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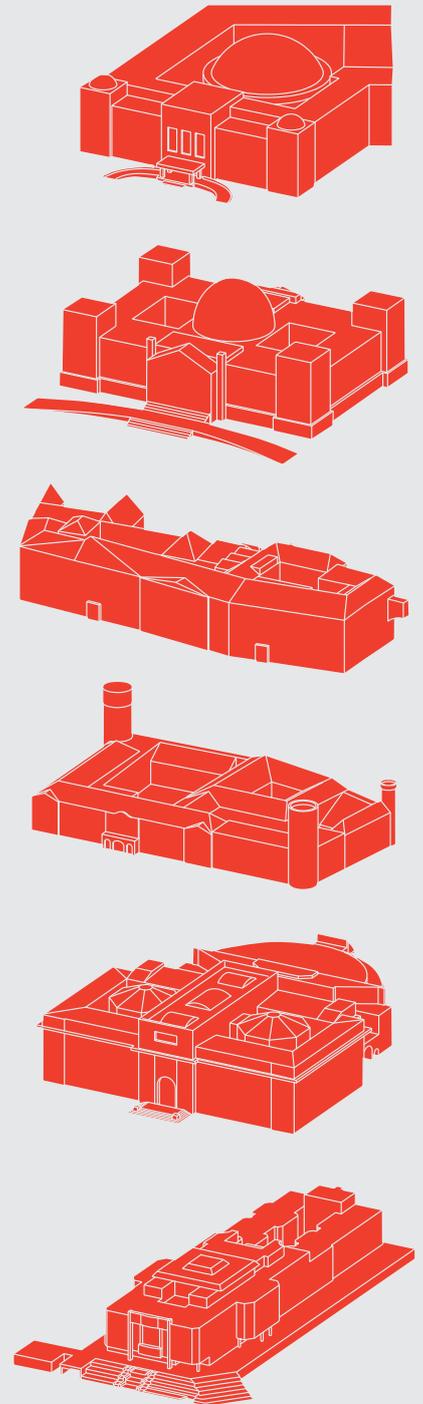
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PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS AND AGENDA-SETTING IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parliaments are multitasking institutions in which a political debate shall take place regarding different issues (among others):

- General political debate and representation of popular opinions;
- Oversight of government action;
- And formulation of public policy priorities through discussion of and passing draft laws

Time is scarce and parliamentary business shall be regulated in order to streamline the debate over legislative items.

The regulation of parliamentary business comprises two aspects:

- Clear and firm framework of parliamentary business (schedule) stipulating time slots for discussion of draft laws at various levels (plenary and committee; legislative readings and committee discussion);
- Rules on how to set an item on discussion (i.e. agenda setting).

All covered parliamentary chambers apply a firm framework of parliamentary business in which weeks/ days devoted to specific tasks rotate. This allows a high-level predictability of parliamentary business, discussion, and outcome for parliamentarians, government, and the public. As an IT tool, a parliamentary calendar is used to convey the agenda to users outside parliamentary chambers.

The paper looks into institutional aspects of setting parliamentary business meaning that the rules that shape parliamentarians' behavior are analyzed. The paper is based on a desk study of relevant rules of procedures and relevant web pages dealing with agenda-setting and the framework of parliamentary business.

In the paper, the parliaments of Czechia (*Poslanecká sněmovna*), Estonia (*Riigikogu*), Germany (*Bundestag*), Slovakia (*Národná rada*), Slovenia (*Državni sabor*), Sweden (*Riksdag*), and Republic of North Macedonia (*Sobranie*) are covered. These countries represent mainly Central and East European unicameral parliamentary systems and are roughly the same size of country. Germany is comprised as a representative of Western European parliaments.

II. PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS TRANSPARENCY – THEORETICAL AND COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW

LEGISLATING PARLIAMENTS

A parliament is a supreme representative body, not necessarily endowed with executive powers, but still representing citizens and making the legislation through which the government, the supreme executive body, may implement its policy programs (i.e. law-making or more specifically legislating). A parliamentary system of government is characterized by an institutional distinction, with functional interconnectedness. The functional interconnectedness means that the government stands as an institution alone, but it derives its strength from a majority of MPs in the parliament.

Law-making comprises public discussion of policy alternatives that should form cores of public policies and then legislating, i.e. drafting a binding version of a bill and passing it into the law. In this regard, the discussion and adoption of a new piece of legislation should be organized in the most predictable and publicly accessible way. The process of passing new legislation should also refrain from any uncertainty and chaos. One of the most crucial questions of law making is, therefore, how and when a new piece of legislation is passed by Parliament. This becomes a crucial question also for the public.

ORGANIZATION OF PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

A parliament may not inflate its internal capacities in order to organize its parliamentary business. In this respect, a **regulated approach** to the **organization of their internal work** (parliamentary business) is applied in most parliamentary chambers. *By regulated* we mean that provisions of organization of parliamentary business are stipulated in an internal legally binding document outlining internal organization of a parliamentary chamber (for instance Rules of Procedures). The respective provisions governing the parliamentary business implicitly reflect the legislative process (the number of plenary readings of draft law, periods in between different readings, referrals to various parliamentary committees, etc.). Such organization usually includes dedicated time slots (be it either weeks or days within a week) for various parliamentary activities at different levels – e.g. plenary session (various readings), committee session.

This regulated organization of work is familiar in advance to parliamentarians, government, and the public. Thus, it allows predictable outcomes of parliamentary activity in a given period of time. It is easier to anticipate a formal beginning of legislative procedure and a possible term in which legislative procedure is finished.

Time becomes scarce even in the process of law-making. Therefore, agenda-setting, meaning a process of setting discussion and voting on policy alternatives, is important. A precise and well-structured rule on agenda-setting shall prevent the law-making process from chaos and unpredictability. Rules of **agenda-setting** are one of the most important rules that enable parliaments to even legislate. Thanks to them, the parliament may overcome unruly chaos and structure its own discussion, in the majority rule direction, i.e. enabling the setting of items with the highest possible support, and creating the lowest possible distrust.

There are, among others, two reasons for a predictable and publicly available agenda of parliamentary deliberation. Firstly, such a setting would enable political parties and their parliamentary groups to concentrate voting discipline on issues of great importance. Secondly, it also allows for the general public to mobilize public support on a specific date and time. Thus contributing to higher public legitimacy of such legislation. The more legislation is adopted in a transparent, predictable and publicly available manner, the higher legitimacy it possesses. Therefore, there is a strong incentive for parliament to adopt precise procedure of agenda-setting in terms of scheduling in which new legislation is passed.

The internal organization of parliament's work within the parliamentary term also influences the process of agenda-setting and consequently also the calendar as a schedule of parliamentary business.

Each parliamentary term is divided into one (a permanent session) or more sessions (a yearly or autumn and spring session), usually consisting of a number of separate sittings. A permanent session can be adjourned for some period, usually known as a summer break. A sitting is a meeting of the parliament within a session. Recess is a period between the ending of one and the beginning of the next session. Summer break of a permanent session is also titled a recess, but technically it is not the same meaning.

Czechia, Germany, Republic of North Macedonia and Slovakia use a permanent session, which means that the session spans the entire electoral term. Estonia and Slovenia use autumn and spring session systems. In Sweden, the parliamentary sessions last for one year.

The sessions' system influences the legislative process, specifically the existence of continuity or discontinuity of the legislative process inside/between sessions and the organization of a long-term agenda, including the structure of the parliamentary calendar. This may be seen mainly in the Swedish case in which, under specific circumstances, an agenda item may be moved to an upcoming session.

AGENDA SETTING

The setting of agenda, which means the order of items tabled for debate, adoption of the order of the discussed items, is crucial for the smooth organization of the work of the parliament. The following topics will be elaborated:

- Who can propose the topics and order of topics (time for discussion)?
- Who can change the order or time dedicated for debate of the particular topic?
- Do the rules regulating debate allow to plan an exact time of discussion of a particular topic and voting on a particular topic?

DEBATE REGULATION

Debate on the topic in parliament consists in general of two basic parts: discussion and voting. In theory we can distinguish the four types of debate regulation:

- 1) Free debate where, in principle, there is no limit to speaking time, the Rules of Procedure provide for the possibility, on the basis of the decision of the parliamentary majority, to terminate or limit the debate in justified cases. This right may be implicit, i.e. the debate may be terminated by the President if no objection is raised against such a procedure, as confirmed by the vote of the plenary. Such cases include e.g. Estonia and the Czech Republic.
- 2) Part-regulated debate, whereby the right to define the time of debate and its division is held by the collective body of the Chamber (Gremium, conference of Presidents, etc.). Examples of this include the Parliament of Finland or the French National Assembly.
- 3) A partially regulated debate whereby the Rules of Procedure give the President of the Chamber the power of ad hoc at his discretion to regulate speaking time. The Bulgarian National Assembly and the House of Commons of the British Parliament are examples of such modifications.
- 4) A strictly regulated debate, stating in the Rules of Procedure the standard time-sharing for representatives of the various MEPs. Here goes for example: the Chamber of Deputies of the Belgian Parliament, the Parliament of Denmark, the German *Bundestag* or the Austrian National Council.

Concerning voting, we can identify two basic organizational models of voting. The first one is voting instantly, right after the discussion is finished. The second model is based on the concentration of voting in a given time. The discussion and voting are separated in this model.

IT TOOLS OF PARLIAMENTARY TRANSPARENCY – PARLIAMENTARY CALENDARS

The launch of parliaments' websites had established a very democratic and transparent way, how to communicate the work of the parliament to the public. The establishment of parliamentary websites makes all items discussed in the parliament available to the public and thereby supports the representative role of the parliaments. Websites allow parliament to keep the public informed in a clear, timely and efficient way.

Political parties and media were the outlets to inform the public about the parliament's business before the massive use of websites and had a high level of exclusivity in terms of the presented topics. The parties used to inform mainly about topics relevant to their programs or particular political positions. The way of informing depended also on the fact if they were a party in government or a party in opposition. The media informed about the topics with a high news value. Thus, the information was not comprehensive, but only partial and subjective.

