

40 years ECPRD

a real contribution to
the effectiveness of
democracy in Europe



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Festschrift**

**Contributions made on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the European Centre for
Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)
1977-2017**

European Parliament
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
ECPRD Member Parliaments

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July 2017

Conception & Design: IDEA Unit | Print: Printing Unit | DG ITEC, EDIT Directorate |

PSD00111

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Foreword

Celebrating 40 years of existence of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), we are proud that the network has reached a stage of maturity. Based on the feedback we had from its users, the structure, objectives and activities of the Centre are now in line with the needs, resources and expectations. Over the years, while many ideas were put forward, some were implemented and others were rejected, the initial idea has become a recognised reality, a sure value and even a model for new initiatives around the globe.

Some will remember that for its 30th anniversary, a publication was prepared to showcase the history of the ECPRD, in particular how it all started and evolved over three decades. However, the ECPRD is not a network rooted in the past. It does not owe its success to the weight of traditions but to the day-to-day commitment of its members. The core activities - the comparative requests, the seminars and the modern website - make it deeply rooted in the present, influenced by the pace of activities in parliaments, be it in legislation or in administration.

Therefore, it was decided by the Centre's Executive Committee that the Festschrift celebrating the 40th anniversary should be devoted to the heart of its activities, its member parliaments, the correspondents, their actions, the achievements and challenges and last not least the role which the ECPRD plays in this parliamentary game. A first glance at the contributions to this publication show that the Centre is as diverse as parliaments are diverse. All highlight the importance of the network for providing parliamentary research and advice.

Some years ago the attempt was made to measure the impact the ECPRD has on the work of parliaments. It turned out that this was not an easy undertaking as benchmarks in this field are difficult. However, the constant high number of requests and the strong participation in the seminars are good indicators that the ECPRD has found its niche. Positive feedback from the Secretaries General of Parliament, meeting on the occasion of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament, confirms this.

One common denominator in all contributions is the reference to the excellent co-operation between the correspondents. It cannot be repeated often enough that the ECPRD is not in essence a centre but a network of people. It is amazing and gratifying to see how well this spirit is preserved despite the natural come and go of correspondents. We are sad to see somebody leave, but we also welcome and integrate new colleagues with open arms.

We would like to close with a warm thank you to all those who have provided a contribution to this publication, turning it into a lively mosaic of the ECPRD. Our thanks go in particular to the editor, Ulrich Hüschen, Co-Secretary of the Centre, who so ably brought together the various contributions. We wish you an inspiring reading of this Festschrift and all the best for the ECPRD network in the decades to come.



Pekka Nurminen
Acting ECPRD Co-Director
European Parliament



Horst Schade
ECPRD Co-Director
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

What is the ECPRD?



The ECPRD was created in 1977 in Vienna by the Conference of Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies, which delegated to the Presidents of the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe its formation and management.

The objectives of the ECPRD are to promote the exchange of information, ideas, experience and good practice among the administrations of parliaments in Europe on subjects of common interest. Its main goal is to strengthen close co-operation among parliamentary services in all fields of parliamentary administration, legislation, information, research and documentation; and to collect, exchange and publicise research studies produced by parliamentary services (Article 1 of the Statutes).

ECPRD should be seen as a network of experts in parliaments rather than a physical centre. Its strength lies in the un-bureaucratic exchange of information based very much on the voluntary commitment of people. This exchange materializes in the form of comparative requests and experts seminars.

Who are the members?

According to Article 2 of the ECPRD Statutes, members are the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and parliamentary chambers where the President is a member of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament. Furthermore, there are some parliaments having observer and Partners for Democracy status.

In 2017, the Centre consists of 66 parliamentary chambers (including 41 in EU Member States) from 54 countries and European institutions. Almost 114 Correspondents and Deputy Correspondents represent their respective parliament in the network and contribute to main ECPRD activities.

How is the ECPRD organised?

Each member assembly appoints a senior official to act as the correspondent for the assembly. The Correspondent is the privileged point of contact for the assembly, should

thus have access to the Secretary General, and must be in a position to coordinate the contribution of the officials of his or her chamber to the work of the Centre. The success of the centre largely depends on the input provided by the Correspondents.

The European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments, consisting of the Presidents or Speakers of Parliamentary assemblies of members and special guests of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, is the supreme authority for the ECPRD and meets every second year.

The Secretaries General have administrative responsibility for the activities of the Centre and these are discussed when they meet during the Conference of Speakers. As regards the two Co-Directors and the two Co-Secretaries - representing the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - these are appointed by the respective Secretaries General of these institutions. The Co-Directors and Co-Secretaries, who carry out their functions for the Centre in addition to their normal duties, are responsible for the day-to-day running of the ECPRD. The Conference of Correspondents is the annual meeting of Correspondents, at which the activities of the ECPRD are discussed and broader policy decisions are taken.

The Executive Committee is composed of the Co-Directors and five Correspondents (appointed by the Conference of Correspondents). It ensures the continuity of work between the annual meetings. The Executive Committee meets at least twice a year. The Secretariat of the Centre is provided by an official of the European Parliament. The Secretariat acts also as webmaster of the ECPRD website which is hosted by the European Parliament as well.

Furthermore, in 2006 four Areas of Interest have been set up:

- Economic and Budgetary Affairs (EBA),
- Information and Communication Technologies in Parliaments (ICT),
- Libraries, Research Services and Archives (LRA),
- Parliamentary Practice and Procedure (PPP).

The objective of these Areas of Interest is to foster the exchange of information and best practice mainly in form of specific seminars on topical issues hosted by an ECPRD member parliament. Four ECPRD Coordinators are appointed by the Executive Committee to fuel the activities within each area.

Not only the excellent cooperation between people but also the implementation of modern IT technologies is responsible for the success of the network. The activities of the ECPRD are supported by a fully-fledged website. Its private section, being only accessible to the members of the networks, hosts a powerful electronic workflow for requests and replies, a growing number of specific seminar mini-sites including online registration and, last not least, parliamentary factsheets on each Chamber with data and contacts.

How is ECPRD financed?

The ECPRD has neither its own budget nor does it receive financial contributions from the member Parliaments. The expenses for staff, secretariat and IT expenses are paid from different budget lines of the European Parliament. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also contributes financially to the activities of the Centre.

Indirect financing takes the form of member Parliaments hosting seminars and meetings of the Centre and providing meeting rooms and interpreters. All Parliaments pay the travel and subsistence costs of their own officials attending seminars and meetings. A number of Parliaments of countries in Central and Eastern Europe benefit from financial support from the European Parliament to ensure participation in seminars and meetings.

European Parliament



Christine VERGER, ECPRD Co-Director¹

Ulrich HÜSCHEN, ECPRD Co-Secretary and Correspondent

Paolo ATZORI, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



40 years of ECPRD - the critical success factors

by Ulrich Hüschén, ECPRD Co-Secretary and ECPRD Correspondent

It has happened several times in the past that delegations from the other side of the globe have come to Brussels with the intention “of seeing the ECPRD”. I was slightly amused to notice their reaction when they learnt that the maximum to be “seen” physically was the modest office of the ECPRD Co-Secretary in the European Parliament. No building, no nameplate at the entrance, no big organigramme!

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation is not a centre but a network of people. Today, ECPRD can count 66 Parliamentary chambers (including 41 in the European Union) from 54 countries

and European Parliamentary institutions. More than 110 Correspondents and Deputy Correspondents represent their respective Parliaments within the network and contribute to ECPRD activities. They prepare ECPRD requests and replies and are as a result almost in daily contact with their counterparts in other parliaments.

In the 40 years of its existence, the Centre has seen many activities, events, working groups etc. Two main activities have turned out to be the central pillars of the ECPRD: the comparative requests and the seminars. The figures have become very impressive: Every year around 250 to 300

¹ ECPRD Co-Director until 31 May 2017. Until the appointment of a new Co-Director the acting ECPRD Co-Director is Pekka Nurminen

requests are transmitted to the network triggering more than 6000 replies. Around 300 experts from parliaments attend the four to six ECPRD seminars hosted by a member parliament and in this way create personal and informal networks of information exchange.

All this constitutes an enormous workload for the parliaments and for the Correspondents in particular. It is encouraging to see that around 80% of replies were made while respecting the preferred deadline of a request and that the overall reply rate to any request is oscillating at around 70%.

What are the underlying factors responsible for the actual success of the network? In my view, the following elements, based on experience over the past years play, an important role:

- All you need is 'Need'

The legal basis for ECPRD is a decision made at the Conference of Presidents of European Parliamentary Assemblies in 1977, establishing the main principles of ECPRD. Nevertheless, in reality the involvement of parliaments is based on a voluntary commitment and not on any obligation. The real glue keeping this network together and operational is simply *'need'*, the need for information, the task to serve members and administrations in parliaments. MPs wish to enrich their contributions to the political debate with data from other countries; administrations in parliaments seek inspiration from their counterparts for managing their projects. In most of the cases, there is no other choice than to consult the ECPRD. Once clients in parliaments have discovered the possibility that research services have access to this network, demand will increase and hence the commitment of member parliaments. The motivation for any exchange of information on top of the normal tasks and the inherent workload would be lower if there would be not the pressure from the clients.

- Be in a win-win situation

Need as the driving force behind the success of the ECPRD

today cannot stand alone. ECPRD provides an excellent example for a win-win situation. "Do ut des" ("I give so that you might give too") is the classical term for this. Providing replies to requests from other parliaments creates a certain right, although not guaranteed, to receive information oneself when the moment comes. The "business partners" do their best to provide help knowing very well the need of their counterparts from the point of view of their own experience. Even when some parliaments have only few requests themselves, but reply in much more cases, they are "buying" almost like shareholders a right to be served "in case".

- No alternatives

A lot of information exchanged within the ECPRD can hardly be found so easily elsewhere. Requests are often of a very complex legal nature, they require in depth knowledge of the country and in particular of its language. Commercial databases are more focussed on scientific matters, and an Internet search does not guarantee trustworthy, complete and up to date information. Furthermore, requests actually need more of an expert in the field to analyse the case, to explain the national situation in a short note and to be available for further questions if needed. In fact, ECPRD is a network of experts in parliaments and hence unique and without alternative. Of course, parliaments always have the option to establish their own bilateral contacts with parliaments but it is obvious that this cannot be done with all parliaments and it is difficult to maintain over time. In the long term, structured, institutionalised and accepted relationships of cooperation prevail over individual, fragile, case-by-case contacts.

- Still valid - the European Idea

The fact that we in Europe share a common history, the same cultural roots and ideas explains the success of ECPRD. The dynamics of European integration, be it in the format of the Council of Europe or in the European Union, have brought European nations closer together than ever, no matter if a country is an EU Member, candidate or in another form of relationship. EU directives have to be transposed, acts taken

by the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights fuel the national debate, international agreements require action - all these factors trigger information needs.

- Useful - European institutions as facilitators

All networks need structures, need members that take the lead or push things so that the project gains speed and stays on track. Secretariats need a home; websites a host, some organisational tasks have to be distributed. Network partners might fear the costs of taking over administrative burdens. Rotating secretaries, as chosen in other parliamentary networks inspired by ECPRD, require the availability of volunteering parliaments. In ECPRD, this role has been taken over by the EP and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe who ensure that the organisational continuity is preserved and who have allocated staff and resources for the small administrative and technical backbone of the network.

- The commitment of people

At its core, the ECPRD is a network of people, the correspondents. Their involvement and participation come on top of their normal tasks, which constitutes a heavy workload given the high number of requests every year. Without this voluntary and personal commitment, the network would be doomed or would exist only as an empty shell. It is THE challenge for all network projects to identify, convince and keep motivated those people who carry the burden of contributing to it. At the same time, they also should enjoy being part of a bigger international community and having a strong interest in activities beyond national boundaries. It is clear that networks need structures, formal procedures, information technologies but in the end, you need people who fill all this with life. Rules are always needed but only for the purpose of facilitating communication and a smooth cooperation. Technologies have only ancillary importance and cannot replace personal relationships and the warm atmosphere of a community.

- A minimum of red-tape

It is clear that a network like ECPRD needs structures and rules as they guarantee stability, transparency and consistency over the years. A critical issue in such an informal network based highly on voluntary commitment and personal relationships is maintaining quality and reliability. For this, some standards and basic principles have to be developed

and some monitoring has to be put in place. The challenge is that this should not hamper the exchange of information and leave some freedom to all partners to choose their way of contributing. The main issue is that the communication functions and that the information exchanged is not lost but really shared. There is a strong belief in the importance of a self-educational system where the members realize quickly what works and what does not. Therefore good communication is not only concerning the exchange of data to serve the end client, but also exercise a reflection on the well-functioning of the process itself – which normally takes place at the statutory meetings. Obviously, members of the network are called upon to provide feedback in order to detect and resolve problems and to improve ECPRD continuously.

- Last but not least - a network of good colleagues

The nature of ECPRD as a network of people finds its most visible manifestation when parliaments host an ECPRD event, be it a seminar on a topical subject, be it the annual conference of correspondents. Both provide a personal experience during the informal chat at coffee breaks and dinners, including conversations about topics beyond the context of work - in short, they give a face to the email address. One collateral effect is that the events create a feeling of being “European” in the very broad sense of the word, where different national cultures and identities come together.

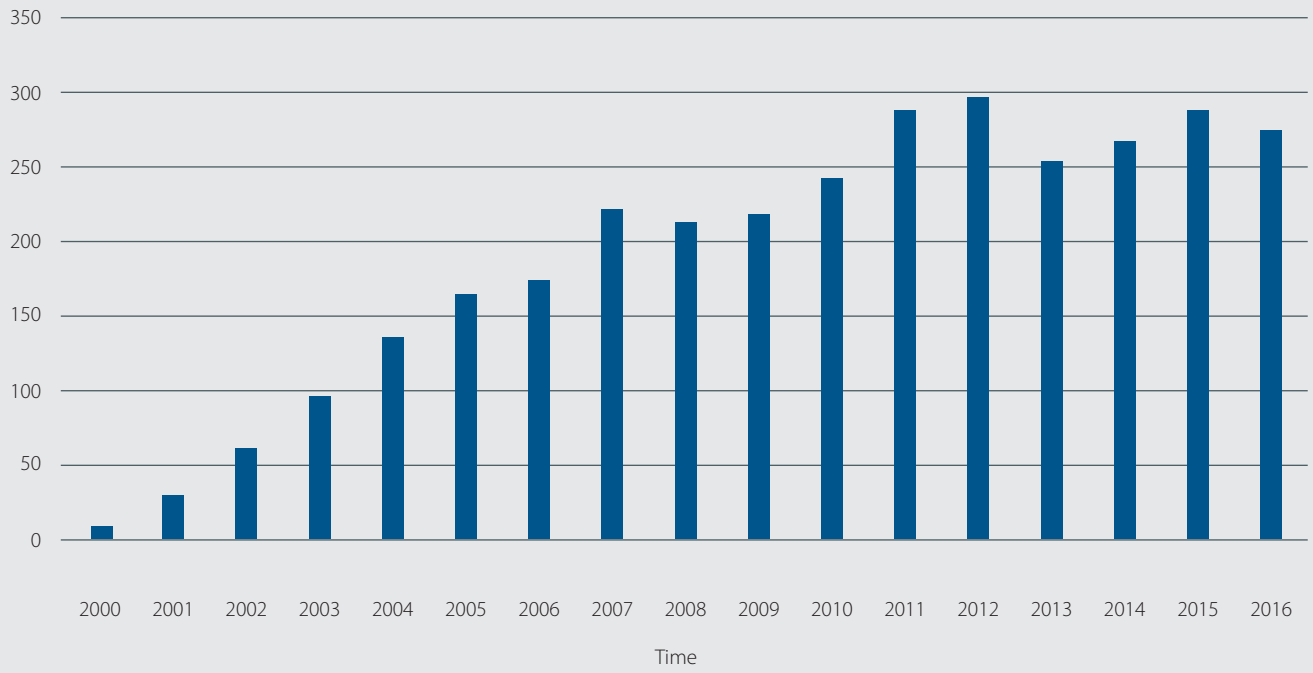
Outlook into the future

If these success factors remain valid also in the future, one does not have to fear for the existence of the ECPRD. Need and commitment have to remain the corner stones of the network. As long as parliaments and parliamentarians are interested in the exchange of best practices, the ECPRD will keep its unique and central role in order to provide its services as a living network of colleagues.

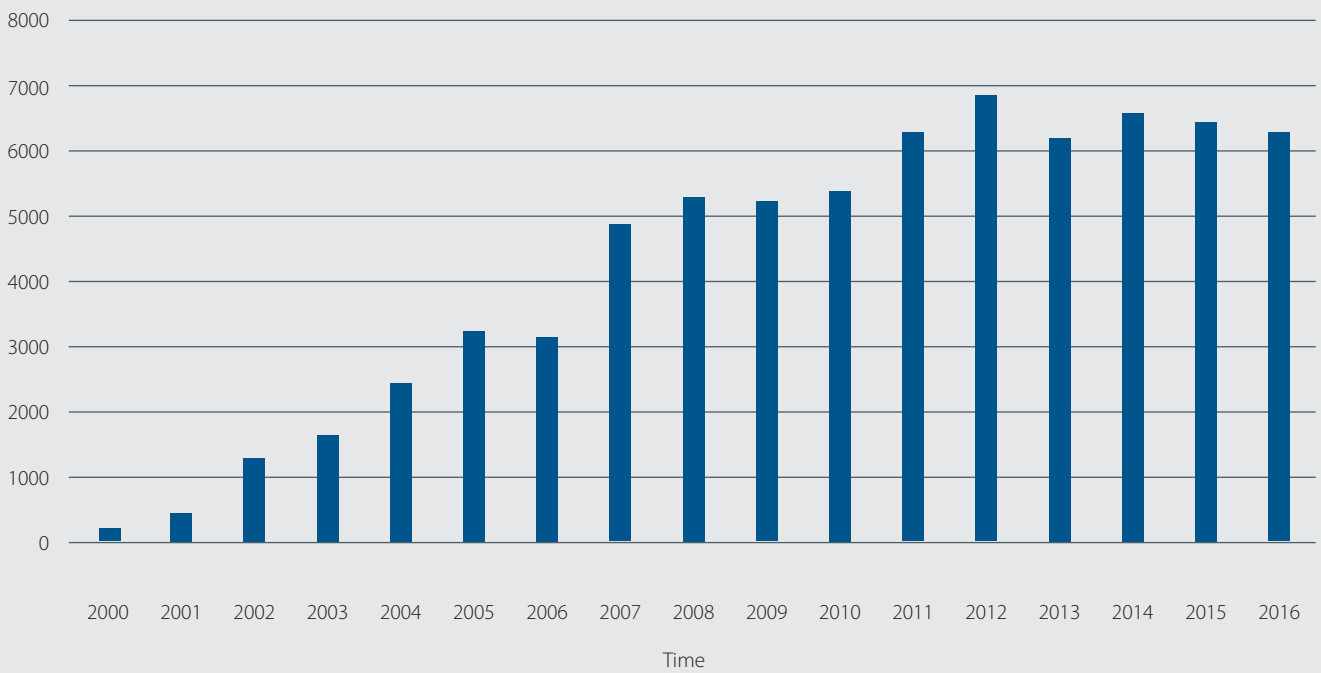
If we look at the constant cross-border exchange of information via the comparative requests and the highly successful seminars hosted by the member parliaments every year, one could even be tempted to say that the ECPRD is “Europe at its best” helping to learn from their neighbours and share best practices.



Comparative Requests



Replies to Comparative Requests



ECPRD Comparative Requests 2000 - 2016



Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe



Horst Schade, ECPRD Co-Director

Yann DE BUYER, ECPRD Co-Secretary and ECPRD Correspondent

Kathleen LAYLE, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



The value(s) of the ECPRD in 40 years

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2017. Under the authority of the Secretaries General of member chambers of parliaments in Europe, the European Parliament (EP) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) together provide the impetus for the governing structures of the Centre.

Some would be surprised that the Centre has survived that long. In fact, not only has it survived, it has thrived. Others would say that there is a risk that it may become the victim of its own success.

The Parliamentary Assembly is in some ways a typical client of the Centre, as its members do make requests and the

PACE secretariat does provides answers to requests by other parliamentary chambers. In addition, however, the role of the Assembly is also to be a guardian of the spirit and good order of the Centre. It does so in close co-operation with the European Parliament, which is also the main financial provider of the ECPRD.

The PACE contribution to the 40th Anniversary *Festschrift* will therefore be more in the form of a birds-eye view of the challenges and achievements of research and information in member parliaments, the constraints of information exchange and the future outlook.

The rise of the Internet and the advent of social media have had a significant impact on research and information

in general, including for parliaments. Traditional media, a source of information for members of parliament and parliamentary research services alike, have had to adjust. These evolutions have made the need for accurate and reliable information more acute.

The ECPRD has successfully responded to the challenges principally in two ways. Firstly, a close-knit, personal network of correspondents is seen as a good indicator that accurate and reliable information is provided rapidly in the replies to requests. Secondly, the ECPRD and its correspondents have together developed a user-friendly and powerful website, with good search capabilities and regularly updated information.

For each of these two achievements, the challenge for the future will be different. For the personal network, the challenge will be that correspondents and their Secretaries General of Parliament continue to believe that devoting scarce time to replies and meetings is worthwhile. For the ECPRD website, the challenge is that correspondents continue to feed it with relevant and updated information, and that the EP continues to fund its maintenance and development.

In addition to the main network of ECPRD Correspondents and Co-Correspondents, there are regular ECPRD Seminars on subjects related to the four "areas of interest": libraries, research services and archives, parliamentary practice and procedure, ICT in parliaments and economic and budgetary

affairs. By attracting specialist parliamentary officials, they provide added-value to the main institutional meetings, constituting a Europe-wide platform for information exchange.

In recent years, the ECPRD has also shown that it can adapt to a changing political context, by opening up some of its activities to so-called "neighbourhood countries", mainly those Parliaments enjoying "Partners for Democracy" status within PACE (Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Palestine). Recent experience has shown that practical but limited co-operation with these Parliaments has not unduly strained the limited resources of the ECPRD and its correspondents as some had feared.

In terms of the institutional structure of the ECPRD, the recent stability and consensus between the EP and PACE about the running of the Centre and its future development have also contributed to a collegial atmosphere in which the activities and its participants can thrive.

Finally, the biennial review by Secretaries General, meeting within the context of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments, provides a useful "reality check" by giving feedback on the Centre's activities and future priorities. Their continuous support is vital for the future outlook of the ECPRD.

40 more years?

Albania

Kuvendi

Lidra BUSHATI, ECPRD Correspondent
Enkeleda BALA, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent
Aida SADIKU, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Introduction

The first step of the research process is undoubtedly the most important one in terms of the quality of the final product at the end of this process. Seen in this light, the sources of information, which will be included as references in the research paper, must be reliable, up to date and diverse. The research staff, on various issues, is based on the cooperation with ECPRD.

History

In May 1999, the European Union adopted a new initiative for the Western Balkan countries, including Albania, called the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). The objective of this new policy of the EU towards the Western Balkan countries was the promotion of regional stability and development of countries in the region to integrate into the European Union.

The establishment of the Parliamentary Research Service of the Assembly of Albania in 1999 brought the beginning of cooperation with the ECPRD and started in 2001. Throughout the years, contacts with the center are managed by this service.

Collaboration: ECPRD and Parliamentary Research Service

The cooperation between ECPRD and Parliamentary Research Service is very broad. When looking for information about the functioning of specific structures of foreign parliaments or content of specific laws, we rely on ECPRD for a concise and detailed answer. ECPRD serves as a reference source, which we consider as very valuable and important.

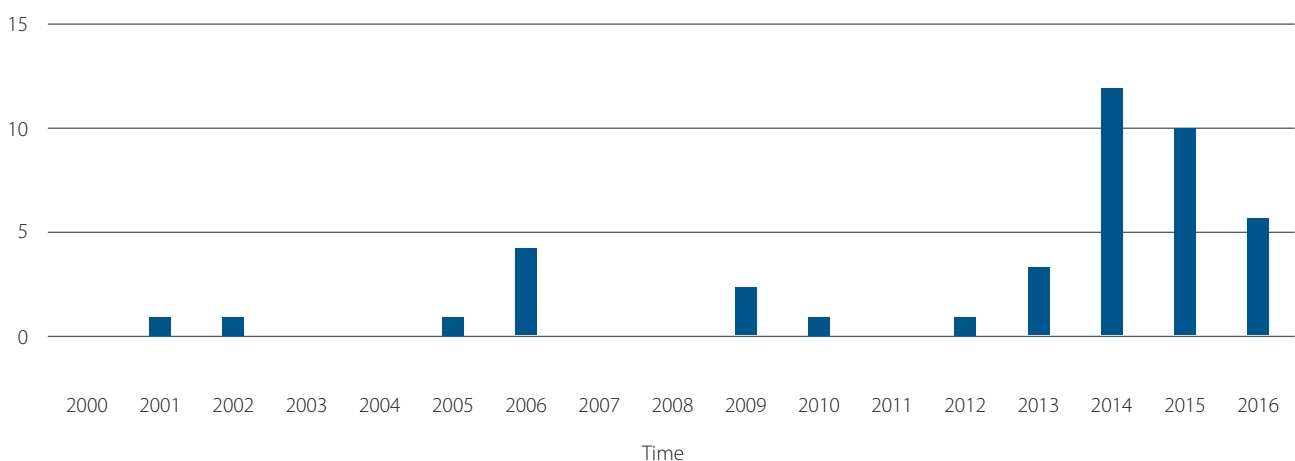
This cooperation has grown over the years. The needs to launch requests to the ECPRD have increased in line with the development of major reforms in the country and the drafting of legislation in the context of integration.

Results of the cooperation

Specifically, the development of research papers for different draft laws, is based on information from the responses received from correspondents in respective parliaments of different countries.

Requests developed by the Parliament of Albania, for the last few years, have had in their containce judicial reform, education reform, the Parliament and the functioning of its structure, rules and different strategies and information concerning different draft laws involving all areas.

Requests from Albania



Conclusion

In a world deluged by information in all sorts of guises, many of them unhelpful, the real contribution of the ECPRD network is crucial, through enabling parliaments and parliamentarians to be well informed.

The network works because a superb community of colleagues throughout Europe want to make it work - and we will always be grateful for this opportunity to make so many friends in so many countries through that network.

Lidra Bushati
Director of Parliamentary Research and Library Service in
Albania Parliament

Austria



REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
Parlament

Parlament, Nationalrat and Bundesrat

Elisabeth DIETRICH-SCHULZ, ECPRD Correspondent

Christoph KONRATH, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



(My) LOVE LETTER to Europe

Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) is a good moment to look back and evaluate the pros and cons of the development of this organisation.

Is it really an organisation? It has a formal structure provided by the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Two co-directors and two co-secretaries supported by five elected members of the executive committee and four coordinators for different areas of interest are responsible for the smooth functioning of the Centre. Only one of these persons works full-time for the ECPRD. All of the others have their administrative jobs in supranational or national parliamentary assemblies of Europe. Their work and devotion to the ECPRD is in addition to that.

Why do they do this work with passion? Most tell me that they love this work: drafting requests and questionnaires, writing replies, finding experts to assist, compiling surveys, organising seminars, hosting meetings, looking for speakers, offering advice, initiating workshops, chairing discussions and so forth. Why do they love such an exhausting job?

The answer is because this work makes them feel part of the European family.

Rob Clements, one of the former UK ECPRD Correspondents, found an ultimate explanation in 2011:

"One of the most enjoyable aspects of my career in the House of Commons, and perhaps the one that I am already missing the most, was my involvement with the ECPRD. There are two main reasons. First, I believe that, in a straightforward and co-operative way, the ECPRD network makes a real contribution to the effectiveness of democracy in Europe through enabling parliaments and parliamentarians to be well-informed. That is increasingly important in a world that is deluged by information in all sorts of guises, many of them unhelpful, confusing or biased. And, secondly, the network works because a superb collection of colleagues throughout Europe want to make it work - and I will always be grateful that I had the opportunity to make so many friends in so many countries through that network."

As one of the longest serving witnesses of the development of the ECPRD, I will tell you my personal love story with the ECPRD.

In June 1977, the Centre was first established at the request of the speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies in Vienna. Klaus Pöhle was the mastermind and founding director of the newly created European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), a community of collecting and exchanging parliamentary knowledge.

Perhaps it was just a coincidence that the Centre started its life in Vienna - the city where I was born. Nevertheless, I have always felt a strong responsibility for its existence and prosperity. My "career" in the ECPRD began in September 1990, when I was allowed to participate in the meeting of the Informatics Working Group in London (24-25 Sept). My "classical way up the ladder" started from participating in a seminar to being a delegate at conferences and to being nominated as deputy correspondent to becoming the national correspondent to being nominated as coordinator for Libraries, Research and Archives for two terms 2006 – 2013 to being elected as a member of the Executive Committee in 2012 and 2015.

What do I owe to the ECPRD? Working in the European family of the ECPRD has taught me to look for compromises, to accept majority decisions, to move away from individual actions, to look for partners, to find win-win solutions, to learn to live with cultural differences and to be open for alternative ways of thinking. On top of all that, I have found an enduring place in this family. Thinking and discussing in at least two languages allows a healthy distance to one's

own opinions which might appear as prejudices from another person's point of view.

I was born when an Iron Curtain divided Europe. The year 1968, when the Czech people tried to find their own democratic way, made me aware how close victory and defeat are on the political battlefield, how thankful citizens have to be for long periods of peace. When I was a student, there was no ERASMUS programme. In my view, the Erasmus exchange programme is one of the greatest culture- and character-building programs that one can have in life. When Austria became a member of the European Union in 1995, there was a lot of enthusiasm and willingness to break down borders. In 1989, the vision of a united Europe almost came true. The Berlin Wall was torn down. The Iron Curtain was cut through. Step by step, the European Union became a community of 28 members. The ECPRD is a bigger network than the EU. All 47 members of the Council of Europe are invited to take part and work together. Since 2015, refugees, migration and new borders have started to dominate the political situation/discussion in Europe. Let us hope that we achieve to keep the ECPRD an open European channel for information and cooperation.

Good luck from Austria for a long-lasting future!

Elisabeth Dietrich-Schulz,
ECPRD Correspondent, ECPRD Coordinator Libraries,
Research and Archives 2006-2013

Austria



REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
Parlament

Parlament, Nationalrat and Bundesrat

Elisabeth DIETRICH-SCHULZ, ECPRD Correspondent

Christoph KONRATH, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Parliaments and comparative law¹

I serve as Austria's deputy ECPRD-correspondent since 2010 and I am an active member of the ECPRD-network since at least 2006. In addition, I have taken part in various other network activities. What follows is therefore mainly guided by practical insight and experience. This is important to note as networks publish their comparative surveys, seminar or conference proceedings and studies only partly. Exceptions apply of course for activities of the EP and the CoE and their affiliated institutions. However, even in those cases the research basis, i.e. published sources or questionnaires, will usually not be published. Furthermore, within the confines of this chapter it is neither possible nor practical to present a detailed case-study of a particular comparative activity. Therefore, my remarks shall have the purpose to give an overview of the methods applied by parliaments and to comment on their merits and shortcomings. This may well serve to get an idea of what is done, how it is done and how further research can possibly be conducted.

Comparative research by parliaments is mostly done through questionnaires sent out by or through the before-mentioned networks. As most enquiries arise in specific

situations, the questionnaires will often have a certain 'ad hoc-character'. This implies that questions do not necessarily stand in a systematic relation to each other and that addressees or those who share – maybe at a later date – an interest in the topic can find it difficult to understand the setting or use the replies and data provided by respondents. Still, most networks and institutions try to foster systematic approaches, too. This is done either by organising topical seminars or by commissioning specific studies. Usually, seminar programs will be based on preliminary surveys that cover the topics to be discussed and present a view of regulations and practices in all participating parliaments (viz. parliamentary administrations).

All approaches share a practical emphasis: parliamentarians and parliamentary officials will often see themselves as standing apart from other institutions of the legal and political system and academic research. One reason for this can be found in the ways parliaments are governed internally and how the lines between law and politics are blurred in political procedures and processes. Another closely related reason is a perceived gap between parliaments (in a wide sense comprising institutions and people) and academic discourse. With the exception of some parliaments, most notably the German Bundestag and the 'Organstreitverfahren' before the German Constitutional Court, parliaments have to or tend to solve procedural and constitutional conflicts by political means. Such a practice entails limited publicity and a limited demand to give reasons for a decision. Thus, it is substantially different from the mechanisms of the judiciary which usually function as pattern or background of legal (academic) discourse. Consequentially, it can be difficult to understand and explain parliamentary practice and procedure from an outsider's perspective, and outside descriptions of and their comments on parliamentary affairs are often met with incomprehension by parliamentarians and parliamentary officials.²

Given that, the questions distributed by parliaments via the ECPRD do usually not refer to how something is regulated in law but to what is regulated in which way.

