

Raad  
vanState



**Seminar organized by the Council of State of  
the Netherlands  
and ACA-Europe**

***“Better Regulation”***

The Hague 15 May 2017

**Answers to questionnaire: Latvia**



Seminar co-funded by the «Justice » program of the European Union

## **ACA Europe Questionnaire Better regulation**

### **Better regulation**

The legislature, the national administration and the judiciary are dependent on each other to function well. The democratic constitutional state functions better if the various branches of state power learn from one another. Good judgments also depend on good legislation. The legislative authority can improve the quality of legislation if it is aware of the practical experiences of judges and their advisory bodies in implementing and enforcing the law, and of any shortcomings. These experiences can be incorporated into the legislative process through various mechanisms thus engendering a feedback loop, enabling practical experiences to contribute to the quality of legislation. Quality here means juridical/legal quality as well as whether the legislation is sound, effective and enforceable. The Member States have developed different mechanisms for this.

Whether legislation is sound and effective is a theme commanding attention at national and European level. The present European Commission announced that the Better Regulation programme would be a policy objective when it entered office in 2014, containing as it does an extensive package of reforms to streamline EU decision-making and make it more transparent, and to improve the quality of new legislation. Instruments such as impact assessments and policy evaluations are intended to play a vital role in the effective and efficient implementation of EU policy. Impact assessment involves the systematic prior analysis of various policy options and the accompanying costs and benefits, including the mapping of the administrative burden. The aim is to arrive at reasonable, realistic regulations that can be properly implemented and enforced. Public consultation will also be used in evaluating existing legislation.

Wider public consultation is being or has been introduced as part of the effort to ensure that legislation is more open and transparent. Any citizen or interested party is entitled to give feedback and make suggestions during a period of eight weeks after the Commission has approved a proposal; these are then included in the legislative debate in the European Parliament and the Council. It turns out that these consultations are used notably by private stakeholders, including lobby groups.

### **National input mechanisms**

Different instruments or mechanisms exist at national level (formal and regulated as well as informal) for allowing input, solicited or unsolicited, to be given on future and existing legislation by legal institutions and independent advisory bodies (both advisors on legislation and bodies that advise on the quality of legislation based on their position or expertise). Examples that spring to mind are instruments used prior to legislation being drafted ('consultation') and those used in response to existing legislation ('feedback'). On 11 December 2015 an ACA seminar in Brussel discussed consultation *prior* to drafting as an example of the first category, which above all focuses on the usefulness of and need for the proposed legislation and the technical aspects. No clear picture is available of other input mechanisms in the phase of legislative drafting, or in the subsequent phase of implementation and enforcement.

In light of the European Commission's Better Regulation programme, such a survey would be desirable, and for the ACA extremely interesting. Hence on 15 May 2017 an ACA seminar is being planned on the subject of Better Regulation. By way of preparing for the seminar we are asking you to complete this questionnaire so we can find out more about existing forms of consultation and feedback in the context of experiences with case law and advisory opinions.

## **ACA ‘better regulation’ questionnaire**

The questionnaire will be used to produce an overview of the various formal and informal input mechanisms in the Member States. What instruments for consultation and feedback do independent advisors and the courts use, irrespective of the individual way these functions are organized in the various Member States, and which ones are adopted by the national legislator?

Independent advisors are advisors or advisory bodies who, based on their position or expertise, give advice, solicited or unsolicited, about the quality of legislation. This may involve legal expertise in general or with respect to a particular legal specialism or area of interest. This therefore also includes Councils of State insofar as they advise on legislation. The courts are courts or advisory bodies comprising judges who give advice, solicited or unsolicited, about the quality of legislation in the form of a judgment or otherwise.

The focus of the questionnaire is on the quality of legislation, and how both independent advisors and the courts can contribute to it. Legislation is defined as generally binding regulations. This is not just a matter of verifying the juridical quality of the legislation (for example constitutional or technical legal scrutiny), but also of assessing whether it is sound, effective and enforceable. Hence the questionnaire expressly does not limit itself to the institutional tasks of those ACA members with a dual function as a Council of State, and goes further than the matters discussed at the ACA seminar in Brussels on 11 December 2015. It also examines the other formal and informal mechanisms used by independent advisors and the courts for input about the quality of legislation, for example through an annual report or publications.

