15 out of 18 respondents) held at the level of the Committee on EU affairs. A few Parliaments/Chambers signalled additional committees had been involved, namely:

- the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*;
- the Danish *Folketing*, where the Committee on Standing Orders adopted a resolution on 8 July 2022, encouraging its parliament to work for the establishment of a green card, which would empower EU national parliaments to request the European Commission to table a legislative proposal;
- the German *Bundesrat*, where the matter had also been treated by the Special Working Group of the Länder.

The European Parliament treated the matter in its Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO).

Both the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie* and the European Parliament reported that the so-called green card had also been discussed at the plenary level.

The French *Sénat* referred to the working group initiated within COSAC under the French presidency, on the role of national parliaments in the European Union. The Spanish *Cortes Generales* similarly pointed to the fact that the so-called green card had been discussed, and supported.

The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, the Danish *Folketing* and the European Parliament were the only Parliaments/Chambers to adopt a resolution on the issue of the so-called green card.

The French *Sénat* referred to the report by the COSAC working group on the role of national parliaments in the European Union (June 2022), the German *Bundesrat* adopted a “report” as a result of the discussions within the Special Working Group of the Länder, and the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* noted that it had supported the so-called green card initiative of the French *Assemblée nationale* on Corporate Social Responsibility (October 2015).

2.4. Only nine Parliaments/Chambers, or one in four, had discussed the issue of the so-called red card since 2019: the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, German *Bundestag*, German *Bundesrat*, Hungarian

Országgyűlés, Italian *Camera dei deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Polish *Sejm*, Swedish *Riksdag* and the European Parliament.

These discussions were generally held in the committee on EU affairs, except for the Swedish *Riksdag* (Committee on the Constitution) and the European Parliament (AFCO).

The German *Bundesrat* adopted a “report” as a result of the discussions on the so-called red card within the Special Working Group of the *Länder*.

The Swedish *Riksdag* reported that in 2021, members of the *Riksdag* submitted motions that Sweden should work within the EU to introduce so-called red cards. The Committee on the Constitution found no reason to take such an initiative and rejected the proposals.

The European Parliament was the only Parliament/Chamber to have discussed the matter at plenary level.

2.5. The following additional information was provided by the European Parliament: AFCO has approved the Report on the “[Implementation of the Treaty provisions on national parliaments](#)”, adopted by the plenary on 22 September 2023. In it, the European Parliament focused on the role of National parliaments scrutinising governmental activity in European affairs and encouraged National parliaments to fully exercise their European functions to directly influence and scrutinise. Regarding the above-mentioned Protocol No. 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, Members suggested that all EU institutions and Member States agree on a common understanding of the two principles.

