



## REGIONS IN RUSSIAN POLITICS

### РЕГИОНЫ В ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ РОССИЙСКОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ

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#### The Influence of the Council of Legislators on the Legislative Activity of Regional Parliaments

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**Abstract.** The authors focus on the political implication of the emergence and functioning of the Council of Legislators under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Based on several characteristics of the legislative process, such as the speed of adopting bills, the traffic of initiatives and the share of those adopted, as well as the transcripts of the Plenary Sessions of the Council, the authors conduct a comprehensive analysis of the work of this institution, recording and interpreting several changes. Using the theory of Rational Choice Institutionalism (the Veto Player Theory, in particular), the authors show that the platform established in 2012, originally designed for communication between federal and regional parliaments, has over time become a barrier, predetermining the fate of some initiatives. In addition, the institutional environment created by the Council's actions has changed the very format of regional activity, whereby the original idea of open dialogue has been replaced by expert discussion within the profile commissions, and the outcome of these activities has shifted from legislative initiatives to expert commentaries and recommendations. Another dimension of influence can be traced in the implementation of the bureaucratic logic associated with redirecting and filtering the traffic of regional initiatives through an extra-constitutional structure. Research results allow the authors to take a different view on the legislative activity of the regions at the federal level, as well as draw attention to the political nature of the work of auxiliary institutions and the «rules of the game» they form in the context of the interactions between the Federal Assembly and the regional parliaments.

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## Влияние Совета законодателей на законодательную деятельность региональных легислатур

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**Аннотация.** В центре внимания авторов — политические импликации возникновения и функционирования в российской парламентской системе Совета законодателей при Федеральном Собрании РФ. Проанализированы стенограммы пленарных заседаний Совета и ряд параметров законодательного процесса: скорость рассмотрения законопроектов, трафик инициатив и доля принятых законов. Исследование в традиции неоинституционализма рационального выбора (в частности, теории вето-игроков) показывает, что созданная в 2012 г. площадка, изначально предназначенная для коммуникации между федеральным и региональными парламентами, со временем фактически стала самостоятельным барьером — вето-актором, определяющим дальнейшую судьбу региональных инициатив. Кроме того, институциональная среда, сложившаяся в процессе работы Совета, изменила сам формат активности регионов, в результате чего первоначальная идея открытого диалога сменилась экспертной дискуссией внутри профильных комиссий, а итог деятельности сместился с возможности внесения доработанной законодательной инициативы в Думу на экспертные комментарии и рекомендации для региональных парламентов. В качестве одного из критериев измерения влияния Совета выделена реализация бюрократической логики работы нового субститута, связанного с перенаправлением и фильтрацией трафика региональных инициатив с прямого внесения их в Госдуму на новый «фильтрующий» орган. Результаты исследования позволяют по-новому взглянуть на законодательную активность регионов на федеральном уровне, а также обратить внимание на политическую природу работы вспомогательных институтов и формируемых ими «правил игры» в контексте взаимодействия палат Федерального Собрания и региональных парламентов.

**Ключевые слова:** Совет Законодателей, законодательный процесс, Государственная Дума, парламентская процедура, региональная политика

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## Introduction

The problems of Russian federalism in general and the relationship between the federal center and the subjects in particular are of great interest to domestic and foreign researchers who have dedicated multiple studies to a wide range of topics: from the distribution of powers and budgetary rules to the representation of regional elites and their participation in decision-making at the federal level. These processes occur within specific institutions and “rules of the game” proposed by the political system of Russia: for example, according to Article 106 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the legislative (representative) bodies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation have the formal status of a subject with the right of legislative initiative (hereinafter referred to as SRLI), which gives them the power to submit bills to the State Duma<sup>1</sup>. As a result, regional parliaments have become some of the most active participants in the process: during the work of the IV convocation, the subjects of the Russian Federation sent 1646 initiatives, or 36.4 % of the total, in the V convocation — 1208 initiatives, or 26.79 %, in the VI convocation — 1750 bills, or 23.4 %, in the VII convocation, the number of initiatives was 984, or 15.65 % of the total number of submitted initiatives<sup>2</sup>. Despite their quantity, the quality of these projects often became the main “sore spot”, resulting in the participants starting to offer various mechanisms for coordination and preliminary examination. One of the structures that ensured such mechanisms is the Council of Legislators under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation.

