

COSAC PRESIDENCY
 THE COSAC WORKING GROUP MEETING IN STOCKHOLM, APRIL 8-9 2001

Synthesis of answers to the questionnaire to European Union Affairs committees

	1 a) <i>Has your parliament pronounced itself in recent years on the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union, especially the issue of the role of national parliaments?</i>	1 b) <i>If your parliament has done so, in what form was the statement made? What specific statements from your parliament do you consider especially important?</i>	2 a) <i>Has your parliament taken any specific measures in order to encourage a broad public debate on the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union, such as arranging public hearings? Is it likely that such measures will be taken?</i>	2 b) <i>Do you have any specific experience from working methods for earlier debates on the EU, especially Treaty changes, in your country, such as parliamentary ad-hoc committees or committees set up by the government, which may be valuable for other countries?</i>	3) <i>Do you have any specific experience from your parliament's dealing with EU matters that might be valuable for other national parliaments in their work with EU matters?</i>
Austria Nationalrat and Bundesrat	Yes	<p>On December 6, 2000 the Main Committee (Hauptausschuss) of the Nationalrat passed with the votes of ÖVP and FPÖ a comment on the European Council in Nice. In this comment the Federal Chancellor was requested to take the following positions, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o capability for enlargement shall be reached; o balance between big and small member states must be guaranteed; o every member state shall keep the right to nominate one member of the European Commission; o Austria shall not refuse the extension of QMV to appropriate fields, while certain issues (legal acts with constitutional character, management of water resources etc.) shall remain subject to unanimity; o closer co-operation shall be possible under certain conditions; o Article 7 of the EU-Treaty shall be amended; o another IGC shall be convened to discuss those issues that are now mentioned in the Nice Declaration in the Future on the Union. <p>In addition, the Nationalrat passed resolutions (that are only politically binding) in its sittings of October 18, 2000 and September 20, 2000. The latter requested the government to demand a clear separation of competences between the European Union and the member states as well as the upgrading of the regions.</p>	<p>So far, no special measures have been taken. However, the meetings of the Main Committee and its permanent Subcommittee as well as the EU-Affairs Committee of the Bundesrat are generally held in public.</p>	<p>Apart from the mentioned committees in the Nationalrat and Bundesrat there exists a Council for foreign affairs and a Council for questions on the Austrian integration policy in the Federal Chancellery where members of the government and members of parliament are represented.</p>	<p>During the European Council of Nice a special committee was appointed composed of the Chairperson of the Permanent Subcommittee of the Main Committee and one member of each party. Thus it was possible to follow the ongoing negotiations in Nice and to react immediately on developments.</p>

Belgium Chambre des Représentants and Sénat	<p>In a resolution relating to the Intergovernmental Conference 2000 (doc. Senate 2-451, Chamber doc. 50-680), adopted by the Senate and the Chamber on 8 June 2000, the assemblies requested:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the insertion of a legally restraining charter of fundamental rights in treaties, including, in particular, civil and political rights and economic and social rights; 2. the division of treaties into two parts, one part containing provisions of a constitutional nature and the other containing provisions for which revision procedures would be relaxed, which would mean no longer dividing treaties into "pillars"; 3. the suppression of the legal status of the ECSC, the EC and the EAEC and the granting of legal status to the European Union so that it may become a contracting party to international agreements, such as the European Treaty for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties and the European Social Charter; 4. the replacement of the Euratom treaty by a new title on the durable energy policy in the European Union treaty. <p>In the resolution relating to institutional reform of the European Union (doc. Senate 1-1379, Chamber 2152-98/99), adopted by the Senate and the Chamber in April 1999, the two assemblies proclaim that, with regard to the role of national parliaments:</p> <p>In line with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty (Declaration n° 13) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (Protocole n° 13) on the work undertaken at the Conference of assembly presidents in Vienna on 1 December 1998 and the COSAC meeting on 23-24 November 1998, the role of national parliaments in the institutional process must be reinforced upstream, by preparing general ideas which are acceptable by the various States, in the process of formulation of European standards (reaction on the basis of proposals by the Commission) and in the preparation and parliamentary control of the Councils of European Ministers and European summits.</p> <p>With regard to constitutional rulings which are, at present, set up by treaties and approved by the parliaments, an upstream process should be envisaged which brings together the European Parliament and the national parliaments in the formulation of broad outlines, whether it be the Charter of fundamental rights (proposed by the German presidency) or the institutional structure. Synergy between the European Parliament and national parliaments should enable us to control the decision-making process. Democratic legitimacy is based on a greater involvement of the European Parliament and the national parliaments. Each national parliament exercises this control over its government when it participates in the Council of European Ministers. It is assisted by the informal exchange of ideas and arguments which regularly takes place within or through COSAC and by the informal meetings of commissions at the European Parliament with the delegations of the commissions of national parliaments.</p>	See answer to 1a.	<p>- forum open to the public and organized by the Senate on 7 March 2001 on "The Treaty of Nice and European Frontiers";</p> <p>-public forum organized by the Federal Advisory Committee for European Affairs on "The aim of the European Union" (18 May 2001)</p> <p>-hearing by the Federal Advisory Committee for European Affairs of NGO on the Belgian presidency of the European Union (28 March 2001).</p>	No.	<p>- The presence in the Federal Advisory Committee for European Affairs of 10 members of the European Parliament, elected in Belgium – which is exceptional within the 15 member states – the remainder being composed of 10 deputies and 10 senators, must favour the transmission of information from the European Parliament to the national parliament as well as favouring transparency. During the working sessions of the Advisory Committee, the 10 Belgian members of the European Parliament are on an equal footing with the deputies and senators.</p> <p>- At the Chamber, each member of the European Parliament elected in Belgium is allowed to participate in the work of the permanent commissions, in an advisory capacity. Furthermore, the Belgian members of the European Parliament have the right to put forward written questions to the federal government on the European policy of the government.</p> <p>- During the plenary session on Thursday, 30 March 2000, the Chamber formally recorded the appointment of Euro-whips. The Euro-whip, who is an effective or substitute member of the Federal Advisory Committee for European Affairs, must make sure that the issues which are examined by the Councils of European Ministers are subject to regular examination by the relevant permanent commissions of the Chamber.</p> <p>- In accordance with the law dated 2 December 1957 carrying the approval of the EEC Treaty, the Belgian government is obliged to file every year with the Federal Parliament a report concerning the execution of treaties relating to the European Union and which also gives an account of the progress of the transposition of European law into internal law.</p> <p>- The Federal Advisory Committee for European Affairs prepares initiative reports on all European problems. The work of the Advisory Committee can be concluded by resolution proposals which can be directly submitted to the plenary session of the Chamber and the Senate.