

THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS:

1. COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

The Committee is composed of 30 members: 10 members of the House, 10 members of the Senate and 10 members of the European Parliament elected in Belgium.

The members of the House (and the Senate) are appointed by the House (and the Senate), at the beginning of the life of each parliament, on proposals from the political groups, in proportion to the relative strengths of those groups in their assembly.

The members of the European Parliament: appointed by the 24 members of the European Parliament elected in Belgium following each re-election of that Parliament, on the basis of proportional representation.

2. CHAIRMANSHIP

The President of the House of Representatives or a Vice-President appointed by him chairs the Advisory Committee of the House.

The President of the House and the President of the Senate's delegation chair the Federal Advisory Committee, alternatively per legislature.

3. COMPETENCES

The Committee's function is:

1. to coordinate and stimulate the parliamentary control of the European decision-making process;
2. to monitor the execution of the internal legislation, the resolutions and the recommendations with regard to European issues;
3. to deliver opinions, pursuant to article 168 of the Constitution, on the negotiations with a view to revising the Treaties establishing the European Communities;
4. to draw up reports, in execution of article 92 quarter of the special law of August 8, 1980 on institutional reforms, concerning the proposals of normative acts of the European Commission.
5. to hear the Government, before and after each European Council, on the items put on the agenda and the conclusions;
6. to strengthen the parliamentary control on the European decision making process by taking initiatives in the field of interparliamentary cooperation (between the national parliaments and the European Parliament, between the national parliaments themselves and between the Federal Parliament and the Parliaments of the Communities and the Regions).
The Committee will be represented at the COSAC-CEAC (Conférence des organes spécialisés en Affaires communautaires – Conference of bodies specialized in European Affairs) which is organized, every six months, by the Parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the European Union.
7. to inform, on a regular basis, the standing Committees on:
 - the important legislative proposals of the European Commission;
 - the legislative programmes of the European Union, the Communications of the European Commission and the White and Green Papers;

- the agenda of the Council of Ministers of the European Union;
 - the reports of the Councils of Ministers to be communicated to the House by the Government;
 - the report of the European Court of Auditors.
8. to devote each year a study to the government's report (to be submitted to the House each year before March 1) on the execution of the Treaties on the European Union (according to the law of December 2, 1957, implementing the EEC-Treaty) and which also gives the current state of the situation with regard to the transposition of European law into domestic law.
9. to deliver opinions on European matters (such as WEU, Council of Europe, Schengen,...).
- The Advisory Committee can draw up initiative reports¹. The Committee organizes its own work and deliberates in accordance with the provisions applying to standing Committees of the House.
- The activities of the Advisory Committee can be concluded with resolution proposals, recommendations or other final texts which are directly submitted to the plenary meeting of the House and/or the Senate².

4. RELATIONS WITH OTHER BODIES OF THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT

- Motions for resolutions adopted by the Advisory Committee are tabled directly before the House or the Senate.
 - Pursuant to article 36 of the House's rules of procedure, the standing committees of the House have to examine, each month, European issues within their province that are on the agenda of the Council of Ministers of the European Union, together with the decisions taken by the latter and the resolutions forwarded officially to the House by the European Parliament.
- The clerks of the Advisory Committee of the House provide the 10 members of the House within the Advisory Committee, appointed by the House as Eurowhips, with a selection of legislative proposals or other documents of the European Commission.
- Eurowhips are members of the Advisory Committee and of one Standing Committee of the House. They must see to it that European issues are dealt with by the Standing Committee they belong to (article 35 of the Rules of procedure).

5. RELATIONS WITH THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Committee may decide to summon members of the Government to appear before it.

In this framework, the Advisory Committee hears a number of Ministers (especially the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign affairs) expound, on the progress of negotiations within the Intergovernmental Conference (the IGC's are monitored first and foremost by the Advisory Committee).

These meetings are organized jointly with the Foreign affairs Committees of the House and the Senate. Hearings are also organized with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign affairs before and after each European Council of Heads of State and Government.

¹ These documents are available, on single request, at the Secretariat of the Advisory Committee on European Affairs (see under 9).

² These documents are available, on single request, at the Secretariat of the Advisory Committee on European Affairs (see under 9).

6. RELATIONS WITH EUROPEAN UNION'S INSTRUCTIONS AND COMPARABLE BODIES IN OTHER MEMBER STATES

A delegation of the Advisory Committee attends, twice a year, the meetings of the Conference of European affairs committees (COSAC-CEAC) organized by the Parliament of the Member State holding the presidency of the European Union. The Advisory Committee also meets comparable bodies in charge of European Questions from other Member States to discuss working methods and topics of common interest.

In order to improve the cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments members of the Belgian Parliament regularly attend, at the invitation of the European Parliament, some of its committee meetings.

7. INVOLVEMENT OF BELGIAN MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IN THE WORK OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE (ARTICLE 34 OF THE RULES OF THE HOUSE)

Any member of the European Parliament representing a Belgian constituency may take part in the work of the standing committees in a consultative capacity. His right to speak is confined to the discussion of draft laws and bills and to meetings held by the committees for the purpose of giving briefings.

Before such members may take part in the work of a standing committee other than the Committee on External Affairs, prior authorization is required from the chairman of the committee concerned. For this purpose, an application to take part must reach the committee chairman by the day before the meeting at the latest and must indicate the main item on which the said member wishes to speak. The President of the House is immediately notified of such applications.

Where the committee chairman gives this authorization, the Committee may nevertheless decide against. The Committee on External Affairs is also entitled not to admit the member.

8. WRITTEN QUESTIONS PUT BY BELGIAN MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Pursuant to point 4 of the Recommendation relating tot the strengthening of parliamentary control of the European integration process, adopted by the House on 12 July 1990 (Doc. 20-1251/-89/90 – House), the members of the European Parliament elected in Belgium can ask questions to the Belgian government. These questions have to focus on European issues dealt with by the Federal government.

The Government's replies are published under a heading in the Bulletin of Questions and Replies of the House.

9. CLERKS

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