¹ This is an abbreviated version of Konrath, Parliaments and comparative law. A practitioner's view, in: Konrad Lachmayer et al. (eds.), *International Constitutional Law in Legal Education. Proceedings of the Erasmus Intensive Programme NICLAS 2007-2012*, Schriften zum Internationalen und Vergleichenden Öffentlichen Recht, Band 19, Wien-Baden-Baden: Facultas/Nomos (2014), 75-86.

Such an approach has its merits as it can help to make basic regulatory schemes, practices and goals obvious, but it can be difficult or even misleading, too, as the following remarks will show in more detail.

Networks and institutions rely on the contributions of parliamentary officials and are constrained by political demands, limited time and limited resources. The general idea behind comparison through networks is that people who actually do something can be addressed and deliver first-hand knowledge and experience. Such an approach implies, however, that expert-addressees have other priorities and limited time-resources. Given that the number of comparative requests and studies is constantly rising it can become increasingly difficult especially for small parliamentary administrations to reserve time and personal resources for such tasks. This comprises – on the side of requesters and on that of respondents – that time and resources for an extended research design including review of literature and jurisprudence as well as the clarification and verification of replies are highly limited.

Apart from practical constraints, the effectiveness of comparative surveys, seminars and studies relies heavily on the competence of respondents and participants. By competence, I refer to two aspects: competence with regard to knowledge, experience and communicative skills, and competence with regard to capacity and authority. The first aspect is – apart from the obvious – of particular importance as the focus of comparative surveys is often on specific aspects of practice, procedure and policies. Thus, a useful reply depends on people who are able to communicate what is very often implicit knowledge in a way that outsiders are able to follow and understand. The second aspect relates to the professional status of respondents. They will usually be civil servants and work as advisors or experts, some – especially correspondents or liaison officers – will be on the level of departmental heads. Therefore, the question of status is important with regard to what respondents or participants are allowed to convey and if they are willing or able to speak out. This relates to the

matter of self-presentation and self-assertion: Comparative activities always risk that participants try (or have) to present their rules and practices in the best possible light. On the other hand, comparison can be fruitful when participants may (or dare to) speak out and bring a (self-) critical attitude to surveys and debates.

Modern parliaments share a specific history of ideas, procedural models and practice. This implies that constitutional and legal norms concerning representative democracy and parliaments show certain similarities all over Europe. The same applies for parliamentary rules of procedure and comparable regulations governing parliamentary affairs. Although it is obvious that every parliament has its own history and place within its political system a shared understanding of certain concepts is often assumed in comparative approaches. This shared understanding becomes explicit in the use of similar concept-words on one hand and specific methodological approaches on the other hand. As English serves as the *lingua franca* of parliamentary practice terms and expressions originating from Westminster will be used even if the legal and constitutional context of a responding parliament differs greatly (and often thesauri do not alleviate the situation, as they can be too complex to use in routine work). As those terms and their use are often not reflected this may have misleading effects and blur differences. Closely related is the methodological approach that assumes that especially norms regulating the status, procedure and organisation of parliaments can be universally understood. This can (or in fact, has) to lead to rather abstract and standardised questionnaires and compilations. Their comparative value will be rather small, as the broad concepts used cannot relate normative differences and the effectiveness of specific norms and procedures. In addition, such approaches lack the sensitivity for specific constitutional, legal and political contexts without of which transformation and adaptation of specific rules can be difficult

It is undeniable that comparative approaches have significantly gained importance in parliamentary practice.

2 Cf. Christoph Konrath, 'Parlamentarismus zwischen Recht und Politik', in Tamara Ehs et al. (eds), *Politik und Recht* (Facultas 2012).

Even if there are certain weaknesses and shortcomings, their value for parliamentary and legal practice is very high. It brings the benefits that academic promoters of comparative methods don't cease to present to practice and can offer a lot of experience in turn. Comparison covers a wide field especially in parliamentary contexts as it is not only used with regard to parliamentary affairs in the narrow sense but also as a tool to scrutinise draft laws and hold government accountable.

From my point of view, though, two aspects of those activities are underdeveloped: While comparative research is well documented, the same cannot be said of its effectiveness and consequences. Everyone speaks of the merits of comparison but hardly anyone tells or documents how comparison was used in a specific case and whether it proved useful and effective. Secondly, there is a lack of reflection and critical-assessment in the comparative approaches I have outlined. This becomes evident when we look at terms and concepts used or attempts to

communicate a certain 'practice'.

Both points refer to the relationship between 'practice' and 'academia'. Personally, I think that this is one of the greatest challenges for both. However, if comparison shall achieve the effects that its promoters both in 'practice' and 'academic' praise both need to pay more attention to what the other is doing and how they can cooperate. Starting points could be systematic comparative projects with the by-effect of a well-reasoned thesaurus of terms and concepts and a sensitivity for the rules and practices that govern the application of constitutional and legal norms in the political and legislative process.

Dr. Christoph Konrath
ECPRD Deputy-Correspondent
ECPRD Coordinator Parliamentary Practice and Procedure



Members of the ECPRD Executive Committee after their meeting in March 2017 visiting the room in the Austrian Parliament where ECPRD was founded in 1977

Azerbaijan



Milli Majlis

Mehman NAMAZOV, ECPRD Correspondent



The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation and the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation, an institution founded in the June of 1977 that plays an indispensable role in the field of inter-parliamentary cooperation and information exchange in the European continent, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

During this period, the ECPRD, whose key task is the study of comparative surveys and the organization of seminars by member-parliaments, has come a long way in deepening the relations among parliaments and exchanging full and comprehensive information about the legislative bodies of member states.

Being a member of a family that is involved in such necessary, useful and crucial activities is without a doubt highly important for the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan. We believe it would be useful to take a look at the history of these relations, to recall the path that has been covered during this period and share information about the activity of the Azerbaijani Parliament.

The foundation of the cooperation between the Centre and Azerbaijan was laid during the visit of the delegation headed by Wojciech Sawicki to Baku in the summer of 2003. Since then the representatives of the Milli Majlis began to participate in the conferences and seminars of the organization. The annual conference of correspondents that was held in Germany in October 2004 was the very first event of the Centre attended by an Azerbaijani representative.

In the course of the last 14 years, the staff members of the Milli Majlis administration have participated in various seminars and conferences dedicated to such essential spheres of parliamentary business as the development of legislative framework, employment of new trends in the law making process, supporting secure work of information technologies, and drafting of budgets and other financial documents. The staff members of the Milli Majlis partook in more than 40 events altogether and were distinguished by their striking presentations and active participation in debates. The following presentations and speeches

may serve as examples of said contributions: “Some Recommendations for Provision of Reliable and Speedy Web Servers in Parliaments” (Ankara, 5-6 November, 2015) and “Use of Legislative Information Management System (LIMS) in a Multilingual Parliament” (Brussels, 16-17 April, 2015) by Shahin Hasanov, the Head of the Information Resources and Technologies Department of the Milli Majlis; “The Procedures and Experiences for the Discussions and Adoption of Long-term National Strategies in Parliaments” (Tallinn, 30-31 May, 2013) by Anar Akbarov, the Head Adviser of the Analytical Information Department; and “Public Participation in the Development and Adoption of Draft Laws” (Zagreb, 11-12 June, 2015) by Samad Sultanov, the Head Adviser of the Legislation on Institutional Building Department.

It is clear that that any cooperation and information exchange does not go by without impacting future activities. The advanced and useful experience of colleagues plays an irreplaceable role in increasing the quality of work and solving similar problems. The information surveys and comparative analyses organised by the Centre among the member parliaments have been effective in identifying the weaknesses in parliamentary business and improving the process. It is not a coincidence that the staff members of the Azerbaijani Parliament who participated in the seminars held by the Centre have achieved successful results through applying the experience and information they gained to their activities.

The people of Azerbaijan, the founders of the first Democratic Republic of the Muslim East (1918), have indeed always been loyal to parliamentary traditions and the cooperation with parliamentary organizations such as the ECPRD is yet another example of the continuation of this positive tendency.

We think it is important to inform ECPRD members about the Republic of Azerbaijan and its Parliament in this jubilee compilation in the context of abiding to the principle of information exchange, as this is one of the fields of the organization's activity.

Despite the fact that the history of the development of modern Azerbaijan as an independent state started merely

26 years ago, the foundation of its parliamentary traditions was laid at the outset of the last century. The groundwork for the parliamentary traditions of our country was laid by the Parliament of the People's Republic of Azerbaijan, the first republic of its kind in the East. The People's Republic which revived and restored the ancient statehood traditions of our nation in the form of a republic during the period of 1918-1920, carried out significant works in state building, economy, culture, education, healthcare and military, thus leaving an indelible mark on the history of our national statehood.

Upon restoring its state independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan took the initiative of establishing relations with parliamentary organizations, particularly with European institutions that coordinate the interaction between legislative bodies. This initiative served the aim of benefitting from European best practices in the process of democratic transformations, and provision and protection of human rights and freedoms. Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan carries out its work on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Internal Statute of the Milli Majlis, the Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Status of the Deputy of the Milli Majlis” and “On the Committees of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

At present, there are 15 standing committees and 2 commissions functioning in the Milli Majlis for the purpose of drafting bills and conducting initial discussions in this regard.

One of the key spheres of the Milli Majlis's activity is the advancement of international relations, and the expansion of the cooperation with parliaments of other countries and international organizations. Milli Majlis is currently a full-fledged member of a number of universal and regional organizations – Inter-parliamentary Union, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, CIS Inter-parliamentary Assembly, Parliamentary Assembly of the Islamic Cooperation Organization, Parliamentary Assembly of GUAM, and an associate-member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Milli Majlis is one of the constituting members of the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States; it actively

cooperates with the European Parliament and other international organizations. There are working groups in the parliament of Azerbaijan on relations with the legislative bodies of more than 70 countries. Strengthening the role of the parliament in securing the national interests of Azerbaijan, unbiased reflection of the essence of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the international arena, and benefitting from the experience of international organizations and other countries in developing the pluralist democracy in the country are the issues dealt by the Milli Majlis in its international activity.

In general, the analysis of the activity of Azerbaijan in ECPRD shows that sufficiently useful and concerted cooperation have been built and the application of the best practices has been ensured for the further improvement of the administration of parliaments.

During its membership in the organization, the Parliament of Azerbaijan hosted 2 seminars thus contributing to the efficient functioning of the Centre. The **ECPRD Seminar “Area of Interest ICT in Parliaments” held on 28-29 November, 2013** with the involvement of 56 participants from 25 countries has remained in history as the first event hosted by the Milli Majlis.

The excellent organization of the seminar, which featured multiple successful presentations, was stressed in the letter of gratitude by the ECPRD Coordinator Carlo Simonelli’s addressed to the Milli Majlis. The letter emphasised once again the indispensable opportunities created by the seminar for parliamentary cooperation and information

exchange. As a result of this successful and highly valued organization of the seminar Azerbaijan hosted a second seminar on **19-20 May 2016: “Parliaments, New Economic and Budgetary Governance”**. The seminar attended by 54 representatives from 34 countries featured successful and interesting discussions and gained the appreciation of the participants. It has become a good tradition to receive letters of gratitude from colleagues expressing their positive impressions and sincere gratefulness related to the Baku seminars. One of such letters was sent by Paola Bonacci, the ECPRD Coordinator for Economic and Budgetary Affairs addressed to Safa Mirzayev, the Secretary General (Head of Apparatus) of the Milli Majlis. Special thanks addressed to the Azerbaijani speakers constructing the theoretical structure of our debates, particularly Tahir Mirkishili, the Member of Parliament, the member of the Committee on Economic Policy, Industry and Entrepreneurship for giving comprehensive answers to the enquiries of the participants. It is not a coincidence that the representatives of the European Union and European Parliament have always highly praised the hosting by the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan and proposed this experience to other member-states as a model.

In conclusion, as the ECPRD coordinator and correspondent in the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan, we would wish our solidary and friendly team not to be satisfied with the attained achievements but instead to conquer new peaks, becoming a transition for the continuation of the successful beginnings of these 40 years that we have witnessed as participants, developing in power even more in the future.

Secretary General of the Milli Majlis,
ECPRD Coordinator

Safa Mirzayev

Head of the Organization of the Library Sector
of the Editing and Publishing Work Section,
ECPRD correspondent

Mehman Namazov



ECPRD seminar 'Parliaments and the New economic and Budgetary Governance' 19-20 May 2016 hosted by the Parliament of Azerbaijan, the Milli Majlis

Belgium



La Chambre - De Kamer

Alberik GORIS, ECPRD Correspondent

Pieter CABOOR, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Over the last four decades, ECPRD has evolved to become a tested and tried model for parliamentary research. It is now very much part of our daily office lives. While this is obvious for all who work in full-blown research services, it is less so for others.

In the Belgian House of Representatives, it has been the fairly small staffed Legal Department, strictly speaking not a research service, which has, for the last eighteen or so years, taken on the prime role in ECPRD activities. There are several reasons for this.

When it was set up in 1999, the Legal Department was assigned the task of answering information requests from international institutions and foreign parliaments, a kind of complement to its core mission, which is to advise parliament on legal and procedural matters.

The fact that for a long time information requests channeled through ECPRD concerned mainly parliamentary practice and procedure, meant the Legal Department was indeed qualified to do that job.

The human factor also played a role. The first head of the department, Marc Van der Hulst, was always keen to take

part in initiatives to develop parliamentary exchanges and that made him the right person at that time to be ECPRD correspondent. It was not long before he would also become the first ECPRD coordinator for the area of interest "parliamentary practice and procedure". Many of the ECPRD community will have known Marc, now secretary general of the House, as a very active supporter of ECPRD and as an enthusiastic organizer and facilitator of many ECPRD seminars and workshops.

In more recent years, the nature of the ECPRD information requests has changed. The focus is now less on parliamentary matters and more on legislation in general. The number of requests has increased as well.

This has somewhat affected the capacity of our small, specialized department to adequately respond to all queries. It means we have to be more selective and need more often to rely on external help if we want to provide satisfactory answers. Too short deadlines are sometimes an additional obstacle when those circumstances are taken into account. We also try to alleviate the workload by distributing questionnaires between the House and the Senate.

We remain, however, “net contributors” and are still happy to receive questions, whenever we can manage to answer them! We often learn a lot from the questionnaires and from the answers of other parliaments. We realize that thanks to the efforts of all, which of course includes the excellent ECPRD secretariat, the engine of the organization, there is a mine of information in the ECPRD database that can be used at any time.

Obviously, ECPRD is more than only information requests. There are also the seminars, which in my experience have always been very rewarding, as well as the annual conferences.

My first participation in an ECPRD seminar dates back to 2001, when the Estonian Riigikogu organized a topical high-standard seminar on “Legal and Regulatory Impact Assessment of Legislation”. I remember an intense debate on the question whether parliaments should have their own capacity to produce ex ante impact assessments or rely on the assessments prepared by their governments.

The issue was not settled, but many parliaments have since chosen to have at least some capacity to complement or challenge assessments submitted to them by the executive. By the way, it was also a seminar that was widely publicized on the internet and still is. Photos of the event continue to linger on the internet, reminding us of the consequences of information technology and of the reality of advancing age...

Later on, in 2007, the Belgian Parliament was itself organizer of a seminar on “Parliaments and Judiciary: Judicial Control of Parliamentary Acts”. For us it was an occasion for genuine learning, about questions we usually only try to answer for our own legal systems.

I feel privileged to be part, since a few years, of the network of correspondents, which allowed me to get to know so many great colleagues and friends. I hope ECPRD will continue to fulfill its mission for many years to come.

Alberik Goris

Belgium



Sénat - Senaat

Dominique DASSONVILLE, ECPRD Correspondent

Marc VEYS, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Forty years of inter-parliamentary networking in a moving institutional context

Vienna, June 1977... The Conference of Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies set up a unique structure of inter-parliamentary cooperation, with the objective to promote the exchange of information, ideas, experience and good practice among the administrations of parliaments in Europe on subjects of common interest. One of those assemblies was the Belgian senate, which had at that time still the same legislative powers as the lower House.

Brussels, January 2016... Mr Andre Rezsöhazy, head of the Legal department of the Senate, ECPRD Correspondent and member of its executive committee, was appointed as Director General of the Belgian Senate. Due to those new duties and responsibilities, he felt obliged to say farewell to his valued network in the very emotional speech he gave in Paris on the last annual conference of correspondents. As Coordinator in the area of interest "parliamentary practice and procedures", his friendly and intellectual behaviour as well as his bright sense of humour will be greatly missed by all those who had the privilege to meet him and they are many in this network.

Being appointed as correspondent since that time, I haven't been so familiar with this parliamentary network even if my

first personal experience with ECPRD dates back to 2006, when the Justice Committee of the Belgian Senate was examining three draft proposals with regard to legislation aimed at extending the field of application of provisions governing legitimate defence under Belgian law. At that time, the bicameral system had already undergone the fundamental fourth state reform of 1993, which officially transformed Belgium into a federal state.¹

The committee of Justice asked for a comparative study on the existence of the concept of legitimate defence in other countries and the manner those texts were applied by the courts. Perhaps due to the very busy committee agenda or to the very critical position of the council of state on those three proposals, the fact is that the debate could not been held in the committee prior to the dissolution of Parliament in May 2007. However, the work was not all lost as the answers to the questionnaire constituted, for instance, one of the basis of my contribution to a judicial criminal journal on the legal subject of self-defence.²

Since 2014, the Senate has been transformed into a chamber that more genuinely reflects the subnational entities, with less remaining legislative powers.³ The standing committees have changed, but the way of proceeding remains.

The new committee for "Transversal Matters regarding the powers of the Regions" of the Belgian Senate prepared an information report on the intra-Belgian decision making process between the various levels of government and the federal state with respect to the European goals regarding climate and energy. Within this context, the committee decided to carry out a comparative study of the aforesaid burden sharing in a number of countries. A questionnaire was sent to 48 countries of which 30 replied.

1 The Senate became a chamber for reflection on the one hand and a "meeting place" for federal and federated representatives on the other. This was reflected as well in its composition as in its powers. In legislative matters, the Senate's powers depended upon the subject matter, leading to a complex set of legislative procedures.

2 D. Dassonville, « Droit de légitime défense et débordements éventuels : aperçu de droit comparé », *Revue de droit pénal et de criminologie*, 2008, p. 5-31.

3 Since 2014, only the lower House and the King preserve the right to introduce Bills, except in those few matters in which the Senate has retained full powers.

A summary of the answers to seven questions was published in the information report.

The replies to the questionnaire on the one hand and the committee hearings on the other hand, enabled the political groups to propose recommendations regarding this matter, which have just been adopted by the plenary session on 27th January 2017.

Starting at the beginning with receiving just a few questionnaires a month, we have now reached an average of three questionnaires a day. Since the Belgian Senate does not have a research department as such, it is quite restrictive in sending questionnaires itself, but the many and quick replies it receives on all its demands contribute to the very positive input of this inter-parliamentary network. The ECPRD summaries as outcome of comparative research are also greatly appreciated especially by the library department.

Another particular aspect of the ECPRD questionnaires became apparent to me when I attended the seminar the 8 and 9th November 2007, organised by the Federal Parliament of Belgium on the relation between Parliament and the Judiciary.

The subject of the seminar was highly juridical, but the questionnaires were designed in such a way as to allow short and rapid answers. After processing the replies to the questionnaires, a final selection of the topics was carried out for the seminar and the organisers got in touch with the parliaments that had sent valuable information with respect to those topics, in order to identify possible keynote speakers.

Reflecting about the balance between the state powers in general, the seminar was not only the place of a high quality level exchange of views among experts but also a very pleasant meeting.

Mrs Hermione L'Amiral, Head of our archive department, who attended the seminar "Innovative services for Parliamentary Libraries, Research Services and Archives" in September 2016 in Oslo stressed the particular sense of humour in the Brexit context of those who were attending this gathering. Personal contacts inside the network are indeed some of the key factors to the ECPRD's success story. I became fully aware of this during the annual conference of correspondents in Paris that I was attending for the first time in November 2016.

Forty years is long or short, depending on the way we look at it. ECPRD gathers now 66 parliamentary assemblies in and out the European Union and has established a successful cooperation in many areas between national parliaments, the European parliament and the Council of Europe. During this period, whilst the Belgian Senate transformed slowly into a chamber of the federated entities, its need for a strong ECPRD network has increased. The expansion of the network is a must in a global world context and we can say that ECPRD can be really proud of its positive achievements in this aspect. Let us hope that it will continue in this successful way for many years to come.

Bosnia and Herzegovina



Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina

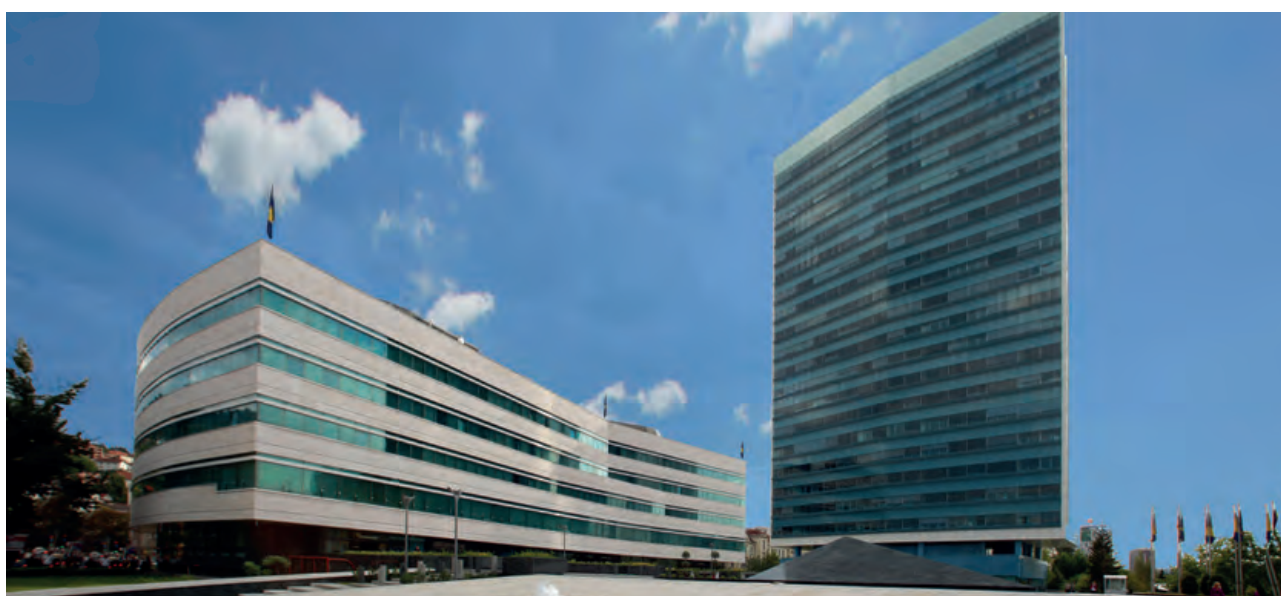
Parlamentarna skupština Bosne i Hercegovine -

Парламентарна скупштина Босне и Херцеговине

Sena BAJRAKTAREVIC, ECPRD Correspondent

Zaklina ANDRIJEVIC-KARIC, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent

Aida OSMANOVIC, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Commemorating 40 Years of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)

The Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (PABiH) has been a member of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) for fifteen years. Looking back, we can conclude that we, Parliament's staff, were enabled by our membership of this particular association to improve our own work and thus contribute to the more efficient work of our institution via simple and quick exchanges of information, experience and practice of the various aspects of the work of parliament and parliamentary bodies. At the same time, frequent correspondence and periodic meetings with colleagues from other parliaments in Europe have reinforced valuable relations that have helped us to solve complicated problems effectively, thanks to these shared experiences.

ECPRD is a network of great and inspiring professionals, colleagues and friends who help each other to support the work of members of Parliament and succeed in providing detailed answers, despite the fact that they themselves have a lot of work. The distinctiveness of the ECPRD is the commitment of its members to provide the requested information, in the spirit of co-operation. Over the years, ECPRD has collected an impressive amount of knowledge, experience and information on parliamentary work, legislation and a number of other issues. The possibility of sending questions to colleagues in the ECPRD network is very important, especially where certain information on legislation cannot be found otherwise.

For those of us engaged in parliamentary research, answers to ECPRD requests that are published on the ECPRD website are of special importance. Often they form a database that serves as an invaluable starting-point in the preparation of research papers. Their relevance, accuracy and availability are reasons for this. Being informed about the legislative solutions in other countries gives an opportunity for BiH legislators to review the specific issue from different perspectives and to be informed in detail before making a decision. This is particularly important in the process of approximation of BiH legislation with the EU acquis towards the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the EU.

PABiH staff answer the submitted requests in a professional and scholarly way and thus help the achievement of the ECPRD network's mission. Beside the Research Section, which also co-ordinates the co-operation between PABiH and ECPRD, staff from other PABiH organisational units, as well as staff and heads from the executive bodies of BiH authorities, also participate in preparation of responses to inquiries, depending on the topic of the inquiry.

Speaking of our requests sent through ECPRD network, PABiH, appreciating the time of their colleagues in other parliaments, has so far sent only requests on specific matters which were not possible to find on the official website of institutions. Those requests were related to certain aspects of parliamentary procedures, the organisation of Parliament, or to issues to which only competent institutions of relevant countries can reply, for example: a survey on the image of Parliament in the public, introduction of certain standards in the work of parliament, accreditation of members of parliament, lists of library resources and similar. The members of Parliament and members of the Collegium of the Secretariat who made those requests have so far always expressed great satisfaction with the response from other parliaments.

PABiH staff regularly and actively participate in ECPRD conferences and seminars. The seminars are well organised,

clearly structured and participants always receive all necessary information promptly.

The Research Section of PABiH exchanges best practice with colleagues through participation in the activities of the ECPRD, and it is regularly informed about the current development of research services in other parliaments. Newly acquired skills at ECPRD seminars have helped the staff from the PABiH Research Department to improve their work in terms of introducing new research products and services, and in deciding on the publication of research papers. The staff learned about the importance and practices of other parliaments in the implementation of the visual identity of the research service for the purpose of dissemination of research papers to members of parliament. Very useful, too, was the insight into the latest usage of IT technology and IT solutions to simplify the delivery of research papers to members of parliament. The Research Section's staff were given the information in these seminars about the organisation and structure of other research services, as well as information about the internal procedures which parliaments follow when preparing answers to ECPRD questions. This is beneficial to our Research Section currently while it drafts the proposals for updating and improving of these procedures.

ECPRD seminars provided the PABiH Library Department's staff with the opportunity for the professional development in various fields, which were particularly important and useful in the early years of their work in the PABiH.

Seminars on the procedures of passing regulations and new insights about ways for citizens to participate in the legislative process, and of participatory and deliberative democracy, significantly helped the staff of Constitutional-Legal Committees of the PABiH in activities related to the increase in the number of public consultations in the legislative process in BiH.

We place particular emphasis on the importance of presentations about the work of other parliaments, during ECPRD seminars, from which the participants can acquire new knowledge, practices and guidelines to improve their work. PABiH staff have also presented their work at seminars. For example, the work of the Library Department or the IT Section's solutions for the conference system and the conduct of sessions.

Information from World E-Parliament Conferences, which is available on the website of the ECPRD, is very important for PABiH staff working in the field of ICT. It is a means by which they can learn about the latest achievements in this field in other parliaments around the world, and establish contacts with colleagues which will be relevant for future work. It is important to note that ECPRD seminars are accompanied by new technologies, and parliaments that are focused on e-Parliament, or rather m-parliament, can thus obtain guidelines for successful and effective strategic planning.

Over the past years, ECPRD seminars which were primarily focused on improving the transparency of legislative institutions were attended by staff of the Public Relations Section. Thanks to the fact that in these events one can regularly learn more about increasing the transparency of the parliamentary website, part of the knowledge acquired was easily incorporated into the official website of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, which is considered to be the most transparent parliamentary website in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The exchange of views and dialogue with colleagues, and in particular ECPRD seminars, represent a unique opportunity for the staff working with the promotion of the work of legislative institutions to grasp the current moment and trends in the field of transparency of the work as the core values of civil society. The fight to enable completely unobstructed access to information, not only to the legislative work but also to the overall parliamentary action, continues. In such circumstances, the sharing of each new experience and new practice among colleagues, which is exactly what ECPRD enables, is priceless.

We believe that there is a need for ECPRD to focus more specifically on topics related to the legislative oversight and control functions of parliament. In this sense, the different practices and experiences of parliaments in individual issues within these two functions, which could provide a platform for consideration by other parliaments, is something that could be reviewed at the seminars. Also, we believe that the ECPRD network should be more actively involved in the work of other organizations such as IFLA. Seminars related to the issues of librarianship and e-resources should be organised by taking into account the date and venue of the IFLA conference - Section for Parliamentary Library. In the area of public relations, it is still

of great importance to force the exchange of ideas about maximising transparency as a democratic outreach and an imperative in the work of public administration. From the aspect of ICT technologies we suggest that the solutions to some of the most important service projects established in certain parliaments are published on the ECPRD's portal with a brief explanation and presentation of the project, to enable other parliaments to ask questions and get answers regarding this service project. If possible, it would be very useful to organise short visits to those parliaments so that staff of other parliaments can see at first hand the established service-projects.

Even though the importance of exchanging information and knowledge among members of the ECPRD network through requests and participation in seminars is extremely high, we also want to emphasise another important aspect of cooperation between the parliaments of the ECPRD network. That is to say, a cultural component of ECPRD seminars and conferences. During each seminar/conference participants learn about the history and sights of the country, cities and parliaments of the host. This segment of the seminar/conference contributes to a better understanding and appreciation of our similarities and differences.

Participation in ECPRD seminars allowed us to connect with the staff from regional parliaments from the southeast of Europe. The staff, socialising during the ECPRD seminars and conferences, became good friends as well and often directly exchange data and information they need in their work.

Given that Bosnia and Herzegovina is geographically, historically and culturally part of the Europe, that it is a member of the Council of Europe, and that its strategic and long-term goal is to become a full member of the European Union, ECPRD membership is really important for the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the years to come, we intend to participate even more actively in all the activities of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation, and to make our full contribution to its successful work and further development.



Meeting of the ECPRD Macro-Economic Research Working Group hosted by the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 9-10 June 2006

Croatia



HRVATSKI SABOR

Hrvatski Sabor

Branka MARTINCIC, ECPRD Correspondent

Anamarija NEJASMIC, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Croatian Parliament became the member of the European Center for Parliamentary Research and Documentation in 1996. As a head of the parliamentary Library, I accepted the duty of ECPRD correspondent representing our Parliament in the ECPRD network, meaning that from the very beginning I have been actively involved in all operational processes related to the network.

At the beginning of our ECPRD membership the cooperation was rather sporadic and inter-parliamentary exchange of information, being one of the core activities of the Center, compared to the one today, much more modest. It was particularly evident in small number of requests received by the Croatian Parliament.

However, as the number of requests that circulated through the ECPRD network steadily increased with years, our Parliament became more involved in such activities. Since Croatian Parliament does not have parliamentary research service dealing with ECPRD requests as other parliaments do, we were faced with great challenges managed in all sorts of ways.

At the beginning, replies were prepared in the very Library by information experts together with the correspondent. However, the higher the number of requests by the Centre, more obvious it became that few employees of the Library could not address this challenge alone and that the problem had to be solved in another way.

As a correspondent, little by little, I included Croatian Parliament Secretariat, working bodies and parliamentary services in the ECPRD activities more. Hence, I began forwarding requests to them, depending on their scope of work and the questions asked.

In this way a longtime cooperation with colleagues from the parliamentary administration started. Initially it was quite difficult, but gradually we developed an organized internal network of colleagues with successful results in the performance of the ECPRD tasks.

Today, after 20 years of experience, we can say that this manner of working is quite satisfactory. Requests have been replied in a quality way, all parliamentary committees and services, when necessary, are involved and participate in the work of network making the whole Parliament actively participating. Although such practice is not common in other parliaments, after years of searching for a quality solution, we believe that this kind of cooperation has its benefits - employees of the Parliament are familiar with ECPRD while the replies often come from the most competent employees from certain areas.

The process of replying a request is organized as follows: the correspondent after receiving the request forwards it to the competent committee or service for replying. The reply is sent by a correspondent to the interpreting service for translation, later it is edited by a correspondent and finally sent to the ECPRD Secretariat.

I am pleased to point out that the statistical data of the Croatian Parliament show that the percentage of the replied requests is very high (always over 90%), positioning our Parliament to the very top. In addition, Croatian replies are mostly sent within the deadline and, besides coming from the parliamentary working bodies responsible for specific issues, they often come from the most competent civil servants working in ministries. When needed, parliamentary employees submit questions to the relevant ministries or other authorities, who then respond to them. So, in a certain way, competent and complete information is provided.

As far as the information available through the network, their importance for the Parliament is huge. Final summaries and replies to specific questions are relevant because they come directly from parliaments, containing data that are mostly not available in the public information space.

Therefore, our Library, when making any comparative analysis for the users, primarily begins with the ECPRD data base search in order to prepare comparative reviews based on the information given.

However, I believe that the information gathered through the network is still not sufficiently used by the parliamentary Staff service and the MPs, so we are constantly looking for the best ways of promoting it.

