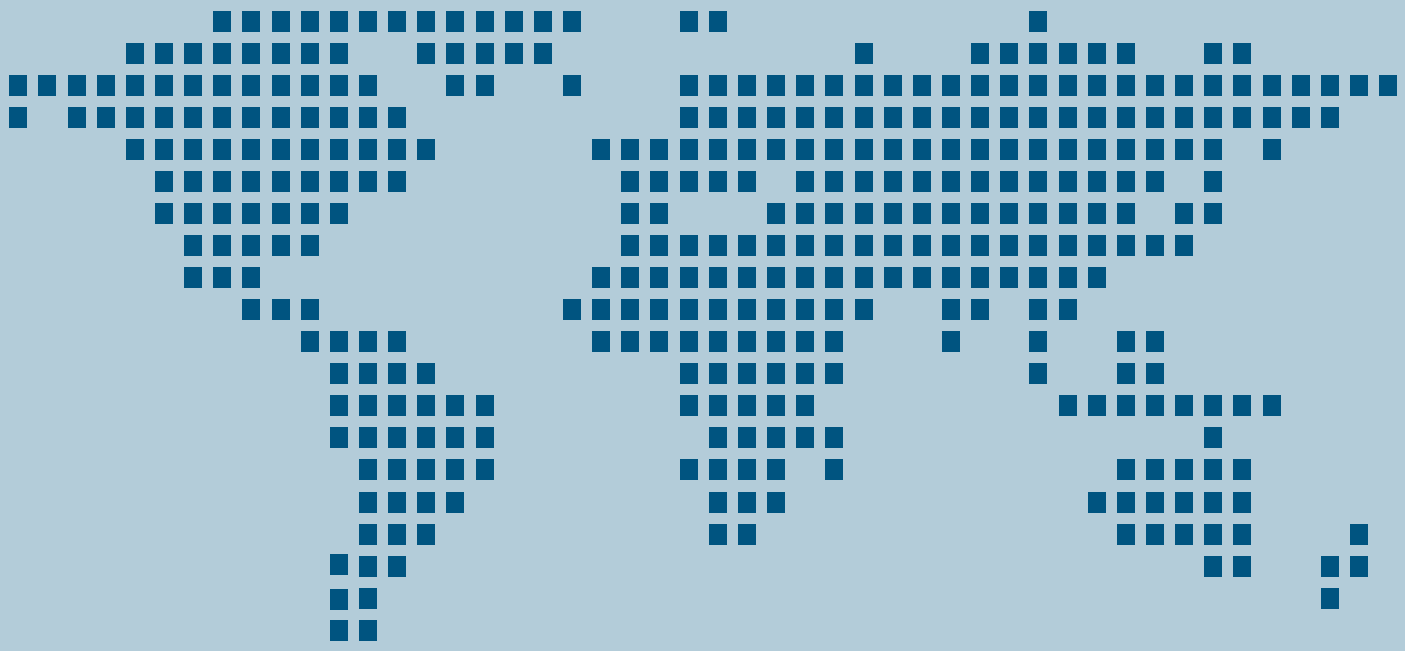
World e-Parliament Report 2008



United Nations

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Global Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Parliament

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Foreword

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become essential tools in supporting the work of legislative bodies throughout the world. As they have grown in sophistication, ICT have acquired the necessary flexibility to assist parliaments in their most important responsibilities: making laws, overseeing the executive and communicating with citizens.

While these developments are opening new avenues of cooperation among legislatures, the newest web technologies have already started to affect the traditional citizen-parliament relationship by enabling participation through the exchange of user generated content.

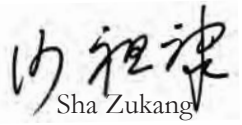
In today's "wired world" parliaments must be able to harness ICT to be more representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective in their many functions. As parliaments employ new technologies, they must also address many of the issues that are inherent in global efforts to achieve an equitable and inclusive information society that supports the democratic process. The ways in which parliaments make decisions on the use of ICT in their own environment will in fact influence the nature of the information society within their country, and their ability to contribute to it.

In preparing the World e-Parliament Report 2008, the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union have joined hands through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament to address some of these issues.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 is the first of its kind and draws on information generously provided by more than one hundred assemblies from around the world. Its purpose is not to rank legislatures by e-parliament levels, but rather to stimulate an international debate on these topics by offering an overview of issues for a broad range of interested readers, at a time when inter-parliamentary cooperation is increasing.

The Report offers to parliaments an authoritative baseline so that they can conduct their own assessment on the use of ICT in their daily work, draw lessons from the different practices presented therein, and see how they can improve their processes. It also provides civil society, business and the academia with a useful instrument to evaluate the complexities of using ICT in such a multifaceted institution as parliament. Moreover, the Report may help the international community to make the right decision when considering supporting legislatures through capacity development initiatives and technical assistance.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 is a tangible contribution of the United Nations, through its Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society, bringing to it a unique and innovative parliamentary dimension from a much needed global perspective.



Sha Zukang
Under-Secretary-General
for Economic and Social Affairs
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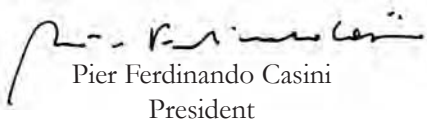

Pier Ferdinando Casini
President
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A background paper commissioned for the preparation of Chapter 5 of the Report was prepared by a team led by Giovanni Sartor and composed of Mariangela Biasiotti, Enrico Francesconi, Monica Palmirani and Fabio Vitali.

The preparation of the Report greatly benefited from the presentations made by members of parliament, Secretaries General, parliamentary officials and experts at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and from the discussions held on that occasion.

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The Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures was designed by Jeffrey Griffith and benefited from the important contributions offered by Amr Aljowaily, Geoffrey Q. M. Doidge, Ross Ferguson, Anders Forsberg, Pam Greenberg, Anders Johnsson, Elisabet Lindquist Michailaki, Mei Lan, Andy Richardson, Enrico Seta, Dirk Toornstra and André van der Meer.

Special thanks are due to the parliamentary staff and officials from around the world who spent considerable time completing the survey and sharing their experiences. The value of this Report is a direct result of their thoughtful responses and insights.

The layout, design and all graphic work were done by Ludovica Cavallari.

Executive summary

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 constitutes the first assessment from a global perspective of how information and communication technologies (ICT) are being employed by parliaments across the spectrum of activities for which they are responsible. It is based on the responses and comments provided by 105 assemblies from around the world to a survey on the use of ICT in parliament. It also draws on experiences exchanged during the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and relevant publicly available information.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 has been produced for the purpose of helping legislatures evaluate the potential benefits of ICT in supporting parliament's basic values of transparency, accessibility, accountability and effectiveness, and, at the same time, its representative, legislative and oversight functions. Its publication is intended to establish a shared knowledge base among the parliaments of the world and, most importantly, promote international dialogue on these matters.

Throughout the Report, e-parliament is regarded as a continually evolving concept that is rooted in the institutional approach to modern technologies in the complex parliamentary environment. In this context, the document outlines the definition of an e-parliament as a legislature that is empowered to be more transparent, accessible and accountable through ICT. It empowers people, in all their diversity, to be more engaged in public life by providing greater access to its parliamentary documents and activities. It is an organization where connected stakeholders use information and communication technologies to support its primary functions of representation, law-making and oversight more effectively. Through the application of modern technology and standards and the adoption of supportive policies, it fosters the development of an equitable and inclusive information society.

This definition deliberately encompasses both the institutional and organizational aspects of parliament and the inevitable broader societal impact of applying information and communication technologies to its context. Parliament is uniquely positioned to use new technologies to demonstrate the values of openness and transparency in the public sphere, and to influence the information society agenda through this approach. Because ICT are such a strategic resource, the leadership of parliament and its members need to be actively engaged in setting goals and establishing priorities.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 addresses nine substantive areas where key issues and related findings from the survey results are analysed: a) Parliament, ICT and the information society; b) Vision, innovation and leadership; c) Implementing the vision: management, planning and resources; d) Infrastructures and services; e) Documenting the legislative process; f) Parliamentary websites; g) Building a knowledge base for parliament; h) Parliaments and citizens: enhancing the dialogue; and i) Cooperation and coordination.

The results of the survey confirm that the income level of each country plays a significant role in determining the extent to which ICT are adopted in parliaments. However, technological legacies in older legislative bodies, organizational flexibilities in younger parliaments, and the rapid evolution of technologies are all factors that can help level the playing field among legislatures. Attaining a high level of performance in the application of ICT is not only dependent on resources; it also requires strong political leadership, active engagement of members, a skilled secretariat, well-trained technical staff, and a sustained commitment to the strategic implementation of information and communication technologies in the legislative setting.

Approximately 10 per cent of the chambers and parliaments that replied to the survey have acquired extensive ICT capabilities across a wide range of key application areas. These include developing systems for managing essential documents, utilizing open document standards, creating rich websites that present information through a variety of formats and channels, and providing access to a wide range of online information linked to pending legislation. At the other end of the spectrum, many parliaments lack a strategic plan, an adequate ICT infrastructure, basic tools for members and staff, systems for managing documents and trained ICT staff. The status of the ICT systems and services of those parliaments that fall between these two groups is uneven. Many of them have implemented ICT applications that serve some of their most important functions. But many of these applications appear to be operating at the lowest level of utility and have not been enhanced to take greater advantage of ICT to improve efficiency and effectiveness, or to offer additional services.

An issue of special importance to parliaments in today's world is improving dialogue with citizens. Some chambers and parliaments are exploring new approaches using the Web, and others have plans to test new ICT-based systems. However, currently very few legislatures have any systematic capabilities for interactive communication with citizens.

The Report concludes that there is a significant gap between what is possible with ICT and what has actually been accomplished by parliaments thus far. On the other hand, survey responses clearly demonstrate that most parliaments have plans to improve their use of technology to support their goals and their work. The high level of participation in the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and the enthusiastic response to the survey indicate that parliaments are acutely aware of the strategic importance of ICT.

Narrowing this gap will require increased cooperation and coordination among parliaments, in partnership with other stakeholders. The World e-Parliament Report 2008 highlights the many opportunities for parliaments to benefit from cooperating at the regional and global levels in the e-parliament domain. Existing and emerging parliamentary networks can sustain some of these efforts, but a worldwide dialogue is becoming increasingly essential. By offering coordinated support and training for those parliaments with fewer resources, increasing the opportunities for sharing expertise and software at a global level and providing greater access to parliamentary information resources, parliaments will be better positioned to fulfil citizens' legitimate expectations, achieve common goals and advance the principles of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Contents

Introduction

In recent years parliaments have begun to exploit advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) to support their many functions and modernize their institutions. Activities carried out through inter-parliamentary and international cooperation have helped facilitate this process and assist parliaments in applying ICT in the legislative environment. However, to date, there has not been any assessment from a global perspective about how these technologies are being employed across the array of activities for which a parliament is responsible.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 represents a first effort to guide interested readers through this unique and evolving environment. The complexities of parliamentary processes, combined with the key role that parliaments play in society and the fast pace of ICT developments, make this a particularly challenging task.

The Report has been written with the principal aim of helping legislatures – leadership, membership and staff alike - evaluate the potential benefits of technology for their work and establish key goals and priorities for exploiting this critical resource. Its publication is intended to advance a shared knowledge base among the parliaments of the world and promote international debate on these matters.

The Report also accomplishes several other objectives.

First, it establishes an authoritative baseline of how parliaments are using, or planning to use ICT to help them fulfill their responsibilities for law-making, oversight, and representation. The Report contains specific conclusions about the current state of technology in parliaments on a global basis and discusses their implications for legislative bodies. These conclusions also allow parliaments to measure their own current use of ICT in daily operations to confirm strengths and to identify areas for possible improvements.

Second, the Report provides an opportunity for sharing lessons learned and good practices from different regions of the world that may be of interest to many parliaments, both in developing and developed nations. The globalization of technology has greatly increased the opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience among such institutions. Collaboration and the exchange of information are essential to identifying good practices and helping ensure that ICT are used to positive effect.

Last, the analyses and findings contained in the document can be extremely useful to parliaments, multilateral organizations, development agencies, donors and experts engaged in inter-parliamentary cooperation and in assisting legislatures to fulfill their constitutional duties.

Data and analyses

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 is based on the results of the Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures[1] conducted by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament between July and November 2007. A questionnaire was sent to 263 chambers of unicameral and bicameral parliaments in 188 countries and to two regional parliaments. 105 assemblies replied. 48 responses (46%) were received from unicameral parliaments, 56 (54%) from bicameral parliaments and one from a regional parliament. Of the 105 replies, eight bicameral parliaments answered the questionnaire as one entity due to their admistrative and organizational structure.

1 See Annexes for the Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures.

Chambers and parliaments that responded to the survey are listed in the next page. They represent national legislative bodies from 89 countries and one regional legislative body from Europe.

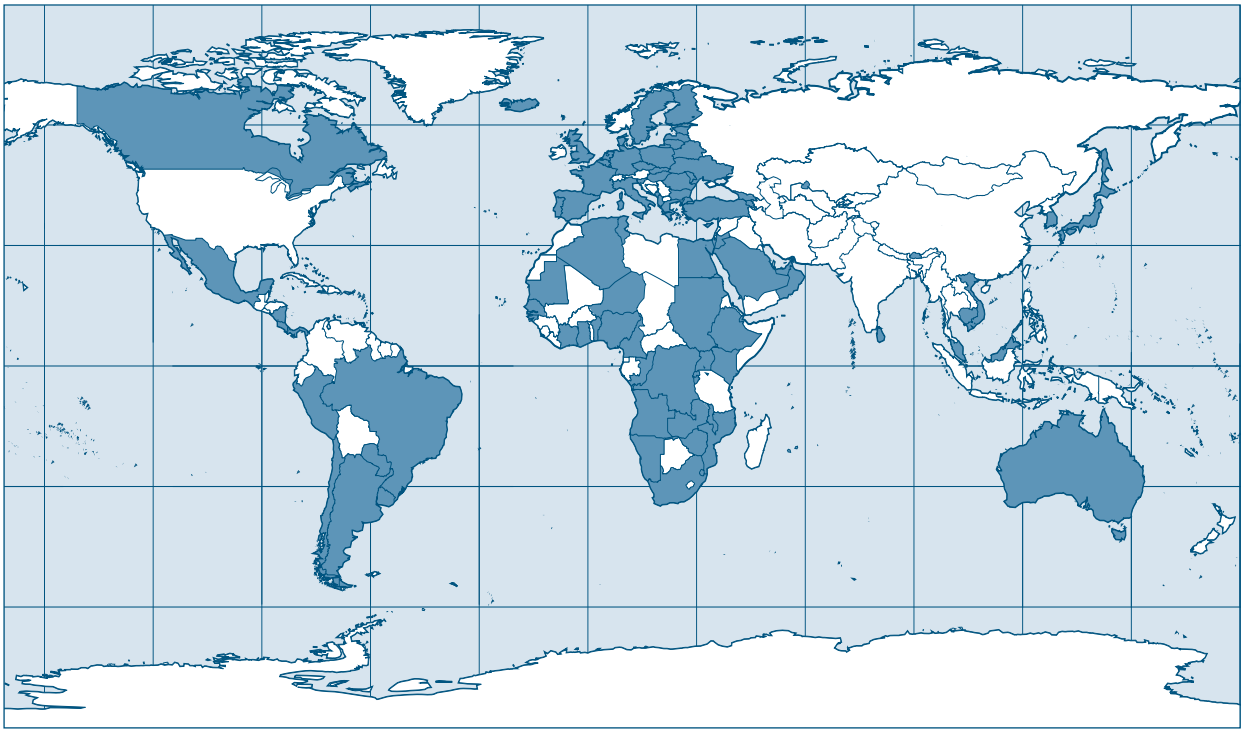
The analysis of this Report is based on the 105 questionnaires as submitted by these chambers and parliaments.

The survey covered the following eight topics:

1. Oversight, management, and planning of ICT (15 questions)
2. Services, infrastructure, applications, and resources (20 questions)
3. Systems for creating bills and amendments (20 questions)
4. Systems for creating documents other than bills and amendments (14 questions)
5. Recording and tracking legislative actions (8 questions)
6. Knowledge management: library and research services (23 questions)
7. Websites for parliament and the public (29 questions)
8. Systems for supporting communication between citizens and parliament (22 questions)

The 151 questions in the questionnaire were designed to be answered as easily and quickly as possible. For ease of use, the questions relied extensively on a "yes/no" answer format. More specific topics were addressed in a checklist form. A few questions were open-ended. Respondents had the option of adding a qualification or comment to any question. At the end of each section, respondents had the opportunity to share any lessons learned or good practices they felt to be of interest to others.

Countries whose parliament or chamber(s) participated in the survey



Parliaments and chambers participating in the survey

National

People's Assembly of Albania
Council of the Nation of Algeria
National People's Assembly of Algeria
General Council of Andorra
National Assembly of Angola
Senate of Argentina
Chamber of Deputies of Argentina
National Assembly of Armenia
Senate of Australia
House of Representatives of Australia
Council of Representatives of Bahrain
House of Representatives of Belarus
Senate of Belgium
National Assembly of Benin
National Assembly of Bhutan
Federal Senate of Brazil
Chamber of Deputies of Brazil
National Assembly of Bulgaria
National Assembly of Burundi
Senate of Cambodia
National Assembly of Cambodia
National Assembly of Cameroon
Senate of Canada
House of Commons of Canada
National Assembly of Cape Verde
Senate of Chile
Chamber of Deputies of Chile
Senate of Congo
Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica
National Assembly of Cote d'Ivoire
House of Representatives of Cyprus
Senate of the Czech Republic
Senate of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
National Assembly of Djibouti
People's Assembly of Egypt
Parliament of Estonia
House of the Federation of Ethiopia
House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia
Parliament of Finland
Senate of France
Federal Diet of Germany
Parliament of Ghana
Hellenic Parliament of Greece
National Assembly of Hungary
Parliament of Iceland
Parliament of Israel
Senate of Italy
Chamber of Deputies of Italy
House of Councilors of Japan
House of Representatives of Japan
National Assembly of Kenya
Parliament of Latvia
National Assembly of Lebanon
Diet of Liechtenstein
Parliament of Lithuania
Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg
National Assembly of Malawi
Parliament of Malaysia
House of Representatives of Malta
Senate of Mauritania
National Assembly of Mauritius
Senate of Mexico
Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique
Parliament of Namibia
Senate of the Netherlands
National Assembly of Nicaragua
National Assembly of Niger
National Assembly of Nigeria
State Council of Oman
Consultative Council of Oman
Legislative Assembly of Panama
Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay
Congress of the Republic of Peru
Senate of Poland
Sejm of Poland
Assembly of the Republic of Portugal
National Assembly of the Republic of Korea
Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Chamber of Deputies of Romania
Parliament of Rwanda
National Assembly of Sao Tome and Principe
Consultative Council of Saudi Arabia
National Assembly of Senegal
Parliament of Singapore
National Council of Slovakia
National Assembly of Slovenia
Parliament of South Africa
Senate of Spain
Congress of Deputies of Spain
Parliament of Sri Lanka
The National Legislature of Sudan
Parliament of Swaziland
Parliament of Sweden
Chamber of Councilors of Tunisia
Chamber of Deputies of Tunisia
Grand National Assembly of Turkey
Parliament of Uganda
Parliament of Ukraine
Parliament of the United Kingdom
Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay
National Assembly of Viet Nam
National Assembly of Zambia
Parliament of Zimbabwe

Regional

European Parliament

In addition to global findings, the analysis of data was also carried out, when it proved informative, according to countries' income level. The classification of economies is based on World Bank practices[2] and included the following: Low Income (23 respondents), Lower Middle Income (22 respondents), Upper Middle Income (26 respondents), and High Income (33 respondents). The European Parliament was not included in the analyses by income level.

