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Development of Parliamentary Research Services in Central Europe and the Western Balkans

Central and Eastern Europe Regional Programs:

**Western Balkans
Legislative
Strengthening
Initiative**

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DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SERVICES (PRIS) IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

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Foreword

Parliamentary research services play a crucial role in the daily operations of modern democratic legislatures. Research improves legislative decision-making and strengthens democracy. Reliable facts and analysis contribute to better understanding of problems, provide more realistic and effective legislative solutions to those problems, and can predict the impact of policies before they are adopted by parliaments. Good research enhances the legitimacy of the legislature, providing MPs with information to draft and amend legislation based on reliable facts. Often, Parliamentary research centers are major sources of information on bills that do not come from governments.

The following study offers a comprehensive summary of information and best practices in the development of parliamentary research services in parliaments of Central Europe, the Western Balkans¹ and Slovenia, including an evaluation of the strength and weaknesses of different models and an assessment of existing challenges.

Through its Western Balkan Legislative Strengthening Initiative (WBLSI or the Initiative), launched with National Endowment for Democracy (NED) support in 2009, the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) is advancing collaborative relationships among parliaments in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, with the legislatures of Central Europe to enhance their institutional, legislative, representative, and oversight capacities. NDI, under the auspices of the WBLSI, has organized several senior staff fellowships for parliamentary researchers from the Western Balkans to the Czech and Slovak legislatures, as well as regional seminars, in-country consultations and multi-lateral study visits, to foster comparative learning and the exchange of information among the Western Balkan parliaments and their Central European counterparts. The study's purpose is to be a valuable information resource to these parliaments, in addition to the in-person exchanges held.

Zuzana Papazoski
Western Balkans Legislative Strengthening Initiative Director
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
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¹ The term Western Balkans refers to the following countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

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~Zuzana Papazoski

Executive Summary

The parliaments of 11 countries in Central Europe and the Western Balkans were surveyed on the establishment, structure, and products of parliamentary research and information services (PRIS) for this report. They are Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia. Each of the parliaments listed above provided official responses. Transcripts of survey responses are listed by section so that each parliament's practices and experience can be compared by topic. The report summarizes responses within each section and where appropriate, provides recommendations.

The analysis section of the report provides a detailed description of how research and information services should function. The most commonly observed good practices and challenges to successful PRIS, as observed in both the Central European countries and their Western Balkans counterparts in the survey, were the following:

Good practices for Parliamentary Research and Information Services

- The PRIS should place more emphasis on assistance to committees, as committees are the primary actors in the legislative and oversight process. The PRIS should assist committees by producing comparative research papers and information analyses, as well as through PRIS staff participation in committee sessions in order to provide expertise and in-depth information on policy and legislative matters;
- PRIS staff should be divided internally according to policy area, enabling individuals to develop expertise in a specific field by monitoring the legislative agenda and assisting one or two committees from the related policy area;
- PRIS are often part of a larger department of intellectual services, e.g. a Parliamentary Institute that serves as an information hub for MPs, committees and other parliamentary departments. This arrangement pools expertise and is believed to be more cost effective, allowing experts to serve several clients rather than one. Institutes often combine policy research, legislative service, legal approximation and EU integration, librarian services/archives, and training sessions for MPs (e.g. organization of MP orientations, policy seminars, etc.) Institutes are usually managed by a lawyer or political scientist who understands the department's role in the political process at a macro level;
- Within the existing research services, parliaments should develop special capacities for financial and economic research, e.g. hire economic experts to assist committees and MPs in the state budget adoption and review;
- The PRIS should provide information on the EU and assist parliament with EU integration. PRIS might be tasked with approximation of laws and ensuring compliance with the *Acquis Communautaire* (an accepted set laws and standards within the EU);

- The PRIS is best defined through the parliamentary rules of procedure. In some parliaments rules of procedure are adopted as a law (e.g. Czech republic, Slovakia, Estonia, etc.) and therefore PRIS operations are legally defined and protected;
- PRIS should have internally-adopted regulations on operations and information-request management;
- PRIS' managerial staff should encourage training and educational activities of the staff, including Ph.D. studies, in order to increase deepen specific knowledge and expertise. For example, PRIS staff in Central Europe often teaches at universities;
- EU candidate countries should take full advantage of available funding through pre-accession instruments and parliamentary assistance programs and consider assigning a special person tasked with monitoring potential funding opportunities. The CEE parliaments made great advancements and built their online legislative tracking and data management systems with EU and other international funding available in the pre-accession period; and,
- Western Balkan parliaments should consider developing of legislative/legal expert service within the parliamentary administration. Such a service should be composed of lawyers. Professional legislative draftsmen would provide information on the compatibility of bills with the legal system, improve technical aspects of legislative texts including amendments drafted at the committee level, assist MPs and committees if necessary, and improve the quality of adopted laws. While the research service provides more in-depth information on the content of the bill (policy), the legislative service ensures that all supranational and national legal and technical requirements are met.

Challenges

- Staff capacity is limited (in the Western Balkans these limitations are in terms of staff skill, resources, and numbers; in Central Europe, budget cuts and staff reductions);
- PRIS staff must decide if their limited resources should be used to offer a broad range of products or more information on fewer topics;
- PRIS in Western Balkans often have an “on request” approach in their operations and rarely prepare information summaries or comparative studies on their own initiative. The PRIS should follow the legislative agenda and prepare information summaries on leading bills on their own initiative, thereby contributing to better informed committee and plenary debates;
- Unlike in Central Europe, PRIS staff in the Western Balkans rarely participate in committee meetings. Limited contact with MPs, little committee engagement during

sessions, and the absence of information about PRIS services weaken its position within the existing administration; and,

- Due to limited resources, only few of surveyed parliaments were able to develop much-needed capacities for financial and economic research. These capacities are crucial during the legislative review of state budget.

II. BACKGROUND

The availability of reliable information and analysis is crucial to parliaments if they are to function effectively. At every level - whether making laws, overseeing the executive or representing the population – reliable data allows members to review legislation, craft amendments, and oversee the implementation of laws. Parliamentary libraries, research services and archives are central to the provision and preservation of information. Their aim is to provide impartial, relevant, timely, and authoritative information and analysis to parliamentarians. The last few decades have seen the widespread development of dedicated parliamentary information services in Europe and elsewhere, which help legislatures understand the information they need to make the law and to hold the government to account.

The global ‘information explosion’ has introduced a new challenge, which is the risk of information overload. From a situation where they had too little information, parliaments and their members now often have too much, and can find it difficult to distinguish between useful and irrelevant information. This has led to a new stimulus for parliamentary libraries, research services and archives to help their clients with more advanced analytical services and through new ways of collecting, cataloguing, conserving and disseminating information.

The information provided in this study was gathered from a survey (appended) sent to the parliaments of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.² The survey included detailed questions about the formation and current structure of their parliamentary research services, as well as how each interacts with committees and those requesting products and services.

III. RESEARCH

This section of the study compares the development and functioning of the parliamentary research and information services (PRIS) in Central European countries – Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovak Republic and the actual status of PRIS in Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. All Western Balkan countries have unicameral legislatures except Bosnia-Herzegovina. From the Central European countries, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia have bicameral legislatures. The Czech Parliamentary research and information department

² The Croatian parliament is one of few parliaments in Europe which has not developed complex policy research services. In Croatia, each committee has three to seven external permanent committee members who represent think tanks, interest groups or NGOs elected through a public announcement. These members have the right to participate in committee discussions and provide additional information on reviewed policy, but do not vote.

works for both house of the parliament, as does the research department of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Poland and Slovenia have provided information on the research and information services for the lower house of parliament.

The head of each PRIS received the questionnaire in September 2012. The wording of the questionnaire can be found appended to this report. This report uses the term parliamentary research and information services (PRIS) for the relevant departments in Parliament Chancelleries though they are named differently in various countries. This section will specify the name of the relevant department in each country and the position of the department in the Parliament Chancellery.

The survey was distributed to the following Parliaments:

- A) Central European countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia – Part I+Part II (Development of the PRIS and Current Status of the PRIS)
- B) Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia – only Part II (Current Status of the PRIS)

Summary of Survey Responses by Topic

1. The Development of Parliamentary Research and Information Services in Central European Legislatures

1.1 PRIS at its Inception

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute of the Czech Parliament Chancellery was established in 1990 as the Scientific Service Department of the then-Federal Assembly. It had four original staff members. In 1991, its name was changed to the Department for Analysis and Expert Opinions by Resolution of the Presidium of the Federal Assembly. Later, the department was renamed as the Parliamentary Institute.

The Parliamentary Institute was one of the departments of the Chancellery of the Federal Assembly. However, there was a movement to create the PI as a department responsible directly to the Praesidium of the federal Assembly. These discussions were interrupted during the process of dissolution of Czechoslovakia.

After Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993, the Parliamentary Institute became part of the Chancellery of the Chamber of Deputies. Between 1993 and 1995, the Parliamentary institute was part of the IT department. In 1995, the new Rule of Organization of the Chamber of Deputies was adopted. According to this Rule, Parliamentary institute was created as an independent department.

Hungary

The PRIS of the Hungarian National Assembly (the Information Service for MPs) is a department of the Library of the Hungarian Parliament (hereafter Library) established in 1991 with four original staff. Its establishment and development are closely related to the history of the Library.

Poland

The decision to establish PRIS (Bureau of Research or *Biuro Studiów i Ekspertyz*) was made in 1990. The 65 original staff of the Bureau began to provide expert support in November 1990. The creation of an organizational framework of the Bureau was completed in December 1991, which coincided with the beginning of the first term of the *Sejm* of the Republic of Poland. At that time, the Bureau accomplished the full scope of its responsibilities. In 2006, the Bureau was reorganized and its name changed to *Biuro Analiz Sejmowych*. However, its English name was not changed (which is not a literal translation of its Polish equivalent).

The Bureau was an organizational unit of the Chancellery of the Polish parliament's lower house, the *Sejm*.

Slovak Republic

The Parliamentary Institute of the Slovak Parliament Chancellery was established in 1997 according to the §144 of the Act No. 350/1996 Coll and had eleven employees. From 24th October 1996 on the Rules of Procedure as an integral part of the Parliament Chancellery. The aim of the adopting of the individual paragraph for the Parliamentary Institute in the Act on the Rules of Procedure was to ensure the political and existential independence of this department that fulfils information and educational activities connected with the functioning of the National Council of the SR and its MPs.

Creation of the Parliamentary Institute as the individual part of the parliament chancellery represented a new period in the development of the informational and analytical background of the Parliament. It enabled better coordination of the activities of particular departments that provide information service for the Parliament and to work more effectively and conceptually.

At the beginning it had three subdivisions – Division of Analytical and Educational Activities, Division of Parliamentary Library and Division of Information Technologies. The Parliamentary Archive and the training center used to belong to the Parliamentary institute.

Slovenia

The Research Division of the Slovenian Parliament was established in 1998, as part of the National Assembly Services, and originally had eight staff. The Research Division was one of the three divisions led by an Assistant to the Secretary General. Employees attended a three-week training course in the German Bundestag in the framework of the Phare programme. The working methods of the Research Division followed the model used in the German Bundestag and were adapted to the needs (particularly with regard to size) of the Slovenian Parliament.

Analysis

In all cases, the department of PRIS was created as an integral part of the Parliament Chancellery. In Slovenia it was led by the Assistant to the Secretary General, in Hungary it was the part of the Parliament Library, in Poland it was administered by the General Secretariat of the Parliament and in former Czechoslovak Republic it was a department of the Chancellery of the Federal Assembly. In the Czech Republic and in the Slovak Republic, the PRIS is an independent department of the Parliament Chancellery (the Chamber of Deputies in the Czech Republic).

1.2 PRIS--Original scope of work

Czech Republic

In its early days, the Parliamentary Institute responded to requests of an informative, scientific or educational nature for the Federal Assembly. The majority of the requests were connected with legal topics.

Hungary

In addition to traditional library services, the new department provided special tailor-made information services to MPs. Its service portfolio enriched gradually with new elements, with different background materials:

- background materials for anniversary speeches;
- the so-called “Bridge” publications assisting the law-making process. The compiled issues included relevant Hungarian law in force, corresponding foreign national and international legal precedents and examples, statistical figures and related academic literature on the subjects concerned;
- compiled background materials for hearings, in the framework of special services provided for committees.

These issues were prepared on a proactive basis, and consisted of full-text documents.

Poland

Initially, the PRIS’ main purpose was to provide information, opinions and expertise required by *Sejm*’s departments, Deputies to the *Sejm*, and the Chief of the Chancellery of *Sejm*. They related to legal acts, their interpretation as well as to their expected and real social consequences, functioning of representative institutions and state administration authorities; and included analysis of the State budget, economic system, selected spheres of the State foreign and interior policy as well as of the questions remaining within the scope of interest of legislation. The Bureau also conducted studies and research on its own initiative. Its aim was to furnish the *Sejm*'s departments and Deputies with specialized information useful in the coming legislative activity.

The scope of statutory activities of the Bureau included arrangement of specialized seminars and lectures on subjects related to *Sejm* activities. The Bureau arranged a series of such seminars and lectures for the newly-elected Deputies of *Sejm* at the beginning of their first term.

The results of Bureau's works were published in three editorial series.

The "white" series included:

1. Information of the Bureau of Research
2. Materials and Documents of the Bureau of Research
3. Reports of the Bureau of Research.

The "green" series included:

4. Bulletin of the Deputies' Consultants Division. Expertise and Legal Opinions of the Bureau of Research.

The "red" series included:

5. Bulletin of Translation Division of the Bureau of Research.

These works were transmitted to the *Sejm's* Deputies, political groups, and to the State authorities.

The scope of activities of BSE did not include:

- to prepare bills and draft resolutions,
- to make translations on demand of Deputies' and political groups,
- to write Deputies' speeches,
- to collect information about political groups and Deputies,
- to execute orders in favour of the electors,
- to execute orders given by political groups,
- to perform legal consultations on the private affairs of Deputies.

Slovak Republic

The main role of the Parliamentary Institute was providing information for MPs and Parliament employees (both proactive or on request), educational activities for MPs and Parliament employees, library and archive services, and maintenance of the computer network and personal computers in the Parliament.

Slovenia

The Research Division was founded on the basis of the former Ordinance on the Organisation and Work of the Services of the National Assembly and the Rules on Organisation and Post Classification of the National Assembly Services.

The Rules specified that the Research Division prepares research studies on various issues, expert analyses related to the work of the National Assembly, its working bodies and services, as well as comparative reviews of legal solutions, the provisions of the Rules of Procedure, the status of deputies, the functioning of parliaments and other related issues. In accordance with the then Rules, the Assistant to the Secretary General was also the Head of the Research Division.