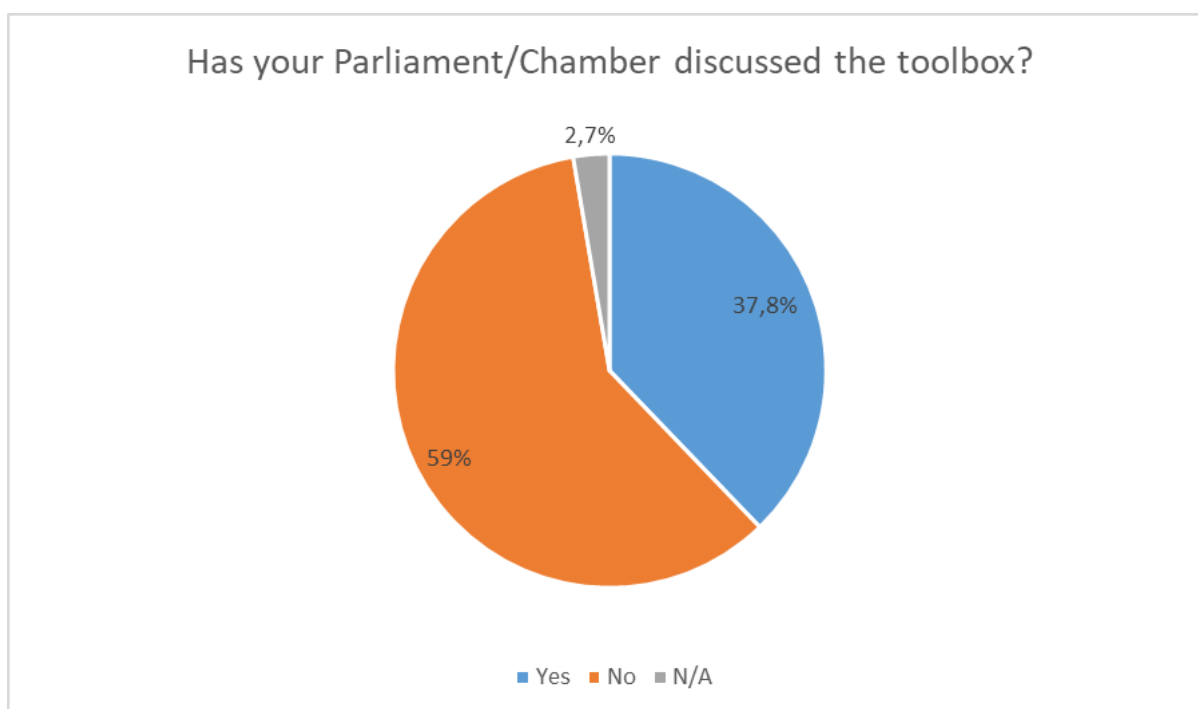
CHAPTER TWO

EUROPEAN DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND NATIONAL AND UNION RESPONSES

THE SECOND CHAPTER OF THE 42nd BI-ANNUAL REPORT concentrates on the toolbox presented by the European Commission, entitled Demographic change in Europe ([COM \(2023\) 577](#)). The aim of the Chapter is to present whether, and in what manner, national Parliaments have so far dealt with the toolbox (part one of Chapter II), as well as to indicate the relevant measures taken on the level of Member States, which focus on the economic and social aspects of demographic issues (part two of Chapter II).

3. The European Commission toolbox on Demographic change

3.1. The chart below highlights the ratio in which Parliaments/Chambers have discussed the toolbox:



When asked whether Parliaments/Chambers discussed the toolbox, the majority (22 out of 37) replied negatively. Ten responded that the toolbox was discussed at the level of the Committee on EU Affairs, whereas seven Parliaments/Chambers dealt with it in another committee or committees. Four Parliaments/Chambers (Czech *Senát*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat*) discussed it in both the European Union Affairs Committee and other committees. Only three Parliaments/Chambers, namely the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat* discussed the toolbox in plenary.

When it comes to the mode of discussing the toolbox, 13 respondents informed that it was debated at committee level; three Parliaments/Chambers replied that it was debated at plenary (Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat*); and four Parliaments/Chambers adopted a resolution (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Czech *Senát*, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat*).

Three Parliaments/Chambers specified different ways of discussing the toolbox. The Latvian *Saeima* adopted a National position, i.e. a mandate to the government, ahead of the General Affairs Council.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) of the European Parliament held an exchange of views on the toolbox with Ms Dubravka ŠUIČA, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography of the European Commission, on 7 November 2023. The Spanish *Cortes Generales* have selected committees devoted to the demographic challenge; the toolbox was also discussed in the scope of the Plan of 130 Measures to Address the Demographic Challenge, adopted in 2021 by the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge.

3.2. Regarding the question of whether Parliaments/Chambers adopted any opinion or position on the toolbox, only four replies were affirmative (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Latvian *Saeima*, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat*). Two Parliaments/Chambers indicated that this question was “not applicable” (Dutch *Eerste Kamer* and Italian *Senato della Repubblica*). A large majority of respondents (32) did not reply to this question.

The vast majority of Parliaments/Chambers (33) did not reply to the question of on what level the opinion or position on the toolbox was adopted. Four Parliaments/Chambers (Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Latvian *Saeima*, Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat*) replied that it was adopted at the level of the European Union Affairs Committee, whereas two Parliaments/Chambers (Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat*) mentioned that the toolbox was discussed both at the level of other committees and plenary. The Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* pointed out that the toolbox will be discussed by the Committee on European Union Affairs and other competent committees in the following weeks, which may result in the adoption of an opinion.

Asked to specify in what way the toolbox was discussed, the Romanian *Camera Deputaților* and Romanian *Senat* indicated a debate at plenary, a debate at committee level and adoption of a resolution, whereas the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* mentioned a debate at committee level and adoption of a resolution.

Three Parliaments/Chambers however mentioned other methods of adopting an opinion or position on the toolbox. The Slovak *Národná rada* informed that the European Affairs Committee took note of the document without a discussion. The European Parliament explained that no formal position was taken. However, following the exchange of views on the toolbox, the Chair of the EMPL Committee sent a letter to Vice-President ŠUIČA, underlining the significance of the issues raised and suggesting to maintain the topic high on the political agenda. The Latvian *Saeima* adopted a mandate for the government ahead of the General Affairs Council.

3.3 The second part of Chapter II seeks to map Parliaments/Chambers work in general terms regarding demographic issues by asking if the different Parliaments/Chambers have ever adopted:

- a. targeted government support-schemes for newborn babies;
- b. a special tax-reduction system designed for large families (i.e. families with more than two children);
- c. any kind of family housing allowance programme for leasehold or home ownership of young couples, including government support schemes and low-cost state-subsidised loan schemes;
- d. personal income tax exemptions for mothers or fathers of more than three children.

A summary of Parliaments/Chambers responses is displayed in the table below. Data shows that a majority of Parliaments/Chambers (22) did adopt targeted government support-schemes for newborns. A special tax-reductions system for large families was adopted by 13 Parliaments/Chambers. Twenty Parliaments/Chambers replied they had adopted housing schemes for young families and nine Parliaments/Chambers also added that legislation was adopted on the reduction of the personal income tax for families of more than three children.

A number of 28 responses were submitted to this question in total, whereas 10 Parliaments/Chambers did not answer to this question.

Has your Parliament/Chamber adopted any measures addressing the following aspects of demographic issues?