Established in 2012, the Council of Legislators was a derivative of the structure of the same name which previously functioned for 10 years under the Federation Council of the Russian Federation. The motives for its creation generally corresponded to the previously mentioned logic: for example, in 2004, Speaker of the Federation Council S. M. Mironov noted that the main task of the body was “*to determine the main directions for the development of federal and regional legislation, to give*

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Russian Federation: [adopted by popular vote on December 12, 1993 with amendments approved during the all-Russian vote on July 01, 2020]. Official Internet portal of legal information. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202007040001>.

<sup>2</sup> The data from the Legislative Support System. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/>

*it a systemic character, as well as to discuss the most significant draft federal laws”* [Mironov 2004: 10].

Later, in 2008, the Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on the Rules of Procedure N.P. Tulaev augmented the logic of how the new format would work with the regions, emphasizing that *“the current Council of Legislators /.../ will have to perform not only representative functions /.../ it is proposed to create a structure that allows the legislature to take on the regulatory obligation to conduct an examination of its legislative initiatives through the institute of harmonization and coordination within the framework of the Council of Legislators and the Federation Council”* [Tulaev 2008: 8]. We can note that while the institution functioned as an auxiliary platform, there was a desire among parliamentarians to transfer the procedure for preliminary consideration of regional initiatives from the status of “opportunity” to the status of “obligation”, thereby offering to transfer the authority to further influence the fate of the bills to a body not specified in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

Despite the formal accountability of the structure to the Federation Council until 2012, initially the Presidium consisted of representatives of both chambers, including the First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma<sup>3</sup>. Such inclusion not only proved insufficient to create a full-fledged dialogue between both chambers of Parliament and the regions, but also emphasized the symbolic importance of the Federation Council as the dominant actor in the issue of communication between the federal center and the regions.

At the first meeting of the Council, on May 31, 2012, the Regulations “On the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” were approved. This decision served as an indicator of the change in the status of the structure from a semi-formal platform for interaction between the SRLI to an independent institution within the framework of the Russian legislative system<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, the authorities of the body did not change: despite the transfer of the Council under the control of both houses of Parliament, the law still stated that referring to its consultation was a right, and not an obligation, of the regions when developing their initiatives.

Nevertheless, such positioning does not exclude the possibility of influencing the behavior of the regions and their legislative activity. The demarcation line between the formal rule and its practical implementation became possible due to the transforming attitude towards the procedural component in the tradition of political science.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Legislators. President of Russia. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <http://www.kremlin.ru/catalog/glossary/66>

<sup>4</sup> Regulations on the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation at the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of May 31, 2012. As amended by the Decisions of the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation “On Amendments to the Regulations on the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” dated April 25, 2013; October 15, 2015; April 29, 2016; December 8, 2016; December 18, 2020.

## **Theoretical and methodological foundations for studying the institutional and procedural components of the activities of the Council of Legislators**

To determine the role and significance of the Council of Legislators for the results of the legislative process in Russia, we applied the methodological developments of Rational Choice Institutionalism, where the “rules of the game” refer to not only formally fixed procedures, but also informal practices that have become generally accepted based on the principle of *fair-play* [North 1991; Tsebelis 2000].

With this understanding of procedure, studies of Russian parliamentarism become noteworthy, in particular, related to the change in the document that determines the process of the State Duma’s functioning — the Regulations. P. Chaisty stated that thanks to the amendments to the said document, the United Russia faction was able to assert its numerical advantage obtained as a result of the elections and strengthen the influence of the head of state on the legislative process [Chaisty 2014]. Similar results were noted by T. Remington, who showed, by analyzing the bills adopted by the State Duma, the growing dependence of the Parliament on the head of state [Remington 2008]. Finally, a significant impact of the Regulations on the process was shown by I.A. Pomiguyev when analyzing the transformation of the status of the State Duma Council, which acts as an independent player, and allows it, for example, to delay the consideration of certain initiatives [Pomiguyev 2016].

The Council of Legislators in this discussion has a slightly different status: it is more of an external platform for the interaction of constitutional institutions than an internal structure of the latter. Moreover, according to the Regulations, it has no formal authority to stop the consideration of an initiative, and therefore it would be completely wrong to call the structure a veto player [Pomiguyev, Alekseev 2014]. However, some researchers still assumed possible political implications of the Council: for instance, N.V. Petrov<sup>5</sup> called the structure one of the “substitutes” — a mechanism that performs part of the functions of a constitutional authority [Petrov 2009]. I.A. Pomiguyev developed this logic, explaining the reasons for the emergence of the Council by the desire to “*compensate for the weakness of the State Duma Council’s position in front of the Federation Council*”, while its actual role comes down to “*filtering regional initiatives*” [Pomiguyev 2017: 118].

