



# Citizens' Participatory Competence Report

Policy Knowledge

## Sustainable Governance Indicators 2018

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Indicator

## Parliamentary Resources

Question

Do members of parliament have adequate personnel and structural resources to monitor government activity effectively?

41 OECD and EU countries are sorted according to their performance on a scale from 10 (best) to 1 (lowest). This scale is tied to four qualitative evaluation levels.

- 10-9 = The members of parliament as a group can draw on a set of resources suited for monitoring all government activity effectively.
- 8-6 = The members of parliament as a group can draw on a set of resources suited for monitoring a government's major activities.
- 5-3 = The members of parliament as a group can draw on a set of resources suited for selectively monitoring some government activities.
- 2-1 = The resources provided to the members of parliament are not suited for any effective monitoring of the government.

### United States

Score 10

The staff resources of the U.S. Congress substantially surpass those of any other national legislature. First, there are three large congressional agencies that perform research and analysis: the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Congressional Research Service and Government Accountability Office. The CBO, a nonpartisan body, is the most credible source of budget analysis in the government. Secondly, each congressional committee has a sizable staff, divided between the majority and the minority parties. In addition, each member of Congress has personal staff, ranging from about 14 personnel, including at least one or two legislative specialists, for a member of the House, to more than 50, with several legislative specialists, for a senator from a large state.

The magnitude of Congress's resources reflects three features: First, Congress is constitutionally independent of the executive, and thus seeks to avoid depending on it entirely for information and analysis. Second, Congress's own structure has traditionally been decentralized, with much of the legislative work done in committee. And third, individual members are politically independent of the parties, and use staff both for participating in policymaking and for providing electorally beneficial services to constituents.

Importantly, Congress has cut staff personnel significantly in recent years. This reflects an increasing reliance on ideologically oriented think tanks for policy advice and centralization of control in the party leadership. The role of individual members and committees in policymaking has been diminished. Nevertheless, Congress's staff levels remain unmatched in the world.

## Australia

Score 9 Members of the parliament have considerable resources at their disposal for monitoring government activity and obtaining relevant information to advance policymaking. The parliamentary library is well-resourced with many skilled researchers and is able to respond to requests rapidly, putting together reports on policy issues at the request of members. In addition, each senator or member may hire employees in four full-time electorate officer positions. In addition, members who have a second electorate office at Commonwealth expense may hire employees in an additional full-time electorate officer position. However, individual members of parliament do not receive allowances to fund independent research.

## Belgium

Score 9 Belgium is a parliamentary democracy. During the political crisis of 2010 – 2011, when the government was unable to be formed, the parliament took over policymaking from government without much problem. Thanks to Belgium's strong party system, information flows well between the government and parliament. As party heads are central figures in any political agreement, they can coordinate action at each level. Individual members of parliament as well as party parliamentary groups are also well-supported by state-funded expert staff and by parliamentary assistants – their overall level of resources is thus high, even if there is often a high level of party discipline in the federal parliament.

In addition, parliament can summon any person, even ministers, to request information. It can initiate special investigations through ad hoc committees, and the Audit Office (Cour des Comptes/Rekenhof), which monitors all Belgian institutions, is a collateral institution of the federal parliament.

## Czech Republic

Score 9 In the Czech Republic, members of parliament can draw on a set of resources for monitoring government activity. Members of parliament have a budget for assistants and expertise; parliamentary committees have an office staff of two to three persons and a secretary; and there is a parliamentary library and a parliamentary institute. The Parliamentary Institute acts as a scientific, information and training center for members of both chambers of parliament. The institute also holds a European Affairs Department, which handles a document database for information coming from EU institutions and other matters related to the European Union.

## Finland

Score 9

Parliamentarians' resources for obtaining information were greatly improved in the 1990s through the creation of a parliamentary assistant system. Currently, some 165 assistants work in a parliament of 200 sitting legislators. However, critics have recently argued that this system has become too comprehensive and expensive. The assistants perform a variety of tasks, some of which relate closely to the procurement of information and general expertise. Members of parliament are also assisted by the Parliamentary Office, whose task it is to establish the necessary conditions for the parliament to carry out its duties. Employing a staff of about 440, the office is also responsible for providing personal assistants. Furthermore, MP's are assisted by the Information and Communication Department, which includes the Library of Parliament, Research Service, and Parliament Information Office. The Library of Parliament has about 40 employees and maintains three service entities: collection services, reference and archival services, and information services. A Committee Secretariat provides secretarial services for the parliamentary committees and handles the preparation of matters brought before the committees.

Additionally, the Research Service supplies information, documents, publications, and other materials that are required by MPs and other actors involved in parliamentary work. As legislators each serve on an average of two parliamentary committees, they also benefit from the information and knowledge provided by the various experts regularly consulted in committee hearings.

Citation:

<http://lib.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/library/organization/people.htx>

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoeduskunnasta/Organisaatio/eduskunta-tyonantajana/Sivut/default.aspx>

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tietoeduskunnasta/kirjasto/tietoakirjastosta/tekijat/Sivut/default.aspx>

## Germany

Score 9

The German Bundestag has adequate personnel and structural resources to effectively monitor government activity. Members of parliament can conduct their own research or obtain information from independent experts. The parliamentary library and the parliamentary research unit respectively have staffs of 175 and 450 individuals. Every member of parliament receives a monetary allowance (about €16,000 per month) allowing him or her to maintain two offices and employ, on average, two experts. The German Bundestag has a staff of around 2,600, while roughly the same number work at the constituency level. Parliamentary groups also have resources to commission independent research studies. Compared to the United States, German MPs' structural and personnel resources are modest.

