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Norwegian *Storting* and  
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Report IRIS – 2007/118





International Research Institute of Stavanger

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Project number: 7252130  
Project title: The internationalisation of domestic policies  
Funded by: The Research Council of Norway  
Research program: Strategic Institute Program (SIP)  
ISBN: 978-82-490-0535-2  
Distribution restriction: Open

Stavanger, 20.09.2007

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# The Internationalization of National Parliaments: Norwegian *Storting* and Slovene *Državni zbor*

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This is a revised version of a paper presented at the IPSA Research Committee of Legislative Specialists conference 'Internationalization of Parliaments – the Role of National Parliaments in the EU' in Ljubljana, Slovenia, April 7 – 9, 2005. A Slovene version of the paper, 'Internacionalizacija Nacionalnih Parlamentov: Norveški Storting in Slovenski Državni Zbor', was published in Miro Hacek og Drago Zajc (eds. 2006): *Demokracija v Globalizaciji – Globalizacija v Demokraciji* (Ljubljana: FDV).

# The Internationalization of National Parliaments: Norwegian *Storting* and Slovene *Državni zbor*

## Abstract

Traditionally, international relations and foreign affairs are considered to be a prerogative of the executive. However, in the age of globalization – a dual processes of internationalization of domestic affairs and domestication of international affairs – the traditional division between international and domestic affairs is blurred and the days when foreign policy was the exclusive domain of the executive are over. This paper explores the effects of globalization and internationalization on the organization and activities of the national parliaments of an old established democracy, the Norwegian *Storting*, and a new democracy, the Slovene *Državni zbor*.

## 1 Introduction

Globalization and internationalization is a process of growing interdependence between states. Small states with open economies in particular are more vulnerable to international fluctuations and developments. In this new situation individual states do not want to take the risks associated with the formulation, adoption and implementation of totally independent policies. They have an interest in international regulation and predictability and the process of globalization has been requesting a ‘constitutionalization of globalization’, i.e. invention of forms of cooperation of the states through which proper decisions could be reached and common policies adopted.

There are different institutionalized forms created to pursue various common policies – one is the World Trade Organization (WTO), another one is the European Union (EU). These international (or transnational) organizations are as much a product as they are a factor of globalization. The WTO corresponds more to the traditional form of international organization, while the EU is a ‘sui generis’ transnational organization.<sup>1</sup> The EU can be considered as a kind of ‘executive federalism’ since the governments have greater power than national parliaments in the process of decision making at the EU level. However, national parliaments have a number of ways to exert influence indirectly through their governments, in the forms of ‘ante’ and ‘post-decisional’ control, and directly through various forms of participation in international organizations (Maurer and Wessels, 2001: 461).

Norway as a member of the WTO may be an example of a country on which globalization has more direct effects, while an EU member country is better protected against the direct effects. For a small country like Slovenia, joining the EU meant creating a buffer against and diminishing the risks associated with global forces. Being a member of a very large organization Slovenia (together with other members) has a

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<sup>1</sup> However, the WTO dispute settlement system has certain transnational characteristics, cf. [http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/disp1\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/disp1_e.htm)

possibility to prevent possible negative effects or to divert and redirect the consequences of such effects of global developments. On the other hand, in Slovenia, as an EU member, domestic policies are more directly influenced by the Europeanization process. Norway as a non-member is more indirectly affected by the EU, but due to the agreement on a European Economic Area the Europeanization process plays an important role in relation to domestic affairs in Norway as well.

According to traditional constitutional theory, international relations and foreign affairs are the prerogative of the executive. However, in our view globalization and Europeanization are dual processes of internationalization of domestic affairs and domestication of international affairs. The traditional division between international and domestic affairs is blurred, and consequently the days when foreign policy was the exclusive domain of the executive are over. This paper explores the effects of globalization and internationalization on the organization and activities of the national parliaments of Norway and Slovenia, the *Storting* and the *Državni zbor*.

## 2 Changing theoretical perspectives

### 2.1 Constitutional theory: prerogative of the executive

Constitutional theory, based on the notion of classic human rights like liberty and equality, has stressed the importance of parliament as an expression of democracy (democratic participation), and the executive being at the same time an expression of the need for action (Elster, 1988: 4). The executive as a separate power has been historically vested to the state rulers (monarchs or presidents). Within their competence fell 'foreign' matters like assembling the army or making peace, representing the state in international relations and maintaining diplomatic relations with foreign countries. Foreign affairs have been a classic prerogative of the executive and in traditional constitutional theory the parliament plays a minor role in international relations.

However, the former understanding of 'foreign affairs' as a matter of purely political interests (i.e. to increase the state's influence over other states or regions of the world or to protect oneself from the influence of other states) has changed and absorbed all sorts of practical matters. On the one hand one could imagine that the classic prerogative of the executive would be extended to all domains where a state collaborates with other states in solving common problems and following common goals, but on the other hand the blending of foreign and domestic affairs blurs the division of responsibilities and the foreign affairs prerogative of the executive could be modified and parliaments could obtain more important roles to play in international relations.

### 2.2 National interests in two-level games

In international negotiations, like the trade negotiations within the WTO or (even more) the negotiations over policy proposals within the EU where the states are trying to promote a great variety of national interests, foreign and domestic policies are fundamentally interconnected. Putnam (1988:434) argues that instead of explaining foreign policy purely from domestic causes, or explaining domestic policy purely from

international causes, international negotiations can ‘usefully be conceived as a two-level game’. At the international level (I), ‘national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments’. At the national level (II), ‘domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favorable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups’.

The ratification process is the ‘crucial theoretical link’ between domestic and international politics, and national and international ‘phases’ in negotiations are often intertwined (Moravcsik 1993). As pointed out by Putnam (1988:436), ‘There are likely to be prior consultations and bargaining at level II to hammer out an initial position for the level I negotiations’, and ‘the need for level II ratification is certain to affect the level I bargaining’. Milner (1997:4) agrees that domestic and international politics are strongly interconnected and that political leaders are playing on the domestic and international arenas simultaneously: ‘They are trying to achieve their various goals using these two arenas, and they face different – and sometimes contradictory – pressures and constraints from each. Their behavior can only be understood when both internal and external factors are considered’.

One of the most important roles of parliaments in general is to prioritize and balance conflicting political interests. This task is of the utmost importance in relation to legislation and decision-making, but it is also important in relation to international organizations and negotiations. In international negotiations, governments negotiate on behalf of the nation states. Governments are supposed to attend to and safeguard the ‘national interest’, but the definition of the ‘national interest’ in modern democratic societies is not straightforward. However, as Trubowitz (1998: 12, 4) argues, ‘there is no single national interest’ as such. The very definition of the national interest is rather ‘a product of politics’, and it is defined by the societal interests which have the power to work within the political system and to make winning coalitions and alliances. Defining the national interest is regarded as an ‘essentially political process’ also by Frankel (1970:97). Thus, the ‘national interest’ is ‘politically contingent’ and dependent upon the outcomes of political processes.

