The House of Lords European Union Committee, under the Chairmanship of Lord Boswell, is conducting an inquiry into the current and possible future role of national parliaments in the EU framework. The Committee seeks evidence from anyone with an interest.

Background
The 2009 Lisbon Treaty sets out a formal role for national parliaments in the scrutiny of EU legislative proposals in relation to the concepts of subsidiarity and proportionality. Furthermore, national parliaments engage in the general development and scrutiny of EU legislation and policies, and hold their governments to account in various ways for their actions at EU level. These individual and interparliamentary efforts are aimed to enable national parliaments to “contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union”.¹

Over the past few years there has been a great deal of interest in the role of national parliaments in the EU, not least in the context of proposals for closer economic and monetary union. It has also been suggested that there is a “democratic deficit” in the EU that national parliaments could help to fill. This inquiry seeks to explore these issues further.

Written evidence is sought by 27 September 2013. Public hearings will be held in the Autumn. The Committee aims to report, with recommendations, in 2014. The report will receive a response from the Government, and may be debated in the House.

The Committee seeks evidence on any aspect of this topic, and particularly on the following questions:

National parliaments in the EU framework
1. Why should national parliaments have a role in the EU framework? What role should national parliaments play in a) shaping, and b) scrutinising, EU decision making? In answering this question you may wish to consider:
   a. Is there widespread agreement on what this role should be?
   b. Do national parliaments have access to sufficient information and the requisite influence at an EU level to play the role that you suggest? Whose responsibility is it to ensure that they have the information they need?

Formal role of national parliaments
2. How is the formal role of national parliaments under the Treaties working in practice? In answering this question you may wish to consider:
   a. What impact have the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties had on interactions between national parliaments and EU institutions?

¹ Article 12, Treaty on European Union.
b. What is your assessment of the existing yellow and orange card procedures? Are national parliaments making good use of these?
c. Is there a well-developed, common understanding of subsidiarity. If not, is there a need to develop one?
d. How effectively is proportionality scrutinised by national parliaments?
e. Should national parliaments have a greater, or different, role in the development and scrutiny of EU legislation?

Dialogue and scrutiny of EU policies
3. What is your assessment of the level and quality of engagement between EU institutions and national parliaments, and between national parliaments? We invite you to offer specific examples. In answering this question you may wish to consider:
   a. What assessment do you make of the adequacy of the level of dialogue between the Commission and national parliaments regarding legislative proposals? What influence, if any, do national parliament opinions have on the legislative process?
   b. How effective is engagement between national parliaments and the European Parliament? Could it be improved?
   c. What effect are procedural trends, such as increased agreement on legislation at first reading, having on the ability of national parliaments to scrutinise EU decision making?
   d. What should be the role of COSAC (the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs)? Does it require any changes to make it more effective?
   e. What is your assessment of other mechanisms (such as Joint Parliamentary Meetings, Joint Committee Meetings and IPEX) for co-operation between national parliaments and EU institutions; and should any other mechanisms be established?

Capacity of national parliaments
4. How effective are national parliaments at engaging with European affairs? In answering this question you may wish to consider:
   a. Are national parliamentarians sufficiently engaged with detailed European issues? Are national parliaments as effective at political dialogue with EU institutions as they are at holding their own governments to account?
   b. Can you give specific examples of Member States that are good at building co-operation and co-ordination between national parliaments? What do they do well? Should other countries learn lessons from this good practice?
   c. Is there political will, and resource, for increased interparliamentary co-operation?
   d. What role does the network of national parliament representatives in Brussels play? Should the network be further developed?

Other possible changes
5. In what other ways should the role of national parliaments in the European Union be changed or enhanced? Which of these suggestions would require treaty change and which would not? In answering these questions you may wish to consider whether there are any specific policy areas (such as financial and economic policy) which are particularly relevant.
Notes on submitting written evidence

Evidence should be submitted in an editable electronic form as a Microsoft Word document by e-mail to scotthl@parliament.uk. Please do not submit PDFs. If you do not have access to Microsoft Word or to the internet you may submit a paper copy to Clerk to the European Union Committee, Committee Office, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW, fax 020 7219 6715.

Short submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary.

Evidence sent in paper form must be clearly printed or typed on single sides of A4 paper, unstapled.

Paragraphs should be numbered. Evidence should be dated, with a note of the author’s name and status, and of whether the evidence is submitted on an individual or corporate basis. All submissions will be acknowledged promptly.

Evidence becomes the property of the committee, and may be published by the Committee at any stage. Once you have received acknowledgement that the evidence has been received, you may publicise or publish your evidence yourself, but in doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee. Parliamentary privilege will not apply to your own publication.

Personal contact details supplied to the committee will be removed from evidence before publication. However, personal contact details will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the committee’s work, for instance to seek additional information or to send copies of the committee’s report.

Written evidence will normally be published online and deposited in the Parliamentary Archives.

Persons who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster, broadcast in audio and often video format on the internet, and transcripts are published online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the clerk or the Chairman of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at www.parliament.uk/hleu.