The Rules on Handling Requests in the Research Division were also adopted for the work of the Division, specifying the manner of work, types of research papers, the publication thereof, etc.

1.3 PRIS Development and Expansion

Czech Republic

During the 1990s the Parliamentary Institute focused on two basic fields of study: general information, analysis and comparisons upon the request of MPs; and preparation for European Union members. After accession in 2004, the Institute focused on studies of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Institute took part in consultations of the Committee for the European Affairs dealing with the EU compatibility of domestic law.

In 2005, Parliamentary Institute was divided into three divisions. *The Division for Analytical Studies* provides research and analysis and answers questions of a legal and economic nature posed by elected officials in both houses. It provides consulting services to departments within the Chamber of Deputies. *The Division for European Affairs* serves the Committee for European Affairs by managing an EU document database and providing consultative services on EU legislation. *The Division for Education and Communication* provides services to the public. The divisions of the Parliamentary Institute work in close mutual contact and provide joint training seminars for Deputies, Senators and other bodies and departments of the Chamber of Deputies, Senate and their respective Offices. Employees of the Parliamentary institute also cooperate with each other and with other departments in the Office of the Chamber of Deputies to prepare projects and studies.

Hungary

A separate department of seven people was established in 2004 to provide research services to MPs. The main task of the new department was to prepare analyses on different policy topics concerning the lawmaking process. The Information Service for MPs continued its work with a staff of eight and with the task of providing information services and compiling background materials. Tasks which concerned the expertise of committees were shared by the two departments.

After six years of parallel operation, it became clear that a more effective and flexible service portfolio would be necessary as the two departments actually worked for the same target group. As a result, an integrated department of Information Service for MPs was formed in 2010 to provide both information and research services for MPs with a staff/team of 15 people.

Poland

During the first term of *Sejm* (1991-1993) the Bureau's infrastructure underwent extensive development and its ICT capacity was substantially enhanced. Involvement of experts in the work of certain *Sejm* committees and subcommittees increased step by step. In that period, the Bureau provided 2114 written expert reports for Deputies, *Sejm* committees, Presidium of the *Sejm* and for organizational units of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* and its Chief (i.e. Secretary General of the *Sejm*). The requests received by the Bureau related to:

- interpretation, content and application of legal provisions – particularly in the field of constitutional law, administrative law, civil law, economic law and criminal law;
- economic policy, state budget and economic system, taxation and international economic cooperation;
- constitutional systems of particular states, regulation of their legal and institutional systems;
- European integration;
- agriculture and environment protection;
- social policy.

In 1992, the Bureau organized an international seminar for parliamentary research services, held for the first time in the Eastern and Central European countries. In 1994, a Budget Analysis Division was established within the Bureau. The Bureau staff had 88 members (of

which 52 working full time), including 23 with a Doctor's Degree and seven university professors. In that time, the Bureau provided 6700 written expert reports and opinions (94% on its own). Moreover, it organized (or co-organized) 25 conferences.

In April 1995, the Bureau assumed responsibility for processing requests from *Sejm* committees and Deputies' political groups for reports and opinions to be prepared by outside experts. In the late 1990s, the Bureau provided 8606 written expert reports and opinions. It organized (or co-organized) 40 seminars, including a seminar for newly elected Deputies. A European Integration Team, subordinate directly to the Bureau's director, was created to provide opinion on the compliance of submitted bills with the legislation of the European Community. The staff of the Bureau consisted of 72 FTEs (full-time equivalents), and employed 87 members (of which 57 working full time), including 19 with a Doctor's Degree and 11 university professors.

In the early 2000s, the Bureau prepared provided 11,681 expert reports and opinions and organized (or co-organized) 25 seminars. The staff of the Bureau consisted of 73 FTEs, and employed 85 members (of which 61 working full time), including 21 with a Doctor's Degree and eight professors.

A reorganisation of the Bureau took place in March 2006, based on the Order of the Chief of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* No. 8. The scope of its responsibilities included cooperation with legislative services of the European Union and other states, as well as preparing documents concerning those representing the *Sejm* before the Court of Justice of the European Union in relation to the compliance of the proposals for EU legislation with the principle of subsidiarity. In the term following this reorganization, the Bureau received 5386 requests. The Legislative Analysis Department and the Team for Financial Analysis and State Budget prepared 703 amendments to the draft State Budget – for the purposes of the *Sejm* Public Finance Committee.

Since then the Bureau has been involved in cooperation with the European Center for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD).³ It is realized mostly by the exchange of information, in particular by responding to request. During the 5th term of the *Sejm*, the Bureau prepared 446 responses to ECPRD requests.

In December 2006, the Bureau initiated cooperation with the European Parliamentary Technology Assessment Network (EPTA). In April 2007, its application received positive recommendation from the meeting of EPTA Directors, resulting in its associate membership of this organization.

During the 5th term of the *Sejm*, the Bureau initiated new publication series including:

- "*Przed pierwszym czytaniem*" ("Before the First Reading") - This publication series contains expert opinions on certain bills or draft resolutions currently subject to parliamentary work.

- "*INFOS*" *Socio-Economic Issues* - Brief analytic newsletter on economic and social issues that are being currently discussed in Poland or that seem to be of high importance for the society "INFOS" is politically neutral, following the idea of objectivity and impartiality of the information provided.

³ The European Center for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD) is a tool for inter-parliamentary cooperation and information exchange. Members cooperate on comparative requests and surveys that originate from individual parliaments, and participate in informational seminars.

- “*Studia BAS*” (*BAS Studies*) - A series of scientific studies prepared by experts and dedicated to selected legal, social or economical problems. Many issues of that publication are prepared with the use of a comparative approach: comparing relevant data from European and other countries.

In that period the Bureau organized (or co-organized) seminars for newly elected Deputies.

At the end of the 5th term of the *Sejm* the staff of the Bureau had 74 members, including 45 with a Master’s Degree, 18 with a Doctor’s Degree and seven university professors.

Slovak Republic

In 1999 the secretary general separated the Division for Information Technologies from the Parliamentary Institute to increase managerial efficiency. The next reorganization took place in the year 2000 when the Parliamentary Institute created three divisions: the Division of Legislation and Approximation of Law, the Division of Analysis and Education and the Division of Parliament Library and two subdivisions: the Subdivision of Parliament Archive and the Subdivision of the International Assistance.

After the next reorganization in the year 2004, the Division of Legislation and Approximation of law was separated from the Parliamentary Institute, which has had since that time three divisions - Division of Analysis and Parliamentary Research, Division of Parliamentary Library and Division of Parliamentary Archive. Also in that year, the Department on European Affairs was established and its first employees were employees of the Parliamentary Institute.

Initially, it had 28 employees (including the IT Division, which had seven employees). Over time the number of employees rose and after the separation of the IT division and the EU affairs division it had 26 employees (there are three current divisions of the Parliamentary Institute). After the reduction of the PI in 2011, it has 20 employees.

Slovenia

Upon its establishment, the Research Division was an independent organisational unit. However, later in 2004, major organisational changes within the entire organisation of parliamentary services took place. With the new Ordinance on Internal Organisation, Positions and Titles in the National Assembly Services, research activity was included among the services performing professional and administrative tasks in relation to the preparation and conduct of the sessions of the National Assembly and other related activities. Two divisions were formed within the Secretariat of the National Assembly, namely the National Assembly Operations Division, and the Research and Documentation Division, which was comprised of two sections:

- The Research Section (formerly Research Division) and
- The Documentation and Library Section. (The Documentation and Library Division was once part of the Information and Documentation Division of the National Assembly.)

Such organisation proved to be sensible, as the work of the Research Section and the Documentation and Library Section is interrelated. In addition to its basic function - collecting documents and forwarding information to internal and external users - the Documentation and Library Section mainly offers assistance to researchers when looking for adequate reference sources for their research papers. The Documentation and Library Section

gathers and forwards data, as well as more complex information to users and generally does not require any additional processing. The content-related processing is the responsibility of the Research Section.

Analysis

In the 1990s, the process of forming and seeking the optimal model and scope of work of the PRIS took place in Central European countries. In most countries the services were in some way joined with library services and background information services.

The number of employees rose gradually; the Polish Parliament Chancellery has the biggest department with approximately 70 employees. The scope of work of the PRIS also broadened – including the types of information, research studies, comparisons etc. This is illustrated by the Polish PRIS, which produced 2,114 expert reports in the first term of *Sejm* (1991-1993) and 11,681 expert reports in its 4th term (2001-2005).

In all cases, the PRIS played an active role in the integration process in the European Union. The department was responsible for the approximation of bills with EU legislation (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic) and compliance of the legislation with the *Acquis Communautaire*. After the accession of these states to the EU (2004), in some countries the EU affairs department was separated from the PRIS (Slovak Republic), but in others it remained the integral part of this service (Czech Republic).

1.4 Role of the PRIS in the European integration process

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute provided professional and legal while the Czech Republic prepared for membership in the European Union. Since 1993, the Parliamentary Institute was engaged in projects whose goal was to support the active participation of the Czech Parliament in the process of transposition of EC/EU legislation into Czech national law, where the legislative body must exercise its final and decisive powers.

The Institute provided professional and training support for the members of the Committee for European Integration, which was newly established after the elections in 1998 and became a key participant in European affairs. Its main task was monitoring the process of transposition and implementation of European legislation in the Czech Republic. In the final phase of the preparations for membership in the European Union, also most of the discussions on the form of parliamentary oversight of European affairs and on the relation between the Government and the Parliament in implementing this oversight played out on the grounds of the Committee for European Integration.

The Parliamentary Institute participated in preparations of the “Euro amendment” of the Constitution of the Czech Republic and in preparations of the amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies (2000).

The Parliamentary Institute’s priorities included monitoring the development of European legislation and transposing such developments into Czech national law. As such, the Parliamentary Institute collected information pertaining to European law (EC/EU law) and, during its existence, amassed extensive information resources concerning the Czech Republic’s integration process.

Hungary

The role of the Information Service in the EU integration process was to provide documentation and information to MPs on the organs, institutions, procedures and activity of the European Union. During the accession period about 15-20 percent of requests from MPs concerned the EU affairs.

Poland

From the outset, the Bureau addressed questions linked to European integration and adjustment of Polish law to the requirements of EU law. A European Integration Team, subordinate directly to the Bureau's director, was created during the *Sejm's* third term to provide opinion on the compliance of submitted bills with the legislation of the European Community.

Slovak Republic

The Parliamentary Institute began to follow and monitor the integration process of the Slovak Republic into the European Union at its beginning. It provided expert background information for the Parliamentary Committee for European Integration. In the years 2000 – 2004, when the Division for Legislation and Approximation of Law was the integral part of the Parliamentary Institute, it checked the compatibility of bills with EU legislation.

After joining the EU in May 2004, the Division for EU affairs was created. It was staffed with former Parliamentary Institute employees. This division supported the Parliamentary Committee on European Affairs.

The Parliamentary Institute helped prepare the act on cooperation between the parliament and the government on EU Affairs, which took effect in August 2004, and the amendment of the *Rules of Procedure of the Parliament* upon EU entrance.

The Parliamentary Institute still provides the expert support on EU affairs by monitoring EU legislation. In the case that it is asked by the committee, the Parliamentary Institute gives an expert opinion on draft EU legislation.

Slovenia

The Research Division joined the European integration process in the framework of its regular activities. It prepared reviews of EU Member States' regulations and of EU law. Some employees also participated in working groups covering different fields together with the services of the competent working bodies.

Analysis

Each of the PRIS played an active role in the European integration process. The ways in which the PRIS were involved in this process are:

- preparing reviews of EU law (Slovenia)
- participating in working groups (Slovenia)
- checking the compliance of submitted bills with EU legislation (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic)
- organizing professional training sessions and support for the members of the committee for European Integration (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic)
- monitoring the process of transposition and implementation of European legislation (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic)
- facilitating discussions on the forms of Parliamentary oversight of EU affairs and the relation between the government and Parliament in implementation of this oversight (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic)
- preparing amendments for existing laws (the Constitution, Rules of procedure) or

1.5. Position and structure of the PRIS

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute is a department of the Chancellery of the Chamber of Deputies. Its position is stipulated in the Rule of Organization of the Chamber of Deputies. According to this Rule, the Parliamentary Institute resolves tasks of a scientific, informative and educational nature for the Chamber of Deputies: Deputies, Committees and other authorities, Office of the Chamber, Senate and its office, senators and Senate authorities.

The Parliamentary Institute is made up of three divisions that provide different services. *The Division for Analytical Studies* provides expert research and analysis services and answers questions (generally of a legal and economic nature) posed by Deputies and Senators and provides consulting services to the bodies of the Chamber of Deputies and departments of the Office of the Chamber of Deputies. *The Division for European Affairs* mostly serves the Committee for European Affairs by managing a database of documents received from the EU and providing expert consulting services to this committee regarding EU legislation. *The Division of Education and Communication* provides services to the public. The division includes the Information Center of the Chamber of Deputies.

Hungary

The office of the National Assembly is directed by the Speaker and divided into various organisational units: the Secretariat of Speaker, the Secretary General's Office (responsible for the support of lawmaking process), the Library of the Parliament, the Office of the General Director for Economics, the Office for Foreign Relations and the Office for Public Relations.

The organizational structure of the Library is divided into two main wings: one for traditional librarian services and services for the public and another for information services including the Information Service for MPs.

The Information Service for MPs' internal structure is divided into three parts; according to the three different locations it provides services:

- the reading room for MPs and further internal users in the building of the Parliament;
- the information center for MPs and further internal users in the separate Office building;
- and also a reading room for the public in the territory of the Library with a special collection of the Hungarian Parliamentary Documents.

Poland

The Bureau of Research is an organisational unit of the Chancellery of *Sejm* (i.e. a General Secretariat of the first chamber of Polish parliament), and is directly subordinate to the Chief of the Chancellery of the *Sejm*.