## Lithuania

**Score 9** Members of parliament as a group have adequate personnel and structural resources to monitor government activities in an effective way. They have resources including personal staff; personnel assigned to parliamentary committees, commissions and other structures; and access to the Parliamentary Research Unit. Expenses incurred by calling experts for testimony or consultation can be reimbursed. Despite these resources, political parties are frequently unable to engage in professional parliamentary oversight, in part due to the parliament's heavy focus on lawmaking. For instance, during its 2012 to 2016 term, the parliament passed more than 2,500 legislative acts. During the spring 2017 session, the parliament adopted 421 legal acts (i.e., about seven legal acts per every sitting), a record for a parliamentary session.

Parties that form a part of governing coalitions are often unwilling to engage in self-monitoring, while opposition parties are frequently incapable of constructive external oversight. Although the parliament does not commission independent research, it can produce internal conclusions or reports, or invite experts to various parliamentary meetings. In addition, the parliament utilizes the results of audit reports produced by the National Audit Office. It is also often the case that members of parliament employ their party colleagues as advisers or assistants on the basis of trust rather than because these individuals have a particular expertise.

## Slovenia

**Score 9** Slovenian members of parliament command sufficient resources to perform their jobs effectively and to monitor government activity. Each member of parliament has a personal budget for education and literature acquisition as well as access to research and data services provided by the Research and Documentation Section. Additional resources are available to parliamentary party groups for organizational and administrative support, and for hiring expert staff. Parliamentary groups must have a minimum of three members of parliament. During the period under review, only two members of parliament did not belong to a parliamentary group.

## Sweden

**Score 9** MPs can collectively monitor all aspects of government activities. They can find some support for these and other activities from the parliament's (riksdagen) administrative support (riksdagens utredningstjänst, RUT). RUT conducts inquiries requested by groups of MPs. Individual MPs in Sweden receive rather little administrative support; instead, support is given to the political party organizations within parliament.

## Denmark

Score 8

Parliamentary committees have staff, as do political parties. The parliament also has its own library and recently opened a (small) unit offering consultation on economic issues. In 2015, the total parliamentary staff was 430, which is not huge. More than a quarter of staff are secretaries, a little less than a quarter are academic staff, followed by security personnel and IT staff. In general, the members of parliament depend a lot on the government for information and expertise. To gather information, they ask written and oral questions of ministers, and use hearings, independent sources as well as contacts within interest organizations and think tanks. There is, however, no tradition in Denmark for major independent investigations initiated by the parliament. This can weaken its power in the political game vis-à-vis the government. Party discipline is also a strong factor in Danish politics, which can weaken individual members' possibilities.

Citation:

Anders Henriksen, "Folketinget er for svagt i forhold til regeringen," *Politiken*. 24 August 2010. <http://politiken.dk/debat/kroniken/article1042660.ece> (accessed 26 April 2013).

Året der gik i Folketinget: Beretning om Folketingsåret 2014-2015. [http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/~media/PDF/om\\_folketinget/Aarsberetning/Aarsberetning\\_2014\\_15/Året%20der%20gik%20i%20Folketinget%202014-15.pdf.ashx](http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/~media/PDF/om_folketinget/Aarsberetning/Aarsberetning_2014_15/Året%20der%20gik%20i%20Folketinget%202014-15.pdf.ashx) (Accessed 17 October 2016).

Året der gik i Folketinget: Beretning om Folketingsåret 2015-2016. [http://www.ft.dk/~media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/aarsberetning/aaret-der-gik-i-folketinget-2015\\_16.ashx](http://www.ft.dk/~media/sites/ft/pdf/publikationer/aarsberetning/aaret-der-gik-i-folketinget-2015_16.ashx) (Accessed 19 October 2017).

Folketingets administration, [http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/Folketingets\\_administration.aspx](http://www.ft.dk/Folketinget/Folketingets_administration.aspx) (Accessed 1 December 2016).

Jørgen Grønnegård Christensen and Jørgen Elklit (eds.), *Det demokratiske System*. 4. udg. Chapter 4. Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2016.

## Estonia

Score 8

Compared to many countries, the Estonian national parliament (Riigikogu) has a rather modest support structure. All administrative staff are employed by the Chancellery of the national parliament and can be divided into three categories. The first category includes analysts working in the research department who provide expert advice and produce information sheets and study reports. Because of budget and personnel limitations (12 advisers in total), studies are typically very small. In addition to in-house experts, the national parliament can also commission studies from universities or private companies on a public-procurement basis. In 2016 and 2017, two studies of this kind were performed, fewer than in previous periods. The second category of support resources is the administrative staff employed by the permanent committees. Each committee typically has three to five advisers. The third group is made up of the individual parliamentary groups' political advisers. In total,

there are 31 people working for the six parliamentary party groups. Legislators can use a reading room in the parliamentary building and the National Library, which also serves as a parliamentary library, is located nearby. Members of parliament also possess monthly allowances that they can use to order expert analyses, studies or informative overviews.

