




POLICY POSITION

One Pager: Trilogue Consultation



The European Movement International believes that the closed-door negotiations between the Parliament, Council and Commission, in the form of ‘trilogues,’ undermine the legitimacy of decision-making on the European level as well as citizens’ trust. Trilogues are informal tripartite meetings held at any time during the legislative process, attended by representatives of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, which aim to create informal compromises on legislative proposals. Greater transparency surrounding the trilogue process is key to reducing the democratic deficit of the European Union.

BACKGROUND

The proliferation of trilogues, both political and technical, is closely associated with the trend of EU legislation being adopted in a shorter time frame, often after just the first reading. As 85% of codecision files were adopted at first reading in the 2009-2014 legislature, most trilogues take place before the first reading. In that last legislative period, about 1,500 trilogues took place on about 320 different pieces of EU legislation, demonstrating the integral and substantial part such meetings play in EU law-making.

Informal trilogues are sometimes defended as being similar to the ‘formal trilogues’ or Conciliation Committee enshrined in the ordinary legislative process. However, before the Committee commences, the initial position or mandate of each institution is public knowledge because it convenes only after the second reading. As a result, the Committee is substantially more transparent than the informal trilogues referred to here.

TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC TRUST

Increasing transparency in the trilogue procedure would enable the tracking of how EU legislation came into existence and therefore increase public trust. Greater transparency around trilogues would also enable a greater spectrum of lobbyists and stakeholders, such as ordinary citizens and civil society organisations, to influence and put pressure on the negotiations and help keep the institutions accountable. Transparency would further act as a safeguard against the blurring of institutional roles and any related unchecked development of long-term institutional dominance. Trilogues should follow the threshold transparency rules governing the Conciliation Committee, a body designed to reach an

agreement within six to eight weeks when the Parliament and Council have been unable to draw up a joint text during the second reading. A lack of transparency prevents public debate on any piece of legislation and plays into the hands of anti-EU populist forces across Europe.

CONCRETE MEASURES

The European Council and the European Parliament should be required to publish a negotiation mandate in advance of debates on legislative proposals. To ensure that civil society is able to execute its necessary function in a democracy, the list of proposed participants and meeting timetables should be made available in advance. Documents exchanged between the institutions during the trilogue negotiations such as the “four-column tables” should be made publicly available on a central ‘trilogue’ internet site within a matter of days after the process has concluded, and before the presentation of the text to the Parliament’s plenary. All documents such as meeting agendas should be made available after the sessions are completed, following the publication procedure of the Conciliation Committee.

Updated impact assessments should be published after trilogue agreement – but before first reading voting, as the original may be outdated due to changes to the proposal.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Only by working together can we provide common solutions to the challenges Europe faces and ensure that Europeans’ ambitions mirror the future work of the European Union. By bringing our member organisations together in our Political Committees, we continuously develop new policy positions and put existing ones to good use. Please visit our website www.europeanmovement.eu to take a look at our main policy positions that guide our current work and get in touch if you would like to join us or support our work.



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Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union