



PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTE

**UNDERSTANDING THE USE AND THE BENEFIT OF THE
RESEARCH SERVICES IN THE PARLIAMENTS IN THE
REGION**

- STUDY -

Skopje, October 2015

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FOREWORD

The availability of reliable information and analysis is crucial to debates and discussion taking place in the Parliament. At every level, whether making laws or overseeing the executive or representing the citizens, reliable data allows Members of Parliaments to review legislation, draft amendments, and oversee the implementation of laws. Often, Parliamentary research centers, departments or institutes are major sources of information for MPs.

Bearing in mind that providing impartial, relevant, timely and authoritative information and analysis to Parliamentarians enhances the legitimacy of the legislature and strengthen the role of legislature in policy process, the Parliamentary Institute of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia invited research services of the Parliaments in the neighboring countries to prepare study on the status and work of their respective departments.

Thus, the following study offers a comprehensive summary of information, standards and best practices of parliamentary research services in Parliaments in Belgrade, Pristina, Skopje and Tirana.

The study will be presented at a regional conference, as a most effective way to share practical information and experiences. The exchange of the experiences and knowledge among researchers will contribute to their professional development, as well as developing standards and practices in providing information and knowledge to parliaments. Moreover, the conference will promote the establishment of research services as a fundamental component in the development of democratic legislatures.

The Parliamentary research and information services of all neighboring countries of the Republic of Macedonia were invited to participate in the preparation of the study and to attend the conference. The purpose of these activities is to promote regional networking of the Parliamentary research services as a first step towards greater cooperation among research staff of the Parliaments in the countries of South East Europe.

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Skopje, October, 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study provides an insight in the status and work of the Parliamentary research services in Belgrade, Pristina, Skopje and Tirana.

The **aim** of the study is to inform how research feeds into existing parliamentary processes and to identify benefit to Members, Members' staff and Parliamentary staff from the use of the research services.

The **purpose** of this compilation is to explore how research services might better support the legislative and oversight role of the legislative branch of power, and thereby contributing to strengthening the rule of law and democracy in the countries.

The study is conceptualized in four chapters, each providing a detailed description of the functioning of the research services in aforementioned countries. Each chapter of the study, using a descriptive method approach, answers five questions:

1. Where, when and how does research feed into Parliamentary processes currently?
2. Which are the services and products provided?
3. What factors (processes, mechanisms and cultures) shape the use of research in Parliamentary processes?
4. Which are values and operating principles of the research service?
5. How research service might contribute better to the improvement of law-making capacities of the Parliament and its ability to provide the necessary checks and balances on the activities of government?

I. BELGRADE: RESEARCH SERVICE IN THE ASSEMBLY

Introduction

Research Service in the Parliaments is indispensable components of all modern democratic parliaments. Their contribution lies not only in the provision of services related to data and knowledge but also on the elevation of parliaments into first order national institutions, thus keeping with their primary constitutional function as the legislative power in modern democracies. Within this framework research services aim to be timely, objective (nonpartisan) and authoritative thereby contributing to an informed national legislature.

I.1 Where, when and how does research feed into Parliamentary processes currently?

Research service was introduced in the Service of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: NARS) in 2007. The National Assembly Library (hereinafter: the Library) provides research service although it has not always been the case due to different organizational structure – the Research Unit merged with the Library Department in 2011.

According to Regulations on Internal Organization and Job Classification in the NARS the Library is the department within the Legislative Sector with 10 civil servants:

- 5 researchers (2 lawyers, 1 master of economy, 1 librarian – researcher, 1 political scientist/specialist for EU integration), not divided in subject teams, issues are covered in accordance with education (if it is possible)
- 4 librarians
- the head of the Library (PhD in language sciences)

I.2 Which are the services and products provided?

The procedure of making a request for research and development of research products of the Library are set out in the *Instructions on Requesting the Research from the Library of the National Assembly*. As concerns its contents, research products may represent the following:

➤ **Comparative research**

- relates to certain issues in relation to legislation of other countries and legal documents of international organizations (published systematically on the website of the NARS from 2008),¹

➤ **Analytical information**

thematic data on the draft laws and other acts, as well as on issues to be discussed at the plenary session of the National Assembly,

➤ **Review information**

¹ Internet: <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/narodna-skupstina-/organizacija-i-strucna-sluzba/biblioteka-narodne-skupstine.1506.html>

- various issues and regulations in the Republic of Serbia and issues related to the work of the NARS and its working bodies,

➤ **General information**

- refers to a particular matter within the jurisdiction of the National Assembly or its working bodies,

➤ **Brief comparative review**

– part of the “Clarity Information” (background dossiers for legislative proposals, researchers draw up together with the European Integration Department and committee secretariats), prepare exclusively for committee stage of drafting legislation.

Research service is covering the whole spectrum of legal and policy fields, economics, statistics, public matters, foreign affairs, etc...for which the different source of information are used:

- national legislation database
- governmental, local self-government and non-governmental organizations
- printed editions (professional journals, books, training materials, etc.)
- interlibrary loans from the National Library of Serbia
- consultations
- international database (ECPRD, IPU, IPEX, OSCE, OECD, EUR-Lex, N-Lex, EPRS)
- cooperation between other parliamentary research services

I.3 What factors (processes, mechanisms and cultures) shape the use of research in Parliamentary processes?

➤ **Crisis throughout Europe**

It has been established that the economic crisis throughout Europe has also taken the form of a deep political and social crisis, in terms that the citizens progressively mistrust the political system and the Parliament as an institution. The crisis has not limited the broad spectrum of activities that parliaments do in modern era. Furthermore a Parliament must do what it does with less resource but not limit its scope of activities. The National Assembly is no exception.

➤ **Public administration reform and EU integration**

On the other hand there is challenge of the public administration reform in the context of EU integration. Strengthening capacities of the Staff Service of the National Assembly by improvement of organizational structure, internal procedures and work practices and upgrading the level of professionalism also is worthy of careful consideration.

The organization chart of the NARS was modified after the circulation of the twinning project's information sheet and before the implementation of the project. Therefore, the administrative chart of NARS is a modern one that reflects the structure as it is shaped by the operation of the Parliament.

I.4 Which are values and operating principles of the research service?