Given the fact that there may be many national interests, the political struggle over national interests has different implications. It can be seen as a struggle over the ranking of different interests in terms of priorities and/or as a fight over trade-offs between different interests where some interests are curtailed in order to achieve possible benefits for other interests. The definition of national interests as a matter of giving priority to and balancing different domestic interests lies at the heart of what parliaments are supposed to do in democratic societies.

The influence of Parliament should also be related to domestic developments in the relationships between Parliament and Government. In the case of Norway, for twenty

years minority governments were the rule.<sup>2</sup> The Storting extended its political and administrative capacity and strengthened its power vis-à-vis the executive (Rommetvedt, 2003, 2005). In the case of Slovenia the powers of the National Assembly vis-à-vis the government have been strong from the very beginning of the independent statehood (1991) and the Državni zbor demonstrated its interest and capacity to influence most important decisions also in the process of joining the EU by confirming all the negotiation positions. These developments affect the level of executive autonomy in foreign affairs and international negotiations. It also makes it less likely for governments to misjudge what is ratifiable in their own polities, a phenomenon which has been ‘surprisingly likely’ in international negotiations (Evans 1993:400).

### **3 Comparing Norway and Slovenia**

Norway and Slovenia are two of the smaller democratic countries in Europe, with 4.6 and 2 million inhabitants respectively. The differences with regard to democratic and parliamentary traditions are striking, however. Norway is one of the oldest democracies in Europe, while Slovenia is one of the youngest. In our study of internationalization of national parliaments, we compare the organization and activities of the old established Norwegian parliament – the *Storting* – and the young Slovene National Assembly – the *Državni zbor*. We focus on the national parliaments of a new member of the European Union – Slovenia – and a non-member of the EU – Norway.

#### **3.1 The old established Norwegian democracy**

The Norwegian Parliament was established in 1814 when Norway separated from Denmark and declared its independence after four hundred years under Danish rule. The Norwegian Constitution, which was signed and sealed on May 17, is one of the oldest ones in the democratic world. However, the winners of the Napoleonic wars forced Norway into a union with Sweden, but Norway managed to maintain its constitution and parliament, and far-reaching autonomy in most areas with the exception of foreign affairs.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing demand for separate Norwegian consular services, but the Swedish-Norwegian King refused to accept the demand. A struggle over the issue between the Swedish and Norwegian governments continued for several years and in 1905 the Storting decided to establish a separate Norwegian consular service. The King refused to sanction the Act, the Norwegian Government resigned, and on June 7 the Storting declared the union with Sweden as dissolved. The armies mobilized on both sides of the Swedish-Norwegian border, but in the end

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2 A majority coalition government was established after the general election in 2005. This was the first majority government in Norway since 1985.



Sweden accepted the separation. A peaceful 'coup d'état' had succeeded and Norway gained full independence.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century Norway became a member of numerous international organizations. Nevertheless, on two occasions, 1972 and 1994, the majority of the Norwegian voters said 'no' to EU membership in referendums. However, an agreement with the EU on a European Economic Area (EEA) adopted in 1992 has given Norway access to the internal European market since January 1994.

### **3.2 The young Slovene democracy**

Slovenia is one of the youngest democracies in Europe, established on June 25, 1991 after the successful separation from the former socialist Yugoslavia and a short war with the Yugoslav People's Army.<sup>3</sup> Until that time Slovenia enjoyed the status of a federal republic of Yugoslavia with its own sovereignty. Slovenes once belonging to the Habsburg monarchy joined the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. The democratic standards based on classic rights and freedoms were actually re-established in September 1989 when the National Assembly elected in 1986 passed amendments to the constitution of 1974 introducing political pluralism and at the same time protecting the unalienable right of the Slovenians to self-determination (Zajc, 1994: 151; 1997: 163). These changes were part of the vast structural and political reforms all over East-Central and Eastern Europe which swept up former socialist systems at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. A huge Europeanization process followed demanding the reestablishment of democratic values and recreation of the whole 'parliamentary world'. It has had different aspects from restoration of the European traditions and institutions after the decades of 'de-Europeanization' to consolidation of democracy. For all new ECE states it also meant integration into the EU.

This process demanded revitalization and strengthening of the national parliament. The former Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, elected in April 1990 in the first democratic elections in Slovenia after the WW2, was elevated to the position of a fully fledged national parliament in 1991. Its adaptation to the new role could be fulfilled properly only by applying relevant standards of internal institutionalization and develop efficient procedures together with sufficient professional support. The Slovene National Assembly is one of the new ECE parliaments which from the early 1990s followed the logic of modernization and rationalization. The passing of the first modern Rules of Procedure in 1993 made possible the fulfillment of an enormous task of replacing the old 'socialist' legislation with a modern one. In order to increase the efficiency of the National Assembly, committees were reorganized and assigned new functions. A broad consensus was needed among the parliamentary parties to enhance the Europeanization process. On July 3, 1997 seven of eight parties made an agreement on the accession to

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3 A transitional National Assembly, elected in May 1990, passed The Declaration on Independence of The Republic of Slovenia on June 25, 1991.

the EU. Considering the tasks of a national parliament of an EU member country the National Assembly has rationalized an extensive legislative procedure by adopting new Rules of Procedure in 2002.

### **3.3 Expectations with regard to internationalization of the two parliaments**

On the basis of the theoretical perspectives presented in preceding section, we would expect national parliaments to become more involved with foreign affairs and international relations. This general expectation applies to both the Norwegian and the Slovene parliaments. What then about differences between the two countries?

One line of reasoning could be this: The involvement of national parliaments in international affairs is a matter of 'maturation'. As time goes by, parliament becomes more institutionalized, stronger and influential, at first with regard to various domestic policies, and finally also with regard to foreign affairs. One of the most important factors contributing to its influential position with regard to the foreign affairs is an efficient and mature parliamentary elite. Consequently we would expect the 'mature' Norwegian parliament to be more involved in international relations than the 'less mature' Slovene parliament.

However, another line of reasoning could be this: Globalization and internationalization is a matter of time in world history. Consequently, a new parliament entering the scene in the age of globalizations needs to 'mature faster' in order to catch up with developments. In this case we would expect only minor differences between the Slovene and Norwegian parliaments.

The effect of being a member of the EU or not, is not self-evident. On the one hand, a new and less experienced EU member like Slovenia may leave 'extra-European' and global matters to the EU, while a non-member like Norway has to take care of all international issues itself. In e.g. the World Trade Organization (WTO), the EU negotiates on behalf of all EU member states, while Norway negotiates on its own.