	Newborns	Tax-reduction	Housing	Personal income tax
Austrian <i>Nationalrat</i> and <i>Bundesrat</i>				
Belgian <i>Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants</i>				
Belgian <i>Senaat/Sénat</i>				
Bulgarian <i>Narodno sabranie</i>				
Croatian <i>Hrvatski sabor</i>				
Cypriot <i>Vouli ton Antiprosopon</i>				
Czech <i>Poslanecká sněmovna</i>				
Czech <i>Senát</i>				
Danish <i>Folketing</i>				
Estonian <i>Riigikogu</i>				
Finnish <i>Eduskunta</i>				
French <i>Assemblée nationale</i>				
French <i>Sénat</i>				
German <i>Bundestag</i>				
German <i>Bundesrat</i>				
Greek <i>Vouli ton Ellinon</i>				
Hungarian <i>Országgyűlés</i>				
Irish <i>Houses of the Oireachtas</i>				
Italian <i>Camera dei Deputati</i>				
Italian <i>Senato della Repubblica</i>				
Latvian <i>Saeima</i>				
Lithuanian <i>Seimas</i>				
Luxembourgian <i>Chambre des Députés</i>				
Maltese <i>Kamra tad-Deputati</i>				
Dutch <i>Tweede Kamer</i>				
Dutch <i>Eerste Kamer</i>				
Polish <i>Sejm</i>				
Polish <i>Senat</i>				
Portuguese <i>Assembleia da República</i>				
Romanian <i>Camera Deputaţilor</i>				
Romanian <i>Senat</i>				
Slovak <i>Národná rada</i>				
Slovenian <i>Državni zbor</i>				
Slovenian <i>Državni svet</i>				
Spanish <i>Cortes Generales</i>				
Swedish <i>Riksdag</i>				
European Parliament				
Total Parliaments/Chambers	22	13	20	9

The Parliaments/Chambers which replied to this question were invited to further elaborate in detail on their family policies. A total of 26 responses were submitted, where Parliaments/Chambers illustrated their national situation, mainly focusing on government initiatives and policies. Responses generally concerned maternity or paternity allowances and housing schemes for young families. It can be noted that government policies tend to favour larger families with the eligible benefits expanding after a new child is born into the family. For the full responses please consult the annex attached to the report.

3.4. When Parliaments/Chambers were asked if they have a committee responsible for demographic issues, 16 respondents (out of the total 34 who replied) confirmed having such a committee, whereas 18 replied negatively.

Out of the 16 Parliaments/Chambers that have a committee responsible for demographic issues, 14 indicated that this is a standing or specialised committee. Demographic issues are dealt with in a subcommittee only in the Latvian *Saeima*.

In general, relevant committees in Parliaments/Chambers do not debate demographic issues on a regular basis. For instance, the Estonian *Riigikogu* has monthly debates. The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati* and Italian *Senato della Repubblica* hold discussions bimonthly, while the German *Bundesrat* and Romanian *Senate* revisits the issue on a quarterly basis. Demographic issues are on the agenda at each committee meeting in the Latvian *Saeimas* and the Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*.

Out of 31 respondents, 12 did not give an answer to the frequency of demography-related committee-debates. Those who left comments (in total 10 responses) highlighted that the competences regarding demography are dispersed between different committees, and/or the responsible committees only have meetings on *ad hoc* basis.

3.5 Parliaments/Chambers were invited to leave their observations and remarks on the subject of demography unrelated to any of the questions above. In total, 20 Parliaments/Chambers did so.

As a general observation drawn from the answers given in this Chapter, the degree of parliamentary involvement in demographic issues shows a wide range of divergence. There are Parliaments/Chambers where this involvement is low due to the division of competences. Both the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants* and Belgian *Senaat/Sénat* noted that certain competences are devolved to the regional or community level. Thus, the communities are competent for demography-related matters.

In other Parliaments/Chambers demography is a rather horizontal issue, which is examined from the perspective of other policy areas. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* noted that there is no specific committee either in the Austrian *Nationalrat*, nor in the Austrian *Bundesrat* which would be responsible for demographic issues. Demography is hence discussed by various committees, as is also the case of the Lithuanian *Seimas*, where these matters are addressed in a number of committees horizontally, as far as they are related to their areas of activity. The same goes for the Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, where demography is addressed either in the Committee on Social Policy, or in the Committee on Health Care. Even the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport may deal with demographic issues within its agenda. Demographic issues are dealt with in several committees of the Finnish *Eduskunta* as well, but national measures referred to in the framework of this questionnaire are attributed to the Social Affairs and Health Committee. In the Danish *Folketing*, demographic issues are discussed by several committees, including the Children's and Education Committee, the Employment Committee, the Senior Citizens Committee and the Social Affairs Committee. In the Slovak *Národná rada*, issues related to demography may be

discussed in the Social Affairs Committee, the Public Administration Committee, or the Financial Affairs Committee.

Again in some other Parliaments/Chambers demography is an explicitly defined competence of certain committees: in most Parliaments/Chambers where this is the case the issue of demography is dealt with in an already existing committee. In some cases a Parliament/Chamber has chosen to establish dedicated committees for demography. As per the answers provided, the issue of demography is dealt with by:

- the standing committee on Social Affairs Committee in the Estonian *Riigikogu*;
- the standing committee on Social Affairs in the French *Assemblée nationale*;
- the standing committee on Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in the German *Bundestag*;
- the standing Committee on Social Affairs and the special permanent committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights in the Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*;
- the standing committee on Family, Solidarity, Living Together, Reception, Gender Equality and Diversity in the Luxembourgian *Chambre des Députés*;
- the standing committee on Social Affairs and the standing committee on Family Affairs in the Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*;
- the standing committee on Health and Family Committee in the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor*;
- the standing committee on Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge in the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados*;
- the standing committee on Depopulation and Demographic Challenge Committee in the Spanish *Senado de España*.