➤ Correct, impartial, up-to-date information

Instructions on Requesting the Research from the Library of the National Assembly (Article 2) stipulates that research products shall stand for correct, politically and in every respect the impartial, up-to-date information made either on the researcher's initiative or at the request filed by Speaker's Office, Secretary General's Office, MPs, Political Groups, Committees and Service of the NARS, on matters within the jurisdiction of the National Assembly

Research work shall be produced by use of scientific methods relating to particular disciplines, as well as to interdisciplinary scientific fields and include the most latest data acquired by research development in certain fields, and they will be given in clear and understandable manner and focus on the special interest fields of the request submitter. There is fixed form of requests (attached to the Instructions) includes:

- a short description of the topic of the research
- the purpose of the request, a deadline for fulfilling the request
- a deadline for publishing comparative research on the NARS Website
- the method of replies (electronic, printed or personally by assistants)

➤ Request formulated at understandable manner

If the request is not clear enough, or if it can have multi-faceted interpretation, request submitter, the Library head and the staff that shall prepare the research product according to the request shall have a meeting in order to make a closer identification of the topic and the expected research results. During subsequent stages of the development of a research paper, a research who prepares the request may require additional explanations from the request submitter.

➤ Right to refuse request

A request may be refused if its contents do not relate to issues from the remit of the National Assembly particularly in the following cases:

- due to the excessive number of requests;
- if too many extra working hours are required for producing information;
- if it does not relate to remit and legislative agenda of the National Assembly.

➤ Setting up the priorities

When deciding on the priorities in fulfilling the request the following shall be taken into consideration:

- deadline for fulfilling the request,
- urgent topic or correlation with the activities and legislative agenda of the National Assembly.

In case of an excessive number of requests submitted and when the work extent exceeds the number of available Library staff, regardless of the request topic, the priority shall be given to submitters in the following order:

- a request filed by a working body, in case the working body may not be able to obtain information in accordance with its competences by another channel, and if the contents is relevant to the items of the working body session agenda;
- the request by the National Assembly Speaker;
- a request by a Member of Parliament;
- request by the parliamentary group and
- request by the Secretary General.

➤ **Mediation on possible disputes**

Possible disputes relating to the request or prepared research product shall be resolved by the request submitter and the Library head. If necessary, research who produced or will produce the research product shall take part in resolving the possible dispute. If the dispute may not be resolved by mutual consent, the National Assembly Secretary General shall be informed thereof.

➤ **Publishing onto National Assembly website**

The research work which is not of confidential nature shall be published the National Assembly website without specifying the name and surname of the request submitter. If the request submitter, considering the request purpose, does not like the research product to be available until the particular date, such a wish shall be taken into account, but not longer than 3 months since the date of the processed request.

➤ **Signed by researchers**

Research product shall be signed by the research that processed the request. If several research-analysts took part, all of them shall sign the research paper.

➤ **Specific principals**

Research service does not provide legal advices and shall not prepare draft laws or other general acts wordings, support Member's political work outside NARS (e.g. in constituency, write speeches), any kind of service to external clients. Also no recruitment of external experts is possible.

Data relating to the request submitter shall be deemed internal data and shall be recorded only for statistical purposes.

I.5 How research service might contribute better to the improvement of law-making capacities of the Parliament and its ability to provide the necessary checks and balances on the activities of government?

The Government is equipped more or less with a well-structured and multilayered system when drafting legislation, suitable for its needs. The question is how the National Assembly can take her part in law-making process on best possible way relying on her own capacities and in what stage of that process research service is stepping in? Firstly research service is involve in committee stage preparing clarity information and secondly on the plenary session by comparative analysis of the law proposal. Additionally, all other research products can be used for amendment the law proposal. Regarding that the capacity building of the research service, its

competences, functions and contribution is of vital importance. This can be done in many different ways some of which are:

➤ **Constant support from superiors**

Involving research service in all activities e.g. introductory seminars for new MPs, working groups, permanently professional education and training

➤ **Improve research products**

Improve in accordance with the requirements of both scientific research and parliamentary needs (MPs, Parliamentary Bodies, the administration, European Institutions).

➤ **Increase internal and external cooperation**

Good internal cooperation between relative departments of the NARS and among external agencies and partners (governmental, NGO, local self-government)

➤ **Adequate resources**

Interdisciplinary methods of gathering the information: printed and electronic data, documentation and IT services, external subscriptions etc.

➤ **Recruitment of appropriate staff**

That is one of the most important issues for the efficient operation of service regarding its scope of work. Strong academic background and highly professional qualifications are extremely necessary.

➤ **Lifelong training policy**

The needs of a Parliament in 2013 are not related by no means to the e.g. the Parliament in 2043. Thus, an employee entering the Parliament in 2013 will soon be of limited use if he is not trained on a continuous basis throughout his career.

➤ **Enhance its self-sufficiency**

With a certain promotion policy with regard to the activities and prospects of the research service by using the internet technology and the growing potential of social media

➤ **Feedback mechanisms**

Use internal tracking mechanisms and electronic systems to obtain estimates of performance.

Conclusion

This study of the research service of the National Assembly Library is entirely based on its experience in providing research services to its clients. Therefore, it will be just one contribution among few others made by our esteemed colleagues from parliamentary research services gathering on this Joint Research Project at the initiative of the Parliamentary Institute from Skopje.

Furthermore, we strongly believe that there is neither a single best practice model, nor is it realistic to imitate diverse and enlarged structures of other parliamentary services. Hopefully, this study will help to establish specific patterns of work according to the best practices of most neighboring parliaments and significantly improve understanding the use and the benefit of the Research Service in the Parliaments.

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2. “Plans for the Capacity Building of the Research Service in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia”, Rapporteur Ms. Milana Šteković, Senior Adviser – Researcher, Deputy ECPRD, Annual Conference of Correspondents of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), Belgrade, National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, 16 -18 October 2014
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II. PRISTINA: DIRECTORY FOR RESEARCH, LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES IN THE ASSEMBLY

Introduction

Directory for Research, Library and Archives (DRLA), acts based on Regulation on the Structure and Operation of the Administration of the Assembly of Kosovo and The Administrative Instruction on the Scope and Rules of Procedure of the DRLA, adopted by Secretary General of the Kosovo Assembly on 15 February 2013.