Moreover, when a sufficient number of chambers and parliaments responding to the survey allowed for a geographical representation, further analyses were added to enrich the global findings. For the purposes of this Report, meaningful geographical groupings were possible for the European Union area (28 respondents from the European Union, including the European Parliament), sub-Saharan Africa (29 respondents), and Latin America (14 respondents).[3]

Sharing of practices

Analyses of data in the Report are accompanied by comments and examples of practices in different areas of parliamentary activity. These come from different sources. First, from the survey itself and from respondents who provided comments and examples of practices and lessons learned. Secondly, the Report benefited from the presentations and discussions held at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings, when representatives of 70 parliamentary delegations, together with experts, academics and representatives of international organizations gathered in Geneva from 9 to 12 October 2007.[4] And thirdly, the Report was enriched by documents and experencies publicly available.

Structure of the document

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 is organized into the following ten chapters that discuss key issues and present findings drawing on survey results.

- Parliament, ICT and the information society
- Vision, innovation and leadership
- Implementing the vision: management, planning and resources
- Infrastructures and services
- Documenting the legislative process
- Parliamentary websites
- Building a knowledge base for parliament
- Parliaments and citizens: enhancing the dialogue
- Cooperation and coordination
- Conclusions and recommendations

The results from most, but not all survey questions, have been included in the relevant chapters. Full results from some of the open-ended questions were difficult to summarize and could not be included, although highlights have been noted. Selected comments made by respondents on questions and best practices or lessons learned at the end of each section have been included in specific chapters.

The key issue of human resources was treated throughout the Report according to the topics covered in each chapter and given appropriate relevance in the final chapter.

As the goal of the World e-Parliament Report 2008 is not to rank individual legislatures by e-parliament levels, no responses were cited in a way that could identify a specific parliament or chamber, although citations to presentations and material made in a public setting have been attributed to their source.

2 See Annexes for the World Bank categories.
3 See Annexes for the complete lists.
4 United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union and Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, *Report of the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings,* 2008.

Throughout the text of the Report the terms "parliament", "chamber" or "respondent" have been used interchangeably to indicate those institutions that replied to the survey. The sources of each figure representing findings from the survey results have been identified and placed in a visible way to facilitate the reader in crosschecking questions contained in the annexed Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures.

The many findings, practices and examples offered in this document provide evidence of the complexities of e-parliament as it is evolving. The Report gives an indication of the impact of ICT on the many functions of legislative bodies, and offers some practical illustrations for how barriers to effective use of modern technologies may be overcome, particularly through inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The challenge is now to refine this work in the future by building upon the existing data to measure the progress of parliaments around the world and increase the knowledge and experiences exchanged among legislatures. Only by achieving this result will the World e-Parliament Report 2008 have reached its full objective.

Chapter I

Parliament, ICT and the Information Society

Today people live in a fast changing world where the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge exchanged across the globe are having a profound impact on the way the world functions.

Technological and scientific advances have significantly changed the way that information is gathered, stored, processed and disseminated. Evidence of this is seen in all sectors of society, including business, entertainment, education, and public services. Given the pace of technological change, one cannot predict with any certainty what new capabilities may emerge for individuals to communicate and share information and what new societal developments may be possible to achieve.

The Internet has become an important global resource, critical to both developed and developing countries in their quest to expand economic and social opportunities for all. New information and communication technologies have been adopted for different purposes: by individuals and communities to make their voices heard; by businesses and institutions to compete in the global economy; by public governance authorities to innovate and better serve their citizens. In sum, they have been used as a means to make political, business and technical processes more effective and efficient.

While no final conclusions can yet be drawn on the impact of ICT on good governance, it is clear that these technologies have been helping countries respond to international calls for higher standards of accountability, transparency, and participatory governance as critical elements of democracy and State legitimacy. Computer and communication technologies have empowered citizens, organizations representing civil society, and the media to expand their participation in public debate, while also helping increase the dialogue among State institutions and the society at large.

In the words of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the global challenge is to harness the potential of ICT to achieve common development goals and, "to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life". This global vision resulted from long and complex negotiations among world leaders and reflects the dialogue held with many actors who contributed to its formulation through the multi-stakeholder and participatory process that characterized the WSIS proceedings.

Yet, the benefits of the ICT revolution are still unevenly distributed between developed and developing countries. And within societies, including the most advanced, opportunities are often not available - or are not available on an equal basis - to marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as unemployed and underprivileged people, migrants, minorities, older persons, and persons with disabilities. Much remains to be done to narrow the divides of technology, skills and knowledge and to remove all barriers to access.

THE PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTION TO A DEMOCRATIC INFORMATION SOCIETY

While the executive branch has taken steps to address these issues at national, regional and global levels, parliaments need to play a more proactive policymaking role as promoter of the principles of the World Summit on the Information Society through their legislative and oversight responsibilities[1] and to be more active in applying new technologies in their own environment.

As outlined in the IPU's guide to good practice *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century*, "Parliament makes a vital contribution to democracy at many levels simultaneously. Within the institutions of government it is the representative body through which the will of the people finds expression, in which their diversity is manifested, and in which the differences between them are debated and negotiated. At its best, parliament embodies the distinctive democratic attributes of discussion and compromise, as the means through which a public interest is realized that is more than the sum of individual or sectional interests. Moreover, the effectiveness with which parliament carries out its central functions of legislation, budgetary control and oversight of the executive is essential to the quality of democratic life. In carrying out these tasks it works together with the associations of civil society, and has the distinctive responsibility of safeguarding the individual democratic rights of citizens. It can only do all this, finally, if it observes democratic norms, by showing itself open, accessible and accountable to the electorate in its own mode of operation".[2]

In line with the above, the same publication sets out the key characteristics of a democratic parliament as follows:

- *representative*: that is, socially and politically representative of the diversity of the people, and ensuring equal opportunities and protections for all its members;
- *transparent*: that is, being open to the nation through different media, and transparent in the conduct of its business;
- *accessible*: this means involving the public, including the associations and movements of civil society, in the work of parliament;
- *accountable*: this involves members of parliament being accountable to the electorate for their performance in office and integrity of conduct;
- *effective*: this means the effective organization of business in accordance with these democratic values, and the performance of parliament's legislative and oversight functions in a manner that serves the needs of the whole population.

This framework has been translated into Figure 1-1, where "democratic values and requirements are set out in the first two columns. The third column itemizes the possible procedural means and institutions through which these values may be realized. Of course parliaments differ from one another, both in terms of their governmental systems and in terms of their social and economic context. There are federal and unitary states. There are presidential and parliamentary systems. There are single- and dual-chamber parliaments. Above all there are enormous differences between countries, not only in their size, but also in their levels of economic development, and in the resources that are consequently available to parliaments for carrying out their work. The sheer diversity and creativity of practices exemplified in this Guide bears out the conclusion of the United Nations 2005 World Summit that 'there is no single model of democracy'. At the same time, the basic values outlined in the framework provide a clear sense of direction and set of criteria to enable us to recognize what a democratic parliament might look like".[3]

1 See President's Summary, International Conference *The policymaking role of Parliaments in the development of the Information Society*, March 2007 (www.camera.it/ictpconference).
2 *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006.
3 Ibid.

Figure 1-1

Framework: the parliamentary contribution to democracy		
Basic objectives or values. A parliament that is:	**Requirements**	**Possible procedural and institutional means for the realisation of these objectives or values**
Representative	An elected parliament that is socially and politically representative, and committed to equal opportunities for its members so that they can carry out their mandates.	Free and fair electoral system and process; means of ensuring representation of/by all sectors of society with a view to reflecting national and gender diversity, for example by using special procedures to ensure representation of marginalised or excluded groups. Open, democratic and independent party procedures, organisations and systems. Mechanisms to ensure the rights of the political opposition and other political groups, and to allow all members to exercise their mandates freely and without being subjected to undue influence and pressure. Freedom of speech and association; guarantees of parliamentary rights and immunities, including the integrity of the presiding officers and other office holders. Equal opportunities policies and procedures; non-discriminatory hours and conditions of work; language facilities for all members.
Transparent	A parliament that is open to the nation and transparent in the conduct of its business.	Proceedings open to the public; prior information to the public on the business before parliament; documentation available in relevant languages; availability of user-friendly tools, for example using various media such as the World Wide Web; the parliament should have its own public relations officers and facilities. Legislation on freedom of/access to information.
Accessible	Involvement of the public, including civil society and other people's movements, in the work of the parliament.	Various means for constituents to have access to their elected representatives. Effective modes of public participation in pre-legislative scrutiny; right of open consultation for interested parties; public right of petition; systematic grievance procedures. Possibility for lobbying, within the limits of agreed legal provisions that ensure transparency.
Accountable	Members of parliament who are accountable to the electorate for their performance in office and for the integrity of their conduct.	Effective electoral sanction and monitoring processes; reporting procedures to inform constituents; standards and enforceable code of conduct. Adequate salary for members; register of outside interests and income; enforceable limits on and transparency in election fundraising and expenditure.

(Source: Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006)

Figure 1-1 (continued)

Framework: the parliamentary contribution to democracy		
Basic objectives or values. A parliament that is:	**Requirements**	**Possible procedural and institutional means for the realisation of these objectives or values**
Effective		
a) At all levels:	Effective organisation of business in accordance with these democratic norms and values.	Mechanisms and resources to ensure the independence and autonomy of parliament, including parliament's control of its own budget. Availability of non-partisan professional staff separate from the main civil service. Adequate unbiased research and information facilities for members; parliament's own business committee; procedures for effective planning and timetabling of business; systems for monitoring parliamentary performance; opinion surveys among relevant groups on perceptions of performance.
b) At the national level:	Effective performance of legislative and scrutiny functions, and as a national forum for issues of common concern.	Systematic procedures for executive accountability; adequate powers and resources for committees; accountability to parliament of non-governmental public bodies and commissions. Mechanisms to ensure effective parliamentary engagement in the national budget process in all its stages, including the subsequent auditing of accounts. Ability to address issues of major concern to society; to mediate in the event of tension and prevent violent conflict; to shape public institutions that cater for the needs of the entire population. For parliaments that approve senior appointments and/or perform judicial functions: mechanisms to ensure a fair, equitable and non-partisan process.
c) In relation to the international level:	Active involvement of parliament in international affairs	Procedures for parliamentary monitoring of and input into international negotiations as well as overseeing the positions adopted by the government; mechanisms that allow for parliamentary scrutiny of activities of international organisations and input into their deliberations; mechanisms for ensuring national compliance with international norms and the rule of law; inter-parliamentary cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy.
d) In relation to the local level:	Cooperative relationship with state, provincial and local legislatures	Mechanisms for regular consultations between the presiding officers of the national and sub-national parliaments or legislatures on national policy issues, in order to ensure that decisions are informed by local needs.

(Source: Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006)

It is evident that ICT are one of the important tools that parliament can use as it seeks to realize these values and objectives. Three broad, non-exhaustive examples should be considered.

First, transparency, accessibility and accountability, as well as people's participation in the democratic process, largely depend on the quality of information available to members of parliaments, parliamentary administrations, media and the society at large, and on citizens' access to parliamentary proceedings and documents. Both can be improved through ICT applications, which in turn could dramatically strengthen the policymaking process.

Second, the efficiency of the internal business practices, of services to members and staff, and the performance of the organization as a whole may impact on the effectiveness with which parliament carries out its legislative process and scrutiny functions, and members their duties. Both the efficiency and effectiveness can be increased by a sound adoption of new technology coupled, if necessary, with organizational re-engineering.

Third, full participation in the emerging global information network is crucial for an institution that wants to avoid marginalization. Parliaments today are confronted with a new reality of information integration and knowledge exchange, as well as with an increasing demand for inter-parliamentary cooperation. And that requires a change in the way parliaments act internally and in the way they interact with the outside world, including through the use of ICT.

As these examples illustrate, there are clear political implications for parliament in using ICT. Leaders of legislative bodies and members of parliaments around the world need to be actively engaged in envisioning and in guiding the implementation of ICT within their institutions, as well as in demonstrating the political will to move parliamentary ICT developments forward in a positive fashion. The effective use of ICT can result only from a clear vision of how they are to be used to support the work of parliament, a strategic plan that sets realistic goals, and strong management to ensure that objectives are achieved. Without political involvement in these efforts, not only may parliaments waste resources and create systems that fail to serve their many functions and higher goals, but they may also fail to keep pace with the evolution of society around them, thus broadening the gap between citizens and their representatives.

Box 1.1

"As parliamentarians, you realize as much as I do how favourably we value the importance of information and communication technology (ICT), which has impacted on our life over the past few decades and took mankind into leaps of progress with an accelerated pace that knows no boundaries.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we live in a world where illiteracy is increasingly defined as certainly not the lack of ability to read and write but rather the inability to understand, communicate or make use of information and communication technology. This goes across the board from aerospace to households. This goes from the hands of skilled labor to the fingertips of our children and grandchildren.

In fact, if William Shakespeare was sitting among us today, he would have said… to "e" or not to be. And that my friends would be the real question."

Ahmed Fathy Sorour, President of the People's Assembly of Egypt
Opening speech at the inauguration of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament

DEFINING E-PARLIAMENT

Many have attempted to define e-parliament in the past. An early definition from the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) focused on the organizational aspects of parliament, where relevant stakeholders and processes – both internal and external – interact through the use of modern information and communication technologies and standards "in order to achieve transparency, quality, throughput, efficiency and flexibility".[4]

4 ECPRD, ICT Working Group Seminar, 6-7 November 2003, Nicosia, Cyprus.

E-parliament, though, can go beyond this definition to encompass the broader impact on governance and the development of the information society in general. The conventional use of the prefix 'e' to reflect the digital nature of the concept does not fully convey the value that the use of ICT can actually add to parliament's ability to foster development and change.

The key word in e-parliament is still parliament. Therefore e-parliament should be regarded as a complementary concept describing the institutional approach to applying modern technologies. Yet, this concept is continually evolving as new technologies arise, innovative ICT applications in the parliamentary environment emerge, and the evolution of the global information society advances.

For the purposes of this Report, one can therefore define an e-parliament as a legislature that is empowered to be more transparent, accessible and accountable through ICT. It empowers people, in all their diversity, to be more engaged in public life by providing higher quality information and greater access to its parliamentary documents and activities. It is an organization where connected stakeholders use information and communication technologies to support its primary functions of representation, law-making and oversight more effectively. Through the application of modern technology and standards and the adoption of supportive policies, it fosters the development of an equitable and inclusive information society.

THE POLITICS OF E-PARLIAMENT

The emergence of the information society presents both opportunities and challenges for parliament as it seeks to affirm itself as a vital democratic institution of the 21st century. Parliament is the central institution representing the people in a democracy, and it plays a critical role in advancing social and political values that benefit all members of a community in all their diversity. In order to maintain and further the special relationship that parliament enjoys with the citizens it must exercise strong leadership in the deployment of ICT and the development of a legal and regulatory framework that fosters broad access to information, while ensuring freedom of expression, privacy, and security of data. Parliament is therefore uniquely positioned to use new technologies to demonstrate the values of openness and transparency in government and, as a key public governance authority at the centre of the polity, to influence the information society agenda through this approach.

In some cases, ICT choices require political decisions, as well as technical considerations; in other cases, the technical deployment forces the political reactions. For example, applying open document standards to legislative materials, adopting accessibility standards for websites, or experimenting with new forms of interactive communication with citizens, are all areas where e-parliament can have a strong impact on the society due to the inherent political implications of these decisions and the possible emulation effects generated on other governing authorities.

In the first instance, the formal decision[5] recently adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal to make available all documents and information published on the Internet and their Intranet in open format will eliminate constraints created by the use of proprietary software for accessing content. And even if this resolution applies only to parliament itself, it sets an important precedent and an authoritative example for other institutions in the country. This decision likely will affect other institutions in the country and generate similar reactions in parliaments around the world, leveraging its effects on the information society.

Moreover, Laura DeNardis and Eric Tam argue in their contribution to the Internet Governance

5 Resolução da Assembleia da República n.º 53/2007, *Aprova a Iniciativa Software Livre no Parlamento*, Diário da República, 1.ª série — N.º 202 — 19 de Outubro de 2007.

Forum's dynamic coalition on open standards that "… document standards have political implications for democratic governments. Free and open access to many types of government documents is crucial for democratic government, either because ensuring dependable, equal, and free access constitutes a condition of democracy, or because the provision or recordation of certain documents constitute core public duties".[6]

Box 1.2

"It is evident that document formats have significant democratic implications, depending on the application's context. In general, the format of publicly accessible documents serves as an important condition of democracy. As we argued above, it is therefore necessary that standards relevant to accessing government documents and records generally remain free of barriers to the format's widespread public use. Due to the information technology revolution, citizens commonly access electronic documents through the use of personal computers and other consumer electronic devices. Such access cannot be restricted by potentially discriminatory barriers in the form of royalty fees or interoperability barriers. Technical specifications for government documents must allow for full competition in the manufacture of products for accessing and using such documents. Given the importance of documents to the communicative processes that constitute the lifeblood of both formal and informal democratic activities, it is clear that the entire polity has a stake in the implications flowing from the government's technical specifications for its documents.

These concerns may be intensified with regard to documents used in formal democratic processes, or documents that play a central role in the execution or maintenance of functions for which government possesses a particular responsibility."

From Laura DeNardis and Tam Eric, Open Documents and Democracy – a Political Basis for Open Documents Standards, Yale Information Society Project White Paper, 2007

Another case where e-parliament can influence information society developments is the decision to adopt standards for parliamentary website accessibility, even in the absence of an internal mandatory decision, act or legislation. Often a voluntary and enlightened decision to allow persons with disabilities access to key public information can be a source of inspiration for other institutions to adopt similar solutions or for the enactment of new legislation in line with the values expressed in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[7]

Box 1.3

"Article 9 - Accessibility
1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas."

Excerpt from Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006

Finally, as the national entity most responsive to citizens through its representative function, parliaments have an added responsibility to act as political catalysts to direct national policies towards social and economic development goals while protecting the diversity and identity of different constituen-

6 DeNardis Laura, Tam Eric, *Open Documents and Democracy – a Political Basis for Open Documents Standards*, Yale Information Society Project White Paper, 2007.
7 *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006

cies and communities. They can accomplish this goal by engaging their citizens in a true dialogue and by providing a space for developing consensus.

The impact of new technologies on the political sphere is at an early stage, but its potential can already be glimpsed as the ever broader range of opportunities made available by ICT gives citizens the chance to intervene actively in several ways and break the silence between one election and the next. Examination of the possibilities offered by electronic petition systems, by the use of the Internet to exercise the citizens' right of initiative, and the prospects for groups of citizens to submit bills for public debate are already part of a vibrant discussion in some countries. At the same time, candidates for elected office are already employing web-based applications, such as social networks and blogs, to reach a more diverse audience and, in particular, the younger generations of voters.

Parliaments that have begun exploring new forms of communication with citizens have faced difficult challenges in opening online channels for dialogue that are both viable and open to all on equal terms. The effectiveness with which parliaments use ICT for connecting with the electorate and the rest of the world will significantly shape their ability to govern responsibly in the context of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex environment.

The definition of e-parliament must therefore take into proper account the inevitable and broader societal impact of applying information and communication technologies to the parliamentary context. A parliamentary organization capable of connecting stakeholders and processes both internally and with the external world would in fact transform itself into a representative institution at the centre of the knowledge society. The implementation of technical decisions in its environment, even if not supported by formal political acts, may have immediate repercussions beyond its own environment and lead to changes of attitude in other public institutions and in the society at large. Therefore, through a thoughtful deployment of new technologies, parliament can deliberatively reinforce, in new and innovative ways, its "traditional functions" - policymaking, legislation, oversight and representation - through which it promotes the information society.

Moreover, by taking such measures parliaments open themselves up to the world. By doing so, they will give interested parties outside the country, such as their own citizens living or travelling abroad, foreign governments and businesses, and international media, the opportunity to access information and follow the country's public life. On the other hand, they will be able to connect to diverse information resources as part of a global parliamentary knowledge base available to all and to become both contributors and beneficiaries in a system that facilitates inter-parliamentary cooperation.

There is no doubt, therefore, that legislatures, as well as their leadership and membership, can and must do more in this area, acknowledging e-parliament as a concrete means, and an effective linkage, to the information society. And as people sharing the same interests from around the world form powerful communities to advance their own goals, parliaments should find strength in a global partnership to advance the application of ICT in the interest of their citizens and democracy.

