

**STANDING
COMMITTEE**

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NATO Parliamentary Assembly

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1. During its meeting in Ljubljana, the Standing Committee discussed relations with the European Parliament (EP). This stemmed from proposals made to Assembly President Pierre Lellouche in a meeting at the Ljubljana Session by Mr Elmar Brok, Chairman of the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs.
2. In view of a lack of consensus during the Standing Committee meeting, the International Secretariat was charged with summarizing the discussion and examining the issues of reciprocity and asymmetry between the EP and the Assembly.
3. The European Parliament has a unique status with the NATO PA. Following a decision taken by the Standing Committee in Brussels in March 2000 and ratified by the full Assembly in the plenary meeting in Budapest in May 2000, the EP can nominate a 10-member delegation to participate in Assembly Sessions, and the EP delegation's rights are almost identical to those of Associate Members: the difference is that members of the EP delegation are not entitled to submit amendments to texts.
4. Thus, the EP delegation's rights are as follows:
 - Full speaking rights in both committee and plenary meetings;
 - At the invitation of Committee Chairmen, EP delegates might be given the right to present reports;
 - Participation in committee and sub-committee visits, Rose-Roth and Mediterranean seminars;
 - The right to present texts (i.e.: declarations, resolutions, recommendations, orders, and opinions);
 - No right to present amendments to Assembly policy recommendations;
 - No right to vote.
5. Since the 2000 Annual Session, the EP has sent a delegation to all Assembly sessions. In addition, the February meetings in Brussels have frequently included a meeting with the EP. However, MEPs have only occasionally participated in Committee visits.
6. In exchange, the Assembly is able to send a full delegation consisting of one or two members from each national delegation to selected high-level hearings of the EP. After a period of receiving invitations to such hearings only sporadically, the Assembly is now notified systematically of EP hearings. However, notification of the content of meetings arrives at relatively short notice – typically less than two weeks – and past experience showed that few Assembly members are able to make the journey to Brussels for such meetings, which often last only half a day. That said, when NATO PA members have participated in hearings, their presence has been recognized and the chair has been generous in allocating speaking to NATO PA participants.
7. During the Standing Committee meeting in Ljubljana, President Pierre Lellouche expressed his wish to increase co-operation between the Assembly and the EP. He noted that co-operation with the EP was crucial in the area of ESDP. He also highlighted the increasing contacts between the United States and the European Union.
8. The President also observed that, following the creation of the new status of Mediterranean Associate Members, these delegations now had more rights at sessions than the delegation from the EP. Specifically, Associate Members and Mediterranean Associate Members had the right to propose amendments to Assembly texts while Members of the EP did not. President Lellouche believed that this was an anomaly which the Assembly should address.
9. The President therefore proposed that at Sessions, the delegation from the EP should have the same rights as Associate Members and Mediterranean Associate Members, namely that they should be able to present amendments to Assembly policy recommendations. He also made another proposal, which he had discussed with Elmar Brok, Chairman of the European

Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee: as the EP had a 10-person delegation to the NATO PA, the Assembly should also appoint a delegation or special group which would meet twice a year with the EP. The President finally remarked that he and Mr Brok agreed that the two organisations should look for opportunities for conducting joint activities.

10. A majority of members, while commenting on the need for the Assembly's relationship with the EP, did not feel the need to enhance its status in the Assembly. The main objections were:

- Granting the EP the right to submit amendments would give too much influence in Assembly decisions, and in some cases EP delegates were seen already as being disproportionately dominant in Committee discussions;
- The fact that many EP represented an organization rather than a state, and that amendments should remain the prerogative of national representatives. Also, the mandates of MEPs and national MPs were quite different;
- In view of the questionable value of meetings with the EP which had taken place in the context of the February meetings in Brussels, some members were unenthusiastic about additional meetings with the EP;
- It was also suggested that contacts with the EP should be managed through existing Assembly bodies – such as a Committee – rather than by creating a new body.

11. As noted earlier, it was decided that the Standing Committee would look again at the issues discussed during its Ljubljana meeting, and the International Secretariat was asked to see if ways could be found to address the questions of reciprocity and asymmetry between the Assembly and the EP. However, the reality is that as a directly elected body, the European Parliament is very different from the Assembly in terms of membership, mandate and working practices. This basic asymmetry makes direct reciprocity impossible to achieve.

12. While institutionalizing deeper cooperation may be important for political or "symbolic" reasons, the above mentioned asymmetry makes it difficult to identify arrangements that would represent a practical gain, beyond the exchange of views that is achieved under existing arrangements between the EP and the Assembly. Current institutional arrangements allow for further cooperation on a pragmatic case-by-case basis when the circumstances are deemed to require it. Institutionalising additional meetings, which to date, members have shown no great enthusiasm to attend, risks creating extra activities for little perceptible gain.

13. In the light of the above considerations, the Standing Committee could consider the following options:

(a) Should the EP delegation be given the right to submit amendments to Assembly texts?

14. While it might seem anomalous that all Associate and Mediterranean Associate members can submit amendments but members of the EP cannot, it could equally be argued that there is no reason why those nations who happen to be in the European Union should have an additional vehicle for submitting amendments. Furthermore, the Assembly does not have the right to submit amendments to EP texts so there is certainly no reciprocity.

(b) Should the Assembly and the EP delegation create a joint group which would meet twice a year to discuss issues of common interest such as ESDP, transatlantic relations, the Mediterranean, relations with Russia etc.?

15. The Standing Committee should decide whether to create such a group. However, it should be noted that under existing arrangements, Assembly members are invited to meetings of the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, but it has proved difficult to secure members' participation on a regular basis. This would also mean adding another special group to an already intensive agenda.

(c) Should one of the Assembly's Committees – or Sub-Committees – be tasked with holding regular meeting with the EP? This could be a compromise.

16. The joint Committee meetings each February in Brussels have included a meeting with the EP on several occasions. This arrangement could be made systematic, provide the dates do not coincide with a period when the EP is meeting in Strasbourg. Alternatively, or even in addition, a Sub-Committee could undertake a regular meeting with the EP, or make a specific point of inviting EP members when a visit is deemed to be of particular interest. This type of arrangement would require the agreement of the Committee and Sub-Committee concerned, and would not impose an extra burden on the Assembly schedule or resources. This option could produce more systematic cooperation without creating new structures and adding to activities.

(d) Should the Assembly's members participate more frequently in EP hearings?

17. The International Secretariat could circulate notifications of all EP Foreign Affairs Committee meetings to delegations, and if any member wishes to participate, could notify the EP accordingly. There are typically two meetings of one and half days each month in Brussels. The dates for meetings are set months in advance but the agendas are usually distributed about two weeks before each meeting. However, in view of the fact that the Assembly itself holds meetings almost every week of the working year, the dates of EP hearings frequently clash – or are very close to – the dates of Assembly activities. In other words, should the Assembly be making additional demands on its members' time and competing against itself in offering meetings to its members?
