

Strengthening Parliamentary Scrutiny and Lawmaking

Challenges and opportunities in the Western Balkans and European Neighbourhood Policy East Region

Regional conference | 8-9 April 2026
Prague Czech Republic

Draft Programme

Introduction

Parliaments play a vital role in ensuring that laws are prepared, scrutinised, and adopted based on the best available evidence, and are implemented effectively and on time to deliver intended policy objectives and results. To fulfil this role, parliaments need strong internal capacities and procedures to access, analyse, and use the best available information and evidence consistently throughout the legislative process. Strong government-parliament collaboration is equally essential, as most laws originate from the executive who also access to key information and data which can help parliament to make informed decisions at key stages of parliamentary deliberations and scrutiny.

Evidence-based lawmaking is fundamental for the quality of public policy, the rule of law and public trust in democratic institutions. It is particularly critical for advancing EU accession processes and partnerships, which place additional pressure on partner administrations to adopt and implement large volumes of complex legislation in a timely manner. Instruments such as regulatory impact assessments (RIA), public consultations, and stakeholder engagement and *ex post* evaluation are key to ensuring that adopted legislation is aligned with national priorities and EU standards and work in practice.

Beyond adoption, parliaments have a key role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of laws through post-legislative scrutiny (PLS) and other tools which help identify ineffective policies and laws that fail to deliver their original intended objectives. *Ex post* evaluation of laws is equally important for reducing unnecessary burdens on the economy, advancing simplification and burden reduction, and improving governance. Ultimately, this helps parliaments hold the Governments accountable and deliver better results.

Despite progress in recent years, parliaments in the Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership regions continue to face significant challenges in applying many of these tools effectively and in strengthening co-operation and co-ordination with governments. Addressing these gaps is essential for improving legislative quality and accountability.

Objective

This second regional conference on effective and evidence-based lawmaking will be hosted by the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic. It will have a particular focus on key challenges parliamentary administrations face during planning, preparation and scrutiny of draft laws, as well as challenges related to parliament-government collaboration and co-ordination. The objective is to foster dialogue and knowledge exchange among senior officials, experts, and representatives from Western Balkan (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) East administrations (Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine), as well as key experts and stakeholders from selected EU member states and institutions and other partner organisations.

The conference will provide a platform for in-depth discussions on topics such as parliamentary procedures and capacities for research and analysis, legislative planning and government-parliament collaboration, use of RIA, stakeholder engagement, as well as artificial intelligence (AI) and other tools to advance the quality of parliamentary scrutiny and lawmaking in the region. It will also address challenges related to the status and management of parliamentary staff, recognising their crucial role in building the knowledge and expertise necessary for effective lawmaking. Findings from the most recent SIGMA publications on these and other related topics, as well as presentations from the host parliament and partner organisations will be used to set the scene and facilitate thematic discussions. Participants will share experiences, best practices, and lessons learned from their national contexts and recent developments, contributing to a stronger collective knowledge base, to help advance reforms and EU integration processes. The conference will help to identify priorities for future reforms and explore innovative approaches to strengthen evidence-based lawmaking and legislative oversight.

Organisation and format

The regional conference is jointly organised by the SIGMA Programme, a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU, principally financed by the EU, the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), and GiZ (Eastern Partnership Regional Project for PAR), in close collaboration with the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic and with the support of European Commission DG ENEST.

Participation

We are expecting 55-60 senior officials and experts to attend, along with representatives from the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic, the European Commission, ReSPA, GiZ, and SIGMA Programme. Secretaries General from the parliaments of the six Western Balkan administrations and three ENP East region (Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine) will be invited to participate, together with their colleagues. Additionally, heads or senior officials from the centres of government (General Secretariat or PM Offices) will be invited to contribute to the discussions from the perspective of the executive branch.

The main working language of the conference will be **English**. Participants are kindly requested to nominate officials who are proficient in English and who can actively participate in the discussions. The delegates are asked to contact the organisers if interpretation into local languages is essential.

Dates and venue

The conference will take place at the premises of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic **Sněmovní 176/4 118 26 Praha 1 - Malá Strana Czech Republic** on **8-9 April 2026**. Participants are expected to arrive on 7 April.

Contacts

ReSPA: Boris Ristović (b.ristovic@respaweb.eu); Jelena Mrdak (j.mrdak@respaweb.eu); Vanja Masanovic (v.masanovic@respaweb.eu)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

DRAFT AGENDA

Tuesday, 7 April 2026

Arrival of participants. No formal activities are planned.

DAY 1

Wednesday, 8 April 2026

Venue: Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic Sněmovní 176/4 118 26 Praha 1 - Malá Strana

08:30 – 09:30 Registration and welcome coffee

09:30 – 10:00 Session 1: Opening Remarks by the Organisers

Speakers:

- Secretary General (SG) of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic (TBC)
- Mr Giulio Venneri, Deputy Head of Unit, DG ENEST, European Commission (TBC)
- Ms Maja Handjiska-Trendafilova, Director of ReSPA
- Mr Gregor Virant, Head of the SIGMA Programme
- Ms. Sandra Fuhr, Project Manager, GIZ implemented Project “Eastern Partnership Regional Project for Public Administration Reform III” (tbc)

10:00 – 10:20 Session 2: Setting the Scene - State of Play and current challenges of evidence-based lawmaking and parliamentary scrutiny in the region:

The session will present and discuss the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration, selected key findings from the recent SIGMA studies on parliaments, and some highlights from SIGMA monitoring reports.