The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, French *Assemblée nationale*, French *Sénat*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Polish *Senat* and Slovenian *Državni zbor* all indicated having a standing committee on demographic issues.

In some Parliaments/Chambers special or ad hoc committees were established to address contemporary demographic trends. In the Netherlands, on request of the Dutch Government and the Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, a special “State Commission Demographic Developments 2050” was established in 2022. The independent State Commission has investigated the social consequences of population changes over the next three decades. In doing so, it has looked at the size of the population and the effects of, among other things, ageing and migration. In its report issued on 15 January 2024, the State Commission advises on possible policy responses and on what effects these could have.

The Estonian *Riigikogu* formed a Study Committee to Solve the Demographic Crisis in 2017. A total of 53 study committee meetings were held. In addition, a working group on the fundamentals of population policy convened, which included over 40 scientists, interest group representatives, and officials. The purpose of the Study Committee was to seek solutions to the issue of a declining population, and its main outcomes include the development of the document "Fundamentals of Population Policy Until 2035" and the recommendations presented in the final report for resolving the population crisis. The *Riigikogu* Study Committee presented its final report with proposals for addressing demographic issues to the parliament during 2019 in the parliament's plenary session.

On 12 April 2024 Italy organised a specific conference on demographic issues, deemed of utmost importance. The conference concluded that in order to avoid the collapse of Western societies due to low birth rates, public spending must be aimed at supporting families and work-life balance. The Italian *Camera dei Deputati* further added that a parliamentary inquiry committee into the economic and social effects of the demographic transition was established in July 2024. The parliamentary

inquiry committee was set up temporarily for the current legislative term deal with issues like depopulation; ageing; longevity and the resulting economic and social effects; housing; residential mobility; the labour market; migration flows; the distribution of social and health services among others.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE THIRD CHAPTER OF THE 42nd BI-ANNUAL REPORT seeks to highlight the different actions taken by the Parliaments/Chambers when it comes to policies connected with the enlargement of the EU, from discussing the European Commission's enlargement package and relevant Communications, to the visiting and hosting of delegations from the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries and any existing cooperation with these parliaments, including participation in EU-funded parliamentary capacity building programmes.

4.1 When asked whether the Parliament/Chamber discussed the European Commission annual enlargement package of 2023 ([COM\(2023\)690](#)), 28 Parliaments/Chambers indicated 'yes', whilst nine indicated 'no'.

The 28 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively were then asked to indicate at what level they discussed the package:

- Committee on EU affairs: 24
- Other committee/committees: 11 (including Committee on Foreign affairs: 5)
- Plenary: 7

It is to be noted that in those Parliaments/Chambers where it was discussed at the level of the plenary, it was also discussed either at the level of the Committee on European affairs or another committee or committees. In the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Romanian *Senat* the package was discussed at all three levels. The Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati* indicated that it has not been discussed, but added that the topic will be discussed in the coming weeks.

When asked about the way the package was discussed, the replies were the following:

- Debate at plenary level: 7
- Debate at committee level: 25
- By adopting a resolution: 7

The German *Bundestag*, German *Bundesrat* and Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* indicated that they had held a debate at both the plenary level and committee level, whilst also adopting a resolution. Under the option 'other' the Latvian *Saeima* added that the parliament approved the government's position in the European Affairs Committee. The European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu* decided to support the position presented by the government, with some additions. The decisions of the European Union Affairs Committee are binding on the government. The Lithuanian *Seimas* and European Parliament referred to a statement which had been adopted in their respective parliament. The European Parliament added that recommendations had been adopted as well.

In addition to these answers the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants* added that the Committee on Foreign Affairs only addressed the enlargement package of 2023 during the discussion on the General Expenditure Budget for the 2024 budget year - in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, although the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants* did not adopt a formal position on enlargement, the topic of enlargement was raised several times in the [Contributions of the LXXI COSAC](#) adopted during the Belgian Presidency (in paragraphs 14, 37 and 73).

The Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* added that this package has been earmarked for discussion in the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs.

4.2 The Commission Communication on a new growth plan for the Western Balkans, ([COM\(2023\)691](#)) was discussed in 17 Parliaments/Chambers. Nineteen Parliaments/Chambers did not discuss it. The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* indicated ‘no answer’, clarifying that it was addressed by the Speaker during a meeting with the Speaker and Members of the Bosnian *Parlamentarna skupština*.

The 17 Parliaments/Chambers indicated that it was discussed at the following levels:

- Committee on EU affairs: 14
- Other committee/committees: 7 (including Committee on Foreign affairs: 3)
- Plenary: 5

It is to be noted that in the German *Bundestag*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Romanian *Senat*, the Communication was discussed in plenary, as well as either in the Committee on European affairs or another committee or committees. In the Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Romanian *Senat* the Communication was discussed at all three levels. The Finnish *Eduskunta*, Slovenian *Državni zbor* and European Parliament specified that it was handled at the level of the Foreign Affairs Committee. In the European Parliament it was also discussed at the Committee on Budgets (BUDG).