## Israel

### Score 8

Two major Knesset departments, the Knesset research center and the Knesset's legal advisory department, serve as structural resources for acquiring information. The role of the research center is to equip Knesset members, committees and departments with information and research to meet the requirements of their parliamentary work, including reports on government activities. The research center is a massive document producer, providing over 300 documents in 2016, 44% of which were specifically requested by members. The legal advisory department also provides research services to Knesset members. In 2016, this department researched numerous policy issues at the request of different Knesset members, such as housing rights for military veterans, parliamentary dress code, adoption and more. The Knesset's archive and library are also used to monitor the government's major activities. Since 2015, each member of parliament has been entitled to employ three assistants, who often engage in independent research on behalf of their employer. Legislators' oversight capabilities have also been aided by recent government reforms making information more accessible, and by information provided by outside experts and lobbyists. In addition, Knesset members may demand that members of the government provide information directly, either within the framework of its committee system or in the plenum, by means of debates, agenda motions or parliamentary questions.

However, the Israeli executive still tends to operate in a centralist and nontransparent manner, especially regarding budgetary and finance issues. The Arrangements Law is a prime example of this problem, as it is widely agreed that this legislative package is too complex to allow Knesset members to develop an understanding of its ramifications in the time and under the conditions provided for the vote.

#### Citation:

Ben-David, Lior, "A comparative survey on the status, function and employment conditions of parliamentary assistants," Knesset research institute 4.11.2004 (Hebrew)

"Correction: Debate on 'Hok Ha-Hesderim 2013,'" Open Knesset website (Hebrew)

"Is Bagatz mocking the petition against the treasury?," Globes website 18.6.2014: <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000947260> (Hebrew).

"Information and research in the Knesset," Knesset website (Hebrew)

"In the Knesset corridors," IDI website (September 2010) (Hebrew)

Knesset Legal advisory department (list of legal research) <http://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Info/Pages/LegalDeptSurveys.aspx>

Knesset Research Center Summary of 2016 <https://www.knesset.gov.il/mmm/data/pdf/m03933.pdf> (Hebrew)

Shapira, Asaf, "A decade to the Knesset's research and information center," IDI website (September 2010) (Hebrew)

"The MK's will get a third Parliamentary Assistant. How much will that cost us?" The Marker 28.10.2015:

<http://www.themarker.com/news/1.2761401> (Hebrew)

Zerahia, Zvi, "The treasury is deliberately holding out information from PMs so we can't supervise it," *The Marker* 7.1.2014: <http://www.themarker.com/news/1.2210843> (Hebrew)

## Italy

Score 8

Members of parliament can draw on significant resources of highly qualified personnel to monitor the activities of the government. The permanent staff of both chambers is quite large and is selected through highly competitive mechanisms. Most staff members possess highly qualified legal expertise. The parliamentary staff regularly produces studies on issues and reforms under discussion. A special office of the parliament (the Ufficio Parlamentare di Bilancio, Upb), created in 2015 following the Fiscal Compact Treaty and successive decisions of the European Council, is now responsible for providing parliamentarians with a detailed evaluation of the government's fiscal proposals. The two chambers have quite extensive libraries. Members of parliament also have at their disposal resources for hiring personal parliamentary assistants. The selection of these assistants is much less merit-based and their quality highly variable. Whether in general members of parliament are really interested in using systematically the available resources for monitoring the government is another matter. Probably only a minority fully utilizes these resources.

Citation:

<http://www.upbilancio.it/>

<http://www.upbilancio.it/rapporto-sulla-programmazione-di-bilancio-2016-2/>

## Luxembourg

Score 8

Luxembourg's members of parliament (MPs) must balance a heavy workload with dual mandates and other professional activities, including municipal councils and/or professional employment. According to the regulations of the unicameral Chamber of Deputies, members can employ a personal assistant and recuperate some costs within the limits of eligible expenses. In practice, the parliamentary groups instead employ a pool of assistants who work for all the MPs of their group, rather than each MP having his or her own assistant. MPs can consult with external experts as part of the functioning of parliamentary commissions. In addition, they have access to a central state computer system to review databases, surveys, reports, agendas and other important information.

Citation:

Règlement de la Chambre des Députés du 1.06.2015.

Reimen, Frank, and Jeannot Krecké. *Die Abgeordneten-kammer: Theorie und Praxis parlamentarischer Kontrolle*. Passerelle, 1999.



## Norway

**Score 8** Members of parliament do not have personal staff, but can draw on support from general staff allocated to each party and paid for by parliament. The number of general staff members is related to party size. Legislators, all whom serve on committees, are also supported by committee staff; most of the legislative work is in fact done in committee. The parliamentary library is well regarded by representatives for its ability to provide support in research and documentation. Support resources are not lavish, but neither do they represent an impediment the effective functioning of parliament or its individual members. The parliament has a limited capacity to independently collect and analyze information, but routinely asks the government to answer questions and to provide additional information. The parliament has increasingly exercised its right to hold hearings.

## Austria

**Score 7** The two-chambered Austrian parliament, in which the National Council (Nationalrat) or lower house holds more power than the Federal Council (Bundesrat), is divided along two main cleavages. First, the strength of political party groupings within the parliament reflect the results of direct national elections (in the National Council) as well as indirect provincial elections (in the Federal Council). Second, the formation of coalitions creates a government and a parliamentary opposition.

All party groups that have at least five members in the National Council can use infrastructure (office space, personnel) paid by public funds and provided by parliament. All party groups are represented on all committees, in proportion to their strength. In plenary sessions, speaking time is divided by special agreements among the parties, typically according to the strength of the various party groups.

Individual members' ability to use resources independently of their respective parties has improved in recent years. Members of parliament can now hire a small number of persons for a personal staff that is funded by parliament and not by the party. This improves members' independence. However, this independence is still limited by the strong culture of party discipline, which is not defined by explicit rules but rather by the party leadership's power to nominate committee members and electoral candidates.