On the other hand, the national parliament of an EU member state will be more involved with EU matters than the national parliament of a non-member state. The successful involvement in the process of accession to the EU (the Slovene Državni zbor was the only parliament of all entrant states confirming the negotiating positions), and the internal institutionalization of the Državni zbor indicate that even though it is the parliament of a new EU member country, it should not be expected to be of lesser importance or marginalized. However, interviews with the Slovene deputies at the end of the previous mandate (2004) show an inadequate cultural capacity, insufficient information on EU matters and procedures, and low motivation to deal with the EU matters (Zajc, 2005, 24).

In the following sections, we will take a closer look at rules and regulations and institutionalized practices with regard to the involvement of the Norwegian and Slovene parliaments in international affairs.

## 4 The Constitutions: Foreign affairs – a modified prerogative of the executives

### 4.1 Norway

According to the Constitution of Norway, Article 3, ‘The Executive Power is vested in the King’, and ‘The King himself chooses a Council [government] from among Norwegian citizens who are entitled to vote’ (Article 12). In practice, however, this is not the case. The principle of separation of powers was abandoned in 1884 when the principle of parliamentarianism achieved its breakthrough after several years of conflict. Norwegian parliamentarianism developed gradually and it was accepted as common law even though it was not written into the Constitution of Norway until February 2007. The Norwegian version of parliamentarianism is a negative one. Governments need to be accepted by the Storting, but they do not need a positive vote of confidence.

Traditional constitutional theory where foreign affairs is considered to belong to the prerogatives of the executive is reflected in Article 26 of the Constitution of Norway which states that ‘The King has the right to call up troops, to engage in hostilities in defence of the Realm and to make peace, to conclude and denounce conventions, to send and to receive diplomatic envoys’. In practice, the King’s right now means the right of the Government since the King has no real political power. The prerogative of the Government is modified, however, by the principle of parliamentarianism, constitutional practice and common law. To some degree this is reflected in the Constitution. Article 26 states that ‘Treaties on matters of special importance and, in all cases, treaties whose implementation, according to the Constitution, necessitates a new law or a decision by the Storting, are not binding until the Storting has given its consent thereto’. In addition to this, Article 75 states that ‘It devolves upon the Storting: [...] to have communicated to it the conventions and treaties which the King, on behalf of the State, has concluded with foreign powers; [...]’.

Conventions and treaties are put before the Parliament, either as separate issues for ratification, or in general accounts for information. Accounts of conventions and treaties are given in yearly letters from the Norwegian Government to the Storting. The account for the year 2003 comprised a total of 235 conventions and treaties. 33 of these conventions had been put before the Parliament in separate propositions (Bills). Earlier accounts listed 210 conventions in 1999, 189 in 2000, 214 in 2001, and 208 in 2002. 22 of the conventions in 1999, 42 in 2000, 34 in 2001 and 28 in 2002 had been put before the Parliament as separate issues.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the accounts of conventions and treaties, the government also presents yearly accounts to the Parliament of agreements

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<sup>4</sup> See the following recommendations from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs: *Innst. S. nr. 156 (2004-2005)*, *Innst. S. nr. 200 (2003-2005)*, *Innst. S. nr. 125 (2002-2003)*, *Innst. S. nr. 18 (2002-2003)*, and *Innst. S. nr. 13 (2001-2002)*.

concerning aid to developing countries. 117 development aid agreements came into force in 2003, 87 in 2002, 97 in 2001, 85 in 2000, and 76 in 1999.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of the yearly accounts of conventions and development aid agreements is questionable however. The accounts are sent to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs for consideration, but with the exception of a few remarks on development aid agreements in 2001, the committee made no comments to the conventions and agreements in its recommendations concerning the years from 1999 to 2003. The committee simply concluded by suggesting that the accounts should be attached to the Record of Proceedings. This is mainly due to the fact already mentioned that the most important (and potentially controversial) conventions and agreements are put before the Norwegian Parliament in separate propositions.

Normally, when the Norwegian Government has negotiated and signed a convention or treaty there is little the Parliament can do about it. Rejection of ratification could lead to dramatic consequences, and the Storting would hesitate to take the responsibility for such consequences.<sup>6</sup> Even more important in this connection (and in accordance with Putnam, 1988) is the fact that when it comes to important conventions and treaties, the Norwegian Government will have consultations with the Parliament before, and sometimes during, negotiations in order to secure majority support and to make sure that there will be no serious problems during the process of ratification. We will take a closer look at the consultation procedures in section 5.

## 4.2 Slovenia

What the writers of the new Slovene constitution (adopted in December 1991) had in mind was a strong Parliament, an independent Government and a relatively ceremonial role of the President of the Republic. Državni zbor consists of only 90 deputies representing the citizens of Slovenia, the Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities being entitled to elect one deputy each (art. 80). Relatively strong ties between the political system and civil society were secured by establishing a special 'non-political' body of corporative character, the National Council, providing for representation of local and professional interests (Zajc and Lukšič, 1994: 379). Since its functions are not the same as performed by the second chamber in other modern bicameral parliaments the Slovene parliamentary system could be described as a 'limited two chamber system' (Grad, 1992: 59).

In the former socialist system, the principle of the unity of power was one of the main regulatory principles, contributing greatly to the domination of the leading Communist party. In the new constitution (art. 3), the principle of separation of powers is one of the

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<sup>5</sup> *Innst. S. nr. 250 (2004-2005), Instst. S. nr. 199 (2003-2004), Instst. S. nr. 99 (2002-2003), Instst. nr. 110 (2001-2002), and Instst. S. nr. 209(2000-2001).*

<sup>6</sup> In 1972 and 1994, the Norwegian Government signed agreements on membership in the European Union. The agreements were rejected by the Storting after referendums where the majority of the voters said 'no' to membership in the EU. These are exceptional cases however.

most important principles and a sign of the democratic transformation of the whole system. The Slovenian model of parliamentary democracy has some distinct characteristics. According to constitutional provisions the ministers are appointed and dismissed by the Državni zbor, upon the proposal of the Prime Minister (art. 112). Prior to the appointment each minister must appear before the respective parliamentary committee where he has to answer questions about his views and abilities. The Law on Government passed in 1993 determined the government's responsibilities mainly in the implementation of the policies outlined by the Državni zbor. In practice, Državni zbor has many times deliberated matters which would normally be in the competencies of the government.

According to the new Slovene constitution of 1991 all international treaties and conventions have to be put before the National Assembly for ratification (art. 86). The accounts for the past years comprise an impressive number of multilateral and bilateral treaties – altogether 200 in the first mandate (1992-1996) of Državni zbor, 290 in the mandate 1996-2000 and 243 in the mandate 2000-2004. Among the most important were the ratification of the EU Association Agreement on July 15, 1997 and the ratification of the Contract between the fifteen former EU member states and the ten entrant states on their accession to the EU on January 28, 2004. On February 2, 2005 the Državni zbor, as the third parliament of new member states, ratified the Contract on the Constitution for Europe with an overwhelming majority (only four votes against). According to the views expressed by the deputies, ratification represented the realization of goals from the time when Slovenia left former socialist Yugoslavia. Deputies also stressed the fact that the Constitution for Europe increases the importance of all member states, giving also a greater role to the national parliaments. In spite of this almost unanimous support, the level of information on the Constitution for Europe among the Slovene public is still very low.