The Bureau is divided into nine units:

- 1) Management – responsible for coordination and organisation of work (of the Bureau and its departments).
- 2) Department of Parliamentary Law Research – deals with issues relating to widely understood constitutional and parliamentary law, including interpretation of the Standing Orders of the *Sejm*. The work of the Department concerns interpretation of the Act on the Exercise of the Mandate of a Deputy or Senator, the Standing Orders of the *Sejm*, as well as constitutional issues. The scope of its responsibilities includes, in particular, providing opinion on bills when doubts arise in the legislative process as to their constitutionality. The Department also initiates study work on matters being the subject of interest of the *Sejm*.
- 3) Department of Legislative Research – addresses a wide scope of topics. It engages mostly in those related to the status of a Deputy, self-regulatory bodies, labor law and social security matters. The department provides analysis in the field of administrative law, civil law and criminal law.
 - a) Legal and Legislative Group – provides opinion on bills from the perspective of existing law, as well as legal information and comparative law analysis, performs study work on the issues which are subject of interest of the *Sejm* (reflected, inter alia, in regular publication of reports on “A quantitative analysis of bills submitted to the *Sejm*”), cooperation with parliamentary and research services from other countries.
 - b) Enquiry and Consultancy Service – fulfills the tasks related to the practice of application of the existing law. Its responsibilities also enclose reception of requests (enquiries) from MPs, transfer of expert reports and legal opinions to those who made a request and provision of any information available to the Bureau. Its main tasks include: provision of interpretation and practice of application of existing law, preparing legal information and comparative law analysis, reception and processing of enquiries, transfer of expert reports and opinions.
- 4) Department of European and International Law Research – the issues addressed by the Department include analysis of: EU law, legislative work of the EU and case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, as well domestic lawmaking process from the point of view of the conformity with EU law.
- 5) Department for Matters before Constitutional Tribunal – prepares material explaining the position of the *Sejm* in the proceedings held before the Constitutional Tribunal and other procedural documents, as well as official documents of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* linked to the review of constitutionality of law.
- 6) Department of Comparative Research– deals mostly with comparative aspects of international affairs as well as internal organisation and functioning of other countries.

It provides information and analysis for individual Deputies and organisational units of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* (particularly *Sejm* committees) on the above issues, especially those concerning EU and NATO member states. The Department also provides opinion on certain bills and draft resolution of the *Sejm* and on legislative proposals prepared by the European Commission. It collaborates with the European Center for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) in the field of comparative studies. The Department is involved in the work of *Sejm* committees, particularly the International Affairs Committee and the National Defence Committee.

- 7) Department of Social, Economic and EU Policies Research– is divided into four groups:
 - a) Economic Affairs Group – deals with economic policy, macro-economic foundations of growth, development of infrastructure, in particular it provides analysis of the processes occurring in individual sectors of the economy and assessment of economic consequences of submitted legislative acts.
 - b) Group for Financial and State Budget Research – addresses the issues of public finances, particularly the State budget and budgetary law, taxation and tax law, banking law, foreign exchange law, financial management of earmarked funds, public finances discipline and administration.
 - c) Social Affairs Group – deals with social policy issues, particularly those concerning: family, the rights of the child and women’s rights as an element of human rights, education, tertiary education and lifelong education, social pathologies, including abuse (in the family, school, mobbing, child abuse), crime, including crime, addictions (including alcoholism, drug addiction), labour market (including unemployment, labour activation, protected labour market), system of pensions, social security benefits, cultural policy and national heritage, mass media market regulation and operation, national health and health care, the disability, physical education and sport.
 - d) Natural Resources Group – addresses the issues of policy on agriculture and rural development, particularly farm production and effectiveness, land use transformation, changes in infrastructure of rural areas and in agriculture, EU Common Agricultural Policy, environmental protection, forestry, water management and sustainable development.
- 8) Documentation and Database Section
- 9) Secretariat

Slovak Republic

The Parliamentary Institute is the integral part of the Parliament chancellery, which is led by the Secretary General. The Parliamentary Institute is based on the §144 of the Act No. 350/1996 Coll. on Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. According to this act the Parliamentary Institute, as a part of the Chancellery, shall perform information and training tasks related to the activities of the National Council and its Members. The Parliamentary Institute has three subdivisions: Division on the Parliamentary Research and Education, Division Parliamentary Library and Division Parliamentary Archive.

Slovenia

The Research and Documentation Division is one of five divisions in the Parliamentary administration and one of two divisions within the Secretariat of the National Assembly. The Secretariat is led by the Deputy Secretary General.

Analysis

A detailed chart describing the placement and structure of the PRIS in the Central European and Western Balkan countries researched in this study can be found in Appendix III.

1.6 Legal basis for the PRIS

Czech Republic

The position of the Parliamentary Institute is stipulated in the Rule of Organization of the Chamber of Deputies.

Hungary

The status of the Information Service for MPs is regulated by the Standing Orders of the National Assembly (from 1994), and by the Charter and the Institutional and Functional Regulations of the Office of the Hungarian Parliament (from 1997).

The Standing Orders of the Hungarian National Assembly (145 (6)) stipulates that the Office:

- a. provides for the registration of the library documents - with special regard to the copyright deposit copies of journalistic products - and their entering and bibliographical processing,*
- b. ensures the provision of the committees and the factions, the Members and their experts and the official organs of the Parliament with library documents,*
- c. processes and makes available the professional literature acquired, ensures information and library services,*
- d. in the interest of the information supply compiles computer-aided databases and mediates databases of external sources.*
- e. The Information Services for MPs provides relevant, objective, impartial, up-to-date information for MPs, for their experts and staff, for civil servants of the Office of the Parliament and Members of the European Parliament.”*

Poland

The legal basis for the functioning of the Bureau is given in the Standing Orders of the *Sejm* of the Republic of Poland [Consolidated text of the Resolution of July 30th, 1992 with further amendments], which states:

“ARTICLE 199

1. The Chancellery of the *Sejm* shall perform organizational and technical as well as consultative tasks related to the activity of the *Sejm* and its organs.

2. The Chancellery of the *Sejm* shall enable the Deputies to perform their representative functions, and shall in particular deliver the *Sejm*'s Papers and other reports and materials related to the work of the *Sejm*, including consolidated texts of bills; it shall enable the *Sejm* to take advantage of professional literature, analyses and experts' reports; and shall provide adequate conditions to the Deputies for participating in the work of the *Sejm* and its organs, and shall provide technical, organizational and financial means for the proper functioning of

Deputies' offices or other organizational units rendering services to Deputies in constituencies. “

The detailed organization and responsibilities of individual organizational units of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* is specified in its Organizational Rules. The current rules were adopted by virtue of the Regulation of the Chief of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* No. 8 dated 29 March 2006.

Slovak Republic

The Parliamentary Institute is based on the §144 of the Act No. 350/1996 Coll. on Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. According to this act the Parliamentary Institute, as a part of the Chancellery, shall perform information and training tasks related to the activities of the National Council and its Members.

Its position in the organizational structure of the parliament chancellery and its internal division was confirmed after the last change of the organizational structure of the chancellery in June 2012.

Slovenia

The legal basis for the existence of the Research Section includes the Ordinance on Internal Organisation, Positions and Titles of the National Assembly Services (Official Gazette of the RS, Nos. 50/2004 and 32/2008) (hereinafter referred to as: the Ordinance) and the Rules on Internal Organisation and the System of Positions in the Services of the National Assembly.

The work of the section is specifically regulated in the Rules on Requesting Research Papers and Handling of Requests issued by the Secretary General (as of 28 May 2012).

1.7 Number, Status and Profile of Staff

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute has 27 employees (two of which work part-time) and is administered by a director and deputy director. The staff is composed of 22 expert researchers (eleven lawyers, three economists, six political scientists, one historian and one technician), two assistants and three employees of the information center.

Hungary

The staff of Information Service for MPs consists of 15 civil servants, all graduates or postgraduates of higher education institutions and with specialization in law (1), political science (3), EU matters (1), economy (2), environment and agriculture (1), linguistics (2), history (3) or library science (2), with a knowledge of either English, German, French, Italian or Russian. Two staff members have a PhD degree in political sciences and history.

Poland

On August 1, 2012, the Bureau had 91 staff members. Twenty-six of these possessed a doctorate, 11 held a Doctor's Habilitated Degree, and one was a university professor. The majority of staff members were experts in law, economy and social sciences.

Slovak Republic

The Parliamentary Institute has 19 employees: nine in the Division of Parliamentary Research and Education, six in the Division of Parliamentary Library and four in the Division of Parliamentary Archive. The employees are either in the state service or civil service.

All employees of the division of Parliamentary research and education have a University degree and can speak at least one foreign language. There are two lawyers, two economists, two psychologists, two political scientists, one environmentalist and one expert for social affairs.

Slovenia

The Services of the National Assembly are subject to regulations governing civil servants (i.e. Civil Servants Act, Salary System in the Public Sector Act, Labour Relations Act, and Collective Agreement for the Public Sector).

There are eight work posts in the Research Section (official work posts), including the head of the section. However, only seven work posts are currently filled. The educational structure of employees and the manner of work have undergone only minor changes over the years. All employees either have academic titles, or a state bar exam or MBA. Currently there are two jurists, two economists, a communicologist and a psychologist working full-time at the Section.

Analysis

A list of the number of PRIS employees as compared to the total number of MPs for each surveyed country can be found in Appendix IV.

1.8 Services and Products Provided

Czech Republic

The Department of General Analysis deals predominantly with requests from Deputies and Senators in the field of foreign relations. The Department of EU Affairs provides expert consultations to the Committee for European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies, maintaining a database of incoming EU documents. The Department of Communication and Education provides services for public and operates the Information Center of the Chamber of Deputies. Each PI department cooperates with others to organize seminars for MPs and the public. Members of all departments participate commonly on major projects and analyses.

The PI serves as an educational and training center for the Chamber of Deputies and its Office employees by organizing seminars and study visits; and provides similar services to the Senate. Seminars and study visits are usually undertaken at the PI's initiative or at the request of an authority within the parliament or a group of four deputies or senators. Most seminars are prepared upon request of parliamentary committees.

Seminars and study visits are organized in two major sections. The first, called the general section, deals with issues of parliamentary system, parliament operations, MPs status issues and procedural rules of lawmaking.

Examples of general seminars:

- Parliament's situation within constitutional institutions of the Czech Republic
- The relationship between the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate and the President

- Deputy/Senator duties and rights

The second group of seminars focuses on the European Union. The PI organizes seminars on European integration – its history, institutions, legislative process and specialized themes of EU law and jurisprudence/case law of European Court of Justice, acceptance of qualifications, and the social security of migrants, etc. There is also a seminar on the future of EU integration.

In the case of a request for a seminar subject not covered by a PI staff member, the PI invites an external consultant from the relevant field. The duration of the seminars and study visits are determined in consultation with the consultant and reflects his/her time availability. PowerPoint presentations are used in seminars, and the PI provides supplementary documents, if required.

Since 2006, the PI has organized seminars for newly elected MPs who do not have previous experience with parliamentary work. During the period of the Czech Presidency of the European Union, the PI supported preparatory work on documents for various parliamentary activities.

Hungary

The Information Service for MPs is responsible for services provided for the internal users, including library, information and research services.

Traditional library services--including lending services--are available to internal users in two dedicated reading rooms, which also serve as information centers. By the request of internal users, the Information Service provides documents, selected bibliographies, press-reviews and selected information packages from different sources of information in hard copy or in electronic form.

“Infosheets” (short summaries of facts and opinions) are prepared for individual users, when short, compressed information is needed; or when the requested information is available from varied sources or in foreign languages.

In addition to providing research by request, the Information Service for MPs prepares general background materials. Background materials are prepared for memorial and anniversary speeches delivered on national and historical anniversaries, and other different illustrious days (e.g. International Day of Holocaust, International Day of Women, International Day of Democracy, International Day of People Rights, Day of Music, Day of Elderly People) – approximately 50 items per year. They contain information about the history of the day, academic and press articles on the occasion and policy concerned, and earlier speeches of leading politicians and related poems. Background materials for recurring events are updated year by year with new materials.

Background materials are prepared for hearings of minister-nominees and include the nominee’s professional and political profile such as his or her curriculum vitae, selected publications that are relevant to the field, and recent interviews. Background materials for regular hearings of ministers and government officials focus on news, interviews, and press articles that cover the minister’s or official’s activities since the latest hearing, and his or her statements on timely issues that are related to committee’s field of responsibility.

Only party factions or committees (not individual MPs) can order regular media-reviews. In addition to different newspapers and free online media, unique sources of information are subscribed to and available from the Library – transcripts of TV and radio programmes and news from the database of Hungarian News Agency Corporation. Current regular (weekly or monthly) media-reviews are prepared on 29 different topics (e.g. Constitution, media, pension, employment, housing, energy policy) totaling approximately 800 items per year.

Analyses are the most-value added form of information provided by the Information Service for MPs. They are prepared on the current policy topics and the themes of certain bills, 20-35 items per year, in two main types. Comparative analyses contain a detailed prescription of EU member states' legal regulation and practice. The other type of analysis summarises the most relevant professional, political, governmental and civil opinion on the policy topic concerned. They are prepared on proactive basis or by the order of party factions or committees.

The Information Service for MPs handles approximately 7500-8000 requests per year. Thirty-nine percent of them are traditional library uses (reading on the spot; borrowing, ordering hard or electronic copies of certain documents). Fifty-four percent of the requests require more substantial research work (compiling information packages or background materials, writing short summaries or analyses). The proportion of different other works is seven percent: answers for ECPRD requests, tasks concerning different Library's projects, etc.

Poland

The Bureau of Research provides both Deputies and *Sejm* bodies with reliable information which allows a safe and effective exercise of a Deputy's mandate and secures the proper role of the *Sejm* in the tripartite system of government.

The tasks of the Bureau include:

- supporting the legislative process with an academic advice,
- providing expert assistance in the exercise of a Deputy's mandate,
- research (law, economy, society) related to the legislative process
- advising and providing opinions in matters related to Poland's EU membership
- cooperation with legal services of the European Union

The tasks are executed by:

- counseling on a range of legal and systemic topics, in particular
- monitoring the constitutionality of drafted legal solutions and their compliance with the European law
- interpreting the Standing Orders of the *Sejm* and the Act on the Exercise of the Mandate of a Deputy or Senator
- analyzing the correctness, effectiveness and quality of drafted legal solutions with regard to all fields of law
- consulting with regard to legal problems directly related to the exercise of the mandate.
- counseling on social and economic policy, as well as on international relations, in particular on:
 - economic development
 - finances and state budget
 - social development

- education, science, as well as scientific and technical progress
- agriculture and fisheries
- environmental protection
- regional development
- state institution and the self-government sector
- civil society
- Poland's position in Europe and throughout the World

The primary forms of activity include:

- providing opinions on draft legal acts
- assisting parliamentary committees
- providing answers to Deputy's requests
- comparative and interdisciplinary analyses
- organizing seminars and conferences
- preparing publications

The Bureau provides service by:

- preparation of written expert opinions
- maintenance of an electronic database of expert opinions.

The Bureau cooperates with academic circles, as well as legal and research services of foreign parliaments, including the European Center for Parliamentary Research & Documentation. Bureau is also an associate member of EPTA (European Parliamentary Technology Assessment) – a network of specialized organizations which advise their national Parliaments on the possible social and economic impact of new legislation.