The **Inter-Parliamentary Union** stated in 2008 that 59 % of all parliaments around the world use websites in order to present plenary parliamentary calendars.¹ In 2018, it was 75 % parliaments publishing the plenary parliamentary calendar and 70 % presented committee calendars or a schedule of the committee meetings.²

Forty-five percent of parliaments present the plenary agenda at least a week before, 24 % of parliaments present the plenary agenda 2 days or at least the same day prior to the plenary. The figures are almost the same in the case of the committee agenda.³

According to the IPU survey, parliaments covered use the following IT tools to make information available to the public via the Internet (see Figure 1).

1 WILLIAMSON, Andy, Andy RICHARDSON a Avinash BIKHA. *World e-Parliament Report 2018*.

2 WILLIAMSON, Andy, Andy RICHARDSON a Avinash BIKHA. *World e-Parliament Report 2018*.

3 WILLIAMSON, Andy, Andy RICHARDSON a Avinash BIKHA. *World e-Parliament Report 2018*, s. 62.

Figure 1. IT tools of informing the public

	2018	2016	2008 ²⁶
Plenary Functions			
Minutes of plenary sessions	84%	79%	70%
Plenary calendars and schedules	75%	78%	59%
Plenary speeches and debates	75%	78%	70%
Database of laws passed by parliament	69%	74%	-
Plenary voting	69%	67%	65%
Bill status/tracking	65%	64%	-
Questions to the government	58%	50%	52%
Amendment status/tracking	55%	55%	64%
Amendment drafting	46%	45%	-
Bill drafting	44%	42%	-
Other scrutiny documents	34%	31%	11%
Analysis of budget proposed by the government	32%	22%	-
Committee Functions			
Committee reports	71%	72%	64%
Committee calendars and schedules	70%	70%	-
Minutes of committee meetings	67%	68%	63%
Committee websites	55%	52%	-
Committee voting	30%	-	-
Administration and Support Functions			
Management and support of website for parliament	90%	91%	84%
HR system	78%	77%	70%
Financial management system	78%	76%	-
Management of library resources	71%	59%	-
Digital archive of parliamentary documents	71%	68%	-
Online library catalogue	65%	57%	-
Systems for communicating with constituents	63%	56%	36%
Financial disclosure	36%	38%	-
Management and support of member websites	19%	21%	34%
None of the above			
None	1%	-	-

PARLIAMENTARY CALENDAR (SCHEDULE OF PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS) – DEFINITION

The parliamentary calendar is a schedule of a week or weeks activities of the parliament, identifying concrete agenda of the parliament in a given week and day.

By the calendar we mean:

- the technical time plan of the organization of the plenary and committees.
- the schedule of plenary agenda.
- the schedule of committees agenda.

III. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Parliamentary chambers do regulate their parliamentary business by a firm framework in which (political and technical debates on) draft laws take place. This framework reflects the legislative process (number of plenary readings, proceeding of plenary/committee discussion what comes first, referral to committees for an additional discussion). Such framework, be it on week- or month-based, set up time slots for discussion of draft laws at the plenary session, their referral to committees, and final approval by the chamber. Therefore, the framework consists of firmly dedicated parts of parliamentary business:

- plenary session (for plenary readings of draft laws);
- committee session (for detailed, sectorial discussion of draft laws);
- plenary session (at which final approval should take place).

The framework is firmly fitted in each and every sitting, thus allowing for predictable organization of parliamentary business. In some cases, the framework also provides clear instruction on when a draft law might be initiated (i.e. put forward for discussion within a chamber).

The Rules of Procedures or other legal norms in the respective parliaments do not specifically regulate the existence of the calendar. The existence of the calendar comes from the general practice of planning of work of the parliament and its bodies and the principle of openness of the parliamentary activities, wherefore the agenda must be available and predictable to the public and other actors.

The advertising of the agenda of plenary sessions, committees, and other political bodies of the parliament is thus based on the general provisions of the Rules of Procedures regulating the openness of meetings for the public.

By the agenda we mean all items such as all legal drafts, committee reports, government reports and other documents which could be tabled on the plenary session or at the committee meeting.

The publishing of the agenda is a basic precondition to ensure openness of the parliamentary discussion to the public, interest groups and other stakeholders.

Parliamentary party groups meetings are not included in the calendar and agenda, as the party groups are not political bodies of the parliament but of the parties.

The decision on the calendar and detail agenda of the plenary session in analyzed parliaments is adopted by the highest self-administrative body, without the intervention of the government. The detailed agenda of the committee meeting is adopted by the committee itself.

The decision of the self-administrative body is based on consensus. The meaning of consensus is procedural, not substantive. It means, that opposition parties do not veto or delay the government drafts, but seek a fair chance to criticize them.

The agenda agreed by the self-administrative body is either approved by the parliamentary chamber (positive approval) or is considered approved, without further discussion in the plenary (negative approval).

The comparison of relevant aspects of parliamentary calendars (schedules of discussion and voting on items), parliamentary debate (debate regulation, voting concentration) and agenda-setting is in Tables 1-5.

Table 1. Structure and availability of the calendar

Country	Legal or other regulation	Schedule/agenda adopted by	Covered period	Form of availability to the Public
Czechia	No regulation, based on the practice	Self-administrative body (Steering committee)	Half of the year	Website
Estonia	No regulation, based on the practice	Self-administrative body (Board of Riigikogu)	Year period	Website
Germany	No regulation, based on the practice	Self-administrative body (Council of Elders)	Half of the year, detailed calendar for a coming week	Website
Republic of North Macedonia	No regulation	Plenary session (Assembly)	Ad hoc period (a month)	Website
Slovakia	No regulation, based on the practice	Self-administrative body (Gremium)	Year period	Website
Sweden	No regulation, based on the practice	Self-administrative body (Riksdag Board)	Ad hoc period	Website

Table 2. Content of the calendar

Country	Meetings of working bodies	Speaker agenda	International visits	Parliamentary groups meetings	Events available to the public
Czechia	Weekly schedule of plenary sittings and committee meetings	No	Yes	No	Specific section on website
Estonia	Weekly schedule of Riigikogu sittings (plenary and committees)	No	No ⁴	No	No specific information
Germany	Weekly schedule of plenary sittings and committee meetings. Detailed agenda is available for the plenary session only	No	No	No	Specific section on website
Republic of North Macedonia	Monthly schedule	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Slovakia	Weekly schedule of plenary sittings and committee meetings, deadlines for submission of legislative drafts	No	No	No	Specific section on website
Sweden	Monthly/weekly working schedule of Rigsdag and its bodies	Yes	No	No (Party leaders debates)	Partially yes

Table 3. Procedural details of agenda approval and discussion

Country	Approval of agenda (negative/positive)	Amendments to agenda submitted by individual MP	Limitation to submit amendments	Type of debate regulation	Concentration of voting
Czechia	Positive	Yes	No ⁵	Free debate	No
Estonia	Positive (approval by the plenary session)	No	No	Strictly regulated	No
Germany	Negative	No	Group of MPs time	Strictly regulated	No
Republic of North Macedonia	Positive (approval by the plenary session)	Yes	No	Free debate	No
Slovakia	Positive	yes	No	Partly regulated	Yes, except procedural voting (art 36 RoP)
Sweden	Positive (discussion only)			Strictly regulated	Yes (Not stipulated by RoP)

4 Only in news section.

5 Only in specific sections, not as a integral part of the calendar.

Table 4. Agenda of the Plenary

Country	Timing of publishing	The content	How is published
Czechia	One week prior to the sitting or immediately after the decision on convocation	The list of items connected with the legislative database	On the main website
Estonia	One week prior to the sessions	The list of items to be discussed connected with the database of legislative activity	On the main website
Germany	One week prior to the sitting	The list of items connected with the legislative database and short description of the topic	On the main website
Republic of North Macedonia	Ten days prior to the sitting	Draft agenda, i.e. the list of items	On the main website
Slovakia	One week prior to the sitting or immediately after the decision	The list of items connected with the legislative database	On the main website
Sweden	Upcoming events and activities according to the two-year plan	The list of items connected with the legislative database and committee meetings	On the main website

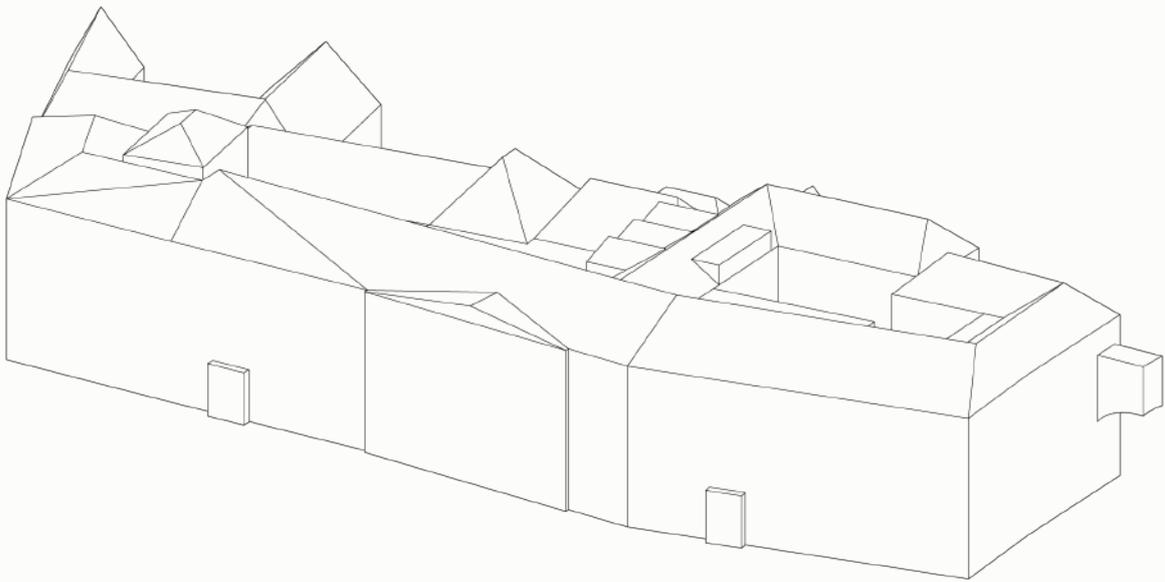
Table 5. Agenda of the committees

Country	Timing of publishing	The content	How is published
Czechia	After the decision on the draft agenda	The list and timing of items	On the website of the specific committee
Estonia	The current week	List of items to be discussed	On the website of the specific committee
Germany	The current week	The list of items connected with the legislative database and short description of the topic	On the main website - specific section
Republic of North Macedonia	Upcoming events in the current month	The list and timing of items	On the main website In calendar
Slovakia	The current week	The list of items and timing	On the main website - specific section
Sweden	Upcoming events and activities according to the two-year plan	The list of items to be discussed	On the main website in one calendar

IV.

