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**REPORT OF THE RESEARCH AND REFERENCE
SERVICES OF PARLIAMENTS**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE RESEARCH AND REFERENCES
SERVICES OF PARLIAMENTS**

**"AN OUTLOOK TURNED TOWARDS
THE OUTSIDE WORLD"**

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

AIMS

The Inter-Parliamentary Union whose international Statute is outlined in a Headquarters Agreement drawn up with the Swiss federal authorities, is the only world-wide organization of Parliaments.

The aim of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is to promote personal contacts between members of all Parliaments and to unite them in common action to secure and maintain the full participation of their respective States in the firm establishment and development of democratic institutions and in the advancement of the work of international peace and co-operation.

In pursuance of this objective, the Union makes known its views on all international problems suitable for settlement by parliamentary action and puts forward suggestions for the development of parliamentary assemblies so as to improve the working of those institutions and increase their prestige.

MEMBERSHIP

At present there are National Groups in the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Germany (Federal Republic of), Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Republic of Cameroon, United States of America, USSR, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

STRUCTURE

The organs of the Union are:

1. *The Inter-Parliamentary Conference* which, unless otherwise decided, meets twice a year.
2. *The Inter-Parliamentary Council*, composed of two members from each affiliated Group. *President*: Mr. I. El-Sayed (Sudan).
3. *The Executive Committee* composed of eleven members, ten of whom are elected by the Conference, the Council President acting as *ex officio* President. At present, it has the following composition:

Ex-officio President: Mr. I. El-Sayed (Sudan).

Members: H. Fechner (German Democratic Republic); I. Darvasi (Hungary), B. Foretia (Republic of Cameroon), A. Ghalanos (Cyprus), R. Jacobi (Australia), B. Jakhar (India), O. Se-Eung (Republic of Korea), A. Pacificador (Philippines), Sir J. Page (United Kingdom), H. Sterken (Fed. Rep. Germany).

Secretary general: Mr. Pio-Carlo Terenzio.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

The Union's official organ is the *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin*, which appears quarterly in both English and French. This publication is indispensable in keeping posted on the activities of the Organization. Subscription can be placed with the Inter-Parliamentary Bureau, Geneva.

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CONSTITUTIONAL AND PARLIAMENTARY
INFORMATION

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REPORT ON THE RESEARCH AND REFERENCE SERVICES OF PARLIAMENTS

Adopted by the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments at the Autumn Session of 1984, Geneva (Switzerland)

Rapporteur: Paul Borgniet (France), National Assembly

The present report takes account of the comments made by Members of the Association on the first draft which was considered during the 1982 Plenary Session in Rome. Forty-one chambers replied to the questionnaire.¹

The concepts of "research" and "reference" are distinct; the aim of the reference service is the collection, classification and conservation of documents and provision of this material to users; whereas the research service aims to exploit existing documents and use them in a way appropriate to each circumstance. But in practice these two activities—which are in any case connected—are very often confused, and this confusion—which has not always been avoided in the questionnaire itself—causes some difficulties for the interpretation of the replies and the process of comparing them.

The concept of research, in particular, is understood sometimes in very different ways in different countries. The archive or record office has been omitted from this study, as its function is to be a source of documentation but not to play the role of a research and reference service. The heading "libraries" has been retained, as in some parliaments the research service is not separate but is included in the library, or as in the United Kingdom in the library Department.

Finally, it should be emphasised that the number of members who in theory can make use of the research and reference services varies considerably from one parliament to another; from 92 to 434 in unicameral parliaments, and from 45 to 1168 in bicameral parliaments. This has an influence on their organisation.

The revised draft report retains the six headings of the first draft: status of the research services (1), organisation (2), work of the service (3), documentation (4), consultants or experts (5) and library (6).