Chapter II

Vision, Innovation and Leadership

Box 2.1

"One can no longer deny the transformative effects of the information revolution on our global society and its impact on governance systems. New technologies have helped to empower citizens and media to take part in public life; to increase the dialogue among state institutions and society at large; to assist countries in responding to international calls for standards of accountability, transparency, and participatory governance; and to encourage international exchanges and cooperation in many sectors."

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations
Opening address at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

A VISION FOR ICT IN PARLIAMENT

Information and communication technologies have become essential tools for supporting the many functions of legislative bodies throughout the world. They are a strategic and vital resource at the service of parliament. From the outset, however, parliaments need to establish a clear vision for how technology will help them achieve their ultimate objectives. This vision sets the framework for all subsequent strategic planning, resource programming and activities.

The vision should be based on political decisions made at the highest levels of the institution, receive the support of the members of the legislature, and be endorsed by the key stakeholders in parliament. It should be rooted in a broad consensus on the primary purposes of ICT in parliament, so that the technical infrastructure that is put in place supports the role of the institution in today's global information society. The vision should also be communicated and made public so that all those affected - both inside and outside the parliament - can have access to it and understand the rationale behind it.

Box 2.2

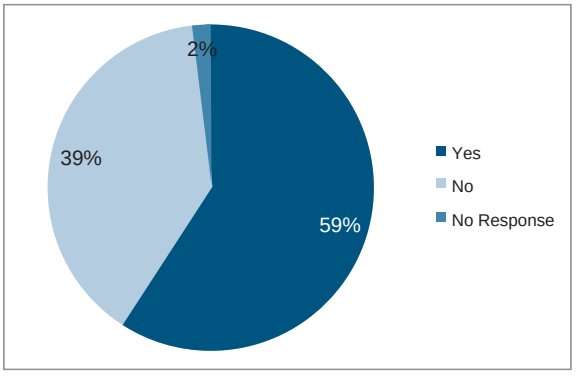
"The vision we had in the Riksdag and in several other parliaments some ten-twenty years ago, to make our official parliamentary documents and information available to the public has, in many senses, been realized. A key goal in these efforts has been to make the work and decisions of parliament transparent to the public, and thus to create opportunities for greater understanding and dialogue on political developments. Freedom of expression and information have been crucial in this process."

Anders Forsberg, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments
Opening address at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

Visions evolve over time as the state of technology changes and new opportunities for supporting the work of parliaments emerge. Some parliaments have stated, and later revised, their vision over many years, to incorporate the new institutional challenges and reflect the evolution of technology; others have recently begun this process; many have not yet started to develop their vision.

59% of the respondents to the global survey in fact reported that their assembly has a vision statement for ICT in parliament; yet, 39% indicated that theirs does not.

Figure 2-1: Vision for ICT



(Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 11)

The following comments provided by some of the chambers and parliaments illustrate the variety of stages that different institutions may have reached in establishing a vision statement:

- A vision statement, representing the first stage of the process of preparing the ICT Strategic Plan, has been adopted for the first time in the last months.
- We have established a Global Vision on technology.
- …we hope to start elaborating soon … a declaration on our vision on ICT…
- Currently there is not a vision statement for ICT for the whole of parliament.
- Under study.

Key issues

As technology has become more sophisticated, more widely available, and more useful to legislatures, vision statements have had to become more comprehensive. At the same time, however, they are most effective when they are clear, concise, and focused on the most important goals of the parliament. The statement should embody the fundamental values of the parliament, for it is here that the institution expresses its views on parliament's role in the information society and on e-parliament. In this context, parliaments need to consider how their vision for ICT deployment addresses such concerns as:

- Achieving *transparency and openness* for both the parliament as an institution and the members as individual representatives of their constituencies
- Providing *universal access* for citizens regardless of their personal resources or abilities
- Improving the mechanisms for *accountability* of parliament and its members to their electorate
- Enabling *dialogue* between the parliament - and its members - and the citizenry
- Ensuring the *security* of authoritative information and the *privacy* of personal information
- Supporting the *work of the parliament* in an efficient and cost-effective manner
- Participating in the *global information society*.

The demand for transparency and openness. There is increasing pressure on parliaments to be transparent, to ensure that their activities are recorded and accessible to civil society and citizens. In addition to the traditional, country specific ways to keep citizens informed about their work, parliaments are using a number of technologies to attain these goals, including public websites, audio and video broadcasting and webcasting, and the use of e-mail alerts and RSS feeds. In today's world, few would challenge the idea that full transparency requires the effective use of new technologies and innovative working methods.

The imperative of universal access. The Internet and the Web have become increasingly important for an informed participation of citizens and the civil society in public life. As parliaments make their actions, decisions, and documents known through modern communication tools, it is imperative that all citizens, regardless of their means or their abilities, be given the possibility of access to this information. This implies that parliaments must be committed to bridging the digital divide within the society and to ensuring that their words and their actions can be understood and analysed by all constituents in their diversity.

Box 2.3

> "Few people would disagree that transparency and accessibility are two of the key objectives of a democratic parliament. ICT offers us an important means of achieving these objectives and we should do everything in our power to seize these opportunities."
>
> Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union
> Opening address at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

The call for accountability. The crisis of legitimacy of parliaments can broadly be ascribed to their perceived inability to effectively safeguard the diversity of the interests of the communities they represent. It is further fueled by an alleged "accountability deficit", whereby the electorate is not always given the means to make an informed judgment on the performance and integrity of office holders. The opportunities offered by ICT to reach out to the public and provide an accounting of parliament and legislators' actions – i.e. voting records, codes of conduct, attendance, performance and integrity – have been increasingly exploited in an attempt to regain the confidence of the electorate.

The challenge of online dialogue. The development of new web-based technologies that support interactive communications has encouraged an increasing numbers of citizens and civil society organizations to express their views on policy issues directly to their parliamentary representatives. These developments have created greater demands on legislators and they have raised people's expectations concerning the acknowledgement of such communications, their consideration in the decision-making process, and their participation in political dialogues. Moreover, in the face of some evidence of a declining involvement of citizens in public affairs, modern technologies have raised hopes of a re-engagement in the democratic process. This will certainly require more than ICT alone. For ICT to contribute to fulfilling this goal at least partially would entail identifying the most effective technological approaches for successfully interacting with the public and enabling parliaments to respond efficiently to new levels of public input.

The critical importance of security and privacy. Privacy and security are essential elements in ensuring the integrity of parliamentary transparency and guaranteeing the rights of citizens to confidential communication. These requirements cannot be overlooked and their importance cannot be underestimated. As parliaments become more visible through the Web, the information and the documents presented must meet the highest standards of accuracy and their authenticity cannot be doubted, even in cases where paper remains the "official version of record". Similarly, citizens must be assured

that communications sent to their representatives, along with information about themselves, remain confidential if they so wish. At the same time, legislatures must determine the appropriate balance required between the demands for security and privacy on the one hand and the need for openness and attribution on the other.

Supporting the work of the parliament. The work of legislative bodies is based on communication and compromise. To accomplish their primary goals, they must give the highest priority to ensuring that a diversity of views can be expressed and considered, and that the laws that result from these deliberations accommodate the values and wishes of as many as possible. While they want to be effective in carrying out their official responsibilities, they are not designed to be "efficient" in the traditional business sense. This does not mean, however, that parliaments should allow inefficiency to hinder the operations that support them. Modern legislatures - as is true for most of today's public and private institutions - need their supporting infrastructure to be as efficient as possible. Only then can their actions and decisions occur in an informed, timely, and responsive environment. Achieving these goals requires accompanying more traditional practices with the intelligent use of ICT.

Participation in the global information society. The societal issues that parliaments must address demand both an understanding of their global implications and the broader environment in which they exist. ICT make it possible to share ideas among parliaments, know what actions have been taken by other legislative bodies, and potentially harmonize approaches to global problems. They also enable parliaments to exchange good practices and collaborate on common technical problems more effectively. As all segments of society increasingly operate via the Internet, parliaments need to determine the best ways to become active participants through the online environment in the global information community.

THE CHALLENGE OF INNOVATION

Globalization and technological innovations have created important opportunities for parliaments. Through sharing and collaboration, these trends have also leveled the playing field, at least in terms of experience and knowledge, by enabling parliaments to learn on a worldwide basis about good practices, effective strategies, innovative approaches, and potential pitfalls. Those in the early stages of introducing informatics to their legislatures may face challenges in obtaining adequate resources of funding and experienced staff to innovate. They will have the advantage, however, of being less constrained by embedded technologies and systems that can hamper the introduction of new approaches, a frequent complaint raised by technologically mature parliaments who have to struggle with old ICT legacies. Similarly, emerging democracies may be able to establish modern organizational systems with less deference to existing procedures and historical operations.

The potential value of ICT must be reflected in the vision in the context of the nature of legislatures and their legislative process. The task is to determine which technologies and which approaches best serve the needs of parliamentary procedures. Many of these procedures will seem inefficient to the technically-oriented observer. But many of them have evolved over time and been both adopted and adapted to support the work of lawmakers who must have sufficient time to gather information, weigh options, fashion compromises, and then frequently move decisively in a relatively short time. ICT must serve what may sometimes appear to be inefficient processes but that are purposefully intended to achieve, when possible, broadly consensual policy choices.

Certainly some legislative procedures could be improved. But effecting institutional change in parliamentary bodies that tend to be bound by tradition can be difficult. Whether the ICT structure is being

established for the first time, or whether existing structures are being modernized, these efforts, to be successful, must be viable within the context and culture of the parliament, must have strong support from the political leadership, and must serve the goals of the institution.

The pace of technological innovation within the broader society can be the cause of tensions for parliaments. Citizens and civil society often adopt new technologies long before their legislatures and then wonder why their representative bodies are not more current with the latest trends. This can result in significant pressure on members by their constituents to be more technically adept. This, in turn, puts social and political pressure on legislative leaders and officers to adopt the latest technologies more quickly.

While these pressures are understandable, the vision for e-parliament must resist the idea of technology for its own sake. Because of the critical nature of their work, and the relatively few resources that can usually be devoted to ICT, parliaments have little room to experiment. Except in those limited areas where the activities of parliament are unique and experimentation may be warranted, they are generally cautious and deploy highly reliable and well tested technologies that are known to meet their most critical needs. A sound vision for ICT in parliament should encourage appropriate innovation, but at the same time emphasize the importance of secure and trustworthy systems.

THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS

A vision can be developed in a variety of ways. It could be drafted by a parliamentary committee of members or a working group composed of members, staff and other actors. It could be proposed by one or more officials of the secretariat. It could be established by a directive of the senior officers of the parliament. Or it might be created by a combination of these methods.

Box 2.4

> "A critical success factor was the engagement of the political leadership with the ICT staff throughout the planning process."
>
> Zingile A. Dingani, Secretary General of the Parliament of South Africa
> Presentation at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

Parliamentary leadership. The parliamentary leadership may have little time for active involvement in establishing the vision for ICT. But regardless of how the vision is formulated, the vision and its development process must be supported and endorsed by the highest leadership of parliament. Because the vision is the starting point and sets the framework for all that follows, it is the element of an e-parliament that most needs the time and attention of the leadership.

Members. Ensuring the involvement of members of parliament in this process is also critical to its success. Without such engagement, the institution risks developing a vision that fails to fully meet the needs of legislators and to support the values and goals of the parliament. However, as can occur with the leaders of parliament, many members feel that they lack the expertise to make informed decisions. This situation may be compared to the one that often confronts legislators who must make decisions about policy issues and bills even though they lack detailed knowledge of the subject matter and the time to acquire it.

Without the ideas and proposals of members, however, the use of ICT will be determined by those with the greatest technical expertise. Despite the best of intentions of technical experts who may, by

default, be called upon on to make such decisions, the results will be less effective than if they were made on the basis of inputs from members of parliament and the parliamentary leadership.

Members know the most important challenges they face and the kinds of solutions that would be most helpful to them. The key is for legislators to have the means, the opportunity and the encouragement to express their needs for ICT support, regardless of the level of their technical knowledge. Others will have the skill to transform this into a vision that can address their most important concerns. But the vision must be based on what the members know to be most important in carrying out their legislative, oversight, and representational responsibilities.

Secretaries General and Directors of ICT. In addition to the critical role played by these senior officials in implementing the e-parliament vision, Secretaries General and Directors of ICT make vital contributions to the vision statement through their wide-system perspective. Their understanding of the work of the parliament and their knowledge of its operations provides them with valuable insights into how ICT can be used to serve the legislative body, its goals, and its members. The engagement of the Secretary General and the Director of ICT in creating the vision will ensure that it is based on an awareness of the current needs of the parliament and of its transformative possibilities.

Officials. The vision must be also supported by key officials of the legislature in charge of different departments. Without their endorsement and support, in fact, that vision will unlikely be realized, particularly if it impacts on the complex mechanism of the organization as a whole. Because of the scope of their responsibilities, the involvement by these officials may occur only a few times a year but that involvement is essential.

Other stakeholders. So far few parliaments have experienced the participation of representatives of citizens' associations, civil society or media organizations in developing the vision. However, those who have done so have certainly enriched the process by introducing in the vision views and elements that could have escaped the attention of those stakeholders primarily involved in the inner mechanisms of parliamentary operations.

SUMMARY

A clear and concise vision statement emerging from the collaborative effort of the leadership of parliament, its members, senior officials and relevant staff is necessary to align the services provided by ICT to the highest goals of the institution. Elements to be considered by these stakeholders in crafting the vision include, among others, transparency, access, dialogue, accountability, security and privacy, business effectiveness and global networking. A successful vision should also take into account the institutional context, and the nature of its processes, within which innovation must take place, while resisting the view of modern technology as an end in itself. Once all of the above is in place, the environment will be created to lead to an effective and creative use of ICT. Against this background, it is therefore a concern that 40% of the chambers and parliaments surveyed acknowledged the lack of a vision for ICT.

Chapter III

Implementing the Vision: Management, Planning and Resources

Effective management and organization, adequate planning, and resources allocated on the basis of established priorities are the keys to the successful implementation of the vision. Management encompasses the entire parliament and can be a special challenge because of the political nature of legislative bodies, their complex organizations, and sometimes subtle decision-making processes. Planning builds on the vision statement and establishes projects, timelines, and resources for achieving the goals and objectives of the parliament. It includes the ongoing process of strategic planning and utilizes procedures such as project management and tools such as enterprise architecture to achieve its ends. Financial and human resources can be estimated from the planning process, although the unique nature of parliaments requires the particular skills of technical staff who can work successfully in the legislative environment.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS

Transforming the vision for an e-parliament into reality involves significant management responsibilities. After the goals and values have been established through the vision statement, the political leadership of parliament must continue to exercise an appropriate degree of oversight. Even if much of this responsibility is delegated, as it happens in many instances, there must be a clear indication from the leaders that they retain a level of involvement sufficient to ensure that the critical goals of the legislature are met.

Box 3.1

> "The experience in South Africa of undertaking a major transformation of technology in the parliament illustrates the critical need for strong political leadership combined with a strong technical ICT team and strong management by parliamentary officers."
>
> Geoffrey Q.M. Doidge, House Chairperson: Committees, National Assembly of South Africa
> Statement at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

Members too must remain engaged and provide feedback as new systems and technology are introduced. They must be willing to assess how well these services are meeting their needs as individual legislators and representatives, the needs of the committees on which they serve, and the needs of the plenary sessions in which they debate. The implementation of technology requires continual adjustments based on the evaluation of users, and members are central to this effort.

The Secretary General, the Director of ICT, and their respective staff are also essential to the effective introduction and management of ICT. Together, these two officers embody a thorough knowledge of how the parliament works, and how ICT can best serve its needs.

Because of the responsibility of the Secretary General over the efficient operations of the whole parliament administration, it is vital for this senior officer to play a major role in the management of ICT. As various departments under the supervision of the Secretary General may have diverging objectives, the Secretary General needs to ensure coherence, cooperation and the resolution of competing goals. The Secretary General also bears special responsibility for communication between the departments responsible for the implementation and use of ICT and the leaders and members of parliament.

Box 3.2

"We Secretaries General have a specific commitment to maintain in our respective parliaments that is to make efforts to open the dialogue between our members and officials who work with ICT. At the Riksdag, ever since we started the computerization process, members have shown a considerable interest in getting involved in the issue of ICT development. This has taken place in various forums of expert and reference groups, where it has been possible to convey the members' views and wishes directly to the relevant officials working with ICT development."

Anders Forsberg, President of the ASGP and Secretary General of the Parliament of Sweden
Opening address at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

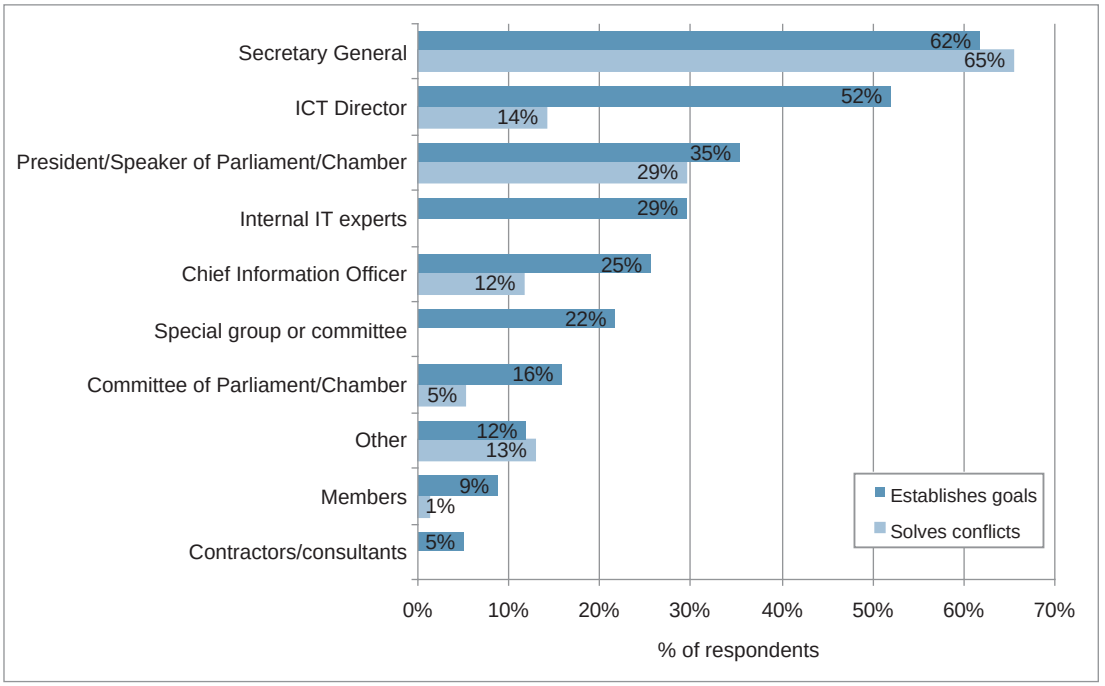
The Director of ICT is essential to ensuring that the technical work that is undertaken is fully responsive to the needs of the parliament, and that it complies with the objectives of the strategic plan. Skilled staff can have an important influence on the way parliamentarians view technology. They must be able to translate their knowledge into proposals that are understandable to members, particularly to those that do not have a technical background, in order to gain their trust and support. ICT staff must focus their attention on what parliament needs most, rather than on the underlying technologies themselves. Two concrete practices exemplify well how legislatures can approach this: the Parliament of South Africa has included ICT staff in its strategic planning forums, while the Parliament of Sweden has started to organize seminars focusing on ICT trends attended by both members and technical staff.

The nature and importance of the relationship between the Secretary General and the Director of ICT is well expressed in the following comments provided by survey respondents.

- The strategy for new technology and communication matters depends on the authority of the Secretary General who ensures the monitoring, coordination and implementation of projects. The Director of ICT, in collaboration with the concerned departments, submits the master plan, feasibility assessments, and project action plans on the basis of the needs of the legislature.
- Goals and objectives are set by the ICT Director based on directives from the Secretary General and the Chief of Informatics.

The roles and responsibilities outlined above are reflected in the findings from the survey. The officials mentioned most often by respondents as being responsible for setting the goals and objectives for ICT in parliaments are in fact the Secretary General and the Director of ICT. As Figure 3-1 illustrates, the Secretary General is also mentioned most often as the person who resolves conflicts among competing goals and objectives.

