A Policy Department of the European Parliament
A new model for research support to parliamentary committees

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Introduction

• Worldwide, research support to committees is "of growing importance" (IFLA Guidelines 2009, p. 63)

• National Democratic Institute – parliamentary research services in C. Europe should "place more emphasis on assistance to committees, as committees are the primary actors in the legislative and oversight process" (NDI report 'Development of Parliamentary Research Services in Central Europe and the Western Balkans', p. 6)

• Service to committees is the preeminent objective in parliamentary research today
Key features of the Policy Department

• Research service **attached to the Committee structure**, working directly with Members and the Secretariats

• Delivers **customised support dedicated to the Committees** and their Chairs

• Provision of **in-person expertise** through e.g. oral briefing, in-the-room advice in legislative work, interactive workshops

• Extensive use of **outsourced expertise** with budget of €1.5M in 2015, for five Committees
Background

• The research service, like the Library, existed even in the predecessor organisations to the European Parliament, dating from c. 1953/4

• Conventional parliamentary research service – connected to the Library, following legislative work and Members’ interests/requests; autonomous in operation. By 1990s using a mix of internal & (some) outsourced expertise

• 2004/5 – reform. Organisational link with Library broken. Attached to Committee Secretariats. ‘Expertise Budgets’ allocated per Committee. Direct & near-exclusive gearing to Committee requirements.
Background

• After ten years of innovation, experience & evolution, useful to reflect and seek feedback

• Service not represented at IFLA in last ten years+ and innovations have never been presented

• Presentation refers to one of the five Policy Departments

• My background:
  – ‘Head of service’ in EP Library 2000-13
  – Chief of Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations 2013-15
  – Head of Policy Department, EP, from June 2015
Policy Department for Structural & Cohesion Policies (STCO)

- Serves 5 Committees (of 20 in the EP)
- This group of Committee Secretariats & the Policy Department are under one Director
- Five Policy Departments to cover all Committees (& Delegations)
Main source of work programme:

1. Generation of proposed research projects by Policy Department based on ‘scanning’
2. + Spontaneous requests
3. Formal consideration of proposals, often leading to new & revised proposals
4. Committees decide on topics
Work Programme - initial proposals

European Commission Work Programme
Legislative consultations & proposals
Topical issues

Political Group Advisors
Members (or Assistants to Members)
Committee Secretariat
Policy Department Specialists

Policy Department, Director & Committee Secretariat

Separately and/or together as ‘Expertise Hub’
Work Programme proposals & decision
Sources of work

• Formally, Committee ‘requests’ but often as a result of Policy Department proposal, including anticipation of future legislative work

• Chair can also request personal support for role e.g. drafting of briefings and source material or speaking points for speeches

• Pure ‘own-initiative’ products possible but so far infrequent (i.e. products without formal request)
Types of product/service

*Standard papers:*
- ‘At-a-glance’ note
- ‘Briefing’
- ‘In-depth Analysis’
- ‘Study’
- EP Factsheets

*Other products:*
- Workshops
- Oral briefings
- Embedded support
- Background notes & speaking points
Source of expertise

- Roughly half of published products are produced by in-house STCO specialists (more in some other Policy Departments)

- External expertise mainly for longer pieces and expert-led events such as workshops

- External experts are selected through:
  - Individual, published, competitive process
  - Framework contracts following competition
  - Market research and solicited individual tender for smaller pieces of work
Resources

- Expertise Budgets averaged €100K per Committee in 2005; Expertise budget for STCO alone = €1.5M in 2015 (i.e. Committee average for STCO = €300K)

- Current staffing in STCO Policy Department:
  - 11 research administrators (+ 1 Seconded National Expert)
  - 1 contracts specialist & 1 information specialist
  - 6 Assistants
  - Head of Unit
Production process

- Major piece of work - can take six months to set up contract and six months or more to deliver
- Timing of decision for research is critical
- Labour-intensive & lengthy procurement process
  - Mixed views on use of framework contracts
- Combination of subject specialist input, legal and administrative work; Contract Management
- Internal reviews & use of anti-plagiarism tool
- Outsourced independent expert peer review
Trends in recent years

- In-house products taking higher share
  (e.g. for AGRI 2005-9: 17% products in-house; 2010-14: 38% in-house; based on published products in the digital archive)

- Text products generally more concise

- Smaller contracts – faster, more precise selection of experts and better targeted output

- Rise in applied expertise/interactive products
Issues

- Overhead and speed of procurement process
- In-house expertise – getting, using, maintaining and keeping; Subject & Contract Management
- Variation by sector (the five Committee areas)
- Quality management (external & internal)
- Usability/volume of use vs. Real added value
- Integrated and customised service vs. Maintaining authority, objectivity & impartiality
- Quality of interaction with Members
Conclusion

- Challenging to operate but
  1. Research/expertise actually integrated in the legislative process, driven by specific Committee request and customised for the Committee
  2. Able to bring in the precise expertise required, not limited by in-house knowledge
  3. Not limited by traditional ‘research’ publication formats – can provide directly operational, live and interactive expert support
Conclusion

Thank you!

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