</p> <p>- With regard to the examination of proposals of normative acts or other European Commission documents, the procedure is as follows:</p> <p>During each session, the secretariat of the Advisory Committee selects a series of documents, whose examination seems important, based on the list of documents transmitted by the European Commission to the Council and published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The secretariat prepares short information reports on the selected documents and makes a proposal for parliamentary intervention. The members of the Advisory Committee regularly receive (normally, twice a month) a memorandum containing the information reports, the proposals for parliamentary intervention and the list of documents transmitted by the European Commission to the Council. The members may submit their observations to the secretariat with regard to the selection of documents and the proposals for parliamentary intervention within a period of one week. If no observations are received by the secretariat, these proposals are considered as approved.</p> <p>The proposals for parliamentary intervention may take on the following forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the document is transmitted to a permanent commission (via Euro-whips at the Chamber, via the presidents of competent commissions at the Senate) for it to take the necessary initiative. At the Chamber, the permanent commission may adopt a recommendation to the government for the texts it considers important; - the document is examined more thoroughly by the Advisory Committee. This examination can result in the preparation of an initiative report as well as a proposal for a resolution or a final text, which may be submitted to the plenary session. <p>The Advisory Committee publishes a parliamentary document resuming the parliamentary intervention which would have been undertaken on all documents transmitted by the secretariat (initiatives taken by the permanent commissions and the Advisory Committee).</p>
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Denmark	The Folketing as such has not yet pronounced itself on the issue of the role of national parliaments.		The Danish Government will before the summer of 2001 publish a White Paper on the Future of the Union and the other issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration to initiate a broad public debate on the issues to be discussed before the next Governmental Conference beginning in 2004. The Government is planning a series of public hearings in different cities in Denmark on these issues. In the Folketing the European Affairs Committee is also planning a series of public hearings on these issues both in Copenhagen and in other cities.	In connection with the referendum on the euro on the 28th of September 2000 the European Affairs Committee arranged an "open EU day at the Folketing" and a hearing in the Folketing about the euro, and party spokesmen advocating a Yes as well as party spokesmen advocating a No participated in a bus tour to several cities and had talks with students, municipal authorities, workers and other interested citizens.	The EU Information Centre of the Folketing has since 1994 made EU information more easily accessible, in particular information regarding the Danish involvement in the decision procedures and the work of the European Affairs Committee. This information is widely acknowledged as being neutral and factual, not politically biased.
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European Parliament		Selected resolutions adopted in reverse chronological order: <u>14 December 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution on the outcome of the European Council on 7-11 December 2000 in Nice, <u>30 November 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution on the preparation of the 7-9 December 2000 Nice European Council, including the common commercial policy (Article 133 of the EC Treaty), <u>30 November 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution on the Commission White Paper on reforming the Commission (aspects concerning the Committee on Constitutional Affairs) (COM(2000) 200 - C5-0448/2000 - 2000/2218(COS)), <u>14 November 2000</u> - Décision du Parlement européen sur l'approbation du projet de charte des droits fondamentaux de l'Union européenne (C5-0570/2000), <u>25 October 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution on the constitutionalisation of the Treaties (2000/2160(INI)), <u>25 October 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution on closer cooperation (2000/2162(INI)), <u>13 April 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution containing the European Parliament's proposals for the Intergovernmental Conference (14094/1999 - C5-0341/1999 - 1999/0825(CNS)), <u>16 March 2000</u> - European Parliament resolution on the drafting of a European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (C5-0058/1999 - 1999/2064(COS)), <u>3 February 2000</u> - Resolution of the European Parliament on the convening of the Intergovernmental Conference (14094/1999 - C5-0341/1999 - 1999/0825(CNS)).	Selected recent hearings in the European Parliament in reverse chronological order: <u>1 February 2000</u> - Study day organised by the Committee on Constitutional affairs, with the corresponding committees of the National Parliaments, <u>11-12 July 2000</u> - Hearing organised by the Committee on Constitutional affairs (IGC), <u>27 February 2001</u> -Hearing organised by the Committee on Citizen's Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs (integration of acquis in the field of JHA), <u>20 March 2001</u> - Hearing organised by the Committee on Constitutional affairs (post Nice), <u>21 March 2001</u> -Hearing organised by the Committee on Citizen's Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs (implementation of Charter). Please also refer to annexed statistics for related meetings in 2000 and first semester 2001.		This subject is of great importance and the European Parliament takes a keen interest in the continuous development and co-operation with the national parliaments in this area. However, we refrain from giving a reply to this particular question, since it seems to be targeted at the national parliaments and their respective bi- or multilateral exchange of information.
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Finland	Yes. Reform of the Union's decisionmaking structure was debated in plenary session on several occasions. The Grand Committee issued four formal statements on the preparations for the Treaty of Nice, and one on the Charter of fundamental rights. The Grand Committee had previously also issued several reports prior to the Treaty of Amsterdam. The substance of the Nice Declaration is covered by these reports.	Of the four formal statements (Suuren valiokunnan lausunto/Stora utskottets utlåtande 1, 2, 3 and 5 /2000) the first (SuVL 1/2000 vp) outlined Finland's goals at the outset of the Inter-Governmental Conference and the last (SuVL 5/2000 vp) Parliament's assessment on the eve of the Nice summit. - Broadly speaking, Parliament assumed the position that enlargement is the primary goal, and all revisions of the treaty should be viewed as means to that end. The Finnish Parliament wanted improvements to the EU's decision-making structure (simplification of the treaties, increase in the use QMV). The Treaty of Nice was viewed as disappointing. These hopes formulated for Nice (and Amsterdam!) remain the core of the Finnish post-Nice agenda. - On the role of national parliaments, the Finnish Parliament has so far consistently taken the position that national parliaments contribute to the union's legitimacy and transparency through oversight and control of the government's work in the Council. The precise role of national parliaments must depend on national constitutional decisions and must not be regulated at community level. The Finnish Parliament is at best sceptical of the usefulness and legitimacy of community-level decision-making by delegates of national parliaments ("second chamber", "assizes" etc.).	In the run-up to Nice, several public hearings were arranged, partly in co-operation with the government. Discourse with civil society was particularly active on the subject of trade policy decision-making and the EU's participation in the WTO. Public hearings on the subjects mentioned in the Nice declaration will take place in due course, once concrete ideas have been advanced and debated within the formal structures of government and Parliament. So far, debate has mainly focussed on the forms of the post-Nice procedures. There has been rather little to debate on the substance (the Nice declaration is, after all, very general and contains only obvious conclusions).	Debate in Finland has been centred on Parliament's Grand Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee, both of which have been innovative in developing their working methods. As Finland's constitutional system is unique, we are reluctant to provide specific advice to others.	As 2 b), above.