A significant step was taken in 2014 to improve the National Council's capacity. The right to install an investigating committee, which has been the prerogative of the ruling majority, has now become a minority right. Considering the rather strict party discipline in Austria's parliament, this must be considered a significant improvement of parliamentary democracy. Also, recently a new subgroup in the parliament was founded which is checking laws for economic costs and benefits.

At the moment, the working conditions of members of the Austrian parliament are better than ever before. The new situation following the elections of 2017 will probably intensify conflicts between government and opposition in parliament. The structural prerequisites for parliamentary confrontations exist.

## Canada

### Score 7

In principle, parliamentary committees have the right to receive government documents in the course of their deliberations, but these documents often arrive incomplete and redacted because of confidentiality considerations, or too late to enable the committee to make effective use of them. Members of the House of Commons and the Senate have access to the research services of the staff of the Library of Parliament, and these staffers are responsible for drafting parliamentary committee reports. Parliamentary committees or individual members of parliament can also request audits from the Auditor General of Canada, although the ultimate decision about what to audit rests with the Auditor General. The Office of the Auditor General is an officer of Parliament that is independent of the government; its mandate is to provide parliament with objective, fact-based information and expert advice on government programs and activities, with the ultimate goal of holding the federal government to account for its handling of public funds. Another important source of information for parliamentarians is the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO).

It is unclear how effective this monitoring is in practice, however. In 2013, the PBO took the previous government to court over its refusal to fully comply with almost half of all information requests and access to information requests. Although the court upheld the PBO's right to demand information, a 2014 report from the office stated that it did not have enough data to analyze 40% of government programs.

The Liberal government has indicated its intention to provide more influence, resources and autonomy to parliamentary committees, in contrast to the previous government. A House of Commons committee put forward a number of legislative suggestions that would give more monitoring resources to members of parliament. However, the 2017 budget places new restrictions on the PBO, including restrictions on research requested by members of parliament relating to parliamentary proposals. Limiting the independence of the PBO could limit the quality and quantity of evidence-based policymaking.

#### Citation:

Gillezeau, Rob. "The PBO will suffer under the Trudeau government's new rules," April 13, 2017. Retrieved October 6, 2017 from <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/the-pbo-will-suffer-under-the-trudeau-governments-new-rules/>

## France

### Score 7

French legislators have fewer resources at their disposal than, for instance, their American colleagues, but they are reasonably equipped should they wish to make use of all facilities offered. In addition to two assistants, whom parliamentarians can freely choose, they receive a fixed amount of funds for any expenditure. There is a good library at their disposal, and a large and competent staff available to help individuals and committees. These committees can also request the support of the Court of Accounts or sectoral bureaucracies, which are obliged to provide all information requested. There are still problems, centered on the long tradition of parliamentarians holding several political mandates. Up to 2017, three-quarters of parliamentary members were also elected local officials, and many of them dedicate more time to local affairs than to parliamentary activities. A new piece of legislation forbids parliamentarians to hold executive positions in local or regional councils, forcing them to choose between local and national mandates. This is a true revolution applicable from June 2018. Since absenteeism was one of the major problems of the French parliament both in the plenary sessions and within the specialized committees, one might hope that the control and evaluation functions of parliament will improve in the future.

## Greece

### Score 7

Members of the Greek parliament are granted full access to the well-resourced library of the parliament. They are also entitled to hire two scientific advisers who are paid out of the parliament's budget. However, many members of parliament hire family members or friends who, in effect, do administrative and secretarial rather than research work. This practice was continued in the period under review. Nevertheless, each party represented in parliament has its own scientific support group that is funded by the state budget.

Nowadays, updated academic advice is available also through two other institutions. The first is the Office of the Budget, a policy-oriented committee of university professors with economic expertise who work independently of the government. They have published policy reports on the prospects of the Greek economy which diverge from official government predictions. There is also the more academically-oriented foundation of the parliament, focusing on historical issues and constitutional matters. In the period under review, both institutions were vehicles for the expression of a pluralism of opinions.

Parliamentary committees are also quite active in organizing hearings and in discussing a variety of issues. However, the parliament lacks a research unit (like for example the Congress Research Service or the Research Service of the House of Commons Library) that could provide members of parliament with expert opinion.

## Japan

Score 7

Parliamentarians in Japan have substantial resources at their disposal to independently assess policy proposals. Every member of parliament can employ one policy secretary and two public secretaries, who are paid through an annual fund totaling JPY 20 million (about €147,000). However, in many cases these secretaries are primarily used for the purposes of representation at home and in Tokyo. Both houses of parliament have access to a 560-staff-member Research Bureau tasked with supporting committee work and helping in drafting bills. A separate Legislative Bureau for both houses, with around 160 staff members, assists in drafting members' bills and amendments. The National Diet Library is the country's premier library, with parliamentary support among its primary objectives. It has a Research and Legislative Reference Bureau with over 190 staff members whose tasks include research and reference services based on requests by policymakers and on topics of more general interest such as decentralization. For such research projects, the library research staff collaborates with Japanese and foreign scholars.

Notably, the substantial available resources are not used in an optimal way for the purposes of policymaking and monitoring. The main reason for this is that the Japanese Diet tends toward being an arena parliament, with little legislative work taking place at the committee level. Bills are traditionally prepared inside the parties with support from the national bureaucracy. Ruling parties can rely on bureaucrats to provide input and information, while opposition parties can at least obtain policy-relevant information from the national bureaucracy.

