

MP OPEN CALL

Your Direct Line to Europe's Policymakers

Mercator European Dialogue

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The Mercator European Dialogue is committed to strengthening dialogue between policymakers across Europe by providing a neutral, informal, and accessible space for conversation. Our monthly, online MP Open Calls grew out of this mission and are a space for parliamentarians to set the agenda, discuss pressing national and European issues, and support each other by sharing best practices and concerns.

In our busiest MP Open Call yet, we were joined by eight parliamentarians from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, and Sweden. They came together to discuss parliamentary involvement in times of crisis, highlighting the continued need for governmental checks and balances. The discussion then moved on to the strategies required to tackle widespread social discontent arising from the continuous socio-economic hardship caused by COVID-19, as well as by the spread of misinformation and conspiracies.

Conversation highlights

- **Many governments are failing to include parliaments in policy implementation during the pandemic.** Some MPs expressed outright discontent toward their government, while others explained the system in place to ensure a degree of parliamentary oversight in their country.
 - “[We need] full transparency from executives.”
 - “The people have no voice, and they will get angry.”
- **The importance of checks and balances in government should not be forgotten in times of crisis.** MPs expressed the desire to reassert their role in governance and decision-making.

“We need best practices set in place for executives to make quick decisions without avoiding parliament.”
- **Last week, the Luxembourgish Administrative Court asserted the right of parliamentarians to access state-made contracts with other entities following a [lawsuit](#) brought by an MP.** The participating MPs took this as an opportunity to share the systems of checking government contracts in place in their own countries, also with a view to recent procurement deals related to the fight against COVID-19.
- **It is crucial, but difficult, to address widespread public discontent on pandemic-related measures.** MPs fear the repercussions of the pandemic for the economy and public morale and wondered how to handle the broad variety of emerging protests.
 - “From the political point of view, it is difficult to understand what these people want. This is the challenge if we want to listen.”
 - “Our experts and virologist are also becoming politicians of a sort, determining policy [but not contributing to public morale]. People feel hopeless.”

New format! MED Policy Sprint: A focused working group for policymakers

As the topic of parliamentary oversight has been brought repeatedly over the last months, the MED will volunteer its process expertise to take the conversation to a next level for all interested network members in the first ever **MED Policy Sprint**. Following the steps of the design sprint methodology, this new format has interested MPs tackle a single topic, beginning with problem exploration to working out a feasible way to solve it, in a short number of highly focused meetings. This approach is well suited to groups that have innate expertise in a subject area and is designed to serve as a guided process through which participants formulate a common and impactful response.

As a network member, you are invited to join this pioneer effort to **begin developing realistic solutions for better parliamentary oversight** during crises. This is an opportunity to work with your international colleagues on an issue across parliaments. The MED Policy Sprint will be held in three 90-minute sessions with the same participants over a span of six weeks. Between sessions, the MED research team and external experts will prepare follow-up information and briefings to ensure a highly productive and goal-oriented process throughout. If you did not already express your interest in joining the MED Policy Sprint during the call, you can **Contact Chiara Rosselli at CRosselli@gmfus.org to sign-up now.**

Resources and further information

- [Parliamentary Innovations in Times of Crisis](#), February 2021
- [Europeans' Right to Protest Under Threat](#), January 2021
- [IMF World Economic Outlook Update](#), January 2021
- [EU Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic: Citizens' Views and Expectations](#), December 2020

What more can we do to drive the conversation forward?

The Mercator European Dialogue is a network driven by MPs. We look forward to hearing from you and helping you as best we can to connect and work with your colleagues from across Europe in these challenging times.

If you have any suggestions on how to take the conversation to the next level or to continue digging deeper into the urgent systemic challenges posed by COVID-19, feel free to reach out to us.

Keep in contact with your colleagues! Please know that you can always find contact details of all **MED members** on the **members-only area of the website**, accessible [here](#). Members are linked to all activities they participate in and are organized by member states, making it easier for you to find your colleagues. Should you have issues logging in, you can contact hwittrich@gmfus.org.