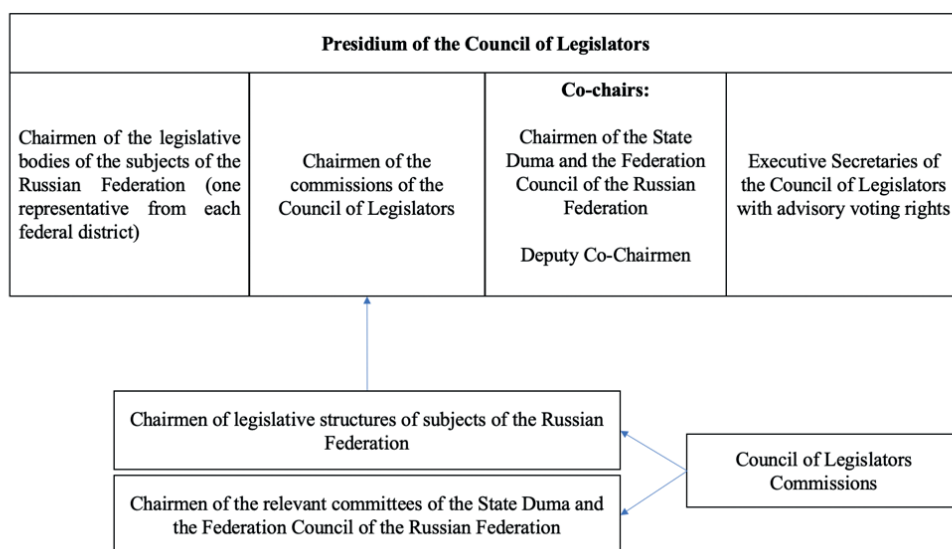
This theoretical discussion about the place of the structure in the system found its logical continuation in the amendments to the State Duma Regulations, adopted in June 2015. One of them was the addition of Article 111 with paragraph 1.1: *When preparing a bill submitted by the legislative (representative) body of state power of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation for consideration by the State Duma, the responsible committee takes into account the results of consideration*

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<sup>5</sup> Included by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation in the register of media-foreign agents on June 3, 2022.

of the said bill in the Council of Legislators<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the conclusion of the Committee on Regulations presents the specific purpose of the amendment: the desire to strengthen interaction between the federal and regional parliaments in terms of the preparation and consideration of draft laws. So, the Committee noted the key direction in which the institute should work: improving the quality of initiatives submitted by the regions to the State Duma.

To understand the specifics of the system after 2015, it is necessary to refer to the internal system of the Council of Legislators and determine the circle of persons involved in the formation of conclusions on draft legislative initiatives. The composition of the Presidium and commissions — the backbone structures of the Institute — is shown in Figure 1<sup>7</sup>. According to the Regulation, the conclusion is the result of the work of the Commission, which includes representatives of regional parliaments and specialized committees of the chambers of the Federal Assembly. In fact, the assessment proposed by the Council structure is the result of preliminary consideration by the relevant committee of the draft law, which will be considered in the State Duma and the Federation Council in the future. To assess the consequences of the current system, it is necessary to refer to the characteristics of the process itself.



**Figure 1.** Organizational structure of the Council of Legislators

Source: Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <http://szrf.km.duma.gov.ru/?ysclid=165dtm6cqt287249348>

<sup>6</sup> Decree of the State Duma of June 16, 2015 N 6859-6 GD “On Amending Article 111 of the Regulations of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”. *SZ RF*. 2015. No. 27. Art. 3719. (In Russian).

<sup>7</sup> Additional information about the activities of the Council can be found in: Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation at the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation: Main tasks, working procedure, provision of activities. (In Russian). Retrieved 14 July, 2022, from <https://cloud.mail.ru/public/J7Q8/U9SQMNCDY>

## Characteristics of lawmaking as indicators of the influence of the Council of Legislators

The traditional approach to the study of institutions, which involves analyzing regulatory documents and making a normative assessment of their work, can take the researcher's focus away from their actual functioning and the political implications that emerge in the process. Therefore, along with the legal approach, political science suggests including among the indicators of influence the characteristics of the legislative process that are related to the analysis of the traffic of initiatives, as well as the speed of their consideration.

As mentioned earlier, the State Duma traditionally considers a large number of projects proposed by regional parliaments. However, it ends up accepting only a relatively small number of them. More detailed information is given in Table 1.

