

The European Scrutiny Committee and its role

The European Scrutiny Committee scrutinises draft EU legislation on behalf of the House of Commons and assesses which proposals are of particular political or legal importance. It draws these proposals to the attention of the House through weekly Committee Reports and by recommending some draft legislation for debate. Debates can take place in European Committees or, more rarely, on the floor of the House.

The European Scrutiny Committee is appointed under Standing Order No. 143. It consists of 16 members, drawn from the three largest political parties and is chaired by Mr William Cash MP.

The Committee assesses the legal and/or political importance of draft EU legislation deposited in Parliament by the Government. This amounts to around 1,100 documents a session. The Committee receives an Explanatory Memorandum on each document from the relevant Minister. It then looks at the significance of the proposal and decide whether to clear the document from scrutiny or withhold clearance and ask questions of the Government. All documents deemed politically or legally important are reported on at length in the Committee's weekly Reports.

The Committee also has the power to recommend documents for debate. Debates recommended by the Committee take place either in a European Committee or (more rarely) on the Floor of the House. Under the scrutiny reserve resolution passed by the House, Ministers should not vote in the Council of Ministers on proposals which the Committee has not cleared or which are awaiting debate.

The Committee can also question Ministers in person and sometimes conducts general inquiries into legal, procedural or institutional developments in the EU.

At the Committee' visit to Copenhagen, the following members will participate:

William Cash (Chairman) - Conservative

<http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/william-cash/25682>

James Clappison – Conservative

<http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/james-clappison/25164>

Henry Smith – Conservative

<http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/henry-smith/35320>

Julie Elliott – Labour

<http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/julie-elliott/78855>

Kelvin Hopkins – Labour

<http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/kelvin-hopkins/25583>