¹ Australia (House of Representatives and Senate), Austria (National Council and Federal Council), Belgium (House of Representatives and Senate), Canada (House of Commons and Senate), Cameroon (National Assembly), Cyprus (House of Representatives), Denmark (Folketing), Egypt (People's Assembly), Finland (Eduskunta), France (National Assembly and Senate), Germany (Federal Republic) (Bundestag and Bundesrat), Greece (Parliament), Korea (Republic of) (National Assembly), India (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), Ireland (Dail Eirann and Seanad Eirann), Israël (Knesset), Japan (House of Representatives and House of Councillors), New-Zealand (Parliament, European Parliament), Netherlands (First and Second Chamber), Philippines (Batasang Pambansa), Portugal (Assemblée de la République), Thailand (House of Representatives and Senate), United Kingdom (House of Commons and House of Lords), United States (House of Representatives and Senate), Zaire (Conseil législatif).

1. Status of the research services

The Rapporteur has identified a great variation in the status of research services, which may be organised on an autonomous basis or combined with other services such as those of the library or committees. There are also situations between the two extremes. It seems that the services of parliament have had to resort to pragmatic solutions to the problems of organising the research service without always being able to avoid duplication.

1.1 Twelve uni-cameral parliaments replied that they possess a research service; in 14 bi-cameral parliaments the research services are a facility common to the two chambers (in six parliaments) and operate separately for each chamber (in eight parliaments).

Sometimes the separate services may be supplemented by organisations common to both chambers (such as the Congressional Research Service of the United States Congress).

1.2 To the important question of whether the research services were administratively independent or were part of other bodies, the replies unfortunately do not lead to an intellectually satisfactory conclusion.

Nevertheless it appears that independent services exist in more than ten assemblies which replied: Belgium, Canada (Table Research Branch), Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrat), Japan, New Zealand and Thailand.

In another group of some 20 countries:

— Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada (Research Services), Egypt, Federal Republic of Germany (Bundestag), Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the European Parliament—

research services are not separate from other administrative structures: committees, archives, library, library Department. They are most often placed within the overall structure of the library. However a converse pattern also exists, where the library is part of a wider structure of research services (as in Austria and India).

1.3 The foundation of the parliamentary libraries and the information services linked to them may have occurred a long time ago, and may have coincided with the creation of the parliamentary institution itself. However using a narrower definition of the concept of research, the establishment of such services can be considered relatively recent, dating from around 1970. However, the research service of the United Kingdom House of Commons was established in 1945, and this service in Canada was established well before 1970.

It should be noticed that various services tend more and more to supplement information provided by the government. Members of parliament in the Netherlands or the United Kingdom are still prepared to approach the Prime Ministers' information service when they wish to obtain documents or studies; but when they look, as they do increasingly, for analyses of various documents, they make more frequent use of the specialised services of their own parliament.

The most delicate problem, raised by various speakers during the session in Rome, seems to be that of combining the research service with that of the committees.

Certain parliaments, such as that of Belgium, have combined these two services, taking advantage of the specialisation of the committee staff for all the work of research and reference. Moreover, the Assembly of WEU uses the secretariats of the committees.

However, it should be noticed that the committee staff are preoccupied by their study of the texts which are on the agenda of their committee and thus in practice can only provide really full information to the rapporteurs who are in charge of these texts. This reason has led the French Senate and the Italian Parliament to opt for the separation of the research services from the committee services. The West German Bundestag has tried the two experiences of separation and combination, and the French National Assembly is hesitating between these two solutions.

1.4 In almost every case the establishment of these services was an internal act of the respective assembly, based on powers of a directing authority, such as the President of the chamber or Speaker, the bureau or the praesidium.

1.5 The officials who carry out the work of the research services are part of an administrative hierarchy, and come under a director (in the case of autonomous services) or a head of division or section (in particular when the service is part of the library). It is often specified that the staff who carry out the work of the service and their superiors are under the control of the political authorities of the parliament.

2. Organisation of the research and reference services

2.1 The organigram of the research services of the various parliaments confirms the preliminary comment made earlier. Two kinds of organisation can be identified: sometimes the research services are organised within or around the library, and sometimes these services are completely independent of the library. Thus, the gathering of documentation and the use of this material are sometimes considered as tasks which are quite separate and distinct and sometimes as tasks which are complementary and inseparable.