Slovak Republic

In order to consider diverse aspects of draft bills, the Parliamentary Institute publishes information on draft bills, provides information on economic and social situation in the Slovak Republic, and produces information and analyses on factual problems. The Institute conducts parliamentary studies on selected topics relating to the activities of the national council. These studies are complex and comparative analyses.

On request, the Institute's staff provides comparisons with other countries' legislation, or with historical legislation. The staff answers questions received from MPs (usually related to foreign policy, economics, education system, culture, social affairs, media, or the environment, etc.), and creates materials for the national council's debates on the state budget.

The Institute presents parliamentary studies and expert publications (e.g. how the parliament works, a practical guide to the MP's work, a small parliamentary dictionary, etc.), and information collected through internal parliamentary research is archived in a special database.

The Parliamentary Institute Section cooperates with the ECPRD. The Chancellery has been an ECPRD member since 1995. The Institute answers the requests of 70 parliamentary chambers from 46 European states' parliaments united in this expert network, and gathers information necessary for the work of the MPs of national council.

In the area of education, the Parliamentary Institute Section:

- prepares training sessions for the MPs and their assistants
- prepares seminars and conferences to the research topics
- provides lectures and tutorial activity.

The Institute's activities related to education are mainly focused on MPs and interns. Topics are related to parliamentarianism and the status and functions of the national council. These educational activities, most frequently organized at the beginning of a new legislative session, are complemented by other activities focused on economic and social problems, and are also organized for the professional public (seminars, conferences, etc.). The latter events are often co-organized with national or international scientific and educational organizations.

The organization of internships in the national council for university students is the Parliamentary Institute's responsibility. The goal of the internships is to introduce to students to the functions of the national council, as well as to train young professionals for the work in this field.

Based on positive experiences from the 1990s, when the national council received international support from EU member states and from the USA, the national council decided to provide support to partner parliaments from non-EU member states. This support is in the form of short-term fellowships and study visits organized with the financial support of partner organizations (e.g. National Democratic Institute and other NGOs). The goal of these fellowships and study visits is to familiarize participants with work of the expert departments of the chancellery, focusing on the practical application of knowledge.

Slovenia

Pursuant to the relevant ordinance, the tasks of the Section are the following:

- to provide exact and politically impartial information and data to the participants of the legislative procedure in the National Assembly,
- to prepare periodic analysis of the work efficiency of the Parliament and its working bodies,
- to present the Parliament's work and the characteristics thereof in the various periods

In practice this means that the Section prepares:

- research papers requested by deputies, deputy groups, working bodies, the plenary, and the Secretary General,
- reports (biannual, annual and end-of-term) on the work of the National Assembly,
- comprehensive part of replies to international questionnaires (ECPRD and others),
- proactive (own-initiative) research papers,
- cooperates with other organisational units in the preparation of specific publications and the National Assembly's website.

Analysis

A detailed chart of the types of services provided by researchers of the PRIS in the surveyed countries can be found in Appendix V.

1.9 Research Tools and Methods

Hungary

Background materials are prepared in electronic form through the use of electronic resources, or by scanning the printed documents. The content and format requirements for different research products are described in a manual, and templates are used for each type of background materials.

Proactive research products are prepared based on studying legislative plans (provided by the government to the parliament two months before each session) and committee agendas. Information is collected mainly from electronic resources (free access or subscribed full text databases, internet), printed documents (using the Library's catalogue, online and self-developed bibliographical databases), or using professional contacts (ECPRD).

During the processing and synthesizing of information researchers are required to maintain professional accuracy and political neutrality.

Proactive research products are published on the intranet site of the Information Service for MPs, and offered to MPs via email. They can order the products in electronic form via email, in printed form, or download from the Service's intranet site.

Poland

Experts preparing research products make use of both internal and external computer databases. Internal databases, containing the results of previous studies and research, include: Lotus system, ISAP (Legislation on the Internet), REX (full-text database relating to our enquiries) and SUE (database of *Sejm* European Affairs Committee). External databases and ICT tools include the system of legal information LEX, EMIS, etc. Another important source of information is the collection of professional books and scientific journals held in the *Sejm* Library and in a reference library of the Bureau. Sometimes, opinions are prepared by external experts, representing mostly academic community.

Slovak Republic

The PI prepares requested information using methods such as defining the problem, gathering relevant sources of information (library sources, internet sources, request for information through ECPRD, databases of national legislation, IPEX etc.), selecting of relevant sources of information, using of information from all the sides concerned, analysis and synthesis, comparative research, historical analysis, case studies, and statistical methods, etc. Sometimes direct contact with relevant institutions is used. Information that the PI provides must be balanced, apolitical and objective. The recipient of the information is immaterial.

Informational materials are delivered to recipients via an e-mail and in hard copy; and are published on the intranet under the Division of Parliamentary Research and Education's section. When preparing information at the request of an MP, there is a 30 day term of "exclusivity" during which the information requested is unavailable to any other requester. After this term it is available to other MPs and on the intranet.

Slovenia

The following principles are considered when drafting research papers:

- topics related to legislative projects
- political impartiality

- professional approach – use of scientific methods
- adequate presentation for the purposes and needs of the parliament
- updatedness and usefulness of information
- confidence and openness
- links with professional and scientific institutions and access to various databases
- continuous training of staff

Since the PI's usual requests involve sociological research, the scientific methods used typically include qualitative methods; yet simpler quantitative methods are also used. The descriptive method of the issue prevails, while in terms of the content, the descriptions of individual systems and social sub-systems and public policies (with an emphasis on the legal aspects) in EU Member States are the dominant ones.

Typical methods and research procedures used are the following:

- defining the problem (used in all research papers);
- searching for references and gathering relevant references (used in all research papers);
- examining primary references and interpretation thereof (used in almost all research papers);
- examining secondary references - if such exists on specific issues - and interpretation thereof (used in a large number of research papers);
- descriptive method (used in almost all research papers)
- comparative research (used to some extent in comparative studies);
- case studies (used in some research papers);
- analyses of official statistics (used in some research papers);
- surveys, questionnaires and opinion polls (used exceptionally);
- interviews (used exceptionally in the case of absence of other references);
- historical analysis (used exceptionally).

The introduction of each research paper contains specific methodological facts which relate to the scientific methods used. In particular, it cites how data and information were acquired and provides a short description of the issue or the definition of the examined field. In their work, researchers are largely independent and also responsible for the final product and the use of correct methods (which is of course to be accepted considering their academic titles) with their signatures. Each research paper is also examined by the heads of the section and the division.

In terms of their form, research papers may be:

- DP - documentation with summaries (selected materials from different information sources with brief summaries of the content);
- PO - data (more complex expert data, additionally edited, commented, selected and accompanied by charts, etc.);
- IN - general information - brief outline of the selected issue;
- PP - comparative review (review of arrangements in various EU Member States and other countries);
- AN - study - analysis.

1.10 Cooperation and Communication with Committees and Other Departments

Poland

The Bureau accepts requests for reports and/or expert opinions from the following entities:

- Marshal [Speaker] of the *Sejm*,
- Vice-Marshals [Deputy Speakers] of the *Sejm*,
- Presidium of the *Sejm*,
- Council of Seniors,
- *Sejm* committees and subcommittees,
- Chief of the Chancellery [Secretary General] of the *Sejm*,
- Deputies of Chief of the Chancellery of the *Sejm*,
- organisational units of the Chancellery of the *Sejm*,
- parliamentary clubs and groups [political groupings of Deputies],
- Deputies to the *Sejm*.

All the inquiries for expert report or opinion are to be submitted in writing, except for those made by Deputies. The deadline depends on circumstances, but is typically 14 days. Experts from the Bureau participate in meetings of *Sejm* committees where they may explain their opinion or provide their expertise. The Bureau acts as an agent in commissioning of consultancy and permanent advisors for *Sejm* committees. Nevertheless, final decisions concerning the commission of expert reports and opinions for the purposes of a *Sejm* committee or subcommittee are taken by the presidium or chairperson of the committee or subcommittee.

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute responds to scientific, informative and educational research inquiries for the Chamber of Deputies: Deputies, Committees and other authorities. However, the most intensive cooperation is with the Committee for European Affairs and the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Hungary

The Information Service for MPs provides special services for committees. Every information specialist from the staff of the department – based on their educational background – is responsible for serving one of the standing committees. They support the committee's legislative and government-controlling functions with different background materials, such as regular media-reviews on the topic of the committee's field of responsibility; issues for regular and pre-election hearings, media reviews and/or analyses on bills or hot topics that are on the agenda.

There is close cooperation with the Information Department of the Secretary General's Office that provides information on parliamentary procedures (status of bills and amendments, delivered speeches and votes on the plenary sessions and committee meetings, etc.). The common information services center for MPs is located in the Office building. It is very convenient for users to find a whole range of information at a single location. The requests are shared between the two departments by the field of their responsibility.

The staff of the Information Service for MPs takes part in different projects organized or coordinated by other departments of the Office of the Parliament; for example in webpage

projects of the Speaker's Office, in youth educational programmes of the Office for Public Relations and in twinning projects coordinated by the Office for Foreign Relations.

Slovak Republic

Committees are entitled to request information from the Parliamentary Institute. One form of cooperation between PRIS and committees is providing them information – either on request or proactively according to the bills that are being discussed by the committee. Experts from the Parliamentary Institute attend the committees' meetings (according to their specialisation) and provide the expert background for MPs.

There is triple support of each committee from the parliamentary chancellery – from the secretariat of the committee (clerk and secretary), the Legislative department and the Parliamentary Institute. This means that during committee meetings, in addition to the committee clerk there is usually present one employee from the Legislative Department and one employee from the Parliamentary Institute.

The Parliamentary Institute also answers requests from other departments of the chancellery, mainly the Department on International Relations and protocol and Department on Communication. On the other hand it sometimes asks other departments for information when preparing its materials, mainly when they are for other Parliaments (e.g. through ECPRD).

The Parliamentary Institute cooperates with the Department on International Relations and Protocol in organising of international seminars and conferences on chosen Parliament or legislative subjects.

Slovenia

The Research Section cooperates with other organisational units either at their or its own initiative. The majority of research papers are requested by deputies as individual requesting parties. The working bodies are also among the possible requesting parties of research papers. Some working bodies invite the Research Section to attend meetings which include research papers among the documents for discussion. The Research Section cooperates most intensively with the Documentation and Library Section (gathering references), the Public Relations Office (more complex press questions), the Section for International Relations, Protocol and Translation (replies to international questionnaires, translations), the Section for Preparing and Conducting Sessions of the National Assembly and its Working Bodies (statistical data), and the services of the Commission for Public Office and Elections and the Section for the Development of the Information System.

The Head of the Research and Documentation Division is also ECPRD correspondent who proposes to the secretary general the specific organisation unit which is to provide the reply to questions from that body.

1.11 Funding for the PRIS

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute is funded from the budget of the Chancellery of the Chamber of Deputies. There is no separate chapter of the budget for the Parliamentary Institute.

Hungary

PRIS is financed by the budget of the Library, without specially allocated resources.

Poland

The budget of the Bureau, as an organizational unit of the Chancellery of the *Sejm*, is as a whole contained in the Budget of the Chancellery of the *Sejm*. The draft budget of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* is set by the Marshal [Speaker] of the *Sejm* who also supervises its implementation.

Slovak Republic

Parliamentary Institute is funded from the budget of the Chancellery of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, which is one of the chapters of the state budget which is approved in November each year. The Parliamentary Institute does not have a special chapter in the budget of the chancellery.

Slovenia

The Section has no appropriated funds. All funds for salaries, equipment and other funds for the work of the National Assembly services are earmarked in the state budget. However, the Research and Documentation Division has special funds for research projects about the work of the National Assembly, which are outsourced to external institutions through tendering procedures. These projects are not included in the research tasks.

1.12 Hiring Process for Staff

Czech Republic

The staff of the Parliamentary Institute is frequently recruited from the trainees. All candidates go through an entrance interview at the direction of the Parliamentary Institute.

Hungary

The members of the staff of the Information Service for MPs are recruited via open competition. The vacancies are advertised on the internet with the detailed description of the required qualification, experience and skills. The head of the Service runs the recruitment process and makes a proposal for the decision, which is finally made by the Speaker himself.

Poland

Recruitment of staff for the Bureau is carried out by the Chancellery of the *Sejm*, in view of the needs and financial resources of the Chancellery. There is a *Sejm* apprenticeship which may lead to hiring staff. *Sejm* apprenticeship is a form of administrative apprenticeship. Candidates for it are selected within the Chancellery and outside. *Sejm* apprenticeship lasts 12 months, but may be shortened by the Chief of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* to six months, recognizing the period of previous employment of the apprentice. The apprenticeship ends with a qualification assessment, taking into account the theoretical and practical abilities of participants, including the result of final exam and opinion of a tutor relating to practical performance of apprentices. It should be noted, that majority of those who have completed the apprenticeship are hired in the Chancellery of the *Sejm*.

Slovak Republic

The recruitment procedure for Parliamentary Institute is similar to any other post in the Parliament chancellery – it is conducted through either open or internal competition. This competition is set according to the needs of the department and to the financial sources of the chancellery. The competition commission is composed of the head of the Personnel Department, the head of the Parliamentary Institute and other employees of the chancellery.

Slovenia

Hiring at the Research Section is conducted in the manner which applies to all official work posts at the National Assembly, either through open or internal (within the public administration) competitions. The Secretary General decides on the type of position within the scope of the classification of posts. The selection procedure also involves a special commission, generally comprised the Head of the Organisation and Personnel Section, the Head of the Research and Documentation Division and the Head of the Research Section.

One or more interviews may be conducted with the candidates. Moreover, candidates may be required to prepare a test research paper.

1.13 Influence on the Legislative Process

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute provides studies or comparisons which can be used by the MP the moment a proposed bill is formulated.

Hungary

An integrated task management system (KERD) based on free access SharePoint software is used for collecting quantitative data provided to MPs. It collects data on the number, type and topic of requests, status of users, method of receiving the request (personally, by phone, by e-mail), and usage of background materials that are ordered by email. The intranet site automatically produces statistics related to the download of particular research products.

Regular feedback is gathered from users following replies from the PRIS (gathered personally, by phone, or by email), as well as from speeches delivered in plenary sessions and committee meetings (which are recorded as references to PRIS products) and through occasional questionnaires concerning user satisfaction.

The Information Service for MPs is planning a general survey on users' satisfaction in 2013 (before the next elections).