Table 1

### Legislative activity of the parliaments of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation and its results at the stage of consideration by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

Indicator / Convocation	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Number of bills presented to the n-convocation, pcs.	1056	1646	1208	1750	984
Number of adopted bills introduced to the n-convocation, pcs.	42	122	131	171	111
The total proportion of the adopted from the number of bills submitted to the convocation, %	3,98	7,41	10,84	9,77	12,09

Source: Legislative activity support system. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/>

It is important to note that since the introduction of the Council, the proportion of initiatives accepted has not changed significantly. However, among those that were adopted, 18 projects (or 10.5 %) in the VI convocation passed a preliminary examination through the structure, and in the VII convocation their number increased to 56 initiatives (or 50.45 %). This data demonstrates the possible importance of the Council with advisory powers to determine the success of the bills' passage in the State Duma. However, this indicator is not

able to fully characterize the ongoing changes: the high proportion of adopted bills can be a manifestation of the influence, expressed in **selecting and filtering the initiatives**, that is, determining the future fate of the bills. To clarify the operation of this mechanism, we suggest considering an additional aspect related to the work within the institute (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Results of consideration of the draft legislative initiatives  
of the regional parliaments in the Council of Legislators**

Indicator / Convocation	VI	VII
Total number of bills considered in the n-convocation, pcs.	471	1619
Number of bills submitted to the State Duma of the n-convocation and considered by the CL, pcs.	146	390
Percentage of the total number of bills submitted by the regions to the State Duma, %	8,3	39,63
Bills with positive conclusions of the CL, pcs.	44	164
Bills that received a positive conclusion from the CL with a proposal for revision, pcs.	169	533
Bills that received a negative conclusion from the CL, pcs.	217	873

Source: *Legislative activity support system*. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/>

Table 2 shows the results of the work of the structure during the functioning of the State Duma of the VI-VII convocations. It demonstrates how the number of the applications for preliminary examination to the commissions of the Council of Legislators increased significantly — from 471 in the VI convocation to 1619 in the VII convocation. Despite the fact that, as a result, the institute is not able to process the whole traffic of bills of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, this value was achieved in parallel with the overall decrease in applications from regional legislatures to the State Duma by 44 % — from 1750 in the VI convocation to 984 in the VII. At this stage, the implementation of the so-called bureaucratic logic becomes decisive: the essence of that logic is to transfer part of the functions of a formal executor to an actual, in this case, substitute, which results in a decreasing burden on the house of the Parliament due to a decrease in the initiatives that received a negative opinion in the Council of Legislators (see Table 3).



Influence on behavior acts as a significant but not exhaustive measure of impact. The procedure introduced into the Regulations of the State Duma in 2015 states that when making its own recommendations the relevant committee of the house should take into account the conclusions of the Council's commission. As a result, this amendment, which essentially approved the position of such conclusions in the constitutional phase of the legislative process, formed a potential field of influence as it can predetermine the further fate of an initiative.

Table 3

**Correlation of the final decisions of the State Duma with the conclusions of the relevant committees of the Council of Legislators**

Indicator / Convocation	VI		VII	
	Pcs.	%	Pcs.	%
Total number of bills passed through the CL and submitted to the Duma	146	100	390	100
<b>Number adopted in the State Duma:</b>	18	12,32	56	14,35
<i>Of which:</i>				
Number recommended in the CL	8	5,4	27	6,9
Number recommended in the CL with modifications	8	5,4	23	5,8
Number of not recommended in the CL	2	1,3	6	1,5
<b>Number of nonaccepted in the State Duma:</b>	128	87,6	334	85,6
<i>Of which:</i>				
Number recommended in the CL	23	15,75	71	18,2
Number recommended in the CL with modifications	67	45,89	159	40,7
Number of not recommended in the CL	38	26	104	26,7

Source: Legislative activity support system. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/>

Observations recorded in Table 3 allow us to determine the following pattern: if a bill has a negative conclusion, the latter becomes a barrier that is almost impossible to overcome in the State Duma. Thus, negative conclusions serve

as an obstacle to the further passage of the initiative. However, here an important result is the indefinite nature of the connection between the decisions of the Council and the State Duma in relation to all other initiatives that are rejected in this or that form.

What is the reason for this divergence? Let us turn to the Regulations on the Council: according to Chapter VIII, the specialized commissions consist of the speakers of regional legislatures and parliamentarians from specialized committees and commissions of the Federal Assembly<sup>8</sup>. A situation arises in which the same persons are involved in the consideration of the projects at both stages. Therefore, it is quite natural for a minimum share of initiatives to be rejected by the State Duma committees, whose chairmen are involved in the work of the Council commissions.

