

RC08 Legislative Specialists, open panels at IPSA World Congress, Montreal 2014

## Capacity building and professional development by parliamentarians

Convenor: [Dr. Hilmar Rommetvedt](#)

Chair: [Dr. Ken Coghill](#)

Discussant: [Prof. Iordanis Kavathatzopoulos](#)

Capacity building and professional development for parliamentarians are of increasing interest to established parliaments and agencies providing support for reformed and newer legislatures. Until recently, practice has developed with little research support.

This panel provides the opportunity for paper-givers to address any aspect of this new field of research but are encouraged to give particular attention to one of the most difficult areas - the development of ethical competence by parliamentarians. Ethical competence is an important quality of members of legislatures as it contributes to the reputation and legitimacy of both individuals and their legislatures. However, views vary on whether parliamentarians should be assisted to develop ethical competence and if so, how.

Paper-givers are invited to report or comment on developments in practice, research or both.

## Contemporary Approaches to Parliamentary Strengthening

Panel in French, with English summary & bilingual discussion

Convenor: [Dr. Rick Stapenhurst](#)

Chair: [Mr. Paul Belisle](#)

Co-Chair: [Dr. Riccardo Pelizzo](#)

Discussant: [Dr. Rick Stapenhurst](#)

Les organisations internationales, les pays donateurs et même les chercheurs spécialistes du pouvoir législatif ont concentré leurs études du renforcement parlementaire sur les pays anglophones et hispanophones ainsi que sur les pays de l'Europe de l'Est et de l'ex-Union soviétique et, plus récemment, du Moyen-Orient et de l'Afrique du Nord. Si bien que nos connaissances des pratiques de renforcement parlementaire dans les pays francophones sont très limitées. Pourtant on y trouve des recherches et des programmes de renforcement parlementaire des plus intéressants.

Ce panel veut mettre en valeur les objectifs, les moyens et les résultats de quelques-unes de ces activités de renforcement grâce à la participation de chercheurs des universités McGill et Laval, du Centre parlementaire et des Assemblées nationales de la France et du Québec.

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There is a scarcity of knowledge regarding parliamentary strengthening in Francophone countries, as most international organizations, donor agencies and legislative specialists have tended to focus on English & Spanish-speaking countries, with an additional focus on countries in Eastern Europe/FSU and recently the Middle East and North Africa. This panel presents on-going research & practical parliamentary strengthening programs being undertaken in Francophone countries.

# Financial oversight in the commonwealth and beyond

Convenor: [Dr. riccardo pelizzo](#)

Chair: [Dr. Rick Stapenhurst](#)

Discussant: [Dr. Louis Imbeau](#)

Over the past 15 years, international organizations, practitioners and scholars have acknowledged that when legislatures and other oversight bodies effectively perform their oversight function, governments are kept accountable for their actions and their expenditures, and this greater accountability in turn has beneficial impact on the functioning of the political system, the quality of democracy, the level of good governance and on the ability to curb corruption. Since Public Accounts Committees, in Westminster systems and increasingly outside the Westminster tradition (Bhutan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kosovo, Nepal, Thailand) have the constitutional mandate to oversee the government accounts, the implementation of government policies and the budget, a growing body of work has investigated the structure, the organization, the functioning, the mandate, the activities and the performance of these committees.

The purpose of the panel is to identify some of the critical issues that the literature on public accounts committees has so far failed to address, to compare and contrast how the oversight function is performed in systems that have public accounts committees and in systems where there are court de comptes, to identify whether these institutions face similar obstacles and challenges and to identify the conditions that could enhance the effectiveness of these oversight bodies.

# Legislators in a changing digital world

Convenor: [Dr. Hilmar Rommetvedt](#)

Chair: [Dr. Osnat Akirav](#)

Discussant: [Dr. Shane Martin](#)

In the last decade there has been an intensive increase in technologies that enable legislators and voters to establish bilateral connections. Nowadays legislators can use emails, party websites, personal websites, facebook and twitter simultaneously to bypass the traditional political media.

The panel welcomes papers on questions such as: What are the patterns of the use of the mentioned technologies? What is the effect of using these technological means on the legislators' activities, on the connection between legislators and voters, and on the connection between the legislators and their party? And if there is change, in what direction does it lead us?

# Parliamentary Control and Contemporary Governance – Challenges, Reactions and Perspectives

Convenor: [Dr. Hilmar Rommetvedt](#)

Chair: [Dr. Sven Siefken](#)

Discussant: [Prof. Werner J. Patzelt](#)

During the last decades, contemporary societies have experienced major changes that are subsumed under the popular term “governance”. Among them are diverse elements such as globalization, the importance of multi-level-systems, an enhanced interest in participation, the role of expert advice and the spread of the new public management approach. It is often assumed that these developments must lead to far-ranging changes in the separation of powers of modern political systems, specifically to the way that parliaments and governments interact with each other and with civil society and public administration. They seem to pose particular stress on the important parliamentary function of controlling the government and exercising oversight. To approach this issue, the panel will integrate three perspectives: First, it will investigate which challenges contemporary governance poses to parliaments in exercising their control function. Second, it will assess how parliamentary actors have empirically reacted to them, i.e. which changes can be seen in control and oversight activities and whether adaptations have been made to the institutional settings. Third, it will discuss whether there are theoretical “ways out” of a resulting modern dilemma of legitimation. Papers can focus on the use of different instruments of parliamentary control, on comparative approaches or on in-depth case studies of decision processes and include both empirical and normative approaches.

