

Note to the attention of the Secretary General of the European Parliament/the Council

Dear Secretary General,

At the beginning of 2016, the two Secretary Generals of Parliament and Council exchanged letters on the interinstitutional collaboration on the management of multi-column tables used in legislative negotiations¹. Both felt that the manual work required by the services on either side to produce and maintain such documents for each legislative file under negotiation is extremely time-consuming, precisely in situations that are often characterised by a lack of time due to the on-going negotiation process. To overcome such difficulties the Secretary Generals agreed that the solution would be the creation of a specialised editor, based on xml-technology, for the handling of multi-column tables.

In the course of 2016, the business and IT services of the two institutions have worked to further refine the intentions set out in the original letters. Based on an initial study, carried out by Parliament, of the feasibility of a multi-column table editor based on xml technology, both institutions have now conducted business analyses, and a steering group has been established to manage the further stages of the joint project. The steering group is now pleased to report back to you on the positive development of this project, including decisions related to the responsibilities and decision-making rules of the steering committee, the joint analysis report, the technical shape of the project and the next steps. These points are listed in greater detail in the annex.

This project, although independent, should not be seen in isolation. Each institution is involved in a number of other IT initiatives that could impact in various ways on the development of the multi-column table editor.

In this regard the Parliament is continuing its effort to transform the internal production chain of its legislative documents using XML from the outset and to rationalise, structure and improve access to key parliamentary documents and document chains by building on its know-how and its positive experiences². Likewise, the Council is considering joining the Commission's new tool for legislative drafting which is based on XML technology. Furthermore at the Interinstitutional Formats Committee, the Commission, Parliament and Council have confirmed the choice of xml Akoma Ntoso as the basis of the structured document exchange between the respective institutions.

While the move towards the use of XML for the production of legislative texts and the intention to enhance synergies between the institutions' IT environment is a common feature of all these initiatives, the steering group intends to continuously monitor that coherence and mutual complementarity between these projects is maintained.

¹ reference...

² see Parliament Project Portfolio IPOL 6 and PRES 8

With these first steps concluded, the project and the steering committee are now ready for the institutions involved to start their cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

ANNEX

I. Governance structure

With a view to establishing a structure which coordinates all the relevant aspects in the development of such an editor and which ensures a collaborative environment between the institutions and the business and IT sectors of their administrations, the Secretary Generals in their letters each appointed representatives for their respective institution [list names?]. These representatives met on two occasions [18 March and 30 September 2016] to launch and oversee the necessary preparatory work for the setting up of a dedicated steering committee structure for this project. Each side communicated as members of the steering committee

- at the level of decision makers: [...]
- at the level of project managers and IT business analysts: [...]

[decision-making of the steering committee]

[list of responsibilities of the steering committee]

[role of the Commission]

II. Project shape

As part of the preparatory works the representatives from both sides undertook further studies which focussed on the functionalities and criteria that can be considered essential in determining how content between the two institutions could be exchanged. [more details on this analysis]. The study led to the conclusion that the project could develop essentially according to two scenarios:

1. The joint development of a content exchange mechanism with a limited core of basic editing functionalities. This mechanism ensures the reliable exchange of information between the two institutions while limiting editing functionalities to what is necessary to guarantee the basic readability; the bulk of the editing functionalities will be largely developed individually by each institution.
2. The joint development of the editor and all its functionalities: besides a content exchange mechanism a joint development of a fully-fledged editor ensures that users on both sides profit from the same functionalities and capabilities. Information is exchanged with greater ease and incompatibilities are avoided. Timing and finalisation of the editor are synchronised.

At its first meeting the steering committee decided to develop the project in line with scenario [1/2], the main reasons being [...].

This decision will serve as the basis for adopting the project methodology and the management plan. In a further next step the solution for the design of the architecture and of first prototypes will follow.

III. Next steps, timeline

IV. Joint analysis report

V. Other practical arrangements