In this situation a negative conclusion of a commission of the Council and the rejection of an initiative by the State Duma suggest different motivations. Let us turn to Chapter II of the Regulations on the Council: the tasks assigned to the institute include “improving the quality of draft federal laws prepared by the legislative (representative) bodies of state power of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation for submission to the State Duma”<sup>9</sup>. This wording implies not so much an assessment of the feasibility and necessity of adopting an initiative, but rather preliminary work to bring it into line with legal standards, as well as substantive refinement of the initiative.

Along with the admission and the result of the consideration of the initiative, the speed of adoption of bills becomes a significant indicator of the process. This variable in the context of the work of the Council was identified by N.A. Zaripov and I.A. Pomigiev when highlighting the problems of its use as an indicator of the political implications of relations between the players involved in the process [Zaripov, Pomigiev 2022]. The authors came to the conclusion that if a bill was considered by the Council, then the average time of its adoption in the State Duma was 111 days for the VI convocation and 150 days for the VII convocation — longer than without preliminary examination. Detailed results can be found in Table 4.

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<sup>8</sup> Regulations on the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation dated May 31, 2012 . As amended by the Decisions of the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation “On Amendments to the Regulations on the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” dated April 25, 2013; October 15, 2015; April 29, 2016; December 8, 2016; December 18, 2020. (In Russian).

<sup>9</sup> Regulations on the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation dated May 31, 2012 . As amended by the Decisions of the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation “On Amendments to the Regulations on the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” dated April 25, 2013; October 15, 2015; April 29, 2016; December 8, 2016; December 18, 2020. (In Russian).

**Average time for consideration of bills passed,  
preliminarily considered and not considered in the Council of Legislators**

Average values, days / convocations of the State Duma	VI convocation		VII convocation	
	The bill has passed through the council	The bill did not pass through the council	The bill has passed through the council	The bill did not pass through the council
Consideration by the relevant committee before first reading	24	33,66	22,8	26,54
Time from a positive committee decision to consideration by the Duma Council	115,5	88	115	103
Time from consideration of a bill in the Council of the Duma to its first reading	71,5	52	91	71,5
Total time from submission to the Duma to adoption on first reading	256,6	184,2	200,78	195,15
Total time of adoption of the bill in the Duma	388,3	277,8	363,33	219,2

Source: Zaripov, N.A. Pomiguyev I.A. (2022). Speed of adoption of bills as an indicator of the political nature of the lawmaking process, using the Council of Legislators as an example. *Vlast*, 30(4). In print. (In Russian).

We suggested only a few characteristics of the legislative process, but they are able to demonstrate its transformation as a result of the introduction of a new body, the powers of which are not specified in the Constitution, but which influences the exercise of the constitutional powers of the regions. At the same time, such indicators ignore an equally important aspect related to the rules of communication between the federal center and the regions within the institute. Therefore, the consideration of the existing communicative environment becomes a logical continuation.

**The transforming format of interaction between the center  
and the regions within the Council of Legislators**

The work of the Council is not limited to the activities of specialized commissions: holding Plenary meetings with the participation of speakers of regional legislatures and chairmen of the federal chambers of Parliament is no less important. The rules by which their relationship is constructed can largely determine their further legislative activity and, as a result, indicate the influence of the Council.

Initially, it was declared that the communication would center around a reflection on significant areas of federal lawmaking. So, for example, at the meeting on April 25, 2014 — 4th in a row since the creation of the Council under the Federal Assembly — co-chairman V.I. Matvienko set such areas as “the powers of the subjects of the Federation, municipalities and their financing”, “issues of strengthening the family, protecting children”, as well as “providing legislative and financial support to the Republic of Crimea” as the agenda for the institute’s work<sup>10</sup>.

Subsequently, before the next plenary session on November 20, 2014, the regions introduced 25 bills, among which 14 affected nation-building and 2 — social policy. The latter two initiatives concerned such spheres as “**Family**” and “**Education. Science. Culture**”, and their concept involved solving the problems highlighted at the meeting related to the implementation of state social policy in relation to low-income children and orphans. Subsequent meetings confirmed their specifics: the topics discussed became an incentive for the development of relevant initiatives, and federal legislators used them to determine the direction of lawmaking initiated by regional parliaments.

