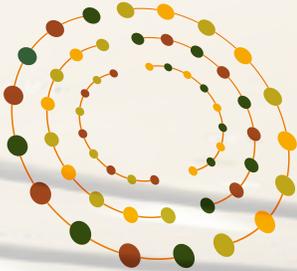




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# **INTER PARES** | Parliaments in Partnership

*EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments*

## **LAUNCH CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS**

### **11 July 2019**



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EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments



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## 1. Executive Summary

On 11 July 2019, the Launch Conference of the INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership - EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments, organised by the European Commission and International IDEA, and hosted by the European Parliament, took place in Brussels, Belgium.

INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership, funded by the European Union and implemented by International IDEA, aims to strengthen representative and inclusive democracy through support to the effective functioning of parliaments in partner countries, by enhancing their legislative, oversight, representative, budgetary and administrative functions. This pilot project, the first of global nature, is an important step in contributing towards making parliaments in partner countries more effective, transparent, accountable, representative and accessible. The project will focus on:



The objective of the kick-off conference was to formally launch the INTER PARES programme and to share lessons learned on EU Member States' interparliamentary cooperation. The conference provided a platform for the INTER PARES core partners to exchange views on the project framework and its activities, and on knowledge sharing platforms, such as AGORA, iKNOW Politics and IPU's Centre for Innovation in Parliaments. The conference also explored the role of academia and civil society in parliamentary development and aimed to identify common approaches to parliamentary assistance.

The Launch Conference brought together around 150 participants, including 22 panellists from EU Member State Parliaments, EU representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament and the EEAS, and parliamentary support actors, from UN agencies and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, Parliamentarians for Global Action and many others.



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## 2. Opening session

The opening session of the conference was chaired by Jennifer Baker, Freelance EU Correspondent.

### 2.1 Keynote Speech

The conference opened with a keynote speech by Pat Cox, former President of the European Parliament. Mr. Cox highlighted the importance of strong and effective parliaments in fostering inclusive and just societies, as well as the challenges that democratic institutions all around the world are facing in recent times. Mr Cox emphasised the important role that EU Member State Parliaments have played in consolidating peace and democracy across the EU and beyond. Reflecting on the impact that the INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership global project can have around the world, Mr. Cox said:



ID/ Pat Cox

### 2.2 Opening Remarks

The opening remarks included speeches from distinguished guests that highlighted the importance parliaments play in building strong democratic foundations.

Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation and Development, DG DEVCO, European Commission, emphasized the European Union's role as a leading actor in the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy worldwide. The INTER PARES project will open a new chapter in strengthening the capacity of parliaments, bringing together not only all EU institutions but also the Member States Parliaments and Partner Parliaments, as well as international implementing partners, to deliver a unique platform for coordination and development.



ID/ Marjeta Jager



ID/Pietro Ducci

Pietro Ducci, Director General for External Policies of the Union at the European Parliament, highlighted the ways in which EU institutions and its Member States work together in a coordinated effort to promote democracy support and capacity building, through the *Comprehensive Approach to Democracy Support* mechanism. Mr. Ducci emphasized the importance of civil society as a pillar of democracy support and outlined the importance of the INTER PARES project in bringing all partners around the table.

Emine Bozkurt, Chair of the Board for International IDEA, conveyed how the ten years of experience spent as a Member of the European Parliament shaped her focus on women's rights, civil liberties and the fight against racism. Faced with lower levels of public trust than ever before, parliaments are increasingly called to promote their shared values, such as such as building partnerships and creating an open dialogue. Ms Bozkurt emphasised how these are the values that the INTER PARES project is built on and will promote wholeheartedly through partnerships between EU Member States Parliaments and Partner Parliaments.



ID/Emine Bozkurt



ID/Kareen Jabre

Kareen Jabre, Director for the Division of Programmes at the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU), stressed that 'stronger parliaments make for better democracies' and that a strong democratic parliament is one that is representative, accountable, transparent, accessible and effective. Recalling the recent 130th anniversary of the IPU, Ms. Jabre provided a brief overview of IPU's history as a platform for dialogue, peace and conflict resolution and its growing focus on responding to the needs of parliaments. The IPU strongly supports the INTER PARES approach of parliaments assisting parliaments and learning from one another to foster effective democratic parliaments.