Poland

Opinions provided by the Bureau (prepared on its own or by outside experts) do not have any binding impact on the legislative process, but are of advisory character. However, they are of great importance for the practice of legislative work of the *Sejm*. In the context of the rules of procedure of the *Sejm*, a special role is played by opinions concerning conformity of the proposal of a submitted bill with EU law. The Marshal of the *Sejm*, having received a bill — other than bills introduced by the President of the Republic or the Council of Ministers — shall, before referring the bill for its first reading, order preparation by experts of the Chancellery of the *Sejm* of an opinion on the conformity of the introduced bill to the legislation of the European Union (Article 34 paragraph of the Standing Orders of the *Sejm*). It should be stressed that authorised entities, particularly Deputies as well as *Sejm* Committees

and political groups of Deputies' may apply for opinions in relation to bills at any stage of legislative process. This solution provides Deputies with a necessary basis (both practical and theoretical) for their legislative work. The staff and collaborators of the Bureau often take part in the meetings of *Sejm* committees where they present arguments for their position and provide answer to Deputies' questions.

Slovak Republic

There is no objective system of evaluation to measure the influence on the legislative process by the Parliamentary Institute. But information from the provided materials is often cited during discussions in committee meetings or in the plenary session. This information serves as the basis for argument for individual MPs or political clubs to assert solutions. Information is dedicated sometimes to MPs who are not so well-oriented in particular field to gain the basic overview of the problem covered by the bill.

Slovenia

Research papers are one of the documents available to deputies as individuals, deputy groups and working bodies in the decision-making process. The Research Section does not systematically collect information about the actual use or influence of the Section's research papers.

1.14 Training and Development Opportunities for Staff

Czech Republic

The Parliamentary Institute supports further education of its experts. The Institute pays for summer school fees and foreign study visits. Furthermore, employees of the Institute are supported in their Ph.D studies.

Hungary

At least once in a parliamentary period (four years) the staff of the office is offered a training course. Different training courses are usually organized during the break between the two parliamentary periods. Occasional training sessions are held on EU matters and protocol, regular training courses on ICT skills (ECDL),⁴ and English language. Regular national conferences are organized in the parliament, which serves the professional development of the staff.

Poland

An employee may be allowed to participate in the desired form of education in order to complete a qualification or to gain new skills needed for the currently occupied or intended job. The training budget is determined annually in the budget of the Chancellery of the *Sejm*. Every year, based on the Employment Plan and the Employee Development, a Training Plan is prepared for that year – identifying the needs of the organizational units of the *Sejm* Chancellery in this area. It provides a basis for spending of budgetary resources allocated for training purposes in a given year. In addition, the Chancellery of the *Sejm* gives employees an opportunity to learn foreign languages (primarily English, French, German and Spanish) at different levels within general languages courses organized in the Chancellery of the *Sejm*.

⁴ The European Computer Driving License is a certification offered to demonstrate internet technology literacy.

Courses are organized either during working hours (in whole or in part) or after working hours.

Slovak Republic

The parliament Chancellery formerly organized various types of training sessions for employees, e.g. language courses, trainings of computer skills, psychological trainings etc. Some of these courses were co-financed from funds of the EU. During the integration process some seminars and trainings were organized regarding the functioning of the EU institutions and the legislative process of the EU. These were financed from EU funds such as “Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies” (PHARE), and the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX), etc. Currently there is a trend towards economic austerity measures in the civil service, so these trainings are minimized.

Slovenia

Training sessions were offered, on human resources management in particular, as well as on professional education and foreign languages. However, due to recent austerity measures, training opportunities of employees are limited.

1.15 Use of New Technologies

Hungary

Since 2004, the Information Service for MPs has been preparing background materials in an electronic form through online resources (subscribed full text databases of law, academic literature and newspapers, and reliable free access online sources from internet), or by scanning printed documents. The content and format requirements for different research products are framed in a manual, and easy-to-use (Microsoft Office Word) templates are prepared and used for each type of them. The templates contain the design of the cover page and the format of the text also.

The Information Service for MPs launched an e-mail service in 2004. Since then users can deliver requests via e-mail, and all proactive and most reactive products are delivered in electronic form. An increasing number of consumers use this form of request: in 2010 12 present and in 2011 28 present of requests arrived via e-mail.

The Information Service for MPs launched its own information webpage on the internal site of the Parliament. On the site users can find:

- different types of background materials – with a search engine,
- general information on the Library & its services for MPs
- access to the library’s catalogue and databases
- links to foreign constitutions, parliaments, standing orders, international organizations, Hungarian political and governmental institutions, statistical and pollster institutions.
- database of constituency-level economic and social statistics
- calendar of illustrious days – with short information & link to the existing background material.

Background materials are offered to MPs via e-mail. They can order them in electronic form via e-mail or in hard copy; or they can download them from the intranet site. By the end of 2012, the Information Service for MPs will publish analyses on the new internet site of the

Library for the broader public (compiled background materials are not possible to publish because of the intellectual property restrictions).

Poland

The use of ICT in the Bureau has been presented in paragraph 5 (Research tools and methods).

Slovak Republic

Employees of the Parliamentary Institute are equipped with hardware and software. All have an internet and intranet connection, and access to national and EU legislative databases. Researchers can watch the plenary sessions of the Parliament via an internal domain either on the TV set or on their computer. The use of new technologies is limited by economic austerity measures instituted by the chancellery.

Slovenia

Each researcher has a personal computer with access to internet, National Assembly databases, and some external databases. The Section has a network colour printer, serving also as a scanner and a copy machine. All employees have audio devices which transmit the sessions of the National Assembly and of the working bodies, and also serve as a radio. Laptops, tablets and smart phones are currently not used for work-related purposes.

1.16 Strengths and Weaknesses of the PRIS

Czech Republic

Strengths:

High level of expertise of the staff, connection with the academic area.

Weakness:

The Parliamentary Institute provides research of scientific nature for both Chambers of the Czech Parliament – Chamber of Deputy and Senate. However, the costs are covered by the budget of the Chamber of Deputies. In the Czech Republic, there is no Law on State Service.

Hungary

The speciality of the system is the integration of library, information and research services in responsibility of a single department (Information Service for MPs). Its strengths are easier access for users and visibility, as a result of the lack of rival services, providing different type of information. The result of integrated services is reflected in dynamically increasing circulation.

The weakness of the system is a permanent dilemma: providing research that is broad or deep. It is difficult to cover such a broad service portfolio.

Poland

Strengths:

- Quality of Staff (knowledge, self-direction, willingness to help, responsibility, punctuality and the ability to work under pressure to meet deadlines)
- Quality of products (trustworthiness, reliability, neutrality)
- Availability (Deputies can direct enquiries by e-mail)
- Good reputation
- Technology (well-equipped infrastructure, access to databases)

Weaknesses:

- Work overload

Slovak Republic

Strengths:

- staff - multidisciplinary professional knowledge, knowledge of foreign languages and skills in searching for information and writing professional texts
- apolitical, objective and balanced information materials
- access to the output of the PRIS via an internet and e-mail
- joint with the library services and archive, easier access to information
- association of the employees of the PI to particular Parliamentary committees

Weaknesses:

- unbalanced distribution of requests throughout the year – from foreign parliaments and from MPs that causes rush of work in some periods
- limited financial sources

Slovenia

The strengths of the Section are mainly in:

- the knowledge (multidisciplinary professional knowledge, knowledge of foreign languages) and skills (in searching for information and writing professional texts) of employees,
- the cooperation with the Documentation and Library Section for acquiring information, and
- in the formal and informal well-defined work process which gives an individual enough space for creativity, but of which rules are clearly defined as well,
- adequately defined responsibility of researchers (by signing research papers) and of the two heads (of the section and division) as regards the review of research papers.

The weaknesses include:

- unequal distribution of requests to be handled by the Section during the year, resulting in occasionally excessive workload to meet the set deadlines;
- occasional administrative barriers as the Section needs to comply with rules that apply to all employees and services of the National Assembly.

Analysis

A detailed list of common strengths and weaknesses identified by the surveyed countries can be found in Appendix VI.

1.17 Key challenges facing the PRIS

Czech Republic

In the next period the main task is to react to the Lisbon Treaty, which changed the legislative process.

Hungary

For the next parliamentary period starting in 2014, the Information Service for MPs is planning to prepare an iPhone and iPod compatible format of research products (primarily “Info sheets”) and it is considering launching a Facebook profile.

Poland

Since its reorganization in 2006, the Bureau has not undergone significant organizational change. Neither of the Deputies of the *Sejm* or its bodies has formulated suggestions on a possible organizational transformation. In the near future, there should not be any significant change in the competence of the Parliament which would make it necessary to reorganize the expert support for the Chamber.

Slovak Republic

The challenge is to maintain the quality of outputs with a reduced number of employees. If there is some ability to strengthen its work, there is an ambition to improve parliamentary research, e.g. PI is preparing a big comparative study on the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament – their development since the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918) and a comparison with similar acts of neighboring countries.

Slovenia

The Section's main challenge is to produce quality and relevant research papers to support the legislative procedure in a timely fashion. For its 10 year anniversary, it proposed to expand its scope of work also to include assessments of the impact of legislation and of scientific-technological development. Since this would imply an increase of staff and additional training, the idea was not further developed.

2. *The Development of Parliamentary Research and Information Services in the Western Balkans*

2.1. Position and structure of the PRIS

Albania

The Parliamentary research service and library department is part of the Information and Documentation section directly subordinated to the Secretary General.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Research Section is one of nine sections in the Common Service of the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina, established at the end of 2004.

One of the main tasks of the Research Section is preparing impartial, accurate and timely research papers, information, analyses and reports regarding legislation, reports and other topics which will be on the agenda of the parliamentary committees and Houses of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Research papers, information, analyses and reports are prepared for the House of Representatives, House of Peoples, parliamentary committees, parliamentary groups, members of parliament and other parliamentary bodies, thus providing support to their work. The Research Section also follows up the data on economic developments, prepares materials necessary for oversight and inquiry activity of the Parliamentary committees, cooperates and maintains contacts with similar services in the country and abroad, including cooperation with ECPRD.

Kosovo

The Administration of the Assembly is structured as follows:

- a. Office of the Secretary General
- b. General Directorate for legal and procedural support and
- c. General Directorate of General administration

In the recently approved organizational scheme, the existing research was merged with Library and Archives, and elevated in the organogram into the Directorate for Research, Library and Archives (DRLA), as one of the four Directorates under the General Directorate for Legal and Procedural Support. As of September 2012, there were two research officers.

A Research Unit has existed in the Assembly since 2006, but employed only one staffer and was not fully operational. The research unit was primarily involved in developing publication of the Assembly. The research unit employed only one staff. The research unit employs six staff; with the Director of the DRLA, a senior researcher and four junior researchers comprising this Directorate. (Note: the new structure of the DRLA, job descriptions, internal protocols etc., was designed based on recommendations from the representative of the Slovak Parliament, Lubomir Fajtak who supported the Assembly of Kosovo in the capacity of consultant under NDI's Western Balkans Legislative Strengthening Initiative.)

Macedonia

The Parliamentary Institute (PI) is a special organizational unit within the Parliamentary service supervised by the Secretary General and the Steering Council (SC).

Currently, the PI is composed of:

1. Head of the PI - providing general management– responsible for coordination and organization of work, as well as providing strategic guidelines, programming and development of the research services.
2. Sector for General Analysis - research and euro integration, responsible for providing research services regarding constitutional and parliamentary law, European approximation agenda and following the legislative process in committees.

- a) Unit for Legal Analysis - responsible for conducting legal analysis, rules of procedures interpretation issues, constitutional issues, parliamentary law,
- b) Unit for General Analysis and Research - conducting sector specific research such as economy, social policy, regional policy etc.

3) Sector for Education, Communication, Legislative Archive and Research Library - responsible for providing administrative capacity building measures for the staff, trainings in rules for procedure for newly elected MP, modern access to legislative archive and user friendly library services.

a) Unit for Education and Communication

b) Unit for Legislative Archive and Research Library

Montenegro

According to the Parliamentary Rulebook on Organization and Systematization, the section for research, analysis, library and documentation performs activities related to research and analysis (short reports, comparative analysis of international legislation and analytical studies) that support the work of members, working bodies and the service, liaises with local and international institutions, libraries, universities, state and other institutions for the needs of the work of the section; provides expert assistance and training for Parliament Members, staff and other beneficiaries of independent research directing them to data on the contents of electronic sources of information and search strategies; produces expert analyses and information as requested by international organisations, national parliaments and institutions under the network of ECPRD on legislation and activities of the Parliament of Montenegro; acquires, keeps and processes library materials and internal documents of the Parliament, produces special library collections and data collections; exchanges parliamentary documents with related institutions abroad, uses electronic sources of information; collects, keeps, classifies, processes and provides documentary and other written materials for use; performs activities of archiving parliamentary materials and items; and performs other activities as ordered by the Assistant General Secretary or Secretary General.

This section is an organizational unit within the Sector for Research, Documentation and IT Network. The section head is responsible to the Deputy Secretary General heading the Sector, who is then responsible to the Secretary General.

Serbia

In accordance with the Regulations on Internal Organization and Job Classification in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the Library of the National Assembly is a department within the Legislative Sector.

Analysis

A detailed chart describing the placement and structure of the PRIS in the Central European and Western Balkan countries researched in this study can be found in Appendix III.

2.2 Legal basis for the PRIS

Albania

The legislative basis of the functioning of the PRIS is the Rules of Procedure of the Albanian Assembly (article 120/b).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The legislative basis of the functioning of the Research Section is: the decision on the Organization of the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Rulebook on Internal Organization and Systematization of Job Positions in the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Internal Rules on Filing In and Processing a Research Request and Instruction on the Establishment, and the Implementation of the Early Warning System.

Kosovo

The structure and operations of the administration of the Assembly are defined by the regulation on the Administration of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. This regulation defines the responsibility of each administrative unit of the Assembly, including the DRLA. According to this regulation, the responsibility of the director in the field of research includes:

- providing legislative research services from professional literature of social and natural sciences, domestic and foreign practices, internet, databases and official statistics on all matters related to the work of the Assembly and its bodies,
- providing legislative research services, after the assessment of the head of division in consultation with the director, from the professional literature of social and natural sciences, domestic and foreign practices, internet, databases and official statistics on all matters related to the scope of department for legal and procedural issues,
- preparation of advice, analysis and provision of professional information in various areas through reports, memorandums and policy analysis related to the work of the Assembly and its bodies,
- providing legislative research services while respecting the principle of professionalism, confidentiality, political impartiality
- providing support in establishing the database for deputies of the Assembly, according to the legislature

Macedonia

The legal basis for the functioning of the parliamentary service is Article 42 of the Law on the Assembly (140/2009) of the Republic of Macedonia.