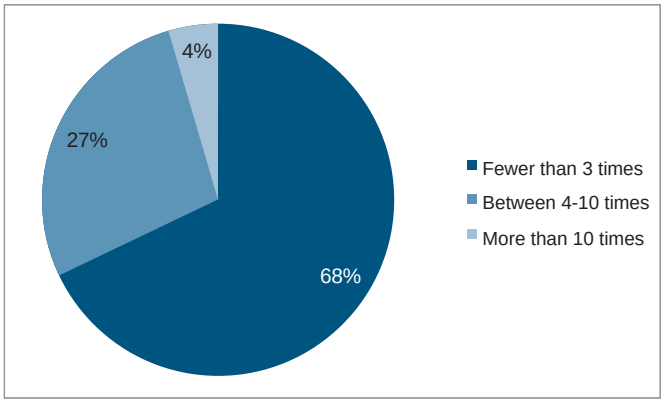
Figure 3-1: Responsibility for establishing goals and objectives and for solving possible conflicts



Results ranked in descending order of percentage of responses on who establishes goals.
(Source: Survey, Section 1, Questions 3 and 4. Multiple responses possible)

In most parliaments, the political leadership is involved in setting goals relatively few times per year. This undoubtedly reflects the many time demands that confront these leaders and the fact that they delegate much of this responsibility to the Secretary General or others. However, the key to their oversight of ICT is not the amount of time they spend but their effectiveness in communicating their goals for technology within the parliament.

Figure 3-2: Yearly involvement of the political leadership in deciding on or reviewing the status of ICT



(Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 5)

(Total may not adapt to 100% because of rounding. This may happen in subsequent figures)

ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIONS IN A PARLIAMENTARY SETTING

A healthy e-parliament is one which fosters the free exchange of information among all stakeholders and in which everyone - from the President or Speaker to the newest member of the technical staff - is engaged in collaborating, sharing ideas, and building the best technical solution for the legislative body.

This requires involving all stakeholders in a way that builds consensus, establishes partnerships, and fosters organizational cooperation. Teams must work together with an understanding of their interdependence and a respect for each other's responsibilities and knowledge. They must all have the interest and commitment to see that the ICT projects most appropriate to the work of the legislature are undertaken and successfully completed. They also need to be aware of the risks of pursuing the latest trends in technology for their own sake while remaining open to new technologies that can enhance, and in some cases even transform, the legislative process for the better.

Box 3.3

"Argentina has undertaken a major Institutional Strengthening Plan to improve parliamentary and administrative management capacity to foster transparency. A key feature of this effort is the combined engagement of the President of the Senate, Members, officers, coordinators, project leaders, and a consolidated ICT staff."

Roberto Reale, Advisor to the President of the Senate and Coordinator of the Institutional Strengthening Programme of the Senate of Argentina
Presentation delivered at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

There are a variety of ways to create such an organization, ranging from a very centralized approach to a very decentralized one. As the value of technology has become increasingly apparent, more groups within the parliament have started to lobby for resources. In the private sector, as ICT have emerged as a mission critical tool, control has often moved upward within the organization. In some legislative bodies control has followed a similar path, while in others it has remained decentralized and shared among members, committees, the secretariat, special groups and the office of the Speaker.

The centralized and decentralized approaches are both viable models if they are well managed, if systems are designed to interoperate efficiently, and if there is coordination when there are separate chambers. In a legislative body there is a significant degree of independence among its constituent components. This can sometimes lead to inefficiencies, but it more closely mirrors the true nature of legislatures. What is essential is that there is good communication and accepted methods for resolving conflicts among competing components within the organization.

As highlighted in Box 3.3, the Senate of Argentina offers one example of how the necessary coordination can be accomplished by establishing clear organizational roles and responsibilities from the top down. Figure 3-3 shows in fact that there are two Secretaries managing the process and a planning coordination unit that operates below them to provide direction to the operational teams.

The Chamber of Deputies of Italy has taken a somewhat different approach. It has created an ICT Strategic Group comprised of major stakeholders to establish priorities and ensure that all systems are interoperable and make use of common open standards. The group is responsible for preparing the Annual Strategic ICT Plan for the Chamber of Deputies and also for providing coordination and

guidance to all cross-departmental plans, projects and initiatives related to ICT.

The group consists of the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretaries General, the Head of the ICT Department, the Head of the Website Office, the Head of the Library's Special Office for organizing the comprehensive digital information system, and officials responsible for crucial projects related to ICT. As reported by Mr. Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy, one result has been that "…most of our data [has] moved into a single framework, interconnecting different activities and changing our working methods in all departments".[1]

Figure 3-3: Organization for ICT in the Senate of Argentina

(Source: Presentation of the Senate of Argentina at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007)

Bicameral legislatures face additional organizational challenges because they usually have separate departments and often separate systems for each chamber. The global survey found that out of 37 responding bicameral legislatures only 27% had a single or shared ICT department while 73% had separate departments.[2]

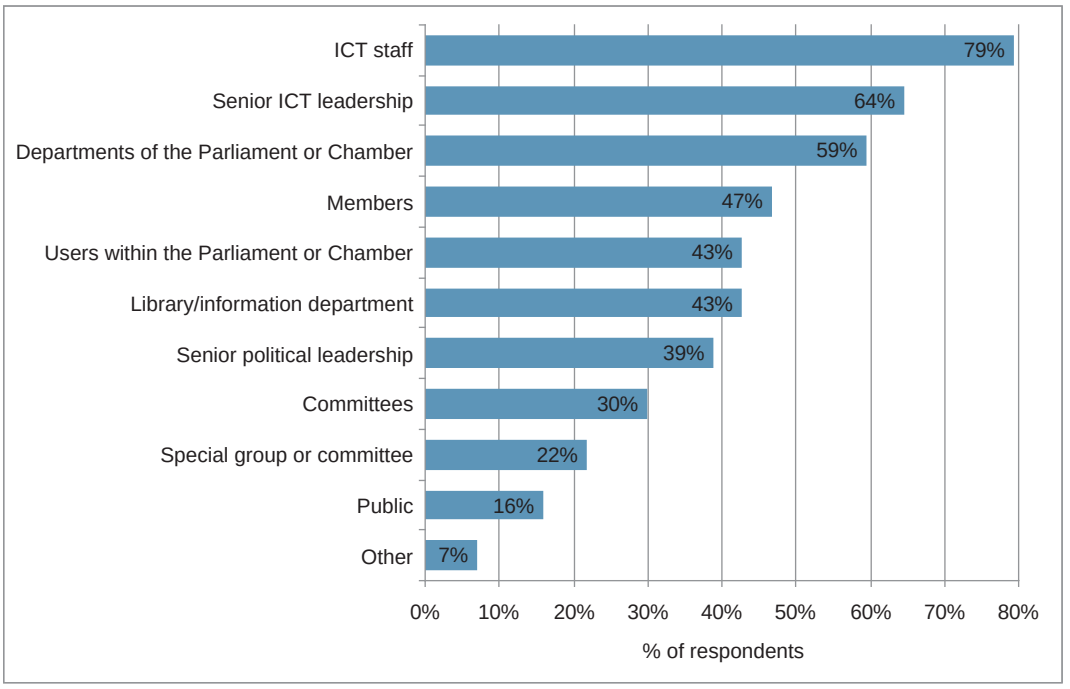
Some bicameral legislatures are attempting to implement a more unified approach. Recently, for example, the Parliament of the United Kingdom has restructured its ICT operation and created an enterprise-wide organization that serves both the House of Lords and the House of Commons called Parliamentary Information and Communication Technologies (PICT). Among its goals, PICT aims at reducing the complexity, redundancy, and the cost of systems while improving the quality of service. The Parliament of Australia has implemented a variation on this approach by establishing a central facility to provide both chambers with infrastructure, support and parliament-wide systems. However, each chamber is responsible for providing desktop and office-based ICT equipment and department specific systems. Both of these approaches continue to be evaluated.

The survey results show that most parliaments seek inputs from a variety of users and stakeholders when they are establishing goals and projects for ICT. Respondents report that proposals come from a number of groups, and, as Figure 3-4 shows, it is interesting to note that some even receive ideas from the public.

The high percentage of respondents who mentioned ICT staff is understandable and reassuring, given their responsibility for the final results. Of particular note is that members are mentioned by almost half of the chambers surveyed, and that the library and information department staff are mentioned by over 40% of them. Staff of the library are often among the most knowledgeable about ICT in parliaments and can be a source for good ideas regarding the best uses of technology.

1 Presentation at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007.
2 Source: Survey, Section 1, Questions 1 and 2.

Figure 3-4: Source of ideas and proposals for ICT goals and projects



(Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 7)

In addition to the specific stakeholders and staff listed in Figure 3-4, almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) indicated that formal or informal working groups from different departments make recommendations.[3]

These findings show the diversity of stakeholders and, by implication, the challenges likely to occur in managing so many potentially competing interests.

The following comments further illustrate the variety of organizational approaches used by parliaments for obtaining inputs and establishing goals and objectives for ICT.

- A Vice-President has oversight for all ICT matters. The ICT Director reports to the Deputy Secretary General who is also Director General of the Presidency, who in turns reports to the Secretary General; a Comité Directeur de l'Informatique assembles representatives of all the Directorates General. An IT plan is drawn up on an annual basis in order to reflect the goals and objectives of the user DGs.
- The President of the Board of Directors directs the administrative services, among which is ICT. These, in turn, are administered by the Secretary General.
- The ICT Director proposes goals and objectives to Board of Management for approval.
- ICT staff come up with proposals to assist the Chief Information Officer. The Secretary General of Parliament provides guidance and supervision.
- The Clerk to the House approves projects/initiatives proposed by standing committees or by a Clerk Assistant to the House who is in charge of IT. Example: Installation of a local area network in the Parliamentary Chamber was suggested in the House Business Committee. Other projects such as a parliamentary website, digital recording and transcription of the debates and standing committee meetings, streaming of the said meetings were put forward by the Officer in charge of IT.

3 Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 8.

- The Chief Information Officer is responsible for identifying needs concerning the ICT of deputies and of administration and is responsible for making suggestions to the Secretary General.

All of these organizational modalities require mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Political compromise – the most common approach in a legislative body – may not be the most efficient or cost effective solution when deciding among ICT priorities, but it is often necessary. Because of the diverse organizational interests within typical legislatures, accommodation of the competing needs of different individuals and groups may be required to achieve consensus and political approval. For this reason, informal decision-making and cooperation are frequently the preferred means for resolving conflicts. This can work well in parliaments so long as it does not cause resources to be disbursed so widely that high priority projects cannot be completed satisfactorily.

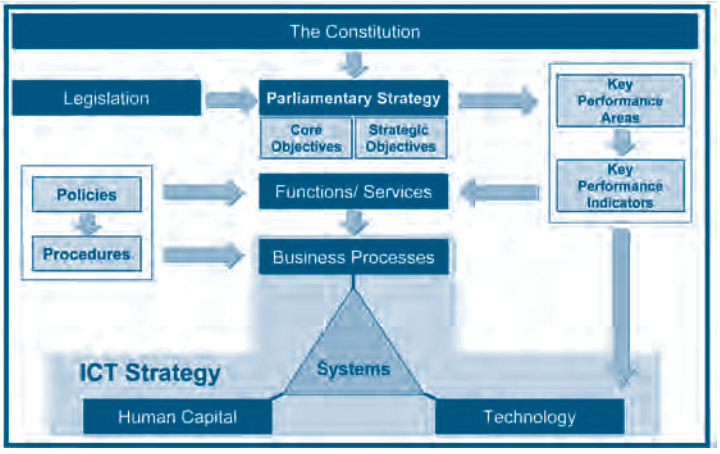
THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

One of the primary tools for managers to move from vision to implementation is the strategic planning process. Once the vision is established and ideas for projects have been gathered, the strategic planning process turns the vision and the approved ideas into specific projects with timelines and resources. Strategic plans for parliaments should be comprehensive and cover all areas of ICT development, which are usually interdependent.

In general, the strategic planning process involves a series of steps beginning with the laying out of specific goals and objectives. This is followed by the development of strategies and action plans for achieving those objectives, the assignment of management responsibility and allocation of resources for their implementation, and the establishment of criteria for the assessment and evaluation of specific projects so that appropriate adjustments can be made as needed. Strategic planning is the key process to identify and decide on the individual steps to be undertaken during the implementation process.

Figure 3-5 refers to the comprehensive nature of strategic planning for ICT in the Parliament of South Africa. It illustrates a high-level approach that views the ICT strategy in the context of the overall strategy of the parliament. The strategy, as the diagram illustrates, is derived from the business processes of the parliament, and encompasses *Technology* (hardware and software), *Systems* and *Human Capital* (people). These in turn are based on the *Functions and Services* of the *Parliamentary Strategy*, which encompass *Core Objectives* and *Strategic Objectives*. The *Parliamentary Strategy* derives from the *Constitution*.

Figure 3-5: ICT strategy formulation rationale



(Source: Presentation of the Parliament of South Africa at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007)

Strategic planning is not a single document or product. It is a holistic process that provides for the review, revision, and updating of plans on a continuing basis as goals, objectives, technologies, projects, and resources change. It is a means for ensuring that ICT initiatives remain focused on the goals of the parliament, and that they occur on an appropriate schedule and with the appropriate resources. It also incorporates a disciplined process for gathering user requirements. This approach helps to ensure that the system will, in fact, meet the needs of the users

and that they will be active participants in the development and testing process.

Strategic planning forces two key issues to the forefront in the management of technology: establishing priorities and evaluating results. Because resources are always constrained in some fashion, one of the most useful purposes of the planning process is to enable the legislature to determine priorities among competing objectives. Equally important, it must continually be able to assess the results of projects and weigh the benefit of resources invested.

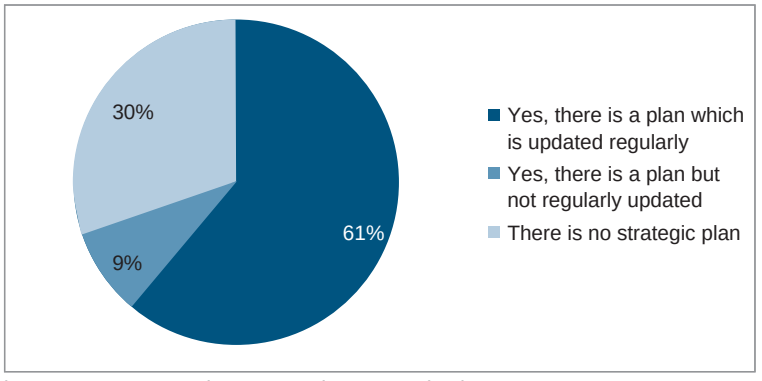
Priorities are sometimes based on the logic and requirements of the technology. For example, the development of an application to support the drafting, amending and distribution of proposed bills among members and the secretariat will require resources for software and programmers to build the system. However, in order for the application to be used, resources will also be required for the acquisition, installation, and support of PCs and a network. In this case, the development of the application and the supporting hardware, software, and communications systems are all required and all will need to be funded and staffed to achieve the objectives of the project.

There can be conflicts between legitimate goals that do not involve resources. For example, the office responsible for recording the legislative actions of the parliament may want those actions to be displayed in the most precise and accurate fashion, even if the official language used to describe them is difficult for an average person to comprehend. This may conflict with the goal of making the actions of the parliament transparent and understandable to citizens through the parliament's website. Both are sound objectives. The conflict between them will surface as a result of the strategic planning process and will need to be resolved.

The most difficult conflicts, however, usually involve projects which contend for the same limited pool of resources. A decision regarding allocations will have to be based on the relative importance of each of the competing priorities. The goal to provide every member with a personal computer, for example, may compete for the resources needed to develop a website for the parliament and a choice, often involving some form of compromise, will need to be made.

Strategic planning brings the issue of resources and demands into sharp focus and provides the parliament with an overall picture that will enable it to understand the scope of the investments it is making and the effort in time and money that will be required. With this knowledge, the parliament can determine the priority of each requirement and the impact of making those choices. Strategic planning, based on an established vision, helps a parliament decide where to allocate its funds and its staff, and the likely impact of those decisions. It does this by requiring a decision not on the technology itself, but on the larger goals and objectives of the parliament. The criteria for an e-parliament, therefore, is not how many PCs or servers or applications a chamber has, but how well it is able to support its most important goals through the effective use of technology. It does not matter whether those goals entail providing members with ICT tools, preparing and distributing proposed bills as soon as they are available, recording plenary debates in digital format, or some other objective. What matters is the focused application of technology to achieve the goals that have the highest priority for each chamber.

Figure 3-6: Strategic planning



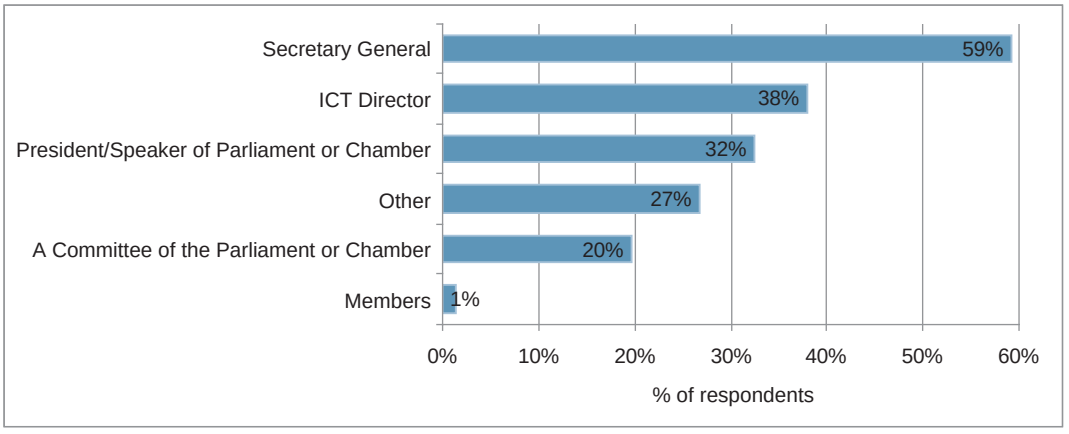
(Source: Survey, Section 1, Questions 12 and 14)

As mentioned before, evaluation of results is also an essential component of the strategic planning process. To successfully manage the transition to e-parliament, a legislature must determine the effectiveness of the ICT projects undertaken to achieve its goals. This requires establishing in advance the measurable outcomes expected from the investment of resources (for example, faster availability of draft bills, savings from printing, access to more information about the budget), and an objective method for quantifying the results. This final step leads back to the beginning of the process where goals and objectives are reviewed and reaffirmed (or modified), resources allocated or reallocated, and responsibilities adjusted as necessary. Without this final assessment phase, the management of ICT is uninformed and decisions are made in the absence of a real understanding of the effect of technology on the work of the parliament.

Findings from the survey show that many parliaments are actively engaged in strategic planning. 70% indicated that they have a strategic plan with goals, objectives, and timetables for ICT. The vast majority also stated that the plan is updated regularly.

When there is a strategic plan, this is approved for 59% of the chambers and parliaments by the Secretary General, for 38% by the ICT Director and for 32% by the President/Speaker. A committee is involved in the approval process for 20% of respondents. Strategic plans often need to be approved at several levels and by several different groups within parliament, and the survey allowed for multiple responses to the question in recognition of this fact. Although the Director of ICT is mentioned second most often, 57% of respondents indicated that the Director reports to the Secretary General, further underscoring the importance of that official in the management of ICT and the strategic planning process.[4]

Figure 3-7: Who approves the strategic plan



(Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 13. Multiple responses possible)

Project management and enterprise architecture

In addition to the strategic planning process, other valuable management tools include formal project management procedures and the development of an enterprise architecture for the governance and management of existing and future technologies. Both of these techniques aid in carrying out approved plans and projects and enable decision makers to track progress, correct problems, and ensure the appropriate allocation or reallocation of resources as needed.

65% of respondents stated that they use project management tools for new initiatives. Of those that do, about two thirds said that projects are managed by the ICT department, 18% by the owner of the project and 14% by "other". About 60% of respondents have developed an enterprise architecture.[5] The percentages of chambers employing project management and enterprise architecture are indicative of

4 Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 6.
5 Source: Survey, Section 1, Questions 9 and 15.

the substantial use of modern management approaches and techniques by ICT departments in parliaments. It will be important to see if this trend continues to increase in the future.