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France Assemblée nationale	<p>The National Assembly has adopted no statement setting out its position on the Nice Treaty. Mr Alain Barreau, Chairman of the Delegation for the European Union, has published a report on behalf of the Delegation assessing the results of France's presidency; this gives a detailed evaluation of the Nice Treaty (Report No 2905, 31 January 2001).</p> <p>The report finds that the debate on the future of the Union should lead to wide-ranging decisions which will relaunch the process of political union and further the emergence of a more transparent Europe that is closer to its citizens. One of the items on the agenda of the next IGC—the role of national parliaments in the European architecture—calls for some thought on our part so that, when the time comes, we will be able to make proposals to governments that can be incorporated in the Treaties.</p>		<p>On 13 December 2000 the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Hubert Védrine, and the Minister for European Affairs, Mr Pierre Moscovici, were heard by the Delegation for the European Union and the Foreign Affairs Committee on the results of the Nice European Council; the meeting was open to the press. Mr Barreau's report on the results of France's presidency was also widely distributed.</p> <p>Mr Moscovici was also heard by the Delegation on 28 March 2001, when he clarified the Government's position on the process set in motion by the Nice Declaration (The record of the hearing can be accessed on the National Assembly's website at http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/6/6f.html.) At the hearing Mr Barreau announced that a working group was being set up in the Delegation to study the issues arising from Nice; it would report, making specific proposals, in the autumn. The Delegation also intends to contact its opposite numbers in other national parliaments from member states and applicant countries to debate the future of the Union. The whole Delegation will also visit the Commission on the 17th of May : an other visit will be planned to the European Parliament.</p>		<p>Parliamentary scrutiny of European affairs is a matter for each country. The stakes in the debate opened by the Nice Treaty are more far-reaching: the procedures are to be defined for the joint participation of national parliaments in discussions on European affairs. Various means are possible, ranging from the improvement of procedures whereby national parliaments are kept informed by European institutions to the collective association of national parliaments in the life of the Union within a strengthened COSAC or the framing of a convention to prepare for the 2004 IGC.</p>
France Sénat	<p>The problem regarding the application of the subsidiarity principle has been examined in several reports by the European Union Delegation. Its conclusion was that national parliaments should become more involved in the application of the subsidiarity principle, in order for this principle to be better considered.</p> <p>On the role of national parliaments, several reports have been adopted, either by the Foreign Affairs Committee or by the European Union Delegation.</p>	<p>A majority position was clearly defined with regard to the role of national parliaments. It was stated on several occasions by successive presidents of the Senate. This position consists in providing for the creation of a second European Chamber representing the national parliaments; this second Chamber would be of a consultative nature and its role would be to ensure that subsidiarity is respected and to contribute to parliamentary control on the two intergovernmental pillars.</p>	<p>The European Union Delegation will open a debate on the idea of a European Constitution, which will, notably, include hearings.</p>	No.	<p>The Senate's method of dealing with European issues is mainly based on the systematic examination of draft European texts by the European Union Delegation. The aim of this examination is to enable the Senate to take a stand on the most important texts.</p> <p>The procedure followed at the Senate has two particularities which might interest other assemblies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – less important texts are examined in writing, which alleviates the agenda of the delegation meetings; – an administrative agency has been set up in Brussels near all the Union institutions to gather information as upstream as possible and to ensure a link with the permanent French representatives at the European Union.

Germany Bundestag	<p>The Committee on the Affairs of the EU of the German Bundestag pronounced itself on several occasions during the IGC on these topics.</p>	<p>Especially in the form of three recommendations for a decision by the German Bundestag which focused on the content of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and its status. In their motions on the Charter of Fundamental Rights, on which the recommendations for decision are based, the various parliamentary groups pronounced themselves unanimously in favour of making the charter legally binding as part of the Treaties. The EU Affairs Committee made substantial contribution to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights project. The EU Committee deliberated on the Charter on various occasions, both prior to the commencement of the Convention's work and in the run up to its subsequent meetings. Thanks to the Committee's efforts, this theme was placed on the Bundestag's plenary agenda on four separate occasions. Concerning the reforms of the European Union institutions, the EU Affairs Committee adopted in December 2000 a resolution on the European Council in Nice. The parliamentary groups called unanimously for deep institutional changes concerning the left-overs from Amsterdam in order to open the way for the accession of new member states.</p>	<p>The EU Affairs Committee has organised a certain number of public hearings. In April 2000 the EU Affairs Committee arranged a one-day public hearing on the Charter of Fundamental Rights in collaboration with the EU Committee of the Bundesrat. The Bundestag and the Bundesrat were thus among the first national parliaments to take up the Convention's proposal that public debates should be initiated in the Member States. Participants in the joint public hearing included representatives of various civil society groups and international organisations, political scientists and constitutional lawyers. Long before the speech of the Federal Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer at the Humboldt University in Berlin, the EU Affairs Committee had begun to deliberate on the objectives and the future of the EU. At its Millennium meeting in January 2000, a number of eminent figures from the field of European politics and leading academics outlined a wide range of possible scenarios for the development of the EU the Committee thus made a substantial contribution to the debate about finality. In March 2001, we are planning a further public hearing on the debate within the EU about a European constitution. Political scientists as well as constitutional lawyers will be invited to express their views and discuss this issue with Committee members.