When asked about the way the package was discussed, the replies were the following:

- Debate at plenary level: 5
- Debate at committee level: 16
- By adopting a resolution: 5

The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* indicated all three options. The German *Bundestag*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Romanian *Senat* indicated that it was discussed at plenary level, whilst it was also discussed at committee level. The Latvian *Saeima* added that the parliament approved the government’s position in the European Affairs Committee. The European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu* decided to support the position presented by the government. The decisions of the European Union Affairs Committee are binding on the government. The European Parliament added that the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and BUDG Committees were jointly responsible for the legislative process to adopt [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1449 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans](#). The French *Assemblée nationale* mentioned the adoption of an information report in April 2024.

In addition to these answers the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants* added that the Committee on Foreign affairs only addressed the new growth plan for the Western Balkans during the discussion on the General Expenditure Budget for the 2024 budget year - in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, although the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants* did not adopt a formal position on enlargement, the topic of enlargement was raised several times in the [Contributions of the LXXI COSAC](#) adopted during the Belgian Presidency (in paragraphs 14, 37 and 73).

The Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* added that this Communication has been earmarked for discussion in the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs.

The Swedish *Riksdag* added that the document was considered in the Statement by the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the Commission's Work Programme for 2024. After the statement was considered by the Committee, it was debated in the chamber.

4.3 Twenty two out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers replied that they discussed the Commission Communication on pre-enlargement reforms and policy reviews ([COM\(2024\)146](#)). Fourteen Parliaments/Chambers indicated 'no', whilst the Finnish *Eduskunta* and Italian *Senato della Repubblica* indicated 'no answer'.

The 22 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively indicated that it was discussed at the following levels:

- Committee on EU affairs: 20
- Other committee/committees: 8 (including Committee on Foreign affairs: 1)
- Plenary: 5

The German *Bundesrat*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Romanian *Senat* discussed the Commission Communication at the plenary level, committee on EU affairs and another committee or committees. The Slovenian *Državni zbor* clarified that they also discussed it at the level of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

When asked about the way the package was discussed, the replies were the following:

- Debate at plenary level: 6
- Debate at committee level: 18
- By adopting a resolution: 4

The German *Bundesrat* and Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* discussed it at all levels and added that they also adopted a resolution. Under the option 'other' the Latvian *Saeima* added that the parliament approved the government's position in the European Affairs Committee. The Dutch *Tweede Kamer* indicated that they appointed three rapporteurs to gather information and had a meeting with the Dutch *Eerste Kamer*.

The Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon* added that this Communication has been earmarked for discussion in the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs.

When looking at questions 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, comparing which Parliaments/Chambers indicated if they adopted a resolution on the enlargement package or on the Commission Communications, the following additional information appears:

- The Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Slovak *Národná rada* adopted a resolution on all three.
- The Finnish *Eduskunta* and German *Bundesrat* adopted a resolution on two out of three.
- The Czech *Senát*, German *Bundestag* and European Parliament adopted a resolution on one out of three.

4.4 When answering the question of whether cooperation with the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries existed, 34 Parliaments/Chambers responded affirmatively. Only three Parliaments/Chambers noted that no cooperation existed: the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants*, Czech *Senát* and Slovenian *Državni svet*.

Five Parliaments/Chambers indicated that formalised bilateral cooperation arrangements, such as memoranda of understanding, had been signed between them and the parliaments of candidate and

potential candidate countries: the Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati* and Hungarian *Országgyűlés*.

Twelve Parliaments/Chambers answered this question by referring to the political cooperation carried out through bilateral visits and meetings, including multilateral meetings. These answers mentioned political contacts at various levels ranging from the Speakers to parliamentary committees, interparliamentary delegations, parliamentary groups, bilateral contacts by individual Members of Parliament, as well as visits in the context of election observation. As examples of concrete initiatives that allowed this type of political cooperation, the Hungarian *Országgyűlés* referred to the “Conference of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe” held every two years. The German *Bundestag* answered that it had hosted the Parliamentary Dimension to the “Ukraine Recovery Conference”, as well as the Parliamentary Dimension of the “Berlin Process” with Members of Parliament and staffers from the parliaments of the six Western Balkans countries.

Some of those who replied answered the question by referring to parliamentary friendship groups as a vehicle for political cooperation with candidate and potential candidate countries. This was mentioned by the Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Slovenian *Državni zbor*.

The remaining Parliaments/Chambers answered this question by mentioning activities focused on democratic cooperation and parliamentary capacity development, often carried out at staff level, such as fellowship programmes, training or study visits. These activities were mentioned by the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Polish *Sejm*, Polish *Senat*, Swedish *Riksdag*, and the European Parliament. Some concrete examples of these initiatives include the “Western Balkans Forum of Secretary Generals” mentioned by the Slovenian *Državni zbor*, or the “Parliamentary Advisers Course” hosted in recent occasions by the Spanish *Cortes Generales*.