In the past years Slovene Državni zbor has not denied ratification of a treaty or convention. At some rare occasions the Government has had previous consultations with Državni zbor during the negotiations with a foreign partner or international organisation in order to get additional support or to prevent possible controversies during parliamentary debate. Such consultations took place in the middle of the 1990s at the time when Italy was trying to block Slovenia's attempt to sign the EU Association Agreement, claiming that the Slovene legislation regarding the ownership of foreigners was not in accordance with legislation of the EU member states. Slovenia accepted the compromising Spanish proposal giving priority rights to land property to all EU citizens and after the change of article 68 of the Slovene Constitution on July 14, 1997, Državni zbor on July 15, 1997 passed the Law on Ratification of the EU Association Agreement.

In March 2003, the Državni zbor almost unanimously adopted the necessary changes of the constitution of 1991 and with a new article (3a) established constitutional ground for Slovenia to join international organizations which respect human rights and basic freedoms. Changing its constitution Slovenia transmitted the execution of a part of the national sovereignty to these international organizations, i.e. to the EU in the first place. Legal acts and decisions made in these organizations are applied in Slovenia directly. Since the common EU legislation is ranked above the national legal system, no additional confirmation or ratification of such acts on the side of Državni zbor will be

needed. The new article foresaw a special Law on the Relationship between the Državni Zbor and the Government of Slovenia in Dealing with EU Matters. Such a law written on the basis of the Finnish and Swedish examples and adopted in March 2004 (a short time before Slovenia became a member of the EU), determined the responsibility of the government to inform the Državni zbor about all matters related to the EU (mostly proposals of the European Commission) in all stages of decision making procedures.

The government has to prepare its own position regarding each matter altogether with an evaluation of the situation and possible consequences. It is within the competence of the Državni zbor to supervise the processes of decision making on the level of the EU where the government is involved, and if necessary to prepare its own position which the government has to take into account. Though its positions are not legally binding the government, the National Assembly may put a considerable pressure on the government to adjust its handling of matters in line with the preferences and directions of the National Assembly. If necessary Državni zbor may also use appropriate measures against the government, including interpellations against individual minister, or against the whole government.

## **5 Parliaments and international relations**

### **5.1 Parliamentary committees and consultations**

Specialized committees are essential elements of the organization of parliaments (Longley and Davidson 1998). All the 169 members of the Norwegian Parliament are assigned to one – and only one – of thirteen standing committees.<sup>7</sup> Party groups should, as far as possible, be proportionally represented in each committee, and the principle of proportionality is also applied when the positions of committee chairs are distributed among the parties (Rommetvedt 1999:7). Virtually all matters to be dealt with by the Norwegian Parliament are first submitted to one of the standing committees for consideration. The standing committees have no decision-making authority on behalf of the Parliament. The formal role of the committees is advisory only, but in reality they play an important role in the decision-making process.<sup>8</sup> The committees prepare fairly detailed recommendations with majority and minority proposals and remarks. Plenary debates and voting are based on committee recommendations, and due to the high degree of cohesiveness of Norwegian political parties one can normally predict the outcome of plenary decisions on the basis of committee recommendations.

Using Shaw's typology, we may say that all standing committees of the Norwegian Parliament have 'legislative' as well as 'financial' and 'investigative' purposes (Shaw 1979:370ff). These functions are related to the decision-making process of the

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<sup>7</sup> Until 2005 the number of MPs was 165 and the number of standing committees 12. The standing committees in 2001-2005 are listed in Table 3.

<sup>8</sup> This is still the case, even though the relative importance of the party groups as compared with committees has increased, cf. Rommetvedt (2003:84f).

Parliament. ‘Administrative oversight’, or parliamentary control of the performance of the executive, is the major responsibility of the Standing Committee of Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs (along with constitutional matters, of course).

The competences of the committees of the Slovene National Assembly are not much different from the competences of similar bodies in other parliaments. As in the Norwegian Parliament all matters must first be submitted to one of the standing committees. (In rare occasions matters are submitted to two committees, i.e. when another committee declares a matter to be in its special interest.) Party groups are proportionally represented in each committee and the same principle is applied in the distribution of positions like committee chairs. Committees have important functions of general overview over their domain, gathering information and solving conflicts, altogether with the control over government’s actions in the implementation of policies. Though the final decisions are taken by all deputies, committees have an important role in preparing proposals for the plenary debate and voting.

What makes Slovene committees different from the Norwegian ones, is their number and composition. Because of the small number of deputies (90) and great number of committees, deputies serve in several committees. There were altogether 26 committees established in the second mandate, 20 in the third and 22 in the fourth mandate. Not all of these committees are ordinary standing committees – in the present mandate eight are dealing with mandates and elections, procedure, petitions etc., while 14 are related to real policy making and scrutiny. There are nevertheless 203 positions in these 14 committees demanding great commitments from the individual members.

### **Norway**

The Norwegian Parliament has established three committees to deal with international relations: A Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, an Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs, and an EEA Consultative Committee on matters related to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (see below). The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs has the same functions as the other standing committees, but in order to portray the role of the Enlarged Committee and the EEA Consultative Committee, we need to add a ‘consultative’ role to Shaw’s list.

According to Section 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the Norwegian Parliament, the *Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs* is responsible for ‘Matters relating to foreign affairs, development cooperation, Norwegian interests on Svalbard or in other polar regions and matters in general relating to agreements between Norway and other states or international organizations’.

The *Enlarged Committee on Foreign Affairs* consists of the ordinary members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, the President and the Vice President of the Parliament, the chairman of the Standing Committee on Defense, and up to eleven MPs who are also members of one of the ordinary (domestic) standing committees. Section 13 of the Rules of Procedure states that the task of the Enlarged Committee ‘is to discuss with the Government important foreign policy, trade policy and national security policy issues’. Consultations should ‘take place before important decisions are made’ by the Government. The businesses of the Enlarged Committee on Foreign

Affairs are kept secret. The Enlarged Committee may put recommendations before the Parliament, but that is not normally the case. The Committee is convened when the chairman finds it necessary, or at the request of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or one-third of the members of the committee. From 1993 to 2005, the average number of meetings was 8.2 per year. The most frequent meetings were held in 1999 (14), 1998 (12) and 2001/2003 (10 each).<sup>9</sup> The variations from one year to another are related to i.a. the occurrence of international events.

The most consequential international agreement that Norway has signed is the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) between the European Union and members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The EEA Agreement, which came into force in January 1994, gives Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway access to the internal market of the EU. The three EFTA countries have agreed to implement Community rules and to respect the relevant case law of the European Court of Justice (Sejersted 1996). The EEA Agreement established an EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee in order to ‘contribute, through dialogue and debate, to a better understanding between the Community and the EFTA States’. The EU and EFTA members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, including six Norwegian MPs, ‘scrutinize all Community legislation applying to the EEA’ (<http://secretariat.efta.int>).