REGULATION OF PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

CZECHIA



The session of the Chamber of Deputies is permanent. Art. 34 of the Czech constitution says that the session of both chambers is permanent. The electoral term of the Chamber of Deputies is four-years and the session is permanent for the period corresponding to the electoral term.

AGENDA SETTING

Based on Art. 54 of the Rules of Procedures the Chamber of Deputies specifies its programme and the method of deliberation of individual items on the motion of the President of the Chamber of Deputies. If the Chamber of Deputies meets on a Wednesday and a Friday, its programme shall include the third readings of bills. Unless resolved otherwise by the Chamber of Deputies, the third reading of bills takes place between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the Wednesdays and Fridays specified as meeting days. The Chamber of Deputies may also decide to reserve other times for this purpose unless an objection is raised by at least two political groups. In such a case, no voting may take place. The Chamber of Deputies shall decide on the possible inclusion of the third readings of bills in another meeting day's programme. No such decision may be taken if at least two political groups raise objections.

Any committee, political group or Deputy may propose that the Chamber's daily programme be changed or expanded. The Chamber's programme, including its possible amendment or expansion, shall be voted on without debate.

During a meeting, the Chamber may vote, without debate, to change the order of deliberation of an individual item of the approved programme, to change the approved programme or add items to it. The presentation of a motion for such a vote must not exceed 5 minutes; time limit does not apply to those Deputies defined in Article 67. A Deputy's speech may be interrupted and ended in the manner that is prescribed for ending a Deputy's presentation of a factual comment (Article 60). The Chamber's approved programme may be expanded during its meetings in exceptional cases only. The Chamber may not consider any such expansion if at least two political groups or 20 Deputies raise an objection.

STRUCTURE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CALENDAR

What is legal regulation of the calendar?

The existence of the Calendar of the Chamber of Deputies is not legally regulated. Article 46 of the Rules of Procedures stipulates that the Steering committee (the highest self-administrative body of the Chamber) organizes and coordinates the work of all bodies of the Chamber and specifies the time reserved for regular sittings of the Chamber. The Steering committee agrees on a half-year plan of the Chambers' activities. The plan is based on the six week cycle starting with two weeks dedicated to the plenary sittings, following one week for committee meetings, the one, so-called variable week (often used for the third week of the plenary sitting) follows, then the week for committee meetings and the cycle is closed by the week dedicated to the presence of MPs in regions.

The Steering committee proposes to the Speaker a motion on the agenda of a particular plenary sitting of the Chamber. Art. 54 of the Rules of procedure regulates the procedure of adoption of the agenda of a particular sitting. Any committee, political group or MP may, at the beginning of the sitting day, propose a motion to change or expand the daily program.

What is the structure of the calendar and who can propose the structure

The calendar of sittings is agreed upon and adopted by the steering committee which is the highest self-administrative body of the Chamber of Deputies responsible for the organization of the parliamentary business. The decision on the calendar is thus an autonomous decision of the self-administrative body. The calendar is communicated to the other relevant actors and available for the public on the web page of the Chamber of Deputies.

Who adopts the calendar?

The steering committee – the highest self-administrative body of the Chamber of Deputies consisting of the Speaker and vices speakers and representatives of the political parties based on the proportional principle.

What is a period covered by the calendar?

The calendar covers half of the year. The agenda of the plenary is presented as a whole and is updated on the daily basis according to the voting of the Chamber on the motions to change the daily program. The agenda of committees include concrete time dedicated for discussion on particular topics.

How is the calendar available to the public?

The calendar, detailed daily agenda of the plenary sitting, committees and commissions of the Chamber of Deputies, are available on the Internet website of the Chamber of Deputies.

Figure 2. Half-year working schedule of the Chamber of Deputies (available in Czech only)⁶

Harmonogram pravidelných akcí na 1. pololetí 2021

Týden kalend. roku	Datum	Týden týd. cyklu	Náplň
1.	4. - 10. 1.	5	výbory (Čt 7. 1. - ORGV schvaluje pořad schůze)
2.	11. - 17. 1.	6	poslanecký týden
3.	18. - 24. 1.	1	Poslanecká sněmovna
4.	25. - 31. 1.	2	Poslanecká sněmovna 1/
5.	1. - 7. 2.	3	výbory
6.	8. - 14. 2.	4	variabilní týden
7.	15. - 21. 2.	5	výbory (Čt 18. 2. - ORGV schvaluje pořad schůze)
8.	22. - 28. 2.	6	poslanecký týden 2/
9.	1. - 7. 3.	1	Poslanecká sněmovna
10.	8. - 14. 3.	2	Poslanecká sněmovna
11.	15. - 21. 3.	3	výbory
12.	22. - 28. 3.	4	variabilní týden 3/
13.	29. 3. - 4. 4.	5	výbory (Čt 1. 4. - ORGV schvaluje pořad schůze) 4/
14.	5. - 11. 4.	6	poslanecký týden 5/

CONTENT OF THE CALENDAR

The calendar is interactive and contains information on a week of plenary sittings. Other information is included in the specific weekly agenda of the plenary and committees.

The calendar includes information on the business of the Chamber of Deputies, more specifically:

- Meetings of the working bodies (committees, commissions) are included in the calendar; the Speaker's agenda is included in a separate section.⁷
- International visits or meetings are included.
- The calendar does not include parliamentary groups meeting.
- Events available for public (seminars, visits, cultural events) are available in the calendar and also on the web in the specific section.⁸

⁶ <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?k=200>

⁷ Mgr. Radek Vondráček, projevy, tiskové zprávy, program. Dostupné z: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/detail.sqw?id=6165>.

⁸ Veřejnost a média. Dostupné z: <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?k=184>.

DEBATE REGULATION

Discussion

Based on article 58 of the Rules of Procedures, the Deputies shall apply for their participation in debate in writing, either to the President of the Chamber of Deputies before its beginning or to the chairing person at any time before its end. The Deputies may also apply by raising their hand. Written applications shall be given priority.

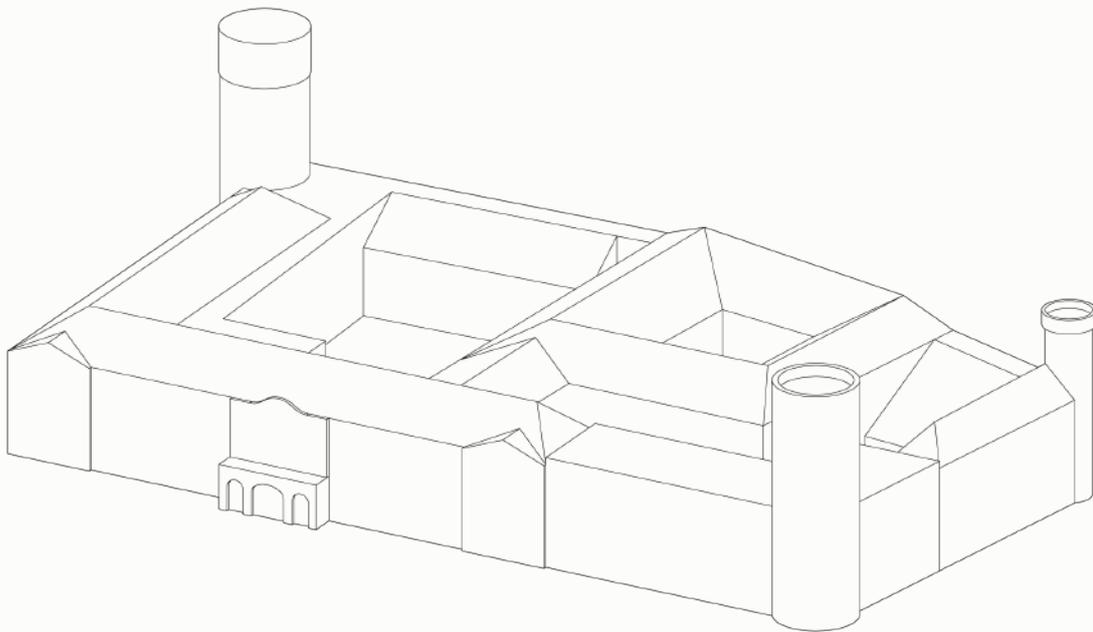
At its beginning the chairing person shall announce the names of all registered speakers. Once the debate is in progress, its chairperson shall allow the rapporteur to address the Chamber whenever he asks to do so. The chairperson shall allow any Deputy appointed to present the opinion of a political group to speak at any time before the end of the debate. Only the Deputies permitted to do so by the chairperson may speak. If a Deputy is not present at the Chamber when it is his turn to speak, he shall lose his right to speak at that moment. If he is not present even just before the end of the debate, his right to speak shall expire.

Article 59 stipulates that The Chamber of Deputies may resolve without debate to restrict the time limit of every speech on any given issue. The minimum time limit must be at least ten minutes. This restriction, however, shall not apply to the Deputies authorized to present the opinions of political groups. The Chamber of Deputies may resolve without debate that any Deputy may speak on the same issue twice at the most. Based on Article 60 any Deputy may ask to present a factual comment in reaction to the running debate. Factual comments also include procedural proposals concerning the way of discussion of any programme item. However, factual comments may not include factual opinions on the discussed issue. The Deputy intending to present a factual comment shall be allowed to speak immediately after the current speaker finishes. The time limit for presentation of a factual comment and for the reply to such factual comment may not exceed two minutes. Article 63 offers MPs the right, in the course of the debate, to present motions regarding proposals being deliberated. They should concern a certain aspect of the debated issue and should clearly specify what resolution the Chamber of Deputies should adopt. The chairperson may ask any Deputy to clarify his motion or to present it in writing.

