

The Joint Committee for the European Union

The Joint Committee for the European Union was established under law as the *Cortes Generales* body specialising in EU affairs.

The Committee's mission is to:

- Ensure the *Cortes Generales*' adequate participation in legislative initiatives tabled by the European Commission, and
- Access the broadest possible information on the EU's activities.

To this end, the Committee meets regularly in order to scrutinise the Government's actions with regards to the EU. The parliamentary instruments at its disposal are:

- Hearings with Ministers and high ranking officials;
- Hearings with experts;
- Debate and adoption of Non-legislative Motions calling on the Government to take a given course of action within the EU;
- Establishing subcommittees and study groups on specific questions related to the EU and the Government's European policy. These subcommittees or study groups draft a report after the relevant hearings and evidence sessions with officials and experts;
- Liaising with the equivalent committees in other Member States' Parliaments, particularly within the framework of COSAC.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Joint Committee shall be the body charged with exercising the new roles that the Treaty bestows upon the *Cortes Generales*, without prejudice to the powers vested in each Chamber's Plenary. These new powers are:

- Issuing reasoned opinions regarding the violation of the subsidiarity principle. These opinions are the outcome of National Parliaments' oversight of EU institutions' legislative initiatives, under Protocol 2 to the Treaty and exercised within the framework of the "early warning system";
- Assessing the work of Eurojust and Europol.

The Joint Committee is made up of 19 Senators and 24 Deputies. By law, the Committee is chaired by the Speaker of the House, though parliamentary custom dictates that the Speaker delegates this role in a Member of the leading opposition party. Currently the Committee is chaired by Mr. Miguel Arias Cañete, People's Party Deputy for Madrid.