ETHICS CHECKLISTS FOR PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH & LIBRARY SERVICES

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THIS PRESENTATION DOES NOT REFER TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BUT TO PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH & LIBRARY SERVICES AS A WHOLE; IT REFLECTS THE PERSONAL VIEW OF THE AUTHOR AND DOES NOT REPRESENT THE VIEW OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
INTRODUCTION

• **Ethics** –
  - Good and bad, right and wrong
  - Fair treatment, equity
  - Correct use of public money and resources
  - Interests – recognising, responding to and managing interests
INTRODUCTION

Distinguish between –

a. General approach to ethics, morality
   • E.g. professional code of no discrimination, equal treatment for all clients

b. Ethical approach in an institutional context
   • E.g. institutional policy that Members of Parliament are privileged clients – there cannot be equal treatment of all clients
INTRODUCTION

As professionals we face two key ethical challenges –

a. Can I reconcile my professional and personal ethics with the institutional policies and practices that define how we must work?

b. In my area of responsibility, can I ensure that work is done ethically within the institutional framework?
   - E.g. institutional policy may not itself be equitable, but is it applied uniformly and fairly?

Iain Watt, DG IPOL, European Parliament - for IFLAPARL, Warsaw 2017
WHY ARE ETHICAL ISSUES IMPORTANT?

• How parliamentary research services and libraries handle ethical issues affects e.g.
  • Service performance, reputation and value of products
  • Product quality and authority
  • Relations with clients, staff & suppliers
  • Career and even health of you and your staff
WHAT GUIDANCE EXISTS?

• There is no direct reference to “ethics” in either the ‘Guidelines for legislative libraries’ or ‘Guidelines for parliamentary research services’
• There are generic ethical frameworks for e.g.
  • Library services
  • Academic/professional research in general
  • Public servants/officials of parliament
  • Procurement (which concerns especially contracted research)
  • Management of people etc.
• Useful but not sufficient for our purposes
WORK DONE SO FAR

• Topic introduced in IFLAPARL 2017 and a wide range of practical ethical challenges identified by survey and workshop
• Working group of the Standing Committee took the project forward
• Existing policies of parliamentary research & library services, with an ethical dimension, were collected and analysed
WORK DONE SO FAR

• Conclusion: not productive to lay down universal rules, but useful to identify ethical issues and examples of ‘solutions’
  • Idea of ‘checklists’ so that services can self-assess
• The checklists are based on the real-life cases and the issues covered by the existing policies
• They are draft and certainly need to be edited further – adding and removing points, revising texts

More info: https://www.ifla.org/node/61910
CHECKLISTS

• Divided into seven areas:
  1. Service mandate
  2. Autonomy within the administration
  3. Access to services
  4. Resource allocation
  5. Production methods
  6. Staff (human resource management)
  7. The power of Members

Draft checklists: https://www.ifla.org/node/62123
WORKSHOP

• In groups, to review one of the seven checklists
• Consider the issues listed
  • Are there issues missing from the list?
  • Any points that are irrelevant?
  • Which are the most important points?
• Do you find the idea of a self-assessment checklist useful?
• Is there another approach to working on ethics we should take instead, or in addition?
AFTER THE WORKSHOP

• Before you leave the IFLA Conference
  • Please answer all seven checklists *anonymously*, reflecting your view and the situation in your service
  • Put the completed checklists in the envelope provided
  • Return the envelope at the open session on Tuesday 28 August or give it to Iain Watt, Steve Wise, Karin Finer or any member of the Standing Committee.

• You are encouraged to discuss the question of service ethics with your staff and colleagues, and in the regional organisations for parliamentary research & library services. Share the conclusions!
THANK YOU!

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