</p>	<p>Debates on the EU are held in accordance with a well-established procedure involving the German government and the German Bundestag. In 1992 in addition to the already existing EC Affairs Committee the Bundestag set up a Special Committee on the European Union to deal with the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on EU. It also had to deal with the amendments to the Basic Law that were considered to be necessary in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty and with a number of accompanying laws regulating co-operation between the Federal Government on the one hand and the Bundestag and the federal states on the other. As far as their membership was concerned, there was a large overlap between the EC Affairs Committee and the Special Committee. Some members belonged to the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Finance Committee. In the course of this procedure, the basis of the work of today's EU Committee was laid. According to article 23 of the Basic Law, the Bundestag shall participate in matters concerning the European Union. These matters include all initiatives such as draft directives and regulations, bulletins on the progress of deliberations with the Council and the European Parliament, Commission communications and opinions, green and white papers. They also include Community agreements with third countries, as well as measures falling within the framework of the common foreign and security policy and police and judicial co-operation. The Federal Government is obliged to keep the Bundestag informed about all relevant matters, and must do so comprehensively and at the earliest possible time. Moreover, the Bundestag must also have the opportunity to state its opinion, and the Federal Government "shall take the position of the Bundestag into account" during negotiations in Brussels. If the Federal Government wishes to deviate from the Bundestag's position, it has a strict obligation to state the reasons for doing so. In some cases, the EU Committee already operates as a kind of "mini-plenary" performing key functions in the public debate about European issues. The Bundestag can also empower the EU-Committee to exercise the rights of the Bundestag in relation to the Federal Government when decisions on European policy have to be made under great pressure of time.</p>	<p>Considering the fact that political cultures and constitutional frameworks within the Europe differ from one country to another, we do not think that the German procedure could necessarily be applied in other national parliaments.</p>
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Germany Bundesrat	In the past years the Bundesrat has on several occasions pronounced itself on the subjects of the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union. The Bundesrat underlined particularly the need to clearly define the competences between the Union on the one side and the member states on the other, as well as the need to work out a Charta of Fundamental Rights.	Already in 1995, when preparing the Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam the Bundesrat called for an improved separation of competences consistent with the subsidiarity principle and adopted a resolution on "Forderungen der Laender zur Regierungskonferenz 1996" (Demands of the Laender vis-à-vis the Intergovernmental Conference 1996; Printed matter 67/95 (decision)). In this resolution the Bundesrat listed all fields of exclusive / non-exclusive competences of the Union. Analogously, the Bundesrat adopted two resolutions (Printed matter 61/00 (decision) and Printed matter 680/00 (decision)) referring to the Intergovernmental Conference that took place some months ago in Nice underlining its conviction that a reform has to consider a clear distribution of tasks between the European Union and the Member States. Moreover, the Bundesrat adopted several resolutions referring to the Charta on Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In its most recent resolution of December 1, 2000 (Printed matter 660/00 (decision)) the Bundesrat welcomed the Convent's draft and stipulated the integration of the Charta into the European treaty framework. The Bundesrat wants the Charta to become the nucleus of a European Constitutional Treaty.	Together with the German Bundestag, the Bundesrat has organized a hearing in 2000 on the Charta of Fundamental Rights. In this year the Bundesrat plans to hold a conference with experts participating on the subject "Future of the European Union".	Formulated by a working group set up by the Conference of Laender ministers for European Affairs, draft resolutions have generally been the basis for the Bundesrat to discuss about the Intergovernmental Conferences. Two delegates represented the Bundesrat's interests at the Intergovernmental Conference.	
Greece	The Committee for European Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament has adopted resolutions, related to the revision of the European Union Treaties. Although sometimes mentioned as positions, reports or opinions, all of above were texts adopted unanimously and submitted to the Plenary Session for a broader discussion and they have not a binding character.	The Position that were issued on March 1996 during the Intergovernmental Conference of that time comment roughly on the Role of National Parliaments. The Report issued next year (May 1997) also mentioned that the Committee on European Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament favours the strengthening of relations between the National Parliaments and the other Institutions of the European union and the strengthening of National Parliaments at national level through their effective participation in the shaping of governmental policies. The last "Opinion of the Committee for European Affairs" issued on July 2000 was focused on the issues of the last Intergovernmental Conference and mostly on: the institutional reforms (composition of the European Commission, distribution of the Council's votes, extension of the voting by qualified majority), the reinforcement of the democratic character of the European Union, the principle of strengthened co-operation, the incorporation of the Charter of fundamental Rights into the Treaty and its binding character, the redefinition of the provisions of the European Union Treaty concerning European union defense.	A meeting of the Committee for European Affairs that will deal with the Future of the European Union in the framework of the Nice Declaration has been scheduled to take place on April 2001. The committee had also planned bilateral meetings with delegations of other EU Affairs Committees, in order to discuss topics such as the enlargement and the role of national Parliaments.	The revisions of the Treaties and the issues related to them always come first in terms of priority and importance during its debates, but there is not a special procedure applied. An ad hoc Committee was set up before the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam.	The mixed composition of the Committee for European of the Hellenic Parliament (19 Members of Parliament and 12 Members of the European Parliament) has contributed to a substantial dialogue and a useful exchange of views and reflections on issues of major importance. Besides, Members of the Government are very often called in the Committee meetings, in order to explain the governmental policies, and sometimes Members of the European Commission as well. The Rules of Procedure of our Parliament provide for joint meetings with other Standing Committees of our Parliament, which have resulted to interesting exchange of views (as for example in the case of the Charter of Fundamental Rights where has been close co-operation with the Committee for Public Administration, Public Order and Justice).
Ireland Dáil Éireann and Seanad			At its meeting on 28 March, 2001, the Joint Committee agreed to hold a series of public meetings (commencing on 4 April) to hear presentations from certain organisations on the Treaty of Nice. In addition, the Joint Committee agreed to place an advertisement in the national newspapers inviting written submissions from members of the public and other interested parties who may wish to convey their views in the matter. The deadline for receipt of these submissions is 12 April, 2001 and the advertisement also states that the Committee may subsequently decide to invite selected correspondents to address a meeting of the Committee with a view to a discussion on their written submission.	The Committee's decision to proceed in this manner is based largely on its experience in relation to its consideration of the Treaty of Amsterdam. In that instance, the Committee agreed to invite presentations from organisations that it knew to be interested in the matter and subsequent reporting of those Meetings led to a small number of complaints from members of the public. These complaints indicated that the Committee should have heard the views of the public in general and not just those organisations that it knew to be interested.	