DRLA, mission is to assist Parliamentary Committees and individual MPs in their parliamentary work by providing them with independent, objective and authoritative research analysis.

Through this joint research paper initiated by the Parliamentary Institute of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, it is described how research service of Kosovo Assembly feed into parliamentary process, what are the products that are provided for MPs, how research service might contribute better to the improvement of law-making capacities of the Parliament, etc.

II.1 Where, when and how does research feed into Parliamentary processes?

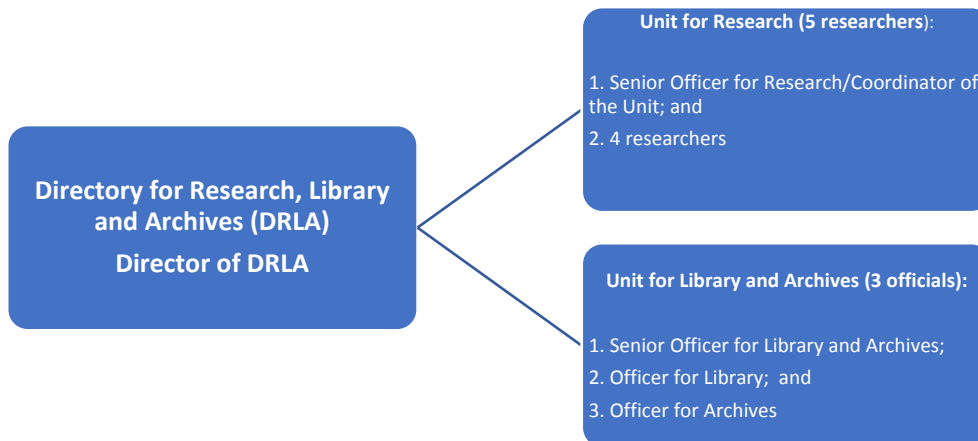
Research Service, for the first time was established as a Sector within Legal Department on 2007, and from that time until 2012 has functioned only with one researcher.

Taking into account the increased demands from Parliamentary Committees and individual MPs, requesting more and more information from the Assembly Secretariat and following the recommendations coming from NDI and the EU Twinning Project “*Support to Kosovo Assembly*”, requesting to create the research service, on 18th April 2012, Presidency of the Kosovo Assembly rendered a Decision to amend the Organization Chart of the Assembly Administration. With that Decision was created the Directory for Research, Library and Archives.

DRLA, is fully functional from 1st of October 2012. Currently, DRLA has nine (9) staff.

DRLA, is composed by two units:

- Research Unit; and
- Library and Archives Unit



Within research unit, three (3) researchers are lawyer, one (1) researcher is political scientist, and one (1) economist. All researchers have Master Degree.

Research service feed very well within parliamentary work. From the creation of the DRLA, the number of research requested has increased. If we refer only to research requests received this year between periods February – May 2015, DRLA has completed twenty eight (28) research products. Most of these requests were from parliamentary committees.

Only this year, it happened twice that MPs referred to research papers prepared by DRLA, during plenary sessions. We think that this is a good sign that research products are having effect.

II.2 Which are the services and products provided by DRLA?

DRLA, is guided by principles of: effectiveness, impartiality, confidentiality and reliability.

DRLA, prepares research papers on request, in response to specific requests which Committees and individual MPs make, and on its own initiative, in respect to legislation and policies, reviewed and adopted by the Kosovo Assembly. According to the Administrative Instruction on the Scope and Rules of Procedure of the DRLA, research service provides the following services:

- Comparative analyses;
- Policy analyses;
- Information on domestic legislation and of other countries.

In addition to the above-mentioned services, the DRLA, in cooperation with Committees and other actors, is responsible to participate and support the organization of roundtables and policy discussion forums, to present its finding and relevant data of the Directorate's research activities.

Who is entitled to request research services?

The DRLA, provide research services within relevant deadlines and procedures, taking into account the following priority order of the Assembly bodies:

- President of Assembly,
- Assembly Presidency (composed by 5 Deputy Speakers);
- Assembly Committees; and
- Individual MPs.

II.3 What factors (processes, mechanisms and cultures) shape the use of research in Parliamentary processes?

We believe that moving from policy/draft-law to law with impact on citizen's life, the role of proper information that parliamentarians need to have when they review and vote/decide for a policy in the Parliament, explores why research input into the policy development process within parliament might enhance the legislation adopted.

In Kosovo around 99% of draft-laws are initiated and drafted from the Government. Taking into account this fact, effective legislative participation of MPs is crucial in order to ensure essential checks and balances, enhances openness, facilitates public debate, and provides a platform for broadly based input that can help to deepen consensus about proposed legislation.

Based on the above-mentioned facts, use a research services into a parliamentary process, nowadays is crucial for parliamentarians.

II.4 Which are values and operating principles of the research service/DRLA?

Article 4 of the Administrative Instruction on the Scope and Rules of Procedure of the DRLA, as the operating principles of the DRLA, has foreseen:

- "Effectiveness": implies that officials of the DRLA shall be effective and shall provide timely services, as envisaged in this AI;
- "Impartiality": services provided by the DRLA shall be politically impartial;
- "Confidentiality": the requester shall have the right to request the DRLA to keep his/her request, and its service, confidential;
- "Reliability": services and information provided by the DRLA shall be reliable and shall be considered an official source of information, and may be quoted by the requester.

II.5 How research service might contribute better to the improvement of law-making capacities of the Parliament and its ability to provide the necessary checks and balances on the activities of government?

Nowadays, parliamentary research services are playing a crucial role in the daily operations of modern democratic legislatures. Research improves legislative decision-making and strengthens democracy. Reliable facts and analysis contribute to better understanding of problems, provide more realistic and effective legislative solutions to those problems, and can predict the impact of policies before they are adopted by parliaments. Good research enhances the legitimacy of the legislature, providing MPs with information to draft and amend legislation based on reliable facts.

Checks and balances are necessary to ensure good governance example in budgeting in the medium to long term, which requires the answerability of the executive to the legislature, and the ability of the latter to take appropriate action in cases of poor performance.