Section 13 a of the Rules of Procedure of the Norwegian Parliament states that ‘The Government’s consultations with the Storting on proposals regarding new or amended acts of Community law in a field within the scope of the Agreement on the European Economic Area [...] shall take place with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, which in such matters shall be joined by the members of the Norwegian delegation to the EEA Joint Parliamentary Committee. The Foreign Affairs Committee or its chairman may also decide that one or more of the other committees shall take part in specific consultations’.<sup>10</sup>

This body is also called the *EEA Consultative Committee*. Consultations are held when the chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, or a member of the Government, or one-third of the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee so request. The businesses of the EEA Consultative Committee and joint meetings between this body and other committees are kept secret, but the minutes of the secret meetings are published after one year (unless otherwise decided). The committee normally meets once a month (except for the summer months). Matters which are discussed in the consultative body are submitted to a plenary meeting of the Parliament if the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs so demands. Whether such a meeting shall be public or held in camera is decided by the Parliament (in camera).

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<sup>9</sup> Information given by the Archives of the Storting.

<sup>10</sup> In 2000-2001, a total of 35 members of other committees met in five of the nine meetings in the EEA Consultative Committee (Melsæther 2004:36).



The importance of the EEA Agreement is clearly illustrated by the establishment of the EEA Consultative Committee, and by the overviews of conventions and treaties which, according to Article 75 of the Constitution, shall be communicated to the Norwegian Parliament. As we have mentioned already, accounts of conventions and treaties are given in yearly letters from the Government to the Parliament. The account for the year 2003 comprises a total of 235 conventions and treaties. This figure includes 182 decisions that should be implemented by Norway according to the EEA Agreement. 22 of these had been put before the Parliament in separate propositions. In previous years we find the following figures: 1999: total 210, EEA 170, EEA separately in Parliament 9; 2000: total 189, EEA 134, EEA separately in Parliament 28; 2001: total 214, EEA 165, EEA separately in Parliament 20; and 2002: total 208, EEA 155, EEA separately in Parliament 9.<sup>11</sup>

The Storting is not pleased with its influence on EEA matters, however. In February 2007, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended a number of measures in order to make sure that the Parliament will be involved at earlier stages of the EEA/EU decision-making processes. An account on important EEA and EU matters should be given by the government to the Parliament every half-year. In addition to the EEA Consultative Committee, the ordinary (domestic) standing committees should be informed and have an opportunity to discuss EEA/EU matters related to their domain.<sup>12</sup>

### **Slovenia**

In order to deal with international issues the Slovene Državni zbor established the *Committee on Foreign Policy* at the beginning of its first mandate in 1992. The committee was reestablished after each subsequent election. In June 1996, the *Commission for European Affairs* was first created, composed of 17 members of all political groups. Its task was to assure coordination of all activities regarding integration of Slovenia into the EU on one place, to discuss general affairs concerning integration and to coordinate the work of the parent working bodies, providing them with opinions. A similar Commission composed of 15 members was established at the beginning of the second mandate (1997). At the same time the Slovene Delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee was formed (1998), composed of eleven members of the Državni zbor (the other eleven were members of the European Parliament). Its task was to study all aspects of the relationship between the EU and Slovenia and to prepare recommendations.

The new Commission for European Affairs established at the beginning of the third mandate (in 2001) was abolished in the spring 2004 when Slovenia became member of the EU. At the same time the Slovene delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee ceased to exist. A new *Committee on EU Affairs* was set up on May 21, 2004 with more

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<sup>11</sup> *Innst. S. nr. 156 (2004-2005), Innst. S. nr. 200 (2003-2005), Innst. S. nr. 125 (2002-2003), Innst. S. nr. 18 (2002-2003), and Innst. S. nr. 13 (2001-2002).*

<sup>12</sup> *Innst. S. nr. 114 and 115 (2006-2007).*

important and detailed competencies. At the beginning of the fourth mandate (November 17, 2004) the Committee on EU affairs was reestablished to deal with the EU matters except the matters of foreign and security policy which are within the competences of the Committee on Foreign Policy. It should also discuss the matters on the agenda of EU institutions, proposed declarations on the directions for the activities of Slovenia in the EU and reports of representatives of Slovenia in the EU institutions. Among its other tasks is also cooperation with other committees of Državni zbor and with specialized committees of other national parliaments on EU affairs.

**Table 1. Number of meetings and items on the agenda of the respective committees of the Slovene Državni zbor \***

Mandates	Commission for European Affairs		Committee on EU Affairs		Committee on Foreign Policy	
	Meetings	Items	Meetings	Items	Meetings	Items
Second 1997-2000	80	280	-	-	137	1008
Third 2001-2004	44	166	8	18	179	891
Fourth 2004-2006	-	-	94	312	75	328
* Source: Reports on National Assembly's Work and Mandates.						

Državni zbor cooperated with the European Parliament and participated in the activities of the Convention on the Future of Europe from February 2002 on. Slovenia was represented at plenary sessions of the Convention by representative of the Government and two deputies representing the Državni zbor. Slovene deputy Alojz Peterle was elected by the representatives of the entrant countries to represent their interests in the Presidium. After 16 months the efforts of the convention resulted in the Draft Constitution for Europe. In April 2002 under the sponsorship of the two national representatives in the Convention, the *Forum for the Future of Europe* was established in Državni zbor, discussing the proposals for institutional reorganization of the EU.

Because of the importance of the association to the EU for all parliamentary parties the Slovene Državni zbor did not concentrate the work related to EU matters in the Commission for European Affairs. Contrary to the practice in other parliaments of the ECE entrant countries, all committees were engaged in the discussion of negotiating positions. The leadership of the Državni zbor as well put on the agenda of its regular sessions a number of the most important documents related to the EU (Strategy of the RS for the Accession to the EU, Regular Reports of the European Commission on the Advancement of Slovenia in the Process of Accession, State Program for Harmonization of National Legislation with EU Legal Order, etc).

The most important and consequential international agreement Slovenia had made before entering the EU in 2004 was the EU Association Agreement, signed in June 1996

(Law on Ratification of the Agreement passed in July 1997). According to this, Slovenia had to harmonize national legislation with the EU legal system by adopting a great number of 'EU laws'. 129 'EU laws' were adopted in 1996-2000, and 190 in 2000-2004. (The number of bills passed were 179 in 1990-92, 375 in 1992-96, 341 in 1996-2000 and 436 in 2000-2004.)<sup>13</sup> A great number of the 'EU laws' were completely new laws, others were just changing the existing legislation. Most of them were passed by a fast-track procedure. Harmonization, considered at the beginning to be a creative process, turned later into simple copying of EU regulation, leaving little space for national traditions, etc.