Citation:

Jun Makita, A Policy Analysis of the Japanese Diet from the Perspective of 'Legislative Supporting Agencies,' in Yukio Adachi, Sukehiro Hosono and Iio Jun (eds), *Policy Analysis in Japan*, Bristol: Policy Press 2015, pp. 123-138  
Junko Hirose, Enhancing our Role as the "Brains of the Legislature": Comprehensive and Interdisciplinary Research at the National Diet Library, Japan, paper for the IFLA Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section Preconference 2014, [http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/services-for-parliaments/preconference/2014/hirose\\_japan\\_paper.pdf](http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/services-for-parliaments/preconference/2014/hirose_japan_paper.pdf)

## Netherlands

Score 7

A comprehensive study on the information exchange between the States General and government in the Netherlands over the past 25 years concludes: "In a mature democracy the primacy of information provision to parliament ought to be in the hands of parliament itself; but in the Netherlands in 2010 de jure and de facto this is hardly the case. ... De facto the information arena in which the cabinet and the parliament operate is largely defined and controlled by the cabinet." This state of affairs reflects the necessity of forming government coalitions supported by the majority of the States General. As an institution, the States General is not necessarily a unified actor.

Moreover, the States General's institutional resources are modest. Dutch members of parliament in large parliamentary factions have one staffer each, while MPs of smaller factions share just a few staffers. MPs of coalition parties are usually better informed than opposition MPs. MPs do have the right to summon and interrogate ministers, although the quality of the question-and-answer game is typified as: "Posing the right questions is an art; getting correct answers is grace." Oversight and control in the Dutch States General is the prerogative of the departmentally organized permanent parliamentary committees, usually composed of MPs with close affinity to the policy issues of the department involved. The small Parliamentary Bureau for Research and Public Expenditure does not produce independent research, but provides assistance to the parliament.

Policy and program evaluations are conducted by the departments themselves, or by the General Audit Chamber (which has more information-gathering powers than the States General). Another more standardized mechanism is the annual Accountability Day, when the government reports on its policy achievements over the last year. Direct day-to-day contacts with officials are fuzzy and unsatisfactory due to the nature and interpretation of guidelines, and formal hearings between MPs and departmental officials are extremely rare. MPs can ask officials to testify under oath only in the case of formal parliamentary surveys or investigations, but this is considered an extraordinarily time-consuming instrument and is used only in exceptional cases.

At present, MPs are exploring the possibility of creating a so-called light parliamentary investigation as a less time-consuming format that is somewhere between a hearing and an investigation. Formally, the States General may use the expertise of a governmental advisory body, but this process is closely supervised by the minister under whose departmental responsibility the respective advisory body functions. Only the Rathenau Institute (for scientific and technological issues) works exclusively for the States General.

Citation:

Guido Enthoven (2011), *Hoe vertellen we het de Kamer? Een empirisch onderzoek naar de informatierelatie tussen regering en parlement*, Eburon

<http://www.houseofrepresentatives.nl/administration/organization-chart/parliamentary-bureau-research-and-public-expenditure>

Parlementaire enquêtes (tweede kamer.nl, consulted 10 November 2016)

## Poland

### Score 7

The members of the Sejm, the Polish parliament, have permanent support staff and can draw on the Sejm's library and the expertise of the Sejm's Bureau of Research (BAS). In addition to researching legal issues, the BAS publishes a newsletter, discussion papers and a peer-reviewed quarterly Law Review (*Zeszyty Prawnicze BAS*). However, the quality of expertise provided by the BAS has declined since the parliamentary elections in 2015. Moreover, the PiS majority has made the

monitoring of the government difficult by not publicizing its plans for new legislation, by circumventing the normal procedures by letting individual members of parliament submit draft laws and by passing legislation very quickly.

## Croatia

**Score 6** Members of the Croatian parliament (Sabor) have limited resources. Parliamentary committees are supported by some parliamentary staff. The Sabor has an Information and Documentation Department that keeps track of the Sabor's legislative activity and responds to queries for information from members of parliament and parliamentary staff about bills in progress and transcripts of plenary sessions. There is also a parliamentary library with various collections in the fields of law, politics, history, economics and sociology. However, the support staff for individual members of parliament is relatively small, as the budget of the Sabor allows for a secretary for every parliamentary group and one additional adviser for every 15 group members. Moreover, the Sabor does not have an office for policy analysis, and formal legalistic thinking characterizes is prevalent among Sabor staff.

## New Zealand

**Score 6** While New Zealand members of parliament are not generously equipped with financial or personnel resources to monitor government activity, they do have access to party research units. Other personnel available to individual members of parliament include an executive assistant (in parliament) and electorate staff, with constituency members being more generously funded than those on the party lists. Despite the availability of these resources, opposition parties are placed at a distinct disadvantage relative to the breadth of staff, research and other resources made available to the government and its small support parties. Each of the non-government parties has a research unit, which follows up on MPs' requests, especially in preparation for parliamentary debates.

Citation:

K.-U. Schnapp and P. Harfst, *Parlamentarische Informations- und Kontrollressourcen in 22 westlichen Demokratien*, *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, 36 (2005), pp. 348–70.

## Portugal

**Score 6** The Assembly of the Republic (AR) has a very robust committee structure composed of standing and ad hoc committees, as well as committees to assess implementation of the Plano do Governo and the Orçamento de Estado. Moreover, it can call members of the executive to explain issues and has some degree of autonomy in terms of its budget allocations. However, there remains a substantial lack of expert

support staff. Members of the Assembly do not generally have their own staff, and in most but not all cases, have little ability to rely on expert support. As such, the Assembly's capacity to monitor government activity is mainly contingent on legislators' own expertise. Under the Costa government, which is a Socialist Party government supported by the parties to its political left, parliamentarians have shown a greater amount of interest in government monitoring, and the number of meetings involving these different political parties has increased substantially. However, this energy and interest does not imply that lawmakers in fact have adequate personnel and structural resources for the purposes of monitoring.