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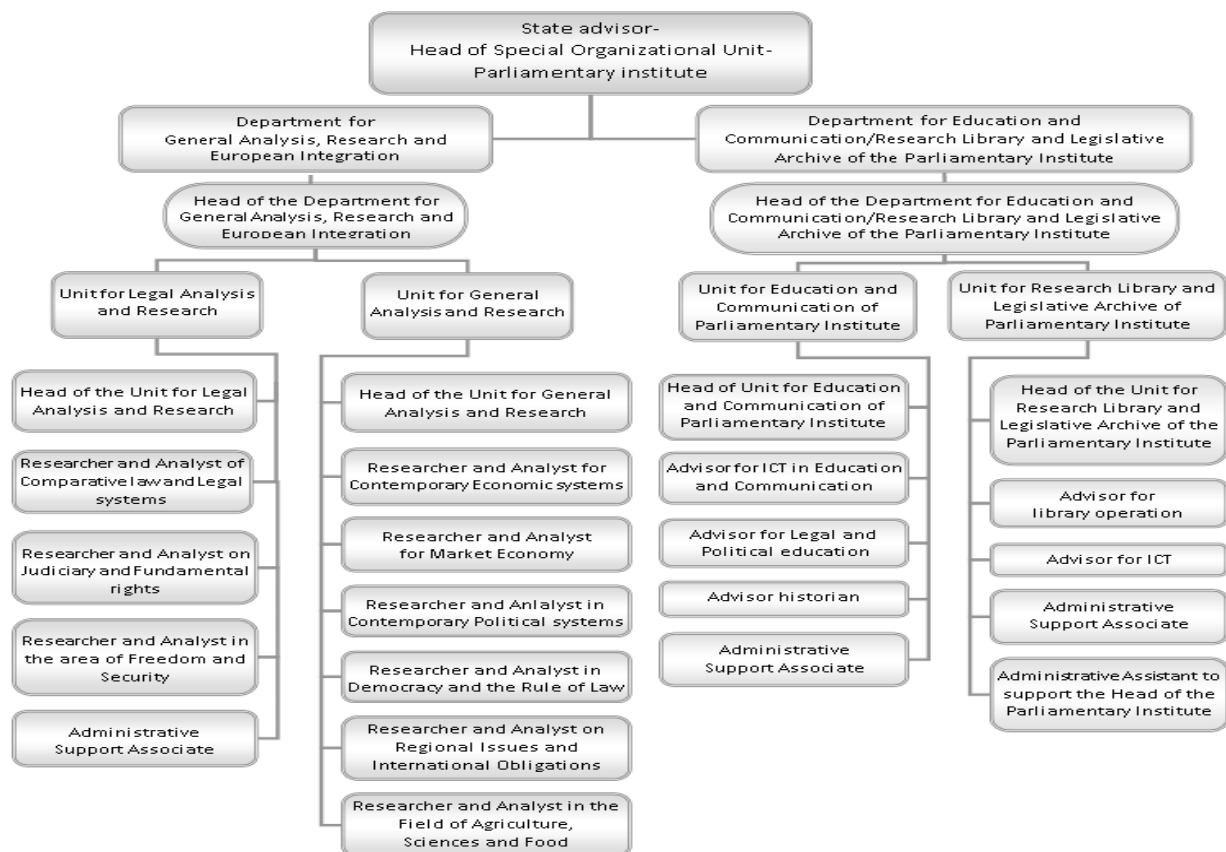
III. SKOPJE: PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTE IN THE ASSEMBLY

Introduction

Parliamentary Institute (PI) is a special organizational unit within the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, established by the Law on Assembly in 2009. Its mission is to strengthen and support the legislative and oversight role of the legislative branch of power. PI establishment contributes to the institutional reform of the parliamentary service. PI staffers are civil servants and are led by a manager hired on consensual basis of the Steering Council composed of party caucus leaders represented in the Parliament, Secretary General, Vice Presidents and representative from the President of the Parliament. It became operational in May 2014.

Within the Parliamentary Institute operates Department on General Analysis, Research and European Integration (hereinafter "Research Department"). The core activity of the Research Department is delivering high-quality, timely, objective, non-partisan, impartial information and analysis related to the draft bills, state budget, economic and social situation in Republic of Macedonia and in the region, and on topics related to the EU integration, with the special attention to the process of approximation of legal system of the Republic of Macedonia to the EU *acquis communautaire*. This is provided for MPs, Committees, Secretary General of the Assembly at their request, or on PI's own initiative.

Organization chart of the Parliamentary Institute is given below:



III.1 Where, when and how does research feed into Parliamentary processes currently?

Parliamentarians are expected to fulfil arduous tasks of law making, oversight of executive actions, table parliamentary questions, approval of the state budget, ratification of treaties, debating issues of national and international moment and representation of thousands of constituents. Implementation of these tasks place a heavy demand for information on those responsible. Providing high-quality, timely, objective, non-partisan, impartial information is area where the Research Department is most needed in the Parliamentary processes.

- **Where?**

Into core parliamentary processes of legislation and scrutiny. For instance, in the process of adopting law, Research Department contributes to enhancing a parliamentarian's fluency with the content of legislation being considered by Parliament. Research Department, also assists in crystallizing the idea of parliamentarian to submit a private member's bill. In exercising oversight of the executive, parliamentarians are likely to be up against a government bureaucracy with substantial resources at its command. Thus, MPs need independent sources of information if they are to scrutinise the government effectively. For the purpose of adopting state budget, Research Department is providing in-depth quantitative analysis on incomes and expenditures. In debating issues of national and international moment, Research Department helps legislature to assert its role in the policy process and to have choices available to exercise its prerogatives.

- **When?**

According to the current practice the quest for the services of Research Department are mostly related to parliamentary agenda. The research services are most needed before referring the bill for its second reading when amendments can be submitted.

- **How?**

Research and analysis services provided by the Research Department do not have any binding on the legislative process, but are for advisory purposes, for information purposes and for alternative solutions on a topic of interest. Its analytical support is tailored to the parliamentary nature of its clients' business. Researchers look comparatively at a wide range of local, national and international perspectives and experiences and avoid commenting on policy options, focus on facts and leave political parties to provide policy advice. Nevertheless, this ultimately enriches the legislative debate in a way that supports the quality of the legislative process.