Figure 3-8 shows the linkages between the vision and the strategy and the subsequent stages of business case development, project scope definition, requirements development and the system delivery, roll out and evaluation.

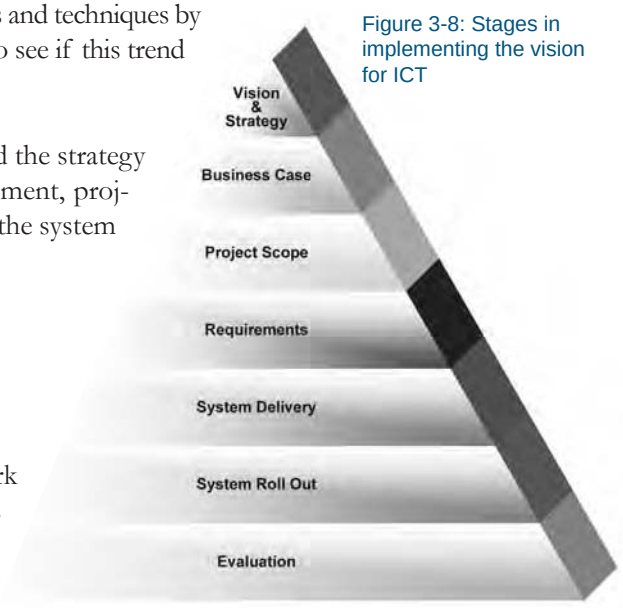


Figure 3-8: Stages in implementing the vision for ICT

(Source: Global Centre for ICT in Parliament)

RESOURCES

ICT are an investment designed to enhance the work of parliaments. Accomplishing this goal requires substantial resources to build the technical infrastructure and to develop the necessary applications. ICT are also a dynamic world that involves continual costs for maintenance, upgrades and replacements. Even with collaborative development efforts and open source software, the direct costs for hardware, software, and systems will always be high for any parliament. There are startup costs and replacement costs that cannot be avoided and for which there are relatively few economies.

In addition to funding for the components of technology, a critical resource that deserves special attention is the need for well-trained, highly qualified in-house ICT staff. While some tasks and services can be outsourced, there is still a need for skilled managers to oversee this work. This need can be difficult to meet because of salaries and opportunities that are available to ICT staff in other sectors of the economy and even in other countries. On the other hand, the nature of the work of parliament requires a special understanding in order to develop responsive ICT services. This understanding can often take years to acquire, and knowledge gained in the private sector does not always translate effectively into the legislative setting.

Box 3.4

"If we think about the major challenges to effective use of ICT in parliament in some countries, one of them in fact has only little to do with ICT. It is the human resources available within parliaments - the people with the skills and knowledge that are needed to plan, build, manage and use ICT systems."

Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General, Inter-Parliamentary Union
Opening address at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

A parliament may create a clear vision, develop an effective strategic plan and have experienced managers in the offices of the Secretary General and the Director of ICT. But without skilled and dedicated staff knowledgeable about parliaments and the legislative process, they will be hard pressed to achieve their vision, accomplish their strategic goals, complete their projects, and enhance the effectiveness of the institution. Visions, plans, managers and organization are all necessary but insufficient without good in-house technical staff.

KNOWLEDGE OF ICT

Even though information technology is widely available in most societies today, many in parliament - both members and officials in the secretariat – have not yet acquired the adequate knowledge about ICT. This can create barriers to the effective use of technology by members and to the establishment of the policies and plans for its development within the legislature. To a certain extent this problem will resolve itself over time as the current members and leaders of legislative bodies, and their senior staff, are succeeded by those who have grown up in the information society. In the meantime, there are a number of ways to address this problem, including greater sharing of practices among parliaments, the use of experts who have worked extensively with legislatures, and reliance on those members and staff who do have the knowledge and experience to advise on the most appropriate uses of technology.

Helping members themselves become effective users of technology presents special challenges. While staff are often motivated or can be required to attain a level of proficiency with ICT, most members do not have the time or the inclination to attend training classes. They often rely on personal or shared staff to use technology on their behalf. But many still need to be able to use ICT themselves in a number of situations. This means that the technology must be easy to understand and use, be reliable, and provide valuable information and services. Meeting these requirements can be made easier through several methods, such as an extensive and disciplined approach to gathering and understanding user needs, the employment of formal usability testing procedures, a responsive help desk, and an ongoing programme to obtain user feedback and continuously improve systems and support.

COMMENTS ON PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES

The section of the survey dealing with management and organization elicited many comments regarding parliamentary practices. It is clear from the contributions received that a number of chambers have thought extensively about how best to manage and organize ICT, solicit ideas and develop plans for projects, and monitor progress. It is also clear that this is a dynamic area in which practices, and consequently lessons learned, continue to evolve. A number of these comments are included below to illustrate some of the approaches that parliaments are finding helpful.

- 1. We have developed formal business planning and programme/project planning techniques which have assisted us in forming a comprehensive three-year programme of work. 2. We have introduced formal management and quality assurance monitoring and performance dashboards in order to understand more objectively if our service levels are improving. 3. We have introduced (but are still in the preliminary stages) business-run ICT planning groups to assist the business side of Parliament to cohesively request and manage their requirements of ICT.
- 1. A steering committee follows up on ICT projects and speeds up implementation. 2. ICT should have highly qualified and certified IT professionals plus the strategy of outsourcing some projects for faster implementation.
- A Committee of Systems was formed which includes not only the chiefs of each area but also professionals whose competencies merit inclusion. This approach has given us good results.
- A)Establish and maintain the management contracts on a clear and formal basis; B) Develop internal competence, both on technical and managerial aspects; C) Adhere to standards, as long as possible, with adaptations as necessary; D) Re-evaluate plans and priorities on a regular basis (annually, for example).

- All departments of Parliament, Committees and especially Committee on ICT can propose what should be done. The department of ICT develops a project or plan including annual plans and sends to Board of Management for approval. Board of Management consists of the Secretary General and Heads of Department. The Parliamentary Commission makes the final decision.
- Periodic meetings are held with all ICT staff to inform them about current and planned activities. Periodic meetings among all ICT managers are held to define, review, and adjust plans. We involve politicians in strategic technical decisions and look for their commitment.
- Specific objectives of ICT steering committee: 1. to create and maintain an enabling environment in order to ensure the best chances for ICT programmes and initiatives development within the Parliament; 2. to monitor and evaluate the implementation of each ICT programme and initiative and their proper execution and coordination; 3. to identify programmes, initiatives or action plans that encounter shortfalls and provide advice as to their reorientation, modification or cancellation; 4. to identify problems associated with the implementation of specific programs, initiatives and corresponding action plans; 5. to collect and analyse relevant plan
  monitoring and evaluation data and information to document the status of the programmes, initiatives and associated action plans; 6. to prepare and submit to the Parliament regular reports to be forwarded to relevant national ICT authority in due course.
- The Centre for Information Technology and Telecommunications develops and evaluates programs relating to services in parliamentary and administrative units. These are submitted to the Secretary General of Administrative Services who analyzes their usefulness and verifies the availability of resources. These are then passed to the Committee on Administration and then to the Board, which is responsible for final approval/disapproval. The Board instructs the Secretary General, who then passes approved projects to the Center for Information Technology for implementation.
- The ICT Director tables any ICT recommendations to the committee comprised of Heads of Department (Committee overseeing Parliamentary Reforms and Modernization). The committee analyses and evaluates the recommendations before making any decision.
- The informatics plan (master plan) is the guide which is followed for the application of ICT in the Senate. In its conception it takes into account the needs of senators, parliamentary groups and the Secretary General, and the ideas of interested users. Direction and coordination are done by the Secretary General.
- There has been major administrative change in the parliament over the last few years and governance arrangements for ICT across the parliament are not finalized. It may take some time to be able to reflect on what lessons have been learned.

SUMMARY

The successful implementation of ICT in parliament depends on several key elements. The first is an engaged group of stakeholders committed to the process. It includes the President or Speaker, members, the Secretary General and the Director of ICT. The officials of the secretariat play an especially important role in ensuring communication and appropriate involvement at all levels, along with sound technical practices and project management. The Secretary General in particular has a central role in informing and advising the leadership and the membership regarding technology, and in overseeing planning and implementation by the technical managers and staff.

Second, the organizational structure should encourage inputs from all key stakeholders and cooperation and collaboration at all levels. There are various ways to achieve these objectives through both formal and informal means. It is essential that these stakeholders have the motivation to work together, recognize their interdependence and be focused on the needs of parliament as well as their particular department or organization.

Third, implementation requires strategic planning, the use of formal project management procedures, and the development of an enterprise architecture. Strategic planning takes the goals and objectives of the vision statement together with the projects and proposals of stakeholders and users, assesses their feasibility and cost, and develops plans, schedules, and resource requirements. The strategic planning process enables a parliament to establish priorities and to allocate resources based on those priorities. It also ensures that tradeoffs and compromises among priorities are made on an informed basis and knowledge of the probable consequences of those decisions.

Finally, ICT are an investment that requires adequate financial and staff resources. Funding is always less than needed to meet demand; sound management and planning processes enable parliaments to assess the full scope of the financial requirements and to allocate appropriately. Staff resources require particular attention because of the special nature of parliamentary bodies and the need for ICT experts who also understand the way parliaments work.

There are a variety of ways for parliaments to meet the need for good management, organization and planning. However, regardless of the methods adopted, the effectiveness of a parliament's approach must ultimately be judged by the results. The following observation serves as a useful summary of this principle for the successful implementation of ICT in parliament.

Box 3.5

"Focusing on the needs and culture of members, involving politicians with ICT experts, and designing parliamentary websites so that they are seen as the knowledge base of parliamentary activity contributes substantially to a successful implementation of ICT in parliament."

Respondent to Survey

Chapter IV

Infrastructures and Services

THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION OF E-PARLIAMENT

Infrastructure is the foundation for all ICT services. Broadly defined, for the purposes of this Report, it refers to the hardware, software, systems and applications necessary to provide technology-based support, and to the internal and external staff with the knowledge and experience needed to build and maintain these various components in a legislative setting.

Like highways, communications systems and power sources that are essential for the operation of a country, the ICT infrastructure in a parliament provides the backbone on which other key activities depend. However, because much of it is hidden from view it can be difficult for large institutions to be aware of what is required to build and maintain these systems. Whether the ICT infrastructure is comprised of only a handful of desktop computers, a few network connections, and one of two servers, or encompasses thousands of personal computers, dozens of servers, and miles of wiring, understanding the importance of and sustaining a reliable infrastructure and the staff needed to support it is fundamental for building an e-parliament. Naturally, the environment within which this infrastructure operates including, among others, a country's economic development level or its ICT penetration rate, can strongly affect options or limit some of the alternative solutions.

A cost and an investment

The financial investment in ICT infrastructure can be significant for several reasons. First, there is the *quantity and complexity of the components*. Infrastructure involves a sophisticated array of hardware and software that, when taken together, can be expensive. Even with the gains in power and efficiency made by the technology industry over the last two decades, the total cost of all the printers, fax machines, cell phones, PDAs, laptops, servers, cables, software, etc. can be considerable. Collaboration and open source software offer opportunities for reducing some costs, but parliaments, like other major institutions, must be prepared to make substantial investments in ICT if they hope to reap the full benefits of the technology.

A second factor is the need for *ongoing maintenance and upgrades*. The dynamic nature of technology means that hardware and software must be constantly upgraded or replaced. The pace of improvements and the emergence of new developments show no signs of slowing. Coupled with the growing demands of legislatures and members for better services this means that the infrastructure must be continually refreshed. Desktop computers, laptops, and servers, for example, often reach the end of their usable functionality after a few years, requiring a plan, and the resources, to replace at least a portion of them on a regular basis. The cost of maintaining and enhancing the infrastructure once it has been built is therefore a major part of the annual budget for ICT.

Improvements in technology can also result in requests for *additional hardware and software* beyond the established base. As new capabilities emerge, members and staff find that some of them are of value to their work. This can lead to a call for new hardware and software, enhancements to the existing infrastructure, and additional staff for installation, maintenance and support. Most parliaments do not have the resources to experiment with leading edge technology, and they must be wary of adopting technology simply to be current with the latest trends. But they must be able to adopt emerging technologies once they are proven to be sustainable and effective for the work of parliaments.

Reliability of the infrastructure is also a critical requirement that adds to its cost. On the one hand, the demand for reliability can save resources if parliaments adopt a policy of waiting until new technologies have become stable and, as often happens, less expensive. On the other hand, the demand for reliability can add to the cost because it leads to the need for duplicate servers and wiring, extensive security components, and 24-hour technical support.

But the most important asset for a legislature is *human resources*, a key element recognized by all organizations that want to use modern technologies to achieve their highest goals. Skilled parliamentary staff - able to bring ideas and proposals to the fore, implement ICT solutions and supervise external contractors when necessary – are a critical ingredient for an e-parliament. Moreover, the sensitivity of the issues treated by the institution and its independence and autonomy make this investment a necessity, requiring continuous attention, training and improvements.

The survey results provide some indication of the investments parliaments are making in ICT infrastructure. In two related questions parliaments were asked to indicate the total budget for ICT infrastructure, including managers, staff, contractors, hardware, software, systems and services, and what percentage of the total budget was allocated for it. As expected, the first question regarding total cost yielded a wide range of responses. Also, comments accompanying the answers made it clear that it was difficult for some to give a reliable figure because funds for ICT are provided to various offices within the parliament and come from various parts of the budget. Another variable in the figures provided is the fact that some respondents included staff costs, while others did not. As a result, it is likely that many respondents underestimated total costs because of the difficulty of including all elements of the budget available for ICT.

Despite these qualifications to the data, some general observations can be made. Over 50% of respondents provided an estimate of the percentage of the total parliamentary or chamber budget allocated for ICT. The median percentage for those who responded was 2.8%.[1] Assuming that this understates the true total percentage, the real costs are likely higher. Further research will be needed to determine a more accurate figure, but these results provide some indications and raise certain questions. To install and maintain an adequate infrastructure for a modern and knowledge-intensive legislative body necessitates a significant budget allocation. As later chapters in this Report will indicate, many chambers are not yet using ICT effectively. One reason may be the relatively low percentage of total budget allocation for technology as reported by many. Greater investments in ICT, and greater inter-parliamentary cooperation, are likely to be needed in order to deploy the full potentiality of an e-parliament.

Relationship to the vision and the strategic plan

Parliaments need to view infrastructure costs as an ongoing investment for internal operations supporting the overall mission of the institution. To be both efficient and effective, infrastructure must be planned in the framework of the goals and objectives of the parliament as expressed in its vision statement and its strategic plan. The needs of parliaments are varied and extensive, and an adequate infrastructure must be both broad and robust. For a modern legislature this means that the infrastructure must support critical functions such as preparing and managing complex documents, recording and publishing the legislative activities that occur in plenary sessions in near real time, and enabling enhanced communications between parliament and citizens.

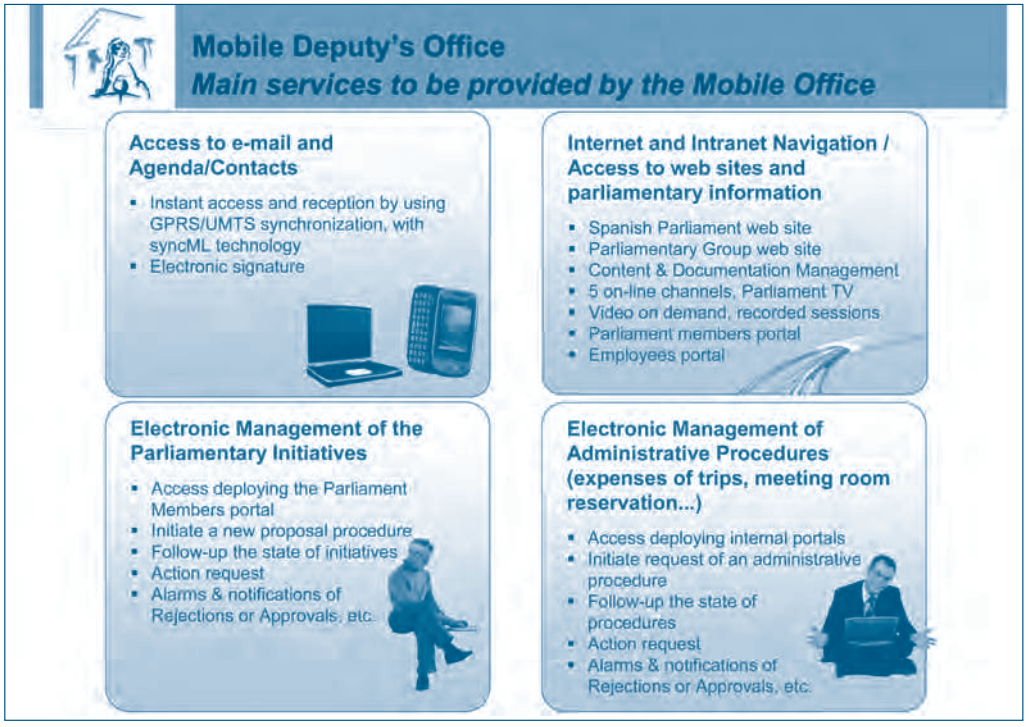
A fully developed infrastructure will therefore need to meet a diverse set of technical requirements including the provision of a sophisticated document management system, print and web publication services, and systems for archival preservation, all preferably based on open standards. It will

1 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 20.

also need to ensure authentication, security and reliability; it will need the capacity for an integrated data and information architecture, video and audio streaming and conferencing, and secure mobile systems for members. And it will be tasked to support emerging requirements such as user generated input, blogs and public forums.

One example of a very advanced infrastructure can be seen in the capabilities developed by the Congress of Deputies of Spain as part of its modernization plan to support remote access for the mobile deputy. Mobility is just one of the major objectives of the plan, but Figure 4-1 offers a good view of the complexity inherent in the infrastructure demanded by an increasing number of parliaments.

Figure 4-1: Services for the mobile office of Spanish deputies



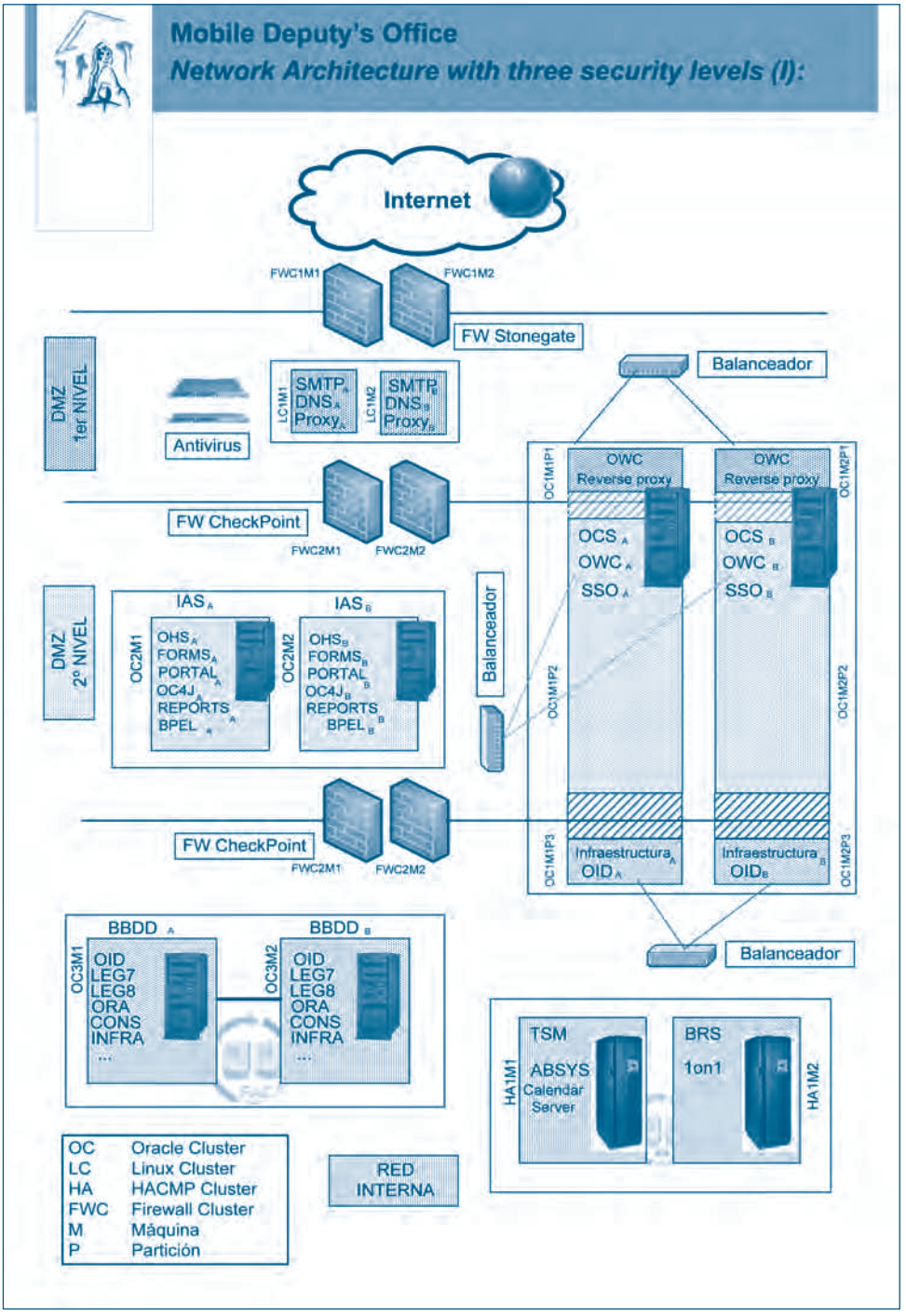
(Source: Contribution of the Congress of Deputies of Spain to the World e-Parliament Conference 2007)

In Figure 4-1 the functional objectives for developing mobile services for deputies are well identified. They include enabling the deputy to carry out the following tasks using mobile technology.