Citation:

Sergio Goncalves, "Portugal's political stability is Europe's rare pleasant surprise," Reuters June 22, 2016.

## Romania

Score 6

The Romanian parliament has a Department of Parliamentary Studies and EU Policies, which offers members of parliaments research support and library access and can prepare research reports at the request of members of the standing bureaus of the two chambers, as well as of the leaders of the parliamentary groups and the chairs of the parliamentary committees. However, a common complaint is that the parliament's resources are channeled to activities such as building maintenance rather than to those directly involving the main functions of a national legislature. Independent legislators have access to few material resources; moreover, little expertise is readily available, and lawmakers often rely on assistance from former parliamentarians or political-party staff rather than independent experts. When independent experts are called to provide their opinion on various aspects of government activity, these points of view might not be reflected in the reports and studies produced by the department. The lack of resources also inhibits the proper documentation of expert testimonies and committee proceedings.

## Slovakia

Score 6

Members of the National Council, the Slovak parliament, have some resources enabling them to monitor government activity. Most members of parliament have a support staff of at least two persons, and there is a parliamentary library (with about 65,000 books). In addition, there is the Parliamentary Institute – a research unit providing expertise for parliamentary committees, commissions and individual legislators. However, most members of parliament tend to rely on other sources of information. Whereas members of parliament from the governing party have access to government organizations such as the Institute for Financial Policy, members of parliament from the opposition parties make heavy use of experts among party members or draw on analyses by think tanks.

## South Korea

**Score 6** Members of parliament (MPs) have a staff of nine, including four policy experts, three administrative staffers and two interns. Given the large quantity of topics covered, this staff is scarcely sufficient, but is enough to cover legislators' main areas of focus. The National Assembly monitors the administration through a system of investigation relating to issues of national affairs. Monitoring efforts can be regular or sparked by specific events. The constitution provides the National Assembly with the authority to conduct inspections of government offices. While this investigation process is a powerful tool, some observers have criticized it as ineffective and time-consuming, in part because it is too widely used. The ruling and opposition parties often use inspections as political weapons against one another. For instance, while the Democratic Party attempted used investigations to criticize the Park Geun-hye and Lee Myung-bak administrations, the Liberty Korea Party has criticized the Moon administration for being incompetent in security matters. Some lawmakers also use this process to promote their own political fortunes in the mass media. The effectiveness of parliamentarians' monitoring role largely depends on each lawmaker's individual capabilities. For example, Kim Jong-dae has been viewed as an effective watchdog overseeing the Ministry of Defense, even though he is a lawmaker from a minority party, the Justice Party.

Tight schedules and the record-high number of agencies monitored by the National Assembly have generated skepticism regarding the effectiveness of legislative audits, one of the body's key functions. Observers familiar with parliamentary affairs have voiced concern that these inspections are inevitably superficial, as lawmakers have little time to study dossiers thoroughly or prepare their questions.

## Spain

**Score 6** Every parliamentary group is assigned funds to hire personnel, with the size of budgets dependent on the party's electoral results. Individual legislators lack even a single exclusive assistant, as the small number of staff members is shared across the parliamentary group (typically with an assistant for every two deputies or senators). Economic resources for the commission of policy research, whether performed internally or externally, are also very scarce. There are no real parliamentary research units. The emergence of Podemos and Ciudadanos has livened things up somewhat but not introduced real changes.

The scrutiny of European policymaking (an area that can be easily compared to other EU member states' national parliaments) well illustrates the lack of resources: the Spanish Joint Committee of the Congress and the Senate for European Affairs has at its disposal only two legal clerks, a librarian and three administrative personnel. And despite growing demands for greater parliamentary involvement in EU affairs since



the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (with the introduction of an “early warning system” to control the proportionality of new European legislation), budgetary restrictions have prevented any change with regard to human and financial resources. In short, Spanish deputies and senators can draw on a set of resources suited for selectively monitoring some government activities, but cannot effectively oversee all dimensions of public policy.

Citation:

Kölling, M. and I. Molina. 2015. “The Spanish National Parliament and the European Union: Slow Adaptation to New Responsibilities in Times of Crisis.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union*, eds. C. Heffler et al. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Turkey

Score 6

The administrative organization of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) consists of departments that support the Speaker's Office. The conditions of appointment of the administrators and officers are regulated by law (Law 6253, 1 December 2011). The administrative organization (including the research services department and the library and archives services department) is responsible for providing information as well as bureaucratic and technical support to the plenary, the bureau, committees, party groups and deputies; informing committees about bills and other legislative documents and assisting in the preparation of committee reports; preparing draft bills in accordance with deputy requests; providing information and documents to committees and deputies; coordinating relations and legislative information between the Assembly and the general secretary of the president, the Prime Minister's Office and other public institutions; organizing relations with the media and public; and providing documentation, archive, and publishing services (Article 3, Law 6253). Although the budget of the Assembly is part of the annual state budget, it is debated and voted on as a separate spending unit. The Assembly prepares its own budget without negotiation or consultation with the government; yet, it does follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Finance.