As far as participation in other ECPRD activities, primarily seminars, we participate whenever the topics are considered to be relevant to our Parliament. In addition to pleasant socializing with colleagues, lectures at seminars and conferences represent an endless source of diverse information and novelties, where everyone can hear and learn something new. Organization of thematic seminars in the Parliament represents both challenge and great satisfaction for a small group of colleagues involved in the organization of such events. We love to remember our first seminar organized two years ago leaving us a nice memory. I can say that my engagement in the ECPRD represents one of the most enjoyable activities of my parliamentarian career. I believe that the ECPRD network is an inexhaustible source of information for parliaments, parliamentarians and civil servants. This is extremely important since we are exposed to all kinds of information, often confusing

and unreliable. Besides, the network is a charming group of colleagues throughout Europe working on its quality and I am happy and grateful for having the opportunity to collaborate with them.

Replying to the ECPRD requests has connected the staff of the Croatian Parliament, where everyone tries to do their part of the job at the highest possible quality. Annual statistical analysis of ECPRD replies represents additional motivation since everyone wants to achieve better results. Our little parliamentary network has been functioning successfully for many years now, constantly evolving primarily thanks to colleagues who diligently and conscientiously perform this additional task.

All this would not be possible without constant support and practical help by my deputy Anamarija Nejašmić, whose patience and generous engagement contributed to the successful functioning of the ECPRD network in the Croatian Parliament.

As for the ECPRD future, I am convinced that the network will continue evolving and growing and I hope that a wide range and quality of information that it offers will be recognized and used more and more by the Croatian Parliament in the days to come.

Branka Martinčić
ECPRD Correspondent
Croatian Parliament

Cyprus

ΒΟΥΛΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΝΤΙΠΡΟΣΩΠΩΝ

House of Representatives

Vassiliki ANASTASSIADOU, ECPRD Correspondent

Christiana SOLOMONIDOU, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



CYPRVS AETERNA



ECPRD – 40th Anniversary

Contribution by the Cyprus House of Representatives

Turning 40 is usually a transitional age... having gone through child age, the teenage years, growing-up in the second decade of life and evolving in the third; the ECPRD has achieved all that and is now celebrating its fourth decade, the last decade being more established and mature than before.

Over the years, a growing circle of colleagues, have become associates, go-to persons for specialized areas of interest and formed friendships, while contributing in what is now a respected pool of knowledge, the ECPRD database, which often reaches beyond the borders of parliamentary knowledge, procedure and expertise.

Having managed to get more and more officials and members familiar with and assisted by both our network and its database in the Cyprus Parliament, our ECPRD team

has grown over the past ten years, reflecting the ongoing expansion of our network. Initially consisting only of the ECPRD Correspondent and Deputy Correspondent, the Cyprus team is now supported by a small yet dedicated group of parliamentary officers, as well as, other colleagues both within and outside Parliament, willing and able to contribute their knowledge to the pertinent questionnaires and thus to the ECPRD database.

Over the course of our participation in the ECPRD network, as a small legislature we had to overcome, personnel and technical constraints to meet the requirements of our network but we did so gladly, as the ECPRD itself provided us with the incentives needed; growing our parliamentary network and knowledge, exchanging views and making friends and associates during personal interaction at our annual meetings and specialised seminars.

The ECPRD turning 40 provides us with a profound sense of pride and fulfillment, stemming from the fact that each and every colleague, has contributed in some way in constructing and promoting a significant parliamentary initiative, into establishment, achievement and now into a celebrated network in its 40th year of existence and hopefully well beyond.

Last but not least, special thanks are due to all the Co-directors, ExCo members, Co-ordinators and the Secretariat, past and present who have been the "glue" that holds the ECPRD concept and network together.

So, here's to us, to our 40th anniversary and to thousands more questionnaires to come!

To the entire ECPRD family, we wish many, happy and creative returns!

Christiana Solomonidou
Cyprus ECPRD Deputy –Correspondent.

(on behalf of Mrs Vassiliki Anastasiadou,
ECPRD Correspondent
and the Cyprus ECPRD Team)

Czech Republic

Parlament České republiky, Poslanecká sněmovna

Robert VYKLIČKY, ECPRD Correspondent

Stanislav CALETKA, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent

Ondřej TIKOVSKÝ, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



POSLANECKÁ
SNĚMOVNA
PARLAMENTU
ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY



Czech case study - parliamentary institute and ECPRD

The Parliament of the Czech Republic is bicameral – the Chamber of Deputies has 200 members elected for a 4-year term, the Senate has 81 members elected for a 6-year term. The number of the staff in the Office of the Chamber of Deputies is about 350, the number of the staff in the Office of the Senate is about 190.

The Parliamentary Institute and the Parliamentary Library are responsible for dealing with ECPRD requests and other ECPRD issues in the Chamber of Deputies.¹ Therefore, all three ECPRD correspondents of the Chamber of Deputies are from the aforementioned Departments. According to the internal Rules of Organisation, the Parliamentary Institute maintains contacts with parliamentary research

services abroad and provides information processed by them. Similarly, the Parliamentary Library maintains and develops relations with foreign parliamentary libraries and international library organisations.

The vast majority of all Czech ECPRD requests and replies is prepared by the Parliamentary Institute (sometimes in cooperation with other Departments such as the Parliamentary Library, IT Department, Committee Secretariats etc.). The reason is, that the Parliamentary Institute resolves the tasks of scientific, informative and educational nature for the Chamber of Deputies (and also for the Senate).²

¹ Appointed correspondents (since 2016):

- Mr Robert Vyklíčký – ECPRD Correspondent, Head of the Department of Communication and Education, Parliamentary Institute (email: vyklicky@psp.cz, phone: +420257172238)
- Mr Stanislav Caletka – Deputy ECPRD Correspondent, Department of Communication and Education, Parliamentary Institute (email: caletkas@psp.cz, phone: +420257172306)
- Mr Ondřej Tikovský – Deputy ECPRD Correspondent, Director of the Parliamentary Library (email: tikovskyo@psp.cz, phone: +420257174501)

² In order to provide the best possible services, the PI has been divided into three departments, each dealing with particular agenda – General Analyses Department, Department of EU Affairs, and Department of Communication and Education. The staff of all three Departments participate on major projects and analyses (including also ECPRD). Additionally PI serves as an educational and training center for the Chamber of Deputies and its Office employees by organizing seminars and study visits. PI provides services of the same extent also to the Senate and Office of the Senate. More detailed information is available in English on: <http://public.psp.cz/en/sqw/hp.sqw?k=40>

According to the ECPRD statistics presented at the Annual Conferences of Correspondents, the Chamber of Deputies has been one of the most active parliamentary chambers regarding making new comparative requests. Generally speaking, information obtained from several countries is always priceless for our work, especially for preparation of several comparative studies. We also actively take part in replying to the ECPRD requests. From this point of view, our replies to the ECPRD requests represent considerable

part of our workload. Such replies are annually among the four most frequent tasks of the Parliamentary Institute. This means that our cooperation with other parliaments within the ECPRD network is an integral part of daily work and daily tasks of the Parliamentary Institute:

Two ECPRD seminars have been organized in the Chamber of Deputies in recent years - both within the framework of the ECPRD area of interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives. In cooperation with the Senate, we organized a

PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTE (PI) AND ECPRD			
Year	Total number of all PI publications	Replies to ECPRD Requests – as a percentage of all PI publications (in %)	Replies to ECPRD Requests – ranking (in relation to other PI product lines) based on number of products completed
2007	680	14	4.
2008	679	16	3.
2009	680	20	3.
2010	717	17	3.
2011	943	13	4.
2012	894	16	3.
2013	775	18	2.
2014	1016	13	3.
2015	994	18	3.
2016	1147	15	4.

seminar on *Transparency in Parliaments* in September 2007 (31 participants from foreign parliaments attended this seminar), and a seminar on *Parliamentary Research and the Plurality of Information Sources available to MPs* with 42 participants from foreign parliaments was organized in April 2013. This seminar was closely connected with the 20th anniversary of foundation of the Parliamentary Institute.

ECPRD brings parliaments together and there is no doubt that the ECPRD network has developed into a very important tool of inter-parliamentary communication and cooperation over the last 40 years. It is a useful community

for exchange of information and contacts between parliaments across Europe and other countries. Moreover, ECPRD network may be considered mainly community of people, as the exchange of information is often based on personal contacts. On the one hand, there are different countries, different parliamentary systems, different internal organisations of parliaments and different legal norms, but on the other hand, there are similar problems that parliamentary administrations and MPs must be facing. Our work is therefore easier due to the ECPRD network. And this is also a big commitment to the future.

Denmark

FOLKETINGET



Folketinget

Hanne RASMUSSEN, ECPRD Correspondent¹

Christina RINGVARD, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent²

Niels H. JENSENIUS, ECPRD Correspondent

Martin LØFGREEN JUSTESEN, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Contribution from Denmark to the publication: 40th anniversary of ECPRD - Denmark and ECPRD

Denmark and ECPRD

Denmark has been a member of the ECPRD family from the beginning and if ECPRD was not there, I think someone has to invent it.

There are only one national parliament in each country and that means that we have very few national colleagues that really understand the problems and challenges we are facing.

That is why it is so fruitful to meet with colleagues in ECPRD seminars because we understand each other although we speak different languages.

When we meet at seminars and correspondent meetings we can share experiences, new initiatives, best practices

and it is not only useful but also a great pleasure to be part of this network.

I started in the Danish parliament in 1988 at that time Elise Holt had just succeeded Kristian Hvidt as correspondent. Elise Holt was for many years a very active member of the ECPRD and she was also a member of the executive committee from 2001-2004.

For many years, I was answering requests but I only knew the people by their email address. In 2006, I attended the first correspondent meeting in London and it was a great pleasure for me to meet all the persons behind the mail addresses.

It is my impression that the correspondent meetings are less formal today compared to the first years of ECPRD.

¹ ECPRD Correspondent until 31 May 2017

² Deputy ECPRD Correspondent until 31 May 2017

Today it is common that also deputies are present at the correspondent meetings. I don't know for sure but it is my impression that the correspondents in the early years of ECPRD cooperation primarily were senior staff members, today the correspondents are more related to the daily work in the different parliaments and that is in my opinion an advantage.

The cooperation are not only information sharing, an important activity in ECPRD are the seminars. Seminars are very useful initiatives facilitating the cooperation between specialists, and the number of seminars organized by the different sections has increased in the last 40 years.

Staff members from the Danish parliament have participated in many seminars in all the different sections and they have all returned with new knowledge, new contacts and new inspiration for the use of their daily work.

Denmark has hosted six seminars in the last forty years:

- 1979 seminar for the thesaurus working group
- 1989 seminar for the library section
- 1996 seminar on methods for informing school children of the work of the national parliaments
- 2008 seminar on ICT
- 2012 seminar for the library and research section

I was responsible for the seminar in 2012

The purpose of the seminar was to bring colleagues from other parliamentary libraries together and discuss a theme that we were concerned about and a theme we considered might be relevant for others too.

The subject was : Members use of information and changing visions of the Parliamentary Library.

The seminar was a success because we managed to have interesting speakers and very active participants. The seminar focused on how to react to the changing ways of collecting information and tried to set focus on new trends and how they influence the work in the parliamentary libraries.

Organizing a seminar gave us a lot of experiences and we realized how much work there are behind a meeting. There are many hours behind such a meeting and a lot of people involved but the outcome is definitely worth the efforts.

The ECPRD co-operation is dependent on members making an effort to organize seminars. So many thanks to all of you who have arranged and organized seminars and meetings, great respect and admiration from Denmark.

The future

Denmark has no research department and never had. Requests have been answered primarily by staff members of the library with help from specialist from other departments and government offices. Although very few people are involved in the answers to the requests we have a fine response rate and we are very proud of that.

Sometimes we are asked: what is the advantage of the membership of ECPRD ? You reply to a lot of requests every year, but send out very few requests. The answer is, that the membership gives us an outstanding access to a network and opportunities to meet colleagues from other parliaments and it gives us easy access to relevant information from other parliaments and we would not miss that.

A research department in the Danish parliament has been discussed for many years but the politicians had preferred to have their own staff and they wanted to strengthen the party secretariats instead of the parliamentary administration.

Nevertheless, in 2015 the politicians decided to strengthen the parliament towards the government and therefore the funding to the parliament administration was increased and five new specialists were hired. In the first place only for three years.

The effects and outcome are going to be evaluated once a year and after 3 years the politicians must decide if they want the arrangement to continue.

The new resources enables the committees to ask for research about actual cases, gives the members more background material about EU cases discussed in parliament, more juridical support in general and more support for private bills from members and more economic research and papers about actual cases.

The purpose is to strengthen the committees and ensure that the parliament is the forum for development of politics and to make the parliament more efficient in the control

of the government. The new specialists have legal and economic background and one is an expert on EU-matters, they are all working close together with the permanent staff members with the same background.

The new initiative might result in more requests from Denmark in the future.

Hanne Rasmussen
ECPRD correspondent since 2006



ECPRD seminar 'Members' use of information and changing visions of the Parliamentary Library' hosted by the Danish Folketinget 14-15 May 2012

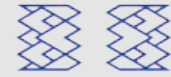
Estonia

Riigikogu

Antero HABICHT, ECPRD Correspondent

Margit MUUL, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent¹

Urvo KLOPETS, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



RIIGIKOGU



Forty years together with wonderful people

First of all, I would like to thank all the people in the ECPRD network and my good colleagues who have allowed me this pleasant opportunity to write a brief text about my experience so far in this wonderful organisation. This is a view, seen from a small EU country, on the work of the ECPRD over the past ten years, in connection with the upcoming fortieth anniversary of this organisation.

During my relatively short period of working as a correspondent since the beginning of 2016, I have had working contact with only some of the current members of the ECPRD. They have struck me as outstanding specialists in their fields. Considering my brief experience, when writing this piece, I have also availed myself of the help and ideas from my colleagues who have had connection with the ECPRD network for a longer time.

The key to the success of any successfully functioning organisation is, as is known, in the first place, people. Besides the queries, network running smoothly and without obstacles, added value is provided by the possibility of

direct contacts which arises and is created at the working seminars where I have participated so far. Although we have met with our immediate neighbours and colleagues also in other parliamentary events, in my view the ECPRD network has been a good basis for a number of effective direct inquiries to our Baltic neighbours, the Nordic countries, etc.

And yet – the greater part of work is done practically in the form of answering the queries sent through the network. I have understood that substantial replies and the possibility to put oneself in the position of the inquirer are often what give the replies the relevance and substance needed by the inquirer. It is true that the fact that a large part of information is not publicly available, or is not available in English at all, is an inseparable part of parliamentary culture. Therefore, the queries already submitted in the ECPRD network, and summaries of them, are of great help indeed. We are also grateful users of the ECPRD web, which seems so self-evident today, but the necessary information has reached the orders database only as a result of our consistent and voluminous work. Not all networks can excel with that.

¹ Deputy ECPRD Correspondent until 31 May 2017

Areas of Interest

I Economic and Budgetary Affairs – From the point of view of this field, the past decade since the thirtieth jubilee looks like a fight with the consequences of an economic crisis – or, as was explained to the participants in the seminar in Frankfurt in 2007, a systemic crisis – and the becoming aware of the existing situation.

II ICT – In this field, the attempt to observe strategic planning, to better understand what could be the precondition and basis for such a plan (polling of MPs as one possibility) can be mentioned, as well as the use of mobile and smart phones with the help of various apps, cloud services, Internet security, new web development projects, etc.

III Parliamentary Practice and Procedure

There is always reason to discuss topical issues of parliamentary practice and procedures. As with other working groups, it is good to note also here that the worries and joys of many parliamentary officials, and the issues arising in practice, are often very similar. So this is a very good format for sharing good practices.

IV Libraries, Research Services and Archives

This is an “administrative focus” and not a specific theme or sphere. Therefore, it is somewhat different from the above-mentioned areas and the audience is familiar with it (the majority are heads of research services), so there is no need to dwell on it at length here.

A big applause to all coordinators who have been in charge of these fields.

What is the use of all that?

Estonia's work experience in the ECPRD network has so far mainly involved answering questions from other countries, as compared to the number of queries it has submitted over the network. In addition, we have had an opportunity to host and organise couple of ECPRD seminars in Estonia. Not long ago, in May 2013, we had a useful experience to host a seminar to share experiences on the issue of debating and approving long-term national strategies in parliaments. I am of the opinion that such an approach has been fairly fruitful and useful after all, from our point of view.

In the past decade, Estonia has been represented by a member in the Executive Committee of the ECPRD, and also by a LRA coordinator. Siiri Sillajõe assumed this responsibility after some hesitation as to whether she could manage this unknown task at all. However, looking back now, I would mention on the assets side of the past years that more substantial background information has reached the Estonian parliament, and numerous positions voiced in seminars have immediately reached the officials interested in the matter here in Estonia. Added to this are contribution to the organisation of seminars, learning from experienced colleagues, and individual development. With hindsight, we feel proud that a small country could also make its tiny contribution to the functioning of the ECPRD. It is heart-warming that smooth and constructive cooperation, and not competition with each other, has been programmed into the ECPRD cooperation model. Indeed, good relations and stability are important keywords. This is the moment to thank for this opportunity.

I and my good colleagues from the Estonian parliament send our congratulations to the ECPRD and everyone participating in its work on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the organisation. Our best wishes for the future to all who will perform and give content to the activities of the ECPRD over the next forty years. I am certain that the ECPRD can solve new kind of problems, in some respects unknown as yet, in our developing and, as matters stand, rapidly changing world. The ECPRD network continues to be an irreplaceable tool in tightening inter-parliamentary cooperation. So let us raise our glasses.

Finland



Eduskunta

Antti RAUTAVA, ECPRD Correspondent

Jan-Henrik PURSIANEN, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Challenges of the parliamentary research service and ECPRD

Background

The Research Service of the Finnish Parliament produces services for Members of Parliament (MPs) and other parliamentary clients. The challenges and development needs of service production are directly related to the changes in parliamentary work and the changing role of Parliament in Finnish society.

In Finland, Parliament has a formally strong position in light of the Constitution. Parliament has the right to decide on legislation and the state budget. Parliament also has a substantial role in overseeing the Government and State administration, as well as in the handling of EU matters and international affairs.

In practice, however, the political system operates according to its own, established procedures. For decades, majority governments sitting their full parliamentary terms have ruled Finland. A majority government, if sufficiently unified internally, can see its bills through the parliamentary process so that the essential parts of the result correspond

to those of the original proposal. This situation emphasizes the overseeing role of Parliament, which is targeted at the operations of the Government and State administration.

Parliament's role in legitimizing the exercise of power must also not be forgotten or its significance underestimated. Legitimizing the exercise of power is directly related to maintaining social peace.

Challenges

What can be the role of a Research Service in a parliament with a position as described above? In addition, in which role would the services provided by the Research Service have the most effect?

The Research Service should support parliament-based thinking and political initiatives. MPs are able to introduce important issues into public discussion, issues on which the Government has failed to take action. Through their actions, MPs can challenge the Government and use their supervisory power to pressure the Government and State

administration. The Research Service is a resource under the sole authority of Parliament, and it can be used to support these activities.

The Research Service may also play a significant role in supporting the work of parliamentary groups. Opposition groups naturally seek to question the actions of the Government and its parliamentary groups. As the opposition groups do not have direct access to the resources, including expert advice, possessed by government ministries, these groups instead rely on services provided by Parliament.

The role of parliamentary groups and their offices in preparing policy has strengthened in Finland. All parliamentary groups, including those of government parties, are involved with preparing future policies. The groups employ experts, who in turn require analyzed background information for their work. In their policy preparations, both government and opposition parties are ultimately concerned with setting their sights on the next elections. A fairly large share of policies prepared during the parliamentary term find their way onto the parties' electoral platforms.

Services

What do our customers need? In short, expertise that is based on education and experience, and the ability to summarize essential information from an enormous amount of data. The Research Service is an arbiter of information, and its particular characteristics are neutrality, its equal treatment of customers and its transparency in the process through which the response to an assignment has been reached.

A customer-oriented approach is the most important aspect in developing the services: the changing needs of customers must be resolved, one way or the other. Customers should also be included in the actual development work in some role that fits their schedules.

The enormous amount of available data and information, its ease of accessibility and the difficulties of ascertaining its reliability are the stages at which the Research Service can assist customers' work processes. An expert with an

overview of the topic, or at least the ability to quickly form one, may be of significant assistance to the customer.

In Finland, there has especially been an increase in the demand for impact assessments. MPs and parliamentary groups want the possible impacts of their planned policy changes assessed. The number of assignments concerning economic impact assessments has especially seen a notable increase. This reflects the current political situation in Finland and Europe, and globally.

There has also been an increasing demand of comparative data on other countries. Problems and challenges are often common and similar solutions or at the very least models on different problem-solving methods are sought after. It is here that ECPRD steps into the picture, but a few words about this later.

Instead, I will step a little bit aside and make a note that besides a high-level Research Service, Parliament should also offer efficient services for the monitoring of information and the media. With the help of these, MPs as well as Research Service experts can keep their knowledge up-to-date on topics they are interested in or on which they need to be informed. Monitoring should also cover discussions on social media, even if the monitoring of it may be quite challenging.

Digitalisation

Out of all changes in the operational environment, digitalization is one of the most prominent factors influencing Parliament's activities and the services provided by the Parliamentary Office. All routine work will face digitalization at some point in the future. Similarly, any services that can be digitalized will undergo the process at some point. That future may come sooner than we imagine, or perhaps wish.

Personally, I do not believe that the coming changes will initially affect the Research Service's expert services. More digital tools will certainly come to assist in the work of Research Service experts. Machine summaries of large masses of text, machine translations and advanced statistics/big data services are examples of tools that one

would gladly utilize in the Research Service. They can offer a complete new range of possibilities on, for example, assessing the impacts of changes in policy. However, the core function of Research Service work, i.e. providing high-level expertise, is something that is not easily digitalized.

The post-truth era

Just as we have just started in Finland in applying information-based policymaking to practice, we find ourselves in the midst of a discussion on the transition to a post-truth era. This is also paradoxical in the sense that Finnish policymaking has never utilized as much information as its groundwork as today.

The talk of a post-truth era may nonetheless contain something that reveals a sudden, unanticipated shift in political activity that is currently underway. In analyzing the phenomenon, I refer to a presentation given by Iain Watt in September 2016 to the ECPRD seminar held at the Storting in Oslo¹. The presentation is a thought-provoking analysis on information, knowledge management and the role of experts. As a Research Service, we must reposition ourselves and keep a close eye on changes in the ways of making politics.

At the same time, the basic operating methods of Research Service work must be reinforced. The Research Service process must be transparent, i.e. capable of evaluation by the customer. It must follow established practices used for presenting scientific data. Facts, studies and reports must be critically assessed and tested from different angles. The reliability of conclusions should be indicated. Quality assessment should be included as part of the process. It is advisable to set the targets high for developing and complying with procedures.

A positive aspect is that Parliament's Research Service has no kind of monopoly in the analysis and forwarding of information. Customers are always free to use other sources of information, and they can use them to evaluate the Research Service's findings.

ECPRD

I consider the ECPRD to be in many ways a success story: it should be invented if it did not already exist.

The ECPRD has one notable competitive advantage, one that is otherwise difficult to obtain. The network enables the reception of information from other countries where an expert in the legislation, practices and culture of the country in question provides an answer. As a result, the answer provided is of high quality. The collegial collaboration between correspondents of different parliaments encourages answering requests. The network is light in its organization; not an insignificant aspect in a Parliament critical of any expenses. Answers are also received with relatively short timeframes, which is a valued feature in parliamentary work.

The ECPRD is also an outstanding channel for benchmarking in parliamentary work. After all, parliaments are fairly alike in their basic features. Knowledge of the methods and administrative arrangements used in other parliaments provides ideas for the development of one's own work.

I presume that the ECPRD is able to maintain its position precisely because expertise connected to a specific country and culture is difficult to replace with, for example, digital services. Through its own activities, the ECPRD holds the banner of expertise and information high, even in the turbulent times of the post-truth era.

I will use the opportunity provided by this forum to thank my colleagues for our well-functioning cooperation. The ECPRD is a network, which one can proudly present. It is an example of cooperation operating in the background to provide many forms of support for parliamentary work.

Antti Rautava
ECPRD Correspondent
Eduskunta, Parliament of Finland

1 Iain Watt: Agnotology and Knowledge Management in Parliamentary Research Services and Libraries. Paper for the ECPRD Conference, September 2016 in Oslo, Norway.



Short reports from two past ECPRD events in Helsinki

Parli@ments on the Net V, Helsinki

www.eduskunta.fi/ecprd

Date: March 25-26, 2002

Venue: Eduskunta, Finnish Parliament House, Parliament Auditorium, Mannerheimintie 30

The seminar will focus on two themes:

- 1. Knowledge Management**
- 2. E-democracy**

The Monday programme includes Keynote Presentations on both themes. Time has been allocated after each main theme for brief, prepared discussion contributions and for discussion.

On Tuesday the participants will form several workshops, focusing on E-democracy and Knowledge Management. The workshops will commence their activity with an introductory address.

Those interested in giving prepared discussion contributions on Monday or giving an introductory address for a workshop can indicate this when registering for the seminar itself, or by e-mail direct to the organisers.

Meeting of the Macroeconomic Research Working Group

Helsinki, 27 March 1998

The seminar, the theme of the which was the Finnish Economy and the European Market, was attended by 46 participants from 27 parliamentary chambers.

The meeting opened with a welcome from the Secretary General of the Finnish Parliament who was followed by Mr Eero Kallio from the Ministry of Finance who gave an overview of the current economic situation in Finland. The specific challenge of EMU for the Finnish economy was then presented by Mr Jukka Lassila of ETLA, a research institute.

After a wide-ranging discussion, a Finnish member of parliament, Mr Erkki Tuomioja, who is chairman of the Eduskunta's Grand Committee (equivalent to the European Affairs Committee) explained how the parliament dealt with European legislative proposals.

The next subject to be covered was the "Northern Dimension". The first speaker for this topic was Mr Alec Aalto, Secretary of State for EU affairs who situated the subject within the context of the EU. He was followed by Professor Janne Hukkinen from the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland (speaking via a video link) who treated the regional and environmental aspects of the topic.

Given the importance of the telecommunications sector for the Finnish economy, Mr Aimo Eloholma, Executive Vice President of Telecom Finland gave an overview of this rapidly growing industry.

The day concluded with an internal meeting of the Working Group to discuss the future work programme. The next meeting of the Group will take place at the invitation of the European Commission in Brussels on 25 September 1997. The dual themes of this meeting will be developments in EMU and developments in the budget in the light of CAP reform and enlargement. The autumn 1999 meeting will take place in the Slovak Republic.



Examples of what remained as traces in the ECPRD memory

France



French National Assembly / l'Assemblée nationale française

Xavier PINON, ECPRD Correspondent / Correspondant CERDP¹

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40th Anniversary of the ECPRD Contribution of the French National Assembly

The ECPRD is 40 years old! It has reached maturity.

As a reminder, a former President of the French Council (in 1955)³, Mr. Edgar Faure, who was, at the time, President of the French National Assembly, was one of the founding fathers of this network. He introduced this idea to the European bodies as of 1973 with the idea of setting up a European Institution for Parliamentary Research. It was thus for this reason that we felt it worthwhile to organize in Paris, on the eve of this anniversary and upon the request of Christine Verger and of Horst Schade, the annual conference of the correspondents and deputy correspondents which brought together almost forty countries.

Les 40 ans du CERDP Contribution de l'Assemblée nationale française

Le CERDP a quarante ans ! L'âge de la maturité.

Pour mémoire, c'est un ancien Président du Conseil (en 1955)³, alors Président de l'Assemblée nationale, M. Edgar Faure, qui fut l'un des pères fondateurs de ce réseau. Il porta cette idée au sein des instances européennes dès 1973 en souhaitant la mise en place d'un Institut européen de recherche parlementaire. C'est aussi pour cela qu'avait du sens pour nous, à la veille de cet anniversaire et à la demande de Christine Verger et de Horst Schade, l'organisation de la conférence annuelle des correspondants et correspondants-adjoints à Paris qui a réuni près de quarante pays !

1 ECPRD Correspondent until June 2017

2 Deputy ECPRD Correspondent until 16 July 2017

3 Prime Minister

3 Premier ministre

At the beginning of this 21st century, the ECPRD at the French National Assembly, is based, in concrete terms, on three people. Unlike what happens in the majority of other assemblies, this unit is not attached to a studies department (which does not exist at the French National Assembly) but is part of the European Affairs Department which includes the standing committee of the same name. All this to say that the size of such an entity which has to deal with more than 200 enquiries per year on such a variety of subjects (the fight against terrorism, social allowances, body part trafficking, public procurement, cemeteries, trees etc.), is not very big. However, this is also what renders our task both delicate and thrilling: in addition to coordinating the requests and the responses of other assemblies, it means we must be all-rounders, ready to understand the meaning of the questions asked by our counterparts and to answer them, in so far as we can, by ourselves, or else, when such a solution is clearly impossible, to know, for example, which software is used by the Reports Department (Hansard) or what is the military music selection for a particular protocolary event. It means that we must be a smart letter box which can contact the people at the French National Assembly who are in the best position to answer such requests, and even to remind them to reply. It is for this reason that a certain number of civil servants working in our administration, whom we have had the habit of contacting, understand, over the years, what is behind the abbreviation ECPRD. It is also for this reason that the ECPRD is a "big family" which stretches beyond its core group of correspondents and deputy correspondents.

Herein certainly lies one of the difficulties and yet one of the charming features of this network: let's remind ourselves that the implementation of its objectives, in accordance with article one of its statutes, states, that its aim is to, *"promote the exchange of information, ideas, experiences and good practices between the administrations of the parliaments of Europe on subjects of common interest, strengthen the close cooperation between parliamentary departments in all areas of administration, legislation, information, studies and parliamentary documentation, as well as to gather, exchange and disseminate the studies carried out by parliamentary departments"* and that this aim is based on the good will

Le CERDP à l'Assemblée nationale, en ce début du XXIème siècle, repose concrètement sur trois personnes. A la différence de ce qui se passe dans la plupart des autres assemblées, cette cellule n'appartient pas à un service de recherche dont nous ne disposons pas mais au service des affaires européennes qui comprend la Commission du même nom. Autant dire qu'une entité de cette taille pour traiter plus de 200 requêtes par an aux thèmes si variés – lutte contre le terrorisme, prestations sociales, trafics d'organes, marchés publics, cimetières, arbres etc. -, c'est peu. Mais c'est aussi ce qui rend notre tâche à la fois délicate et passionnante : en plus de coordonner les demandes et les réponses des autres assemblées, elle nous impose d'être des généralistes aptes à comprendre le sens des questions posées par nos homologues, et d'y répondre autant que possible par nous-mêmes, ou bien, lorsqu'il nous est manifestement impossible de le faire – comment savoir par exemple quel est le logiciel utilisé par le service du compte rendu ou quelle est la musique militaire choisie pour telle situation protocolaire ? -, de servir de boîte-aux-lettres intelligente pour solliciter au sein de l'Assemblée les personnes les plus à même de répondre, pour les relancer aussi... C'est pour cela qu'un certain nombre de fonctionnaires de notre administration que nous avons été amenés à contacter finissent, au fil des années, par connaître ce que cache le sigle du CERDP. C'est aussi pour cela que le CERDP est une « grande famille », bien au-delà de son noyau dur de correspondants et correspondants-adjoints.

Car c'est là assurément l'une des difficultés et l'un des charmes de ce réseau, la réalisation de ses objectifs, conformément à l'article 1er de ses statuts qu'on se plaît à rappeler - *« promouvoir les échanges d'informations, d'idées, d'expériences et de bonnes pratiques entre les administrations des parlements d'Europe sur des sujets d'intérêt commun, renforcer l'étroite coopération entre les services parlementaires dans tous les domaines de l'administration, de la législation, de l'information, des études et de la documentation parlementaires ; et recueillir, échanger et diffuser les études réalisées par les services parlementaires »* – passe uniquement par la bonne volonté de chacun et la détermination de tous ses membres, dans la mesure de leurs moyens, à coopérer.

and the determination of each of its members, acting within their own spheres, to cooperate with each other. All of us, the ECPRD unit and the civil servants help contribute to make the network flourish.

In addition, this network, far from having been made obsolete by the internet revolution, seems to be more and more active and lively. The need for the transfer of information which is both reliable and secure, within certain time limits, which are often set by a political emergency, is, in fact, paradoxically, still very present. Internet is certainly an inexhaustible well of information but such information is inconsistent in its reliability, thus the support of a network on which one can count, in the fields of the reactivity of one's counterparts to find the relevant, authorized and updated information on a foreign country, especially when one has little or no knowledge of the language, remains essential.

The success of this venture is clear and the figures speak for themselves: as of today, since the setting-up of the ECPRD's secure site, the network has reached its 3 380th request! The French National Assembly plays its part by receiving more than 200 enquiries each year and it attempts to reply to each and every one of them. It appears that the number is indeed increasing. In a single semester, since January 2017, the ECPRD unit of the Assembly has been solicited 94 times, 8 of which have been direct solicitations and it has, for the moment, replied to 80 of these enquiries.