Speakers: SIGMA/OECD

10:20 – 10:50 Session 3: Czech experience in evidence-based lawmaking

A presentation will be made about the procedures and practice of evidence-based lawmaking and parliamentary scrutiny in the Czech Republic.

Speakers: The Czech Parliament administration / Parliamentary Institute (TBC)

10:50 - 11:15 Group photo and coffee break

11:15 – 13:00 Session 4: High-level Panel- Roundtable with Secretaries General (SGs) of parliamentary administrations

This high-level panel will discuss some of the key challenges parliamentary administrations face during planning, preparation and scrutiny of draft laws. How the procedures and work of parliamentary administrations can be enhanced to ensure effective scrutiny of laws and to advance better regulation and simplification principles. It will also explore the challenges related to excessive use of non-standard (shortened, urgent) procedures for adopting laws and specific challenges

related to preparation of MP-initiated laws and laws aimed harmonising the national legislation with the EU law. How much are the parliaments involved in ex post evaluation and scrutiny of laws? The Secretaries General will be asked to share recent developments from their administrations and highlight any challenges and good practices that can enhance legislative processes, reflecting on the findings of the recent SIGMA and other reports.

Speakers: SGs

Moderator: TBD

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch Break

14:00 - 15:30

Session 5: High-level Panel 2-Roundtable with Secretaries General (SGs) and senior government officials

Enhancing parliament-government collaboration for better lawmaking

The high-level panel will involve SGs and senior parliament and government officials. It will discuss challenges related to parliament-government collaboration and co-ordination throughout the legislative cycle, from preparation, to scrutiny approval and ex post evaluation. What are the main challenges in ensuring effective collaboration and co-ordination and how those can be addressed? The session will also discuss the quality and availability of data and information to parliament for effective parliamentary scrutiny of government-sponsored legislation.

Speakers: Representatives of the up to 4 administrations TBD

Moderator: TBD

15:30 – 15:45

Coffee Break

15:45 – 16:45

Session 6: Better regulation and Post-Legislative Scrutiny in the EU and OECD countries

The session will present the experiences of selected EU/OECD countries in evidence-based lawmaking and better regulation, building on the recent OECD 2025 report on Better Regulation Practices in the EU.

The session will also discuss different approaches to PLS and its application across EU/OECD countries.

Speakers: OECD / WFD on PLS; Selected countries.

Moderator: TBD

16:45 - 17:00

Closing session

--- End of Day 1 ---

DAY 2

Thursday, 9 April 2026

08:30 – 09:00 **Registration and Welcome Coffee**

09:00 – 11:00 **Session 7: Importance of government legislative planning and co-ordination for effective parliamentary scrutiny of laws**

Most legislation are initiated by the executive branch but those are often prepared and approved outside of the official government plans. Moreover, many of the government-sponsored laws are often scrutinised and approved through shortened/urgent procedures, creating big risks for evidence-based lawmaking and parliamentary scrutiny. Enhancing parliament's capacities for scrutiny and co-ordination with government are crucial. There are also challenges in planning and implementing EU law harmonisation in a timely and effective manner. How to enhance consultation on MP and Government-sponsored laws? How can government administration help parliament during the preparation and scrutiny of MP-initiated laws? Czechia's experience of "preliminary consultation" with the relevant committees before formal submission.

Short presentations by government officials from selected EU member states will be presented, followed by short discussion

*Speakers: Selected officials from Government and parliament administrations
Czech Government representative;*

Moderator: ReSPA

11:00 – 11:30 **Coffee Break**

11:30 – 13:00 **Session 8: Building stronger capacities for evidence-based lawmaking through professionalisation of parliamentary staff**

The session will discuss the principles related to public service and human resource management and specificities of their application in parliamentary administrations, including the legislative frameworks governing parliamentary staff challenges of ensuring political neutrality and professionalism as well as recruitment and development of staff.

Speakers: Selected parliament officials, experts. TBD

Moderator: SIGMA

13:00 – 14:00 **Lunch Break**

14:00 – 15:00 **Session 9: Looking forward: How the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies can enhance the quality of lawmaking and parliamentary scrutiny?**

The session will discuss the vast opportunities and risks AI, machine learning and other disruptive technologies might provide for effective parliamentary lawmaking. A presentation will be made about the new opportunities AI provides for enhancing the lawmaking use of AI in parliaments, with experiences and examples from selected administrations.

Speakers: AI Guidance for parliaments-EU experts and panel discussion with selected delegates TBD.

Moderator: TBD

15:00 – 15:15 **Closing remarks- by hosts and organisers**

15:15 – 16:30 *Tour of the parliament building- TBC*

--- End of Day 2 and Conference ---