The questionnaire distinguishes between two phases.

The first phase is the legislative drafting stage, when consultation takes place. Input is given through the normal advisory process. However, it would be interesting to know more about the different ways in which advisors and courts are or have been involved at this stage. The main aim is to give an overview of the formal and informal instruments currently used in the Member States.

The second phase covers feedback after the legislation has come into force and some practical experience of it has been gained. Again, the priority is to take stock of the formal and informal instruments currently used by advisors and the courts in the various Member States to provide feedback about their experiences.

The findings may spark a discussion about the need for improved or new input mechanisms to enhance the quality of legislation.

Please give as many concrete examples as you can when answering the questions.

The questionnaire comprises the following questions:

### **Part 1: Input mechanisms *prior* to the drafting of legislation**

#### **A) Input from the courts**

1. Are there any general mechanisms in your Member State for the courts, and more specifically the highest courts, to provide solicited or unsolicited input or advice in the phase before legislation is drafted?

If so:

- a. Are the courts consulted structurally or incidentally at this stage, and in what way? Is case law for example consulted?
- b. Does feedback from the courts go directly to the legislator or indirectly to advisory bodies which can then decide to pass this on to the legislator?
- c. To what extent do the courts themselves take the initiative to directly or indirectly advise the legislator or draw attention to the quality of legislation, for example by means of unsolicited advice, a response to a public consultation, or a contribution on that subject to the annual report?
- d. What aspects of the quality of the legislation are specifically addressed and can you give an example?
- e. To what extent is the given input public?

If not:

- f. Do you think input mechanisms for the courts would be desirable at this stage, and in what form?
- g. What is the basis (for example, constitutional, statutory or unwritten law) for the existing mechanisms?

Yes, there are mechanisms for courts to provide input and advice in the phase before legislation is drafted. These mechanisms are unwritten and based on initiative of the respective ministry which develops the law.

Judges and legal advisers of the Supreme Court and other jurisdictions are often invited to participate in working groups which drafts legislation before that goes to the parliament. Usually courts and employees of the courts are invited to participate in drafting process of legislation which concerns competence of respective department (for example, Department of Administrative Cases, Department of Civil Cases, Department of Criminal Cases). That is, the judges and employees participate in meeting groups which concerns elaboration of respective procedural laws (for example, Civil Procedure Law), and other categories of laws which often are applied in the respective department, for example, legislation concerning child protection, registration or change of personal name or surname etc.

Courts participate in elaboration of law via judges or other employees who participate in legislative meeting groups (both within executive branch which prepares legislation, and as well in legislative branch which finally prepares bills for parliament to be adopted). As it was mentioned before, courts participate in legislative process if they are invited to do so. Thus it must be concluded that judicial bodies are consulted rather incidentally. However, there are certain cases when the courts initiated their participation in elaboration of law on its own motion. At this stage case law is always consulted.

Besides working groups there exists also method of questionnaire when courts fills certain questionnaires related to the adoption of the laws. However, this happens rarely.

The mentioned input mechanisms for the courts are desirable at this stage. It contributes to assessing whether the legislation is sound, effective and enforceable as these matters are specifically addressed while participating in working groups and filling questionnaires. The given input is not directly public.

2. Are there objections or risks attached to the formal consultation of the courts at the stage before legislation is drafted? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no considerable objections or risks attached to the formal consultation of the courts. This is rather sound cooperation and exchange of experience between two powers: judicial and legislative power.

3. Are there objections or risks attached to giving unsolicited advice at the stage of the drafting of legislation, for example by means of an unsolicited opinion, an annual report or publication? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no such objections or risks attached to giving unsolicited advice.

## **B) Input from advisory bodies**

4. Are there any general mechanisms in your Member State for advisory bodies to give solicited or unsolicited input or advice at the stage before legislation is drafted?