## 3. Panel Discussions

### 3.1 EU Approach to Parliament strengthening

This session introduced the European Union's approach to parliamentary development and more specifically, the perspectives of the European Commission, European Parliament and the European External Action Service.

Chiara Adamo, Head of Unit for Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance at DG DEVCO, European Commission, highlighted the political exclusion that affects around two billion people around the world, with only 'one in seven people living in a society where political power is equally distributed'. In the past ten years, the EU has financed 202 projects on parliamentary strengthening and support to political parties, amounting to €240 million in an attempt to rectify the status quo. The first of a global nature, the INTER PARES project aims to build on EU's existing efforts in parliamentary strengthening through its demand-driven partnerships.



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Strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation is a long-term agenda. Gerrard Quille, Head of Mediation and Dialogue Support Unit for the European Parliament, outlined in further detail the *Comprehensive Approach to Democracy Support* framework, describing the instruments of the European Union to design and support the electoral cycle, showcasing Ukraine as a case study.

Patrick Costello, Head of the Democracy and Electoral Observation Unit at the EEAS, outlined the challenges that democracy is facing today. Mr. Costello stressed that support for democracy cannot be assumed anymore and that online threats undermine public trust. Faced with common challenges, parliaments need to work together in partnership.



ID/From left to right: Chiara Adamo, Gerrard Quille, Patrick Costello

### 3.2 INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership: An Introduction



ID/From left to right: Gonzalo Jorro-Martinez, Jonathan Murphy

Gonzalo Jorro-Martinez, Policy Officer for Parliaments and Political Parties, DG DEVCO, European Commission, presented an overview of the INTER PARES project. As the first EU-funded project on parliamentary strengthening with a global scope, the project aims to implement its peer-to-peer partnerships ensuring that they are guided by the following key principles: demand-driven, process supportive, results oriented, gender sensitive, multi-party, a rights-based approach and tailored modalities for implementation.

Both speakers highlighted that, beyond ownership by Partner Parliaments, EU Member State Parliaments are at the core of the INTER PARES project and their expertise will ultimately drive the implementation process.

Jonathan Murphy, Head of Programme for INTER PARES | Parliaments in Partnership, International IDEA, outlined project achievements since its inception in January 2019, from the recruitment of the project team to the data collected through the baselines survey of EU Member State Parliaments, from the eligibility matrix developed for the selection of Partner Parliaments to the knowledge partnerships established: with the IPU, Agora and iKnowPolitics.

The core project activity planned for the second semester of 2019 will be the launch of a first set of five partnerships between EU Member State parliaments and Partner Parliaments. The main driver in the selection process is the interest of potential Partner Parliaments and of the EU Delegation in country to take part in the project, while other relevant criteria includes: 1) Countries with the first or second generation of the pilot exercise of the EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support; 2) Countries where follow up is required on EU and OSCE EOMs; 3) Graduated countries - any of the 37 Lower Middle-Income and 57 Upper Middle-Income Countries, as per the "DAC List of ODA recipients; 4) Democratic space; 5) Exclusion criteria: where the EU is already financing a country-specific parliamentary strengthening project.



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### 3.3 Project Partners' work on parliamentary knowledge sharing and innovation: AGORA, iKNOW Politics and the Centre for Innovation in Parliaments (CIP)

Moderated by Chiara Adamo, Head of Unit for Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, DG DEVCO, European Commission, the session outlined the ongoing initiatives on parliamentary research, knowledge sharing and innovation that will be supported by INTER PARES. Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Head of Political Participation and Representation at International IDEA, gave an overview of [AGORA](#), the sharing portal for parliamentary development and online learning platform, launched in 2010 through a partnership of different parliamentary development actors. The portal is an avenue for sharing information and expertise, while providing opportunities for knowledge exchange and peer support. INTER PARES will support the revitalisation of AGORA as a flexible instrument that responds in an effective way to the needs of parliaments.