## Parliaments and coalition governments

Convenor: [Dr. Hilmar Rommetvedt](#)

Chair: [Dr. Zdenka Mansfeldova](#)

Discussant: [Prof. Drago Zajc](#)

Most democratic states practice a version of a parliamentary system where a number of parties compete for power. In most cases a coalition of various parties is needed in order to form a government. Coalition studies tend to be static and focus on a single coalition process at one point in time. New approaches should include dynamic elements and the exploration of interactive processes, thus enabling us to understand which coalition will form under specific circumstances, how long it will last or how it will end, or how prior formations of a coalition affects the formation of subsequent ones. An important question is: Which are the endogenous and exogenous factors that influence each of the coalition processes and their particular consequences. Among the first might be the capacity of coalition partners to cooperate in order to achieve common goals, while among the second are not only various economic events, but also the potential impact of international politics, especially within the EU. In a period of lasting, or even deepening economic crisis in Europe, a number of coalition governments have collapsed, thus endangering the stability of parliamentary democracy. Regularly scheduled elections do not seem to exclude the possibility of cabinet dissolutions. New democracies are strongly exposed. The panel is an opportunity to contribute to the conceptualizing of dynamic approaches, to demonstrate their potential and to exchange views over recent political events.

# Sub-national parliaments

Convenor: [Dr. Hilmar Rommetvedt](#)

Chair: [Associate profes Hans Petter Saxi](#).

Discussant: [Prof. Oddbjørn Bukve](#)

In this panel, we invite papers that are concentrated on regional and local parliaments and councils. These sub-national bodies are crucial expressions and instruments for the ability of self-government. We call for papers about how sub-national parliaments and councils around the world are affected by new challenges which have emerged the last decenniums, and which discuss and elaborate on the significance of these bodies.

Are sub-national parliaments and councils stable, increasing or decreasing in significance? How much autonomy and power do they have in relation to the national level? Do the party systems in these assemblies' reflect the national political party system, or are such assemblies dominated by regional or local parties? Are the electoral systems proportional or plural at the sub-national levels? How are the turnouts in elections developing?

How are the relationships between the sub-national parliaments and councils at the one hand, and the executives at the other? Are these relationships based on domination by the former, or are the relations more balanced?

How are the relationships between the politicians and the administration organized? Can the developments during the last decenniums be evaluated as a vitalization or a weakening of sub-national democracy?

We especially welcome papers that are answering one or more of these questions based on empirical data from sub national parliaments and councils.

## Gender, diversity and power in legislative committees: Comparative perspectives

Co-sponsored by RC08 Legislative Specialists and RC19 Gender Politics and Policy

Convenor: [Dr. Hilmar Rommetvedt](#)

Chair: [Dr. Anne Maria Holli](#)

Discussant: [Dr. Joan Grace](#)

A legislative committee in Parliament can be defined as a subgroup of legislators entrusted with reading in detail a bill in a specific policy area on behalf of the plenary and, often in practice, in its stead. In fact, this task of scrutinising and amending bills most often is actually delegated from the plenary to parliamentary legislative committees. The status of such committees as well as the internal hierarchies within parliaments have proved to be a major internal obstacle for newcomers, such as women and minorities, making it difficult for them to gain power or advance to higher positions. Typically, world parliaments display both an internal horizontal and vertical gender segregation in this respect.

This panel calls for comparative studies on the accessibility and functional consequences of legislative committees for women and minority representatives. What are the mechanisms hindering their access to high-status committees; do they make a difference in terms of substantive representation when they are there? In addition, the panel is interested in empirical studies of recent developments, such as the emergence of parliamentary committees for equality in many parliaments and their effectiveness from these perspectives.

# The Politics of Representation

Co-sponsored by RC08 Legislative Specialists and RC03 European Unification

Convenor: [Prof. Johannes Pollak](#)

Chair: [Prof. Johannes Pollak](#)

Discussant: [Dr. Zdenka Mansfeldova](#)

The current European political and economic crisis has amplified a tendency for increasingly powerful transnational players and decision-making arenas to escape the reach of traditional institutions of democratic representation rooted in territorially defined polities. An increasing number of collective decision-making areas and issues, at both the national and supranational level, are now largely shaped by specialized and expert bodies. A multiplication of informal structures and opportunities for representation and influence has increased the importance of decision-making in couloirs, working groups or expert committees which bypass formal (parliamentary) politics. Political power has thus been fragmented and responsibility and accountability dispersed.

The panel aims to explore those challenges to representation along three dimensions: (a) the challenges brought on by globalization but also the European crisis to our basic conceptions of democracy; (b) challenges to traditional functions of representative institutions such as parliaments; and (c) challenges to key actors of modern liberal political representation such as parties.