Voting

Voting concerning an agenda item, including legislative drafts, is a part of the debate.

ESTONIA

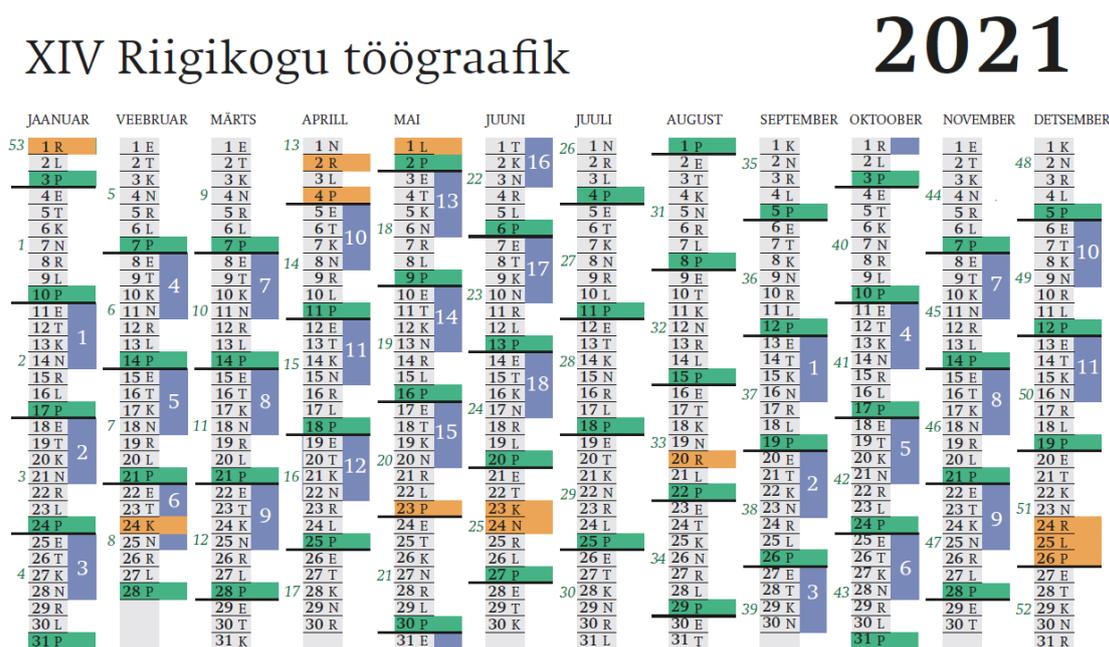


Estonia has a unicameral parliament called *Riigikogu*. According to the *Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act* ("Rules of Procedure"), the sitting of *Riigikogu* is organized in two ordinary sessions during a year (spring and autumn). The spring session starts on the second Monday of January and lasts until the third Thursday of June. The autumn session starts on the second Monday of September and lasts until the third Thursday of December. In January, June, July, August, September, and December an extraordinary session may be held.

During the ordinary session, the sitting is organized in a four week cycle – a plenary sitting is held from Monday to Thursday in the first three weeks. The fourth week is free in which Members of Parliament may devote their time for constituency work (see Figure 3). The Rules of Procedure stipulate these provisions in detail in § 45-§47.⁹

The calendar displaying the cycle of plenary sittings is available at the main webpage of the Riigikogu.¹⁰

Figure 3. Calendar of Riigikogu for 2021 (available in Estonian only)



TÄISKOGU ISTUNGID TOIMUVAD TALLINNAS, LOSSI PLATS 1A

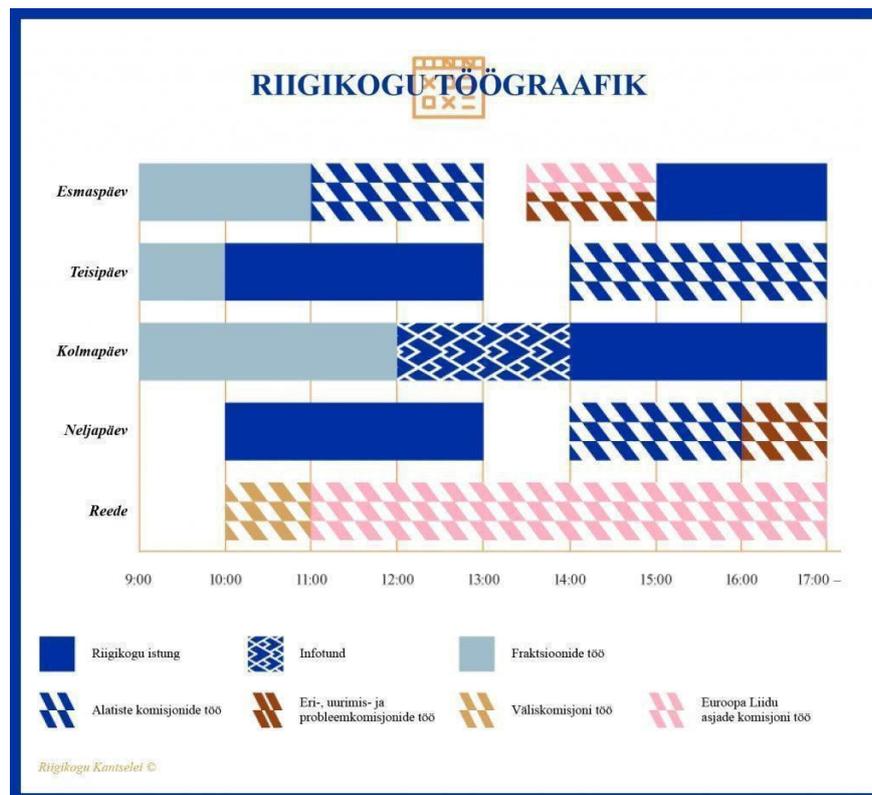
The plenary session and committees' sessions are held from Monday to Thursday. The Rules of Procedure stipulates time slots for plenary sessions, committee sessions (including sessions of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Committee on European Affairs), and parliamentary party groups' sessions. However, there is no provision stipulating the availability of the calendar (schedule of parliamentary business) in the Rules of Procedure. Nevertheless, the Rules precisely stipulate the process of agenda-setting and its approval (see below).

9 Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act. Dostupné z: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/512032015002/consolide/current>.

10 XIV Riigikogu töögraafik. Dostupné z: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/RK2021.pdf>.

Besides the parliamentary cycle, the calendar, agenda to be discussed at levels of plenary session and committees is published at the main website of the Riigikogu. The calendar allows searching information according to various criteria (for instance actors such as plenary session, committees, Board of the Riigikogu). The calendar also includes a direct link to substantive information on the agenda discussed at precise times and minutes.¹¹

Figure 4. Organisation of sitting weeks (available in Estonian only)



The Rules of Procedure also stipulates the provision on the change of the working schedule and additional sitting of the Riigikogu (§ 48 and § 49). According to § 48 of the Rules, the change of the working schedule is a rather rigid procedure in which a change is based on a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of members. The Rules of Procedure do not stipulate the ground on which such resolution is discussed and eventually passed. Further, an additional sitting may be also held upon the provision of § 49. The additional sitting is held upon the decision of the Board (the President and two Vice Presidents of the Riigikogu elected at the first meeting of the newly elected Riigikogu).

¹¹ Kalender. Dostupné z: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/tegevus/kalender-ja-eelinfo/>.

Additionally, the Riigikogu may hold an extraordinary session which shall be summoned on the proposal of the government, the president of the republic or at least one-fifth of the members of the Riigikogu. An extraordinary session may take place even during the period of a regular session.

The number of sitting days in each electoral period varies from 453 to 459. In the last electoral period 2015-2019, the Riigikogu held sittings during the regular sessions in total amount of 1,411 hours.¹²

AGENDA-SETTING IN RIIGIKOGU

The organization of parliamentary business into two regular sessions requires a clear and solid system of agenda-setting.

The Rules of Procedures sets different stages of the agenda-setting process:

- Agenda-setting (collecting and setting items for deliberation);
- Distribution of agenda;
- Final approval of the agenda prior to the deliberation.

Given the type of session/sitting in which the process of agenda-setting takes place, each step is distinctive.

The agenda for each **regular** (plenary) **sitting** (a working week) is prepared by the Board of Riigikogu not later than by 15:00 on Thursday of the week prior to the working week (§ 53 (2)). The Rules of Procedure also stipulate that items for deliberation at the plenary may be proposed by committees and agreements reached with the addressees of interpellation included in their replies. The ordering of the items shall follow the logic of first-come-first-serve – i.e. items not deliberated at the previous sitting shall be ordered at the top of the agenda on the following working week.

At the end of the working week, the agenda for the following week shall be distributed to members (§ 54 (1)). After being distributed, the agenda may be amended only if no faction opposes such motion. An extraordinary right of a removal of an item from the agenda is granted to an introducer of a bill and a submitter of a draft resolution or the lead committee.

12 *RIIGIKOGU XIII KOOSSEIS*. Dostupné z: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/XIII-Riigikogu-statistikakogumik.pdf>.

The agenda is then approved by the plenary assembly at the first sitting of the working week or at the beginning of the additional sitting. The Riigikogu may amend the agenda before it only if no faction is opposing the intention.

After having been approved by the plenary assembly, the President of the Riigikogu may amend the agenda under specific circumstances (§ 56). These circumstances relate to a parliamentary oversight function (for instance a motion to express no confidence in the Government, granting the candidate for the office of the Prime Minister), a legislative function (re-approval of a Bill rejected by the President of the Republic, a bill approving or repealing a presidential decree), and others. All items to be included in the agenda shall be proposed by the President of the Riigikogu. However, a new piece of legislation is not included among the exemptions that the plenary assembly may accept for amended deliberation. Therefore, the Rules of Procedure provides relatively strict provisions hindering that no legislative initiative introduced by a member of the Riigikogu shall be inserted in the agenda without proper agenda setting and formal approval.