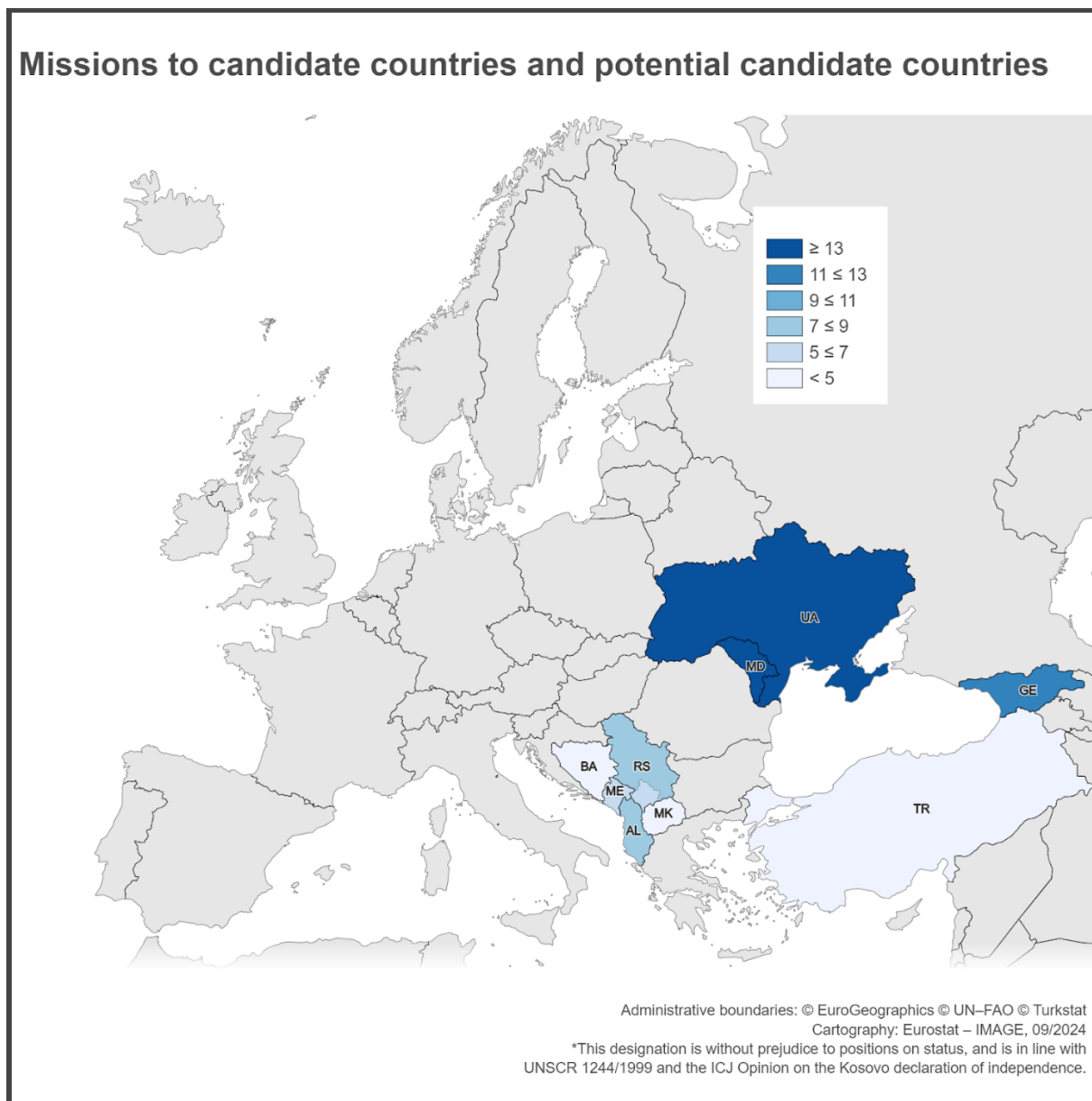
The Lithuanian *Seimas* noted an agreement of cooperation with the International Republican Institute (IRI) concerning support for Eastern Partnership countries. The Portuguese *Assembleia da República* also noted cooperation activities with Albania in the context of an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Support Program, as well as cooperation with Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the framework of specific OSCE projects and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Another concrete initiative highlighted in the replies was a small internship programme for staff from the Ukrainian *Verkhovna Rada* run jointly by the French *Sénat*, German *Bundesrat* and Polish *Senat* and in which each of the three chambers welcomes a colleague from Ukrainian Parliament and hosts them for a week.

Various parliaments, such as the Belgian *Senaat/Sénat*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Danish *Folketing*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and Slovak *Národná rada* replied positively to this question without providing specific details or referring to EU-funded cooperation initiatives, which are detailed in question 4.8 in this Chapter.

4.5 When asked whether they had organised any missions to the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries since 1 January 2023, 30 Parliaments/Chambers replied affirmatively. Six Parliaments/Chambers answered negatively: Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants*, German *Bundesrat*, Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Polish *Senat* and Slovenian *Državni svet*. The Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* indicated that this question was “Not Applicable”.

Among those that replied positively, there were also differences in the number of missions highlighted in their answers. Eight Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had organised missions to the parliaments of five or more candidate and potential candidate countries (although in some cases there

were various missions to the same country). This was noted by the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, Finnish *Eduskunta*, French *Assemblée nationale*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Lithuanian *Seimas* and the European Parliament.