During the review period, the 550 deputies were provided with 482 primary and 465 secondary advisers and 493 clerks. A total of 29 experts and 93 clerks are assigned to the various party groups. The Turkish parliament attempted to improve its human resources, especially for budget and final accounts processes, and provide greater support for parliamentary members' work. Within this scope, the so-called Country Expertise Project covers 44 countries and employ four experts and 47 officers. However, capacity-building remains a major problem. The parliamentary library and research unit cannot effectively meet demands for information. Following the 15 July failed coup, several staff members were dismissed from the Assembly. In November 2017, the parliament advertised 192 job vacancies, mainly in logistical services.

Citation:

TBMM 26. Dönem 1. Yasama Yılı Faaliyet Raporu,

[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/26\\_1\\_yd\\_faaliyet\\_raporu\\_20102016.pdf](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/26_1_yd_faaliyet_raporu_20102016.pdf) (accessed 1 November 2017)

"TBMM personel alımı başvuru sonuçları açıklandı!" 15 November 2017, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/tbmm-personel-alimi-basvuru-sonuclari-aciklandi-40646332> (accessed 1 November 2017)

"İşte karşılaştırmalı TBMM İç Tüzük teklifi," 10 Temmuz 2017, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/iste-karsilastirmali-tbmm-ic-tuzuk-teklifi,413621> (accessed 1 November 2017)

Nakamura, Robert and Omer Genckaya. 2010. "Assessment for the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Support of the Implementation of the Public Financial Management Act." Report to the World Bank.

Turkish Parliament: Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Research Center, Ankara, 2012.

## United Kingdom

Score 6

MPs have relatively few resources at their disposal in terms of personnel capable of monitoring government activity. Parliamentary parties have few additional resources and therefore can provide little support. In addition, if a party is in government, a substantial part of their MPs will be (junior) members of the government and therefore not too keen to monitor themselves.

Parties in opposition are granted some public funds to hire additional researchers to fulfill their duties of controlling the government. But in terms of resources this is still not much compared to those the governing parties can call on through the ministerial bureaucracy.

Citation:

European Parliament / Directorate-General for Research 2000: Comparison of organizational and administrative arrangements in EU national parliaments; [http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-ma/ep/00/budg110\\_en.pdf](http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-ma/ep/00/budg110_en.pdf)

## Chile

Score 5

The National Congress is furnished with a multidisciplinary staff of consultants in order to support deputies and senators in their representative, legislative and control functions as well as in the field of congressional diplomacy. Nevertheless, this support tends to be asymmetric in comparison with ministerial analytical and investigatory capacities. The National Congress' oversight function is based in the Chamber of Deputies. However, this function tends to operate as a reaction to journalistic complaints in combination with political conflicts rather than as a proactive mechanism for monitoring the government's ongoing activity.

## Hungary

Score 5

In principle, members of parliament are provided some funds for professional advice. However, since resources are apportioned according to the share of seats in parliament, the democratic opposition parties receive only a small amount of money. Moreover, these resources have not been sufficient to keep up with the Orbán governments' hectic style of policymaking, with its unprecedentedly high number of

legislative decisions. For the small and ideologically fragmented opposition, it has thus been rather difficult to monitor the government's legislative activity. However, activities on the part of the Fidesz majority in parliament and its committees which preclude effective debate and monitoring, constitute the key obstacle to effective parliamentary work.

## Ireland

### Score 5

The Oireachtas Library and Research Service manages the Irish parliamentary library. The service's primary users are the individual members of the houses of the Oireachtas, committees and staff of the houses.

Whereas ministers recruit advisers and experts, there is no system of internships that allows members to recruit researchers and no tradition of members or groupings commissioning and publishing evaluations of government activity. The main resource available to members for monitoring government activity is the committee system. This allows members to call expert witnesses and explore the implications of proposed legislation. The resources available to these committees appear adequate for their purpose.

These resources are complemented through the mechanism of Parliamentary Questions. Dáil Éireann allocates time during which deputies may ask questions of members of the government relating to their departments or to matters of administration for which they are responsible. Considerable civil service resources are devoted to researching the answers to these questions, of which a total of 50,000 were processed during 2014. This works out at an impressive average of 300 per deputy.

Citation:

A statement of the services available from the Oireachtas Library and Research Services is provided here:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/housesoftheoireachtas/libraryresearch/others/LRSSStatementofServicesapprovedbyCommission2012.pdf>

Michael Gallagher, 'The Oireachtas: President and Parliament,' in John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*, 2010.

## Mexico

### Score 5

Mexico has had an unusual electoral system, in that all members of Congress were until recently prohibited from running for re-election. This system was intended to bring legislators closer to civil society, but it had unanticipated consequences. Mainly, it has weakened the legislative role and increased the power of party bosses. The most senior members largely control Congress, though opposition parties tend to punch above their weight. They tend to control the careers of more junior

congressional members because the effect of Mexico's strong no re-election rule prevents members of Congress from using their constituency as a political base. In turn, members tended to lack resources and legislative scrutiny was often perfunctory. Similarly, members have had little incentive to take a deep interest in lawmaking, because their term as incumbents was so short. Moreover, good legislative performance often went unrewarded in local or national politics.

However, in 2018, local representatives, city council members and mayors will be able to run for re-election. Senators and federal representatives will have to wait until 2024 and 2021, respectively, to run for a consecutive term. An important caveat to this political reform is that candidates who want to run for a second term will have to be nominated by the same party that nominated them for their first term, or run independently if they did so the first time. Some critics claim that this incentivizes elected officials to prioritize party accountability over constituent accountability. Moreover, it further increases the administrative burden to INE. Re-election is a significant regulatory challenge for the electoral authorities, and the guidelines for the 2018 (regulation for Article 134) process are still not fully defined.