The Board of the Riigikogu also decides and sets the agenda for an **additional sitting**. There is no precise limit for announcing the agenda to other members, though. However, the provision of the additional sitting (§ 47) stipulates that the President notifies the members of the convention of the additional sitting at least three days before the date on which the sitting is planned. When notifying members, the President also informs them on the agenda of the sitting (§ 54 (2)).

The purpose of the additional sitting is not precisely defined. However, the Board of the Riigikogu may convene the plenary assembly to deliberate items which have not been deliberated at the regular sittings yet at the end of regular sessions.

The agenda for **extraordinary session** shall be prepared by the presenter of the proposal to convene the session (i.e. the government, the President of the Republic or one fifth of members of the Riigikogu). The agenda of the extraordinary session shall be announced together with the notification of its convention by the proposer. The agenda is not subject to approval by the plenary assembly. The Board of the Riigikogu shall define the working schedule of the extraordinary session and at least a majority of members of the Riigikogu shall cast their votes in favor. Yet, there is another limitation for the extraordinary session. The quorum of present members during the additional sitting and extraordinary session is set at least one-half of the members of the Riigikogu.

Provisions of the Rules of Procedure provide a rather firm framework for the transparency of the agenda-setting process in Estonia. During the regular session, the workload of the Riigikogu is predictably set at regular sittings in an orderly manner. Single items are deliberated consecutively. It should be also noted that the weekly agenda is subject to approval (alternatively rejection and change) according to the specific provisions of the Rules. However, the Rules of Procedure do not allow the insertion of a single item introducing a new piece of legislation in the approved agenda. By this, the agenda-setting is relatively firm. Moreover, the Rules of Procedure also stipulate relatively strict limitation for the change of the working schedule of the Riigikogu.

DEBATE REGULATION

The Members of Riigikogu are limited in speech time. According to the Rules of Procedure, there is limitation of first speech at five minutes; any other may take only two minutes. Upon approval, this may be extended up to three minutes.

Voting

There is no specific time for voting on items.

STRUCTURE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CALENDAR

What is legal regulation of the calendar?

There is no legal provision of parliamentary calendar for the purpose of informing the public.

What is the structure of the calendar and who can propose the structure?

The calendar comprises information on plenary session business and committees' sessions. The agenda of calendar is automatically determined according to the debate of items in relevant parliamentary bodies (see above). The Board of Riigikogu is formally responsible for collection and distribution of calendar/agenda.

Who adopts the calendar?

The calendar reflects the working procedure of Riigikogu. Given the half-year sessions, the working period of Riigikogu is stipulated by the Rules of Procedure. The Board of Riigikogu prepares the agenda which shall be discussed in advance. The agenda to be discussed in the respective week shall be approved by the plenary session at the beginning of the working week.

What is a period covered by the calendar?

The schedule of parliamentary cycle is available covering one year. The calendar at the websites of Riigikogu covers all events. The agenda of plenary session shall be announced two working days prior to debate. The calendar (as an IT tool) enables to filter events according to time and actors.

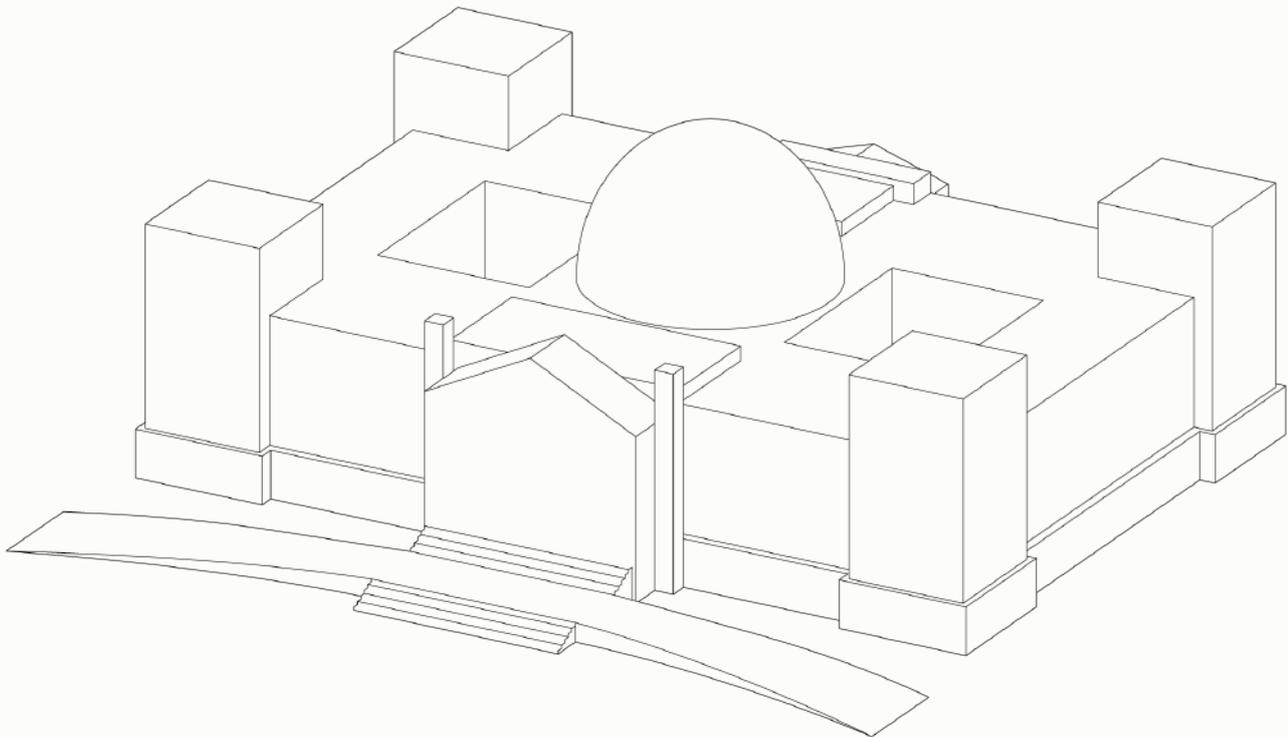
How is the calendar available to the public?

The calendar is available to the public at the websites of Riigikogu (see above).

Content of the calendar

- Meetings of the working bodies (committees, commissions) are included in the calendar.
- The Speaker's agenda is not specifically included; yet, there is agenda of the Board of Riigikogu.
- International visits or meetings are included.
- Parliamentary groups meetings are not included; yet, there is information available of party leaders' discussion.
- Events for the public are available through the calendar (seminars, visits, cultural events). Further, websites also comprise IT tools for better voters' outreach and their communication with Members of Riigikogu.

GERMANY



The session of the German Bundestag is permanent. Art. 39 of the German Basic law states that “the Bundestag shall determine when its sessions shall be adjourned and resumed.” The electoral term of the Bundestag is four-years, the session of the Bundestag is permanent for the period corresponding to the electoral term.

AGENDA SETTING

In accordance with Rule No 20 of the Rules of Procedure, the agenda of the plenary of the Bundestag, as well as the date of the meeting, must be approved by the Council of Elders, unless the Bundestag has decided in advance to entrust the President. The draft agenda shall be communicated to the members of the Bundestag, the Federal Council and the Federal Government.

The programme shall be deemed to have been approved at the time when the first item is started. Prior to that, any member of the Assembly may propose amendments to the programme if his proposal has been submitted to the President of the House by 18.00 of the preceding day. Interference with the approved agenda shall be possible only if the parliamentary group or a group of deputies of at least 5 % of the members present are not objected to the proposal. The Bundestag may decide to exclude items from the agenda at any time during the meeting.

STRUCTURE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CALENDAR

What is legal regulation of the calendar?

The existence of the Calendar of the German Bundestag is not legally regulated. Rule 20 of the Rules of procedure regulates an agenda of a particular sitting. Based on this rule "the date and agenda of each sitting of the Bundestag shall be agreed in the Council of Elders unless the Bundestag has already taken a decision thereon or the Speaker determines them on his or her own authority." The President shall on his or her own authority determine the date and agenda of a sitting if the Bundestag empowers him or her to do so or is unable, for a reason other than the lack of a quorum, to take a decision.

In practice, the Council of Elders schedules the dates of the sitting weeks for the coming year well in advance (see Figure 5). Based on the dates determined by the Council of Elders, the calendar of sittings is being elaborated.

The agendas for plenary sittings are set by the Council of Elders shortly before they take place being decided during the previous sitting week. The proposed agenda is communicated to the MPs, the Bundesrat, and the Federal government. If no objection is raised, the proposed agenda is deemed as adopted when the first item is called at the plenary sitting. Each week designated for plenary sittings is considered and numbered as a separate plenary sitting.

What is the structure of the calendar and who can propose the structure?

The calendar of sittings is agreed upon and adopted by the Council of Elders which is the highest self-administrative body of the Bundestag responsible for the organization of the parliamentary business. The decision on the calendar is thus an autonomous decision of the self-administrative body. The calendar is communicated to the other relevant actors for the planning of activities related to the Bundestag. The calendar is available to the public on the web page of the Bundestag.

Who adopts the calendar?

Self-administrative body of the Bundestag consisting of representatives of the political parties based on the proportional principle.

What is a period covered by the calendar?

The calendar covers half of the year, and a coming week is covered in case of the agenda of the plenary and committees meetings. The agenda of the plenary and committees meetings includes a concrete timing (an hour) for discussion of a particular topic.

How is the calendar available to the public?