## 5.2 International organizations and parliamentary delegations

### *International delegations*

Norway and Slovenia are members of a variety of international organizations, a few of which are set up with parliamentary assemblies or committees comprised of members representing the national parliaments of the member states. Table 2 shows the development with regard to permanent delegations to such assemblies and committees.<sup>14</sup> As we can see, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of international parliamentary delegations, especially after 1993.

It should be added that members of the Norwegian Parliament are always included in the Norwegian delegations to the general assemblies of the United Nations. They are, however, appointed on a temporary basis by the Government, not by the Parliament. The Government appoints MPs to other temporary delegations as well. In 2001 for example, such appointments included delegations to the UN special session on HIV/AIDS, the sixth and seventh conferences of the parties under the Climate Convention, and a conference in Vilnius on women and democracy. In February 2007, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended that delegations of Norwegian MPs should go to Brussels once a year in order to improve their knowledge about EU institutions and to establish contacts with the party groups of the European Parliament.<sup>15</sup>

Like Norway, Slovenia is a member of a number of international organizations with parliamentary type of working bodies, composed of representatives of national parliaments. Comparing the two countries, we see that the young Slovene Parliament was a 'late starter' with regard to participation in international organizations, but it has almost caught up with the old Norwegian Parliament.

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13 Sources: Regular Reports of the National Assembly of Slovenia.

14 Sources: Nordby (1985) and various editions of *Stortinget i navn og tall*.

15 *Årsrapport 2001. Stortingets administrasjon* (Annual Report, Oslo: Stortinget) and *Innst. S. nr.115 (2006-2007)* (recommendation from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs).

**Table 2. Permanent delegations of the Norwegian (N) and Slovene (S) Parliaments to international parliamentary assemblies and committees of international organizations**

Organization/delegation	Members	1945-49	1950-53	1954-85	1985-93	1993	1995	1997	1998	2002	2004
Inter-Parliamentary Union	N:4, S:3	N	N	N	N	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	N:5; S:4	N	N	N	N	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S
NATO Parliamentary Assembly	N:5, S:3			N	N	N	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly	N:6, S:5					N S	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S
West European Union Assembly	N:5, S:4					N	N	N S	N S	N S	N S
Nordic Council	N:20		N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
European Free Trade Association Committee of Members of Parliament	N:6				N	N	N	N	N	N	N
European Economic Area Joint Parliamentary Comm.	N:6					N	N	N	N	N	N
Delegation for relations with the European Parliament	N:12					N	N	N	N	N	N
Central European Initiative Parliamentary Conference	S:3					S	S	S	S	S	S
Joint Parliamentary Comm. of the European Parliament and entrant country	S:11								S	S	S
Convention on the Future of Europe	S:2									S	

**Committee membership and international delegations**

In the election period 2001-2005, the number of memberships in the three Norwegian committees concerned with foreign affairs and international relations, and in the parliamentary delegations to international organizations shown in Table 2, amounted to a total of 122 'international positions'. These positions were allocated to 60 Norwegian MPs. In other words, 36 percent of the members of the Storting were members of one or more committee(s) or delegation(s) dealing with international relations (Langhelle and Rommetvedt, 2004: 200ff). Table 3 shows the distribution on the standing committees of the Norwegian holders of international positions. Clearly the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs had no monopoly with regard to foreign affairs. At least one member of each of the twelve standing committees held an international position. 45 members of domestic committees were involved in international relations.

**Table 3. Distribution of international positions on the standing committees of the Norwegian Parliament, 2001-2005**

Standing committee on	Number of committee members	Committee members holding at least one international position
Foreign Affairs	15	15
Defense	10	7
Education, Research and Church Affairs	16	7
Finance and Economic Affairs	20	6
Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs	10	5
Transport and Communications	15	5
Justice	11	4
Business and Industry	14	3
Health and Social Affairs	14	3
Family, Cultural Affairs and Government Administration	13	2
Local Government	14	2
Energy and the Environment	13	1

Deputies of the Slovene *Državni zbor* are at the beginning of the fourth mandate (2004-2008) to a different degree engaged in international relations, holding positions in respective specialized committees. Table 4 shows the distribution of positions in ordinary standing committees among the 90 members of the *Državni zbor*, each of the deputies being member of several committees. It shows also how the positions in the committees dealing with issues of foreign policy and with EU matters are intertwined with the positions in all other committees. There are altogether 32 deputies serving in either the CEUA or in the CFP, all of them having at the same time at least one position in another committee. Besides there are altogether 22 positions in the delegations of the *Državni zbor* to the international parliamentary assemblies or other bodies.

In both countries we see that a substantial number of MPs who are members of committees for domestic affairs, are also holding international positions or membership in foreign affairs committees. This indicates that in this respect there is no clear-cut distinction between domestic and international affairs.

**Table 4. Members of the standing committees of the Slovene National Assembly who are also members of the committees on Foreign policy and EU affairs, 2004**

Standing committee on	Number of committee members	Committee members having position in CFP and CEUA
Foreign Policy (CFP)	19	19
EU Affairs (CEUA)	18	18
Culture, Education and Sports	17	8
Employment, Family, Social Care and Disabled	14	6
Home Affairs, Public Administration and Judiciary	17	6
Higher Education, Science and Technology	13	4
Environment	14	4
Finance and Monetary Policy	14	3
Local Government and Regional Development	14	3
Traffic Affairs	15	3
Defense	10	2
Public Health	10	2
Economy	16	2
Agriculture, Forestry and Food	12	1

### 5.3 Governmental statements and questions to Ministers

#### *Norway*

Submission of a governmental report or proposition is the principal way of putting an issue on the agenda of the Norwegian Parliament. By consent of the Presidium of the Norwegian Parliament, government ministers may also give an oral account or statement on an issue to a plenary sitting of the Parliament. Some of the statements are related to critical events of immediate importance. Others are a matter of routine and are presented to the Parliament once a year. The latter include yearly statements by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other ministers on their respective fields. Most of the statements are debated immediately or at a subsequent sitting. Searching the website of the Norwegian Parliament we found 50 oral statements presented by governmental ministers to the Parliament in 2001-2005 ([www.stortinget.no](http://www.stortinget.no)).

The 17 oral statements that were given in 2001 included accounts by the Minister of Defense on the use of weapons containing depleted uranium, the Minister of Labor and Government Administration on the strategy of the Nordic Council on sustainable development in the Nordic countries and their surroundings, the Minister of Foreign Affairs on foreign policy, the Minister of International Development on development policy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs on WTO issues prior to the Ministerial Conference in Qatar, the Prime Minister on the terror attack on the USA on September 11, and the Minister of the Environment on climate negotiations in Marrakesh.

In 2002, a total of 11 oral accounts were given by government ministers. Five accounts were related to international issues: two statements by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on foreign policy issues, one statement by the Minister of International Development on development policy, one by the Prime Minister on the Johannesburg Summit on sustainable development, and one by the Minister of Petroleum and Energy on the Nordic electricity market.