- Access to e-mail, agenda and contacts
- Internet and Intranet navigation, including access to the parliamentary website and other parliamentary information sources
- Electronic management of parliamentary initiatives
- Electronic management of administrative procedures

Figure 4-2 illustrates the technical architecture required to support the desired functionality for the mobile office. In addition to providing services for mobile offices, the strategic plan of the Congress of Deputies of Spain calls for the development of other key areas, including the electronic processing of all parliamentary initiatives, updating the hardware and software throughout the institution, ensuring security, improving quality, enhancing knowledge management services, and managing e-mails.

Figure 4-2: Architecture for the mobile office of Spanish deputies



(Source: Contribution of the Congress of Deputies of Spain to the World e-Parliament Conference 2007)

Figure 4-2 also highlights the importance of providing adequate security and reliability in a mobile environment, which creates additional costs and challenges. All services are replicated and utilize clustering and load balancing to ensure high levels of availability and failure tolerance. Two firewalls have been installed to separate access to the three security layers, using firewall software from different manufacturers to improve defense against attacks. The first layer, which is exposed to the public Internet, contains the hardware antivirus, the exterior connection services and the Web contents. The second layer contains the application server, the applications themselves, e-mail, single sign on

system, and a cache service for web applications. The third layer is the internal network and contains the data repositories, file servers, etc.

While many of the same components developed for the mobile office are going to support other objectives of the strategic plan, the overall investment in the hardware and software to achieve this goal is still considerable. This example reflects the significant level of investment needed for advanced capabilities, such as mobile offices.

However, for parliaments that are just beginning to apply ICT, decisions will need to be made about the core elements of infrastructure that should be installed initially and how enhancements can be made incrementally. Priorities will have to be established, based upon those identified within the parliament's strategic plan and determined by the availability of resources. For example, installing infrastructure that will support the primary work of the parliament, including drafting legislation and making parliamentary documents accessible to legislators would likely take precedence over other applications. In cases where resources are very constrained, legislative bodies may need to consider how objectives such as increasing transparency can best be accomplished with limited technology and funds. Taking advantage of lessons learned by other parliaments and sharing information on good practices should help identify the best ways to proceed and reduce barriers to implementing ICT in a cost-effective manner. It is also important to recognize and plan for the fact that building an adequate infrastructure takes time and needs to proceed gradually so that quality can be assured and reliability fully tested. Furthermore, the changes that result from ICT can be substantial and members and staff need time to adjust to them.

RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

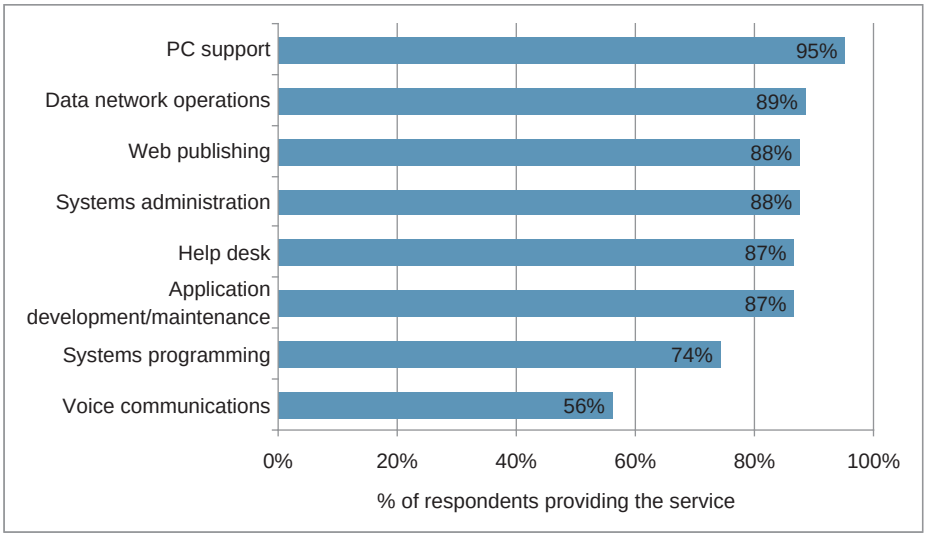
The infrastructure section of the survey gathered data on the current state of major ICT components within parliaments. These included: 1) General ICT services; 2) Systems and services for members and staff; 3) Networks and servers; 4) General applications; 5) Applications specific to parliaments; 6) Staff; and, 7) Budget. Findings from each of these areas are outlined below.[2]

General ICT services

This component encompasses the basic tasks and services of an e-parliament infrastructure. It includes operations such as data network management, PC support, systems administration and systems programming, application development and maintenance, help desk, web publishing and voice communications.

Respondents provided indications on which general ICT services are available in the parliament or chamber and whether they are provided by ICT staff or by outside contractors. Figures 4-3 and 4-4 summarize the responses to this question and provide the basis for the findings that follow.

Figure 4-3: Availability of general ICT services

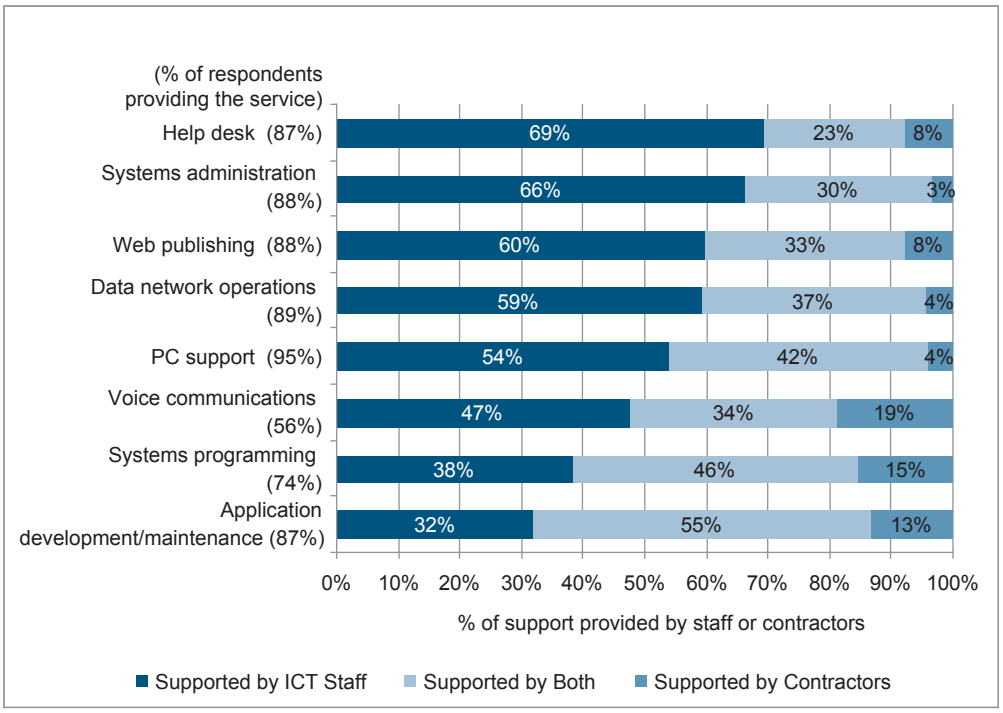


(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 1)

2 For Figures in this Chapter, no response is taken as "not available".

1. In the area of general ICT services, 95% of respondents provide PC support by using parliamentary staff, contractors, or both. Almost 90% provide other basic services including data network operations, web publishing, systems administration, help desk and application development and maintenance. Somewhat fewer provide systems programming (74%).

Figure 4-4: General ICT services by support providers



Results ranked in descending order of percentage of services provided by ICT staff
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 1)

These services are among the minimum required to provide parliament with basic ICT support. Without these it would be difficult to offer the most essential technology-based services to parliament. Over 10% of the chambers do not provide one or more of these services and may be most in need of additional funding and perhaps outside support. A few respondents indicated that these basic ICT services are provided by organizations outside the parliament, such as the executive branch of government. This may be a satisfactory solution in the short term, especially if parliament does not have sufficient resources of its own, but it will limit the independence and autonomy of parliament and the ability to address its own priorities in the long term.

2. Over 50% stated that they do not provide voice communications. This may reflect differences in the way telecommunications services are provided in various countries, including from outside telecommunications authorities or a separate entity within the government.

3. More than half of all respondents use parliamentary staff to provide Help desk (69%), Systems administration (66%), Web publishing (60%), Data network operations (59%), and PC support (54%). These are also the services most likely to be provided by a combination of parliamentary staff and contractors.

4. The services least likely to be performed solely by parliamentary staff are Systems programming (38%) and Application development and maintenance (32%).

These findings confirm how parliamentary practices rely on both in-house and external staff for infrastructure services. The larger percentage using parliamentary staff for the Help desk likely reflects the need for direct control of this critical activity that represents the "face" of ICT to users. It also indicates the need for Help desk staff to have an understanding of the parliament's processes if they are to perform their jobs effectively.

The reliance on external staff for application development, either primarily or with parliamentary staff suggests a possible opportunity for collaboration among parliaments who may be able to pool resources and therefore share costs of this often expensive activity.

5. 41% of chambers and parliaments that replied to the survey entered into service level agreements (SLAs) with their vendors; 30% are planning or considering SLAs. However, 30% also said that they do not have SLAs and are neither planning nor considering them.[3]

   Developing service level agreements is a standard industry practice designed to ensure effective ICT support. The fact that less than half have such agreements in place and almost a third are not even considering them may raise issues about how to ensure responsiveness of ICT services in some parliaments. Quality of service is a key means for promoting clients' or users' support for ICT and therefore it is critical to institute practices that will contribute to this objective.

   The following comments provided by survey respondents illustrate the various ways that SLAs are implemented in parliaments that use this technique.

   - There are a vast range of ICT services available to clients within the parliament. Some services already have a service level agreement in place but others do not. A services catalogue is currently being produced which will give clients a full list of services and any available SLAs.
   - [SLAs are provided] through the Result Based Management system implemented government-wide.
   - We have service level agreements with the vendors on services that cannot be supported by the staff.
   - Yes, through approved requirements specifications.
   - Only for Help Desk.

6. 90% of respondents have access to reliable electrical power 24 hours a day.

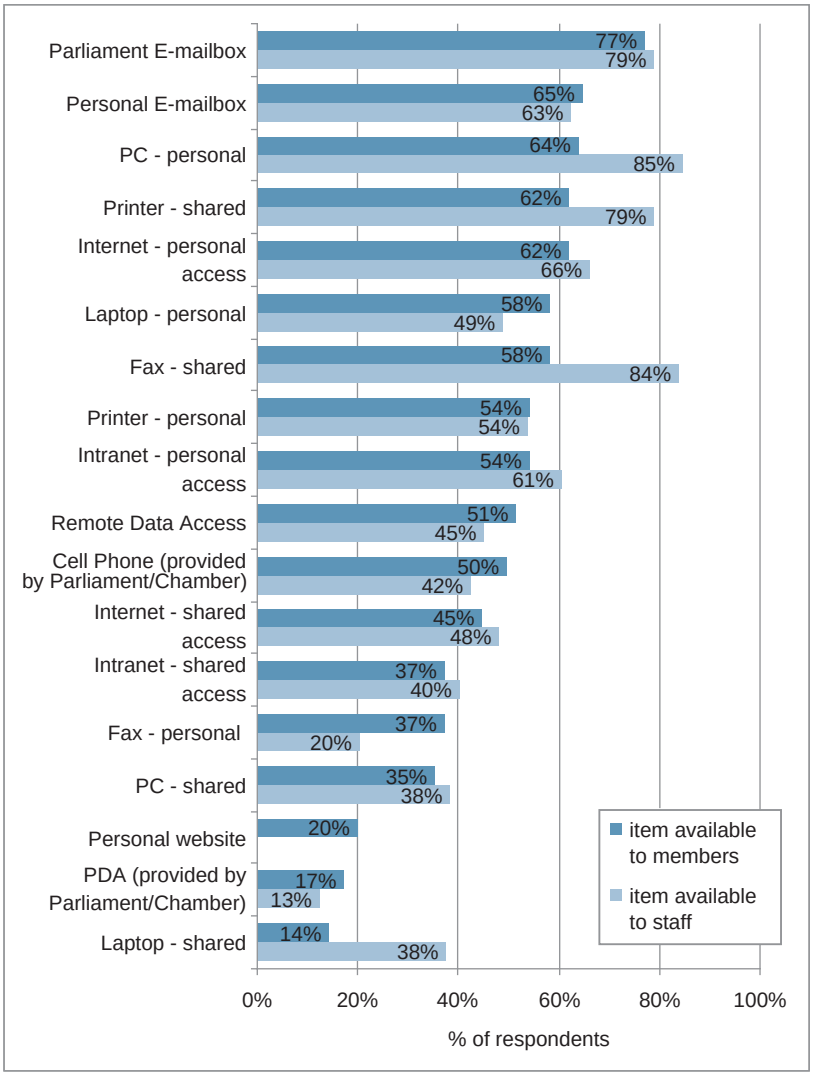
   The fact that 10% do not have reliable power illustrates the challenge that a number of parliaments in developing countries face in bringing the benefits of ICT to their legislatures. A number of respondents cited the use of uninterrupted power supplies (UPSs) for ensuring reliable power.[4]

3 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 2.
4 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 5.

Systems and services for members and staff

This component focuses on the range of hardware, software and services provided directly to members and to staff of parliament. Findings are based on the results shown in Figures 4-5 through 4-7.

Figure 4-5: Support items available to members and staff of parliament



Results ranked in descending order of percentage of respondents providing item to members
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Questions 3 and 4)

7. Most respondents provide ICT support to members for the following: a parliamentary e-mail box (77%) and a personal e-mailbox (65%); a personal PC (64%) and shared printer (62%); a personal laptop (58%), and a shared fax device (58%).

8. Personal printers, remote access, and cell phones are provided by approximately half of chambers and parliaments surveyed.

9. Only 20% of respondents provide members with personal websites.

These findings collectively suggest that many parliaments do not yet provide a basic set of personal equipment and services for members. For example, only 64% provide a PC; only 54% a personal printer; and only 50% a cell phone.

This sampling of comments is indicative of the wide range of direct ICT support provided by parliaments to members.

- Members do not have offices and a few use ICT.
- Members do not have offices but have access to an 18 machine thin client solution for Internet and other uses. The Leadership however has desktops and/or laptops.
- 4 PCs available in the library of the [chamber] for use by the members with 2 shared printers.
- On completion of the ongoing ICT strategy, most of the above facilities/equipment will be available to members.
- Websites and personal e-mailbox are planned.
- Each senator is provided with a credit allowance for the purchase of IT equipment: micro PCs (regular PCs or laptops), peripheral devices (printers, scanners, webcams, personal assistants, multifunction devices, projectors), software, faxes, as well as training, assistance or fixing, except for consumables' supply.

10. Parliamentary staff and members tend to have comparable access to ICT tools, although a higher percentage of staff have access to PCs, shared printers and fax machines. Members are somewhat more likely than staff to have personal laptops, cell phones and personal fax devices.

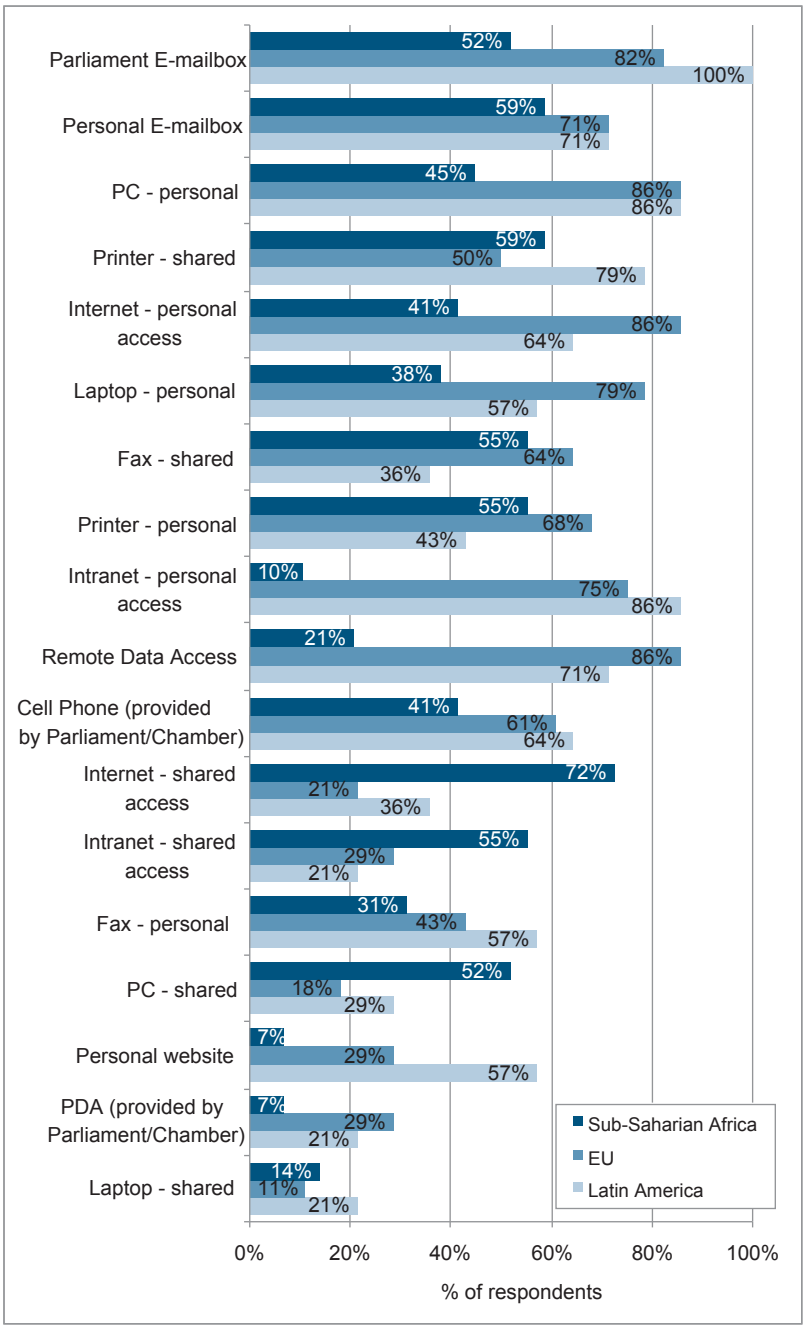
    The differences in overall access to ICT between members and staff shown in the survey results may reflect the fact that in many parliaments members rely upon staff to provide information services and access to documents. This may also suggest that some staff are more comfortable and more skilled at using technology.