Italy Camera dei Deputati	<p>The Chamber of Deputies attaches particular importance to the role of national parliaments. It was following an initiative taken by the Italian delegation of the Chamber of Deputies that the COSAC, in its meeting in Dublin on 15 and 16 October 1996, adopted a contribution plan. It requested that the declaration on the role of national parliaments, annexed to the Maastricht Treaty, be transformed into a Protocol annexed to the Treaty, and that its contents be reinforced. The request was granted by the Intergovernmental Conference which would have then ended up in the Treaty of Amsterdam. The delegation of the Chamber of Deputies within the COSAC intends to develop even more the position of national parliaments in relation to the provisions of the Protocol. At the 23rd COSAC which was held in Versailles on 16 and 17 October 2000, the delegation of the Chamber presented proposals which were added to the adopted contribution; their aim was to request a modification to the Protocol on the role of national parliaments in the European Union, with a view to providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at Points 1 and 2, the direct transfer to national parliaments by the European Commission of all documents of a consultative nature (green books, white books, communications), as well as legislative proposals and proposals on measures to be adopted in accordance with Titles V and VI of the Treaty on the European Union; - at Point 3, a period of six weeks between the date on which the Commission also makes available to the national parliaments either a legislative proposal or a proposal relating to a measure to be adopted in accordance with Titles V and VI of the Treaty on the European Union, and the date on which this same proposal is placed on the agenda of the Council. <p>The Commission for European Union policies of the Chamber of Deputies has made post-Nice the subject of its debates; it has agreed that the European Council of Laeken has to introduce a new method of developing reforms, ensuring a more democratic process and a greater role for national parliaments and the European Parliament. This method could be based on the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Convention based on the one which developed the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; by a qualified majority decision, it should draw up a project of reforms to be introduced into the European system. For the Convention to be effective, it must involve qualified representatives of each parliamentary Assembly as well as groups from the opposition; furthermore, there should be close collaboration between the parliaments and their representatives within the Convention; - an Intergovernmental Conference acting on the basis of work accomplished; - the accepted opinion of the European Parliament on the final decision of the Member States. 	<p>During the legislature which has just taken place (June 1996 – March 2001), the Chamber of Deputies approved numerous directives sent to the Government regarding subjects mentioned in the Declaration on the future of Europe: Role of national parliaments. The Chamber pronounced itself in favour of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to support the opening of reform proceedings which not only concern institutional aspects but also Union policies, by involving the EP and the national parliaments and by striving to ensure that these reforms provide for an increase in the powers of the EP and the national parliaments and the broadening of their competence in matters falling within the 1st and 2nd pillars (Ruberti Resolution et al, n° 6-00092); - to account for the specificity and the effectiveness of parliamentary controlling capacities with regard to Union policies and policies included in the Schengen agreements (Rei Resolution et al, n° 6-00094); - to support an increasing involvement of the European Parliament and national parliaments in decisions relating to humanitarian missions and crisis management (Ruberti Resolution et al, n° 6-00092); - to determine procedures for the revision of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union, which may take different forms and which are more respectful of the representative role of the European Parliament and national parliaments (Schmid Resolution et al, n° 6-00141, Diliberto Resolution et al, n° 6-00144). <p>The Chamber is also in favour of beginning democratic proceedings for the European Constitution, with the participation of the people and national parliaments (Berlinguer Resolution et al, n° 6-00150).</p> <p>The status of the Charter of rights. The Chamber has requested that the Charter be integrated in the Treaties either in the form of a preamble, or in a protocol annexed to the Treaties, with a view to their constitutional revision (Occhetto Resolutions et al, n° 7-00860), Ruberti et al, n° 6-00092, Schmid et al, n° 6-00141, Diliberto et al, n° 6-00144). It again requested that proceedings for the revision of the Charter be determined which may take different forms and which are more respectful of the representative role of the European Parliament and national parliaments (Schmid Resolutions et al, n° 6-00141, Diliberto et al, n° 6-00144).</p>	<p>Until now, the Chamber of Deputies has not been able to organize specific initiatives because of the dissolution of the two Chambers. Once the new Parliament has been formed, it is probable that activities based on "post-Nice" will be soon developed, in the wake of initiatives taken for the European Council of Nice: in fact, at that time, a page devoted to the Intergovernmental Conference for the forthcoming Council of Nice was created on the Chamber's website: all citizens had the opportunity to send their comments and proposals to the Chamber, for the imminent parliamentary debate on the Summit which was about to take place in Nice.</p>	<p>. Subjects relating to the modification of the Treaties are debated within the Commissions for European Union policies and foreign affairs, which prepare the debate for the Assembly. Other methods have not been tried, as yet.</p>	<p>A recent reform in the ruling of the Chamber of Deputies provides for the joint examination of the annual community bill and of an annual report on Italy's participation in the legislative proceedings of the European Union. It is the Government which presents these texts to the two Chambers, after which the sector-based Commissions examine them beforehand. These sector-based Commissions then report to the Commission for European Union policies which then prepares reports for the Assembly. Through the annual community law, the introduction of community directives adopted during the stated year is assured; the annual report accounts for Government tendencies with regard to community policies; the joint examination of the two texts enables the Chamber to concentrate its control both on the elaboration as on the execution of European Union policies in a sort of "community session". - In February 2000, the Chamber resorted to an experimental procedure for examining documents relating to the European Union's legislative programme: each permanent Commission examined the European Commission's programme for the year 2000 as well as the strategic aims for 2000-2005, by looking into matters with which it was concerned. Afterwards, each Commission nominated a spokesman in charge of presenting its conclusions to the Commission for European Union policies, which then presented a report to the Assembly. At the close of the general debate, the Assembly adopted a resolution addressed to the Government. - We should also point out the practices regarding the periodic meetings of the Commission for European Union policies and the Italian representatives at the European Parliament, which are organized both in Rome and in Brussels. Even when the European Commission's legislative programme was examined, the Commission for the European Union policies arranged a hearing with the Italian representatives of the European Parliament.</p>