ID/From left to right: Chiara Adamo, Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, Julie Ballington, Norah Babic

Julie Ballington, Policy Advisor for Political Participation at UN WOMEN, presented the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics ([iKNOW Politics](#)), available in four languages (EN, FR, ES, AR). The platform connects users with experts, it provides resources and knowledge products, and offers an online workspace for knowledge sharing between different stakeholders. iKNOW Politics provides the largest online library dedicated to women's participation. INTER PARES will contribute to the platform as part of the project's gender strategy, which addresses gender both as a cross cutting issue and with a specific focus on supporting young women parliamentarians.

Norah Babic, Manager of the IPU Technical Cooperation Programme, introduced the Centre for Innovation in Parliaments (CIP), that aims to promote and share technology-led innovation in parliaments. The Centre has thematic hubs and regional hubs, hosted by parliaments, that promote inter-parliamentary cooperation and support their path to achieving digital maturity. INTER PARES will support the CIP's research on parliamentary innovation, including digital technologies and e-Parliaments.

### 3.4 EU-Funded Parliamentary strengthening projects: implementing partners, impact and lessons

Moderated by Fabienne Van Den Eede, Deputy Head of Unit - Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance, DG DEVCO, European Commission, the panel showcased different modalities and approaches of EU-funded parliamentary strengthening projects.

The *Enhancing Legislative Oversight Programme*, developed with EU support, is an innovative tool which supports the development of South Africa's legislative sector, while strengthening the role of civil society, through mutual learning. Jozet Muller, Programme Manager at the EU Delegation in South Africa, showcased how the long-term approach of the programme has consolidated a strong legislative sector at both national and provincial levels, implementing an oversight model, a public participation model, a communication framework, a Monitoring and Evaluation framework and sustainable financial governance.



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Lessons learned from another EU-funded parliamentary strengthening project, the *EU Support to Jordanian Democratic Institutions and Development (EU-JDID)* project, focused on the importance of professional expertise, effective financial and administrative management, a flexible workplan and clear communication lines. Sergiu Galitchi, Human Resources Expert at the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, outlined how the project helped strengthen the legislative and oversight functions of the parliament, enhancing the functioning of committees and improving internal communications.



ID/From left to right: Jozet Muller, Sergiu Galitchi, Fabienne van den Eede, Ricardo Godinho Gomes, Frederika Schweighoferova

Pro PALOP-TL SAI, a project managed by Ricardo Godinho Gomes at UNDP Cape Verde, is a programme focused on public financial management in Lusophone countries. The initial objectives of the project focused on quality of governance and independent external control. In 2017, M&E results brought to the fore the need to promote budgetary transparency and political oversight, and to build institutional capacity through South-South triangular cooperation.

Frederika Schweighoferova, Senior Legal Officer at Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), outlined the Campaign for the Universality and Effectiveness of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) System, which aims to promote the rule of law, human rights and human dignity by combating impunity, promoting accountability and providing justice for victims through the universal ratification and effective implementation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Through the Campaign's efforts, legislative packages on domestic implementation were adopted in 36 countries.

### 3.5 The role of academia and civil society in parliamentary development

Moderated by Thomas Millar, Head of Sector for Democratic Governance at DG DEVCO, European Commission, the panel enabled academia and civil society to share their experiences in research on parliamentary matters and their role in parliamentary development.

Stefanos Loukopoulos, Managing Director at Vouliwatch, showcased the Vouliwatch parliamentary platform that strives to facilitate open and transparent communication with citizens. It focuses on bridging the gap between citizens and electoral democratic institutions, in a time where trust in public institutions is at an all-time low. Vouliwatch hopes that digital technologies can provide solutions at both institutional and grassroots levels, allowing for information to be disseminated rapidly and openly.



ID/From left to right: Thomas Millar, Stefanos Loukopoulos, Constanza Sanhueza



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Constanza Sanhueza, Research Associate at the V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg, presented the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data set that measures democracy on the basis of five high-level principles: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian, through over 350 indicators. This comprehensive tool is the largest contributor of indicators to the Global State of Democracies Indices ([GSoD Indices](#)) developed by International IDEA, which measures different attributes of democracy and emerging trends for 158 countries over the period between 1975 and 2018.