Article 42:

1. For the purpose of strengthening its legislative, oversight and research and analysis capacity, the Assembly establishes a special organizational unit (Parliamentary Institute).
2. The work of the special organizational unit from paragraph 1 of this article, is regulated by the Special Act adopted by the Secretary General, based on consensual positions and guidelines from the coordination of the President of the Assembly with Vice-presidents and coordinators of political groups, in a period of three months from the date when this law becomes legally binding.
3. The special organizational unit (Parliamentary Institute) is a research center, providing members of parliament with timely, objective and impartial research and analysis for conducting their parliamentary mandate.

Special act as referred to in Article 42 paragraph 2 was adopted in 2010, further proscribing work, scope, internal organization and management provision of Parliamentary Institute.

Montenegro

Articles 218 to 221 of the Rules of Procedure define the role and status of the Parliament Service. It is envisaged that the Parliamentary Service will perform professional tasks and other tasks to meet the needs of the Parliament, Committees of the Parliament, MPs in the Parliament, and specific tasks for MP Groups.

The Parliamentary Service is organized in accordance with the Rulebook on Organization and Systematization. The current organizational structure of the Parliamentary Service was established with the new Rulebook on Organization and Systematization in the Parliamentary Service adopted in June 2010. The Rulebook organizes the Service in seven organizational units.

The following are established within the Sector for Research, Documentation and IT Network:

- Section for research, analysis, library and documentation,
- IT Section,
- Section for recording and broadcasting the Parliament sessions, and
- Section for audio and written records.

In addition, there is a set of internal regulations related to the work of the Section that define its work in more detail.

Serbia

The main documents that create the legislative basis of the PRIS are: the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the Regulations on Internal Organization and Job Classification in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, and Instructions on Requesting the Research from the Library of the National Assembly.

Analysis

The PRIS are established mostly by the Rules of Procedure of the parliament. In the Slovak Republic, these rules are in the form of a law and the position and functions of its Parliamentary Institute are integrated directly in law; in Macedonia the legal basis for the functioning is provided by the Law on the Assembly. Some countries have adopted special regulations on the information provided by the PRIS, e.g. Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro. This is a useful tool to make the work of the PRIS effective and also acts as a protection against unjustified and unrealistic expectations.

2.3 Number, Status and Profile of Staff

Albania

There are five staff members in the Parliamentary Research Service and Library. Two work in Library of the Parliament and the other three in parliamentary research services. They have finished university studies and a two year course in Library Science. They have a Masters Degree in a Library Science, and are covered by the statute of civil servants.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Research Section employs five people:

- head of Section,
- two expert advisors (one of them is BSc. economist and one is Master of Political Science – International Relations and Economic Diplomacy and BSc. journalist),
- one expert associate (BSc. journalist) and
- one administrative-technical assistant.

Kosovo

The Head of Directorate is currently being appointed. The DRLA employs six staff. The majority of the DRLA employees are lawyers by profession, two of which hold masters degree in law. Two of the staffers hold a BA in political science and MA in EU studies. Most researchers speak English and Serbian; two of them speak English, while one of them speaks Swedish.

Macedonia

As of September 13, 2013, the Parliamentary Institute has recruited 20 people, out of which 6 have Masters Degrees, 2 are enrolled in PhD programs and 2 of the lawyers have completed the official BAR exam. The rest are entitled with Bachelor's degrees and with significant experience in their respective fields of occupation.

Montenegro

According to the Rulebook, the Section includes the following job positions:

Head of Section, two research analysts, two associate researchers, one senior librarian, one library associate, two document associates (currently vacant) and two junior archivist. With the exception of junior archivists, all positions require at least university degree. General conditions of employment are prescribed by the Law on Civil Servants.

Serbia

The Library services have three librarians and eight researchers. In June of 2012, there were 11 employees in the Library, out of which six employees (the head of the Library, four researchers and one librarian) held the title of the senior adviser, three employees (one librarian and two researchers) held the title of the independent adviser and two employees (one librarian and one researcher) held the title of the junior counselor. All employees have a university degree. Among the researchers, one held M.A. in economy and one held an M.A. in political science. The head of Library held a Ph.D degree in language sciences.

Analysis

A list of the number of the PRIS employees as compared to the total number of MPs for each surveyed country can be found in Appendix IV.

2.4 Services and Products Provided

Albania

The Research service is part of the Library and was started in 2000. It undertakes research at the request of parliamentary committees and members of parliament and their staff on subjects which related directly to their work in the parliament. Because of the limited staff resources, priority is given to inquiries relating current business of the parliament.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Research Section provides information to members of parliament on various topics in the form of compilation of data and figures, general information, economic surveys, summaries of selected documents, comparative reviews, and analyses, at their request or at the Research Section's own incentive. The Research Section also informs members of parliament about its work and prepares research papers in the form of oral presentations.

Kosovo

The Directorate for Research, Library and Archive in the Assembly of Kosovo is in its initial phase of establishment. It does not provide any service or products currently. However, since 2009, with the support of NDI's Parliamentary Research Service (PRS), the research unit (one staffer) and other relevant staff (committee staff primarily) were involved in coordinating an internship program, providing basic comparative research, providing in-depth research through local think tanks and organizing policy briefings. These services and products are in the process of being transformed from NDI to the newly established DRLA. An internal regulation on protocols and procedures will also be developed in order to ensure efficient functioning.

Macedonia

The Parliamentary Institute (PI) provides the following services:

- In the area of research and analysis: reports, summaries, analysis and impact assessment of draft proposals (related to the legislative process), exchange and cooperate with ECPRD network, GLIN and OSCE legislative base as well.
- In the area of communication and education: trainings, seminars, conferences and other forms of knowledge and experience exchange, briefings and seminars; bulletin, brochures and leaflets, visitor tours in the Assembly, internship program, and specific communication with public.
- In the area of legislative archiving: upgrade and maintenance of archive system, quick access to the archived documentation for research.
- Library services: the PI will function as a specialised library that maintains and upgrades the library funds, provides loan services and research services related to library resources.

Montenegro

PRIS provides comparative research papers, statistical data, short written and oral information, responses to ECPRD requests, and reports, etc.

Serbia

The Library provides expert and comparative analysis at the request of deputies and working bodies of the National Assembly on matters within the jurisdiction of the National Assembly. The website of the National Assembly has continually published research reports since 2008.

Researchers are responsible for drafting comparative research for committees; specifically a concise overview of the key expert opinions regarding any bill, report or document to be considered by the committee.

Analysis

A detailed chart of the types of services provided by researchers of the PRIS in the surveyed countries can be found in Appendix V.

2.5 Research Tools and Methods

Albania

I. The following is the process the request goes through:

1. Acceptance of the question by the service department
2. Registration of the question in the database
3. The Head of Service send the question to the appropriate researcher which will prepare the response

II. Preparation of response

1. First, the department checks all the possible independent sources of information: if this subject is exhausted in the documents of international organizations (e.g.: European Commission materials, reports of international organizations and non-governmental institutions etc...) or is exhausted in informative studies of foreign parliaments or ECPRD or it can send a request to ECPRD.
2. It then seeks and identifies information and available resources on the subject requested (based on physical and temporal availability)
3. Next, research services colleagues consult one another to prepare the response.
4. Preparation of draft response and adoption of the text by the director of service
5. Launch of the response after enrollment in the database.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The following methods of research are applied by the PRIS: descriptive, comparative and quantitative method, case study, secondary analysis of data, statistical methods, interview, survey, study/analysis of the relevant literature, etc. In its work, the Research Section uses the internet, Parliamentary Library, documentation, databases and contacts with other authorities, institutions and expert organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and abroad.

Kosovo

Since it is in the initial phase, the department has not yet determined any particular method of work. It does not currently provide access to specific resources such as scientific journals, reports or professional services online. NDI is working with the secretary general and the legal department to develop an intensive six month training plan for newly hired DRLA staff. The experience of parliaments in the region and beyond will be explored in order to increase the capacities of the DRLA to efficiently carry out its duties. Potential fellowships in the Slovak and Czech Republic will also be considered.

Macedonia

The Parliamentary Institute's research experts in preparing opinions will use electronic legal and academic databases, both from domestic and international sources, a contemporary library fund and an easy access archive system. These are all part of the acquisition plan at the time being.

As far as other methods of information gathering and processing are concerned, we train our staff to use direct links of communication with the experts from the executive, local self-government units or judiciary. Researchers attend the committee sessions in the Assembly. They are strongly encouraged to check the information from as many aspects as possible including consulting with CSOs or the academic community. The objectivity of how the data are been processed and disclosed to the recipient is guaranteed with three level of per-review process within the Parliamentary institute.

Montenegro

Tools that are used in research are the following: literature surveys and studies, questionnaires, interviews, processing and analysis (*ex post facto*), interpretation and generalization, etc. One may refer to the Section's products as more descriptive (in the sense that they describe the state of affairs as it already is), than analytical. The papers are also more fundamental than applied (meaning that they are rather concerned with generalizations than finding a solution to a specific issue).

Serbia

The most important sources of information are databases of national legislation, ECPRD, IPEX, and internet searches through sites like IPU, Legislation On Line, and EU portal, etc.

Analysis

Most-used research methods by PRIS are:

- Defining the problem
- Searching for references and gathering of relevant information sources
- Descriptive method
- Analysis and synthesis
- Comparative research

2.6 Cooperation and Communication with Committees and Other Departments

Albania

There is communication between the unit and committees.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Research Section cooperates with parliamentary committees by preparing research papers for them and, according to its abilities and capacities, follows the meetings of several committees and the topics that these committees deal with. It also has good cooperation with all other sections, most frequently with the Legislative-Legal Section, during the preparation of research papers.

Kosovo

The unit has still is not developed any consistent practice of cooperation with the committees, because until now this unit has worked with two investigative officers and has not been able

to support the requirements of parliamentary committees. However, in some cases, committees have helped researchers in development research, and in general there is a suitable environment for collaboration. It is important to note that each committee has a researcher/field analyst assigned to it (these researchers are not part of DRLA). Therefore, it is of critical importance to have them involved in all training sessions of the DRLA, and build practice of cooperation in the future, particularly due to the fact that committees are expected to be the main client/beneficiary of DRLA products and services. Particular importance will be given to cooperation with the political staff of parliamentary groups, so that parliamentary groups are aware of ways DRLA can support their work.

Macedonia

Research activities are provided for members of parliament in their different capacities, committees and councils and parliamentarian clubs who are entitled to request research services from the Parliamentary Institute (PI).

At present, the PI has not practiced official requests from a committee since the PI rules of proceeding are currently in the drafting process. Researchers are already part of the committees in the legislative monitoring process.

Montenegro

Depending on the organizational unit, the quality of cooperation varies from very good to quite challenging. Communication is more or less formal depending on the unit involved.

Serbia

The main function of the Library of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia is to support the work of deputies and the National Assembly by providing every sort of information and publication needed to carry out their activities.

Analysis

Forms of the cooperation of PRIS with parliamentary committees include:

- Preparing research papers (information) proactively regarding legislative proposals – all countries
- Preparing information on request of the committee – Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Serbia, Montenegro;
- Participation in committee sessions and expert cooperation with committees (one PRIS employee is associated to each committee) – Slovenia, Poland, Slovak Republic;
- Organizing of international seminars and conferences – Slovak Republic, Czech Republic.

Cooperation with other departments of the parliamentary chancellery:

- Answering requests from them: Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic.
- The most frequent cooperation is with the Department on Library and Documentation and Department on Public Relations.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly, including the Research Section, is financed through the budget of the Parliamentary Assembly, which is a part of the national budget Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Kosovo

There is no special line item for DRLA financing. According to budget officers, there is a budget line item (goods and services) that this unit may have access to, provided that their activities are in the favor of the Assembly. In the absence of an efficient PRIS in the past, the Secretary General decided to allocate annual funds to committee (10.000-20000 Euros) in order for them to independently hire short term experts or think tanks that provide research and expertise. However, this is not working very well, and these funds should be allocated to the DRLA, in order to be able to hire external expertise in case they do not have capacities to provide in house research and expertise. Of course this funding should come when the DRLA is fully functional and launched, and when committees file requests for research to the DRLA.

Macedonia

The Parliamentary Institute (PI) budget is a separate line contained in the budget of the parliamentary service and the Assembly as a whole. At this point there is no separate PI budget that would entitle efficient management of the financial resources provided by the PI senior management. The PI's establishment is supported by the National Democratic Institute and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Montenegro

The Section does not have a separate budget. However, at the beginning of a budget year, estimates are made in terms of the Section's needs such as: acquisition of literature, subscription to commercial data basis, preparation, design, translation and printing of annual report and semi-annual parliamentary reports, preparation, design and printing of other publications and brochures in Montenegrin and English language, translation and publication of selected research papers, IT equipment, archive material handling equipment, acquisition of standard office supplies, etc.

Serbia

The budget of the Library of the National Assembly is roughly 50.000 euro, including outlays for yearly subscriptions on official periodicals, databases, magazines and daily newspapers and excluding salaries of employees.

Analysis

Each of the states answered that the PRIS is financed from the budget of the Parliament Chancellery. Most of the services could provide better quality expert services if given more funding.

The Slovenian PRIS has special funds for research projects of the National Assembly (researches on the National Assembly) which are outsourced to external institutions through tendering procedures. These projects are not included in the research tasks.

In Kosovo, where the PRIS is still being formed, committees have dedicated funds to hire independent short-term experts to provide research. The PRIS' development would be helped if these funds were instead allocated for it to hire external experts to complement its in-house research and expertise.

2.8 Hiring Process for Staff

Albania

Hiring of staff is carried out through open competition based on merit (law no. 8549 / 1999 on the Status of the Civil Servant).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Staff of the Research Section (civil servants and employees), as well as of other sections in the Secretariat and of other institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, are employed in accordance with:

- the Law on Civil Service in the Institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which stipulates the procedures of public recruitment, internal vacancy, internal and external transfer of civil servants, and
- the Law on the Work in the Institutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which stipulates the procedure of hiring employees.

The procedure of public recruitment for employing civil servants is carried out by the Civil Service Agency of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the procedures of internal vacancy, internal and external transfer of civil servants are carried out jointly by the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Civil Service Agency; and the procedure of hiring employees is carried out by the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Kosovo

The process of employment of new staff has been slow, but in formal terms has respected recruitment procedures. NDI has monitored the hiring process for the DRLA staff and observation shows that the process was open and transparent.

Macedonia

The Parliamentary Institute (PI) employees are civil servants and the procedure described in the Law on Civil Servants applies to this hiring process. The process is launched by the Secretary General in cooperation with the State Agency for Administration. Out of candidates that pass the administrative selection criteria a short list of the five most successful candidates are invited to the selection interview.

Out of these five, a three candidate short list is made with the best candidates who must pass a psychological test. The Secretary General makes the final decision in the process. According to the Special Act, the Head of the PI should be consulted on the selection decision.