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<p>Italy Senato</p>	<p>During the current term of Parliament, the Senate has pronounced itself several times on the issues of institutional reform, the role of national parliaments and the future of the Union. Among the main relevant documents one should mention the reports by the Committee on European Community Affairs on "Democratic Legitimacy and Reform of EU Institutions", submitted on 20 May, 1999 (doc. XVI nr. 9); on "Helsinki European Council and the Inter-Governmental Conference on Institutional Reform", submitted on 6 December, 1999 (doc. XVI nr. 12); on Italian Participation in the EU, submitted on 25 January, 2000 (doc. LXXXVII n. 7-A); and on the Working Programme of the European Commission for the Year 2000 and Strategic Objectives for 2000-2005, submitted on 5 July, 2000 (doc. XVI n. 14).</p> <p>In addition to its consideration of the above documents, the Senate Plenary Assembly held a debate on 13 and 18 July, 2000, concerning the prospects for reforming the European Union. At the end of the debate two motions were approved by an overwhelming majority: a motion on institutional reforms submitted by Sen. Migone and others (doc. 1-00559) and one on the Charter of Fundamental Rights submitted by Sen. Salvato and others (doc. 1-00562).</p> <p>Finally, on 7 March last the Committee on European Community Affairs approved a resolution on the programme of the Swedish Presidency which also included institutional issues.</p>	<p>In the above-mentioned documents specific reference has been made to the need to merge the treaties, i.a. as a means to draw European citizens closer to the Union. This consolidation of the treaties should include drafting a part on constitutional issues, such as provisions on institutional arrangements and fundamental rights based on the Charter worked out by the Convention (doc. XVI nr. 12, paragraph 13). Moreover, the need has been stressed (doc. LXXXVII, nr. 7-A) to ensure implementation of the subsidiarity principle through greater involvement of national parliaments in EU choices. In the motion approved on 18 July, 2000, the Senate stated once again its commitment towards the inclusion of the Charter on Fundamental Rights in the Treaties. This would increase the legitimacy of the Union in the citizens' eyes and give concrete application to the idea of European citizenship, as an essential basis of the future European constitution. Furthermore, the Senate affirmed its commitment towards strengthening parliamentary scrutiny in the field of foreign and security policy and European defence.</p> <p>With the resolution approved on 7 March, 2000, the Committee on European Community Affairs requested the Government to urge that a reflection on Nice follow-up be started, in particular on the role of national parliaments in the European architecture, the issues related to the implementation of the subsidiarity principle, the status of the Charter on Fundamental Rights and the reshaping of the treaties, in order to simplify legislation and convert treaties into a constitution. Moreover, the Committee invited the Government to see to it that the enlargement process be conducted in parallel with the "deepening" of the institutional set-up so as to avoid the risk that an enlarged European Union may convert into a mere free trade area.</p> <p>As regards national parliaments, the resolution urges them to get involved in the early stages of this reflection on Nice follow-up. This could be done by drawing on the experience made with the Convention that was called to draft the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Convention for the first time brought together, in one single body and on an equal footing, representatives of the Governments and the European Commission, as well as representatives of the European Parliament and national parliaments.</p>	<p>Except for the already mentioned resolution of 7 March 2000, the Senate has not taken any specific measure yet to encourage a public debate on the issues emerged in Nice on the Future of the Union. This is due to the fact that Italian Parliament has been dissolved and a General Election has been called. However, parliamentary initiatives were taken in the recent past with the aim to promote greater participation of civil society in the debate on the EU institutional reform. This was done during the fact-finding surveys on the Amsterdam Inter-Governmental Conference and, last year, on the drafting of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Hearings were held of central and regional Government representatives, economic and social associations - such as the Industrial Confederation and trade unions - academicians, and NGOs. Similar initiatives will be probably taken after the coming elections.</p>	<p>Whenever there has been a debate on Treaty reviews, no ad-hoc Committees have been set up by the Italian Parliament, because consideration of the relevant ratification bills falls under the responsibility of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the two Houses, which must ask for the opinion of the respective European Affairs Committees and any other Committees concerned. However, as part the information and study activity which precedes formal consideration of ratification bills, some useful experiences have been made: joint fact-finding enquiries by the European Affairs Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (as in the case of the debate on the Charter of Fundamental Rights); joint surveys by the European Affairs Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee (as in the case of the debate on the Inter-Governmental Conference); meetings with parliamentary delegations from other Member States and applicant countries; visits to their governments, parliaments and other bodies; visits to community institutions.</p>	<p>In the current Parliament there has been an unprecedented effort to scrutinise proposals for community law. About 70 such documents were considered and comments were transmitted to the Government. This experience has stressed the greater awareness of this procedure shown by the Committee on European Community Affairs as compared to departmental standing committees. Though the latter have primary competence over the specific subjects, over the same period they considered only one proposal for community law. In this connection, the procedure laid out in Rule 144 of the Senate Rules of Procedure has proved to be quite effective. In pursuance to this Rule, the Committee on European Community Affairs sends its opinion to the relevant departmental committee in the first place; if the latter does not express its position to the Government within 15 days, the opinion adopted by the Committee on European Community Affairs is directly transmitted to the Government. However, the Committee on European Community Affairs has experienced constant delays in the formal reception of the proposals for Community law from the Government, well beyond the deadlines set in the Amsterdam Protocol. Though in practice this type of documents are now available on the Internet and through press communiqués, it would be useful to amend the Amsterdam Protocol with a provision whereby the Commission should be compelled to transmit its legislative proposals to national parliaments, in addition to the European Parliament and the Council. The Committee on European Community Affairs has also experienced difficulties in receiving written papers from relevant ministerial departments concerning the legal and socio-economic impact of proposals for European law on the national level. This is why the Committee has found it useful to consider together all proposals coming under the same subject areas. It has then invited each Minister to report on the Government's position on all the proposals for Community law falling under his/her responsibility. For example, this procedure proved very useful when the proposals for Community law concerning internal affairs and the judiciary were considered.</p>
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Luxembourg	The Commission for Foreign and European Affairs and Defense issued a statement on the future of Europe in its report dated 23.10.2000 which was the basis of a debate on the direction taken by the Chamber of Deputies on the European policy as a whole and the Intergovernmental Conference in particular (see doc. parl. 4710, separate communication). The Commission will also prepare a report on the 2004 term and the post-Nice agenda.	The Chamber of Deputies' proposals on European policy have been retained in several motions, adopted on 26 October 2000 and 21 March 2001.	A big debate on foreign and European policy took place on 20 and 21 March at the Chamber of Deputies. A debate, largely open to the public, will be arranged on the future of Europe.	During the Intergovernmental Conferences, the Committee for European Union Affairs has organized every week hearings of the members of the Government. Furthermore, public hearings have been organized with regard to preparatory work for the Charter of fundamental rights. Three deputies participated in the Convention for the development of the Charter. The Chamber of Deputies will also organize a vast debate on the future of Europe and will prepare a relevant report.	On a national level, close co-operation with the Government is recommended. On a European level, COSAC should become an efficient working tool to be used jointly by national parliaments to strengthen their role in the European Union. In this regard, the setting up of working parties is highly desirable.