The countries which have set up services of research and reference separate from the library are largely Belgium, France, the French-speaking countries of Africa, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the European Parliament, Zaire, Austria and Portugal.

The structures of the research services are nevertheless very varied within this category.

Thus, in the Bundestag where the resources of personnel are considerable, there is a Directorate General of Research and Documentation Services which comprises several divisions.

The French Senate, where there are fewer staff, has three separate groups which have the following roles:

- the rapid information division (legal and social),
- the local authorities division, and
- finally, an economic analysis and forecasting group.

The countries which have not adopted this solution have still judged it necessary to establish teams of specialists within their library who have the task of researching into documentation in order to respond to requests made by Members of Parliament.

The staff available to these services varies considerably from one country to another.

Thus in the Federal German Bundestag there are 400 staff whereas in Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands this number is ten times less.

Between these extremes lie countries such as Canada (with 200 staff), India (150 staff), the European Parliament (139), and the United Kingdom (140).

In each country, there is a nucleus of top level staff who have qualifications to an advanced level in such subjects as law, economics or social sciences. These officials are mostly assisted by some staff who deal with documentation and by other support staff, such as secretaries, in varying numbers.

The material resources available to these services also varies greatly between the different countries.

The number of their offices ranges from 10 or 20 (such as in France, Belgium and Italy) to several hundred (United States of America), which corresponds to a floor area ranging from 100 square metres to 3 or 4,000 square metres.

In general these offices are located near both the Members of Parliament and the other documentation services.

The financial resources cannot be analysed in any great detail when the research services do not have a separate budget, as is the case in France, Belgium and Italy.

In countries where the budget can be separated, the share of finance which the research services receives ranges from less than 1% of the whole budget to 6%. This variation reflects the substantial differences which exist from one country to another in the role assigned to the services, as well as in their organisation.

3. Work of the Service

3.1 Generally, the research services seem to be available not only to the parliamentary authorities such as the Speaker, the bureau or committee chairmen but also to individual Members of Parliament. In addition access is often given by extension to Members' research assistants and to the parliamentary groups. As for requests from outside individuals such as students, officials of the Ministries, or members of the public, such requests are sometimes accepted but only on the basis of straight-forward provision of material (examination or copying of existing documents).

3.2 In 17 countries, the services process a very wide range of requests. In various other countries their activity seems limited to tasks of documentation or provision of information on parliamentary activity; this is the case — if the replies have been correctly understood — in Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Israel, Portugal, the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrat).

3.3 As a whole, there are no further restrictions on the area or number of requests beyond the limitations caused by lack of resources of staff and materials. The lack of such resources sometimes enforces an order of priority. As for research studies as such, the number of requests received each year varies from perhaps 100 to 6,000. However the differing interpretation of the concept of research does limit the value of such comparisons (for example in Belgium a distinction is made between requests depending on whether they require more or less than one hour's work).

3.4 The services respond to requests on the basis of time limits agreed with the client on the basis of the urgency and difficulty of the research. An exception should be made in particular for Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Ireland, the Philippines and the United Kingdom, where the staff also issue on their own initiative information documents which appear regularly (press summaries, summaries or parliamentary activity), or irregularly (for example, research studies issued when there is a forthcoming legislative debate). Individual replies and combined works of information always aim to provide an objective analysis of the subject and are not generally covered by copyright.

4. Documentation

4.1 The question about the existence of a classic collection of documents belonging to the research services themselves and independent of that of other reference services (an issue which presupposes the independence of these research services) has not always been fully understood (as for example by the United States). This is entirely understandable, but as a result the replies are difficult to interpret. However it is clear that in essence the main body of documentation is usually administered at the level of the library or the archives: the research services—when they truly exist—supplement this with new methods (thematic studies, files, collections of their own studies) which may be co-ordinated with the existing material.

4.2 With the questions on the use of microfilm, microfiche, tape-recordings or video-recordings, it is clear that the study moves from the area of research services to that of the library and the reference services. These latter services use microfiche and microfilm, often on a restricted scale: some parliaments do not use them or, at least, not yet, such as Belgium, Greece, India, Israel, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Portugal and Zaire.