Montenegro

The hiring process is defined by the Law on Civil Servants.

Serbia

In accordance with the Law on Public Servants, public competition is required for filling all public servants posts.

Analysis

The process of hiring of PRIS staff is usually carried out according to the Act on Civil Service. In most Western Balkan parliaments the process is managed by a state agency tasked with filling all public servants posts. Contrary, in Central Europe and Slovenia the process is fully administered by parliaments.

2.9 Influence on the Legislative Process

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Members of parliament informed us that research papers from the Research Section were useful to them at the beginning of consideration/drafting of various bills, before drafting the amendments to the bills, and during consideration of various kinds of reports.

Kosovo

There has not been any comprehensive assessment, but if an assessment was based on number of staff and number of research papers produced by the unit, the influence would be found to be very low. However, there has been interest from MPs for research, which was directed to NDI for more information.

Macedonia

Research and analysis services provided by the Parliamentary Institute (prepared on its own initiative or by request) do not have any binding on the legislative process, but are for advisory purposes, for orientation purposes and for alternative solutions on a topic. This ultimately enriches the legislative debate in a way that supports the quality of the legislative process. MPs are free to use the research in the legislative process, proposing amendments or to enrich the discussions and policy options.

Montenegro

There is no established method of measuring the influence over the legislative process.

Serbia

The Library supports the legislative process rather than influencing it.

Analysis

There are typically no objective criteria for assessment of influencing of the legislative process. PRIS have only indirect evidence of this influence, e.g. noting that parts of research papers were used during discussions in committee or plenary sessions, as well as feedback from users of this information.

PRIS have special influence in countries where they also evaluate of the conformity of bills with EU law (e.g. Poland, Czech Republic). Their opinion is usually respected by MPs when

drafting legislative proposals. The Western Balkan countries are only beginning to create PRIS, so it is too soon to evaluate their influence of the legislative process.

2.10 Training and Development Opportunities for Staff

Albania

Training opportunities include attending national and international seminars and conferences on parliamentary matters; as well as official visits to foreign parliaments.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Staff members within the Research Section often attend seminars and training courses organized by the Civil Service Agency and Directorate for European Integration. They also participate in specialized training courses organized by the USAID Parliamentary Strengthening Project and the OSCE, etc.

Macedonia

The Parliamentary Institute (PI) devotes special attention to the need for administrative capacity building of employees. As civil servants the employees are entitled to education, training and continuous professional upgrade. This is part of the coordination with the HR unit within the parliamentary service when annual training assessment needs are addressed. In addition, the PI is considering a specialized program for sector specific trainings for the staff. The latest one occurred with the Instrument for Pre-accession legal and institutional set up provided by the specialized training center. The amount of funds for training is subject of donation support at the time being. We also encourage usage of EU training support mechanisms, such as TAIEX. ECPRD events are of great importance for proper development and networking activities of the staff. We also participated to the MATRA program provided by the Dutch government to Western Balkan countries.

Montenegro

Since the establishment of the unit, members of staff have participated in more than 20 trainings on topics related to public administration. This number includes training on acquiring skills such as team work, time management, conflict resolution, etc., with special focus placed on research knowledge and skills. Researchers participated in two trainings on research methods and techniques organized by OSCE, and three members of staff had an opportunity to participate in an internship program organized in the Slovak Parliamentary Institute and supported by NDI.

Serbia

There are various programs aimed to professional development of the Library staff: language courses, courses on management of electronic resources, courses on specific legislative topics, study visits; etc.

Analysis

The staff of PRIS attended training sessions on internet technology, foreign languages, EU matters, protocol; etc. In the past Central European parliaments benefited from pre-EU entrance funds such as PHARE and TAIEX. The states of the Western Balkans are largely

candidates for EU entrance and have greater opportunities for educating and training their employees with the aid of the EU.

2.11 Use of New Technologies

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Members of staff of the Research Section use all forms of new technology available in the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Kosovo

PRIS uses the same technology used by other units of Assembly. There is access to the internet, but limited or no access to online data bases or journals.

Macedonia

The Educational center that is part of the Parliamentary Institute premises is to be equipped with sophisticated tools for presentation, translation, education and conferencing equipment. At this point we have laptops for all employees. Specialized software solutions are being developed and will integrate with the e-parliament system. This solution will provide us with the electronic organization of our workflow especially in dealing with research requests. The Library fund will be electronically searchable and the EUROVOC classification system will be used.

Montenegro

Staff use internet and on-line commercial data bases such as COBISS system and EBSCO database. There are plans to develop a comprehensive DMS. In addition, models of digitizing the parliamentary archive have been considered, as well.

Serbia

The research and library services make use of software for the electronic cataloguing as well as of e-parliament, the internet, e-mail communication and electronic document management.

Analysis

Access to internet and intranet is a common tool in each PRIS. The Central European PRIS usually have access to national and EU legislative databases. These countries typically use an electronic system for tracking the legislative process, enabling PRIS staff to monitor a bill from the time it enters parliament until its publication in the collection of law.

Information requests are usually received and processed via an e-mail. The webpages of the parliaments are improving gradually and are becoming available in other languages (mainly English). The countries of the Western Balkans typically have some handicaps in using new technologies compared with Central European countries for financial reasons, but they are eliminating of this distinction.

2.12 Strengths and Weaknesses of the PRIS

Albania

Strengths:

- Legal Albanian reference databases
- Legal information
- Publications

Weaknesses:

- Lack of databases with full integral texts with search engine of Albanian laws and parliamentary debates,
- Training of research staff.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Research Section is not able to follow the work and needs of each parliamentary committee in detail, since the number of staff of the Section is smaller than number of parliamentary committees of the Parliamentary Assembly. However, the Section succeeds in responding to all research requests from the parliamentary committees.

Kosovo

Weaknesses have been outlined in above sections. In terms of strengths, there is a lot of hope in the newly hired staff. There is political will from the Speaker to support and strengthen the DRLA. The Secretary General has also listed the DRLA among its priorities.

Macedonia

Strengths:

- Broad political and leadership support for the establishment of the Parliamentary Institute (PI) and prioritization to become fully operational.
- Good reputation of professionalism and impartiality of the PI staff both with their quality as young, well-educated and willing to learn and improve skills.
- Involvement in the committees that are the real engine of the legislative process.

Weaknesses:

- Risk of overlapping with some tasks that should be overcome in future.

Montenegro

Strengths	Weaknesses
Enthusiasm and energy General Education Willingness to learn Dedication to work Knowledge of foreign languages Team work	Inability to attract more expert staff Lack of narrowly specialized staff Lack of more experienced staff Insufficient availability and usage of new technologies Insufficient understanding of colleagues

<p>Good quality of work achieved in a short period of time Oriented toward future Modern technology oriented Multi-task Well-developed written skills</p>	<p>from other units of the Sections' work Insufficient office space</p>
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Serbia

The main achievements are a provision of accurate and complete information and good cooperation with committees and other National Assembly departments. The weaknesses are mainly related to insufficient equipment.

Analysis

A detailed list of common strengths and weaknesses identified by the surveyed countries can be found in Appendix VI.

2.13 Key Challenges Facing the PRIS

Albania

The key challenge ahead for the PRIS is the digitalization of parliamentary documentation.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

One challenge is to respond to the needs of members of parliament in the process of harmonization of legislation with the *Acquis*, and another challenge is endeavouring to have each Research Section staff member responsible for work in particular fields in order to more effectively follow developments in those fields.

Macedonia

Key challenges at this time are to define protocols of work, manage workflow and to set best standards for quality services.

Montenegro

See the weaknesses listed in above sections.

Serbia

Further development of information products and application of e-Parliament technologies are considered priorities.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

1. Recommended Steps to Strengthen Legislative Research

- Produce integrated, interdisciplinary research. The kind of research that is most useful in a legislative environment is an integration of different disciplinary approaches that also incorporates political intelligence, value perspectives, and procedural considerations. Failure to consider and assign appropriate weights to the various dimensions of an issue forces non-specialist law makers to take on tasks for which they are not prepared. For example, producing separate analyses of the legal, economic, medical, scientific, and/or programmatic concerns of an issue force the legislator to play lawyer, doctor, engineer, and/or program specialist. A truly interdisciplinary approach requires a team working together and developing a shared understanding of the problem, and making a clear presentation.
- Make all work for the legislature concise and accessible. Legislators do not have time to read lengthy papers. In writing for the legislature, special care must be taken to:
 - Provide summaries
 - Use charts and graphs to illustrate points
 - Employ “bullets” and other typographical techniques

2. *Criteria and Performance Characteristics*

There are two key purposes for research and information in the legislative process: (1) to provide individual **Members** with the information needed to understand the policy issues on which they will be voting; and (2) to provide the in-depth information and analysis needed by **committees** in helping the legislature to assert its role in the policy process and to have choices available to exercise its prerogatives. These roles are outlined below in terms of normative statements of desired performance.

- Information for Members
 - Maintain a strong commitment to serving the needs of the legislature and its Members, and try to be helpful at all times.
 - Meet all deadlines or negotiate new ones that can be met.
 - Answer most routine requests for information (those with no deadline requested) within one week.
 - Provide materials that are balanced, brief, and relevant.
 - Seek to provide proactive work (including selective dissemination of information, clipping services, background reports).
 - Advertise the availability of assistance (brochures on services, new acquisitions lists, finding aids or annotated bibliographies of information on hot topics, etc.).
 - Seek regular feedback from the legislature on the quality and utility of current services, and solicit suggestions for improved services from Members and leadership.
- Analytical Information and Research for Committees
 - Serve in the role of “research broker” or “intermediary” between the world of ideas and the world of action, with a distinctly practical bias – never letting academic training and erudite colleagues get in the way of producing understandable and timely reports for the legislature.

- Focus on the legislative agenda and what is important to the legislature in deciding on which topics to concentrate limited analytical resources.
- Maintain a stock of up-to-date analytical reports on major issues of interest to the committees and the legislature.
- Meet deadlines of committees for reports and information.
- Stay in regular contact with the committee to ensure that all necessary services are provided on legislative issues of importance to the committee, and to maintain continuing relevance and timeliness of work in progress.
- Develop options and trace their effects (impact analysis) for the committee to facilitate informed decision-making.
- Anticipate issues and prepare committee in advance to deal with matters of importance in a non-crisis environment.

3. *Conclusion*

Institutions providing library and research services for legislatures in the future will need to be far more adaptable and strategic in approach than their predecessors. The reason is simple – change in the modern world is more rapid and pervasive today than ever before. These changes impinge upon and shape the substantive challenges and inner workings of the legislature itself at the same time that they transform the societies of which they are an essential part. Emerging trends in parliamentary research services are outlined below.

- ***Regional organizations of parliamentary information providers are becoming increasingly important.*** One of the most effective ways to share practical information and technology is through conferences and personal visits to the information providers of neighboring countries. However, the cost of travel to international conferences has become increasingly difficult to manage for many legislatures and legislative information providers. As a result, there has been a trend toward the creation of regional associations of information providers to lessen the distances and costs of exchanges. Examples of such regional organizations at the national level include the European Center for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), as well as one of the oldest regional associations representing the Nordic countries. There are two regional organizations in Asia and the Pacific, one for eastern and southern Africa, a new one proposed for pan-Africa, and one proposed for Latin America. There is also a partial international counterpart to ECPRD in the form of the Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments of the International Federation of Libraries and Institutions – or IFLA, which gathers once each year to share ideas for improving parliamentary information practices in their respective legislatures. Recent innovations at IFLA include the addition of full-day workshops on Research, and on Library and Research management techniques.
- ***Automation and telecommunications advances have had profound effects on how parliamentary information providers conduct their business -- and present equally profound challenges.*** The twin revolutions in automation and telecommunications are having a profound and immediate impact on nations and their legislatures. It is clear that automation and telecommunications can enhance the effectiveness of parliamentary information enterprises significantly.

At the same time, the availability of “instant gratification” of information needs creates expectations for more of the same from legislative clients. Why wait for the

parliamentary library or documentation center to provide a piece of information or the research service to do an analysis when one can go on the Internet and find “something” immediately? Partisan “think tanks” have their own homepages on the Internet, on which they offer readily useable position papers. Therefore, it is incumbent upon parliamentary libraries and research services to put information on the Web of comparable or better quality and utility. To fail in this effort is to lose two opportunities: (1) the chance to put before the legislature high-quality information that is unbiased and targeted directly on the needs of the legislature; and (2) to demonstrate that parliamentary institutions are up to the challenge of competing in the information revolution, and can be counted on to provide equivalent or better services than other outside institutions.

The spread of such technology is impressive. Today, roughly 70 per cent of legislatures have access to email, and two-thirds have a parliamentary website. Parliamentary libraries have access to both email and the Internet through the parliament itself, and over 20 per cent of the libraries either have their own website or are made accessible to clients through the main parliamentary website. The picture is much brighter in Europe, where all the respondents to the survey evidenced virtually universal access to computers for nearly all staff members, and full connectivity to both Internet and *Intranet* services.

After launching its own homepage on the congressional intranet in 1996, the U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS) saw the percentage of requests answered by direct access to the homepage grow astronomically in the course of 5 years – from roughly 33 per cent of total requests in 1997 to over 80 per cent in 2001. Through the CRS homepage, Congressional users can access the current status of legislation (including the text of bills and reports), track legislative issues, access all active CRS reports, make requests, and use electronic “briefing books” on topics of key legislative interest.

- ***Parliamentary information providers must make their services more relevant to and immediately useable by the legislature.*** This process starts with the individual member of Parliament, and moves outward and upward to committees and to parliamentary leadership. With many more new members of parliament, special efforts must be made to acquaint them with the services of parliamentary information providers. By the same token, the products and services should be easy to access, and easy to use – meaning short, non-technical, timely, with lots of charts and interpretive graphics, and, as noted before, a strong presence on the Web. This focus on the member and his/her unique needs in a legislative setting will help to overcome outside competition. Persuading the members of the advantage of balanced analysis over partisan argumentation is another element in this conversion equation.

In summary, the forces that will propel parliamentary information providers into closer contact with individual members and parliamentary leadership will also motivate them to provide more services for committees. As the legislature takes on greater activity in the policy process, it tends to rely more on its committees to refine proposals under consideration. That is certainly the case in the U.S. Congress and the German Bundestag, where committees play a determining role in the legislative policy process. As a result of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, the Congressional Research Service has a legal mandate to serve committees as its highest priority, and pays close attention to the legislative agenda in

patterning its services. This orientation to committees is partly fueled by the substantive research needs of the committees and the sensible response of research managers to concentrate analytical resources at that stage of the process where the most important decisions are made, and partly on economic support grounds. To continue to enjoy financial support in times of fiscal stringency will require research services and libraries to demonstrate their contribution to the important work of the legislature. Work for committees is one important manifestation of such an orientation, in addition to the abovementioned assistance to members of parliament and parliamentary leaders.