Netherlands Tweede Kamer	Yes, during several debates regarding the European Union, the issue of the role of national parliament has been subject of discussion.	In our parliament a debate took place on the issue of adding a Senate to the European Parliament. At this debate MP's discussed also on the matter of what that would mean for the role of national parliaments. In the end, the plenary voted against a proposal of the government to devote herself to the European Senate.	Not yet. Maybe in the future.	No specific methods, other than public hearings and the call for written comments.	What might be rather special for the Dutch situation, is that EU-parliamentarians are allowed to take part (under specific rules) in committee-meetings when dealing with the preparation of meetings of the Councils of Ministers. Once a year the House of Representatives of the States-General holds a plenary debate about a document produced by the government "The State of the European Union". In this debate European Parliamentarians are allowed to take part (under specific rules).
Netherlands Eerste Kamer					
Portugal	On the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union, the Portuguese Parliament pronounced itself about the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. It called for the Charter to be adopted as a binding instrument and for the Union (as such) to adopt the European Convention on Human Rights. Moreover, the Portuguese Parliament declared its commitment to continue the discussion of the issues related to the Charter, with all interested parties.	The statement about the Charter was adopted as a Resolution – "Resolução da Assembleia da República n.º 69/2000", dated 4 October.	The Committee on European Affairs approved a programme in order to promote and organise a wide and profound debate among all interested parties on the Future of the Union. In practical terms, the Committee is planning to conduct a process of discussion and exchange of views with national and international academics, personalities from the European institutions, opinion-makers, representatives of civil society and the public. The programme also includes the setting-up of a link in the Assembleia da República internet homepage where everyone can found the whole information on the debate programme and can also send written contributions to the debate itself. This initiative was launched by the Committee on European Affairs, on one hand, to encourage public debate and, in doing such, to help bringing the EU closer to its citizens; and, on the other hand, to contribute for the European debate on the Future of the Union, in which the issue of the role of national parliaments will be called upon.	As far as earlier debates on the EU are concerned, our Committee have already organised debate programmes on Portugal Options vis-a-vis EU, Auto-Oil Directive, Social Europe and European Single Market, Amsterdam Treaty ratification process, consequences of the EC Commercial Agreement Policy regarding third countries, capital markets towards 1992, MFA and Uruguay Round, EMU, CAP, employment, development and competition, freedoms and human rights, foreign policy and European security issues at a debate called "Citizens Chamber", Agenda 2000, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Similar programmes are presently taking place on Enlargement and the Future of EU. Usually, the Committee asks for a contribute from University Professors on a specific theme and organises a debate with these Universities to exchange ideas and confront the several arguments presented. The same process is accomplished with socio-professional groups and it usually ends with a wide public debate with the parties involved so far and representatives of civil society. In the meanwhile, there is a specific link at the Assembleia da República internet homepage where everyone can found the whole information on the debate programme and can also send written contributions to the debate itself.	See answer to question 2 b).

<p>Spain Congreso de los Diputados and Senado</p>	<p>Yes, the Spanish Parliament has pronounced itself in recent years on the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union, especially the issue of the role of national parliaments. The first time (June 1997) through the Subcommittee for the Follow-up of the Turin Intergovernmental Conference created within the Joint Committee for the European Union. The second (November 1999) through the Subcommittee on the Agenda 2000 also created within the Joint Committee for the European Union.</p>	<p>In June 1997 the Joint Committee for the European Union stated that, as a matter of principle, National Parliaments should participate in a bigger extent in EU activities and increase their capacity to express their opinions on issues of interest. More specifically, the Joint Committee believed that the following actions should be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send all consulting Commission documents to National Parliaments, both in due time and in the official language of each Member State. - Commission legislative proposals should also be made available to each Member State, both in due time and in the official language of the respective State, in order to allow further reception by National Parliaments according to regulation and usages of each Member State. - Set up a two-month minimum delay between the moment when the Commission should submit either to the European Parliament or the Council a legislative proposal in all language versions and the date of inclusion of the said proposal in the Council agenda for its decision. - The so-called COSAC should keep its present functions in accordance with Declaration 13 of the EU Treaty. <p>In November 1999 the Joint Committee for the European Union underlined the importance of the COSAC role as linkage between National Parliaments and the European Parliament as well as among National Parliaments themselves.</p>	<p>Yes, the Spanish Parliament has taken specific measures in order to encourage a broad public debate on the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration on the Future of the Union: these measures consist of the creation –already included in the agenda of the Joint Committee- of two subcommittees, one of them to follow up the 2004 Intergovernmental Conference, the other to cope with issues concerning the EU Enlargement.</p>	<p>As far as it concerns any specific experience from working methods for earlier debates on the EU, especially Treaty changes in our country, such as parliamentary ad-hoc committees or committees set up by the government which may be valuable for other countries, it has been usual to set up a subcommittee within the Joint Committee on the EU. The said subcommittee arranges non-public hearings, usually involving the MPs themselves together with members of the government, at a variety of levels: from ministers, to junior ministers or even directors general of different departments. Experts on the debated issues are also usually heard, as well as authorities from the EU institutions or other Member States, and other relevant persons (European commissioners, MEPs, EU Member States' ambassadors, trade union representatives, and the like). Once the hearings are over, the subcommittee writes a report to be subsequently submitted for approval to the Joint Committee (or even in certain occasions to the plenary of the Congress or of both chambers for a debate without vote). Undoubtedly this procedure is highly recommendable, having yielded excellent results among us in Spain.</p>	<p>As far as it concerns the specific experience from our parliament's dealing with EU matters that might be valuable for other national parliaments in their work with EU matters, the above-mentioned procedures should be taken into account.</p>
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Sweden	<p>The role of national parliaments was debated prior to and during the IGC that led to the Amsterdam Treaty. The Swedish Government presented its views in a report to the Riksdag in November 1995. The role of the national parliaments in the decision-making process should be strengthened, according to the governmental report, since this role is of fundamental importance for the democratic legitimacy of the EU co-operation. Each state has its procedure for the relationship between government and parliament, and decisions about these procedures should continue to be made at the national level. It is of great importance that the union works in a way that facilitates good relations between governments and parliaments in the member states. Measures that facilitate the role of the national parliaments should thus be considered. The national parliaments should be given increased possibilities to influence the work in the EU, above all by having more time to examine the different issues. Reforms at EU level should thus not focus on increasing the collective role of the national parliaments and making them a player, but on creating conditions which facilitate consultations between each national parliament and its government. In the debate in the Riksdag, all political parties agreed that there was a need to create better opportunities for the national parliament to exercise influence. The Riksdag supported the idea of making Green Papers from the Commission easily available for national parliaments.