After the election of the State Duma of the 7th convocation, the interaction transformed, partly due to the position of the new Chairman of the State Duma, V.V. Volodin. At the meeting on December 8, 2016, he noted that the Council provided the subjects with the opportunity to “*more effectively participate in expert activities when considering key bills*”<sup>11</sup>, which shifts the attitude towards the regions from the status of the SRLI to the status of members of the expert council. This metamorphosis took place simultaneously with the increasing number of legislative initiatives (from 20 between convocations in 2014 to 44 in 2016), which are less and less dependent on the agenda. At this stage, one can note the parallelization of the work of the Council’s plenary sessions and individual legislative work.

Subsequent meetings within the Council translate this feature into a trend or a new rule of interaction. So, at the meeting on April 24, 2017, the main participants of the discussion were representatives of relevant commissions, i.e., State Duma deputies and senators. The speakers of the legislative assemblies of the regions were still included in the legislative process, but the format of their participation changed: instead of developing initiatives, they were now supposed

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<sup>10</sup> Transcript of the meeting of the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on April 25, 2014. Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <http://www.szrf.km.duma.gov.ru/Zasedaniya-Soveta-zakonodatelej/item/37930/>.

<sup>11</sup> Transcript of the meeting of the Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on December 8, 2016. Council of Legislators of the Russian Federation under the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. (In Russian). Retrieved July 14, 2022, from <http://www.szrf.km.duma.gov.ru/Zasedaniya-Soveta-zakonodatelej/item/37846/>.

to send non-formalized proposals and recommendations to the Government of the Russian Federation and the parliamentarians.

Over time, this format became increasingly popular: for example, one of the topics of the meeting on April 27, 2018 was the development of the healthcare system. The speaker of the Tyumen Oblast parliament S.Y. Korepanov suggested considering prepared amendments to the federal law, however, they eventually did not reach the State Duma.

Amidst the platform's transformation from a consultancy to an expert platform, the development of yet another format is noteworthy. Since 2019, an additional area discussed during the meetings has been the regional implementation of the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, which by 2022 has already become a traditional element of hearings. This part of the meetings, at which the President of the Russian Federation often spoke, shifted the emphasis from discussions to the reporting on the work done. This metamorphosis resulted in the inability to conduct a substantive debate in the areas of lawmaking, also impeding for the regional parliaments to act as political subjects with their own position.

At the same time, the federal agenda of the meetings, which initially involved the regions' participation in the development of initiatives, was replaced by solving "on the ground" problems related to the improvement of regional mechanisms and lawmaking in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. This can be seen in the cases of social nutrition issues in 2018 and the regulation of the "Zemsky Doctor" program in 2019, the discussion of which resulted in recommendations for regional parliaments.

As a result, we can state that the Council of Legislators has undergone significant changes over the years. The role model of the platform has changed from "a place for discussing the directions of federal lawmaking" to "an expert panel for the internal bodies of the Council to develop recommendations", and then to a "control tool".

## **Conclusion**

The Council of Legislators is an example of the political logic of changing the legislative procedure and creating new restrictions on the activities of subjects with the right of legislative initiative. The institute, originally created for the qualitative improvement of bills of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, eventually turned into a veto player, restricting (to a greater extent informally) the federal legislative activity of regional parliaments. Another political implication of the Council's work was the transformation of the internal rules of communication, which over time changed the format of the dialogue between representatives of the SRLI to the expertise of members of the Council's commissions.

However, along with the political logic in the work of the Council, we can also distinguish another, bureaucratic one: thanks to a change in the traffic of initiatives, the system managed to reduce the burden on the federal parliament. The proposed

process is part of a larger strategy to create the previously mentioned “substitutes” [Petrov 2009].

All such changes had a significant impact on the legislative activity of the regions. Instead of using the constitutional right to submit initiatives to Parliament, regional legislatures began to give preference to pre-parliamentary expertise, the results of which eventually began to determine the further behavior of the subjects. At the same time, the Council itself proved to be able not only to influence the decision of parliaments to use their constitutional powers, but also to predetermine the future fate of bills in case of a negative review. As a result, there was a significant decrease in the actual activity of the regions in the State Duma.

The presented observations are important not only when considering a separate institution — they greatly enrich the understanding of the process of the consideration and adoption of laws in the Russian political system. As for the Council, its institutional design and its subsequent evolution have a specific political nature, the definition of which is necessary for understanding the work of the entire political body. After all, the Council is just one of many structures that, as a rule, fall out of the researchers’ focus, but at the same time directly affect the results of the legislative activities of political actors.

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