



Setting legislative calendars: a comparative perspective

Panel I “Coordination between executive and legislative powers: the annual legislative plan”

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Plenary time as a valuable asset



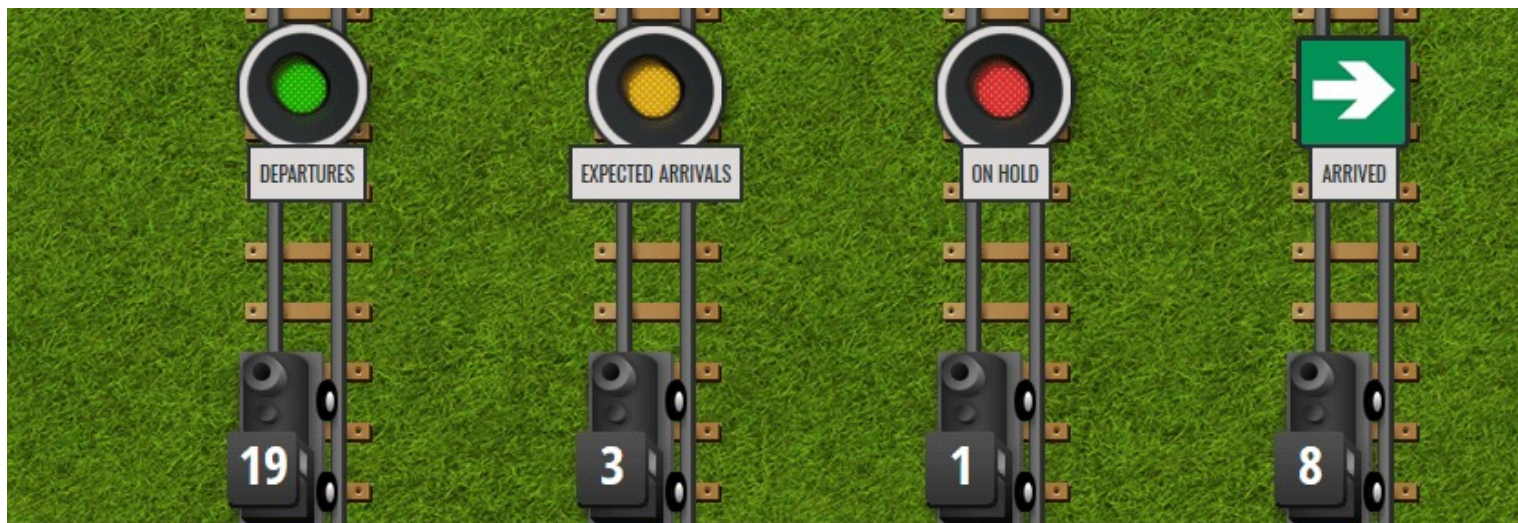
The discussion of important laws requires at least some plenary time



Yet, there are only twenty-four hours in a day and, hence, plenary time is also in limited supply



The railways metaphor



EC Priorities **6** EP Committees **19** Commission 2019-24

			Departure Demands	Departures	Departed	On hold	Expected Arrivals	Arrived	Derailed
1	A EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL		1	65	38	2	3	30	4
2	A EUROPE FIT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE		5	44	13	6	7	21	4
3	AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE		2	36	26	14	4	34	4
4	A STRONGER EUROPE IN THE WORLD		0	11	8	6	2	40	1
5	PROMOTING OUR EUROPEAN WAY OF LIFE		1	26	21	5	4	31	1
6	A NEW PUSH FOR EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY		3	25	18	1	1	9	1

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/schedule>

Busy legislatures are inegalitarian

Agenda-setting power

- Who can propose a bill?



- Who can stop or delay a bill?