What can be said of the ECPRD? Without being exhaustive, let's concentrate on several observations – the ECPRD represents

- First of all, a huge diversity of subjects dealt with according to the requests: requests which are very varied both on account of their nature, their number and their complexity. The regulatory knowledge required by many questions rarely falls within the scope of legislative assemblies;
- The sense of the infinite variety of what is real in practice. "Not that enquiry again!", is often the reply heard when one sees another request appear concerning family benefits, the material conditions of M.P.s, parliamentary

Tous, cellule du CERDP et fonctionnaires, nous contribuons à nourrir ce réseau.

Or ce réseau, loin d'être rendu obsolète par l'avènement d'Internet, semble de plus en plus actif et vivant. L'exigence de transfert d'informations à la fois fiables et sécurisées dans des délais souvent contraints par l'urgence politique est en effet, paradoxalement, toujours d'actualité. Si Internet constitue une mine aussi inépuisable qu'inégalement fiable d'informations, l'appui d'un réseau où l'on sait pouvoir compter sur la réactivité de nos homologues pour trouver l'information pertinente, autorisée et actualisée sur un pays étranger - *a fortiori* quand on n'en maîtrise pas ou peu la langue - reste indispensable. Le succès est au rendez-vous et les chiffres sont éloquentes : à l'heure où nous écrivons ces lignes, depuis que le site sécurisé du CERDP existe, le réseau a atteint sa 3380ème requête ! L'Assemblée nationale pour sa part est saisie de plus de 200 requêtes chaque année et s'efforce de répondre à chacune d'entre elles. Et la cadence semble encore s'accélérer. En un seul trimestre, depuis janvier 2017, la cellule du CERDP de l'Assemblée a été sollicitée 94 fois dont 8 en direct ; elle a répondu à ce jour à 80 requêtes.

Que dire du CERDP ? Sans volonté d'exhaustivité, on se limitera à quelques remarques : le CERDP, c'est :

- d'abord une incroyable diversité de sujets dans lesquels on butine au gré des demandes : sollicitations de nature variée tant en raison du type de requête que de leur nombre et de leur difficulté – le niveau réglementaire requis par de nombreuses questions est rarement de la compétence des assemblées législatives ;
- le sens de l'infinie variété du réel. Encore telle requête!, a-t-on tendance à s'exclamer lorsqu'on voit apparaître une énième demande sur les prestations familiales, la situation matérielle des députés, la déontologie au parlement, ou les services de renseignement, avant de mesurer que sur un même sujet, tel un tissu aux motifs se déclinant à l'infini, les questions n'épuisent jamais le réel ;
- la frustration aussi devant certaines réponses, les nôtres comprises : les Italiens le savent bien *traduttore*

ethics or intelligence services but then we understand that on the same issue, the questions, like an infinite pattern, can never be exhausted by the demonstration of practices;

- The frustration felt upon receiving certain answers, ours included: the Italians say it well - *traduttore traditore* – or how to translate without changing the meaning? How can we, by the means of the working languages (English, French and German), which people master to a smaller or greater extent, transmit a legal concept or the realities of a sociological, historical or everyday practice which is embodied by the rule of law?
- The sense of incongruity: “Why has such a request been made?” This can lead to laughter, annoyance and sighs, but modesty must be the rule of the game – if we have been annoyed by the incongruity of a request, it must be stated that we have also fallen into the trap of having transmitted an apparently ridiculous request: the migration of grey geese does not necessarily appear to be a parliamentary priority for everyone. Therefore, hat’s off to all those who replied, beyond our wildest hopes, to our enquiry: the description of the methods implemented to limit the proliferation of this bird convinced us to cancel the restaurant specialized in duck which we had planned for the occasion. Indeed, the most surprising thing sometimes is that we discover ingenious ideas which lead to an improbable conclusion which we can use and validate in order to answer a question, which, at first sight, appeared unanswerable;
- The knowledge of the institutional system of the other countries of the Council of Europe, which are, at the same time, diverse, multi-dimensional, at times baffling and yet also deceptively close. “*Philosophy is the daughter of surprise*”, said Aristotle. That could also be said of the exercise of comparison which the ECPRD carries out every day. This is an almost impossible exercise – “pears are not apples”, as we say in France. All of that certainly goes without saying. What is less evident is to discover through the outlook of others or thanks to their enquiries, that which defines our very selves. This is the case in all fields: our political system which we think we know so well, the extraordinary complexity of our legal

traditore : comment traduire sans trahir ? Comment, par le truchement de langues de travail – l’anglais, le français, l’allemand – qu’on maîtrise plus ou moins bien, transmettre un concept juridique ou faire passer toute la réalité sociologique, historique, d’usage etc. dans laquelle la règle de droit s’inscrit ?

- le sens de l’incongru : pourquoi telle requête ? Rires, agacements, soupirs... Mais la modestie s’impose : s’il nous est arrivé de nous agacer de l’incongruité d’une requête, force est de constater que nous sommes aussi tombés dans le travers de devoir relayer une demande apparemment farfelue : la migration des oies cendrées ne semblait pourtant pas *a priori* une priorité parlementaire partagée ! Chapeau bas d’ailleurs à tous ceux qui ont su répondre, au-delà de nos espérances, à notre demande : la description des méthodes utilisées pour limiter la prolifération de l’animal nous a fait renoncer au restaurant de canard que nous projetions d’expérimenter pour l’occasion... Car c’est le plus surprenant parfois : on se découvre des trésors d’ingéniosité pour trouver la référence improbable, la recouper, la valider pour répondre à ce qui nous paraissait infaisable au premier abord ;
- la connaissance du système institutionnel des autres pays du Conseil de l’Europe, à la fois divers, multiforme, parfois déroutant, parfois aussi illusoirement proche. « *La philosophie est fille de l’étonnement* » disait Aristote. Cela pourrait se dire également de l’exercice de comparaison auquel le travail pour le CERDP nous confronte chaque jour. Exercice presque impossible : des poires ne sont pas des pommes comme on dit en France. Tout cela va sans dire sans doute. Ce qui l’est moins, c’est de découvrir au travers des autres ou grâce à leur sollicitation ce qui nous définit nous-mêmes. Cela vaut pour tout : notre système politique qu’on croit bien connaître, l’extraordinaire complexité du maillage juridique qui règle nos vies mais également notre assemblée elle-même, notre « maison » pourtant ! car pour répondre à des requêtes sur le service informatique, sur l’accréditation des journalistes, sur la sécurité autour des bâtiments, sur les travaux, il faut appeler, écrire ou se déplacer auprès des collègues. Une requête sur l’équipement sportif de l’Assemblée n’a-t-elle pas obligé un des plus réfractaires au sport à se

system which regulates our lives but also our assembly itself and yet this is our "House"! For indeed, to be able to reply to questions on the computer department, on the accreditation of journalists, on security concerning buildings, on works, it is necessary to call, write to or meet colleagues. There was even the case of a question concerning the sports facilities of our Assembly which obliged one of our most unathletic colleagues to go to the weight-lifting room! This is the discovery of a new world both at home and away!

To conclude, the ECPRD represents the enormous privilege of better discovering the places which are at the heart of our modern democracies along with the shared pleasure of professional and often friendly conviviality which is at the very centre of international meetings between parliamentary civil servants. Thanks to the thematic seminars organized all year long and the annual conference where we meet and/or meet again the pillars of the network, as well as new faces (often younger!), there is a true institutional geography which is drawn up: Stockholm, Athens, Berlin, Belgrade, Rome, Bern, Lisbon, Oslo, etc., how many wonderful memories! But memories which will lead, we must hope, to the construction of the future!

rendre dans les salles de musculation ! Découverte d'un monde chez soi et chez les autres !

Pour finir, le CERDP, c'est le privilège immense de découvrir au plus près les lieux où bat le cœur des démocraties modernes dans le plaisir partagé de cette convivialité professionnelle, et parfois amicale, propre aux réunions internationales de fonctionnaires parlementaires : grâce aux séminaires thématiques organisés tout au long de l'année et à la conférence annuelle où l'on rencontre et retrouve piliers du réseau et visages neufs (plus jeunes souvent !), c'est une véritable géographie institutionnelle qui se dessine : Stockholm, Athènes, Berlin, Belgrade, Rome, Berne, Lisbonne, Oslo, etc. que de souvenirs déjà ! Mais qui contribuent, on l'espère, à construire l'avenir !

Pensée Chappotteau
ancienne Correspondante-adjointe du CERDP / Deputy
Correspondent of the ECPRD



Annual Conference of Correspondents, Paris organised by the French Assemblée nationale and the Sénat
17-19 November 2017

France



Sénat

Jean-Marc TICCHI, ECPRD Correspondent / Correspondant CERDP¹

Pierre-Michel VAUTHELIN, ECPRD Correspondent / Correspondant CERDP



The European Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments gave birth to two bodies. In its wider formation, the Council of Europe, it created the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) in 1977, and in its smaller formation, the European Union, it created the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) in 1989.

These are two remarkable achievements of interparliamentary cooperation between parliamentary officials for ECPRD and cooperation between parliamentarians for COSAC.

The ECPRD has turned forty, the age of full maturity; it is a unique example in the world of cooperation between officials of parliaments, both mono- and bi-cameral. Ever since its creation, the French Senate has always viewed the Center as an essential tool at the service of the assemblies to assist their operation through exchanges and experience sharing. Based on this decade experience, it appears that the Center is at its most valuable when it focuses on specific areas.

The first area relates to parliamentary procedure and

La Conférence européenne des présidents de Parlements a donné naissance à deux organes. Dans le cadre de son grand format, celui du Conseil de l'Europe, elle a créé le CERDP en 1977 ; et, dans le cadre de son petit format, celui de l'Union européenne, elle a créé la COSAC en 1989. Ce sont là deux réussites remarquables de la coopération entre parlements : coopération entre fonctionnaires des parlements pour le CERDP ; coopération entre parlementaires pour la COSAC.

Le CERDP, qui atteint donc la quarantaine, c'est-à-dire l'âge de la pleine maturité, est un exemple unique dans le monde en matière de coopération entre fonctionnaires des parlements, qu'ils soient monocaméraux ou bicaméraux. Depuis sa création, le Sénat français a toujours considéré que le Centre était un outil essentiel au service des assemblées pour les aider dans leur fonctionnement grâce aux échanges et aux partages d'expérience.

Après ces tentatives diverses au fil des décennies, il apparaît que le **Centre apporte une valeur ajoutée indéniable lorsqu'il se concentre sur quelques domaines précis.**

Le premier concerne **la procédure parlementaire et le fonctionnement des assemblées.** Certains animateurs

functioning of the assemblies. In the past, participants in the Center suggested the creation of a large database collecting information from all parliaments on their procedure and internal management. This oversized ambition for the Center was fortunately abandoned. In this field, the Center's contribution probably relies on a few seminars on specific matters thanks to debates geared more towards practical experience sharing by officials than doctrinal presentation. Via questionnaires, the Center encourages contacts with our colleagues of foreign Parliaments and gaining fast and valid information on parliamentary issues through one-on-one exchanges.

The second area relates to information and communication technologies (ICT). Our assemblies are all faced with new questions in this field requiring decisions so that parliamentarians may make the best possible use of innovations. Since we all have the same needs and may avail ourselves of the same new techniques after collecting the decisions of the Assemblies in this field, the Center will continue disseminating the new uses of ICT.

The third area is libraries and archives. There again, our assemblies are all faced with the same requirements, the same demands and challenges. Seminars are an occasion to share experiences, in particular on specific aspects of parliament libraries.

Finally, the Center plays a key role in comparative legislation studies. This is part of its core activity, which is raising and answering questions. Here again, the Center had great expectations in the past. In the 90s, some expected it to conduct its own legislation studies for the assemblies, which would have required disproportionate resources for an uncertain outcome and unsatisfactory result. In its wisdom, the Center decided against that course. A seminar might be usefully convened every five or ten years to study the methodology of comparative legislation studies and to publicize the work. However, the most important part is direct exchanges between assemblies via the Center's network and the sharing of individual studies.

In 40 years, the Center has gone through remarkable developments, growing pains and failed attempts, as well

du Centre ont eu autrefois l'idée de constituer au sein du Centre une grande base de données rassemblant toutes les informations de tous les Parlements sur la procédure et la gestion interne. Cette ambition était démesurée pour le Centre et elle fut heureusement abandonnée. En cette matière, l'apport du Centre repose sans doute sur **quelques séminaires**, portant sur des aspects précis grâce à des débats axés davantage sur la présentation d'expériences pratiques par les fonctionnaires parlementaires que sur les exposés théoriques universitaires. Mais surtout le Centre, par **le jeu des questionnaires**, doit permettre à chacun d'entre nous d'être en contact avec ses collègues des autres parlements et d'obtenir rapidement des informations sûres sur des questions parlementaires grâce à un échange direct de spécialiste praticien à spécialiste praticien.

Le second est relatif aux **techniques d'information et de communication**. Toutes nos assemblées sont confrontées à des questions nouvelles en ce domaine et doivent prendre des décisions afin que les parlementaires puissent utiliser au mieux les innovations. Le Centre doit faire connaître les décisions de chaque assemblée en ce domaine car nous avons tous les mêmes besoins et nous pouvons tous recourir aux mêmes techniques nouvelles pour les satisfaire. L'objectif du Centre doit donc être de **diffuser les utilisations nouvelles des techniques d'information et de communication**.

Le troisième est le domaine des **bibliothèques et des archives**. Là aussi, toutes nos assemblées sont confrontées aux mêmes exigences, aux mêmes besoins spécifiques, aux mêmes difficultés. Des séminaires peuvent donc permettre de confronter les expériences, notamment dans les aspects **spécifiques aux bibliothèques parlementaires**.

Enfin, le Centre est essentiel pour la réalisation des **études de législation comparée**. C'est là un élément de son fonctionnement quotidien par l'échange de questions et réponses. Là encore, le Centre a connu autrefois de grandes ambitions. Certains, dans les années 90, ont souhaité qu'il réalise lui-même des études de législation comparée qu'il aurait mises à la disposition des assemblées. Il eut fallu pour cela des moyens démesurés pour un résultat incertain qui n'aurait, en tout état de cause, pas été à la hauteur de

as undeniable and sustainable successes. These forty years have taught us that the Center cannot give more than it is reasonable to expect, but what it offers us today is beyond our expectations.

Jean LAPORTE
Correspondant
de 1989 à 2012

Jean-Marc TICCHI
Correspondant
depuis 2013

ces moyens. Avec sagesse, le Centre a su renoncer à ces tentatives. Dans ce domaine, peut-être un séminaire peut-il être utile tous les cinq ans ou tous les dix ans pour traiter de **la méthodologie des études de législation comparée** et pour **faire mieux connaître à tous les travaux de chacun**. Mais l'essentiel tient, d'une part, aux **échanges directs** entre assemblées grâce au réseau que constitue le Centre et, d'autre part, à la **mise à disposition de tous des études de chacun**.

En 40 ans, le Centre a connu un développement remarquable. Il a connu des crises de croissance avec des tentatives inabouties, mais aussi des réussites indéniables et durables. Ces quarante années nous ont appris qu'il ne pouvait pas apporter plus qu'il n'est raisonnable d'en attendre, mais que ce qu'il nous apporte aujourd'hui est déjà inespéré.

Jean LAPORTE
Correspondant
de 1989 à 2012

Jean-Marc TICCHI
Correspondant
depuis 2013



ECPRD seminar 'Parliamentary libraries and archives and their role in the preservation and conservation of the historical and cultural heritage of their countries' organised by the French Sénat 31 May - 1 June 2013

Georgia



Parliament of Georgia

Nino GETIA, ECPRD Correspondent

Marika MESKHISHVILI, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



First of all, we would like to congratulate ECPRD on the 40th anniversary!

Research Department of the Parliament of Georgia has anniversary too – we will be 25 this year!

When in 1999 Research Department of the Parliament of Georgia joined ECPRD, the latter already counted the experience of 22 years. It was a difficult time for Georgia in the 90s, we used to write in hand back then and took turns to use 2 or 3 computers available for the entire department...

Many things have changed for the better since then. We have learned many things from our colleagues and elaborated form and content of our papers.

We met many colleagues from ECPRD in person during seminars and meetings, and now we can see a real colleague behind each text of reply to our questions.

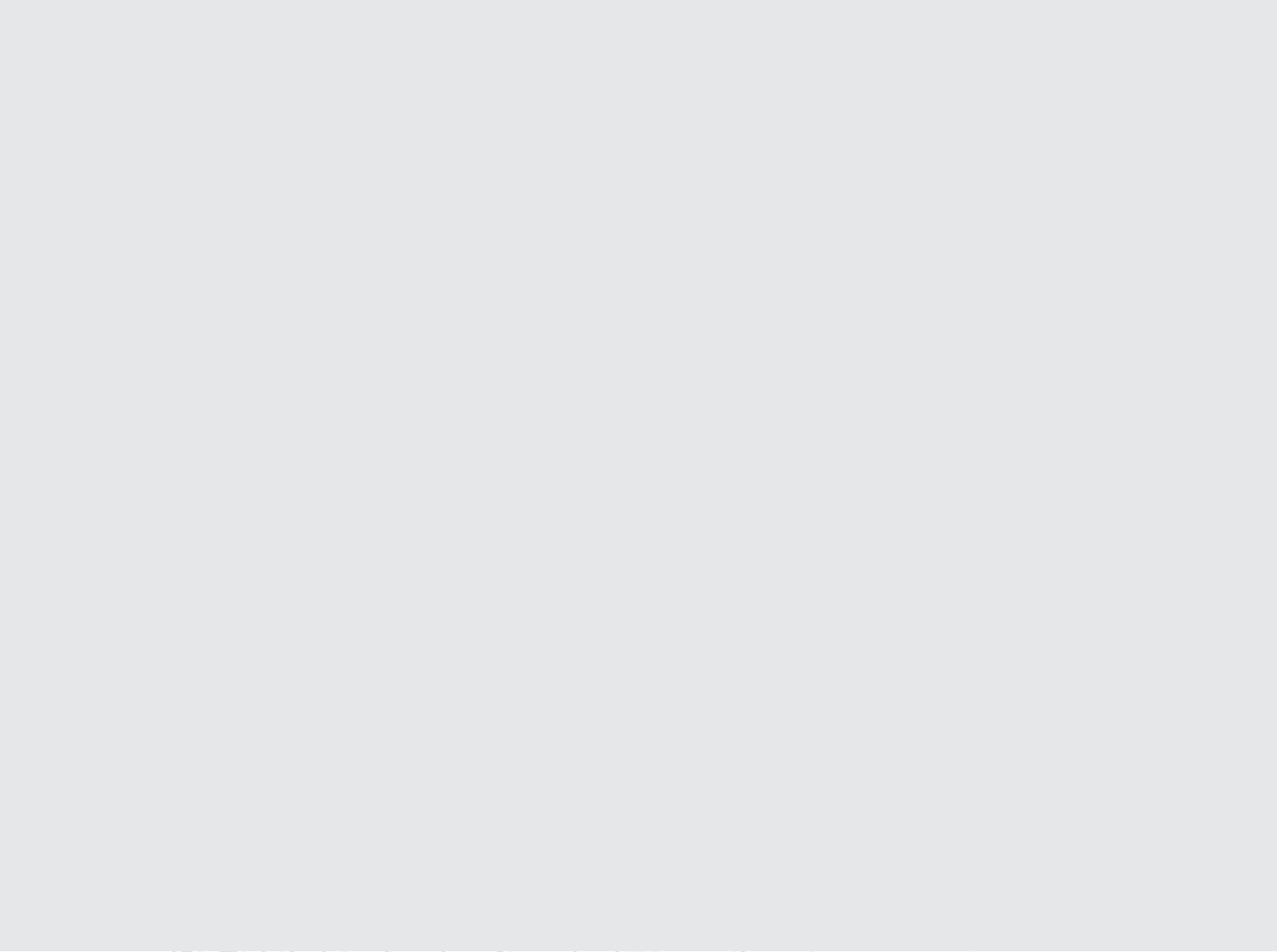
We understand importance of working to respond to questions from ECPRD network. This is, again, what we

have learned from you – we are doing our best to meet the deadline and provide comprehensive response. We have been extending our language capacity and have started to prepare responses in French as well.

One thing is clear – large ECPRD family has gained an active member: we are asking many questions, we may even be bothering you too much. You must be thinking opening the email: Oh, those Georgians (again)!

Today, when Georgian democracy is developing, when many things have changed, an Association Agreement has been signed between the EU and Georgia and we are looking forward to the opportunity for visa-free travel to EU countries for our citizens, we would like you to know that if, indeed, staff of the Parliament of Georgia has taken its part in movement of Georgia in the European direction, each of you have contributed greatly to this.

Nino Getia and Marika Meskhishvili
ECPRD Correspondents



Germany



Bundesrat

Claus KOGGEL, ECPRD Correspondent

Lena HELDT, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Looking to the future: The ECPRD in 40 years

by Claus Koggel, ECPRD Correspondent

40 years since the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation was founded—that is an occasion that offers more than simply a chance to review an impressive success story in the realm of interparliamentary cooperation. The anniversary also provides an opportunity to turn our thoughts to the future and consider the question: "How will the ECPRD look in 40 years?"

Let me say first that very few of us will still be actively involved in our respective parliamentary services when that anniversary rolls around in 2057; only the very young colleagues in our parliamentary administrations will be fortunate enough to celebrate the anniversary during their active professional careers. A whole host of questions can however already be identified that concern us in our role as the current ECPRD Correspondents: Will there still be an ECPRD in forty years? What kind of services will it offer its users? How will it be structured, and how will it function? Will there still be Correspondents? Will we still be meeting regularly for annual conferences and seminars? This essay cannot answer all of those questions, but it will at least venture a glimpse to the future.

Initial Inspiration for these Reflections

In June 2016 the Bundesrat organised the seminar *Parli@ments on the Net XIV* in Berlin addressing "A digital facelift for parliaments". As the concluding highlight of the event, the Bundesrat invited Hamburg-based futurologist Nick Sohnemann as a guest speaker. One of the points he tackled in his presentation was how the daily work routine in parliaments might look in some years. That sparked off my reflections about the role that the ECPRD would play 40 years from now in the parliament of the future.

The Parliament of the Future

One thing is clear: There will certainly still be parliaments 40 years from now. However, their organisational structures and workflows will change dramatically as technology and digitalisation spread into more and more areas. If we take futurologist Sohnemann's forecasts as our point of departure, work routines in parliament might look like this:

An intelligent, sophisticated eParliament system will determine how parliamentary business functions: initial versions are already running in test mode (for details, see the final summary of responses to ECPRD information request 3142 of 10.06.2016—Implementing eParliament solutions in parliaments). Storing and organising the enormous amount of data that will accumulate over the coming years will be a huge task, as will ensuring that potential users can still consult or search this data. Pen and paper will probably have had their day. Instead we will be using eFiles and digital signatures.

Parliamentary meetings of all kinds will still be organised, and parliaments will continue to hold plenary sessions and committee meetings. However, it will no longer be absolutely necessary for parliamentarians to be present in person. In the future they will also be able to participate in parliamentary debates from home or while travelling, and even introduce motions or vote remotely. Many meetings will be held in virtual space. Tomorrow's technology will enable members of parliament to be in a meeting room, represented as a three-dimensional figure, even if they are at home in their living room. This virtual world will also give citizens a chance to experience debates and votes at first hand.

As a result of all these changes, our workplaces will also look very different. According to futurologist Sohnemann, in the near future, parliamentary staff like us will already on the whole work from home. We will be able to log into parliament networks from our home offices and access our files and documents. The mobile workplace will become standard. We will most likely not be using desktop computers, laptops or tablets any longer, but rather the IT devices of the future, which we cannot even begin to imagine today. Most discussions will be organised as video conferences or virtual meetings. It will become the exception rather than the rule to meet with our colleagues in person in the parliament for deliberations. Fixed working hours will be a thing of the past; there will be more and more flexibility in our working lives. The distinction between work and leisure will progressively vanish.

This, then, is likely to be the scenario that awaits us in the future.

The ECPRD's Role in the Parliament of the Future

Will the ECPRD still be needed in the parliament of the future? The answer is crystal-clear: YES!

Parliamentary work in the future will still give rise to questions, and exchanging opinions and experience in an interparliamentary network—such as the ECPRD network—will continue to be of invaluable assistance in resolving such questions. Changed parliamentary workflows, which will be fundamentally different from those we know today, will pose a multitude of new challenges for us in many different areas, relating to issues such as the organisation of parliament, parliamentary law, use and procurement of the latest information technology, the structure of research services and libraries, the budget and human resources. Mobile working and flexible working-time models for parliamentary staff will give rise to complicated questions concerning civil service and employment law. A central issue, as is already becoming apparent today, will be how to protect this technically highly complex system against attacks and manipulation. These new parliamentary structures may occasion far-reaching changes in the relevant legislation in the various ECPRD member states. Fundamental amendments will need to be introduced into current parliamentary Rules of Procedure. Adopting a comparative international perspective will make it considerably easier to meet these challenges. 40 years from now, the ECPRD will also be able to offer new impetuses and food for thought in devising solutions—just as it does today.

Substantive law will also continue to evolve: the draft legislation scrutinised by parliaments will become more difficult and more complex. All parliamentarians will therefore draw on the support provided by their parliament's research services to an even greater extent than they do today, and will increasingly ask these services to include an appraisal of the international context when devising solutions. An international platform for exchanging information will assume even greater importance, giving rise to an ever-growing number of ECPRD requests.

How Will the ECPRD Change?

One point we should already be fully aware of is that 40 years from now the ECPRD, just like parliaments, will have undergone far-reaching changes.

Given the developments that lie ahead of us, the ECPRD may have a new organisational structure, or further institutions and bodies may be added to its structure. Fundamentally revised statutes might be needed.

The ECPRD's membership structure will change. Depending on the route that Europe pursues in the next few years, new members will join, while others may opt to leave. There will also be an even higher number of parliaments with guest or observer status, from outside Europe too.

The Correspondents and their alternates will remain crucial protagonists in the ECPRD. With the advance of digitalisation, their workplaces and working methods will be dramatically altered. They will no longer necessarily work in the parliament building, for in this context too "mobile working" will be the order of the day. There will be an overhauled version of today's ECPRD website or another electronic or digital information system in a form we cannot even imagine today. Our databases will have expanded and we will have new options for storing and searching the documents. After all, the experience-based knowledge garnered over many decades will need to be preserved for the future.

The classical ECPRD request format as we know it today will still exist, although it might look a little differently, using still undreamt-of options to represent information. It will be possible to draw up and transmit responses to information requests much more rapidly, just as electronic consultation, storage and viewing such documents will be much speedier. Questions and answers will be linked to available content through an automated knowledge management system. Semantic search functions will offer appropriate answers in the twinkling of an eye, drawing on a vast repository of previously collected information.

Communication channels will be transformed. We will be able to establish contact with one another much more easily and directly. Urgent questions will be resolved by

video conference or in virtual meetings. Meetings of the Executive Committee at short notice or spontaneous deliberations between particular Correspondents will become real possibilities, even if participants in the debates are several thousands of kilometres apart.

There will still be annual conferences and seminars. However here again virtual meetings will mean there will no longer be any need for all participants to be on the spot. Colleagues who are unable to travel to a meeting due to other pressing engagements or work to be dealt with in their home parliaments will nevertheless be able to participate in deliberations in any other European capital.

Conclusion

After 40 years of successful work, the ECPRD can look to the future with optimism. In the next 40 years it will remain an important instrument for exchange of knowledge and experience and will, I am certain, even further consolidate its role. The ECPRD will provide an even broader range of services and information thanks to the possibilities opened up by new technologies, and our workflows will change in ways we cannot even begin to imagine today. However, let us not be afraid of these processes of change, but view them instead as an opportunity. We should however take care to ensure that the human touch remains in our network despite all the technical progress we shall experience in years to come. Communication within the network will become more straightforward and easier to use, but it also risks losing its personal note.

I have come to know and value the ECPRD as a network based above all on contacts between people and on personal conversations. Over the years, many close friendships have developed that have become vitally important to me. Last, but certainly not least, we always refer to the "ECPRD family". It is crucial to preserve the spirit of this family. That should be our most important task as we face the many changes that will arise over the next 40 years.



Seminar 'A digital facelift for parliaments' (Parli@ments on the Net XIV) hosted by the German Bundesrat 9-10 June 2016

Germany



Deutscher Bundestag

Deutscher Bundestag

Ursula BELL, ECPRD Correspondent

Mathias KERSTEN, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Article for the Festschrift "Forty Years of the ECPRD"

By Dr. Ursula Bell, ECPRD Correspondent of the German Bundestag

Dr. Hanspeter Blatt, the ECPRD correspondent of the German Bundestag for many years, always spoke of the ECPRD network as a "family". When, in March 2016, the Director of the German Bundestag appointed me the new ECPRD correspondent for the German Bundestag, I inherited a job from my predecessor after 16 years – but did I inherit a "family" too? As administrative officers we understand functions, and as civil servants we serve our state, but are we now also to have a place in something called a "family" but consisting of more than 51 nations and an even larger number of parliamentary assemblies and chambers? A "family" of more than 100 persons of the most varied nationalities, who know each other from the exchange of information between the national parliaments and meet perhaps one a year? I must admit that I was somewhat sceptical. But at the same time I did sense that my ECPRD deputy Dr Mathias Kersten, who had already been in his post for two years, was very enthusiastic about this network, and that intrigued me.

And I had already come to know the ECPRD network as a user: having spent many years as a head of division in the Research Services of the German Bundestag, I already knew how useful it can be to be able to ask colleagues in some or even all countries of the network how particular matters are organised in their country. In any case, I was grateful as a user. And as the head of a division which also drafted answers for the ECPRD, I was often able, through requests for information, to learn about a discussion in other countries which I had previously missed. Thus it was evident it was useful for obtaining specialist knowledge.

But was this not enough? I did not really need a "family" on top of it. So it was all the more enjoyable when again and again I came to know individual colleagues as people: for example in the day-to-day exchanges, when I was trying to help a colleague from another Member State with a question. Or when I attended my first seminar, held by my ECPRD colleague from the Bundesrat, I met the experienced colleagues from Belgium, Italy and Luxembourg and we immediately found a good rapport with each other, or

when I went to my first correspondents' conference in Paris in 2016 and I was approached in such a friendly and open way and found that others shared in many of the problems and developments I knew from my own work.

To my surprise I found that colleagues everywhere approached me on a basis of trust even before we knew each other, for after all we were all working towards the same goal of exchange of information. As always in life, it is people who fill a function with vitality. In any case, I at last understood what was meant by "family", and I experienced it as a "family" myself. I am now glad to be a member of this "family", above all but not only as a representative of the German Bundestag. At the same time I am happy that I can serve the German Bundestag in a new and wider-ranging way through the exchange of information with colleagues of other parliamentary administrations.

As a new recruit in a particular function, one is interested in the history of that function. If you want to know who was the predecessor of the long-term ECPRD Correspondent of the German Bundestag I just mentioned, it is necessary to do a little digging. In the German Bundestag, in the 1990s, the head of division of the Research Services delegated the responsibility for ECPRD to Dr Günter Lachmann, who as the head of a division was also responsible for parliamentary history. This meant that he was the first ECPRD Correspondent of the German Bundestag, a function that did not exactly entail mountains of work in those days. At that time there was not yet any notable amount of ECPRD correspondence. At the Correspondents' conference in Paris in 2016, one colleague, who was leaving the ECPRD family after many years, told us that in the earliest years the correspondence had been by conventional post. At some time or other faxes on thermal paper began to be used. One can imagine how many faxes were sent. The answers were still sent by post. The colleague in Paris also said that in the 1990s there were a maximum of one or two requests for information per month.

The situation is completely different today. The German Bundestag is the grateful biggest user of the ECPRD network with its requests for information, and the number of answers is still higher: there is an intensive exchange in both directions. The modern means of communication make the exchange much easier, but the possibilities of the internet mean that the Members themselves are able to do their own research, which was originally done by the Research Services. The questions which are now sent to the Research Services of the German Bundestag are more international and seek a comparison with law or practice in other countries and their parliaments. And they often expect answers which are prompt and nevertheless precise. The ECPRD colleagues and their deputies in the Member States take care of this in an exemplary manner, as I observed. The research paths are greatly shortened, they are reliable and let us access areas where we would very often not find our own way because of the language barriers. In this way, the ECPRD network, through comparative analysis, often enables harmonisation and orientation towards the best examples. And it is therefore not surprising that many requests for information on the network begin by saying that there is a need for legislation in some policy area and that the parliament making the request wishes to orient itself on the basis of the good examples of other Member States.

At the German Bundestag, ECPRD now plays such an important role that the practical work of sending out requests is done not only by myself and my deputy, but also by another colleague, Frau Kerstin Amelang. This is an astonishing "success story", if we think of the beginnings, and a good reason to celebrate with gratitude the 40-year anniversary of the ECPRD in the ECPRD family.