By looking at the survey results by regional groups in Figures 4-6 and 4-7, it is interesting to note that members are in general provided with comparable services in both the European Union area and in Latin America. The latter region has higher percentages (a difference of more than 15 percentage points) in terms of the provision of personal websites and a parliament e-mailbox, while the former region has higher percentages for personal access to the Internet, personal laptops, a shared fax and remote data access. On the other hand, it is evident that chambers and parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa have difficulties in providing personal services and tend to rely more on shared items.

With regard to parliamentary staff, the Latin America group, compared to the European Union group, shows higher percentages (a difference of more than 15 percentage points) in the use of shared PCs, printers, laptops, and shared access to the Internet. They are also higher on data remote access. In the European Union group percentages are higher on personal access to the Internet, shared access to a fax, and the provision of a PDA. In sub-Saharan Africa, staff receive a higher number of personal PC and laptop than members, as well as access to Intranet. However, Internet and Intranet shared access remain a characteristic for this region.

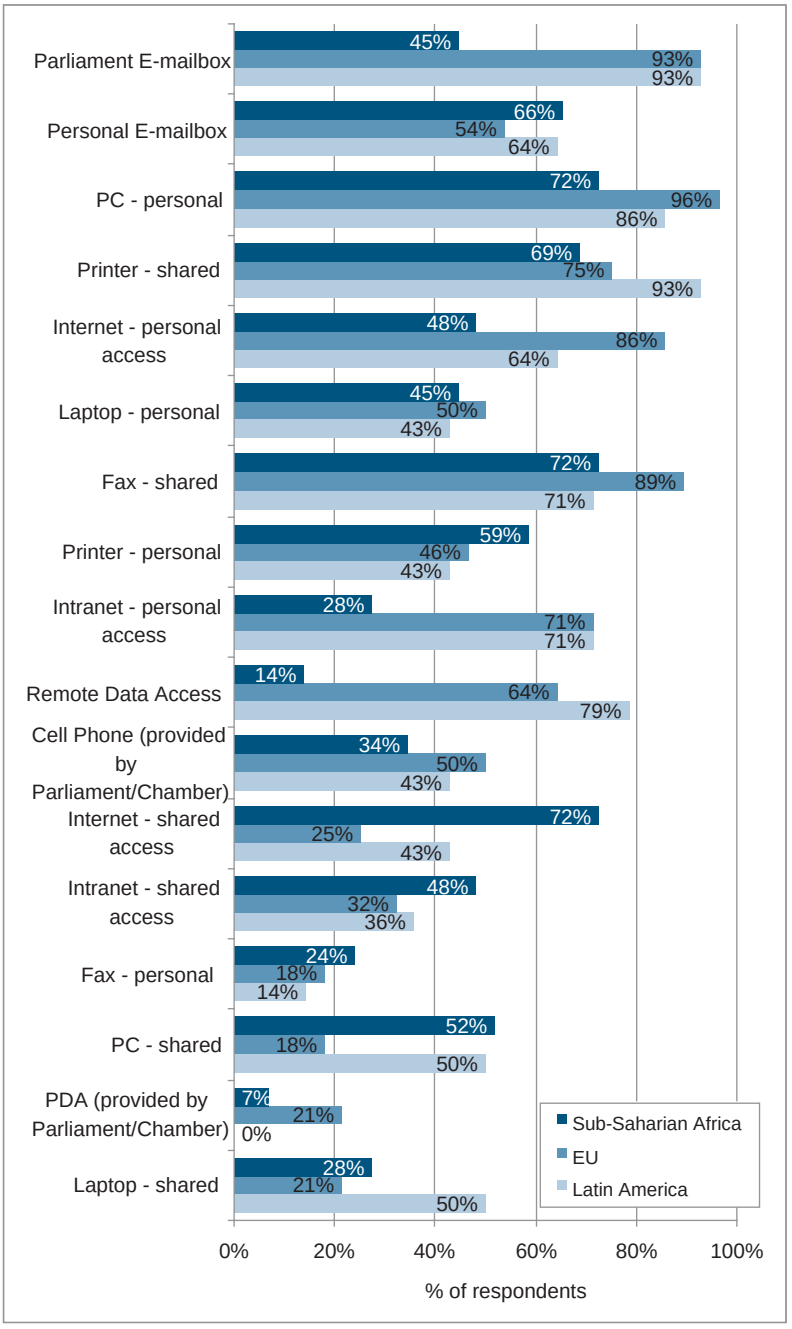
While confirming that parliamentary staff and members tend to have comparable access to ICT tools in all regions, Figures 4-6 and 4-7 also substantiate the different levels of support capacity provided by parliaments to members and the staff in terms of technology items.

Figure 4-6: Support items available to members of parliament for three regional groupings



Results ranked in descending order of percentage of respondents providing item to members among all countries, as in Figure 4-5
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 3)

Figure 4-7: Support items available to staff of parliament for three regional groupings



Results ranked in descending order of percentage of respondents providing item to members among all countries, as in Figure 4-5
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 4)

An area of increasing importance to many legislatures is ICT support for members while they are away from the parliament. It is important in fact to be able to provide access to parliamentary documents and other resources to members while they are in their constituencies or otherwise engaged in parliamentary business elsewhere.

In 2007, the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) Working Group on ICT launched a survey on mobile technology in the 60 chambers representing its mem-

bership. Of these, 58% responded to the ECPRD questionnaire. A description of the survey and its main findings is provided in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1

Use of mobile technology in ECPRD members

The aim of the survey was to gather findings on the following issues:

- Priority in providing mobile equipments for MPs
- Availability of wireless network access
- Percentage of MPs using mobile technology
- Most used wireless network security policy
- Most used solutions to provide remote access to parliamentary information system
- Availability of remote access applications for MPs

To do this, nineteen questions were grouped in three broad areas: a) availability and use of mobile equipments for MPs; b) level of security provided for wireless network and remote access; c) status of implementation of remote access to applications

Findings showed that:

- More than 90% of respondents give high priority to support mobile technology for MPs;
- In 50% of responding parliaments the large majority of MPs use laptop computers;
- Wireless network and remote access (VPN) is used in few responding parliaments (less than 20%);
- More than 80% have already implemented remote access to legislative documents;
- More than 90% of respondents have already implemented Webmail for MPs;
- Around 35% of respondents have implemented or expect to implement in two years time consultation tools for dialogue with the electorate;
- Only 6% of respondents have implemented public opinion polling on legislative procedures;
- Digital certificates & electronic signature are already implemented in 20% of respondents;
- Remote electronic voting has no expression in the responding parliaments;
- WEP is the most used wireless network security policy adopted by respondents.

Joao Viegas d'Abreu, Director of ICT of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal and Chair of the ECPRD Working Group on ICT
Presentation at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

Networks and servers

This portion of the survey intended to cover issues concerning hardware and software needed to provide Intranet and Internet communication, access to internal databases and general data capacity. Because of the range of options available to parliaments in this area, several of the questions were open-ended. However, as the answers were quite varied in both content and format, making the results somewhat difficult to summarize, findings emerging from the responses to these questions only provide an indication of the state of network and server capacity in many parliaments.[5]

5 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 6 to Question 9.

11. There is a wide range in the network, server and storage capacity among respondents. Examples include:

Servers: 5 respondents reported having over 300 servers while 16 reported having 1-2 servers or none at all. The average was 46, the median was 11, and the maximum was 480.

Local Area Networks (LANs): 90% of respondents reported having a LAN.

Network Connections: 5 respondents reported having LANs with over 5,000 connections, 10 reported having less than 100. The median number of connections is 300; the average is over 1,500.

Internet Bandwidth: Over 90% reported having some level of Internet bandwidth. 3 respondents reported having bandwidth to the Internet of over 1 Gbps; 2 reported having 64 Kbps.

Storage: 66% of respondents reported storage capacity under 10TB; 22% reported a capacity between 10 and 100TB; and 12% cited over 100TB of capacity.

The most important of these findings may be the high number who reported having LANs and at least some level of Internet access. A LAN is a critical component of the infrastructure for supporting collaboration and communication within the parliament and for providing access by members and staff to documents and legislative activities. Servers and storage can be added as needed, but LANs support all applications and need to connect all members and staff to be effective. Access to the Internet is also essential for communication outside the parliament and for access to information.

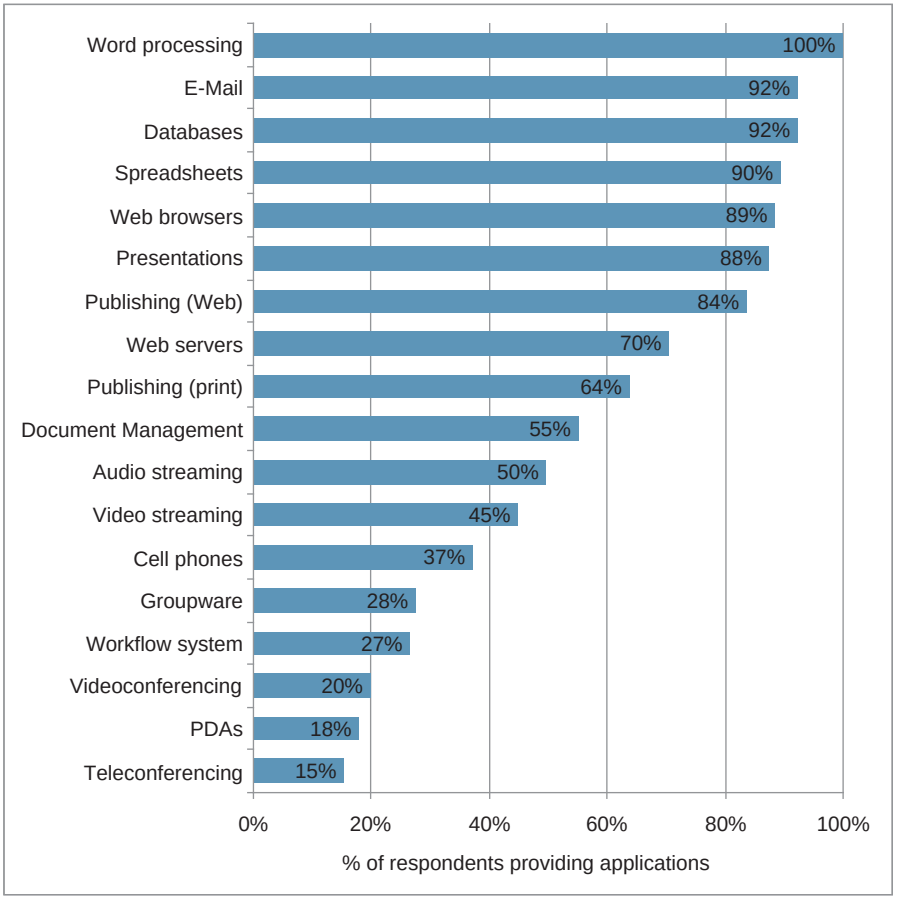
General applications

These applications are generic in nature and cover a range of functions from word processing to document management and videoconferencing. Figure 4-8 shows which general applications are most provided in the surveyed parliaments.

12. Word processing, e-mail, databases (flat file), spreadsheets, presentations, and web access are the most prevalent types of general applications, provided by over 85% of all respondents.

13. Web servers, web publishing, and print publishing are provided by 64% to 84% of respondents.

Figure 4–8: General applications



(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 10)

14. Document management systems are provided by 55% of respondents.

15. 50% or fewer chambers and parliaments provide the following:

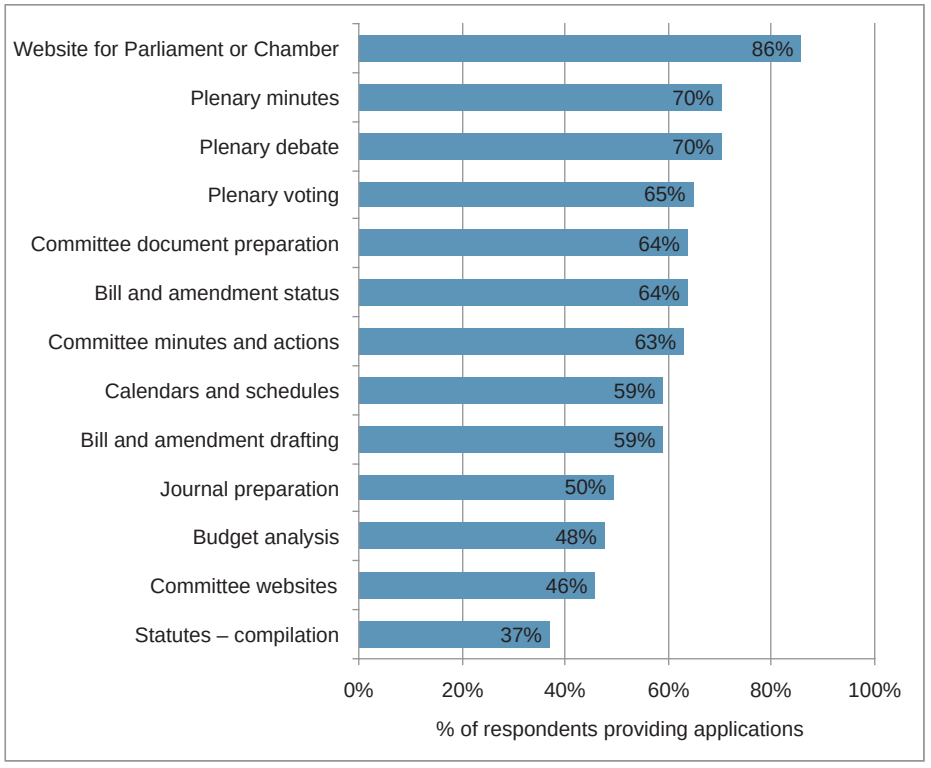
- Audio and video streaming
- Cell phones
- Groupware
- Workflow
- Videoconferencing
- PDAs
- Teleconferencing

The fact that over 85% of respondents stated that they had a combination of word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, e-mail, databases (flat file) and web access applications suggests the prevalence of office suite software among parliaments.

The fact that only 55% of respondents indicate that they have document management software raises concerns because of the importance of document management to parliaments for fundamental operations like bill drafting, amending legislation and providing minutes of plenary sessions.

96 respondents indicated the specific word processing software that they use. Of these, 93% use commercial software, while 7% reported using open source word processing software. The same number reported using open source software for presentations, spreadsheets and databases. This percentage likely reflects the usage of open source office suite software in general at this point in time. It will be useful for future surveys and analyses to track changes in this area.

Figure 4-9: Legislative applications



(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

Applications specific to parliament

This component of the survey first addressed a group of applications directly related to the legislative, representational and oversight responsibilities of parliaments, followed by questions on knowledge management and administrative applications.

Legislative applications. Figure 4-9 summarizes the responses to questions concerning the range of legislative applications available in parliaments.

16. 86% of respondents provide a parliamentary or chamber website (other questions in the survey indicate that this percentage may be even higher); and 70% provide systems for recording plenary debate and minutes.

17. Over 60% of respondents provide applications for committee calendars and schedules, minutes and document preparation. However, only 46% provide committee websites.

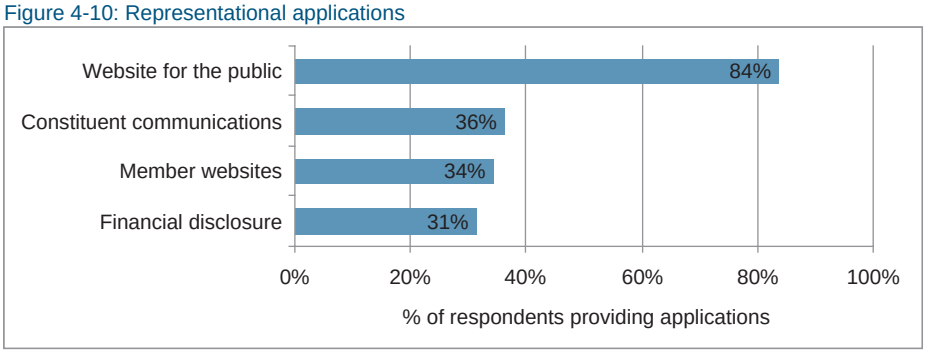
18. 59% of respondents stated that they have applications for bill and amendment drafting and 64% have bill and amendment status applications.

Systems to prepare, edit, store, manage and distribute bills, amendments and other key legislative documents are essential for supporting the most important parliamentary operations. While many parliaments have applications in these areas, approximately 40% of respondents do not report having bill and amendment drafting systems. Given the critical nature of these functions in legislative bodies, the data indicate that more parliaments may need to make this ICT area a priority.

Similarly, committees play a key role in the legislative process of many parliaments, yet one third of respondents do not have systems to support committee documents preparation. Of equal concern is the fact that only 46% have committee websites. As parliaments seek to become more transparent, providing public access to committee information is increasingly important. Future surveys will need to examine this issue in more detail.

Representational applications. Figure 4-10 provides the results of the survey concerning those applications that support the representative functions of parliaments.

Figure 4-10: Representational applications



(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

19. 84% of respondents maintain websites for the public. This is slightly lower than findings from questions reported in Chapter 6.

20. In comparison with the high number of respondents who state they have parliamentary websites for the public, only 34% of respondents provide member websites. Approximately one third of

respondents also indicated that they have applications for financial disclosure and for constituent communication.

The high percentage of respondents who provide websites for the public is a strong indicator of efforts to enhance transparency and access. However, it should be noted that achieving this goal also depends on the quality, timeliness and completeness of the documents and information available on the site. This issue is explored in more detail in the chapter focusing on parliamentary websites.

In response to an earlier question in this section of the survey, only 20% of respondents reported that they provide personal websites for members. The higher percentage reported here (34%) may suggest that more parliaments provide some information about members on the parliamentary website. It is reasonable to conclude from these two findings that at least 34% of respondents provide some type of website support for members, although the survey did not ask in detail how these sites are used.

Despite the high interest in using ICT to improve communication with citizens, as also shown in Chapter 8, only 36% reported having systems for communicating with constituents. Since most parliaments provide members with electronic mailboxes, we can assume that respondents meant systems other than e-mail for communicating with citizens.

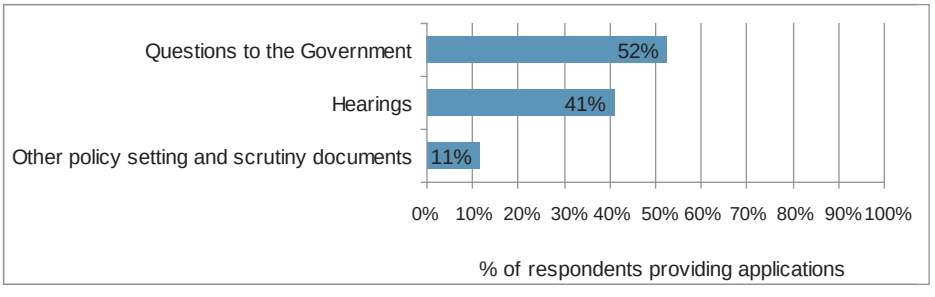
The following comments submitted by respondents indicate the range of approaches to this issue.

- Members have a parliamentary home page on the website, with the option to link to their personal home page (hosted by themselves). There is a feedback form available for constituents to communicate with the member.
- Members websites are maintained by themselves or by party secretariats.
- We have at the moment just one website serving for both public and member. In future we have plans to have many different websites.

Transparency in parliament includes financial disclosure, as well as the availability of documents. The relatively low percentage of respondents who report that they have systems for such disclosure reflects the challenge that this issue poses for many legislative bodies. While some may offer paper-based access to this information, it is not as helpful or efficient as a digital system, which can be relatively simple to implement with current technology. This is a clear example of where ICT planning and implementation depends on political will.

Oversight applications. Data provided in Figure 4-11 reflects the responses received to questions concerning oversight applications in parliament.

