

Interview with António Vitorino: cooperation between the national parliaments and the European Parliament (Lisbon, 24 October 2007)

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[Miriam Mateus] In the years preceding Portugal's accession to the European Communities, you also held various parliamentary positions. What kind of cooperation exists between national parliaments and the European Parliament?

[António Vitorino] Well, I can't deny that such cooperation involves a degree of envy here and there. I think that one of the most difficult aspects to deal with in the European context is the need to show that, in democratic terms, the functioning of the Union's institutions and of national institutions on European issues can be mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. What I mean is that giving responsibilities to the EU doesn't necessarily mean releasing national parliaments from those responsibilities. I think it positive, for example, that issues concerning the area of freedom, security and justice are now subject to the codecision procedure at European level, since that involves the democratic participation of the European Parliament, but there are also rules in the Treaty that reinforce national parliaments' participation in European issues in general and in the area of freedom, security and justice in particular. So, my point is that artificial competition shouldn't be created between the democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament and the democratic legitimacy of national parliaments and that their cooperation can play a very positive role in reinforcing democracy at all EU levels, both national and European.