Greece



HELLENIC PARLIAMENT

Βουλή των Ελλήνων / Hellenic Parliament

Georgios SOTIRELIS, ECPRD Correspondent

Chara PAPAIOANNOU, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



40 years of ECPRD

Since the establishment of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD) 40 years ago, the increasing sequence and quality of the requests, has made obvious that the ECPRD has grown from a shy initiative to the instrument its founders envisioned, becoming an important means for the functioning of member parliaments. There was a time when ‘burdening’ colleagues with request-questions required a lot of effort and diplomacy skills. That time is almost long gone. The benefits of ECPRD’s shared and credible knowledge have spread and continue to do so. This achievement is basically due to the commitment of the people involved as is also to the fact that the challenges rising nowadays are more and more common and the ECPRD provides the necessary solid and fertile ground for developing sound and effective solutions.

ECPRD’s direct knowledge network provides an answer to the “how do they know” question of the people as to the ability of their representatives in dealing with the complex issues of our time. In both legislative and control functions of the parliament, access to credible information

is strengthening the role of parliaments by enabling their members to make the best possible choices and address the needs of the citizens. It is obviously one of the tools parliamentary democracy has in order to reinstate and increase the credibility of institutions and parliamentarism.

As to the development of the European Union, the ECPRD has contributed to the integration procedure of candidate states when dealing with the alignment of the *acquis*, embedding practices and procedures and nurturing a European consciousness. Although national parliaments have still not intensively influenced or monitored EU policies, their role may prove more crucial in view of the introversion demonstrated by the executive branch of some European states. Parliaments may be called to act as the barriers of this challenging trend by guarding the European common values and orientation, making the contribution of the ECPRD in this effort more than essential.

The accumulated information of 40 years of operation forms an important part of European history as it reflects the evolution of legislation, of parliamentary procedures

and the concept of parliamentary democracy itself. Thus, the ECPRD archives would not only be helpful to academic scholars or researchers but also to the future citizens and decision makers in shaping their opinions and policies while avoiding documented shortcomings and by not repeating unsuccessful practices, since they most probably, will not have witnessed this period in the making.

The significance of ECPRD's information and documentation gathering will follow an increasing path because, by its nature, it will continue to provide a safe-haven of credible information in a post-truth era. This may sound as putting additional burden to the people of the ECPRD community but 40 years of history has shown that we are up to the challenge. However, the main challenge we will have to face is to safeguard what we have accomplished so far, by being effective, flexible and displaying quick reflexes, and to nurture the drive that has moved us forward, in order to be competent and develop innovative ideas by including Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) in our future projects.

A project that we run in the Hellenic Parliament during the last months of 2016, is to address an internal production of our Department (Parliamentary Research and Studies) which includes all ECPRD requests and activities, in the form of a monthly e-newsletter. The contents are elaborated and

translated in order to meet current needs and interests of parliamentary work and activities or political current issues. We are in the process of preparing this newsletter to be available at the e-pigeon hole of each MP according to his/her parliamentary duties and interests. Needless to say, this initiative has attributed to the further recognition of the importance of ECPRD by the parliament's administration.

As a more personal note, I cannot but recall the hosting of the ECPRD's annual conference in 2010, when the anti-austerity demonstrations were at their peak in Athens. It resulted in all ECPRD participants to enjoy VIP security measures for their transfers and of course provided a great challenge for the Hellenic Parliament administration to successfully conclude the Conference. The incident reaffirmed that when a State belongs to a Family, then it's easier to succeed their goals no matter how difficult they might be even if this means, as we realized through this experience, that being part of the ECPRD family could result to 'crisis management'...

By George Sotirelis
ECPRD Correspondent
Directorate of Studies
Head of Department for Parliamentary Research, Professor
in Constitutional Law

Hungary

Országgyűlés

Ida KELEMEN, ECPRD Correspondent

Zoltán BUKVAI, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



HUNGARIAN NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY



Parliamentary research and information service

The history of information services for MPs goes back to 1870, when the Library of the Parliament was established. It now has a collection of more than 700,000 volumes. It is open to the public as an academic library with special collections in law, political science and modern history.

After the democratic elections in 1991, a comprehensive information service was set up. In the Information Centre for MPs, which was established in 1991, two different organizational units have been providing information for the Members of the Parliament in close cooperation for more than 25 years: the Information Service for MPs and the Information and Methodology Unit. These two units are responsible for dealing with ECPRD comparative requests as well.

The Information Service for MPs was established in 1991 as part of the Library of the Parliament. In addition to traditional library services, the department has provided special tailor-made information services for Members since it was established. Its service portfolio has been gradually enriched with new elements, including various compiled

background materials and later, in the early 2000s, analyses.

Since 2014 the Information Service for MPs (the research service) has been an independent organizational unit, separate from the Library, with 17 staff members. It provides integrated research, information and library services for parliamentary users. Based on the requests of individual users it provides tailor-made information and research services as well as background materials and research papers on proactive basis. There are two main types of research products: compiled background materials consist of selected full text documents and articles (for memorial and anniversary speeches, for hearings of minister-nominees and occasional and regular media-reviews), and comparative analyses and information briefings, written by the researchers themselves as a summary and analysis of relevant information.

Over the more than 25 years that the service has been in operation it has faced the changing needs of the Members (they require more value-added products and more succinct information), the shortening of deadlines for answering

requests and changing communication channels. In response to these challenges we improved our services, increased the number of staff, introduced specialization among the researchers, launched new and more value-added research products and published them on the intranet and internet. We regularly filter users' satisfaction and needs and launch marketing campaigns at the beginning of each parliamentary period in order to increase awareness of our services. Recently we have been working on making our research papers more visual (with charts and infographics) and on launching a mobile application for our internet page.

The *Information and Methodology Unit* is part of the Directorate of Legislation. Our unit's main responsibilities include informing MPs about all kind of parliamentary activities including legislative information, plenary and committee activities, the Rules of Procedure, the House Committee, voting results, speeches, MPs data, Agenda, Orders of the day and so on. MPs can also submit their proposals, questions, interpellations and amendments here. In other words, we carry out traditional administrative tasks as well. We are also responsible for parliamentary statistics and for the methodology of statistics. Our parliamentary information services are open to the public and to all citizens and since 1997 we have also been able to provide information in English. We also develop and coordinate the content of the parliamentary website and as editors of the website we publish the vast majority of the content, including the English version.

ECPRD cooperation

Hungary became an ECPRD member in 1992 after the Strasbourg Conference of Speakers opened up the Centre to states in Central and Eastern Europe. At the beginning the Office for Foreign Affairs was responsible for tasks associated with this cooperation. In response to an increasing number of incoming requests, in 2008 two more units became involved in ECPRD cooperation. Since then the researchers at the Information Service for MPs have dealt with requests related to various policy issues (according to their subject specialization) and the staff at the Information and Methodology Unit respond to questions on parliamentary practice and procedures. These two units are headed by

the Correspondent and the Deputy-Correspondent of the Hungarian National Assembly. Other staff members are also involved when the request concerns other fields of parliamentary administration (e.g. ICT, parliamentary budget, HR).

ECPRD cooperation plays an important role in the information system of our National Assembly. As both teams involved in ECPRD cooperation provide information services, we often send requests to the network and use the responses to previous requests which are available on the database. We first sent a comparative request to ECPRD correspondents in 2002 about the salaries and pensions of MPs. Since then we have sent 94 requests over a period of 14 years. Two thirds of them (64) were about parliamentary practices and procedures; some of them concerned MPs' salaries and allowances as well as various aspects of parliamentary security.

In 2012 the Parliament adopted the Act on the National Assembly (Act XXXVI of 2012) and in 2014 it adopted the new Rules of Procedure (Resolution 10/2014. (II. 24.) OGY on certain provisions of the Rules of Procedure). During the preparatory period of the draft bill and Rules of Procedure the Information Service for MPs sent several comparative requests related to parliamentary practice and procedure and prepared summaries and comparative analyses of the responses. They proved very useful for the staff working on the draft law and for MPs preparing for the parliamentary debate.

ECPRD Members' best practice in e-Parliament also helped our parliamentary administration to develop a new xml-based legislative system called ParLex that allows the entire legislative process to be standardized from the beginning phase until promulgation.

We understand the importance of comparative information and therefore we also try to answer as many questions as we can. According to data published on the ECPRD website we answered exactly 1500 requests between 2008 and the end of 2016, which represents 80-96 % of questions addressed to our parliament.

ECPRD cooperation is not only an essential and effective means of gathering information but a magnificent opportunity to meet and get to know colleagues from all over Europe. The ECPRD seminars and conferences do not only provide opportunities for knowledge transfer and professional development, but also for cooperation and making personal contacts. Our staff members are regular attendees of ECPRD seminars and our parliament has also organized professional programmes.

Budapest hosted the meeting of the Research Working Group in 1992, a Workshop on Parliamentary Libraries organized by the Congressional Research Service in 1994 and the Conference of Speakers in 1996. Our parliament organized two ECPRD seminars as well: the annual ICT seminar entitled "*Open the window, close the door - The role of Open data, XML and Web 3.0 in the communication within Parliaments and in society. The secure way of using your own*

device in the Parliament" in 2012 and the annual seminar of Area of Interest Libraries, Research Services and Archives entitled "*Libraries and Research Services Serving Openness and Transparency of Parliaments"* in 2014.

We benefit a great deal from ECPRD cooperation. It is a source of comparative information as well as a forum for sharing best practice, meeting colleagues from different countries and discussing challenges and solutions in relation to our work. On behalf of the teams working on ECPRD cooperation as well as the National Assembly as a whole we would like to express our special thanks to ECPRD and all colleagues for all the support and opportunities they have provided.

Ida KELEMEN Ph.D. Correspondent (since 2013)

Zoltán BUKVAI Deputy Correspondent (since 2015)



ECPRD seminar 'Libraries and research services serving openness and transparency of parliament' done by the Hungarian Parliament, the Országgyűlés, on 24-25 September 2015

Iceland



Viggó GÍSLASON, ECPRD Correspondent



Photo: Bragi Thor Josefsson

Participation in the ECPRD-network : 40th Anniversary of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation – 1977-2017

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation plays an important part in cooperation between European Parliaments in exchange of information about Parliaments and the societies which elect their Members. This cooperation has strengthened in the last 30 or so. The activities of the Secretariat, the network of Correspondents and Groups concerned with four Areas of Interests have taken care of many kinds of activities, such as annual meetings, conferences dedicated to certain subjects, publication of reports, etc. A vast amount of data accessible at ECPRD website has been gathered by means of requests answered by Correspondents and other Parliamentary staff.

The fall of the iron curtain increased the number of requests enormously when former communist states were gathering information on how institutions of European democratic states operated within their legal frameworks. Still the national legislation of European states differ in some ways, although they have common features due to

the transposition of EU Directives and implementation of EU legislation into national legislation.

When I was employed with the Parliament of Iceland in 1982 I inherited the ECPRD-Correspondent's post. There were not many requests pr. year. The Correspondent's work involved a lot of paperwork: the requests arrived by mail, the main information sources were on paper, the answers were typewritten, and sent by a mail to the Co-Secretary of the Centre and the Correspondent sending the request.

My colleagues at Nordic Parliamentary Libraries mentioned annual meetings of ECPRD-Correspondents more like attending a club venue, an opportunity to travel to Strasbourg and to have a nice time with colleagues, rather than an important channel for exchanging factual information and work experience. One of them even questioned the existence of the Centre.

Since then the activities of the Centre and its networks have grown and shown that they play an important role in the cooperation of Parliaments in Europe. Even so that states outside Europe have become extra- members of the Centre.

It is impossible to predict how the future activities will change in respect of technology. When it comes to the ideology there are clashes between European nations and tensions in the international community at the moment. We must hope that this will not affect the useful activities of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation.

Ireland



Oireachtas

Charlotte COUSINS, ECPRD Correspondent

Maedhbh McNAMARA, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



My experiences with the ECPRD

by Maedhbh McNamara, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent

The ECPRD has been a golden thread running through my career in the Oireachtas Library & Research Service.

Among my earliest assignments upon joining, the staff as a newly minted graduate in the early 1980s were ECPRD queries, assigned by the Librarian, Maura Corcoran, the ECPRD Correspondent.

At the time Ireland had been a member of the EU for about a decade and connections with European countries were still a novelty.

It was amazing to discover that no parliament was an island but a part of the main (with apologies to John Donne) through this European network.

Often our Members wanted comparative research about other countries, but this wish could be granted only rarely because of practical obstacles. Members usually required their answer in a short timeframe; awaiting the answers from other countries took too long and could baffle

because of differing legal systems. The ECPRD addressed these key problems.

During the 1980s the Houses of the Oireachtas was preparing for computerization and I was given the task of discovering which were the best models to emulate in our selection of library software.

It fell to me from Library and Research to attend the meetings of the ECPRD ICT section. While sitting next to the Greek Correspondent at lunch I enquired how many ICT staff were employed by his parliament. "50", was his reply, "How many are in your parliament?" "One." I replied, registering his astonished expression.

In this context, the advice of parliamentary colleagues in other parliaments was a real benefit. During fruitful meetings in Europe's capitals, I met with colleagues and drew from their vast well of knowledge and experience.

They were generous with their expertise, not least on the choice of the best library software for our needs. Their invaluable advice informed our purchasing decision. The outcome was our selection of a user-friendly system with excellent functionality. This proved to be of especial benefit while our Members, their staff and our library staff were being inducted into the ways of the newfangled technology.

Among my discoveries were wonders called the Internet and the World Wide Web; parliaments had set up new things called websites to communicate with their public and these websites received thousands of *hits*. I was the messenger bringing this news from the ECPRD to the Oireachtas.

During the 1990s the democratization of Eastern European countries was underway and ECPRD meetings began taking place in these new capitals which were emerging from communist rule. It was fascinating to observe the transition. In Warsaw one morning, I was walking after breakfast from our hotel to the Polish Sejm accompanied by UK House of Commons colleagues along a quiet road which was virtually free of traffic. Along came a sole car which without warning careened off the road and slammed into a tree. It was explained to me that for some Warsaw residents driving was a novel experience. In my hotel room that evening on to the television news came a photograph of my own parliament, the Oireachtas in Leinster House in Dublin. It was announced that the deputies had suspended the sitting so that they could attend a race meeting in Cheltenham, England. What are the chances of seeing a news item about my parliament in a hotel room in Warsaw? The internet was introduced in the Oireachtas Library in 1995. By 2003, the Oireachtas was equipped with an E-democracy unit and had won an award for the best parliamentary website in Europe.

For the next ten years I had little engagement with the ECPRD and I was delighted to be appointed Deputy ECPRD Correspondent in 2014.

In the meantime the ECPRD website had been developed to a high degree--a sea change had occurred. The process had been streamlined, both for submitting queries and responses and for consulting the completed research. The introduction of the model answer helps to lower language barriers and overcome incomprehension caused by differing legal systems. Previous queries are searchable, so that often comparative research is accessible quickly. This database was described by an academic speaker addressing the 2016 Conference of Correspondents as "a goldmine". We have been so grateful for this aspect of the ECPRD website when faced with rush comparative queries. No more panic when given rush queries from the Speaker!

The ECPRD is a network linking Ireland on the periphery of Western Europe with countries across the continent to Eastern Europe, Russia and further afield. It is a delight to make the acquaintance of the correspondents at the conferences and seminars and match faces to the names seen in Requests. Another treat is to visit the historic Chambers of so many Houses, and see where our distinguished historic predecessors worked, for example, Anotole France who was employed in the library of the French Assemblée Nationale and Edmund Gosse, a staff member of the UK House of Lords.

In 2016, we hosted our first ECPRD seminar in Dublin and I was pleased to show participants the Chambers where our own Members have spoken, for example, the poet Senator W.B.Yeats.

Israel



The Knesset
Research and Information Center

Knesset

Shirley AVRAMI, ECPRD Correspondent

Sarah ZWEBNER, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Publication on the State of the Art of Research and Information Exchange in Parliaments and the Role of the ECPRD

Background

The Knesset Research and Information Center (RIC) was established in the year 2000. Since then, the scope of its work has expanded and its status has increased in the eyes of Knesset Members, committees, and professional departments.

The RIC is a source of knowledge and research for the many tasks of the Knesset Member: introducing bills, beginning with an initial examination of the subject and a study of steps that have been taken in Israel and elsewhere; conducting an analysis of alternatives and cost estimates; performing oversight of the executive branch; and placing items on the public agenda.

Since its establishment, the RIC has prepared some 4,000 documents. Every year, it responds to some 500 requests and adds approximately 300 documents to its database. The vast majority of these documents are available for public use and accessible through the RIC page on the Knesset website: www.knesset.gov.il/mmm.

The RIC is divided into interdisciplinary research groups, and each committee is assigned a researcher who specializes in the committee's work. The documents written for the committee by the RIC researchers provide the basis for discussions and help the committee chair and members raise issues for discussion and oversee Government activities in the field in question. The researchers also provide Knesset Members with information on a wide variety of issues that interest them. In the documents it prepares, the RIC aims to address all the aspects and ramifications of a topic: historical background, statistics, budget, implications, comparative research, etc.

The Budget Control Department in the RIC produces documents related to budgetary oversight, macro-economic studies, and cost estimates for private members' bills.

In addition, the RIC provides information services for Members of Knesset who need materials to be readily available and accessible in order to carry out their work. Members of Knesset take a great deal of interest in the ways in which other countries address issues related to their own work, both in order to learn from these countries' policies and to get new ideas for ways to address an issue. The inter-parliamentary research carried out by the RIC focuses on preparing analyses and comparative surveys. A great deal of expertise is required to write comparative analyses, understand a country's local culture, and balance wide-ranging knowledge of the world with the need to locate necessary information. Therefore, the RIC established an inter-parliamentary research domain, which provides a source of knowledge for comparative studies and analyses that specializes in conducting comparative studies.

Challenges

The RIC operates primarily upon demand. Because of the strengths and capabilities it has developed, the RIC must meet a demand for its services that increases annually (currently approximately 500 requests). In order to respond to the large number of requests, the RIC adopted a system for prioritizing its work. However, this system is primarily "mechanical"—employing criteria such as FIFO (first in, first out) and limiting the number of active requests a Member of Knesset can have simultaneously — and does not introduce considerations such as importance and public interest.

The Knesset finds itself at a structural disadvantage compared to Government ministries when it comes to access to information, as the information is held by the ministries. It was therefore important to establish areas of specialization within the RIC in which Knesset researchers can develop a level of expertise that can provide a suitable counterweight to the Government's capabilities. In addition, it was also important to develop researchers' critical thinking skills, which allow them to cross-check and verify data from the Government against information from other sources in academia and the field. Today, the Knesset Research and Information Center is a strong body whose model Government ministries strive to duplicate and emulate. The fact that the Knesset has the capability

to examine and analyze material affects not only the mere transmission of data and information, but even actions and policy. For example, in a 2015 report on teachers who work as independent contractors, the State Comptroller asserted, "it was only following an inquiry from the Knesset Research and Information Center that the Ministry of Education conducted its first discussion to establish policy on the subject."

Members of Knesset require different types of documents, which vary in terms of their scope and level of detail. Before preparing any document, the RIC identifies the Member's needs in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the document's purpose and the timeframe in which it is needed. At the same time, the RIC constantly finds itself in a professional dilemma between the need to provide an expeditious response to a request that meets the client's precise needs and the desire to conduct an in-depth and exhaustive examination of the subject. Between comprehensive and detailed, on the one hand, and broad and general, on the other.

Achievements

RIC documents provide the basis for decision-making, both within the Knesset and outside its walls. The RIC is recognized by organizations, nonprofits, and academic researchers. RIC documents are regularly cited by the media, court rulings, policy studies, and legislative proposals.

Knesset Members and committees make wide use of the documents, and the general public also benefits from the ability to understand a topic in depth by reading a relevant document or study.

In 2008, the Knesset Law was amended (Amendment No. 24) to require controlled bodies to provide the RIC with data and information upon request and "without delay."

In addition, the Knesset Rules of Procedure grant the RIC the authority to present an alternative cost estimate to the one that the Government presents for a given bill.

In addition to its professional ties with the ECPRD, which will be detailed below, the RIC has developed ties with academic

and research institutions in Israel and abroad. These include the Congressional Research Service, Congressional Budget Office, and OECD, among others. The RIC also takes on student interns from Israeli universities as well as from MIT and the University of Chicago.

Vision

- Writing documents and studies which provide a basis for discussion and decision-making in the Knesset.
- Adhering to core values of excellence and solidarity.
- Engaging in a continuous process of learning the needs of RIC clients (i.e., Knesset Members and committees) and tailoring services to these needs in the optimal manner, which will lead to expanded use of RIC documents by the Knesset.

The ECPRD

The RIC views the ECPRD and the various services it provides as the anchor of its work as regards comparative overviews and studies as well as the study of and specialization in developments in other countries.

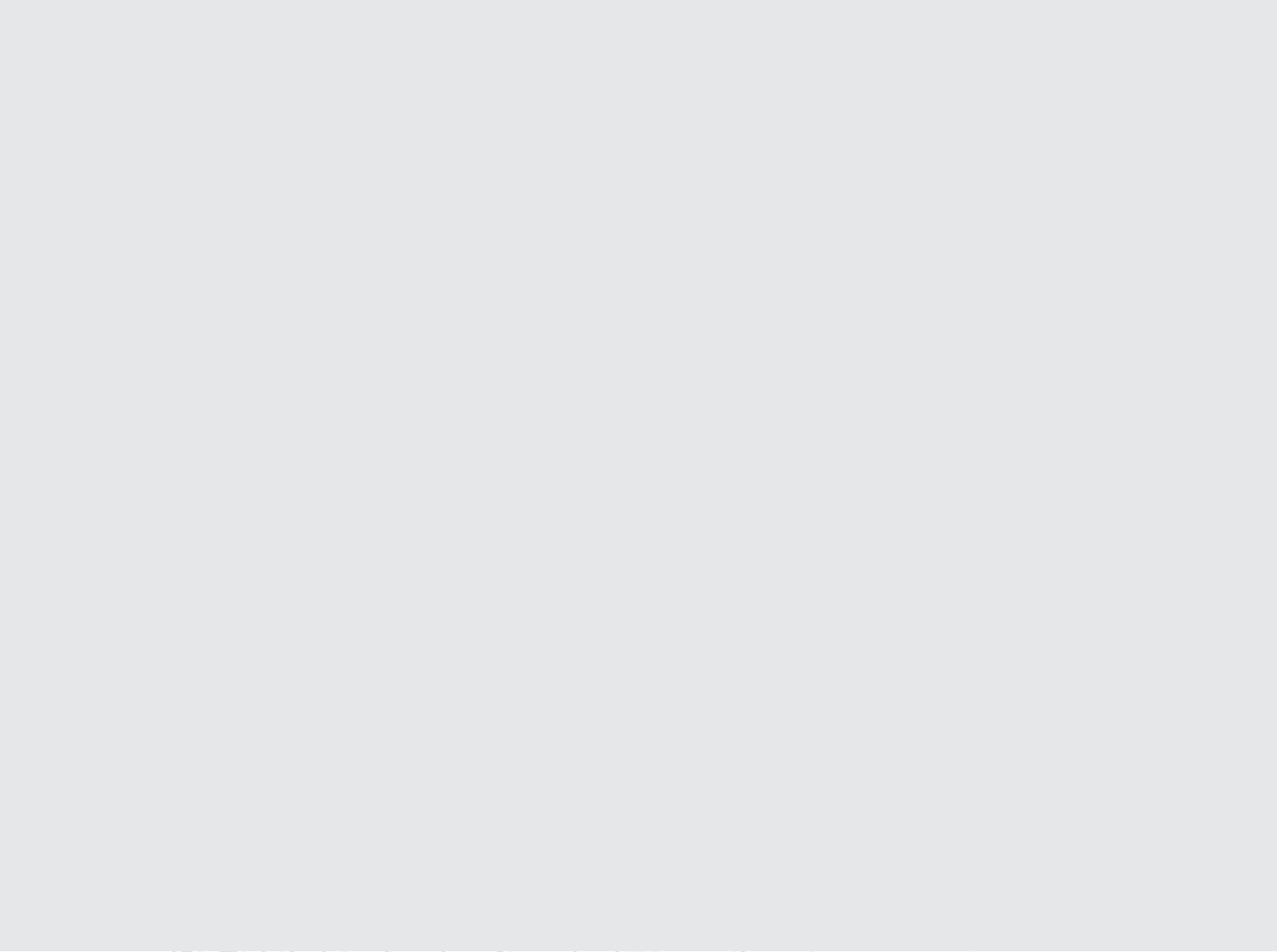
First of all, the ability to examine past requests and learn from requests that have been submitted, which saves us valuable time and spares us the need to bother colleagues from other countries or examine primary sources, is of great value. The database on the website is so comprehensive that almost every request or subject generates at least a lead. Second, the ability to send a request for information to either a large number of recipients or to a limited number of countries—and then to receive reliable responses in a timely manner—provide the RIC and our clients with an unparalleled resource.

RIC researchers also attend the various ECPRD conferences. These are important opportunities for learning about a specific subject and, no less so, for developing personal connections with interested parties and our professional counterparts from other countries. The conferences allow us to learn from our counterparts' successes and mistakes, and the Annual Conference of Correspondents allows us to constantly improve our work in order to make it better and more professional.

Information sharing based on non-binding good will that occurs because of common interests, on the one hand, and personal ties, on the other, is the organization's secret and the root of its success. This is the driving force behind the organization; so long as these two foundations are maintained, the ECPRD will continue to be a tool and professional and social network of prime importance to us.

Vision

Our vision for the ECPRD is to continue strengthening the interpersonal connections and professional work that flourish through the organization's good offices. In addition, we view the organization as a suitable platform for furthering researchers' specialization at the initiative of the ECPRD and under its auspices. This could take the form of professional training sessions and courses for employees on writing comparative studies and examining parliamentary and policy information from specific countries. Another potential avenue could be staff exchanges or foreign internships for employees of parliamentary research centers.



Italy

Camera dei deputati

Annibale FERRARI, ECPRD Correspondent

Lorena MONGUZZI, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Camera dei Deputati



The activity of the Documentation Services of Italy's Chamber of Deputies

Since the 1980s the Chamber of Deputies has been devoting a great deal of attention to parliamentary documentation, whose contents and operational criteria are regulated by internal procedures and submitted to the attention of an ad hoc Supervisory Committee, made up of Deputies and chaired by one of the Vice-Presidents of the Chamber of Deputies.

Documentation activities were initially set up to support the legislative function of the Chamber as part of the pre-legislative scrutiny work carried out by parliamentary Committees. Subsequently, their structure and contents developed in line with the information requirements related to the step-wise implementation of a multi-level governance system (European Union, National State, Territorial Authorities), as well as to the need to produce documentation with a more specialised and complex technical profile.

In particular, quality documentation was increasingly needed for the analysis of public policies, the assessment of the economic, financial and administrative impact of regulatory activities, the exercise by Parliament of policy-setting and oversight functions with respect to Government action, particularly with a view to assessing the effects of legislative decisions versus the expected results.

Against this backdrop, the Research Department of the Chamber of Deputies is responsible for the documentation activities supporting the work of parliamentary bodies and the Library has a specific Unit in charge of constantly monitoring the legislative production of European countries. More recently, their work has been complemented by other specialised structures, including: the State Budget Department, in charge of assessing the costs of bills, as well as the analysis the overall public finance trends; the Office for Relations with the European Union and the Department for International Relations, dealing respectively with the documentation related to Italy's participation in the

European Union, and to international organisations and initiatives; the Parliamentary Control Department, in charge of assessing the implementation of laws and of overseeing the follow-up of parliamentary resolutions.

In the last few years, the functional integration between the different departments and offices, and the cooperation with the corresponding offices and departments of the Senate have been intensified, in order to strengthen research and analysis activities. This working method led, among other things, to the establishment of so called "Observatories" – the Observatory on Foreign Legislation, the Observatory on Italian Legislation, the International Policy Observatory and the Public Finance Observatory – whose task is to produce, on a periodical basis, specific analyses and statistical data on thematic areas considered of particular interest for parliamentary bodies, also in collaboration with other public administrations and specialised research centres.

The importance of the contribution by ECPRD to parliamentary documentation

The participation of the Chamber of Deputies in the ECPRD network dates back to the initial stages of informal cooperation among Parliaments, preceding the adoption of the ECPRD statutes in 1996 during the Conference of Secretaries-General held in Budapest.

Since then, the exchange of knowledge, skills and best practices in the framework of the ECPRD has represented for the Italian Parliament – that has always prioritised the area and requirements of parliamentary documentation – an important forum for further enhancing its research and analysis activities, which developed in parallel and fruitful synergy with the projects implemented at national level.

The degree of interconnection between the Italian Parliament and the Houses that joined the ECPRD network is highlighted by the constant flow of information activated through the questionnaires, as well as the participation in and the organisation of ECPRD seminars and meetings.

As evidence of the great deal of attention devoted to the exchange of information and direct debates among officials engaged in the different areas of parliamentary activity, the Italian Parliament had the privilege to host – from 2009 to date – three seminars in different areas of interest of the ECPRD, and is presently in the process of organising a new event ("Libraries, research and documentation services in Parliaments: experiences, trends and perspectives") that will be held in Rome on 8th and 9th June 2017. This seminar aims to promote a broad debate on current trends and future perspectives of parliamentary documentation.

Over the years, the contribution in terms of ideas and concrete projects made by the Chamber of Deputies to the ECPRD network is also shown by the membership of its officials in the Executive Committee, as well as their participation in the network activities as Coordinators in some Areas of Interest ("Information and Communication Technology in Parliaments", "Economic and Budgetary Affairs").

Personal remarks

All the above-mentioned experiences contributed to the professional enrichment of our officials, and were translated into new stimuli and growth opportunities for the departments in charge of documentation activities.

The engagement and synergies permeating the ECPRD community provided tools to adapt the information base of parliamentary activities to the evolution of knowledge, hence contributing to strengthen the preconditions for a correct operation of democratic institutions.

This has constituted a decisive contribution, notably in recent times, with parliamentary representation facing more and more complex challenges originating from the economic and social changes under way, rooted in a novel context characterised by phenomena such as globalisation, and rapid technological and economic-financial transformation.

Furthermore, what is really significant is the contribution provided by the ECPRD network to the consolidation of a culture of "team work"; it entails pursuing shared objectives and common ideals focussing on knowledge as the

foundation underpinning the most important political-institutional decisions, as well as our ties of solidarity and commonality.

This sense of belonging represents a common heritage, nourished day after day through an ongoing collaboration that allows each and every one of us, in any capital city of our Countries, to be fully aware of the possibility to rely on a qualified professional help and, most of all, of being always “among friends”.

Annibale Ferrari
ECPRD Correspondent
For the Chamber of Deputies



Meeting of the ECPRD Executive Committee in the Camera dei deputati, Rome 26-27 March 2015

Montenegro



Parliament of Montenegro

Skupština Crne Gore

Jelena ULIC, ECPRD Correspondent

Sandra BRAJUSKOVIC, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



The Evolution of Parliamentary Research Service in Montenegro while living in the comfort of ECPRD home

Parliamentary research services that are well-equipped with human and information resources, which provide concise and relevant facts to parliamentarians, present a keystone of a modern democratic legislatures whose main function is to create, assess and vote legislation.

In the past several years, there had been a significant step forward regarding the organization and administrative capacity strengthening of research service in the Parliament of Montenegro. Considering the fact that the capacities for parliamentary research services vary size-wise as well as expertise-wise, and being fully aware of the significance and impact of research services world-wide, we aspired to establish and expand such unit.

The first two research papers were produced in a newly formed *Department for Research, Analysis, Library and Documentation* in late 2010, and soon afterwards two internal documents outlining procedures were developed: *Rules of Procedure of the Department for Research, Analysis, Library and Documentation* and *Rules for commissioning and development of research papers*, which outline the products offered, who can access these products, the manner in

which they are delivered, etc. The work of this unit has been continuously improving, both in cooperation with similar services of European national parliaments and through the exchange of information between parliaments.

As this Department started to expand in terms of its activities, a decision was made to form a *Parliamentary Institute* composed of three units: *Research Center; Library, Documentation and Archive Center; Education Center*. The Research Center, functioning as an independent unit, although in line and close cooperation with the library unit, is primarily tasked with preparation of research papers, which serve to assist parliamentarians debate on a certain topic, provide them with info in order to draft and amend legislation based on reliable information and facts.

Given the size, composition and expertise of our research unit, and at the same time keeping a balance and ensuring that expectations match the resources available, we focus on a limited number of products. Such products include: research papers (brief info, comparative analysis, statistical data, study) at the request of parliamentarians and Secretary General; providing information to other national parliaments, international organizations, including through the ECPRD network; preparing weekly/monthly newsletters.