III.2 Which are the services and products provided?

The services of Research Department are available to MPs, Committees, Secretary General of the Assembly on an equal basis. Services are provided on a first-come, first-served basis to agreed deadlines. The services of Research Department are provided by responding to individual enquiries from beneficiaries or on its own initiative. That is, the service may be reactive (responding to individual enquiries) or proactive (anticipating needs and available to all).

Upon beneficiaries' request, the Research Department provides:

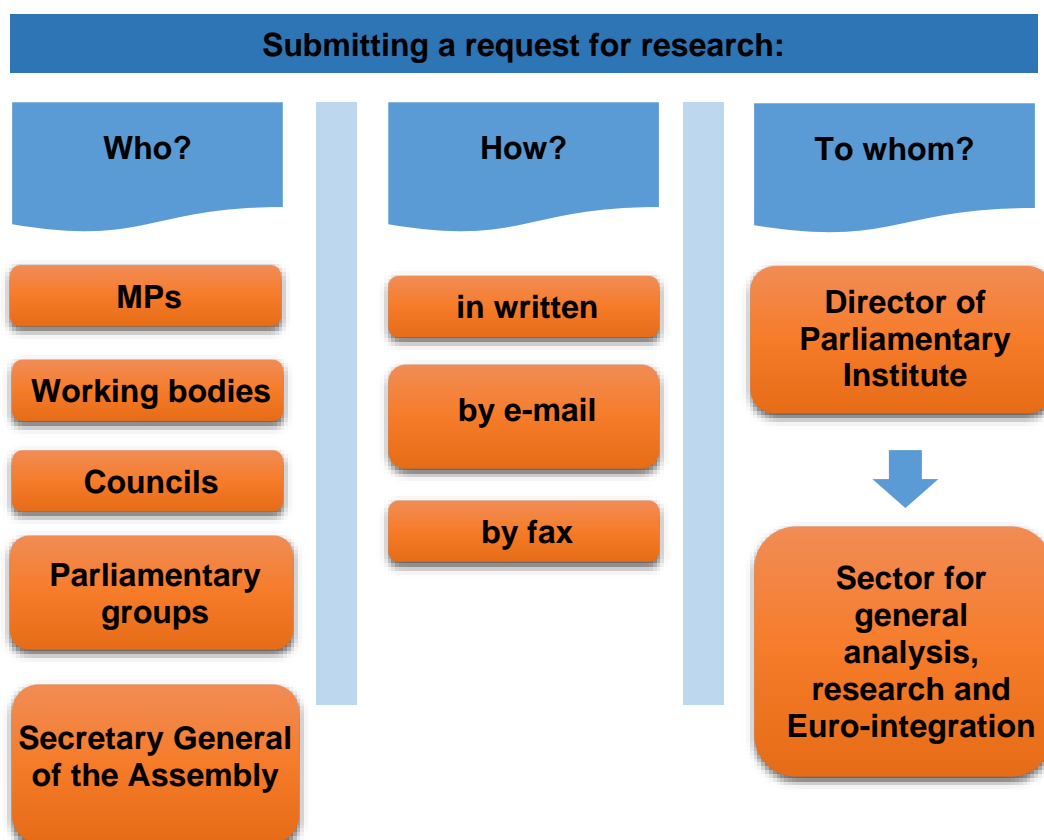
- Brief information - summary on a particular matter;
- Thematic or comparative overview of certain matter;
- Statistical or quantitative overview of particular matter;
- Chronological overview of particular matter;
- Extensive information on particular matter that takes into account the context, the implications from different solutions for the target groups or the country.

On its own initiative, the Research Department prepares:

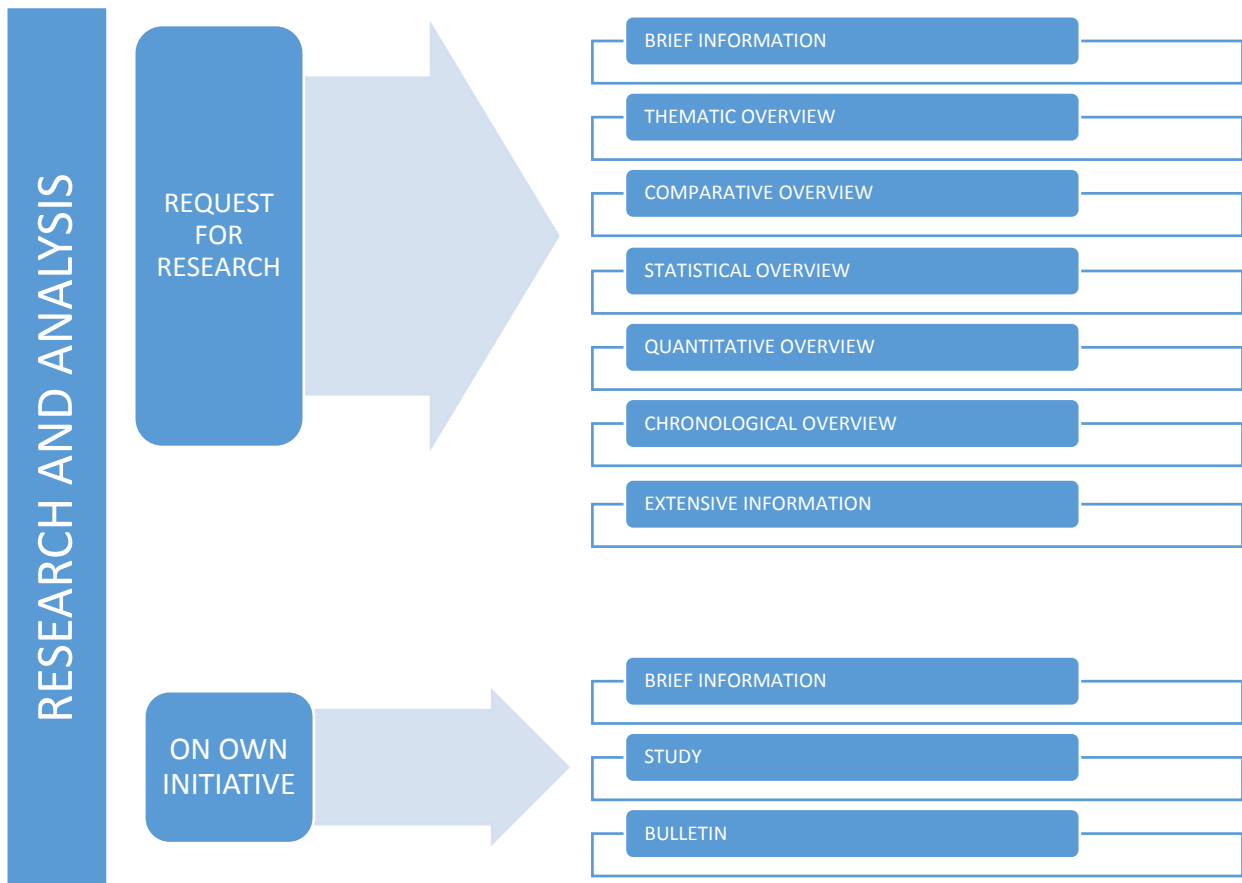
- Brief information - summary related to concrete acts;
- Study on selected topics;
- Bulletin on social, economic and budget indicators in Republic of Macedonia.