If so:

- a. Are the advisory bodies consulted structurally or incidentally at this stage, and in what way?
- b. To what extent do the advisory bodies themselves take the initiative to advise the legislator or draw attention to the quality of legislation, for example by means of unsolicited advice, a response to a public consultation, a publication or a contribution on that subject to the annual report?
- c. What aspects of the quality of legislation are specifically addressed and can you give an example?
- d. To what extent is the given input public?

If not:

- e. Do you think such input mechanisms for advisory bodies at this stage would be desirable, and in what form?
- f. What is the basis (for example, constitutional, statutory or unwritten law) for the existing mechanisms?

Similarly as with courts, such consultation exists but is rather incidental and based on initiative of the respective ministry which develops the law. According to the Law on preliminary assessment of bills, when drafting the law, responsible institution is under obligation to add annotation (specific document of preliminary assessment of normative act to be adopted) to the bill where it has to be stated inter alia which members of society and advisors the institution has consulted. Thus is it possible to conclude that there exists mechanisms for advisory bodies to give solicited or unsolicited input or advice at the stage before legislation is drafted. This consultation proceeds in the same way as consultation with the courts. However, different advisory bodies and interest groups are also allowed to send their proposals and suggestions to the Parliament when the law is in adoption process (in the final preparation for the parliament to adopt the law). Such proposals and suggestions are always registered and taken into account.

5. Are there objections or risks attached to the formal consultation of advisory bodies at the stage before legislation is drafted? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no such objections or risks attached to the formal consultation of advisory bodies.

6. Are there objections or risks attached to advisory bodies giving unsolicited advice on the drafting of legislation, for example by means of an unsolicited opinion, a publication or a contribution on the subject in the annual report? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no such objections or risks attached to giving unsolicited advice.

### **C) General**

7. Are there any general or specific input mechanisms in your Member State (except for those for the courts and advisory bodies) at the stage before legislation is drafted, for example public consultation via the internet or otherwise?

As it was mentioned before, different advisory bodies and interest groups are allowed to send their proposals and suggestions to the Parliament when the law is in adoption process.

8. Have you any additional or other remarks about input mechanisms before legislation is drafted?

No.

## **Part 2: Input mechanisms *after* legislation has been drafted**

### **A) Feedback from courts**

9. Are there any formal or informal feedback mechanisms in your Member State for the courts, and more specifically the highest courts, to provide solicited or unsolicited input or advice *after* legislation has been drafted and some experience has been gained with implementation and enforcement?

If so:

- a. Are the courts consulted structurally or incidentally at this stage, and in what way? Is case law for example consulted?
- b. Does feedback from the courts go directly to the legislator or indirectly to advisory bodies which can then decide to pass on the feedback to the legislator?
- c. To what extent do the courts themselves take the initiative to directly or indirectly advise the legislator or draw attention to the quality of legislation, of the lack of it, for example by means of unsolicited advice, a response in a public consultation, or a contribution on that subject to the annual report?
- d. What aspects of the quality of the legislation are specifically addressed and can you give an example??
- e. What is the reply if a problem arises in the practical implementation of the legislation that results in an acute increase in the workload of the (highest) court?
- f. To what extent is the given feedback public?
- g. If feedback is given (solely) by judgment by the court, how is this done (for example obiter dictum, prospective ruling)?

If not:

- h. Do you think such feedback mechanisms for the courts would be desirable, and in what form?

- i. What is the basis (for example, constitutional, statutory or unwritten law) for the existing mechanisms?

There are no formal structural feedback mechanisms. However, courts may inform legislator on problems with implementation or enforcement of laws on their own initiative. For example, article 288 (1) stipulates that a court may take an ancillary decision, if in the adjudicating of a matter facts are determined which evidence possible violation of the norms of law, as well as in other cases. An ancillary decision must be sent to the appropriate authority.