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V. Appendix I: Survey

Part I – Development of the Parliamentary research and information services (PRIS)

1. When has the PRIS formed in your Parliament?
2. How many people did the department have?
3. What was its position in the organizational structure of the Parliament chancellery?
4. What were its main roles, the scope of work?
5. How did the department change during the next years according to the number and profile of the staff, scope of its work, position in the structure of the chancellery, internal division of the department etc.?
6. What was the role of the PRIS in the European integration process?

Part II – Current status of the PRIS

1. Position of the PRIS in the organizational structure of the chancellery and its internal division (scheme of the organizational structure and the scope of work of particular departments)
2. Legislative base of the functioning of the PRIS
3. Number, status and profile of the staff
4. Services and products provided
5. Research tools and methods
6. Cooperation and communication with committees and other departments
7. Funding for the PRIS
8. The hiring process for staff
9. Influence on the legislative process
10. Training and development opportunities for staff
11. Using of new Technologies
12. Strengths and weaknesses of the PRIS
13. Key challenges facing the PRIS

Please, would you be so kind to send us the existing publications and information on PRIS in your country?

* * *

VI. Appendix II: Status of Parliamentary Research and Information Services (The data are available to the year 2002)

ECPRD conducted a survey on research services in 1998 and 2002. The 2002 survey had a response rate of 80%, with 44 of 55 parliamentary chambers in the ECPRD responding. This section combines those responses with information gathered from by the ECPRD in a 1998 survey and a study conducted by Jennifer Tanfield in 2000: *Parliamentary Library, Research and Information Services of Western Europe*, (ECPRD, 2000). As a result, additional information on five of the 11 nonrespondents is available and fairly current. These combined sources provide information on 49 chambers (nearly 90% of the total 55 chambers).

A. Central Research Organizations vs. “research services”

The studies make an essential distinction between the existence of a particular kind of organization (a central unit charged with doing research), and the availability of research services to the parliamentary chamber (which may be provided through a multiplicity of organizations located throughout the chamber). A central research unit is defined in fairly rigorous terms: (1) the name of the organization denotes its research and analysis function, (2) the staff have advanced academic degrees that support a research orientation, (3) there are at least three different academic disciplines present in the organization to permit it to carry out inter-disciplinary and integrative studies, and (4) the services and products offered to the chamber demonstrate the presence of research services. The discussion below focuses on the 49 chambers which have provided information (either from the 2002 survey, or from the data available from 1998 and/or 2000).

In the ECPRD survey, 13 of the 49 chambers indicated that they did not have a central research unit in the terms noted above. However, of those 13 lacking such a unit, 9 chambers report the availability of some “research services” provided through a number of different organizations in the chamber. Thus, while 27% of the chambers lack a central research organization, nearly all chambers have access to research services in some form through a number of different organizations.

B. Number of New Research Units

Since 1998 until 2002, seven new research organizations were created in ECPRD member parliaments (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, and the Second Chamber of the Netherlands, Norway, and Slovenia). This is an impressive period of expansion, exceeding the six new services created in the 1994-98 period, and equaling the years of 1990-94 following the launch of several newly independent nations and legislatures throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe (when new research organizations were created in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Polish *Sejm* and Polish Senat, and Hungary – as well as Cyprus). Ukraine eliminated its central parliamentary research organization in 2000, and relies on several remaining units in the Rada to provide legal research, as well as two non-governmental organizations outside the Rada for the availability of socio-economic analysis (the Institute for a Competitive Society and the Center for Political and Legal Reform). Over the 8-year period (1994-2002), over one-third of the chambers in ECPRD created new central research units (19 net new units for the 55 chambers).

According to the results of an April 2009 ECPRD study with 37 responding national parliaments, six national parliaments did not provide research or analytical services. Within

the list of parliaments with no designated research or analytical services there are the parliaments with longer democratic histories (e.g. France, Denmark) but also parliaments which have passed through the transition to democracy within the Third Wave (e.g. Croatia). In parliaments where there is no dedicated research service, there are a number of other configurations and services. For example, the informative role may be transmitted to the scope of the Parliamentary Library. However, the Parliamentary Library mainly provides reference materials and descriptive information. In Austria and Croatia the role of parliamentary research is under the scope of Parliamentary Library. Secondly, analytical services may be provided by the staff of party groups or caucuses. This occurs in Denmark where objective information for political work is obtained through the Library, but the parties hire staff with suitable academic qualifications to carry out political analysis. Thirdly, on some special occasions the analytical role may be transmitted to parliamentary committees. For example, the legal secretariat and committee secretariats elaborate legal analysis of questions of relevance to bills. In France, a substantial reorganization of legislative services started in 2006 and the analytical services are provided by committee secretariats and a division responsible for scrutiny and research. The Danish Folketing employs one in-house economic consultant who prepares descriptive economic analyses and other reports of socio-economic importance and one EU consultant who elaborates analyses on EU legal issues.

As previously mentioned, according to the ECPRD comparative study out of 37 responding national parliaments, 31 national parliaments provide research or analytical services. What is inevitably to be deliberated is the connection between the structure of parliaments (number of chambers) and the organization of research and analytical services within this framework. From the aggregate of bicameral parliaments not every chamber of these parliaments provides such services. An archetypical example is the German Parliament where in the Bundesrat, which represents the federal level of the constitutional framework, analytical services are not an independent structural unit. The electronic and printed sources are provided by the Library and informative background in the field of international relations is elaborated by the division 'Parliamentary Relations, Praesidium Office'. The opposite case is Italy, where a research department exists in every chamber.

Not only the national parliaments but also the assemblies of supranational organizations have to subserve the role of parliamentary research services. The Council of Europe no longer has a central research or analytical service but undertakes limited services by sector, in particular, the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly. In certain cases research questions by the Assembly and its members may be submitted to the Library of the European Court of Human Rights. Within the administrative structure of the European Parliament, the parliamentary research service is fully integrated into the existing Library structure with no separate organizational entity for the analytical service.

C. Scale and Structure of Central Research Organizations

Most of the central research services are relatively small (ranging from three to 10 research staff for 12 chambers, and 11-20 staff for an additional seven chambers). However, five chambers have central research services with a more substantial 21-30 member staff. The largest central research staffs are found in the German Bundestag (86), the Polish *Sejm* (79), the Italian Chamber of Deputies (45), and the British House of Commons (39).

The above-mentioned ECPRD comparative study found that among 37 responding national parliaments, the most comprehensive staff occurs in the United States where the parliamentary research services consist of 350 analysts and lawyers and 100 informative

professionals. The second largest analytical support is in the United Kingdom, where the staff numbers 155 employees. The number of staff is nearly the same in Canada and Italy. The smallest research and information staffs exist in Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Slovenia, where each has less than 10 experts.

Research and information services are usually internally divided into the following professions – analysts, lawyers, librarians and archivists, secretaries, and technical support (ICT). The largest numbers of lawyers work for the parliamentary research service in USA and Germany, and secretary functions are common mostly for Italy. In some cases a special position is assigned for economists, interpreters and linguists. Interpreters and linguists are employed in higher numbers in Belgium, Georgia and Italy.

In United Kingdom the research service is divided into eight subject-based sections. Each is headed by a subject specialist researcher and typically includes four other subject specialists. In Russia, the organizational chart of the parliamentary research services consists of the head of Department, deputy chiefs of Department, reviewers of Department, office of the economic analysis, office of the financial analysis, social policy office, office of national safety, office of the state building, office of parliamentary programs, office of parliamentary monitoring, situational office and information office. In the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Department of parliamentary research consists of five Units: Unit for research and analysis on request of other Departments of the Assembly, Unit for research and analysis on request of other European Parliaments, Public Relations and Statistical Information Unit, Library Unit and Documentation Unit.

A second way of organizing the departments is that the parliamentary research services have no subdivisions, although the experts are predominantly aimed at particular policy area. For example, in the Czech Republic the team of analysts is comprised of experts on general affairs, European affairs, and education. In Switzerland, the Documentation Service employs 10 part-time specialists concentrated on following issues: i) political institutions and law; ii) foreign policy, education, science, research and culture; iii) agriculture; iv) foreign affairs, international economy, European policy, media and communications and security policy; v) economics and social policy; vi) finance, taxation and housing; vii) health; viii) environment, town and country planning, energy and transport.

The linkage between parliamentary research services and the Parliamentary Library can be organized in three possible structures. First, the Library can be a sub-division of the parliamentary research service, e.g. Georgia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Secondly, the Library and the parliamentary research service are equal divisions subordinated to one specific unit, e.g. Armenia and Finland. Thirdly, the parliamentary research service can be a sub-division of Parliamentary Library e.g. Canada (PIRS is a service branch of Parliamentary Library).

VII. Appendix III: Analysis of Placement and Structure of the PRIS

Country	Name of the PRIS	Position in the Parliament Chancellery	Internal division
Albania	Parliamentary Research Service and Library	Secretary General → Information and Documentation Department → Parliamentary Research Service and Library	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Research Section	Secretariat of the Parliamentary assembly → Common Service → Research Section	
Czech Republic	Parliamentary Institute	Chancellery of the Chamber of Deputies → Parliamentary Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division for Analytical Studies • Division for European Affairs • Division on Education and Communication
Hungary	Information Service for MPs	Speaker → Library of the Parliament → Information Services → Information Service for MPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading room for MPs and internal users • Information center for MPs and internal users • Reading room for public
Kosovo	Directorate for Research, Library and Archives (DRLA)	Administration of the Assembly → General Directorate for legal and procedural support → Directorate for Research, Library and Archives (DRLA)	
Montenegro	Section for Research, Analysis, Library and Documentation	Secretary General (SG) → Sector for Research, Documentation and IT Network (Deputy SG) → Section for Research, Analysis, Library and Documentation	

Poland	Bureau of research	Chancellery of <i>Sejm</i> → Bureau of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management • Dep. of Parliamentary Law Research • Dep. Of Legislative Research • Dep. of European and International Law Research • Dep. For Matters before Constitutional tribunal • Dep. For comparative Research • Dep. Of social, Economic and EU Policies research • Documentation and database section • Secretariat
Serbia	Library of the National assembly	National Assembly of Serbia → Legislative sector → Library of the National assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Library • Research Department
Slovak Republic	Parliamentary Institute	Chancellery of the National Council of the SR → Department of Parliamentary Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division on Parliamentary Research and education • Division Parliamentary Library • Division Parliamentary Archive
Slovenia	Research and Documentation Division	Secretary General → Secretariat of the N.A. → Research and Documentation Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Section • Documentation and Library Section

VIII. Appendix IV: Number of PRIS Employees Compared to Total Number of MPs

Analysis

This section of the report delineates only so-called “researchers;” not librarians and documentarians (which are professions very closely joined with PRIS). The number of employees of each PRIS follows (and in brackets the total number of MPs is listed for comparison):

Slovenia – 7 (90 – lower house)

Hungary – 15 (386)

Poland – 91 (460 – lower house)

Czech Republic – 24 (281 –in both houses)

Slovak Republic – 9 (150)

Serbia – 8 (250)

Bosnia-Herzegovina – 5 (57 in both houses)

Montenegro – 5 (81)

Kosovo – 6 (120)

Albania – 3 (140)

The great majority of these employees has a University degree (except assistant positions) and can speak at least one foreign language. In most of the countries the status of these employees is regulated by the Civil Servants Act.

IX. Appendix V: Type of Work Done by PRIS Researchers in Each Surveyed Country

Analysis

This section described only the work of “researchers” of the PRIS, excluding the work of the librarians and documentarians. It is possible that research services are being provided by the state but that parliament hasn’t included this information in its answer.

Type of the service	Slo	Hun	Pol	CR	SR	Ser	BaH	Mon	Mac	Kos	Alb
Research papers proactive	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×			
Research papers on request	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×			×
Comparative analysis		×	×	×	×	×	×	×			
Reports on the work of the Parliament	×		×		×			×			×
Replies to foreign Parliaments (ECPRD)	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×			
Preparation of specific publications	×		×		×						×
Background information towards bills		×	×		×	×					×
Background information for speeches		×			×						
Background materials for hearings of minister-nominees		×									
Regular media-reviews		×									
Providing information towards EU matters			×	×	×						
Monitoring of the constitutionality of drafted laws and their compliance with EU law			×								
Considering of the			×								

compliance of the proposals with the principle of subsidiarity											
Interpreting the Standing Orders and acts on deputies			×								
Counseling on social, economic policy and international relations			×	×							
Assisting Parliamentary Committees			×		×						
Organizing seminars and conferences			×	×	×						
Cooperation with academic milieu			×								
Membership in EPTA			×								
Educational activities – for MPs, Parliament employees, University students				×	×						

X. Appendix VI: Common Strengths and Weakness Identified by Surveyed Countries

Analysis

Common **strengths** of the surveyed countries are:

- knowledge (multidisciplinary professional knowledge, knowledge of foreign languages) and skills (in searching for information and writing professional texts) of employees (Slovenia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Montenegro)
- cooperation with the Documentation and Library Section in acquiring information (Slovenia, Hungary, Slovak Republic)
- well-defined work process which gives an individual enough space for creativity, but of which rules are clearly defined as well (Slovenia)
- adequately defined responsibilities for researchers (because of the requirement to sign research papers) and of the head with regard to the review of research papers (Slovenia)
- Quality of products - trustworthiness, reliability, neutrality (Poland, Slovak Republic)
- Availability - Deputies can direct enquiries by e-mail (Poland, Slovak Republic)
- Good reputation (Poland)
- Technology - well-equipped infrastructure, access to databases (Poland)
- association of the employees of the PI to particular Parliamentary committees (Slovak Republic, Serbia)
- support from the Speaker of the parliament and Secretary General (Kosovo)

These **weaknesses** were mentioned by the surveyed countries:

- unequal distribution of requests to be handled during the year, resulting in occasionally excessive workload to meet the set deadlines (Slovenia, Poland, Slovak Republic)
- occasional administrative barriers that apply to all employees of the National Assembly (Slovenia)
- providing broad or deep information (Hungary)
- absence of the law on civil service (Czech Republic)
- limited financial sources (Slovak Republic)
- low number of staff (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
- inability to attract more expert staff (Montenegro)
- insufficient availability and usage of new technologies (Montenegro)
- insufficient cooperation with other departments staff (Montenegro)
- insufficient office space (Montenegro)
- lack of the databases with full integral texts of laws and Parliamentary debates (Albania)
- insufficient training of staff (Albania).