The calendar, detailed daily agenda of the plenary sitting, committees, and other political bodies of the Bundestag, are available on the website of the Bundestag.¹³ Committee agenda is publicized on their respective websites.¹⁴

Figure 5. Parliamentary calendar of Bundestag (available in German only)



13 Tagesordnung und Sitzungsverlauf. Dostupné z: <https://www.bundestag.de/tagesordnung>.

14 Ausschüsse. Dostupné z: <https://www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse>.

Content of the calendar

The calendar contains only information on a week of plenary sittings. Other information is included in the specific weekly agenda of the plenary and committees. The information that the calendar includes are as follows:

- Meetings of the working bodies (committees, commissions) are not included in the calendar, but agenda is available.
- The Speaker's agenda is not included.
- International visits or meetings are not included.
- Parliamentary groups meetings are not included.
- Events available for the public (seminars, visits, cultural events) are not included in the calendar, but are available to the public on the web in a specific section.¹⁵

Debate regulation

In accordance with Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure – its form and duration – it is determined by the council of the elders, the debate for individual items of negotiations is determined by the Council of the Elders.

If a member of the Government or the Federal Council or a person authorized by them for more than 20 minutes speaks, a parliamentary club who wishes to present a different opinion may request the same period of time for a representative of his parliamentary group.

Debate on legislative drafts is divided into three readings.

Discussion

If the elders do not reach an agreement, the speaking time of one speaker may not exceed 15 minutes. At the request of the parliamentary group, one of the members of the club may speak for 45 minutes. The President may extend the speaking period if he considers the conduct of the debate or its importance to be essential.

If a member of the Bundestag exceeds his speaking time, the President shall, upon reminder, withdraw the floor.

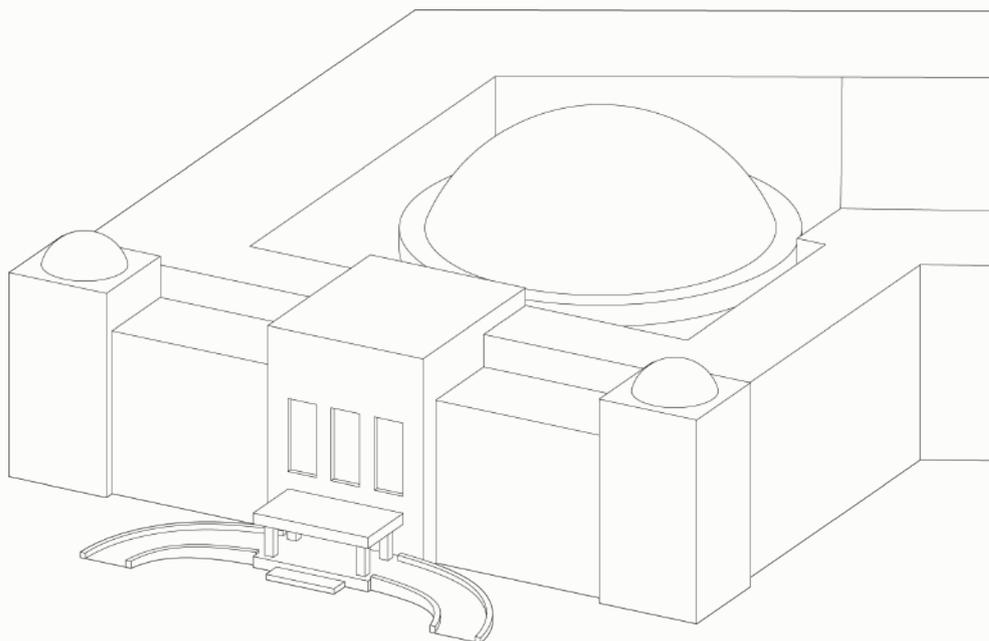
Discussion on legislative drafts has a limited general part and concentrates preferably on the particular separate parts of the bill.

Voting

Voting concerning an agenda item, including legislative drafts, is a part of the debate.

¹⁵ Besuchen Sie den Deutschen Bundestag. Доступно на: <https://www.bundestag.de/besucher>.

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA



According to the Art. 66 of the Republic of North Macedonian constitution, the session of the National Assembly is permanent. The electoral term of the Assembly is four-years and the session is permanent for the period corresponding to the electoral term.

AGENDA-SETTING

The President of the Assembly shall convene parliamentary sessions based on Art 67 of the Rules of Procedure. Art. 68 stipulates that the decision for convening a parliamentary session, together with the draft agenda and the documents for the issues on the draft agenda, shall be delivered to the Members of the Assembly not later than ten days before the day of the parliamentary session. It is possible to organize meetings of committees and the plenary session in the same day.

The President shall propose the agenda and the Assembly shall decide on the agenda at the beginning of the session. The President of the Assembly shall include in the draft agenda the issues that have fulfilled the relevant conditions determined with these Rules of Procedure. (Art. 69 of the Rules of Procedure).

Art. 70 of the Rules of Procedure says that a Member of the Assembly or the Government, in cases of urgent and pressing matters, may propose the inclusion of items in the agenda until the decision is made on the Agenda for the session. The proposal must be justified in written form.

A Member of the Assembly and the Government may, after the convening of the session, propose postponement or withdrawal of items in the agenda and give justification.

Art. 76 of the Rules of Procedure says that before the adoption of the agenda, the President of the Assembly shall inform the Members of the Assembly on proposals for inclusion, postponement or withdrawal of items in the agenda, in accordance with Article 70 of these Rules. Then based on Art. 77 the Assembly shall decide without debate on every proposal for changes or supplements to the draft agenda and on the overall draft agenda for the session.

STRUCTURE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CALENDAR

What is the legal regulation of the calendar?

The existence of the Calendar of the Assembly is not legally regulated. Article 24 of the Rules of Procedure stipulates that every Monday, a regular coordination meeting shall be convened by the President of the Assembly, with the Deputy President(s) and with coordinators of the Political Party Groups in aim to harmonize the weekly work schedule of the working bodies of the Assembly. There is neither legal provision regulating longer planning of the Assembly activities, i.e. a half or one-year plan nor a shorter more-week cycle.

What is the structure of the calendar and who can propose the structure?

Art. 36 of the Law on the Assembly says that Fridays are devoted to contact of MPs with the citizens, the Assembly therefore shall not convene, and it is not relevant to the committees. The daily agenda is available.

Who adopts the calendar?

Adoption of the calendar is not stipulated by the law and due to this fact, it is not clear who would have authority to adopt the structured calendar. The calendar might be adopted at a regular coordination meeting consisting of the President, the Deputy Presidents(s) and coordinators of PPG.

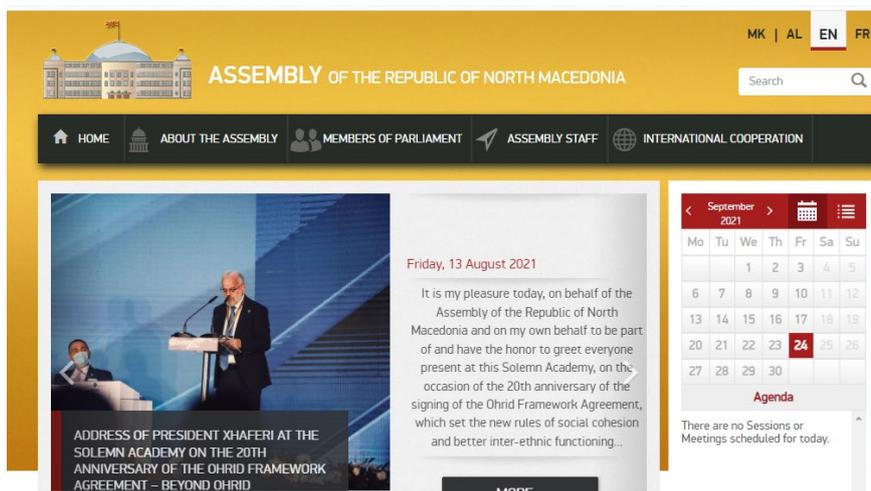
What is a period covered by the calendar?

Not available.

How is the calendar available to the public?

The calendar is available on the Internet at the main website of the Assembly.

Figure 6. The calendar at the North Macedonia Assembly website¹⁶



Content of the calendar

The calendar is interactive and contains information on activities in the current month. The calendar includes information on daily business of the Assembly, more specifically:

- Meetings of the working bodies (committees, commissions) are included in the calendar; the Speaker's agenda is included in a separate section.¹⁷
- International visits or meetings are included.
- The calendar does not include parliamentary groups meeting

¹⁶ <https://www.sobranie.mk/home-en.nspix>.

¹⁷ <https://www.sobranie.mk/activities-2014.nspix>.

DEBATE REGULATION

Discussion

The Discussion on the items in the agenda shall be carried out according to Art. 78 of the Rules of Procedure in accordance with the determined order in the agenda. The Assembly may not deal with issues on which the relevant committee and the Legislative committee have not adopted a position (with exceptions stipulated by the Rules of Procedure) The same procedure is established for EU related laws and the position of the Committee on EU affairs.

The debate shall be open until the list of parliamentarians who have registered to take the floor is exhausted. The Members of the Assembly shall apply for debate within one (minute) after the opening of the debate. The list of Members of the Assembly may not be changed or supplemented during the debate. Art. 86 of the Rules of Procedure establishes time limit for speeches. MP may speak only once for a maximum of ten minutes, the same limit applies for a rapporteur of a relevant body. A coordinator of a parliamentary group and a proponent (sponsor) may speak more than once but fifteen minutes in total.