</p>	See answer to 1 a.	<p>The Committee on the Constitution and the Committee on Foreign Affairs have formed a temporary joint committee that will prepare a report on the issues mentioned in the Nice Declaration. The report will be debated in the Chamber on May 9th 2001. The joint committee includes some members of the Committee on European Union Affairs, who also are members of either the Committee on the Constitution or the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Committee will ask for contributions to the debate from the public through the Internet. – In October 2000 the Committee on European Union Affairs arranged a hearing on the ongoing IGC, including issues about the future of the Union. In May 2000 the Committee arranged a hearing on the Convention on the Charter of Fundamental Rights. These hearings were arranged together with the Committee on the Constitution and the Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is likely that there will be more public hearings arranged on the issues under debate during the next few years, but no decision has yet been made. - It could also be mentioned that the Swedish Government will shortly appoint a committee with representatives of the seven political parties in the Swedish Parliament to promote and stimulate a broad and open debate on the future of the EU. Activities will be decided upon by the committee. Among the suggestions from the Government: Interactive web-site linked to the European web-site "Future of Europe", reach the youth and/or other groups that are seldom exposed to EU-issues, emphasis on co-operation with schools and public libraries, co-operation with non-governmental organisations, political parties, networks, popular movements and organisations for adult education, meetings and seminars in cities and municipalities all over the country, publications, easily comprehensible, co-operation and contacts with the academic world in Sweden and abroad, try methods used during the Swedish EU-presidency as Young Reporters and Twin Town 2001.</p>	<p>The Riksdag and its members were involved in issues concerning the 1996 IGC in several ways. The Government presented – after an explicit request by the Riksdag - a report that was closely scrutinized in the Riksdag and in its standing committees; the Committee on EU Affairs met representatives of the Government almost every week during the IGC; and, finally, the Riksdag approved the treaty. – In March 1995 the Government resolved to appoint a Committee with members from all political parties to investigate topics of major importance which may come to be discussed at the 1996 IGC and also to encourage public debate on the main topics for the IGC and to give representatives of various views the opportunity of promoting their viewpoints. The IGC 96 Committee commissioned experts, mainly in the national administration and at universities and research institutes, to investigate a number of important fields. The Committee presented about 20 expert reports. The Committee also issued a series of minor publications, which gave a more general presentation of various problems fields prior to the IGC. The Committee's activities also included arrangement of seminars and hearings, both in Stockholm and in other parts of the country. Further, the Committee was allotted special funding to support and encourage public debate on the main topics of the IGC. These funds were mainly channelled through NGOs, popular movements and organisations for adult education. In the Riksdag, the Government informed and conferred with the Committee on EU Affairs almost every week during the 1996 IGC. It was mainly Sweden's chief negotiator, a State Secretary at the Foreign Ministry, who met the Committee. There were almost 50 meetings of this kind in the Committee during 1996 and 1997, and there were also deliberations with representatives of the Government in some standing committees, especially the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The IGC was also discussed in the Committee on EU Affairs when IGC matters were dealt with in the General Affairs Council. During the concluding negotiations in Amsterdam in June 1997, there were telephone conferences between the Swedish negotiators and the Committee. There was also information and debate in plenary sessions about various aspects of the IGC on several occasions. During the IGC leading up to the Nice Treaty the Riksdag and especially the European Union Affairs Committee were also continuously informed. During the concluding negotiations in Nice in December 2000, there were telephone conferences between the Swedish negotiators and the Committee.</p>	<p>From 1999 to early 2001, a Parliamentary Commission consisting of eleven members of the Riksdag investigated and evaluated some aspects of the organisation, processes, and procedures of the Riksdag. The Speaker of the Riksdag chaired the Commission. The members of the Commission represented all seven parties in the Riksdag. The work of the Commission focused on four areas, among them the handling of EU matters in the Riksdag. A summary of the report and the proposals follows: The Government's obligation to inform and confer with the Riksdag in EU matters should be stated in the Swedish constitution. The Commission underscores that the specialised committees shall have a strong role to play in the work of the Riksdag with EU matters. The committees shall follow important matters during the preparatory process in the European Commission and during the continued decision-making process. The EU matters should be included as an integral part of the committee's handling of its ordinary business and be brought up in reports that deal with neighbouring questions. All the committees should draw up an EU paper covering the EU matters in their remit. For the benefit of the public debate, it is desirable that the committees arrange open hearings on EU issues of particular importance. The Chamber's central role in creating transparency, openness and public debate on EU matters shall be developed further. Information from the Government should be planned in the long-term schedule of the Chamber more systematically. The Prime Minister should always inform the Chamber close to the meetings of the European Council. When a new member state takes over the presidency and presents its programme, it should be considered that the Government informs the Chamber orally about its views. A special EU debate with a minister participating should be arranged annually. The Government's obligation to account for its actions in the European Union to the Riksdag shall be regulated in the Riksdag Act.</p>
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United Kingdom House of Commons	Yes on the status of the Charter; not recently on the role of national Parliaments.	In the Committee's Report on 'The 2000 Inter-Governmental Conference'.	No, because there has not yet been sufficient time and a general election is imminent. It is possible that the Committee in the new Parliament will take such measures.	No	Originating in 1997 what became the Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments, which it would be worthwhile to re-examine.
United Kingdom House of Lords	The House itself has not adopted a position, although the European Union Committee of the House has touched on this issue in its report on the 1996 Inter-Governmental Conference.	The European Union Committee considered that the most important contribution which national parliaments can make to the legislative processes of the Union is "by exercising timely pressure on their own Governments in advance of Council meetings". The Committee also supported strongly the proposals made by the European Committee of the House of Commons for a minimum period of notice to allow the proper scrutiny of legislative texts. This proposal formed the basis of the Amsterdam Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments.	The European Union Committee has begun an inquiry into the idea of a European Second Chamber, and will be taking further evidence later in the year. All the evidence is taken in public and published in full. The European Union Committee, or other Committees in the House, may go on to examine other aspects of the "post-Nice" agenda, but no firm decisions have yet been taken.	Our own practice has been to examine the issues in advance of the IGCs leading to Treaty changes, in an attempt to influence the debate before the Government has adopted firm positions, and to stimulate wider debate on the broad issues facing the Union.	The United Kingdom system relies on undertakings from the Government to keep both Houses fully informed about a very wide range of European documents. The Government is obliged to submit a detailed explanatory memorandum on each document deposited in Parliament. The system works well. It is comprehensive in its coverage, and means that all important proposals and documents come before the scrutiny committees promptly, and with an adequate explanation of their significance. Without this steady flow of information, the Committees' tasks would be much more difficult.