## Switzerland

### Score 5

The Swiss parliament is not broadly professionalized. Officially, it is still a militia parliament, meaning that legislators serve alongside their regular jobs. However, this is far from reality. Almost 90% of members use more than a third of their working time for their political roles. Legislators' incomes have also been increased over time. On average, the various components of remuneration total more than CHF 100,000 annually (about €85,000). However, legislators do not have personal staffs, and the parliamentary services division offers only very limited research services, though legislators do have access to the parliamentary library. Thus, in comparative perspective, member of parliament resources are very limited.

## Bulgaria

### Score 4

The Bulgarian parliament has a budget of only a little more than 0.15% of national public spending. About three-quarters of the budget are used for the remuneration of members of parliament and administrative staff. As a result, resources available to members of parliament for expert staff and independent research are very limited. This means that the capacity of the National Assembly to effectively assess and monitor the policies and activities of the executive is also limited. This limitation is not structural, but rather of a political character, since the Bulgarian parliament has full discretion over the central government budget and could secure the resources for enhanced monitoring.

## Malta

### Score 4

Members of parliament have little resources to support their legislative work. Staff members are too few in number and occupied by their primary duties. MPs work part time as legislators and typically maintain some form of private employment once elected. There have been calls for reform from within both government and the opposition to grant parliament more powers to monitor the government. These proposed reforms include a prime minister's question time, the review of political appointments (e.g., ambassadors, chairpersons of public entities and chiefs of police and the military), the appointment of a commissioner for standards in public life, reducing the time needed to introduce a private member's bill, MPs to transition to full time, and for more family friendly hours to be introduced to encourage an increase in female MPs. A new parliamentary committee to scrutinize public appointments is in the process of being established. Members of permanent parliamentary committees enjoy support from newly appointed research officers as well as academics and specialists. Greater participation of MPs in international conferences has helped bridge the resource gap, but more is required. These developments have improved the process for evaluating EU legislation and other social issues. In 2014, the budget for parliament was increased by €300,000 and new officers were employed in the international relations unit. Meanwhile, legislation was passed in 2016 giving parliament financial autonomy over budget decisions (Parliamentary Services Act) and in 2017 €80,000 was allocated for capital expenditure to establish a parliamentary archive, a library and additional committee rooms. Additional resources must be allocated to the parliamentary scrutiny committee dealing with pipeline aquis.

#### Citation:

Camilleri, I. Parliament is out of touch with Brussels. No feedback to Brussels' documents. Times of Malta 14/06/11  
Its too early to talk about what is in store for me Times of Malta 11/10/2015

MPs express different opinions on pay rise for politicians, full-time parliament proposals. Malta Today 6/01/2015  
<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20160111/local/new-law-will-make-parliaments-administration-autonomous-of-the.598431>

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Most PN proposals to improve parliamentary work included in PL manifesto - government Times of Malta 19/08/17

The PN has seven suggestions for a better functioning parliament Times of Malta 18/08/17

Speaker concerned about incomplete security coverage around parliament. Times of Malta 30/11/17

## Cyprus

### Score 3

The House of Representatives took a small step with regard to parliamentary resources by digitalizing archival material. Its moderately sized staff provides primarily administrative and secretarial support. A research, studies and publications division produces publications on specific subjects as part of the House's engagement in social events and activities. There are no public reports of the division or personal assistants to deputies conducting genuine expert research. Similarly, no

information is publicly available or included in the House's annual report on the results of cooperation agreements signed with universities and other research institutions. The parliament does possess a rich library, though it remains underused.

Parliamentary committees obtain information on the government's activities through written questions to or meetings with ministers and other administration officials.

## Iceland

### Score 3

Parliamentarians have access to experts employed by parliament. While the 30-person Committee Department (Nefndasvið) is tasked with assisting the parliament's standing committees, individual members can also turn to this department for assistance. However, the limited capacity of the Committee Department, combined with its primary mandate to assist the parliament's standing committees, restricts its ability to effectively assist more than 50 of the total 63 members of parliament. Ministers also have access to resources in their ministries. The 2007-2009 government enabled members of parliament whose constituencies are located outside of the capital area to hire half-time personal assistants. The aim of this was to improve members of parliament's access to information and expertise. However, this policy was withdrawn after the 2008 economic collapse due to parliamentary budget cuts and is still to be reintroduced.

Citation:

<http://www.althingi.is/um-althingi/skrifstofa-althingis/skipurit-og-hlutverk/nefndasvid/>

## Latvia

### Score 3

Parliament does not have adequate resources to monitor government activity effectively. Some limited expertise is available from parliamentary committee, legal office, personal administrative support and parliamentary library staff. However, this has not allowed for substantive policy analysis or the independent production of information. Until 2017, the Latvian parliament was the only legislature in the Baltic Sea region with no institutional research capacity.

In 2017, the parliament created a new parliamentary research unit. As of May 2017, it is in its start-up phase, with a director and staff of two. The 2018 budget for the unit is expected to include resources for outsourcing expertise. To date the unit has produced one study. Their mandate for further research studies to be done in 2018 was approved by the presidium of the parliament in November 2017. The planned work is to be produced on a medium- to long-term schedule (i.e., issues to be addressed are broad and overarching, not narrow and tied to legislative work in progress). The mandate approved for the research unit does not, at present, enable the research unit to be responsive to in progress legislative work.

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