

MP-Call: Parliaments in times of Corona #2

Mercator European Dialogue

8. April 2020

Over the past weeks, the Mercator European Dialogue has monitored and informed its members on measures and responses to COVID-19 taken by national parliaments in Europe. On 25 March, 13 parliamentarians from eight countries exchanged national perspectives and concerns in an online conversation facilitated by the Mercator European Dialogue.

You can read more about the main takeaways and highlights of the first call [here](#).

15 Members of Parliament from 11 European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden) came together to discuss European solidarity during the Corona crisis. The session was held via video call and was facilitated by the Mercator European Dialogue. During the call, the parliamentarians engaged in an open conversation communicating to their colleagues about priorities and topics of interests in their countries. The exchanged ideas and updates on measures adopted by their parliaments to continue working during these very challenging times.

Highlights of the Conversation

- **Parliamentarians identified emerging priorities** to discuss further and suggested follow-up conversations to allow for more in depth exchange of ideas and best practice sharing.
 - Functioning of Parliaments during pandemic.
The discussion touched upon ways to keep exercising the functions of parliaments, how to react in case of executive overreach, and how to manage elections.
 - Seeking economic responses to the crisis.
The discussion called for a mapping of measures that member states are implementing to absorb the economic shock, as well as an appetite for deeper understanding of the sectors and industries that will need most assistance.
 - Runner up topics of discussion:
 - Covid19 global strategy: what are we doing about Africa?
 - What does solidarity look like: a European patent for the virus?
 - Management of Covid19 in Refugee camps
 - New security threats: New Covid19 specific waves of disinformation campaigns
 - Impact on the functioning of society: Ways in which the continuation of education can be managed during the Corona pandemic, especially with regards to exams.
- **Rehabilitating the role of Parliaments.** A warning was issued regarding the need to fight negative stereotypes with regards to the role of Parliamentarians in such a crisis. In a moment in which Parliaments seem “out of the picture” in many EU countries, participants discussed initiatives that

parliaments are putting in place to show that the institutions are closer to citizens during challenging times:

- Facebook live updates from party groups organized centrally by the Parliament, rather than individual parliamentarians.
- Recommended to communicate clearly to citizens how the work in committees (or plenary sessions) is continuing, describing measures adopted to overseeing the government via hearings and inquiries even if remotely.
- **Best practice sharing on keeping parliaments operative.** The Swedish parliament, voting still takes place in person but with a maximum of 55 parliamentarians in plenary. Parties are represented proportionally, and they are responsible to select members that will participate in the voting process. Exceptionally, all parliamentarians are also part of all committees and they meet regularly online to debate pressing issues. All members present can intervene in committees' meetings, bringing their party positions to the table and asking questions.
- **National measures to support the economy.** A number of different approaches are being implemented across Europe. Notably, two examples were quoted in the discussion:
 - Developments surrounding the virus have forced our society to face unprecedented challenges. Freelancers, employers and employees alike struggle to come to terms with this new and unexpected situation. The **German federal government has put in place a massive bailout program** for individual freelancers and small companies with up to 10 employees in Germany that have been hard-hit by the coronavirus crisis.
 - **Denmark's government has announced moves to cover 75% of wage bills**, helping companies struggling in the face of a slowing economy caused by the virus. The offer lasts for three months and aims to encourage firms to send home employees rather than fire them.

Update on members' cross-party initiatives

- www.insieme-together.eu/ launched by members Lars Castellucci, Angela Schirò, Franziska Brantner, and signed by over 30 members of the MED network, is a call for and from Parliamentarians to advocate for more European Solidarity. Thanks also to the support of the MED network is in now a cross-partisan initiative with the support of over 100 lawmakers, and counting.
 - It is possible to sign the appeal online, so feel free to sign it or circulate it among your colleagues.
 - The insieme website is also meant to showcase other initiatives and cross-border and cross-party cooperation, which you can find [here](#).
 - You can signal your own initiatives by sending a message through the "support us" page or scroll through existing initiatives to adhere and learn more about who is collaborating on what across European Parliaments.

MED member Points of Contact: Lars Castellucci, Angela Schirò, Franziska Brantner.

- www.weareinthistogether.eu is a joint German-Italian appeal to the governments of all Member States and to EU institutions signed by 21,000 supporters, launched by 42 prominent politicians, economists and intellectuals in Germany and Italy. It calls for ambitious fiscal measures to tackle this unprecedented crisis in Europe, including a health credit line in the ESM and European Health Bonds. Yesterday, some of the initiators, including members Franziska Brantner and Lars Castellucci, held a first joint Italo-German Press Conference, with Prof. Mario Monti, Elmar Brok.
 - You can still sign the appeal online.

MED members Points of Contact: Franziska Brantner, Lars Castellucci.

Keep in contact! Please know you can find contact details of all MED members on the Members-only area of the website, which is accessible here. www.mercatoreuropeandialogue.org/login/

Should you have issues logging in, you can contact rschalast@gmfus.org.