The over-riding rule is that anything requested should be needed in connection with the parliamentarian's parliamentary duties. Therefore, the research work does not include: providing legal advice and assistance in individual cases; preparation of draft laws or amendments; giving information which is under the competence of other sectors in the Assembly.

Process of submitting a request for research services and types of research work are described in the charts below:



Types of research work



III.3 What factors (processes, mechanisms and cultures) shape the use of research in Parliamentary processes?

In a rapidly changing world, all parliamentarians are confronted with challenges in finding relevant, appropriate information to support the decisions they make and the actions they take. At the same time, the use of relevant high-quality information adds to the perceived legitimacy of their actions in an increasingly technocratic era. Thus, some of the factors which shape the use of research services in Parliamentary processes are:

- **Information overload.** The global "information explosion" has introduced a new challenge, which is the risk of information overload. From a situation where they had too little information, parliaments and their members now often have too much, and can find it difficult to distinguish between useful and irrelevant information. Researchers, therefore, focus on decoding this information and presenting it in a format and language that align with activities conducted in the Assembly. Hence, Research Department do not simply help parliamentarians find relevant and authoritative information, they also make sense of the information by analyzing its various dimensions and relating it to the work of the Assembly.

- **Trusted and credible source of information.** Internal sources of information are likely to be more valued, because they are balanced and impartial and can be most responsive as they are in close contact with parliamentary departments. Although, Parliamentarians rely on a range of other sources for advice (their political staff develops expertise over time, and political parties share key analysis aligned with their platforms, the media and lobbyists often come forward with arguments in favour of particular outcomes on public policy), many Parliamentarians value the opportunity to access analysis that is politically neutral and fact-based, reflecting a range of perspectives that they may wish to consider as they exercise their parliamentary duties. Furthermore, Research Department do not have a problem establishing its credibility with the Assembly (as would some outside groups).
- **Speed of accessibility and a pre-existing relationship with the source of information.** MPS often need to access information rapidly, as a consequence of the unpredictable timeframe of some aspects of the work of the Assembly and their general involvement in multiple, often unconnected, areas of policy simultaneously. Pre-existing relationships with a source of information is a way to maximise their use of time, by ensuring that they had an identified point of contact for when they need information. Moreover, Research Department can provide a "one stop shop" where parliamentarians can seek information on the many and varied topics on which they may be expected to give an opinion. This is even more important bearing in mind that Parliamentarians have different backgrounds and interests, and they can not be experts in all matters of public policy.

III.4 Which are values and operating principles of the research service?

The values and operating principles of the Research Department as established under the rules are:

- **Objectivity** - objective information is a key quality standard in research. In order to ensure that all sides of an issue are covered it is required to check the information from as many aspects as possible and to present a range of views. The objectivity of how the data are been processed and disclosed to the recipient is guaranteed with three level of per-review process within the Parliamentary Institute;
- **Impartiality** - impartial information and analysis is a synthesis from a number of sources and it is not "captured" by government policy perspective. The research services are available and equally accessible for parliamentarians from all parties across the political spectrum;
- **Confidentiality** - The name of the recipient and the requested service are confidential. However, after the expiry of 30 days from the receipt of the research work by the beneficiary, it is published electronically (posted) and it

become available to all MPs. As exception, the beneficiary can request extension of the deadline for publication, but not later than 60 days from the receipt of the answer to the request;

- **Timeliness** - The researchers monitor public policy issues on an ongoing basis and are skilled at responding to beneficiaries' request rapidly and with up to date information;
- **Client focus** - Research services are tailored to the needs of the client. It is always important in selecting material that it is client-oriented and responsive directly to the needs of the beneficiaries;
- **Excellence in service and use of appropriate information resources** - Research Department provides a comprehensive service, backed by specialism in many policy fields. Links with professional and scientific institutions and access to various databases ensures use of appropriate information resources.

III.5 How research service might contribute better to the improvement of law-making capacities of the Parliament and its ability to provide the necessary checks and balances on the activities of government?

The overall goal of Parliamentary Institute is to support the further development of the Assembly towards a well-functioning, autonomous legislature by improving its law-making capacities and thereby contributing to strengthening the rule of law and democracy in Republic of Macedonia. Although, there is no objective system of evaluation to measure the influence on the legislative and scrutiny process by the Parliamentary Institute, undoubtedly these challenges are to be taken into account:

- **Further specialization of working tasks** - the trend is for increasing subject specialisation as the work of the Assembly becomes more specialised and challenging. Therefore it is needed researchers to develop expertise in a specific fields and to be able to answer more specific and technical requests.
- **Strengthening capacity of the staff** - improving independent research capacities in order to maximise the accuracy and usefulness of information they produce.
- **Enhancing the client-focus approach** - parliamentary services are dedicated to parliament, its needs and tempo. Parliamentarians have a requirement for information that is presented to them in a format which fits with the busy tempo of parliamentary life and with the nature of the role of the parliamentarian. That is, it should be simplified without being distorted and prepared by people who understand MPs' needs.
- **Establishing direct point of contact with researchers** - it is desirable that the person likely to respond to the enquiry talks to the person making the enquiry. This is because a subject specialist will be able to explain what is available and is more likely to know what questions to ask in order to establish the enquirers needs. Moreover, it would be an added value if MPs are being

able to enter into discussion directly with researchers after receiving of the research material. The option to complement written material with greater 'in person' briefing of MPs is a practice in European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) and in some EU Member-State Parliaments.