The spectrum of products and services depends to a great extent on available resources and expertise. At the moment, the Research Center hires five researchers, equipped with generalist expertise and speaking at least one globally recognized language. Despite the fact that generalist knowledge is a great advantage, we believe that a research service balanced with both generalist and specialized expertise can provide one of the most valuable contribution to the work of parliamentarians. Hiring employees with diverse professional backgrounds and expertise will be a challenge but priority in order for our research unit to expand and address multiple-issues requests.

Analysis, often at short notice, lacked the time necessary to properly synthesize and analyze the information and, thus, had been a challenge. In that context, we set up priorities in providing research materials and extended deadlines outlined in our internal rules to meet the demands with available resources. Although the quality of information provided to a complex question has improved with such changes, we noticed that longer procedure might cause a decrease in put requests as parliamentarians often need information quickly so not to fall behind the parliamentary agenda. It is still a challenge to find the right balance.

Collecting precise, valid and high-quality information, sometimes not easily accessible, contributes to well-informed decision making and provides parliamentarians with the information they need to perform their primary representative role. This is where the ECPRD plays a crucial role! Hence, there is no better place for collecting such resources than the ECPRD network – a platform with combination of different topics, expertise, first hand information. Although there is a rise in publicly accessible information found on the internet, the valuable resources

provided through the ECPRD member parliaments to a great extent assist parliaments to run research services more effectively.

The Parliament of Montenegro joined the ECPRD network in 2007, celebrating this year its 10th anniversary! Bearing in mind that a functional research unit had been established only in 2010, contributions to this network and our role in it was very much limited. Thus, year 2010 can be considered as the starting point for an active membership of this valuable and prestigious network. That is the time when we submitted our first ECPRD request and prepared our first ever research paper using, *inter alia*, ECPRD resources. Ever since then, we are committed members and contributors to the network. Audiences, including policy and decision makers and staff, have viewed our products, mainly comparative analysis, as valued sources of information, such that they are mentioned in the plenary by parliamentarians, used to create law proposals and other acts of the Parliament.

Often, information inquired is not easily available in the globally-recognized language and that is where contribution and access to the ECPRD network is of a major value. The fact that the number of requests had grown and the quality of questionnaires had improved over the years witnesses the significant use of this resource “hub”. Therefore, we placed responding to ECPRD requests under one of the Research Center priorities, listing this activity in our Action Plan for Strengthening Legislative and Oversight Role of the Parliament of Montenegro. Furthermore, we made submitting and responding to ECPRD requests a part of our official parliamentary procedures.

The work of our Research Center would not be so interesting, motivating and enabled for progress without opportunities to cooperate, expand knowledge and keep abreast of developments, techniques and new tools in research and similar fields. This brings us to another aspect of the networks’ added value and that is organization of and participation in ECPRD seminars, which play a key role in parliamentary staff relationships, new ideas, debates, and so on. The Research Center staff benefit from attending seminars and conferences, which are the opportunity for inter-parliamentary cooperation and the sharing of experiences on many levels.

A parliament can be either a participant or a host of the ECPRD seminar. In that context, although known to be a laid-back nation, we “took a dare” to organize, for the first time, an ECPRD seminar titled “The e-Parliament in action: best practices about ICT strategic planning, information security, mobility and cloud computing” in November 2014, where we gathered 36 experts from 25 Parliaments and international institutions. The social segment of such seminars gives them a “sugary topping” and often lets one reveal some things about the culture unfamiliar with before.

Also, the ECPRD network has served as an inspiration for the development of *other similar databases* of comparative research analysis, in order to avoid translation and longer timeframe for processing for countries of the region that speak the same or similar language and share similar legal and legislative background. In this sense, we supported the creation of a Western Balkan regional database of comparative research studies, though still under construction.

Not only information exchange is done, but lifelong friends are made through such exchange!

What’s next?

Despite its many positive sides, transparency and public availability of research papers has been a subject for often discussion lately. Rules on availability and access to research materials vary from country to country, mainly depending whether the parliament is subject to freedom of information legislation or not. In our Parliament, all research papers are immediately made publicly available, although some limitations are applied. The main principle leading to this practice is the *free access to information* in possession of state authorities, in line with the Law on Free Access to Information. Pursuant to this Law and principles it outlines, the Parliament of Montenegro regularly publishes all its research papers on the parliamentary website. Therefore, clear guidelines on availability or publicity of research materials that contain information gathered through the ECPRD, due to inconsistency among parliaments, may be a subject for consideration.

Complex and specialized research materials carry with them a complex and specific terminology, which sometimes is not easy to interpret and may not be consistent due to

different legal systems and translation capacities. Thus, one possibility to overcome such issue would be to create a database with definitions of the most significant terms in the field of parliamentary theory and practice in selected languages. However, simply listing of the terms with translation would not be as beneficial as having more detailed and systematic definitions of concepts relevant to parliamentary democracy, as well as their theoretical aspect and practical application in different countries explained. Having said that, it might be worth thinking about creating a comprehensive, comparable cross-country document or even a digital platform that could be filled with contents and edited by the ECPRD correspondents.

Having a similar goal in mind, the Parliamentary Service of the Parliament of Montenegro, with the help of several university professors and assistance by the OSCE, has developed the first Parliamentary Lexicon in Montenegrin and English. Its purpose is to contribute to understanding of those terms that are frequently used in the legislative and related processes, which, given the complexity of terminology in this area, may cause disagreements and dilemmas in their interpretation as well as in their translations into and from a foreign language. As explained in the foreword of the book, “wherever possible, the term is defined generally with reference to the theoretical aspect and the wider practice of its use, which is followed by an explanation of the given term in relation to the valid regulations and practice in Montenegro”. In addition, whenever it is necessary, the book offers a list of synonyms and related terms below the definitions.

The ECPRD may also consider to be a platform for initiation of some joint projects of parliaments.

Kudos to the ECPRD website team that has been continuously developing and introducing modern technologies!

Let me take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all ECPRDs members for selflessly contributing to our research service and improving the work of ECPRD network to meet our demands.

Happy 40th Anniversary!

Jelena Ulic, ECPRD Correspondent, Parliament of Montenegro

Netherlands



Tweede Kamer

Piet VAN RIJN, ECPRD Correspondent

Nico BAL, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Is it troublesome to organize an ECPRD-seminar?

A few experiences

by Piet van Rijn, ECPRD Correspondent

Looking back, we may say that one of the pillars of success of ECPRD, for forty years now, has been the almost continuous stream of seminars. In general, these seminars add great value and show a good degree of professionalism. Over a hundred seminars must have been organised so far. The development of the subjects covered and the papers presented might justify carrying out an interesting study on the developments in parliamentarism and parliamentary administrations in Europe. Over the years, most parliaments organised a seminar and many chambers organised even more than one, sometimes many more.

This contribution describes the experiences of one of these organizers and tries to list a number of good practices and to give some tips.

Start early

Start at least a year ahead. It takes some time to secure "sponsors" within your chamber and you have to secure

budget. Sponsors can include the Secretary-General, another member of the Management Team or the heads of departments. It is my experience that the decision to organise an ECPRD seminar must be taken first and that ideas on which subject to choose follow later. Heads of departments can help you decide on the subject.

As to the budget, it is our experience that you need about € 10,000, given that the venue is provided for by the chamber (for free) and the seminar language is English without interpretation and based on participation of around 60 persons. The budget can be divided into three almost equal parts:

- Food and drink (coffee, tea and lunch during the seminar) 1/3
- Excursion (transport and entrance fees) 1/3
- Dinner outside parliament 1/3
- Unforeseen (e.g. technical facilities at the seminar venue) PM

An early start enables you to seek permission and to arrange

for the necessary budget, the excursion and the dinner first. This gives you time to concentrate on the programme, the presentations and other practicalities in due course.

Choose a subject that benefits your chamber

As an organiser, you are quite free to choose the subject of your seminar. Of course, you keep in touch with the ECPRD-coordinators, but even then you, as the host, are in charge of finally deciding on the subject. Focus on what is currently going on in your own chamber; only then will you have the support of the professionals on these subjects within your parliament. Moreover, their support will make the job of finding speakers a little easier. In 2012, we organised a seminar on parliamentary buildings. The subject did not fit in with any of the ECPRD areas of interest, but it brought together the very people who in a number of countries are now involved in major renovation projects. Those who attended that seminar now know how to find each other, which is another important role of seminars, in my view. So, do not be afraid to pick a subject that suits your chamber, because it will pay off.

Don't worry, be happy

It is great fun to find an interesting venue for an excursion and a dinner. Consider what the participants of your seminar might be interested in seeing. Negotiate a good price, shamelessly exploit the fact that you represent your nation's parliament and that you bring colleagues from other countries to visit them! Look for a not-too-far-away venue, within half an hour by bus, at most. This is a challenge and it is quite rewarding when your ideas prove to work.

The excursion I am most proud of brought the group to board a local ferry that we hired from a municipality for a river cruise to a 19th century circular fortress where we had a simple dinner with Dutch food. A local music group (shanty choir) entertained us. The informal environment enabled the participants to meet each other and to socialise. Which, I think, is always a very important element of a seminar.

Filling the programme can be a nightmare. Finding speakers can at times be troublesome. However, do not worry, in the end your programme will be filled properly. Find good moderators during the seminar and do not be shy to act as moderator yourself. Stick to the programme, keep presenters to their time-slots; your audience will be grateful for this.

Tips and tricks

Never shorten breaks (stick to your programme).

Do not be too formal, a formal (old) plenary is not always the best seminar venue! Pay attention to good and comfortable chairs and enough leg space. Invest in informality.

"Advertise" your country a little. Consider the possibility of an excursion and/or dinner outside. Be proud of your country and show this to your colleagues.

Always include a tour of parliament in your programme, especially the plenary hall.

Do not forget to wrap up afterwards, to summarize, to thank all the people involved and to make sure that all the presentations are collected and disseminated.

Netherlands



Tweede Kamer

Piet VAN RIJN, ECPRD Correspondent

Nico BAL, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Diplomacy and the hope for a good reply

by Nico Bal, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent

I have been the Deputy Correspondent for the Dutch House of Representatives since 2005. I count myself blessed to have worked with some iconic ECPRD figures, such as Hanneke Coppolecchia and Rob Clemens. In those days, the ECPRD was still a very informal, practical network based on voluntary cooperation (which of course is still the case in some ways ¹).

I noticed in the very first days of my ECPRD career that it is not always wise to tell someone that a reply is voluntary. Experts and staff are always very much involved in their own work and find it hard to make time to formulate a comprehensive reply. For instance, in this day and age, when you ask the Head of the Security Service to reply to a request about security issues and you tell him a reply would be nice but it is voluntary, the chance that you will receive a reply isn't very big. It takes some strategy and diplomacy to urge a colleague from another department to find the

time. Since that time I have always tried to put some form of personal pressure on the matter; "The Parliament of ... is dealing with the same sort of problems as we do and they are very much interested to learn how we deal with this!" What also works is to explain to the people involved that all the replies of some 27 Parliaments will be available on the website of the ECPRD so that every Parliament can learn from the solutions of others.

I remember that in the early days of the ECPRD the work and the requests were very much related to the work of the Library and to the day-to-day practice of the Parliaments. Over the years, this has evolved to a much broader range of topics. Compared to other Parliaments the Dutch House and Senate are relatively small. In the Dutch House, the entire Library (the current Department of Information Services) dealt with the requests. Library staff (nowadays Information Specialists) were very much equipped to reply to such requests, but since the scope of the topics has broadened, (by far the majority of questions nowadays are politically inspired) this became more difficult. It meant that

¹ The electronic workflow for requests and replies via the website was introduced in 2010 and has formalized the information exchange to a certain extent.

our staff had to involve people from other departments and in many cases even external parties such as the Ministries, which puts much more pressure on the deadlines. It is hard to convince staff of the House to invest some time to reply before the deadline, but it is almost impossible to convince external parties of the same.

In the Netherlands, the Ministries are all dealing with problems of smaller (or no longer existing) Libraries. Research staff is mostly spread over the various topical departments of the Ministries and are not easy to contact. There is of course also some competition between the Ministries and the House, so the readiness to help is not always very high. We try to overcome this problem by contacting Library or documentation colleagues at the Ministries, or sometimes try to use contacts of staff with an employment history at the Ministries but it remains troublesome.

Nevertheless It is not always easy, but I think the ECPRD is a very successful network, which cooperates on a friendly and professional basis and helps the Parliaments involved to learn from each other in many ways.

Poland



KANCELARIA
SENATU

Senat

Ewa NAWROCKA, ECPRD Correspondent

Danuta Malgorzata KORZENIOWSKA, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent¹



Photo: Fot. Wierzejski&Iwaszkiewicz

Contribution from the Analyses, Documentation and Correspondence Office of the Senate of the Republic of Poland

As members of the ECPRD family – as we would like to call it – for over a quarter of a century, we have the feeling of making something unique. We all feel that we belong to a quite special group whose mission is to help in making better legislation and to ensure that the most essential part of such a support is reliable. It is thus unique information that we generate and share among us. So much as a word of introduction to how we see the role of the ECPRD and parliamentary information exchange. Perhaps the tone adopted is a bit solemn, but we were encouraged to assume a personal note.

Poland became a member of the Council of Europe on November 26, 1991 and soon afterwards, both chambers of the Polish Parliament started their activity in the ECPRD. Therefore, we joined the network at a certain stage of its development. At that time, we were in process of organizing our research and information services to the newly re-established Polish Senate so this new experience was of great importance and very enriching to us. It made it possible to consider better ways to inform and to

prepare materials for the senators in order for them to make deliberate choices in their legislative work.

Since then we may say we have been adopting new approach. For current issues we still use the information acquired thanks to our individual requests and the responses received provide us with a very deep well of knowledge. More and more however, we reach to a well-developed database of the replies collected through many years. In many cases, we find replies to similar requests sent earlier as very valuable. If not always providing us with an exhaustive or up to date answer they are great starting point for further research. It is certain that the information acquired via ECPRD network is unique in the sense that it is unavailable in any other way.

On the other side one must say that managing a great number of requests is hard work. In case we have enough knowledge of the subject, we try to reply within our unit. The second choice is to call for help asking colleagues from other offices for information. There are however complex

requests that are passed to other services of the Senate and they are dealt with completely by professionals there. This way many of our colleagues learn about ECPRD and later on when they need information for their work for senators they approach us with requests. We also encourage parliamentarians to give us enough time when asking for comparative study so we can send a request via ECPRD and compile a report. We are grateful to the ECPRD network for the cooperation because the more professional and in-depth the replies to our requests are the more services of our research office are valued. Largely the good reputation of our services we owe to our common work within the ECPRD.

Topical seminars bring together experts, professionals and parliamentary staff presenting and discussing current issues of common interest and searching for best practices. There is always interest among our staff to attend them and their evaluation is very high. Direct contacts established at the conferences and seminars pay off since people are motivated by personal approach – the work on requests, especially those quite demanding or with a short deadline, is much more efficient when one knows who is on the other side. It is also of great importance to continue the idea that the ECPRD conferences of correspondents are hosted by member countries. It used to be in the old days that these conferences were regularly held in Strasbourg. At present, we learn a lot about a hosting country from these visits and meetings: about particular political and constitutional system, about its historical background, about parliamentary services, especially research services and library. Finally, when we have guided tours and other social events we get to know each other even better and such friendly relation enhances cooperation and is mutually fruitful. This experience have enriched us not only as professionals, but also have broadened our horizons and personal knowledge.

As for the challenges, new opportunities, new needs it is certain that in the area of research and information changes are very fast. The Senate of Poland information and research services have been reorganized several times since their inception at the beginning of the transformation. Starting point was quite modest: mostly quick information with just a few in-depth studies. In preparing to the expected

accession to the EU, the European unit was developed together with a specialized expert unit. The services grew in numbers of employees, especially highly qualified. Following the accession, many of these very well qualified and experienced people joined the ranks of committees' staff, the European Union Committee in particular. On the other hand knowledge obtained thanks to the process of the exchange of information had a significant impact on supporting senators during the process of accession and adopting EU principles.

At present, we take pride in being a rather small unit but very professional and based on best practices. Besides dealing with requests for information or a study on our own research, we ask experts that have recognized standing in various fields in order to provide senate bodies with opinions or reports on demand. For that, purpose the database of experts in particular fields of interest has been developed by our office in order to shorten the period of time required to search an appropriate specialist. We usually work under pressure of time, within very short deadline.

The changing role and perception of research services of the Senate has been reflected in the subsequent names of the office, such as Research and Analyses Office, Information and Documentation Office, Analyses and Documentation Office, Analyses, Documentation and Correspondence Office.

In the future, the new technology could provide us with faster and multidimensional information and analysis. Perhaps we would be able to deliver such many-sided and in depth studies using ready algorithms, comparing means and effects basing on research provided by the ECPRD colleagues via new media.

To conclude we would like to recall the song written to mark the 30th anniversary of the ECPRD by Kjell Torbiörn, ECPRD Troubadour and former Coordinator whom we keep in fond memory:

"It's thirty years since ECPRD was born, one sunny day
All these days we've been hard at work to help it find its way
We have helped improve procedures that our parliaments
observe

Heaven knows it's complicated, but never lost our nerve
For in our hearts we will always be true to our ECPRD".

The time has come to sing:
"It's forty years since ECPRD was born, one sunny day!"

Thank you ECPRD!



Annual Conference of Correspondents, Warsaw organised by the Polish Sejm and Senate on 17-19 October 2013

Poland



Sejm

Wieslaw STASKIEWICZ, ECPRD Correspondent



My memories as a senior ECPRD correspondent are memories from Poland, a country of the “Solidarity” movement, of political and economic transformations, trying to build efficient civil service and parliamentary administration supporting the work of Deputies. The European Centre of Parliamentary Research and Documentation was a great help in this mission.

As a correspondent, I engaged in the work of the ECPRD in mid 1990s, when I was the director of the Bureau of Research of the Chancellery of the Sejm, established in 1991. It was and still is a duty and an honour for me to perform the function of the ECPRD correspondent. A duty, because the tasks of the correspondent include handling of sometimes very difficult orders. And an honour, because the position of the correspondent is not only prestigious in every parliamentary administration, but also allows to expand one’s knowledge in the area which is colloquially called “parliamentology”. The status of the ECPRD correspondent is more complex than it would stem from the role of a representative of the Secretary General of parliamentary administration. As one of the links in the ECPRD network, the correspondent not only replies to the requests, but also organises seminars, serves as a local expert and supports colleagues from numerous units of parliamentary administration.

The function of the director of the Bureau of Research was a different experience. In our everyday parliamentary service, we had to cope with the lack of access to information required for correct and effective legislation. We had difficulties with separating the social role of researcher from the role of expert. In the first years of the Bureau of Research functioning, we enjoyed the assistance of employees of the Congressional Research Service and Task Force, while later we were supported by the ECPRD.

One of the characteristics of the ECPRD which I have appreciated from the very beginning and still highly value is its political neutrality. It was particularly important, since in our work as the Bureau of Research we were often under to strong political pressure, and we considered the work of the Centre to be a model of parliamentary service. The focus on providing information necessary for parliaments’ work by supporting parliamentary research services, organisation of seminars and trainings constituted an example to be followed. The 40 years of experience of the ECPRD created a new quality and ethos of the civil service. It is of utmost importance in particular for the representatives of parliamentary services of the countries where democracy is still young.

An invaluable achievement of the Centre is its “institutional memory archive”, i.e. our database of requests. When today I handle requests marked with the number exceeding three thousand, I am filled with nostalgia. I still remember the first requests the replies to which were difficult to obtain, were sometimes trite or failed to arrive at all. At the beginning, the database was created by trial and error, but now it is an efficient apparatus. We now have a vast amount of information about the problems experienced by parliamentary chambers and about issues of their interest in the past. The ECPRD database became the forum for exchange of experience and information, and sometimes a helpline for parliamentary research services. It has also served, so I am told, as a source of data for doctoral dissertations. It is also a unique centre of comparative law and a melting pot of legal culture of the West and other cultures. Numerous requests concern specific legal solutions, institutions and procedures, as well as rights and obligations of citizens in individual member states. However, it also includes replies to questions concerning many other areas, as well as those that arose from life events which we, as correspondents, could not have foreseen. Diversity of topics is an advantage. The database includes replies to both very detailed and very general questions. There are also reports which may even be considered research material. The time has shown that they are all useful, since the scope of issues in which parliaments are interested is unlimited.

An equally important activity of the Centre was (and is) the organisation of seminars and conferences. Carefully prepared topics of conferences always focused on issues of importance for parliamentary research services. We owe particular respect to coordinators of our sections for their

hard work. The preparation of conferences consumed the time of organisers, lost in struggles with bureaucracy and institutional obstacles, but it was worth the effort. We all found it easier to face the rapidly changing reality of not only new technologies, but also new challenges in our work. The Bureau of Research of the Chancellery of the Sejm organised three ECPRD seminars in Warsaw, and its employees participated in numerous seminars organised by other Chambers and in training visits. We also published materials from conferences.

Every institution and organisation is created by people. It is them that make the Centre work. I had a great pleasure to meet fantastic people throughout the years of my service as a correspondent. It is from my colleagues from the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and individual parliaments that I learnt about important issues concerning the functioning of chambers and parliamentary administration. It is also them that helped me understand the essence of work of parliamentary research services. I remember fondly Johanna Coppolecchia–Somners, the head of the Centre’s secretariat, who, as Ulrich today, was always ready to help, share advice or warning. I could always rely on her. I would like to thank them, as well as other colleagues very much.

The future of the Centre is now in the hands of younger members of the ECPRD team.

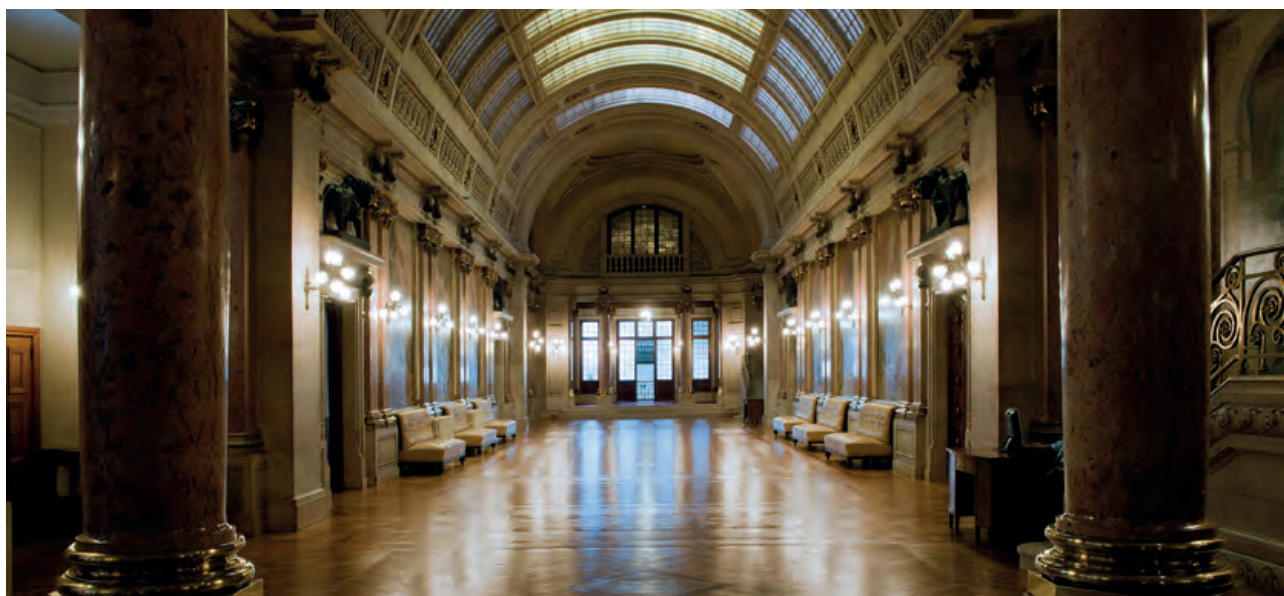
Dear Colleagues, develop the concept of the Centre, improve the cooperation network and obtain new information to develop democracy and civil services, which is the common goal of us all. Good luck!

Portugal



Fernando MARQUES PEREIRA, ECPRD Correspondent

Dalila MAULIDE, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Publication for the 40th anniversary of ECPRD

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD) was created in 1977 with the main goal of streamlining organised, structured contacts as well as legislative and parliamentary information exchange between European parliaments, enabling effective cooperation between institutions.

With Portugal's accession to this network in 1987, the Assembly of the Republic (AR) acquired a major tool for systematising and drawing up comparative information, which was a decisive element in enhancing the support services for parliamentary work and in helping enrich the political debate and improve the quality of legislation.

Requests for comparative information and other initiatives such as **thematic meetings and seminars** have, since very early on, given all members of staff of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal the possibility to carry out joint work, sharing ideas, experiences and practices which have greatly contributed to their work and the continuous improvement of the quality of the services provided to the Parliament.

There have been many occasions where the sharing of information through **requests for comparative information** has borne fruit, both following requests sent by the AR to all the Parliaments in the network — a total of 49 requests between 2004 and 2016 — and through direct access to documentary resources produced by each correspondent and member of staff at the Parliaments that make up the network.

Important political decisions, including those regarding the rules of access to the citizens' galleries in the Plenary room, the presence of Parliaments in social platforms and media, as well as the simplification of legislation were preceded by thorough comparative studies based on the substantial replies to the requests submitted by ECPRD correspondents. In the same way, some structuring administrative decisions, including those regarding the reorganisation of parliamentary services, as well as the reform of the performance assessment system for parliamentary staff were conducted, bearing in mind the results of comparative requests launched through the network. This bears testimony of the relevance of the work we do at ECPRD for the present and the future of our Parliaments.

Access to legislative and parliamentary information from various sources has highlighted the importance of analysing comparative information in support for the legislative procedure, in legislators' technical training and in their commitment to the quality of legislation and well-informed, substantiated policy decisions by providing the decision-making process with visibility and transparency.

It was against this background that a number of members of parliamentary staff, aware of the benefits that the ECPRD brought to parliamentary work and to the exchange of information, were brought together in a working group with the aim of reflecting on and proposing good legislative practices. This working group put forward the idea of creating a **technical note** for each legislative initiative admitted at the AR, a new instrument in the parliamentary legislative procedure providing comprehensive information of a purely technical nature to allow the rapporteur for each initiative to focus on the ideological and political analysis of what is proposed, leaving the technical analysis of the initiative, for which they do not have to be qualified, to the Parliament services.

The reform of the Parliament and the adoption of new Rules of Procedure introduced technical notes in 2007. Under Article 131 of the Rules of Procedure of the AR, all services now draw up a technical note for every members' and government bill admitted.

Drawing up technical notes has brought obvious benefits to the quality of legislation adopted by Parliament and makes it possible to:

- Assess, early in the legislative procedure, compliance with formal, constitutional and regulatory (in accordance with the Rules of Procedure) requirements for the presentation of initiatives;
- Understand the normative basis upon which legislation is built — the current one and the one that preceded it, and compare legislative solutions in various legal systems, presenting the legal and legal-theoretical framework for the topic of the bill at both European and international level;
- Provide knowledge on the background of the initiative, other related legislative procedures that are still pending;

- Verify compliance with the law governing the form of bills and references to contributions from bodies with an interest in the matters concerned.

The comparative analysis efforts in each technical note have been particularly relevant in identifying mentioned or related **national legislation**, in checking changes in all the laws mentioned, in identifying other documents with a direct connection to the subject matter of the initiative and in identifying the parliamentary history of the initiative under analysis, as well as collecting and identifying **European Union legislation and foreign legislation** on the matters under analysis.

For the first time, the implementation of this instrument allowed for the direct involvement of parliamentary staff during the legislative procedure, giving visibility to their work and highlighting their contribution to improving the quality of new legislation. It has enabled an integrated, impartial technical analysis of the legislative initiatives presented by the various services at the Parliament, allowing the opinion of the Member of Parliament to focus on an analysis of political appropriateness and also enabling a more informed debate within the Committees and in the Plenary. Finally, it has contributed to improving the image of the AR because it facilitates the interpretation of laws and reflects the concern of the AR with the quality of parliamentary legislation.

The success of this process has been reflected in the more than 2100 technical notes drawn up between 2007 and 2016.

However, the ECPRD represents much more than a channel where information is exchanged. The AR has, since very early on, been actively engaged in having its staff participate in **ECPRD meetings and seminars**, offering all those involved new opportunities for debate, exchange and cooperation.

As a reflection of this commitment, the AR started by hosting two meetings of the Executive Committee of the ECPRD in April 1998 and March 2009, between which two workshops in the areas of economic affairs and information and communication technology were held, in June 2000 and November 2004 respectively.

With the aim of engaging in important moments of discussion in thematic workshops on the ECPRD's different areas of work, the AR organised two seminars, one in the area of "ICT in Parliaments" with the title "How to bring parliament closer to the citizens through the use of the Internet", in May 2009, which saw 48 staff members from 29 legislative Chambers participate, and one in the field of "Parliamentary Practice and Procedure", entitled "Parliaments' legitimacy and the new supervisory instruments", in May 2017, which was attended by 60 members of staff from 26 legislative Chambers in the ECPRD network.

Further to that, in 2017, the Portuguese Parliament has extended invitation to fellow staff workers of other parliaments who have made presentations in ECPRD Seminars in fields especially relevant to the current works of our Parliament, so that they reproduce their presentations to a larger audience of interested colleagues in a video-conference meeting that takes place a few weeks after the Seminar has taken place. This way, we can bring ECPRD Seminar presentations to a larger number of beneficiaries inside the Assembleia da República, in a formative meeting free of costs for the parliaments involved, therefore broadening the exchange of knowledge that ECPRD facilitates.

The participation of AR staff in ECPRD meetings and seminars has produced moments of discussion about best practices at each Parliament and has made it possible to update knowledge and create opportunities for the creation of informal links and contacts, which have gradually become fundamental support for the work of AR members of staff.

Here, too, the example of the ECPRD has inspired the inception and development of other networks in which the Portuguese Parliament takes part, such as the Association of Secretaries General of Portuguese Speaking Parliaments, created in 1998, to promote the development of technical-parliamentary cooperation in common and to modernize

the parliaments, as well as to facilitate personal and institutional contact among its members.

In line with the work of ECPRD, this Association set up "Meetings of Members of Staff from Portuguese Speaking Parliaments", which are meetings themed by field of work, autonomized in the same spirit of the areas of interest of ECPRD, that gather staff from the Parliaments of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, East Timor, the Parliament of Portugal.

Based on presentations of case studies, the Meetings of Members of Staff enabled staff from each Parliament to discuss matters common to each of the thematic areas and make proposals for solutions to the difficulties experienced.

These Meetings have made it possible to establish closer working relations, focusing on the connections between the staff at Portuguese-speaking Parliaments, while reflecting the administrations' commitment to real cooperation aimed at developing services and internal processes, with a view to more effective and structured support for parliamentary work.

Also, in a clear replication of the ECPRD's ways of working, the network has developed a tool that allows for the submission of comparative requests by member Parliaments and established a network of focal points for expedited exchange and contact among its members, which further demonstrates how good examples, such as those set by ECPRD, will inevitably be reflected in the contexts to those who seek the best practices.

The ECPRD remains a positive experience of cooperation, communication, openness and knowledge sharing that challenges, inspires and stimulates us to follow new paths.



ECPRD seminar 'legitimacy and the new supervisory instruments' organised by the Portuguese Assembleia da Republica, 8-9 May 2017

Romania

Camera Deputatilor

Andrei MOCEAROV, ECPRD Correspondent

Any-Mary JULA, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Contribution from the ECPRD Correspondent of the Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania

A happy coincidence makes Year 2017 not only a festive moment for the ECPRD as a whole, which commemorates 40 years of its existence, but an anniversary occasion for parliamentary research in the Chamber of Deputies of Romania, which celebrates 20 years of effective activity.

Most of the researchers who started to work within the directorate for research in the Chamber of Deputies were trained during year 1996 and benefited especially from the high knowledge of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the US Congress. At that time, the CRS established a task force aimed at giving expertise for parliamentary research to the new democracies from Central and Eastern Europe.

The big lesson we learned then and which it is still of equal relevance today was the following: a parliament needs autonomous expertise to be able in performing high quality legislative and oversight functions.

In the first years, the research centre of the Chamber of Deputies focused on big issues related to democracy and the constitutional principles for a parliamentary democracy. Looking to our archive, one could find studies as: the People's Sovereignty, the Social State, the Political Pluralism, the Principles of the Separation of Powers within the State, and the Legislative and Judicial System in Romania.

After year 2000, while Romania has been preparing for the accession to the NATO and the EU, the research centre prepared numerous materials related to the EU policies and the *aquis communautaire*, as well as to the security and defense policies. A milestone moment in the state of our parliamentary research was in 2009 when a European affairs section in charge with the EU policy analysis was added to the initial research directorate.

One of the challenges of our research team was to connect the research activity to the needs of the MP's. We tried to anticipate the bills to be adopted and the policies to be debated in the Chamber of Deputies. At the same time, while the research center has become more visible we shifted gradually our focus from pro-active products to products made on requests. The ratio between on request products and pro-active ones is not a question of statistic, but rather a sign of recognition for usefulness of our research and documentation work.