Tape-recordings and video-recordings seem to be used in Austria, Canada, Korea, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany (Bundestag), Greece, New Zealand and Thailand.

4.3 Computerised documentation exists in a certain number of parliaments: Australia, Canada, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States of America and the European Parliament.

The Parliaments which have made the greatest progress in this field appear to be the Federal Republic of Germany (27 staff in the Bundestag and 30 terminals), Canada (four terminals), the United States (eleven terminals in the Library of the Senate), France (30 terminals in the Senate, 100 members of the National Assem-

bly have a terminal in their constituency or their office), Italy (60 staff and more than 22 terminals), Japan (nine terminals), the United Kingdom (30 terminals in the House of Commons and ten in the House of Lords) and the European Parliament (four terminals).

4.4 As far as relations between the research services and outside sources of documentation, the replies emphasise the links which exist between parliamentary libraries and official sources of information and official publications.

5. Consultants or experts

5.1 As far as the use of consultants or experts is concerned the replies suggest that there are three kinds of situation:

- 18 assemblies (13 parliaments) do not make use of this kind of assistance, or have not so far;
- 12 assemblies (9 parliaments) sometimes use experts or consultants for committee work and usually on an occasional basis: this is the situation in the Bundestag and the French National Assembly as well as in Austria, Canada, Egypt, Greece, Israel, the Philippines and the United Kingdom.
- In four cases—Australia, Italy, Japan (National Diet Library) and the European Parliament—it appears that the use of consultants or outside experts—generally on an occasional basis—is operated by the research and reference services themselves.

The Philippine Parliament may call on the assistance of a large variety of university experts in order to have legislative texts studied. Bills are in effect submitted before being considered in the Assembly to universities and research centres for analysis. The amount of work they do on the bill depends on the requests made by the Parliament.

6. The Library

6.1 As far as bi-cameral legislatures are concerned, there are six where each chamber has its own library (France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Thailand, and the United Kingdom), and seven where the library is shared between the two chambers (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, India, Ireland, Japan and Thailand). In the United States, the Library of Congress is additional to the libraries of the two chambers.

The 12 uni-cameral parliaments (Cameroon, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Israel, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, The Philippines, Portugal, Zaire and the European Parliament) all possess a library, that of the New Zealand Parliament being an integral part of the National Library of New Zealand.

6.2 The totals given for the budget of the libraries—when they have been supplied—are difficult to interpret. The share of the budget of the assembly as a whole varies from 0.18% to 7.43%.

6.3 The number of works in the libraries varies from 3,000 to 700,000 (leaving aside the Library of Congress).

6.4 The number of subscriptions (paid for or complimentary) also varies considerably: from dozens to several hundred for newspapers; from dozens to tens of thousands for periodical and reviews.

6.5 This size of the staffs also varies greatly. Their number ranges from a handful to more than 200 (including those staff who carry out research studies).

6.6 There are fewer disparities in the hours of opening. The library opens at 8.00 a.m. in five cases, 8.30 a.m. in six cases, 9.00 a.m. in eleven cases, 9.30 a.m. in three cases and 10.00 a.m. in two cases. The libraries remain open at least until the end of the sitting, and the normal closing time ranges from 4.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.; in general the libraries are closed on Saturdays and 10 p.m. or later in the United Kingdom continue to operate over the lunch period.

6.7 As far as the services provided to users are concerned, all replies agreed in stressing that, apart from the loan of books, the libraries offered Members of Parliament a range of documentation of varying sophistication: reading lists, press cuttings, news reviews, photocopies, translations, catalogues of works and available publications.

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In sum, it appears that, in most Parliaments, the task of providing documentation has followed a parallel course characterised by the development and diversification of methods, as well as by adaptation to the modern techniques of conservation and classification. As far as the provision of research advice is concerned—which is often integrated into the provision of documentation—the situation appears less uniform, the variation undoubtedly being explained by the differences of approach towards the role of parliamentary assemblies and their relations with the executive power.