The Joint Master's Degree on Parliaments and Public Policy, funded by the Erasmus+ programme and presented by Prof. Nicola Lupo, Director of the Centre for Parliamentary Studies LUISS Guido Carli, highlighted how the large array of partners, the inclusion of both law and political science elements in the programme and the partnership between academia and institutions, scholars and practitioners, made the programme a real success, with 90% of students from countries outside the European Union.



ID/Prof. Nicola Lupo



ID/Dr. Maria Mousmouti

By generating new knowledge and addressing niche areas of legislative development, academia can partner with parliamentary institutions to advance legislative drafting and oversight competences, which can be converted into practical skills. Dr Maria Mousmouti, Lecturer in Law at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), outlined ways in which the academia-parliament relationship also offers an enabling environment to experiment with new ideas through networking of practitioners and researchers.

### 3.6 EU Member State Parliaments experience in delivering EU-funded parliamentary strengthening projects: Twinning

Moderated by Gonzalo Jorro-Martinez, Policy Officer for Parliaments and Political Parties at DG DEVCO, European Commission, the session highlighted the success stories and the challenges encountered in delivering EU-funded parliamentary strengthening projects through the twinning modality.

The twinning tool, outlined by Francesca Aquaro, Team Leader for Twinning at DG NEAR, is a peer-to-peer exercise that combines the expertise of Member State parliaments' staff with the partner parliament and it includes two methodologies: conventional twinning and twinning light. While standard twinning involves a Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA), seconded to the partner administration between 12 and 36 months, and two project leaders, one from the EU Member State leading the project and the other from the partner administration, twinning light offers a more flexible approach lasting approximately six months, without an RTA. In both cases, the ownership of the partner parliament is ensured through a joint commitment on political objectives and results.



ID/From left to right: Gonzalo Jorro-Martinez, Francesca Aquaro, Dr. Jur. Kristian Kovacs, Marie Vigouroux, Dr. Fotis Fitsilis



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The points raised by Ms Aquarro were reinforced by the French National Assembly’s twinning projects with Morocco and Tunisia, presented by Marie Vigouroux, Head of the Interparliamentary Cooperation Unit for the French National Assembly. Through the twinning instrument, national parliaments are provided with a structured framework for coherent action, a solid methodology, helping to build long-term relationships between the beneficiary states and the member states.

The twinning projects in Albania, Bosnia and Moldova, spearheaded by the Hungarian National Assembly, highlighted lessons that will be vital in the implementation of INTER PARES partnerships. Dr. Jur. Krisztián Kovács, Head of the EU Department at the Directorate for Foreign Relations, Hungarian National Assembly, highlighted the crucial management role of the Resident Twinning Adviser (RTA), the importance of donor coordination and political ownership of the beneficiary partner, as well as the challenges and opportunities that can arise from working with various short-term experts, whose approaches may differ.

Dr. Fotios Fitsilis, Head of the Department for Scientific Documentation and Supervision at the Scientific Service of the Hellenic Parliament and former Resident Twinning Advisor for the Hellenic Parliament, showcased the twinning project in Serbia between 2010-2014, led by the Hellenic Parliament. Dr Fitsilis recognised that being the pioneer institution partnering with Serbia brought its own unexpected challenges, but that a successful project needs to be creative, flexible and efficient, and have both partners dedicated to the project. Twinning is not meant to be a one-way technical assistance venture, but a true partnership based on a shared commitment.

## 4. Closing Session

Chiara Adamo thanked the participants, the European Parliament for hosting, as well as the European Commission and the International IDEA team for the success of the INTER PARES Launch Conference, highlighting three key words to take away from the session - **ownership, partnership and expertise**: the ownership of Partner Parliaments, the partnership between EU Member State Parliaments and Partner Parliaments and the expertise of Parliaments and all the partners involved.



ID/Chiara Adamo



ID/Keboitse Manchangana

Keboitse Manchangana, Director of Global Programme at International IDEA, thanked the organisers and the speakers for their hard work and inspirational words. She highlighted how the conference provided invaluable resources and lessons, critical in implementing the INTER PARES programme. Ms. Manchangana pointed out how the common thread of the conference, the trust and relationships with the partner parliaments, as well as mutual learning, will shape the vital pillars of the INTER PARES programme.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**