Our pursuit to develop and improve the research dimension within Chamber of Deputies has also taken inspiration from the ECPRD research network. Soon after the research directorate was established in the Chamber of Deputies, we started to connect to the ECPRD network and to gradually participate in the activities organized under the aegis of the ECPRD. We grew up with ECPRD and we were witnesses of the great successes of ECPRD, a unique information and research centre worldwide, which keep together over 60 parliamentary assemblies and assured a successful cooperation between national parliaments, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe.

Information exchanged through the ECPRD network represents a valuable source for the parliamentary activity in the Chamber of Deputies, mainly for the legislative one. But, another very helpful contribution of the ECPRD is achieved through seminars and conferences, excellent occasions to exchange the best practices and to strengthen links between researchers.

Beyond the specific knowledge, a participant can acquire from a seminar, informal exchange of information and personal experiences is probably the best praise of the ECPRD seminars. The direct dialogue between us has the merit of improving mutual perception over our research activities. While the technology provides us with the tools that make possible electronic exchange of information, personal contacts during our seminars and conferences are of invaluable help.

Informal exchange of information and even of opinions on different matters should be encouraged for the improved activity of our assemblies and, consequently, for the benefit

of our citizens. The ECPRD network brings an added value to our knowledge and makes each of us more efficient in our endeavor to provide high quality advice for the MP's.

The social programmes organized by the hosts of the seminars in its margin enrich our knowledge and bring us closer to different cultures. The trip in the *Vigelandsparken* in Oslo, the visit at *Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac*, the trip by old steam tram through beautiful Berne, the visit to the *Belgrade Fortress* and the famous *Skadarska Ulica* are only some of the memorable cultural events I enjoyed with great pleasure during my last abroad trips under the ECPRD aegis. Not to forget about the delight to taste the flavor of the local traditional cuisine.

We live in a complex world that is facing multifaceted challenges. One of the most critical challenges, directly linked with parliaments, is what is called the democratic deficit. The citizens' trust in politics has been shrinking in the last decades. There are many reasons behind these developments. While it is up to the politicians to find ultimately the right answer to the citizens' anxiety, we, as officials of the parliaments, notably as researchers in the parliamentary field, could have our contribution in restoring the confidence of the people in the parliaments, as the most representative institutions of the liberal democracy. The simplest way in doing this is to make our best for allowing our knowledge services to deliver impartial and authoritative expertise around which MP's can find the right evidence-based policy conclusions.

We also live in a world where the confidence in experts is at the lowest level ever. "*Why did nobody notice it?*" Queen Elizabeth II of Britain famously asked the faculty at the London School of Economics in November 2008, just after the financial crisis erupted. In this environment there have been deep cleavages among professionals regarding different aspects of the social and economic options e.g. the role of the state in a market economy, how to find the best answer to globalization challenges, and attitude to austerity. At the same time, in a post-truth society, where we are confronting with the deliberate promotion of false information and deliberate creation of ignorance, our responsibility is higher. We need expertise more than ever to solve the problems we are facing. The challenge is how

to ensure that expertise is trustworthy. If the future is not to be shaped by ignorance and narrow-mindedness, the parliaments need knowledge and informed debate more than ever before. At a time when liberal democracy is under assault by a string of populists and nativists, the parliaments, as expression of the sovereignty of peoples, must play an instrumental role in regaining the trust of the citizens.

In this regard, the administrative capacity of the parliaments is crucial. As experts in the research bodies of the parliaments we can and must substantially contribute to the quality of the parliamentary activities. We have to find a delicate and ultimately right balance between many contradictory inputs. In a high risk information environment, there is a stringent need to strengthen and even rebuild a common framework for professional ethics.

I express my hope for further development of our ECPRD community by improving the quality of our products, by communicating more each one with other, by taking advantage of the new technology, and not at least by creating through the ECPRD network genuine epistemological communities of mutual recognized experts in different disciplines.

The big enjoy of working together within the multicultural environment of the ECPRD network and the open, voluntarily and friendly cooperation between researchers represent a precious asset of the parliamentary democracy. We have to keep alive this asset and to transmit it enriched to the next generation of parliamentary researchers.

Andrei Mocearov, ECPRD Correspondent, Chamber of Deputies, Romania



Seminar ICT in Parliaments "Present and future of e-parliament services, technologies and inter-parliamentary cooperation" organised in Bucharest by the Chamber of Deputies 17-20 November 2010

Romania

Senat

Roxana TRUINEA, ECPRD Correspondent

Ioana RUSU , Deputy ECPRD Correspondent

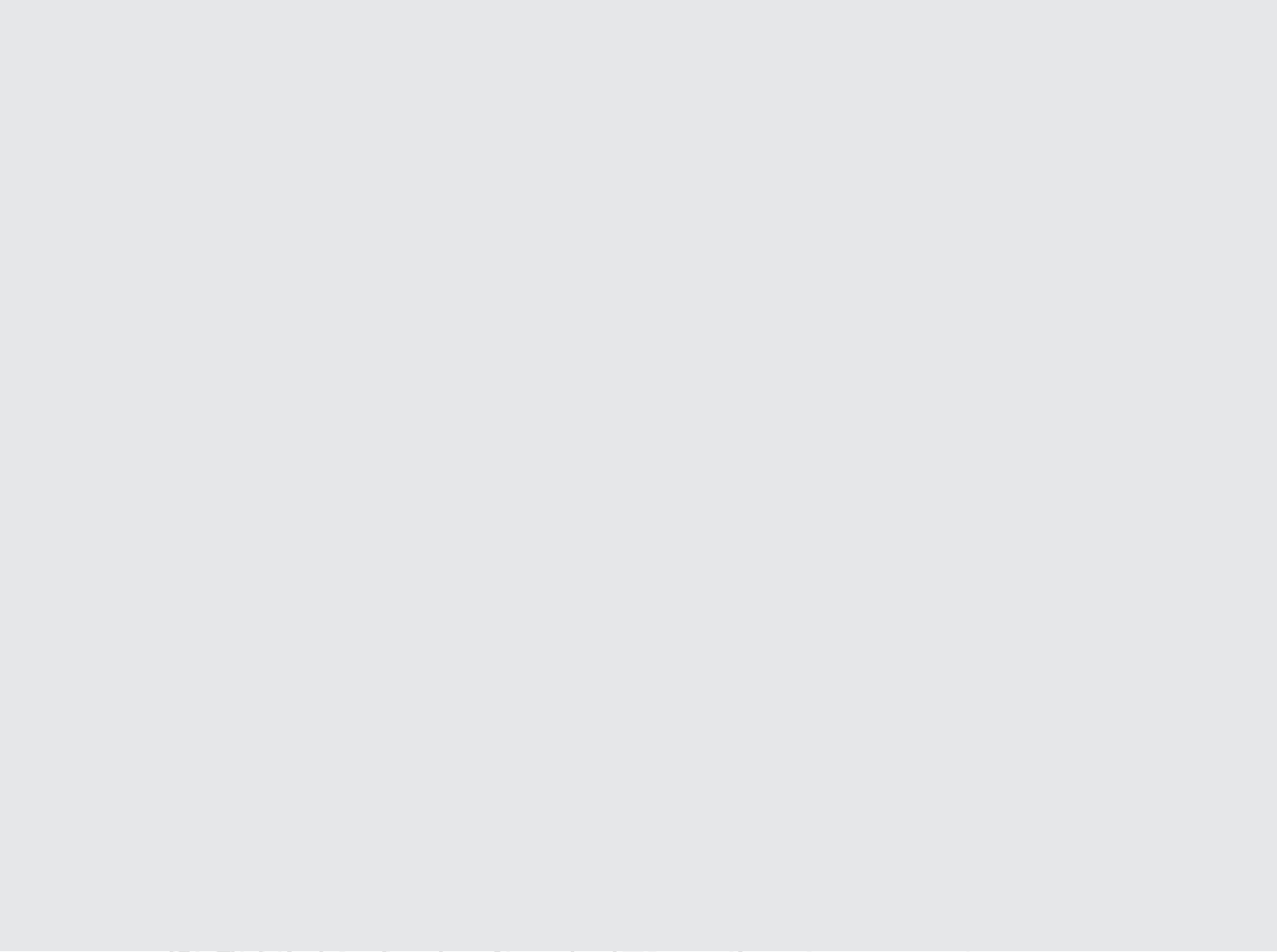


Since the Senate of Romania joined the ECPRD family, the parliamentary research and documentation work has become better and better. It is the simple beautiful truth!

Thank you, ECPRD!

Thank you, dear all colleagues!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

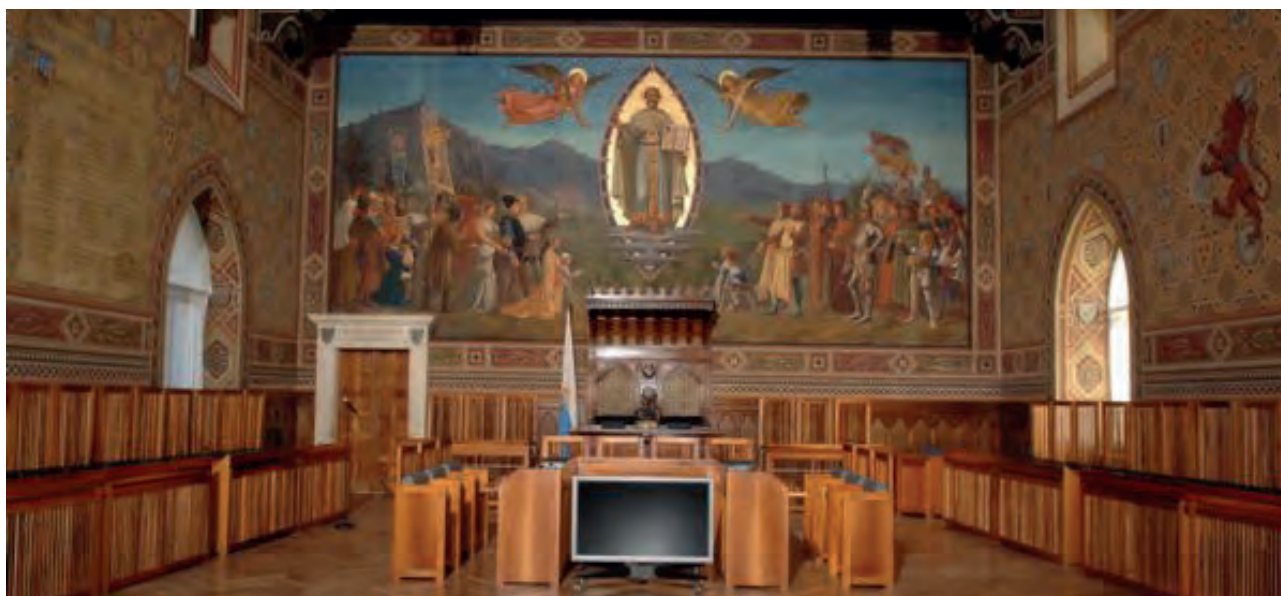


San Marino



Consiglio Grande e Generale

Antonella Giardi, ECPRD Correspondent



The key role that the ECPRD has been playing during these years, as a privileged network and excellent instrument for the exchange of information, ideas, experiences and good practices among the European Parliamentary administrations, is of undoubted value.

Thanks to the generous, impressive and challenging activities carried out until now, and through the creation of an authentic IT platform, the ECPRD has made significant steps forward in collecting and providing data and documents, fostering the exchange of information and improving the diffusion of comparative studies and analysis.

There is no doubt that a more active participation of Parliaments and their services remains an essential prerequisite for the full success of the Centre and its mission.

San Marino is conscious of the need to strengthen and develop its participation and cooperation in the ECPRD and is convinced that Parliaments and services of small States, in particular, may take full advantage of the opportunities offered by this important European network. However, this contrasts with the limited human resources, technical infrastructures and financial support that a very

small parliamentary administration can devote to this commitment.

Rather than provide an active and concrete contribution, we have so far made use of this network as a major reference source of parliamentary information and research, deriving, more than others, the maximum benefit from it. This arises from the very small internal organisation of the State Institutional Secretariat supporting the activity of the Great and General Council, which cannot be compared to most other European parliamentary administrations.

Given its small size and the very limited number of employees, the State Institutional Secretariat cannot afford a wide and structured administrative organisation, nor have distinct units or departments with separate and specialised services and ad hoc staff.

For example, unlike other European Chambers, the Great and General Council does not have a Parliamentary Library on its premises, nor does it have a parliamentary research and documentation department or a specific support service for the study and the drafting of legislative texts, etc...

This can be seen also in the parliamentary activity of the elected members of the Great and General Council which is not a full-time occupation. MPs continue to carry on their own professional activity during their mandate, not least because they are not entitled to a parliamentary salary but only to an attendance fee and a small monthly allowance.

Down through the years the Great and General Council has updated its official website: an innovative and useful tool with specific sections offering general information on the Parliament and its members, bodies and activities. This website is a valuable service not only to the Members of Parliament but also to external users interested in consulting acts and laws by chronological or thematic criteria.

Well aware of the relevant and significant contribution that the ECPRD network could ensure also in the future, this 40th Anniversary must not be considered as the end, but a continuation of an enduring engagement.

As Seneca stated, *Magna pars est profectus velle proficere* (the greater part of progress is the desire to progress). Said willingness should be increased with regard to new and further challenges facing the ECPRD as part of its future commitments in favour of parliamentary administrations.

Therefore, this Anniversary is an outstanding opportunity to congratulate and pay special tribute to the ECPRD network, its Co-Directors, its Co-Secretaries, its staff and to all Correspondents, while encouraging them to continue, with great enthusiasm, their successful action and cooperation in the interest of Parliaments.

Giovanna Crescentini
Director of the State Institutional Secretariat
SAN MARINO

Serbia

Народна скупштина
Narodna skupština

Tanja OSTOJIC, ECPRD Correspondent
Milana STEKOVIC, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



The Library of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in the ECPRD Network

by Tanja R. Ostojić, Head of the Library, ECPRD Correspondent

The Library of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia establishes a trend to provide a forum for trend watching and cooperation between the knowledge services for legislatures in the global Information Society in which legislative processes regulate the relations of a society, citizens and state powers. The Library serves to promote better laws and better lawmaking processes with the provision of information and knowledge services. We hope to achieve these aims by promotion of understanding and experience sharing of working in a politically complex environment.

Considering prevailing trends in the Internet librarianship, the Library has defined its mission in the spirit of IFLA strategy for library and research services in parliaments. The Library of the National Assembly aims to achieve following tasks:

- To promote democracies and legislative processes through the provision of information and knowledge to the National Assembly;
- To promote knowledge on legislation and legislative processes to the citizens, for transparency and strengthening of democratic participation;
- To serve as an instance of exchange of experiences, knowledge, problem solving situations and networking, particularly in serving a political environment;
- To promote best practices in providing information and knowledge to the National Assembly;
- To provide a forum for anticipation on issues relating to legislative processes.

In response to requests from MPs, the Library carries out bibliographical and documentary research on various subjects. The information gathering usually consists of the extensive data basis and Internet research and information

retrieval, in the purpose of an adequate information support for the legislative work in the National Assembly.

The Library encourages programs which would foster the adaptation of the latest information technologies to parliamentary research services. In addition, the further goals are to promote citizen participation and democratic enabling activities, in the context of the Information Society and Information Literacy initiatives. In this purpose, professional priorities are aimed toward promoting standards, guidelines and best practices as: unrestricted access to information, the principle of freedom of information and resource sharing. A particular aspect of the information work is to promote the cooperation between legislatures, and especially their parliamentary research departments, because of the growing need for legislators to be well informed concerning developments worldwide. We believe that this will encourage and foster the incorporation of parliamentary research services into the Information Society in the context of future trends such as direct democracy and e-government.

The research cannot be used unless it is available to those who might best use it, at the time they need it, in a format they can use and with findings that are comprehensible and adaptable to local circumstances. Effectively communicating results to the right audiences is just as important as producing high-quality research and policy analysis. The Library of the National Assembly is increasingly becoming a knowledge-based organization, both in terms of the retrieval and dissemination of information and documentation, and of the delivery of information and research analysis products and services to MPs and parliamentary working bodies. The contribution of ECPRD in achieving these goals is extremely important. ECPRD network provides the access to a wide range of information what significantly improves the work of the libraries and research services of parliaments, and thus parliaments as a whole.

Today we face the challenges of globalization, the gap between information and human communities flattened. The democratic ideal of an informed participant in public life is faced with the rapid development of communication networks in parallel with the fragmentation of information society.

In the globalized context, the dialogue of cultures becomes a regulatory factor of historical processes, or in other words, it sets the values that change the boundaries of human communities in the history. In this sense, the ECPRD network gives the valuable contribution to the mutual understanding of different legal and state traditions in Europe and also worldwide. The cooperation through the ECPRD network offers not just the data and information, but also builds interpersonal relationships among correspondents and other contributors. The cooperation through the ECPRD activities removes boundaries and supports a development of the new communicative paradigm that widens the vision of future social processes.

In the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the abbreviation ECPRD became well known among MPs and the parliamentary staff. ECPRD is considered as the valuable source of information on various aspects of parliamentary work and state policies in European countries. The interest in ECPRD seminars which allow tracking of the most important and the most advanced practices in parliaments is particularly high. Moreover, ECPRD as a forum for the exchange of experiences and knowledge on parliamentary work is important source of historical data about political developments in Europe.

Congratulating the 40th anniversary jubilee, we want to ECPRD to perform for many years its important mission of bringing together different political cultures and experiences.

Slovakia



Narodna Rada

Natalia SVECOVA, ECPRD Correspondent

Milan HODAS, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Slovak cooperation within ECPRD is not a one-way street

by Natalia Svecova (ECPRD Correspondent, National Council of the Slovak Republic)

Parliamentary research and documentation is one of the cornerstones of parliamentary administration. It is vital to ensuring dignified and fact-based parliamentary debates. Focal role of parliamentary research is to improve effectiveness of legislature. Parliamentary research services enhance decision-making on particular policy issues. Reliable facts and analysis may eventuate to better understanding of the problem and comparative study or survey summary may broaden horizons to find the most appropriate and realistic solution. Thus, this broadly accepted parliamentary administration unit may facilitate political agreement by providing neutral information background and narrowing the debate into values and arguments. Having access to up-to-date information is essential in order to highlight policy alternatives and to draw attention to policy consequences. Adopting legislation, which is based on timely, up-to-date, accurate and well-researched information, may add to the perceived legitimacy of the Parliament and may help to rebalance the relationship between the Parliament and the Government.

Reflecting Leonardo da Vinci's famous observation: "Wisdom is the daughter of experience" we may claim that without sharing experience and information our knowledge would be incomplete, ergo vain. Thus, experience is valuable treasure. Nevertheless, without proper communication channels we will not be able to learn about each other's experience. Therefore, we may be legitimately convinced that the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) is the catalyst of the parliamentary research success. This reciprocal exchange of information and best practices allows gaining new insights that we may not have otherwise thought of. If we see things from another perspective, we will not only expand our knowledge, but we will also be able to discover our own case into more detail. This is the "magic" of comparison. Hence, ECPRD accelerates professional development of parliamentary staff members and facilitate their self-improvement. Besides, it helps us to be "plugged in" one joint parliamentary research community.

For the National Council of the Slovak Republic it has been a privilege to cooperate within ECPRD since 1995. During these twenty-two years, the Department of Parliamentary Institute (i.e. Research Service) has developed its own work principles, parliamentary research methodology and internal guidelines for ECPRD requests and replies. The Act no. 350/1996 Coll. on the Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Slovak Republic as amended directly enacts the existence of the Parliamentary Institute as the parliamentary administration unit that shall perform information and educational tasks related to the activities of the National Council and its Members. Thus, the basis of the Research Service is legally defined and protected. Currently, the Parliamentary Institute consists of three divisions and employs in total 20 civil servants. The first one is the Division of Parliamentary Research and Education, which provides advisory, research, analytical and consulting services for the leadership of the Parliament, parliamentary committees and for the Members of Parliament. This division presents answers to specific requests from MPs or other requestors and provides proactive research such as briefing books, case studies, comparative studies, information papers and short briefing papers. Furthermore, it provides lecturing activities for various target groups (e.g. MPs, foreign counterparts, students and public) and supervises the internship program for university students. The second integral part of the Research Service is the Division of Parliamentary Library, which based on the special library status provides loan and reference services for MPs, parliamentary staff members, university students and selected external users. Currently, the library collection consists of more than 75 000 books, 800 titles of domestic periodicals and 50 titles of foreign periodicals. Furthermore, the Division of Parliamentary Library actively cooperates with foreign partners within the Joint Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library and the Visegrad Digital Parliamentary Library Plus. The focal aim of both projects is to make parliamentary documents accessible to public by electronic means. It is worth pointing out that the Joint Czech and Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library contains electronic forms of parliamentary documents and stenographic reports since 1848 to present. The third essential part of the Parliamentary Institute is the Division of Parliamentary Archives, which presents archiving of all documents received and produced by the

Parliament and its bodies. Besides, it ensures functioning of the Registry Center and methodologically supervises processing of documents.

To sum it up, the Parliamentary Institute serves as an information hub for MPs, parliamentary committees and other departments of parliamentary administration. Eight research analysts working for the Division of Parliamentary Research and Education answer annually at average 328 requests from the leadership of the Parliament, parliamentary committees, MPs, foreign parliaments and other requestors. To master such workload would not be possible without ECPRD and the willingness of our foreign counterparts to response. Requests from the Members of the National Council are so specific, that many times it is not feasible to find relevant information elsewhere. For this reason, the Slovak Parliament has been for the last four years in top three chambers of parliaments submitting the most ECPRD requests. Among the Members of the National Council, ECPRD has a long-standing reputation for providing high-quality information. As outlined herein before, ECPRD is not a one-way street; ergo the National Council tries to answer every single ECPRD request aimed at gaining information about the Slovak case. From the total number of replies to comparative requests since 2000 we can observe that the National Council belongs to top fifteen chambers of parliaments with more than 1914 replies to ECPRD comparative requests. We truly believe that ECRD makes our research work much easier, forasmuch as it streamlines communication between parliaments and facilitates sharing lessons learnt and best practices.

From all herein above mentioned it is obvious that the scope of the Parliamentary Institute is manifold. All of its three divisions are widely accepted by their foreign counterparts. As evidence, in practice, the Parliamentary Institute has become the backbone of the Slovak parliamentary development assistance to the parliaments of candidate countries and potential candidate countries. For instance, the Slovak model of research service work principles and methodology has inspired the functioning of the research service in the Assembly of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In summer 2015, we even elaborated a joint comparative study focused on electoral systems in

six countries, which was presented in Skopje with great success.

Without mentioning the networking factor, the mosaic of the Slovak cooperation within ECPRD would be incomplete. We may legitimately claim, that ECPRD is not only the database with facts, numbers, names and deadlines; on contrary, it has become a successful story of creating so called "network of networks" between parliamentary staff members. Not only the network of Correspondents, but also the networks of research analysts, legislative advisors, IT experts, library specialists and other relevant parliamentary employees stand behind the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation. Face-to-face contacts between colleagues from the ECPRD community during ECPRD seminars and Annual Conferences of Correspondents are priceless. We are not robots; we need to get to know to each other personally. Such interaction will naturally charge our motivational engines to do our work more precisely and with pleasure.

Last but not least, let me conclude with final word on the future of ECPRD and our cooperation therein. In general, parliamentary research needs to compete effectively with the worldwide information explosion. Therefore, the research papers have to be targeted, useful, and timely without drowning in a sea of unnecessary or even

biased information. Researchers should not only provide information, but should also be able to select information and distinguish what is useful and what is not. Thus, it is inevitable to ensure that the research products have clear structure, and are easy to understand and to use. In light of general demand for cost-effective performance of the parliamentary administration, it is worthy to ponder over effective ways of marketing research products and attracting clients' attention (for instance by using infographics). Besides, we need to assure veracity of provided information. Our papers have to be of comparable or better quality than the ones that are accessible otherwise on internet or in library. Therefore, we need to be particular in our ECPRD requests and replies. Only by our willingness to provide sufficient replies, we will be able to protect the uniqueness and credibility of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation. Furthermore, going hand in hand with the progress of information technologies we need to consider potential ways to enhance functioning of the ECPRD website, for instance by optimizing the search engine and by integrating on-line survey tools directly into the website.

We are aware that it might be demanding to pursue these ambitions, but we believe that we together will be able to develop further the ECPRD and ECPRD community.

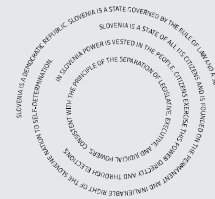


Annual Conference of Correspondents, Bratislava hosted by the Narodna Rada, the National Council of Slovakia, 8-10 October 2010

Slovenia



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



Državni Zbor

Tatjana KRASOVEC, ECPRD Correspondent

Marjana STARIC, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



ECPRD through my eyes

by Tatjana KRASOVEC, ECPRD Correspondent

I was first informed of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation, commonly known as ECPRD, at a time when the research service was being set up at the National Assembly, namely in 1997 and 1998. The then ECPRD correspondent of the National Assembly Nataša Glavnik introduced ECPRD as a possible source of parliamentary information.

In those times, there was little information that could be accessed online and data were mostly obtained from written sources, which, in addition to our parliamentary library, were also provided by other specialised libraries. Another important source of specific parliamentary contents were our colleagues from other parliaments with whom we came into contact at various meetings and seminars and who were willing to provide the required information by phone, e-mail or regular mail. From today's perspective, it is certainly difficult to imagine how the work was done back then.

In those days, Slovenia was focused on the process of accession to the European Community and the harmonisation of its legislation with the *acquis communautaire*. The state, its institutions as well as the National Assembly have been receiving various pre-accession assistance provided by European institutions as well as active assistance by some of the national parliaments. Our parliamentary staff had the opportunity to attend study visits to parliaments of the then Member States of the European Community, seminars for parliaments of countries in pre-accession negotiations and ECPRD seminars, thus gaining an insight into the functioning and organisation of parliaments, as well as into the activities of the ECPRD. A visit that was particularly valuable to us, one that helped the National Assembly's newly founded research service to get started more easily, was a three-week study visit by our colleagues to the Reference and Research Services of the German Bundestag in 1998 in Bonn where the parliament had its seat at that time. Nataša Glavnik, the then ECPRD correspondent of the National Assembly, was also member of that group. Our German colleagues did not only present the work and

organisation of their research services, library, archives, but by presenting how European affairs are discussed in the Bundestag and describing European institutions, they brought us closer to a part of the European legislation. Hence, we were able to better integrate our knowledge or expertise on European legislation and institutions. At the same time, we have also established genuine contacts with our hosts who have expressed willingness to assist us also in the future. Among them was also the head of the Documentation and Archive Subdepartment and Bundestag's official ECPRD correspondent. He promised that, if necessary, he will provide us with the texts of German laws and other parliamentary documents and studies through our ECPRD correspondent.

The study visit to Bundestag, the study visits to other parliaments of the Member States, and the contacts with the colleagues from seminars have enabled us to create a network which, in addition to other information sources, helped us successfully carry out the ensuing tasks of the research service within the expected time and content framework.

At the start of our activities, we obtained information from different sources, a few times also through the ECPRD network (e.g. twice in 1998, five times in 1999, and in 2000, etc.). When ECPRD questionnaires were put online, new possibilities of obtaining information opened up. We are now able to use the information from the comprehensive collection of replies to a wide variety of topics, even though it does not only comprise replies to questionnaires submitted by our Parliament. My colleagues and I believe that this is the great value of ECPRD collection. From this point of view, also the replies submitted after the deadline are still valuable. This is certainly something we should consider when deciding whether or not to prepare a reply, even if it cannot be done within the envisaged time limits. And there is another thing which I believe is important when replying to ECPRD questionnaires: that the reply presents the subject matter in such a way that also someone who is not quite "at home" in other country's legislation is able to understand it. Generally, the basic legislative and political, and the economic systems are alike in all modern democracies, while the differences lie in the details and in the implementation thereof in practice. I think that

the majority of my colleagues would agree that we have managed to bring this particular aspect of cooperation within ECPRD to an indeed solid level.

2001 was a kind of watershed year for me in establishing contacts with the colleagues from ECPRD network. In May that year, I had the opportunity to attend ECPRD seminar on regulatory impact assessment held in Tallinn. I considered the topic to be highly interesting, as were the city, the parliament, and the seminar participants. The positive opinion about ECPRD shared by our Slovenian correspondent proved to be correct. That is also why I had no qualms about responding to her invitation to help her with the organisation of the ECPRD annual conference, hosted by the National Assembly in October 2001, in Ljubljana. The ECPRD correspondent did the lion's share of organisation. I assisted her in the implementation of certain organisational and technical as well as content-related aspects of the conference. As part of the "informal" programme we took conference participants to one of Slovenia's top tourist attraction Bled, and at these informal gatherings I met a lot of correspondents and deputy correspondents with whom we became good colleagues later on.

In June 2004, the National Assembly organised a seminar on security in parliament. The National Assembly's research service prepared this seminar together with a colleague responsible for security, and two external experts. And, for the first time, I co-hosted the seminar with the colleague responsible for security which was a unique experience. The seminar revealed considerable interest in the topic of security in parliament, as well as the interest of participants in further seminars on this particular topic. We should perhaps consider of giving attention to this group of parliamentary staff also in the future, giving them the opportunity to once again participate in an ECPRD seminar on this particular topic.

And again, I met a lot of new people, very nice persons. Although the participants were mostly staff responsible for parliamentary security, the seminar was also attended by some correspondents. Thus, I have been expanding my circle of ECPRD colleagues.

In 2007, when the National Assembly hosted a seminar in the field of information technology, I was not part of its organisation, but I did attend the seminar and met new and old ECPRD colleagues.

Two years later, the National Assembly organised another ECPRD seminar, this time on finance and economy called The Control of a Parliament over State Budgetary Spending and The Financial Autonomy of a Parliament. The content of the seminar was quite a difficult task that was realised by our research service with the assistance of Kjell Torbiörn, the then coordinator for that field. In addition to my role in the organisation and content of the seminar, I had already acted as ECPRD correspondent during preparations, since I was appointed to this office at the beginning of 2009. And something that I particularly remember from that seminar is the active engagement of all the participants and the interesting presentation of the Italian concept of parliamentary oversight in the budgetary field by our colleague Paola Bonnaci, who later became the coordinator of this field.

In 2014, the National Assembly organised another ECPRD seminar, this time on the recording and transcriptions of parliamentary sessions and the publication and archiving thereof. The content-related and technical aspects of the organisation were carried out with the assistance of our colleagues in the National Assembly who work in the relevant field. The engagement of the parliamentary staff was so the more significant also due to the fact that the topic of the seminar provided this particular group, whose line of work was usually not covered by seminar topics, with an opportunity to attend and actively participate in the seminar.

In October 2009, I attended my first annual conference of correspondents in Bratislava. Thus, I had the opportunity to see in practice how the ECPRD network functions, including the unwritten "grouping" between correspondents, partly owing to language used by individuals in their communication, while also to territorial proximity, the age structure, the longstanding cooperation within the network and the strong personal contacts thus established, etc. Moreover, there were some lobbying efforts as regards the elections to the Executive Committee, which

is understandable, since the composition of the Executive Committee was to reflect a relatively equal representation of individual groups of countries/parliaments. But above all, from my own experience, I may say that this is a relatively large group of very open and friendly people, both ECPRD correspondents and those working in the Secretariat. The contacts that I established later on have only confirmed my impression. With some correspondents we did not only become good colleagues, but friends who, though meeting only once a year, have formed a genuine bond.

Instead of a conclusion, I would like to highlight my outlook on what makes ECPRD so exceptional:

- First, the wealth of information that parliamentary staff have gathered over the past 40 years has been invaluable to those of us who provide information support to legislators. This should remain the main thread of ECPRD network activities also in the future;
- Cooperation and the respect for the participants in the network. Everyone who is part of this network should be aware of the situation of colleagues from which replies are sought. It is necessary to "step into their shoes". It occasionally happens that the questions are such that they exceed, in my opinion, the purpose of ECPRD. The responsibility to obtain information is burdened on the shoulders of colleagues in other parliaments much too easily. I believe that the role of ECPRD correspondents is also to determine whether the ECPRD network is indeed the appropriate channel to obtain the desired information;
- Mutual respect and trust between the participants in the ECPRD network, which should be carefully nurtured. We all contribute a great deal to it, while the atmosphere which the members of the Secretariat create through their personal approach and modus operandi is of particular significance as well. Let us hold on to that good atmosphere also in the future.



ECPRD seminar 'Stenographic records : Hansard in the 21st century' organised by the National Assembly of Slovenia, the Drzavni Sbor, 5-6 June 2014

Spain



CONGRESO DE LOS DIPUTADOS

Congreso

María Rosa Ripollés, ECPRD Correspondent



Memories and projections ahead

by María Rosa Ripollés, ECPRD Correspondent

We have been asked to draft up a personal written contribution in order to produce a publication that, among other activities, commemorates the 40th anniversary of the ECPRD in 2017. This kind of contribution is drawn from lived experiences, analysis of situations as well as projections into the future. I understand that among the many and possible approaches there are three that seem to me to be most of interest: the impressions and memories that a long relationship with the Centre produces; the parliamentary work of the ECPRD; and the significance of ECPRD in the European setting.