Five of the eight accounts given in 2004 were related to international issues. The Minister of Foreign Affairs gave four statements, three on foreign affairs in general and one on WTO negotiations. The Minister of Defense gave a statement on Norwegian participation in EU battle groups. In 2003, only five oral accounts were given to the Parliament by government ministers, four of which related to international questions. Three were presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (on foreign affairs in general, Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, and WTO negotiations) and one by the Prime Minister (on the Iraq question). The nine accounts given in 2005 included six statements on international matters: three accounts by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on foreign affairs in general, on Norwegian engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq and on WTO negotiations; two statements by the Minister of Defense on Norwegian military engagement abroad; and one statement by the Prime Minister on the tsunami in South Asia.

The government does not have a monopoly with regard to agenda setting. Members of Parliament may raise an issue through an interpellation or a question to a minister, or by presenting a private member's bill. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of questions and private members' bills over the last few years (Rommetvedt 2003:47, 49). In the 1980s and 1990s, the average number of questions and interpellations was 600-900 per year as compared to 200-300 in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>16</sup> The number of private members' bills has increased from a handful in the beginning of the 1980s to more than a hundred per year in the second half of the 1990s.

We have no comprehensive overview of the number of questions and private members' bills concerning international relations, but we would expect similar trends in this area as well. Searches on the website of the Norwegian Parliament revealed an increase in the number of questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 145 in the four-year period from 1989 to 1993, to 249 and 200 in 1997-2001 and 2001-2005 respectively.<sup>17</sup> According to Melsæther (2004:41) there was an increase in the number of questions and interpellations mentioning the EU and/or the EEA agreement from 28 in 1998-99 to 54 in 2002-03.

However, even more interesting in our context is the occurrence of international questions to ministers responsible for domestic affairs. Questions related to the World

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<sup>16</sup> Questions to be answered in writing are not included in these figures. There was an increase in the number of questions answered in writing from 132 in 1997 to 494 in 2001 and 706 in 2002 (*Årsrapport 2002. Stortingets administrasjon* (Annual Report, Oslo: Stortinget), p. 12).

<sup>17</sup> Questions to be answered in writing are included in these figures. Source: www.stortinget.no.

Trade Organization gives an interesting illustration of the dual process of internationalization of domestic affairs and domestication of international affairs (cf. Langhelle and Rommetvedt 2004). From 1993 to 2006, a total of 71 questions and interpellations concerning various aspects of the GATT and WTO were raised by Norwegian MPs, cf. Table 5.<sup>18</sup>

Naturally, most of the questions were answered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (and the Minister of Trade from 1993 to 1996). The number of questions answered by the ministers responsible for various national affairs is striking however. The table clearly demonstrates that international relations are intertwined with domestic policies.

**Table 5. Questions concerning WTO/GATT from Norwegian MPs to Government Ministers**

Starting session	Total no. of questions	No. of questions answered by (or on behalf of) the Minister of:								
		Prime Minister	Foreign Affairs*	Trade/Trade and Industry *	Development Aid*	Agriculture	Fisheries	Labor, Government Admin.	Education, Research	Finance
2005-2006	9	2	3	1	1	1	1			
2004-2005	4		3				1			
2003-2004	6		3	1		2				
2002-2003	14		8		2	3			1	
2001-2002	5		3					1	1	
2000-2001	4		2					1		1
1999-2000	7	1	2		1	2	1			
1998-99	3		1			2				
1997-98	6		3			3				
1996-97	3		2			1				
1995-96	3			3						
1994-95	4			4						
1993-94	3			3						
Sum	71	3	30	12	4	14	3	2	2	1

\* Until 1996 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had three Ministers: Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Aid respectively. From 1996 the Ministry had two Ministers: Foreign Affairs and Development Aid. From 1997 the Ministry of Industry was reorganized into a Ministry of Trade and Industry.

<sup>18</sup> Questions to be answered in writing included.



## **Slovenia**

Rules of Procedure of the Slovene Državni zbor do not determine submission of government's or minister's reports on the plenary sessions as a regular practice or as a matter of routine. The usual way of communication between the government and Državni zbor are oral or written accounts on important matters or events to the relevant committee. The debate on particularly important issues is most frequently opened during regular question time at the beginning of each session and at occasions of interpellations towards ministers or government as a whole.

After the first democratic elections to the Državni zbor in 1990 the number of questions increased greatly, a great number of them being related to the European and international issues. The number of questions increased from 1318 in the mandate 1992-1996 to 1586 in the mandate 1996-2000 and then to 2459 in the mandate 2000-2004. Questions proved to be means of providing valuable information on the internationally agreed values and recognized standards for the dealing with important domestic matters. Though there are no exact figures, ministers and other representatives of the government frequently tried to explain the impact of the common EU policies and regulations on the formulation of domestic policies. The number of questions addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs increased from 67 in the period 1992-1996 to 73 in the period 1996-2000, and to 95 in the period 2000-2004.

On the other side private members' bills in the period of the last 14 years have been much less connected with international matters. Their number was even declining due to the immense pressures put on the Državni zbor to modernize the whole legislation. In the circumstances when the government tried to fulfill the expected role of transformer of the 'old' legislation made it difficult for less experienced deputies to develop independent initiatives, which demand a certain level of expert knowledge.

### **5.4 Administrative support**

The political and administrative capacity of parliaments depends, of course, on resources. The administrative staff of the Norwegian Parliament has been small compared to other parliaments, but the number of persons employed by the Storting administration and the party group secretariats has increased considerably over the last decades. The Parliament staff in 1971 comprised 174 people (party group advisers and office staff included). In 2004, a total of 540 persons were employed by the Parliament and the party groups. The increase in staff resources and administrative capacity is reflected in the level of activity in the Norwegian Parliament. There has been a substantial increase in the number of dissenting remarks, alternative proposals, questions and private members' bills (Rommetvedt 2003, 2005).

The increased importance of foreign affairs is reflected in the number of administrative personnel specialized in taking care of international relations. In the middle of the 1990s, the Norwegian Parliament set up an *International Department* in order to handle the international contacts of the Storting. The department comprises two secretariats: the *International Secretariat* and the *Secretariat of the Norwegian delegation to the Nordic Council*. Today, the International Department employs a total of 18 persons including a Head of Department, nine persons in the International Secretariat, and eight

persons in the secretariat of the delegation to the Nordic Council.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, in 2007 the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended that the Storting should engage more people in order to strengthen the capacity with regard to investigation and information on EU/EEA related matters.<sup>20</sup> In the middle of the 1970s, only three persons were employed in the secretariat of the delegation to the Nordic Council, which at that time was the only unit within the Norwegian Parliament's administration that specialized in international relations

While parliaments with a long democratic tradition have developed a broad variety of professional, organizational and technical services, the new democratic parliaments had to organize parliamentary services from the beginning. The Slovene Državni zbor reorganized the whole system of administrative support, establishing new units and departments. Administrative staff has been enlarged by new highly skilled people and a number of staff members have gone on training in other parliaments. The number of persons employed by the Slovene parliament has grown slowly. While there were 216 people employed in 1991, their number increased to 298 in 1998 and 346 in 2004. In March 2005 altogether 10 people were employed in the Committee on EU affairs and 2 people in the Committee on Foreign Policy. Professional capacity of the staff is demonstrated at all levels of activity of the Državni zbor, from the level of the deputy groups and standing committees to the level of the assembly. However, it is supposed that the extent and quality of the administrative and professional support is still insufficient, partly due to the limited financial means determined by the state budget (proposed by the government).