- **Improving cooperation with committees' staff** - regular contact with the committee ensures that all necessary services are provided on issues of importance to the committee, and that continuing relevance and timeliness of work in progress is maintained. Also, maintaining good relations with committees' staff facilitates anticipating issues to prepare committees in advance to deal with matters of importance in a non-crisis environment.
- **Ability to be responsive to the needs of members of parliament in the process of harmonization of legislation with the EU *acquis communautaire*** - as the Republic of Macedonia continues in the EU accession process, Research Department will have the specific role of responding to the needs of members of parliament in the process of harmonization of legislation with the *acquis communautaire*.
- **Establishing practice of doing periodic surveys of users' satisfaction** - such surveys can provide useful information about what works well and what have to be modified and improved.

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IV. TIRANA: THE PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH AND LIBRARY SERVICE

IV.1 Where, when and how does research feed into Parliamentary process currently?

The Parliamentary Research and Library Service in the Albanian Parliament provides to MP's, Parliamentary Committees and their staff the necessary information to exercise their constitutional functions through various publications, databases and qualified staff.

The Library, part of the Research Service and Library in the Albanian Parliament was created in 1923. For many years the Library was a traditional library, but in 1993 being part of the Administration of the first pluralist parliament, the Library expanded its functions and procedures. Later on, in 1999 with a Parliament Decision², research service was attached to the Library.

Currently the Parliamentary Research and Library Service is one of the four sections under the Information and Documentation Service of the Assembly of Albania.

The Parliamentary Research and Library Service has 7 employs and it is administered by a director. The Research service staff is composed of 5 expert researchers (4 lawyers and 1 economist), whereas the Library service consists of 2 specialists.

The role of the Research Service is to support MP's and Parliamentary staff with the necessary information in the legislative process.

Parliamentary Research supports MP's and staff in:

- a. Research (Information)
- b. Comparative Studies
- c. Answers to reference inquiries
- d. Materials describing and comparing current legislation proposals and their status in the legislative process

The service undertakes, on its own initiative legal researches, based on Parliament's work program (agenda) and calendar of parliamentary proceedings. Follows legislative procedure of discussions on draft laws in parliamentary committees and undertakes research within the ECPRD (European Centre for Documentation and Parliamentary Research). Although, this service, periodically inserts legal information in the Official Bulletin database and manages and collects the Official Bulletins.

² Decision of the Assembly of Albania, Request Prot. No. 1805/1 Date 05.10.1999

The chart for Parliamentary Research Service and Library is given below:



IV.2 Which are the services and products provided?

Parliamentary Research Service, part of the Information and Documentation Service, plays a supporting role towards Parliamentary Commissions work, it only assist the commissions in obtaining information for their deliberations.

The main products of the Research Service are the research and development of data requested by the commissions or acting on its own initiative. The materials are organized, evaluated and summarized responsibly, ensuring the appliance of work principles and values such as professionalism, impartiality, transparency and credibility of information etc.

The main sources that our Parliamentary Research Service uses when responding to a research request from the commissions, are the as following:

- The European Commission
- The Inter- Parliamentary Union
- OSCE
- World Bank
- Official websites of national parliaments

Compering regional countries or EU parliamentary practices and legislative policies has become the main task of the Research Service. Since 1999 Albania has been a

member of the ECPRD, this has facilitates the communication between parliaments, by fulfilling its duties (offering information whenever needed) and benefiting from the centers services.

Lately, the Assembly of Albania has joined IPEX, a platform for the mutual exchange between the national Parliaments and the European Parliament concerning issues related to the European Union, especially in the light of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Moreover, when developing proactive materials, the main internal research sources are:

1. Pro Law (a database of the legal acts published in Official Gazettes)
2. Various publications in the possession of the Library of the Parliament of Albania
3. Opinions and statements published by the printed media

Altogether, services and products that the research service provides are:

1. Proactive research paper
2. Research paper on request
3. Comparative analysis
4. Replies to foreign parliaments (ECPRD)
5. Background information towards bills
6. Preparation of specific publications
7. Assisting Parliamentary Committees

For achieving a positive work environment, collaboration with the assisting staff of the commissions is substantial.

IV.3 What factors (processes, mechanisms and cultures) shape the use of research in Parliamentary Processes?

Our daily work is oriented by the fact that, in order to perform properly their parliamentary duties, MPs need accurate, up-to-date, timely and well-researched information. Parliamentary research services can provide this information needed to ensure the proper functioning of a legislature. Research service is important for law making process because through research, MPs get access to independent sources of information, in order to understand what the alternatives are for a complete picture on issues during the decision making process.

Considering the fact that in most cases laws come from the Executive, it is necessary more information in form of background materials, comparative analysis about different issues of these laws that deputies have to approve. Such materials are prepared from research service.