If I analyse the experiences that such a long relationship with the ECPRD has granted me I have to go back to my first approach to the Centre, a seminar in Berlin on Press and Parliament which, if I remember correctly, took place in 1989, certainly shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. A group of Swedish and Italian colleagues and us Spaniards crossed over to Eastern Berlin by subway and walked on the cobbles of *Unter den Linden* and, as if it were today, I hear the words of a Swedish colleague: "you can feel the sound of history"-and this certainly was true. Personally,

I have to say that all of it made up for my "remorse" for having left my babies in Madrid, that strange mixture of enjoyment towards the profession and a certain feeling of abandonment so typical of many women of my generation.

Since then, as Director of Research of the Spanish Senate a rich exchange of consultations and experiences, meetings in seminars, and summits of correspondents throughout Europe had already begun. We organised different seminars on Upper Chambers of territorial representation, EUROVOC Thesaurus, Public Agencies, Representatives of National Parliaments in the European Parliament, etc. Every time, with each meeting, each seminar, the same dilemma: - how to reconcile trips with the unforgettable necessities of daily life? In the end, things always went well, albeit with some unexpected event at some point, which forced to advance returns or make the trips with the minimum possible time. I must have missed beautiful cities, museums, monuments, and relaxed chats with colleagues due to these circumstances. No matter, the commitment to combine work and family made up for all that.

Without a doubt one of the best things about the Centre has been to meet so many interesting people. Throughout all these years there have been numerous colleagues, among which many friends, who have taught me to be -I hope- a better professional and, above all, a better person. I am talking about the kind of human beings that are learned, cultured, correct, kind, amusing, generous and capable of making the best of themselves: Pöhle, Lisbeth, Ricci, Anna, Maria Jose, Francesco, Italo, Hanneke, Dick, Wojciech, Rob, Jean, Italo and his wife Hilaria, Ulrich, Fernando, Christina, Mathias, Victor, Ahmet, Gunnar, Ewa, Tatjana, George, Carlo, Paola, Marc, Siiri, Jerry, André, Branka, Karel, Antii, Pascale, Ida, Charlotte, Piet, Wieslaw In short, they and so many others, so many people, with so many different personalities and a common denominator: their professionalism, their bonhomie, the service to the Parliament in their countries and the Centre.

And by this memory of these other colleagues whom I have come across with during these long years, I would also like to refer to the parliamentary work that we have developed through the Centre. There is nothing more fitting in this respect than a quote from, if I remember rightly, Dick Toonstra, the Co-Director of the ECPRD at the European Parliament and, without a doubt, one of the most excellent personalities of the Centre. "*We are part of a parliamentary community*", he would say, in the technical sense of *community*, i.e. common interests, procedures, culture and objectives because, indeed, we are parliamentary officials, bureaucrats in the purest Weberian sense of *ideal tipus*, public servants, designated objectively, whose performance is of a public service provided from neutrality and objectivity. All the aforementioned features are especially important when, as in our case, we work for the plurality of our States and Europe because we perform our task in pluralistic bodies that enjoy the greatest legitimacy of origin: popular election.

Whenever, within the multiple parliamentary working meetings, I have the opportunity to exchange such ideas with colleagues from other parts of the world, I try to transfer this notion of parliamentary community, made up of similar procedures, analogous competences and old practices extended over time, as pillars of our work. And I must say that I perceive interest from those who hear this

common perception when we talk about political control, transparency, code of conduct, legislative procedure, commissions of inquiry, information for parliamentarians, immunity and parliamentary inviolability, payment, accountability, thesaurus, citizen participation, committees, speaking turns. . . In sum, the world of our job, the techniques of our work, so intertwined with the same representative democracy that it would be difficult to understand the later without the former.

Throughout these years, the Centre has been expanding its organisation from the first seminars that today would seem almost elementary to that complex mechanism that Jerry explains to us in each meeting with enthusiasm and some pedagogy: the web page and the whole computer system of the ECPRD. A long time ago, the working groups were created as well as the notion of group coordinators. The executive committee was extended, always taking into account the balance, of lands, sensitivities and souls, each executive committee was leaving its imprint and we were learning how to manage the different earmarked subjects: research and parliamentary procedure, libraries, archives and documentation, computer science, parliamentary websites or the all-powerful economy ruling everything in recent times.

At the same time as this development took place –growth stage- new experiences were lived with the enlargements of the Union and the capacity of the Centre and we learned how the new incorporations placed us in a mosaic of participants, languages, ways of working and also personalities. Accordingly, the number of requests and questionnaires was greatly increased as a result of the said enlargements of our community as well as our maturity as a centre for the exchange of studies and parliamentary experiences. Today the ECPRD is more complex, has a more consolidated structure and yet maintains that informal character, that subtle and proper combination of naturalness and sophistication that constitutes one of its characteristics and qualities; because as I see it, making an excessively bureaucratic and centralised body could end the Centre's clever evolution and personality so far.

These circumstances also brought about relevant changes in our small Spanish world of the Centre, because it

was very difficult to respond to the growing number of requests, even though the preparation of responses might have been eventually spread among colleagues. That was the reason why we resorted to the award of a remunerated traineeship – two or three young graduates with excellent curricula and with European knowledge and vocation - that today we continue to have and are the young spirit of the collaboration of the Spanish Congress of Deputies with the Centre: our grantees, Silvia, Carlota, Jose; and this year's trainees: Elena, Patricia and Javier, outstanding and enthusiastic collaborators, without whom our contribution would be much more complicated and less effective. I believe that with people like them, the future of the Centre will carry on because they have excellent background, a sense of responsibility and provide a very generous collaboration.

In the same terms I would have to refer to the colleagues who are in the core of the Centre, the directors, co-secretaries –especially now our Ulrich- and coordinators, excellent professionals and *alma mater* of the Centre, so close to all of us, with an excellent know-how to make everything work.

And it is precisely the thought of these young people that leads me to the last, but not the least, part of my reflection: what impact does the ECPRD have as a joint body of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe? My answer thereto is that the Centre constitutes a representation of many and the best things in which I believe and which, I think, we must continue to believe in: on the one hand the European Union as a supranational organisation that integrates a good number of us Europeans ranging from the Nordic, Baltic, Central European, Eastern Europe, Anglo-

Saxon, to Mediterranean, like us. In a word, various cultures but with a common past - certainly sometimes stormy - and a future settled on democracy, the rule of law, and the welfare State. And, on the other hand, the Council of Europe as a highly broad international organisation based on fundamental rights and their guarantees.

We surely are an oasis in history and in the world, a privileged setting of culture, welfare and pluralism, with much in common. I see it in our children who travel and live throughout this territory that is perceived as their own and not foreign, in our Erasmus students, from Austria, Holland, Hungary, Greece, Italy; or participants in the Master of European Parliamentary Law, which we manage in common with Universities of England and Italy-EUPADRA; and also in our own identities. A Spanish poet said a few decades ago: "*he who loses the origins loses the identity*" and certainly it is so. But we must keep our sensitivity vigilant, that bet on what transcends our small world, that European generosity and openness that is characteristic of our sphere, the European way of being in the world.

With that conviction in mind I would like to convey that it has been a privilege to have been part of the ECPRD, to have met with you, dear colleagues, throughout these years, to have learned and shared experiences as a Spanish and European woman, and as a Clerk (legal adviser) of the Spanish Parliament, and I trust that reason and heart help us to transmit these experiences to our children, to the next generations of Europeans.

In Madrid, winter 2017.



ECPRD seminar 'Parli@ments on the Net X - Mobility, transparency and open parliament: best practices in Parliaments' web pages', hosted by the Spanish Cortes Generales, 31 May - 1 June 2012

Sweden

SVERIGES 
RIKSDAG 

Riksdag

Gunnar Fors, ECPRD Correspondent

Johan HÄGGLÖF, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent¹

Robin Travis, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



Photo: Melker Dahlstrand/The Riksdag Administration

Festschrift für das EZPWD

by Gunnar Fors, ECPRD Correspondent

Do we need the ECPRD? One would think that this question would be superfluous, taking into consideration that the Centre has existed for 40 years and has produced almost 3 300 comparative studies. Nevertheless, such a question should be asked now and then. The network must not be taken for granted, like every success it must be examined, evaluated, and continue to develop. The mere fact that the ECPRD celebrates its 40th anniversary more than ever indicates that it is a success story.

Before I continue, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all my old and present colleagues within in the Centre, for a most rewarding cooperation. I have been a correspondent for twelve years and a member of the Executive Committee for eight years. I have seen it as my mission to push forward the excellent work of my predecessors and together with my fellow colleagues make the ECPRD a community of parliamentary knowledge and to become an ever more useful tool for inter-parliamentary cooperation and information exchange. And I think we have done fairly well, so far.

Since it was first established, at the request of the Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies in June 1977, the European Centre for Parliamentary Research & Documentation (ECPRD) has evolved not only in numbers, with today's 52 parliaments: two international parliaments, 47 national parliaments and three parliaments with observer status, but also in practice.

The development of the Centre can be structured into four stages:

1978-1989: In this first stage was characterised by the development of standards for the information provided by national parliaments. In addition, working structures were developed; a correspondent was appointed in each national parliament; and working groups for the various fields of activities of parliamentary administration were developed.

1990-1996: During this stage the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe were subsumed into the work of the Centre; Electronic Data Processing was intensified in

the national parliaments; parliamentary homepages were created.

1997-2006: This period saw an unprecedented growth in reciprocal enquiries, reflecting increased cooperation between national parliaments. A comprehensive seminar program was provided for the members of staff of the national parliaments. In May 2006 new statutes were accepted by the secretaries general at the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments in Tallinn.

2007-2017: The application of the Lisbon Treaty meant that the respective powers of the European Parliament and the national parliaments increased considerably and inter-parliamentary cooperation grew substantially. Comparative requests and seminars were still the two main focuses of the Centre's activity. Requests increased from 440 in 2008-2009 to 530 in 2010-2011, in other words by 20 %, and replies rose from 10 600 to 11 800 over the same period, i.e. by 11 %.

Looking back at what has been achieved, it is quite obvious that the Centre has reached a stage of maturity and is in fact a success story.

All this being said, the ECPRD is not without challenges.

In the course of the regular work of a Research Service within the Parliament, the work load tends to strain the resources at hand, demanding to, first and foremost, serve our own parliamentarians. This is of course in line with our *raison d'être* as Research Services. However, if a network such as the ECPRD is to stay a well-functioning cooperation, based on voluntary commitment, to be the best organized, most used inter-parliamentarian cooperation *sui generis*, and with the highest quality, everybody must keep contributing.

For progress to continue, the human resources allocated to these activities would probably have to increase. Likewise, it would only be possible to achieve the desirable increase in the number of summaries for each file if sufficient resources were provided. Also, the success of the ECPRD may result it that the Centre's workload is beginning to reach saturation point. Something to bear in mind for future discussions.

The way I see it, we must firstly not lose sight of what we have achieved. If we continue to answer requests and keep responding in time, we will always get the same behaviour and response in return from our fellow parliament research services. One is tempted to say "Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno". Hence, one cannot enough stress the importance of answering requests as ambitious, meticulous and as timely as possible. Only then will the ECPRD continue to be the success it has become over the last 40 years, and for years to come.

Taking all the above mentioned achievements and progress into consideration, we must still ask ourselves: are we doing the right things?

At the Annual Conference of the European Centre for Parliament Research and Documentation (ECPRD) in Athens in spring 2012, it was proposed that a project to collect data on the utility (and indirectly the impact) of ECPRD comparative requests from respective clients should be carried out. It was agreed that a survey should be sent out during 2013, and that the findings should be presented and discussed at the Annual Conference in Warsaw, which took place on 17-19 October 2013. The Research Service of the Swedish Riksdag was asked to carry out the survey.

Such a survey was consequently sent out. And a report was written for the Annual Conference in Warsaw, based on the survey. The overall objective of the report was to show and better understand the value and utility of all the work being put into the ECPRD network. A more specific objective was to enlighten the secretary-generals/highest management in ECPRD parliaments about the work within the network, *inter alia* to make them aware of, and hopefully recognise, the importance of this work, so that they would give priority and resources to correspondents and others whom work with ECPRD matters. Furthermore, the report hopefully gave ECPRD members a systematic and valuable input on what was being done within the network. Perhaps members could benchmark, find best practices and, in some ways, compare how each parliament works with requests in parliament.

As was stated in the introduction to the survey, the report was to be seen as part of the broader question to what extent parliamentary research influenced political or administrative decision making. (It was not a report on client satisfaction *stricto sensu*, although utility and satisfaction are naturally interrelated and difficult to distinguish.) The outcome of the survey showed that the typical request was made by a single MP from a government party followed by an MP from the opposition. It concerned draft legislation on a topical issue in the home country, where the information on the situation in other countries/parliaments obtained a central place in the final document prepared by the original requestor, and the added value was that the MP took note of this information.

One conclusion from the findings of the survey was that requests were used in the legislative process, the very heart of a parliament's tasks. The mere fact that members use ECPRD in the context of draft legislation, suggests that the Centre does make a difference. Not only that, the fact that comparative requests are being made and used on a daily basis, shows the need for a network such as ECPRD.

Another conclusion of the survey is that a lot of questions concern administrative issues, namely 19 % of all requests. It consists of requests such as: are there recording possibilities, microphones and TV in the chamber and committees, how big is the chamber, is there interpretation, is voting electronic and which flags are represented in the chamber. These questions might be of importance, but should they strain the resources of the Centre? We might want to discuss this in the future.

A final conclusion that I drew from this survey was that: If there was no ECPRD, we would have to invent it!

Finally, from a personal point of view, I would like to thank all my colleagues in the ECPRD for their great friendship and commitment. The ECPRD has taught me a lot about international cooperation and about other countries and cultures. Special thanks also go to the ECPRD co-directors, co-secretaries and webmaster for their excellent leadership and work.



Annual Conference of Correspondents organised by the Swedish Riksdag
13-15 October 2011

"The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"



Sobranie - Assembly

Ms Marina DIMOVSKA, ECPRD Correspondent

Mr Zlatko ATANASOV, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



The state of parliamentary research and information service to MPs, political bodies and the administration

The Secretariat of the Parliament of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"¹ has reorganized its concept of research and information providing for MPs by establishment of the Parliamentary Institute (PI) as research and information service. Constituting 8% of the Service, with 25 staffers (13 researchers) the PI introduced professional research papers production and databases for usage. Once institutional and legal frame was set up and administrative capacities strengthened, the PI replies in average 106 request by MPs per year. Although user feedback is quite high, with ethnic and gender balance from both majority and opposition, information provided are more used in the discussions rather than practicing MPs right to legislate. Entrusted right of self-initiation to

¹ The geographical denomination of the country has been adapted to the international and ECPRD practice

the PI provides opportunity to draft papers and to invite stakeholders (MPs, service) to a policy briefs events. This should enable environment where debates also take place in the Parliament supported by background information.

Research and information services must stay up to date with electronic developments. PI designed electronic platform for request management system. It guarantees objectivity, reference cross check and effective per review process. PI uses dissemination methods of research products to make them more visible by e-mails notification as well as search engines for easy access.

Comparative information matters, MPs wants to compare options and solutions in different countries. ECPRD is the network to provide this. Our statistics shows that MPs want

comparison in various points of view: EU 27, South East Europe, Baltic countries, Visegrad countries, Scandinavian countries as well as issue based combination of countries. Having information gathered through the ECPRD network provides more argumentation and contributes MPs effort to legitimize believes and decisions.

Sources of information and databases are the core of well drafted papers. Beside horizontal comparison of information per issue we would like to underline the value of time line information as well. Appropriate software to support an easy to search archive of the legislative process is important. Macedonian PI also developed such a tool.

The relevance and impact of the information exchange within the ECPRD network for the work of the Research Department

"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" is an acceding country for EU membership. Much of the legislation derives from the EU *acquis*. Even in such cases comparative information are valuable. Not always the real implication of enacted legislation can be foreseen. EU directives oblige in their goals but methods can vary. The ECPRD network can provide those variations across countries in efficient and timely manner.

Research Service in Parliaments "raison d'être" is to support MPs. To understand MPs needs one has to understand their world of activities and obligations. In conducting their competences, MPs can use expert opinions, ideological positions or simply clear rationale/logical way of making decisions. We see the ECPRD network as platform of information dealing' experts.

The Parliamentary Institute contributed to the Macedonian parliament ECPRD request management system. Expertise within the parliament is used to explain policies and laws.

Replying request is managed by research staff. We consult other departments if necessary. As Deputy Correspondent and Head of Research Service, it is my job to delegate and to organize the workload in parallel with the MPs' requests.

ECPRD relevance and credibility derives from the fact that it provides: an "one stop shop" where researchers can seek information via search engines; easy system to launch a survey; exchange of information that enables strengthening the legislative branch of government in the EU accession process; meeting people and harmonies standards and practices.

The Macedonian Assembly and the ECPRD network organized a seminar held in Skopje on 9th of May 2014. The seminar items, discussions and final summary provided information with regard to MPs conduct, ethics and staff integrity. It made a clear relation to the importance of these issues in regard of domestic political culture.

The ECPRD in ten years' time?

I would like to phrase it like a letter from the future: ECPRD has developed itself into a platform for substantial exchange of parliamentary information. Confidence in information that are shared was maintained and increased. The network provided more human dimension by facilitating fellowship programmes and exchange of experts. Promotion of activities concerning what ECPRD is doing was increased. The ECPRD network developed a monthly e-bulletin. The network was co-author of specialized publications with specialized international organizations. The scope of themes was widened and seminars held regularly. Management structure included representatives from more countries on a rotating basis. On-line register of researchers from all parliaments involved was created. This enabled even closer communication. Surveys increased in quality and quantity. In most legislators ECPRD surveys are included in official bills sponsored as background documents.

Turkey

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi

Emrah HURMA, ECPRD Correspondent

Semra GÖKCIMEN, ECPRD Correspondent



ECPRD

Today's parliamentary business is getting more complicated and requires more and more technical expertise. In the past, the subjects that can be easily regulated by simply setting the basic principles are now necessitating more and more detailed regulations. Therefore the legislators are now demanding much more knowledge than they used to.

In the globalizing world, good practices and/or regulations from other countries that have encountered similar problems before, have begun to attract more attention from parliamentarians as a kind of information that facilitates the solution to many problems. In terms of our country, the EU candidacy process also brought with it the necessity to look at EU legislation and the practices of the EU member states for every law that is enacted in the parliament.

However, parliamentary research units cannot develop comparative expertise in all areas regulated by the legislative act due to many reasons, both internal (budget, human resource inadequacy) and external (limited or no access to relevant legislation or application, language barrier etc.). This may raise the risk that the research centers may not be

able to provide the information that the parliamentarians request from time to time. This risk was also valid for the Grand National Assembly of Turkey's (GNAT) Research Centre especially when it was a small unit, recently separated from the GNAT Library (in 2005) and became an independent unit. However, during the establishment period, most of the knowledge that the Grand National Assembly requested could easily be met through ECPRD. Thanks to the unique and valuable information that our colleagues have provided us through ECPRD, it was possible for us to prove ourselves while we are still in the process of being established. In fact, some members of GNAT have expressed their amazement and appreciation for the detailed memos and reports we have prepared in a short period of time, which we could not do so effectively without the help of ECPRD network.

Many of our memos and reports that are based on the information we have gathered from the ECPRD network have been the basis for various important legislative activities (legislative proposals, amendment of laws, press releases, audit activities, etc.).

Perhaps the most valuable and surprising fact that the ECPRD experience has shown to us is the following: Although both geographically and culturally, we are from a country in the periphery of the European basin, we saw that almost every issue the European Parliaments encounter during their parliamentary activities is quite similar to us. Many questions asked by other parliamentarians to the ECPRD have come to the agenda of GNAT either at a similar time or before or afterward. Even those who have not yet come are likely to come to the agenda one day. Certainly, countries can have their own agendas according to their political conditions, but in a surprising and incredible way, we have most common problems and agendas. This is one of the most important consequences not only for Turkey but possibly for all countries.

The list of questions asked by ECPRD reveals that there are many common problems in Europe's most eastern and western countries, or even countries with populations of tens of millions and countries with not even a million inhabitants. Only this fact is enough to justify the existence and usefulness of ECPRD. The solutions developed by countries with similar problems and interests are also likely to inspire other countries.

Another important benefit of ECPRD is the prospect to meet with our colleagues from other European parliaments through meetings and seminars held several times a year and to establish a valuable network via this opportunity. Of course, the friendship and information exchange

established via the internet is very important and valuable; moreover it constitutes a very high proportion of ECPRD activities, but we are convinced that the face-to-face communication in terms of information exchange, meeting and networking among colleagues will not diminish despite all the technological transmission tools that have evolved. Perhaps the greatest benefit of ECPRD for users is the fact that even without asking a new question, ECPRD website has turned into a very detailed and up-to-date database which compiles information on many issues that we can never reach elsewhere. This feature has therefore been used as one of the most important sources in preparing many of the reports, memos, or specialized expertise theses most of the experts working in the GNAT's Parliamentary Administrative Organization, even without having to open a questionnaire.

This aspect of ECPRD has been recently enhanced with the inclusion of "Parliamentary Indicators" section into the website. This section surely provides more up to date knowledge that is even more accessible to the parliamentary researchers. We think that this section has the potential to be further improved. The most useful enhancement can be the inclusion of most common questions that are repeated more or less every year.

We think that ECPRD is our probably the most important tool to get qualified information. We would like to thank all the people who contribute to this valuable international network of people, information, and ideas.

United Kingdom



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

House of Commons

Richard CRACKNELL, ECPRD Correspondent

Jenny STURT, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



ECPRD 40 years

By Richard Cracknell

"I've been asked to follow up a recommendation that the House of Commons should improve its childcare provision. My boss suggested your ECPRD network might be able to help as she has asked me to find out what other parliaments do. I need to get something together within a month or so."

So went a recent email from our Chief Executive's office from a colleague in the House of Commons who clearly thought she may have been set a thankless and possibly fruitless task. But she was wrong. The ECPRD could help and could do so quickly. Within a few minutes we were able to provide a ready-made summary of parliamentary nursery and crèche provision around Europe which had been compiled in response to a similar request by the Slovakian Parliament a few months earlier. Our offer of the detailed responses from individual parliaments was taken up and we were very quickly able to email these to her clear

delight, some surprise and, importantly, to the benefit of UK parliamentary administration. Thank you Bratislava for anticipating our interest; thank you to all those colleagues who had provided replies to that request; and thank you to the ECPRD for its website which enables these comparative requests to be so easily processed, archived and retrieved!

This is not an isolated instance. While correspondents tend to view the ECPRD through the prism of new comparative requests, the growing body of questions already answered can already provide a starting point for those faced by a not-so-original request, without even bothering their hard-pressed correspondent(s).

ECPRD correspondents have a number of roles: promoting seminars, putting individuals in touch with counterparts in other parliaments and dealing with the flow of questions

from other parliaments about their parliament's practice and the way in which the law and public policy works on the ground. Less often we find ourselves explaining to colleagues how they can go about putting their own questions when they want to find out how other countries approach an issue. This has to be fitted around our other work and getting colleagues to devote time to put together a response and occasionally answering the questions ourselves requires knowledge of people in our own parliaments, tact and diplomacy and a realisation and belief in the benefit of mutual help and support that the ECPRD network can provide.

The advent of the internet and email and the move to a world where we can Google instant answers to questions might have made parliamentary research and information services and the ECPRD redundant. Why would we need to meet up with colleagues in other European Parliaments when we can contact them via Skype and email direct from our desks? Surely the answer to questions about practice in different countries can be obtained by pressing a few buttons on our keyboards to find the webpage with all the answers? Yet the parliamentary information and research services are thriving and many are busier than they have ever been. And not many days go by without at least one Parliament making a request for information via the ECPRD network. The answer lies partly in the fact that in an increasingly complex world politicians have high expectations about what research services can provide. In the UK, policy-makers want to know "what works?" and part of this evidence-base is how other countries deal with a particular problem or situation.

Comparative requests via the ECPRD network can provide some of the answers to the "what works?" questions – Does your country issue duplicate passports? How do you: regulate home schooling; appoint judges; deal with overweight school bags? are just a few examples. Equally, parliaments themselves are faced with making choices about how they react to technological changes and respond to issues with finite (and sometimes reduced) resources. Finding out how colleagues in similar institutions

have dealt with the same problems provides a range of ideas and experiences to enable informed decisions to be made – Do you have rules about MPs employing family members? Can MPs use unpaid interns? How do MPs vote in parliamentary chambers? Can they abstain and if they do how is this counted for a decision requiring a majority to be in favour?

None of these would be easy to find answers to without the ECPRD network.

The body of responses to comparative requests would undoubtedly be a rich source for anyone wanting to study cultural differences across the ECPRD member countries. Personally, my favourite questions are those about different parliamentary practices. Sometimes I am surprised by the answers – who would have guessed that the UK would have the largest range of branded parliamentary wine? (Request 2924) and how apparently uncaring the UK is compared to other Parliaments in the way it marks the death of an MP! (Request 3059) National parliaments often view themselves as unique institutions with few, if any, obvious comparators. But that idea of uniqueness is soon dispelled by the knowledge that ECPRD requests and contacts can bring. In spite of the many different histories of our countries and their parliaments, there is a huge amount that our parliamentary institutions have in common with each other.

Informally, ECPRD correspondents are an invaluable channel for obtaining information about other countries and parliaments. Alongside more visible comparative requests there are numerous one-to-one emails and telephone calls asking how a particular country does things. These are made much easier by knowing who to contact, and that person is often someone you have met, exchanged experiences with and that you know will do their best to help. That community of correspondents is the foundation of the ECPRD, providing mutual practical help to colleagues in like institutions. The ECPRD works as its connections are between the people involved in day-to-day parliamentary operations. Here's to the next 40 years!

United Kingdom



House of Lords

Patrick VOLLMER , ECPRD Correspondent

Matthew PURVIS, Deputy ECPRD Correspondent



The House of Lords Library provides impartial, authoritative, timely research and information services to Members in support of their parliamentary work. This year, 2017, marks the 40th anniversary of the modern Library service enjoyed by Members today.

The Library was founded in 1826 following a Select Committee's recommendation that the Clerk Assistant of the House should provide "such a collection of English law books as, in his experience, he may consider useful to the House for reference". Until the mid-twentieth century, the Library's chief focus had therefore been on supporting the judicial work of the House, rather than the legislative work, but things began to change in 1958, when life Peers sat in the Lords for the first time. They began to make more intensive use of the Library than had been customary for Members who were not part of the judiciary, and as their numbers grew over the next twenty years so did the work of the Library in trying to support them. By 1976 it was clear the Library's services were in need of modernisation. Lord Eccles, a former minister, was appointed to chair a Committee to this end, which included Members from all

sides of the House. The Committee's report was published in March 1977. Among other things, the report recommended the creation of a proper research service for Members, the acquisition of more books relating to current affairs and the business before the House, the establishment of a new centre for enquiries in the Queen's Room, the introduction of IT facilities and, for the first time, the recruitment of librarians with professional qualifications.

Today, research available ranges from briefings on all major items of business in the Chamber to bespoke responses to Members' research and information enquiries. Resources provided include access to over 200 journals and 50 electronic databases, complete sets of UK legislation, parliamentary materials and approximately 80,000 books. The Library also offers tailored coaching to enable Members and their staff to access parliamentary information and news quickly and independently; a quiet workspace for Members close to the Chamber with a range of facilities including computers, printers, copiers and scanners; and support for Research Assistants in the Millbank House Library suite.

During the 2015/16 financial year, 734 Members used at least one of the Library's services, well above the average daily attendance of 494.

Supporting the Work of Members

The Library is split into three work streams: Information Provision, composed of the researchers and librarians who complete enquiries and briefings for Members and manage the front-of-house service; Information Management, composed of librarians who develop and manage the collection of books, materials and electronic databases and provide tailored coaching to support independent access to information resources; and Central, composed of support staff who assist the Director of Library Services in the strategic and financial management of the Library. The Library has a staff complement of 46—Information Provision 21, Information Management 21 and Central 4.

In 2015/16, the Library answered over 5,500 enquiries from 572 Members: 1,698 requests for bespoke research briefings; 3,816 reference enquiries; and 1,457 books were loaned. Over 900 deposited papers were indexed and 1,659 titles added to the Library's catalogue.

The Library continued to publish a prepared briefing for all major items of business on the floor of the House and in Grand Committee three days in advance of debates. In 2015/16, the Library prepared and published over 300 briefings for Members with an overall distribution of 28,547 items, increasing its productivity to deliver more briefings to Members than in the previous year. These briefings are produced to inform Members about bills, debates and questions in the Chamber and issues of topical interest, and are made available to all Members. In addition, the Current Affairs Digest (CAD) provides Members with a monthly digest of articles from the Library's journal subscriptions, from blogs and magazines, plus speeches and think tanks. It brings together this content across six policy areas—economic affairs, home affairs, science, international affairs, the constitution and social policy—with a focus on articles

and comment relevant to business of the House. This is sent to nearly 600 subscribers across Parliament.

The Library has continued to innovate to meet Members' information needs in terms of the content, format and delivery of its research products. The focus has been on providing Members with sharper, more digestible, accessible, timely briefings to support business on the floor of the House. Shortly, the Library will be consolidating its branded research products, and relaunching these products under a single 'Library Briefing' banner. This decision was taken following an ECPRD survey of other parliaments' practices and on the basis of feedback from Members. Continuous reviews take place to ensure process and practice underpinning enquiry and research services are 'mistake proof', and that briefings are produced to the highest possible quality and consistency. Staff training continues to be at the heart of the Library's priorities to ensure staff have the skills required to deliver services both efficiently and effectively.

Meeting Members' Needs

The Library has utilised the opportunities technology offers to deliver its services to Members in ways that suit them. For example, the Library's briefings for business intranet pages are a Member's 'one-stop-shop' for briefing materials, where the Library's publications are available together with further useful materials for business. The Library's briefings for business are now available on the House Papers app, enabling Members who wish to access the Library's research on a tablet device to do so. The CAD app enables Members to read the CAD on electronic devices such as iPads and smartphones. Views of the Current Affairs Digest on the app have been encouraging.

In 2016/17 the Library launched an e-books service, in response to demand from Members through the Information Committee. In the same year, the Library also introduced a new subscription app for online magazines, accessible through smartphones, tablets or computers.

The Library will shortly launch a new enquiries tracking system for both research and reference teams to track requests from Members and their staff. It will enable the collection of a richer set of data that provides a fuller, more nuanced picture of how Library services are being used. Metrics help inform decision-making to ensure the Library continues to meet Members' information needs, and further work is underway to ensure data collection is optimised and embedded in daily decision-making.

Partnership Working

The Library has continued to pursue opportunities for partnership working with other Offices in both the House of Lords and House of Commons. The two Libraries minimise duplication and share collections whenever possible, as well as undertaking joint procurements for services and information resources. As a means to further cooperation and knowledge sharing, regular training seminars have been held with the House of Commons Library and the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST). A re-run of the successful series of continuing professional development workshops on research methodologies, organised by POST, the Libraries and Committee Offices of both Houses, will take place later this year to ensure staff have the skills needed to complete research for Members. The Library also worked with the National Assembly for Wales to produce a briefing for the Wales Bill with input from its research team. Over the last year, the Library has benefited from two ESRC-funded PhD fellowships, facilitated by POST, which has provided additional research capacity and subject knowledge/expertise. Further placements of this type are planned through 2017. The Library has provided support to other Offices. For example, the Library has assisted the Lords Committee Office with scoping notes for ad hoc committee inquiry subjects being assessed by the Liaison Committee and has produced briefings following up on the work, and impact, of the ad hoc committees in 2014/15.

Over the next twelve months the Library will:

- Further publicise the Library's authoritative, impartial, timely briefings to increase awareness and take-up
- Continue a programme of customer service training for Library staff
- Continue to develop the Library's information collection, including books, ebooks and electronic resources, to support the work of the House
- Improve the online search interface for the Library's collections and subscriptions, through the procurement of a new catalogue in partnership with the Commons Library and a discovery search solution that will improve the accessibility of electronic journals, as well as the print collections
- Embed a new, more efficient case management system
- Begin preparations for moving the Library's collection out of the Palace of Westminster, in anticipation of its forthcoming restoration and renewal.

ECPRD

The House of Lords Library continues to value the opportunities afforded by the ECPRD. Requests for information are regularly made through the network of correspondents, recourse is had to summaries published on the ECPRD website, and responses to request from other members of the ECPRD are completed and often provide interesting insights for researchers which can be relayed to Member of the House of Lords. In addition, huge value is derived from attendance at ECPRD conferences, both by staff attending as well as the networks and knowledge attendees disseminate on their return. The House of Lords Library very much looks forward to continuing to work with colleagues across the network.