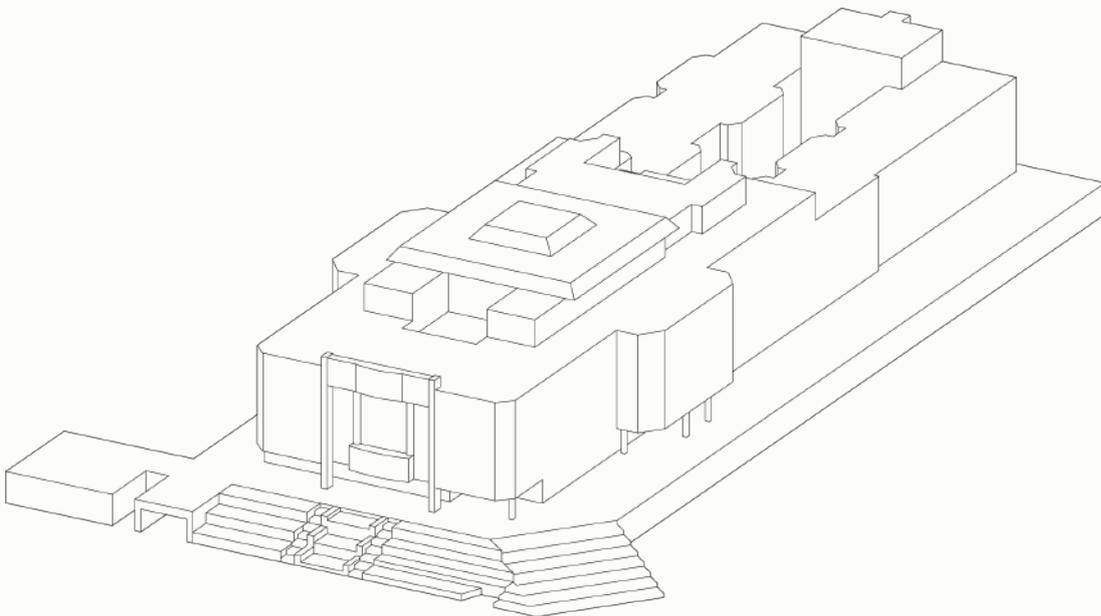
The proponent and the co-ordinators of parliamentary groups may register to take the floor during the debate, as well. The President of the Assembly shall conclude the debate after he/she determines that the list of speakers has been exhausted. The Assembly may conclude a debate on each item of the agenda by:

- Adoption of an act,
- Adoption of a conclusion, or
- Simply moving on the following item.

Voting

Voting concerning an agenda item, including legislative drafts, is a part of the debate.

SLOVAKIA



The session of the National Council of the Slovak Republic is permanent. Art. 82 of the Slovak Constitution states that “the National Council of the Slovak Republic shall be continually in session.” The electoral term of the National Council is four- years, the session of the National Council is permanent for the period corresponding to the electoral term.

AGENDA SETTING

According to Art. 17 of the Rules of procedure, the Speaker of the National council convenes the sessions and determines the place, the day, the time, and proposes the agenda of the session. Based on Art. 24, the National Council shall discuss and vote at the beginning of each session on the agenda proposed by the Speaker. Any MP may propose a motion to amend the agenda.

The usual sitting days of the National Council shall be Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The first sitting day of the session shall begin at 1 o'clock p.m., unless otherwise decided by the Speaker. The subsequent sitting days shall begin at 9 o'clock a.m. and end not later than 7 o'clock p.m., or 4 o'clock p.m. on Fridays, unless resolved otherwise by the National Council.

DEBATE REGULATION

Discussion

MP wishing to participate in the debate on the issue tabled on the agenda shall enter her/his name on the list of speakers only after approval of the agenda by the National Council. Only after interventions of speakers from the list, other MPs may ask for the floor. The Chair shall give the floor to all speakers in the order in which they applied. The Members authorized by the parliamentary party group shall speak first, provided that their names have been entered on the list. Each parliamentary party group shall authorize only one Member to speak for that party. During the discussion, a Rapporteur and the sponsor may have the floor whenever they request to speak. The Speaker and the Deputy-Speakers of the National Council, the President of the Republic and a member of the Government may have the floor at any time they request to.

The National Council may, upon the motion of at least two parliamentary party groups, resolve to set a time limit for the debate on an item included on the agenda of the session of the National Council. Such a proposal shall be submitted by the beginning of the debate on this item on the agenda of the session of the National Council. Proposals submitted at a different time shall not be taken into consideration. The time limit for the debate shall not be less than 12 hours. Should the National Council make a resolution to set a time limit, the Chair shall divide the time allocated for the discussion between the parliamentary party groups and MPs who are not members of parliamentary party groups proportionately according to the number of MPs.

The National Council may resolve, without debate, to set a time limit for speaking. Such limits shall not be less than ten minutes, or twenty minutes in the case of speakers authorized by a parliamentary party group

During the discussion, any Member may move amendments to the issue under discussion; any such an amendment shall be in writing and properly worded.

STRUCTURE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CALENDAR

What is the legal regulation of the calendar?

The existence of the Calendar of the National Council of the SR is not legally regulated. Section 66 of the Rules of Procedures says, that the Gremium of Members consisting of members delegated by parliamentary factions based on the proportional principle shall consider issues of political and procedural nature concerning the activities of the National Council and its bodies. The Gremium is the highest self-administrative body of the National Council discussing all issues relevant to the National Council operation.

Art. 24 of the Rules of Procedures says that the agenda of the plenary session is proposed by the Speaker to the National Council for consideration at the beginning of the session. The proposed agenda may be amended by a motion of individual MP, group of MPs or factions.

The daily agenda (when a particular issue shall be discussed) is predictable since the National Council decides the time for discussion, and voting (except procedural), which are concentrated in given time.

What is the structure of the calendar and who can propose the structure?

The calendar of sittings is agreed by the Gremium which is the highest self-administrative body of the National council responsible for the organization of the parliamentary business and other relevant stakeholders including the administration. The decision on the calendar is thus an autonomous decision of the parliament. The calendar is communicated to the other relevant actors for the planning of activities related to the National Council. The calendar is available to the public on the web page of the National Council.

Who adopts the calendar?

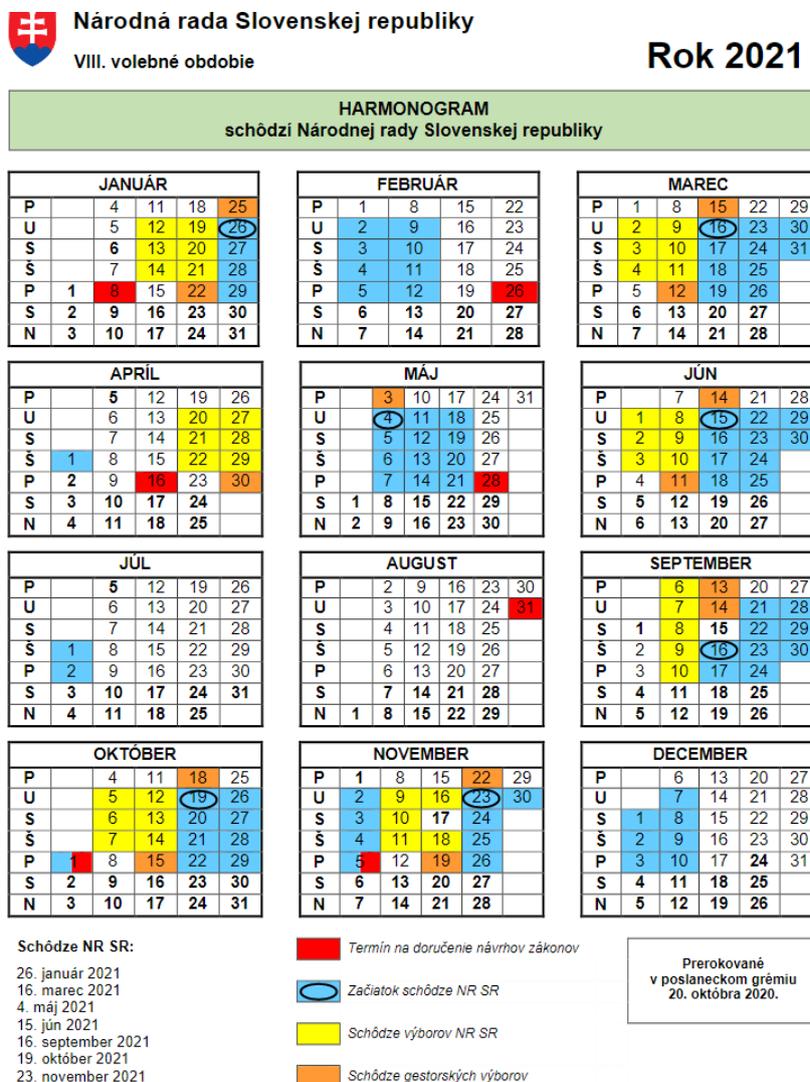
No official procedure for the adoption of the calendar exists. The yearly calendar is agreed at the level of the Gremium in cooperation with the parliamentary administration at the end of the year previous to the year of the respective calendar.

What is a period covered by the calendar?

The calendar covers a year period.

How is the calendar available to the public?

The calendar, detailed daily agenda of the plenary sitting, committees and other political bodies of the National Council, are available on the website of the National Council. They are not concentrated in one spot but available sorted according to the particular body.

Figure 7. Year work schedule of the Slovak National Council (available in Slovak only)¹⁸

Content of the calendar

The calendar contains information on a week of plenary sittings, committee meetings, main committees meetings and the deadline for submission of legislative drafts for consideration by the plenary in the first reading. Further information is available in the specific weekly agenda of the plenary and committees.

¹⁸ HARMONOGRAM schôdzi Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky rok 2021. Dostupné z: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=486850>.