Calendar power

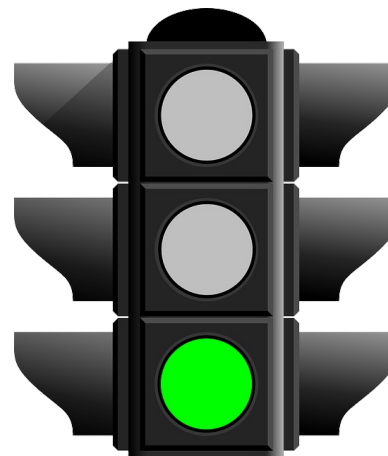
- How is plenary time allocated among the bills?
 - which bills are to be given priority
 - in which sequence bills are to be examined
 - how much time is to be allocated to each bill

ARRIVALS	041	TBD	ON TIME
DISPATCH STATION	817	TBD	ON TIME
HEIGHTS	2171	TBD	ON TIME
STON, DC	125	TBD	ON TIME
STON, DC	755	TBD	ON TIME
LE	375	TBD	ON TIME
SWISS	017	TBD	ON TIME
ROSLAKEVILLE	811	TBD	ON TIME
E	715	TBD	ON TIME
Y495	819	TBD	ON TIME
HEIGHTS	081	TBD	ON TIME
	917	TBD	ON TIME
DISPATCH STATION	8519	TBD	ON TIME
	043	TBD	ON TIME
95	717	TBD	ON TIME
ARRIVALS			
C	172	TBD	ON TIME
C	2158	TBD	ON TIME
STAPLES	86	TBD	ON TIME
	2150	TBD	ON TIME

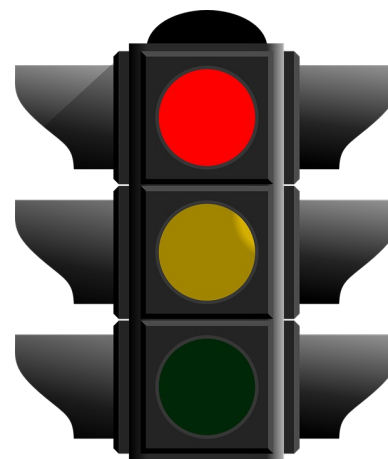
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Agenda-setting power

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Calendar power

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... PARK/495	041	TBD	ON TIME
... STER/UNION STATION	617	TBD	ON TIME
... ON	2171	TBD	ON TIME
... H HEIGHTS	175	TBD	ON TIME
... PTON, DC	759	TBD	ON TIME
... TON, DC	975	TBD	ON TIME
... LE	017	TBD	ON TIME
... ENTER	811	TBD	ON TIME
... RO/LAKEVILLE	715	TBD	ON TIME
... E	619	TBD	ON TIME
... K/495	081	TBD	ON TIME
... EIGHTS	917	TBD	ON TIME
... UNION STATION	P519	TBD	ON TIME
... 95	043	TBD	ON TIME
... 95	717	TBD	ON TIME
... ARRIVALS			
... DC	172	TBD	ON TIME
... C	2158	TBD	ON TIME
... STAPLES	86	TBD	ON TIME
... 2160		TBD	ON TIME

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Understanding calendar power



Who decides the plenary calendar?



Who decides the committee calendar?



Time horizons



How may possible obstruction in the plenary be curtailed?

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government control

Ireland

- most plenary time is reserved for the government
- business committee sets the order of business on a weekly basis but it is the Government Chief Whip that decides on the content

Portugal/Italy

- the President of the Assembly sets the order of business after consulting with the conference of leaders

Understanding calendar power



Who decides the plenary calendar?



Who decides the committee calendar?



Time horizons



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government control

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Ireland

- arranged with the Committee Clerk through the Ministers Office (sponsoring Minister will be an ex officio member of the Committee while they consider the bill)

Portugal/Italy

- set by the parliamentary committee or by its chairman, after consulting the parliamentary group representatives on the committee (taking into consideration the plenary schedule)

Understanding calendar power



Who decides the plenary calendar?



Who decides the committee calendar?



Time horizons



How may possible obstruction in the plenary be curtailed?

Italy

Work program
(2/3 months)

Work
calendar
(1 month)

Daily
schedule

Understanding calendar power



Who decides the plenary calendar?

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Who decides the committee calendar?

government control



Time horizons



How may possible obstruction in the plenary be curtailed?

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Ireland and 'guillotine' motions

- they can be initiated by the government
- if successfully voted, debate is ended with one closure question, all Government amendments are deemed agreed and all opposition amendments rejected

Portugal and the emergency procedure

- It can be initiated by any Member of the Assembly of the Republic, any parliamentary group, the Government
- If successfully voted, it shortens the discussion to 5 days in committees and 2 for the final draft in the plenary

Conclusion



- Some prioritization is necessary to avoid logjams in the plenary (“arrival station”)
- Rules to coordinate access to the plenary are necessary
- How time is managed should reflect the culture and broader institutional setting of the country