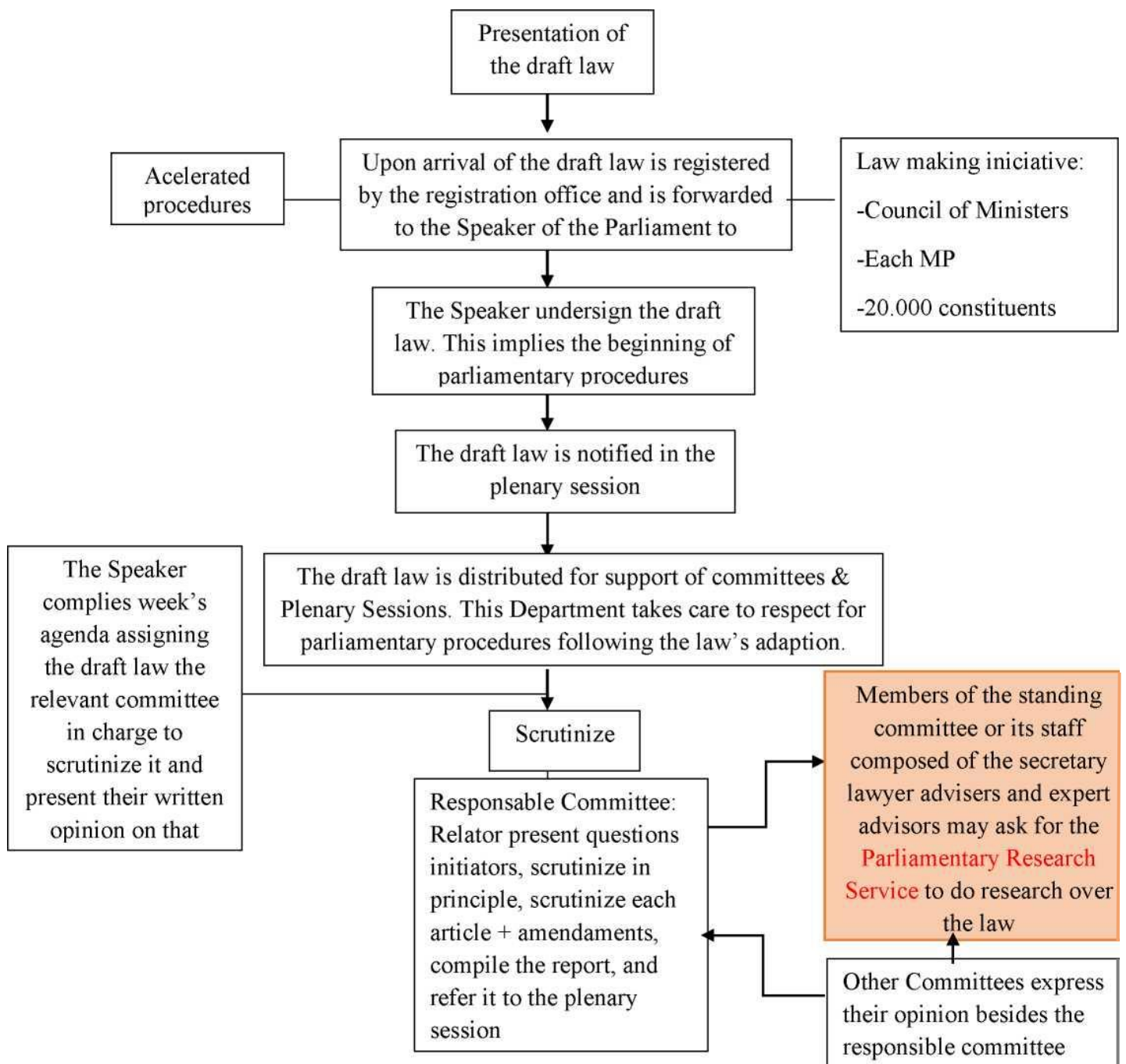
Member of Parliament, while draftin the laws, don't have time to review and internalize all kind of information about draft bills due to their legislative demands on their daily work. In that case, the research staff must also prepare the information in a meaningful

form for MPs.

The wide range of policy issues with which parliament deals, makes it impossible for any single MP to be an expert in all areas; therefore, it is needed that the research information is repackaged and presented in a meaningful form for use by Members of Parliament.

Research is defined as an activity, a process and a tool and the research service is seen as a manager of information.

The position of Parliamentary Research Service in the parliamentary process:



IV.4 Which are values and operating principles of the research service?

Developing the values and operating principles with an appropriate enforcement mechanism for parliamentary staff has become necessary. It provides a clear framework of action in which our staff can carry out their duties.

Values:

1. Generally speaking the law specifies these key principles to which conduct should adhere:
2. Legality
3. Professionalism
4. Political neutrality
5. Tolerance
6. Acting exclusively in the MP's interest
7. Objectivity
8. Confidentiality
9. Competence
10. An obligation to challenge and refuse compliance with any unlawful decisions or assignments
11. Conflict of interest avoidance
12. Impartiality
13. Use of reputable information
14. Respect of copyright and licensing rights

Operation principles:

To be relevant, we must provide quality services more efficiently. Concerning this, we have set our operational services. These Principles define what good administration entails in practice and outline the main requirements to be followed.

- Service standards
- Deadlines
- Formats of products
- Language requirements

To comply with all above, information that we provide has to be:

- a) Clear: legible for all members of the parliament
- b) Simple: as simple as possible, but not forgetting that integrity is a complex topic
- c) Concrete: uses specifics and examples, avoiding generalizations
- d) Structured: is logically centered around a number of core values
- e) Consistent: uses concepts in a consistent way
- f) Linked: includes cross references to other documents and guidelines
- g) Relevant: moves beyond the obvious to issues where guidance is needed

IV.5 How research service might contribute better to the improvement of law-making capacities of the Parliament and its ability to provide the necessary checks and balances on the activities of government?

The role of research service is to improve the law making process and its outcomes.

To improve the analytical process as much as possible based on the facts, on the work of members of the Parliament of Albania to carry out their legislative functions and oversight, the Parliament of Albania over the past two years has paid special attention to strengthening parliamentary research capacity through a special structure that is the Parliamentary Research Service and Library.

Our vision for the key role in generating parliamentary research, design and delivery of quality products that help parliamentary democracy is clear. Target and everyday challenges of parliamentary research related to processing qualitative information to legislators, with the conviction that good information enables precise address the problem, the consideration of alternatives to the solution and the design of appropriate policies and strategies.

Information with accurate facts and evidence to policy makers but also to all other stakeholders is not an act but a process, however, the analysis of all the evidences shows that better be the collaboration between specialists, universities, enterprises and policymakers bring to politics more sustainable development. In other words a strong collaboration with among all these actors could have facilitated the timely undertaking of structural reforms which, according to all our international partners have hindered us in alignment with the standards of countries in which we want to join.

According to Parliament, the main challenge for policy making based on evidence remains the creation of networks and communication channels for cooperation with universities and various NGOs. Important are projects at national level, or the establishment of networks at the regional level to unify the databases, which enable to increase quality research products.

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