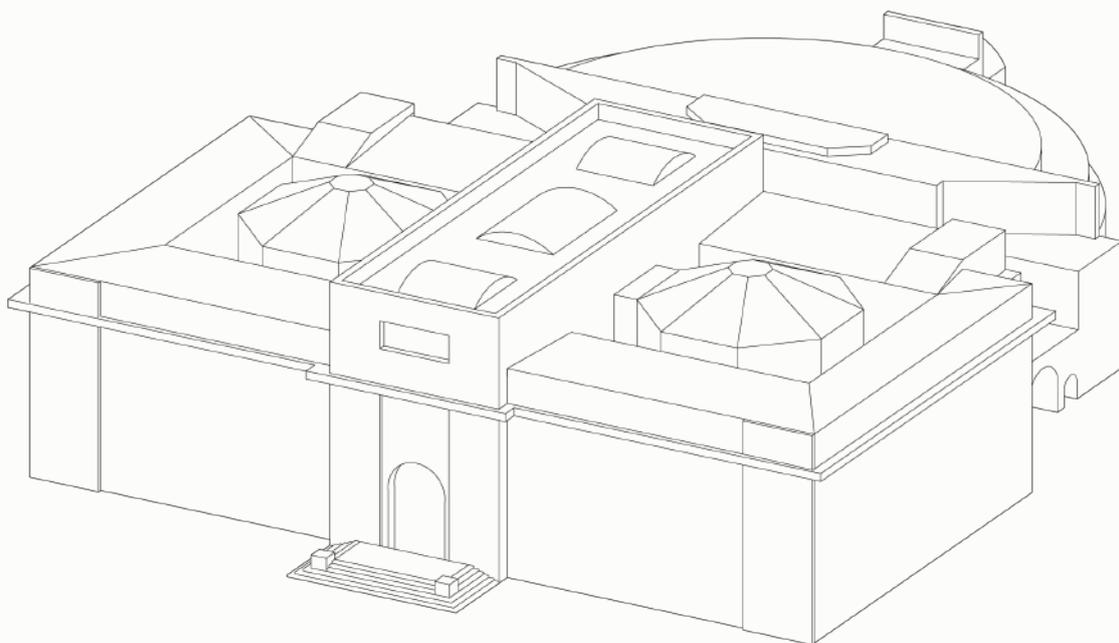
In the calendar the following aspects are specifically covered:

- Meetings of the working bodies (committees, commissions) are included in the calendar.
- The Speaker's agenda is not included in the calendar but is available in the Speaker's web section.¹⁹
- International visits or meetings are not included, but the agendas of the Speaker and Deputy Speakers are available in the specific sections.
- Parliamentary groups meeting are not included.
- Events available for the public (seminars, visits, cultural events) are not in the calendar, but on the web in the specific section.²⁰

19 Kalendár podujatí predsedu NR SR. Dostupné z: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/?sid=predseda/informacie/podujatia>.

20 Verejnosť a médiá Kontakt. Dostupné z: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/default.aspx?SectionId=152>.

SWEDEN



Sweden's unicameral parliament is called Riksdag. Every four years in September, a general election is held. The Riksdag convenes no sooner than four days after the official results have been declared and not later than fifteen days. The Riksdag convenes in September on a day determined in the preceding session. At the beginning of the session, the Prime Minister then delivers a Statement of the Government Policy (i.e. a plan of governmental activities for the following session from which a workload of legislative initiatives comes). A session then lasts till the start of the next session.

The Riksdag Act (2014:801) does not stipulate a specific provision that govern the process of scheduling. For the current electoral period, the Riksdag issued a schedule for the whole period in September 2018 right after the general election.²¹ An updated version of the parliamentary meeting plan for the period of 2020–2022 was issued in September 2020.²²

The business of the Riksdag, including also the planning of the work of the Riksdag administration, is governed by the Riksdag Board. The Speaker and ten members of the Riksdag appointed by parliamentary factions according to the proportional representation consist the Board. Thanks to the proportional representation, the Board has the legitimacy to govern the work of the Riksdag.

The Riksdag Act also stipulates options for introducing Riksdag business and who may raise an issue for discussion. In Chapter 9 of the Riksdag Act, the option is granted to the Government by means of a government bill or written communication, every member of the Riksdag by means of a private member's motion; in the committees by means of a committee initiative; and in certain Riksdag bodies by means of a submission or a report. The Riksdag Act further stipulates the time limits for the submission of agenda items before deliberating. The most strict limitation is set for the Fiscal Policy Bill which the Government shall present no later than 15 April and the Budget Bill submitted no later than 20 September. In addition to that, the Act also set the latest time limits for discussion of the business before a general election.

The legislative process starts with submitting an item for deliberation to the Chamber. It is then automatically referred to a specific committee according to the subject area. A committee shall then present a committee report for the plenary discussion and decision. After discussion in a committee, the item is referred for the plenary discussion and decision.

Chapter 11 of the Riksdag Act stipulates the settlement of business. An item may be discussed only if the committee report is available for members at least for two days before it should be deliberated by the plenary session. The Riksdag Act does not provide any further provisions ruling the agenda-setting of the parliamentary business. Yet, the Speaker of the Riksdag has the power to set the agenda of the Chamber and tables items for discussion at various working days. In case there is an extraordinary circumstance requiring for instance shortening of the period between publication of the committee report and plenary discussion, the Speaker shall consult the chair and deputy chair of the committee.

21 *Preliminär sammanträdesplan för kammaren*. Dostupné z: <https://www.riksdagen.se/globalassets/02.-kalender/langtidsplan-2018-2022.pdf>.

22 *Preliminär sammanträdesplan för kammaren*. Dostupné z: <https://www.riksdagen.se/globalassets/02.-kalender/preliminar-sammantradesplan-2020-2022.pdf>.

Articles 15–17 then stipulate the schedule and agenda-setting of the parliamentary business shall be discussed in the same electoral period as it was proposed. The Riksdag may decide to defer the item to the first parliamentary session of the next period.

There is a weekly and monthly calendar of the Riksdag activities available on a special website. However, there is no provision in the Rules of Procedure that would regulate its operation. The calendar includes all agenda items (schedule of debates and decisions, debate of party leaders, committee sessions, and other events).

DEBATE REGULATION

According to the Riksdag Act, there is a time limitation for discussing Members; the limitation is four minutes.

Voting

The Riksdag Act does not provide any provision that would stipulate the precise time of voting. Yet, the calendar consists of voting slots in which the Riksdag shall decide on various items. However, the slots do not consist of all agenda that have already been discussed.

STRUCTURE AND AVAILABILITY OF THE CALENDAR

What is the legal regulation of the calendar?

There is no legal provision of the parliamentary calendar for the purpose of informing the public.

What is the structure of the calendar and who can propose the structure?

The calendar comprises information on plenary session business and committees' sessions and other events of Riksdag. The Riksdag Board is formally responsible for the collection and distribution of the calendar/agenda (see above).

Who adopts the calendar?

The calendar reflects the workload of Riksdag. Given the system of a year session, the working period of Riksdag is stipulated by the Rules of Procedure. The schedule of working days is determined far in advance by the Riksdag Board. Setting the agenda for respective working days is responsibility of the Speaker who sets items for discussion.

What is a period covered by the calendar?

The schedule of parliamentary cycle is available for a period of two years. The calendar at the websites of Riksdag covers all upcoming events that have been already set.

How is the calendar available to the public?

The calendar is available to the public at the websites of Riksdag.²³ The calendar allows for filtering the displayed content according to various aspects (plenary session, committee session, etc.).

Figure 8. The calendar (monthly displayed) in Swedish Riksdag (available in Swedish only)

The screenshot shows the Swedish Riksdag website's calendar interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for 'Lysna', 'Lästlist', 'Teckenspråk', 'In English', 'Other languages', and 'Ordbok'. The main navigation menu includes 'Start', 'Ledamöter & partier', 'Utskotten & EU-nämnden', 'Debatter & beslut', 'Dokument & lagar', 'Så funkar riksdagen', and 'Webb-tv'. The calendar is displayed in a monthly view for November 2023, with the current week highlighted as 'Vecka 44'. The events listed are:

- Måndag 1 november**: Nordiska rådet håller session i Köpenhamn
- Tisdag 2 november**: Nordiska rådet håller session i Köpenhamn
- Onsdag 3 november**: OSSE-möte digitalt; Nordiska rådet håller session i Köpenhamn
- Torsdag 4 november**: 10.00 Bordläggningsplenium (Webb-tv); OSSE-möte digitalt

On the right side, there are two filter panels: 'Typ av händelse' (Event type) and 'Avdelning' (Department). The 'Typ av händelse' panel includes filters for Beslut (5), Frågeslund (1), Bordläggning (2), Debatt om förslag (6), Interpellationsdebatt (5), Kallelse och föredragningslista (2), Presskonferens (1), Resa (1), and Session (4). The 'Avdelning' panel includes filters for Stansida (111), Kamraren (20), Utskotten & EU-nämnden (87), Arbetsmarknadsutskottet (3), and Civilutskottet (5).

Content of the calendar

- Meetings of the working bodies (committees, commissions) are included in the calendar.
- The Speaker's agenda is not specifically included.
- International visits or meetings are included.
- Parliamentary groups meetings are not included.
- Events for the public are available through the calendar (seminars, visits, cultural events).



RECOMMENDATIONS

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the previous analysis of various parliamentary systems and ways how parliamentary business is governed, the following recommendations to introduce rules on parliamentary business and agenda-setting in the Republic of North Macedonia case might be relevant:

- **Establish long term (a half year at least) planning of the Assembly and its bodies activities, preferably based on the regular cycle of weeks dedicated to different activities.**

Justification:

The regular cycle of four, five or six weeks allows planning of the plenary and other Assembly bodies activities. In this model of planning a particular week is reserved for the activity of a particular body. The long term planning of activities identifies days of the plenary sessions and Assembly bodies meetings. Certain days in the week can be reserved regularly for a specific activity. Each Friday, for example, for contacting citizens in electoral districts, Mondays for Political party groups meetings, etc.

This model is used in all parliaments examined in our research.

- **Establish binding dates (deadlines) for presenting legislative drafts to be considered by the plenary at the following plenary session.**

Justification:

The National Council of the Slovak Republic identifies in the long-term plan of activities the deadlines for presenting legislative drafts to be discussed at the following plenary session. This is important for the planning of the plenary agenda, specifically for the knowledge of the drafts for the first reading. The introduction of this tool is recommended with the aim to limit the number of unexpected drafts presented for consideration to the Assembly.

- **Consider repealing discussion of presented draft law by the committees prior to discussion at the plenary in the first reading of the draft law.**

Justification:

Consideration of draft law by the committees before discussion at the plenary is not common legislative process. The repealing of this stage can facilitate the work of the committees. Consideration of the draft, before the first reading, should be done by the Parliamentary Party Groups.

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Swiss Parliament Support Program (PSP) supports the efforts of the Assembly of Republic of North Macedonia for independence through building consensus, structural reforms and capacity building for institutional development of the Assembly; its legislative and oversight role and institutional transparency and accountability. PSP is implemented by the National Democratic Institute, the Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje and the Centre for Change Management, aimed at supporting the strategic planning of the Assembly, human resources management reforms, improved regulatory impact assessment and procurement processes, commitment to open data and measuring the public opinion and monitoring of the efforts for reforms, including enhanced citizen participation in policy-making processes.

