

The European Parliament's role in the second and third pillars of the European Union

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Pursuant to Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union, the Council Presidency consults the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and ensures that Parliament's views are duly taken into consideration. Parliament is regularly informed by the Presidency and the Commission of its development.

The European Parliament may table questions to the Council or make recommendations to it. It holds an annual debate on progress in implementing the CFSP.

Under the third pillar of the Union, which, following the amendments introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam, concerns only police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, the European Parliament is regularly informed by the Council Presidency and the Commission of work carried out in these areas.

The European Parliament may table questions to the Council or make recommendations to it. Each year, it holds a debate on the progress made in these areas.

The Amsterdam Treaty of 2 October 1997 introduced a new paragraph in Article 39 of the Treaty on European Union which confers on the European Parliament a consultative role for the adoption of the following measures:

- framework decisions for the purpose of approximation of the laws and regulations of the Member States,
- decisions for any other purpose,
- conventions.

The European Parliament must deliver its opinion within a time-limit which the Council may lay down but which is not less than three months. In the absence of an opinion, the Council may act.