On the other side the interest of the deputies for professional support has been continuously growing. In the period 1998-2004 the Research Department produced 482 reports at the request of the deputies and leadership of the Slovene Državni zbor. A great deal of them, 57 %, were dealing with international issues, including issues related to the EU (procedures of decision making, legal arrangement of particular matters, etc.).

No doubt, the staffs of the parliaments of Norway and Slovenia have grown and the administrative capacities for dealing with international as well as domestic affairs have been strengthened.

## 6 Conclusion and discussion

There are several factors that may contribute to an increase in the involvement of parliaments in international affairs. Internationalization and globalization are driving forces, but that does not necessarily imply that *parliaments* become more involved with international affairs. The 'mechanism' that involves parliaments is what we have called the dual process of internationalization of domestic affairs and domestication of

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<sup>19</sup> Information given by the Secretary General. The Head of the International Department is the Secretary of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs as well.

<sup>20</sup> *Innst. S. nr. 115 (2006-2007)*.

international affairs. Traditionally, international affairs were matters of national security and defense, and it was fairly easy to isolate security and defense from domestic sectors and policy areas. Today, international affairs are not only foreign affairs. They also include matters related to various domestic sectors and policies like business policy, research policy, environmental policy etc. etc.

Governments are responsible for international negotiations. However, international negotiations nowadays involve various domestic interests and in two-level games like this, trade-offs between various domestic interests are needed. Such trade-offs belong to the domain of parliaments. An important role of parliament is to contribute to the definition and interpretation of national interests. As we pointed out earlier, 'the national interest' is 'politically contingent' and depends on the outcomes of political processes, especially when there are more than one national interest involved. Consequently, in general we expected national parliaments to play a more important role in international relations and processes of deciding trade-offs and determining national bargaining positions in international negotiations.

Even though the general expectation should be relevant in the cases of both Norway and Slovenia, we did expect to find differences between the two national parliaments. Our first hypothesis regarding the degree of 'maturation' of parliaments indicated that the old Norwegian parliament would be more involved with international affairs than the young Slovene parliament. On the other hand, our second hypothesis regarding timing and the present era of globalization indicated that the young Slovene parliament would 'mature' faster and catch up with the old Norwegian parliament. Finally, we expected the parliament of Slovenia as a member of the EU to be involved with European matters, but to leave 'extra-European' matters to the EU who negotiates on behalf of all the members. The parliament of Norway, a non-member of the EU, on the other hand was expected to be less involved with European matters, but more involved with 'extra-European' matters since Norway has to negotiate on its own.

The data presented in this paper seem to confirm our general expectation. However, expectations regarding differences between the two national parliaments are not confirmed. There are, of course, several nuances between Norway and Slovenia, but in our interpretation the overall picture shows more similarities than differences with regard to internationalization of the Norwegian and Slovene parliaments. The general trend towards internationalization and globalization seems to override the effects of the two countries' different political traditions and affiliations with the EU, and of the variations between the two parliaments with regard to degree of parliamentary 'maturation'. It didn't take long until the Slovene Državni zbor caught up with the Norwegian Storting.

The national parliaments of both Norway and Slovenia have become more actively engaged in international affairs. As we have seen, new parliamentary bodies have been set up in order to handle issues concerning Norway's and Slovenia's relations with the EU and there has been a remarkable increase in the number of international parliamentary delegations. More than one-third of the members of the Norwegian Parliament and more than half of the members of the Slovene National Assembly are members of international delegations and committees dealing with international

relations. MPs have become more active asking various government ministers questions about international issues. International matters are becoming more and more relevant for various domestic sectors. In other words, there is an intrusion of international issues into domestic politics, and vice versa.

In our study Norway and Slovenia have served as illustrations of the general process of internationalization of national parliaments and the strengthened role of national parliaments in international affairs. The final question to consider is: What does this analysis tell us about the internationalization of parliaments in general? Can the Norwegian and Slovene experiences be extended to other parliamentary democracies, or are Norway and Slovenia deviant cases with little relevance to other countries?

We believe that the Norwegian-Slovene experiences are relevant to other parliamentary systems as well. In spite of important political differences between the two countries, we have seen that the parliaments of both countries have become more involved with international affairs, thus indicating that internationalization of parliaments is a general trend. However, the relevance of the Norwegian-Slovene experiences may vary, depending on the character of the political system.

General characteristics of executive-legislative relations are perhaps the most important element in this connection. The principle of parliamentarianism strengthens the position of Parliament vis-à-vis Government. Governments need to make sure that they get support from a majority of the Parliament. Consultations with Parliament are necessary and minority governments like the Norwegian ones in particular, have to attach importance to the views of Parliament. The ability of Parliament to exert real influence on the Government depends, however, on the Parliament's political and administrative capacity. Competence, staff and other resources are needed for Parliament to be able to realize the potential parliamentary power. Slovene experience with 'large' coalitions, consisting of parties representing different party families (at least in the period 1991-2004), may contrast the Norwegian experience, but the strong position of the Državni zbor in the Slovene political system makes the government more dependent on the Državni zbor with regard to international matters.

In presidential systems with a strong president the legislature will tend to be weak and to play a minor role in relation to international affairs. The same applies to parliamentary system with cohesive parties and majority governments – especially single party majority governments. There seems to be a widespread norm, however, of consensus and continuity in relation to foreign policy and international affairs. Consequently, even presidents and majority governments tend to have a wish for broader support on international matters. The strength of the norm of consensus and the wish for broad support represents an opportunity for legislatures to play a role in international relations.

More comprehensive comparative analyses are needed, of course, to give a satisfactory answer to the question of generalization of the Norwegian-Slovene experiences. However, the process of domestication of international affairs and the internationalization of domestic affairs will continue with increased strength in the future. Most likely, in the age of globalization the various domestic sectors and interests that are affected by the two-level games of international negotiations, will increase their

pressures on national parliaments and parliamentarians, and thus challenge the traditional aloof role of parliaments in international negotiations and organizations. No doubt the days when international affairs were a prerogative of the executive are long gone, but parliaments are still searching for an appropriate role in international organizations and negotiations.<sup>21</sup>

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21 On the parliamentary dimension of the WTO, see Rommetvedt 2006.

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