

CALL FOR PAPERS

Digitalisation of Parliaments: Enhancing Institutional Resilience?

Hybrid workshop

Jean Monnet Network on E-Governance and Digitalisation in the EU (ENDE)

Jean Monnet Chair (ReDemo), University of Wrocław

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Over the last few years, digitalisation of professional and private activity has rapidly accelerated. The COVID-19 pandemic has only catalysed the digital transformation process. For instance, we saw that the body of EU legislation related to digitalisation has grown considerably in that period, only to mention the Digital Services Act and the Artificial Intelligence Act.

National legislatures and the European Parliament were not exempted from that process; on the contrary, most of them have turned to innovative digital measures in order to effectively exercise their constitutional functions but also to manage their daily administrative work. Today, legislatures not only deliberate on legislation regulating Artificial Intelligence (AI), but they also begin to employ it in their own work, for instance in the law-making process.

Against that background, digitalisation became a necessity, an opportunity, but also a challenge for legislatures. Firstly, legislatures should keep pace with the digital transformation as the process has penetrated all aspects of our life. Secondly, digitalisation generates an opportunity for legislatures to become more transparent, inclusive, and efficient. Yet, we should remember that the effects of digitalisation depend, to a large extent, on the domestic context in which these new measures are implemented. Therefore, we should keep in mind that even in consolidated democracies digital innovations may sometimes fail to achieve their goals.

This workshop therefore aims to shed more light on factors that explain why and to what extent digital innovations contribute to the resilience of national legislatures and the European Parliament. The focus is both on their formal competences and practices in the area of law-making, scrutiny, and representation/communication. The guiding research questions are:

- What is the impact of digitalisation on representative democracy in Europe in general?
- Under which conditions do various digital measures enhance or hinder legislatures in the exercise of their core functions (law-making, scrutiny, and representation/communication)?
- How is the application of AI formally regulated by parliamentary rules of procedure? What is the parliamentary practice regarding the application of AI in their work? How can we assess the application of AI by parliaments from the standpoint of democracy or the rule of law?

We build on the rich literature that has studied digitalisation of parliaments over the last two decades (i.e. Leston-Bandeira 2007). The existing literature has predominantly focused on the impact of digitalisation on the communicative function: in that area there is a rich body of literature analysing the role of (social) media in linking parliaments (or MPs) to voters (Tromble 2018, Lev-On et al 2017) also during campaigns (Schürmann and Stier 2022). Recently, we have seen studies focusing on digitalisation in the pandemic and the post-pandemic period (Serra-Silva 2021, Louwse 2021) and, more specifically, focusing on digitalisation of oversight and scrutiny (Griglo 2020) as well as the law-making process (Maatsch 2024). We also find studies analysing recent innovations (Koskimaa and Raunio 2020), such as the application of Artificial Intelligence (Fitsilis 2021) in drafting legislative proposals or application of comprehensive online platforms (i.e. E-Sejmas) managing the entire legislative process. Our goal is to fill the gaps in the literature by providing a systematic account of the most recent developments and their impact on representative democracy.

We invite contributions focusing on recently introduced digital measures, that is during and after the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Geographically, our focus is on national legislatures in EU member states as well as the European Parliament; however, we are also open to contributions focusing on national legislatures in EU candidate states. We welcome papers addressing the research questions drawing on comparative analysis, but also case-studies as well as papers discussing the application of digital measures to specific function(s) of parliaments. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are welcomed, embedded in political or legal sciences and its subdisciplines.

Timeline and organisation

The workshop is organised within the framework of the Jean Monnet Network on E-Governance and Digital Transformation in the European Union, ENDE. The local host is the Jean Monnet Chair ReDemo at the University of Wrocław, Poland.

Applicants are invited to send their extended abstracts, between 500 and 800 words, to: aleksandra.maatsch@uwr.edu.pl by 10.01.2025. Authors of selected papers will be notified by email no later than: 07.02.2025. Workshop papers should be sent to Aleksandra Maatsch by 28.03.2025. Organisers aim at a special issue, details are to be discussed during the workshop. Papers will be selected upon their thematic fit; however, we will also make sure that the gender balance is respected and that contributors are at different stages of their academic career. The workshop will take place in Wrocław in a hybrid format. There will be funding available (travel and accommodation) for those attending the workshop in person. Further questions should be sent to: aleksandra.maatsch@uwr.edu.pl

Literature references:

- Fitsilis, F. (2021). Artificial Intelligence (AI) in parliaments – preliminary analysis of the Eduskunta experiment. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 27(4).
- Griglo, E. (2020). Parliamentary oversight under the Covid-19 emergency: striving against executive dominance. *The Theory and Practice of Legislation*, 8(1–2).
- Koskimaa, V., & Raunio, T. (2020). Encouraging a longer time horizon: the Committee for the Future in the Finnish Eduskunta. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 26(2).
- Leston-Bandeira, C. (2007). The impact of the internet on parliaments: A legislative studies framework. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60(4).
- Lev-On, A. et al (2017) A Facebook post is born: exploring the process of generating MPs' social media presence. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 23(4).
- Louwse, T. et al (2021) Opposition in times of crisis: Covid-19 in parliamentary debates, *West European Politics* 44(5-6).
- Maatsch, A. (2024) Parliamentary adjustment during a crisis: Interplay of digitalisation and domestic context factors, in: *Internet of Things*, vol 27.
- Schürmann, L. & Stier, S. (2022) Who Represents the Constituency? Online Political Communication by Members of Parliament in the German Mixed-Member Electoral System, in: *Legislative Studies Quarterly* vol. 48(1).
- Serra-Silva, S. (2021). How parliaments engage with citizens? Online public engagement: a comparative analysis of Parliamentary websites. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 28(4).
- Tromble, R. (2018) Thanks for (actually) responding! How citizen demand shapes politicians' interactive practices on twitter. *New Media & Society*, 20(2).