Eight Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had organised missions to the parliaments of two to four candidate and potential candidate countries (although in some cases there were various missions to the same country): the Danish *Folketing*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, French *Sénat*, German *Bundestag*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Polish *Sejm*, Romanian *Senat* and Slovenian *Državni zbor*.

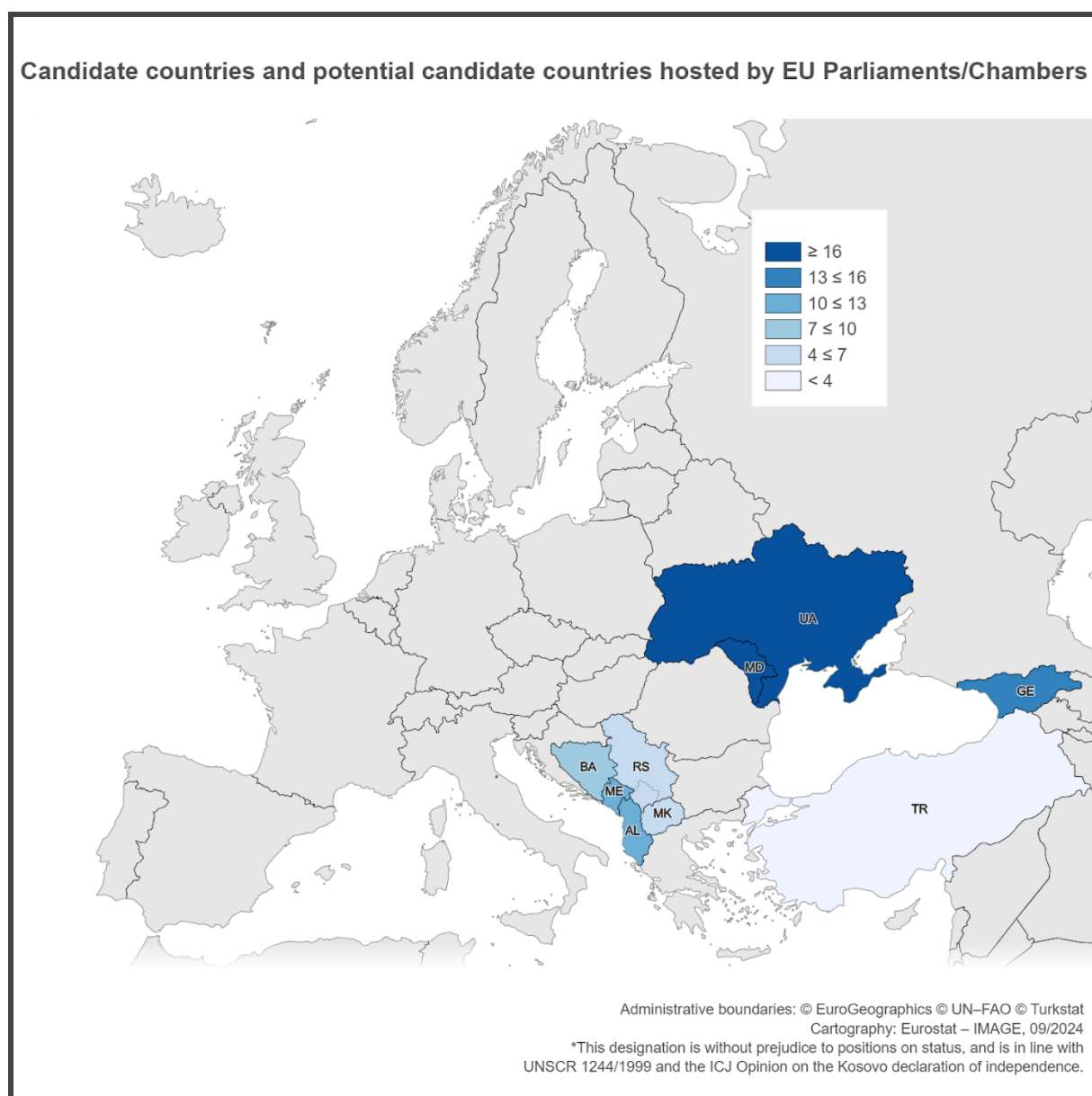
Ten Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had organised missions to the parliament of only one candidate or potential candidate country (although in some cases there were various missions to the same country): the Belgian *Senaat/Sénat*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Luxembourgian *Chambre des Députés*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República*, Slovak *Národná rada*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Swedish *Riksdag*.

Lastly, four Parliaments/Chambers replied positively and indicated that missions had been organised to the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries without providing further details: the Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Czech *Senát*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon* and Latvian *Saeima*.

Based on the information provided in the questionnaire, the following missions to the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries took place since 1 January 2023: Albania (7), Bosnia and Herzegovina (4), Georgia (12), Moldova (14), Montenegro (6), North Macedonia (4), Serbia (8), Türkiye (3), Ukraine (16) and Kosovo³ (4). The map above shows this information.

4.6

When asked whether they had hosted delegations from the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries since 1 January 2023, 33 Parliaments/Chambers replied affirmatively, whereas four answered negatively: the Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, German *Bundesrat*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer*, Slovenian *Državni svet*.



³ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Nine Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had hosted delegations from the parliaments of five or more candidate and potential candidate countries (in some cases various delegations from the same country were hosted): the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna*, German *Bundestag*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Romanian *Senat*, Spanish *Cortes Generales*, Swedish *Riksdag* and the European Parliament.

Fourteen Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had hosted delegations from the parliaments of two to four candidate and potential candidate countries (in some cases various delegations from the same country were hosted): the Danish *Folketing*, Estonian *Riigikogu*, French *Assemblée nationale*, French *Sénat*, Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Lithuanian *Seimas*, Luxembourgian *Chambre des Députés*, Dutch *Eerste Kamer*, Polish *Sejm*, Polish *Senat*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Slovenian *Državni zbor*.

Three Parliaments/Chambers indicated they had hosted delegations from the parliament of only one of the candidate and potential candidate countries (although in some cases various delegations from the same country were hosted): the Finnish *Eduskunta*, Portuguese *Assembleia da República* and Slovak *Národná rada*.

Finally, seven Parliaments/Chambers replied positively to the question of whether they had hosted delegations from candidate and potential candidate countries but without providing any additional details: the Belgian *Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants*, Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Czech *Senát*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Latvian *Saeima*, and Maltese *Kamra tad-Deputati*.

Based on the information provided in the questionnaire, the following delegations from the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries had been hosted in the member states since 1 January 2023: Albania (10), Bosnia and Herzegovina (7), Georgia (15), Moldova (16), Montenegro (10), North Macedonia (6), Serbia (5), Türkiye (2), Ukraine (19) and Kosovo⁴ (5). The map above displays this information.

4.7 Parliaments/Chambers were asked whether or not they adopted a position on the future enlargement of the EU. Twenty-three out of 37 Parliaments/Chambers replied that they adopted a position. Thirteen respondents indicated ‘no’ and the Irish *Houses of the Oireachtas* indicated ‘no answer’ whilst noting that a report is planned to be published in September 2024.

The 23 Parliaments/Chambers that replied affirmatively indicated that it was discussed at the following levels:

- Committee on EU affairs: 15
- Other committee/committees: 10
- Plenary: 15

The Bulgarian *Narodno sabranie*, Italian *Senato della Repubblica*, Romanian *Camera Deputaţilor* and Romanian *Senat* indicated that it was discussed at the plenary level, committee on EU affairs and another committee or committees. Under ‘other’ the European Parliament indicated that it was the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs that discussed it. In the Danish *Folketing* they adopted the mandate for the government concerning the negotiations. In the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* high level meetings were organised. In the Finnish *Eduskunta* the Committee on Foreign Affairs was involved.

⁴ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

When asked about the way the package was discussed, the replies were the following:

- Debate at plenary level: 14
- Debate at committee level: 17
- By adopting a resolution: 17

Twelve Parliaments/Chambers indicated that they discussed it on committee level, plenary level and adopted a resolution. The Latvian *Saeima* added that the parliament approved the government's position in the European Affairs Committee. The European Parliament referenced several reports, whilst the Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat* issued a joint statement and the Swedish *Riksdag* issued a statement. The European Union Affairs Committee of the Estonian *Riigikogu* decided to give an approval to the position presented by the government. The decisions of the European Union Affairs Committee are binding on the government.

4.8 The last question in this chapter asked whether the Parliament/Chamber participate in EU-funded parliamentary capacity building programmes for the parliaments of candidate and potential candidate countries. A total of 19 Parliaments/Chambers replied affirmatively. Fourteen Parliaments/Chambers replied negatively and four Parliaments/Chambers replied that the question was “Not Applicable”.

Three EU-funded programmes are regularly referred to in the replies of the different Parliament/Chambers as the relevant EU programmes in which they took part: (a) the organisation of EU-supported twinning programmes, (b) the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument of the European Commission, and (c) “INTER PARES: Parliaments in Partnership”, the EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments.

The Austrian *Nationalrat* and *Bundesrat*, and the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*, indicated that they participated in all three types of EU-funded programmes: twinning projects, TAIEX and INTER PARES with candidate and potential candidate countries (as well as other third countries). The Croatian *Hrvatski sabor*, Czech *Poslanecká sněmovna* and Lithuanian *Seimas* mentioned their participation in both twinning programmes and INTER PARES.

The INTER PARES programme was mentioned by five Parliaments/Chambers when replying on the EU funded parliamentary capacity building programmes for candidate and potential candidate countries in which they participate: the Cypriot *Vouli ton Antiprosopon*, Danish *Folketing*, French *Sénat*, Slovenian *Državni zbor* and Swedish *Riksdag*. Five other Parliaments/Chambers referred to twinning projects: the Belgian *Senaat/Sénat*, Greek *Vouli ton Ellinon*, Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, Dutch *Tweede Kamer* and Portuguese *Assembleia da República*.

The Estonian *Riigikogu* and French *Assemblée nationale* mentioned TAIEX in their replies. The German *Bundestag* replied affirmatively to this question but provided no additional details. In its reply, the European Parliament noted that, as an EU institution, it organises its own capacity building programmes for enlargement countries, but that it has also taken part in capacity building programmes organised by other EU institutions or EU funded projects such as INTER PARES.