For example, the Supreme Court has drawn attention to the fact that certain aspects of national regulation in the field of public procurement do not correspond to the regulation of European Union (Ancillary decision of March 25 2015 of the Supreme Court, case No.SKA- 46/2015), or certain aspects of municipal regulation do not correspond to the national regulation (Ancillary decision of April 2 2013 of the Supreme Court, case No.SKA-121/2013), or unsoundness of certain aspects of national regulation in the field compensations for expropriation of private property and noncompliance with human rights (Ancillary decision of May 8 2012 of the Supreme Court, case No. SKA-16/2012), etc. Usually such ancillary decisions result in amendments of law.

In practice this mechanism is used rarely and only in order to inform legislator on problems with implementation or enforcement of laws. Typically, court would address the problem if the respective regulation / law is not sound, effective or enforceable. Otherwise, courts give feedback by their judgments (obiter dictum or constitutional control – referring the case to the constitutional court to assess a conformity of laws and other regulatory enactments with the Constitution).

If the practical implementation of the legislation results in an acute increase in the workload of the (highest) court, non-formal discussion would commence. Firstly, the court with an assistance of Judicial Council would inform legislator on the problem. Secondly, it is evidenced that judges and employees of the court publish legal articles in legal journals on the respective problem and thus propose changes in the legislation. For such a small country as Latvia, these mechanisms are effective enough to initiate changes in the legislation, given that members of legislative institutions read the publications of judges and employees of the Supreme Court.

The publicity of the feedback depends on the mechanism used. Ancillary decision, judgments as well as articles of legal journals are public. As for non-formal consultation, it is rather not public.

The existing feedback mechanisms are rather incidental. However, they seem to be effective.

10. Are there objections or risks attached to the formal consultation of courts at the stage after legislation has been drafted? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no considerable objections or risks attached to the formal consultation of courts.

11. Are there objections or risks attached to drawing the attention of the legislator, unsolicited, to shortcomings in the quality of legislation, including its soundness and

implementability, for example by means of an annual report or publication? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no considerable objections or risks attached to drawing the attention of the legislator, unsolicited, to shortcomings in the quality of legislation. This is rather sound cooperation between two powers: judicial and legislative powers.

## **B) Feedback from advisory bodies**

12. Are there any formal or informal feedback mechanisms in your Member State for the advisory bodies to provide solicited or unsolicited input or advice *after* legislation has been drafted and some experience has been gained with implementation and enforcement?

If so:

- a. Are the advisory bodies consulted structurally or incidentally in this phase, and in what way?
- b. To what extent do the advisory bodies themselves take the initiative to advise the legislator or draw attention to the quality of legislation, or the lack of it, for example by means of unsolicited advice, a publication or a contribution on that subject to the annual report?
- c. What aspects of the quality of legislation are specifically addressed and can you give an example?
- d. To what extent is the given feedback public?

If not:

- e. Do you think feedback mechanisms for advisory bodies at this stage would be desirable, and in what form?
- f. What is the basis (for example, constitutional, statutory or unwritten law) for the existing mechanisms?

To our Court's knowledge, there is no such formal consultation with advisory bodies after legislation has been drafted and some experience has been gained with implementation and enforcement. However, different advisory bodies and interest groups are allowed to send their proposals and suggestions in order to initiate changes in the laws. Such proposals and suggestions are always registered and taken into account.

However, the Court see that any kind of critical evaluation of existing legislation is desirable.

13. Are there objections or risks attached to formal feedback from advisory bodies at the stage after legislation has been drafted? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no considerable objections or risks attached to formal feedback from advisory bodies.

14. Are there objections or risks attached to advisory bodies giving unsolicited advice on the quality of legislation, including its soundness and implementability, for example by means of an annual report or publication? If so, what are they? How can they be resolved?

There are no considerable objections or risks attached to advisory bodies giving unsolicited advice on the quality of legislation.

**C) General**

15. Are there any general or specific input mechanisms in your Member State (except for those for the courts and advisory bodies) at the stage after legislation has been drafted, for example public consultation via the internet or otherwise?

To our Court's knowledge, there is no such a public consultation.

16. Have you any additional or other remarks about feedback mechanisms after legislation has been drafted?

No remarks.