Figure 4-11: Oversight applications



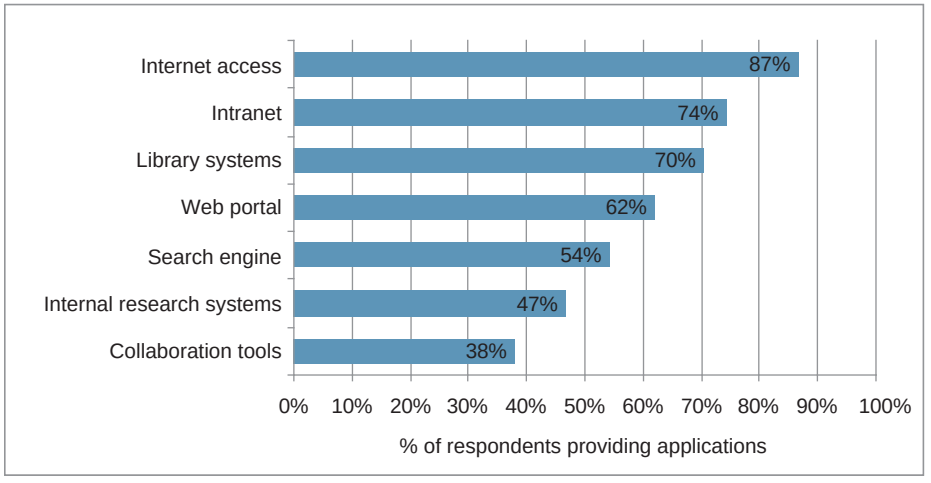
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

21. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) have systems for handling questions to the government. Applications to support hearings are provided by 41% of respondents, while only 11% indicate systems that support other oversight activities.

    As highlighted in Chapter 5, it is interesting to note that the percentage of respondents who reported having systems for questions to the government is higher than those who reported having a system for managing bills and amendments. This may reflect the importance attached to this activity, which often occurs in plenary session.

Knowledge management applications. Figure 4-12 provides a summary of the responses to questions concerning knowledge management applications.

Figure 4-12: Knowledge Management applications



(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

22. The high percentage of respondents that have Internet access (87%) and an Intranet (74%) facilitates knowledge management efforts in parliaments. The fact that 62% of chambers and parliaments are able to provide a web portal further enhances support for their knowledge management functions.

23. 70% of respondents report having a library system as part of their infrastructure.

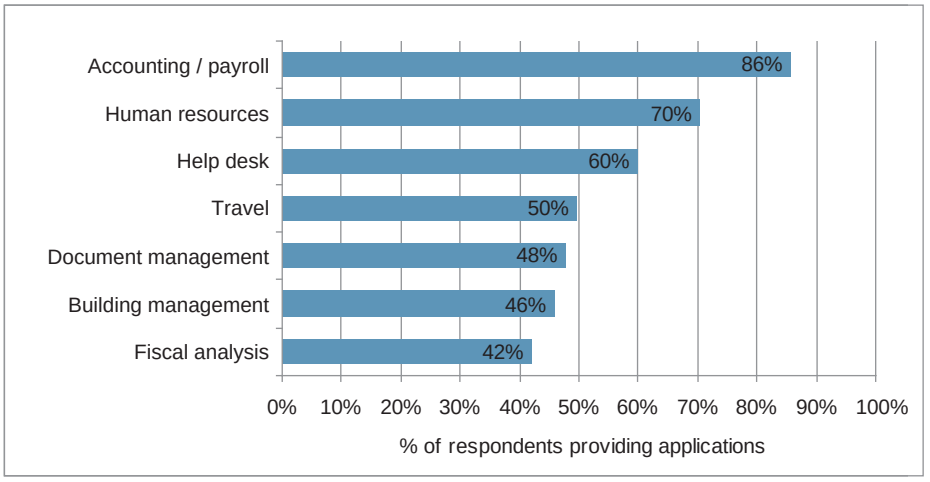
    These percentages reflect the fact that libraries and research centres often are among the most effective users of technology in parliaments as further discussed in Chapter 7. In addition, many of the tools for knowledge management are widely available in parliaments and do not require customization to meet special user needs.

24. Just over half of respondents (54%) report having a search engine as one of the tools to support knowledge management. Fewer than half (47%) have internal research systems and even fewer (38%) have collaboration tools.

    This finding about search engines mirrors the findings highlighted in the chapter on parliamentary websites regarding the percentage of respondents who have search engines for their websites. A search engine is a key component to support a knowledge based parliament and this technology is becoming increasingly available at affordable cost. As a result, it is likely that in future surveys the percentage of respondents having search engines available will increase.

Administrative applications. Results concerning administrative applications are shown in Figure 4-13.

Figure 4-13: Administrative applications



(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

25. Administrative systems are supported by a large number of respondents. 86% of respondents report having accounting and payroll systems, while 70% have systems to support human resources.

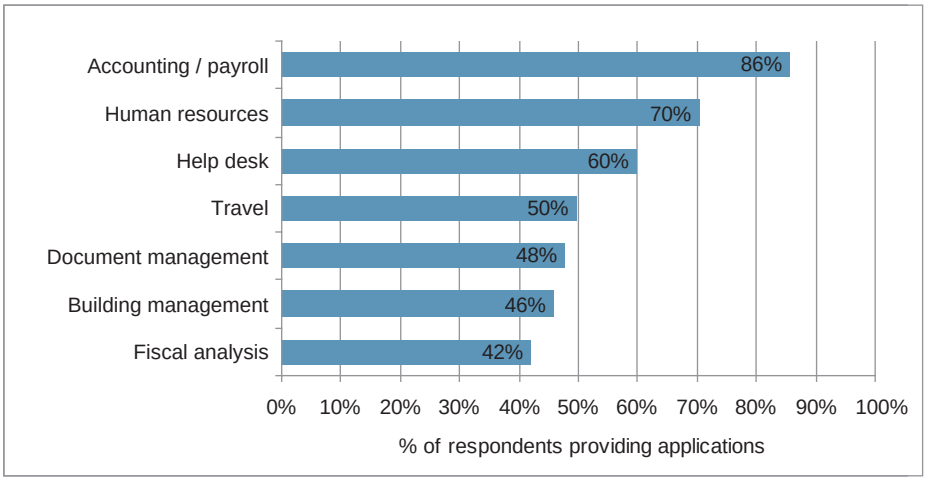
    This finding is consistent with the fact that many organizations adopt ICT first to support their accounting and payroll functions. The large percentage having systems to support human resources is likely a reflection of the development and greater availability of these systems over the last decade.

Staff

Skilled staff who are knowledgeable about legislative bodies are an integral part of a parliament's infrastructure. They can be in-house staff, contractors, or a combination of the two. They are vital for developing, managing and maintaining ICT services and applications that are tailored to the needs of members, committees and officials, and that support the highest goals of the legislature. Data appear to reflect the approach of relying on in-house staff for applications or projects that require knowledge of the legislative process, while employing contractors to support more generic functions or develop common applications. Questions in this portion of the survey focused on the numbers and the roles of in-house and external staff.

26. The average number of in-house technical ICT staff reported is 31. This average encompasses a wide range from zero to 300, more than half of respondents reporting fewer than 15. The average number of technical contractors reported is 22. As with in-house staff, there is a wide range from zero to over 400, but with more than half of respondents reporting fewer than 5.

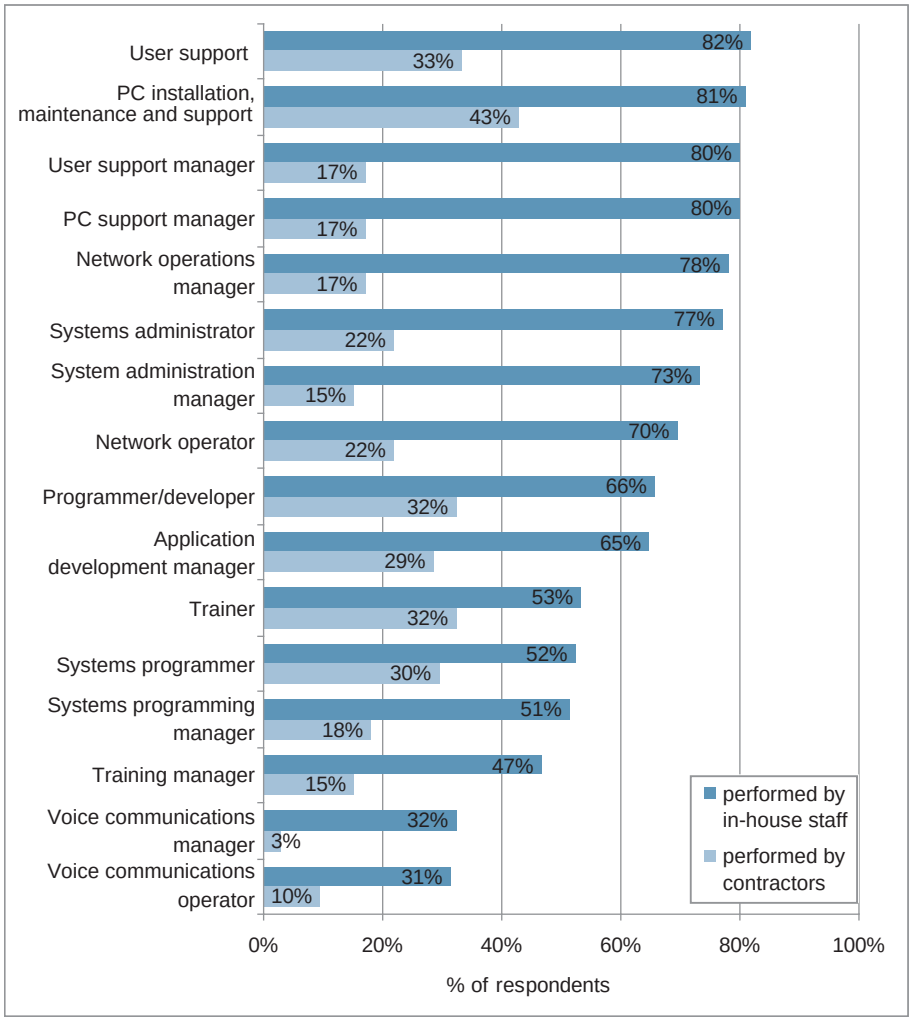
Figure 4-14: Distribution of the number of staff and contractors employed in the last year



(Source: Survey, Section 2, Questions 12 and 14)

27. Parliaments tend to use their own staff rather than contractors to manage ICT functions. The one area where contractors play more of a role is in applications development. In none of the functional areas were contractors used to a greater extent than in-house staff, as shown in Figure 4-15.

Figure 4-15: Functions performed by in-house staff and contractors



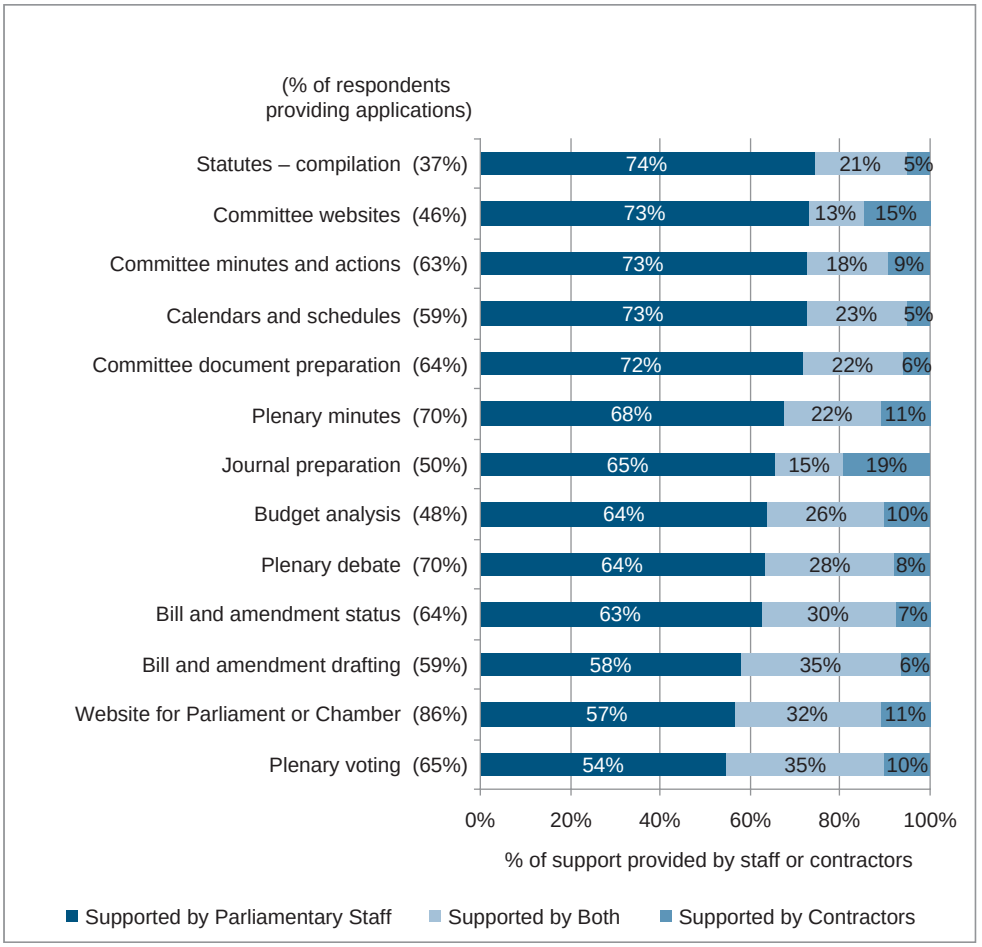
Results ranked in descending order of percentage of respondents indicating function performed by in-house staff
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Questions 13 and 15. Multiple responses possible)

These responses reinforce the view that parliaments control important ICT activities through use of in-house staff, especially to perform management tasks. Contractors play a significant role in areas such as PC installation, maintenance and support where knowledge of the institution and users is less critical. Because applications development may require certain specialized technical skills, contractors are also more likely to play a larger role in it.

Figures 4-16 through 4-19 provide survey results related to use of in-house and contractors for specific kinds of applications.

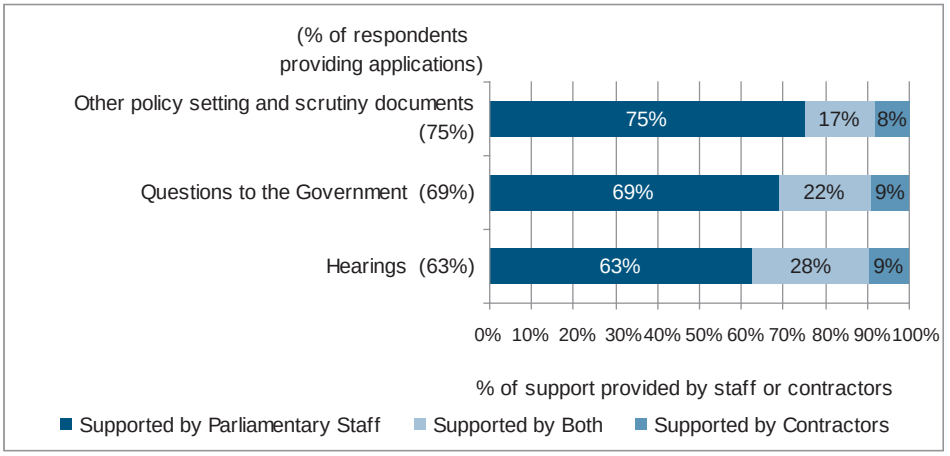
28. Applications that support the legislative and oversight processes are most likely to be developed by parliamentary staff or by a combination of parliamentary staff and contractors. In only two cases – committee websites and journal preparation - did more that 15% of respondents report that they were supported by contractors and not parliamentary staff.

Figure 4-16: Providers of legislative applications



Results ranked in descending order of share of support provided by Parliamentary staff
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

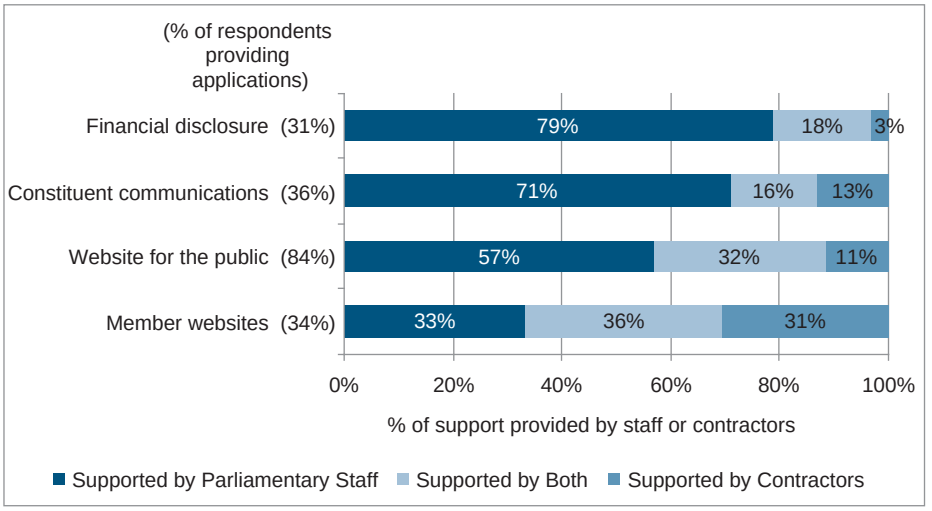
Figure 4-17: Providers of oversight applications



Results ranked in descending order of share of support provided by Parliamentary staff
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

29. Contractors worked with parliamentary staff most often on three of the most important legislative applications: bill and amendment drafting, plenary voting, and the parliamentary websites. In all three cases, over 30% of respondents reported that contractors worked *with* parliamentary staff. When combined with the number who reported that contractors were the *primary source* for these applications, the percentage who reported contractor involvement with these applications rose to over 40%. This finding suggests another area where collaboration could be cost-effective.

Figure 4-18: Providers of representational applications

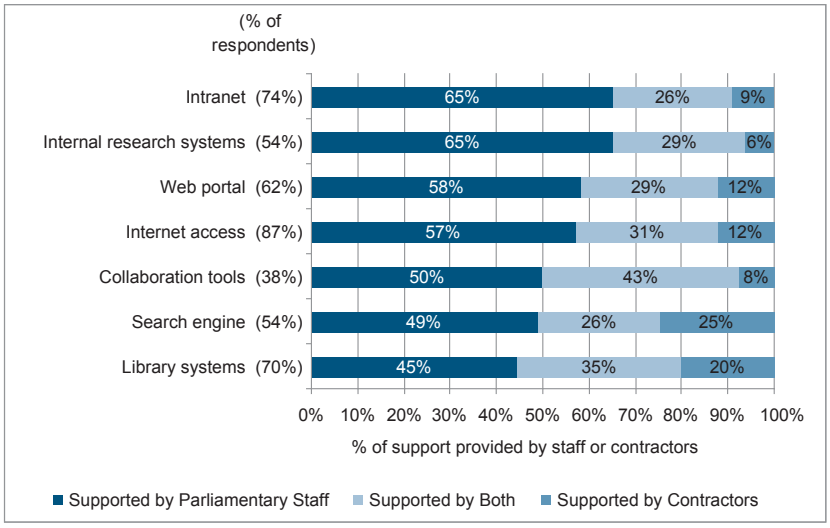


Results ranked in descending order of share of support provided by Parliamentary staff
(Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

30. Most respondents reported that parliamentary staff were the primary providers of representational applications for constituent communication and financial disclosure. In the case of websites for the public, while parliamentary staff are the primary support for this application in 57% of the cases, contractors are also involved in over 40% of responses (either as the primary or in conjunction with parliamentary staff). Respondents make even greater use of contractors for developing member websites, where they are involved as the primary source for 31% of respondents or in conjunction with parliamentary staff for 36% of respondents.

The use primarily of in-house staff for financial disclosure and constituent communication applications is understandable given the sensitive nature of such activities. At the same time, the high percentage of respondents who report that contractors provide support for member websites is not surprising given the policy of many parliaments to distinguish member sites from the official site of the parliament. Respondents appear to be taking advantage of the web design skills available from contractors, while retaining a dominant role for parliamentary staff who understand the operations of the institution.

Figure 4-19: Providers of knowledge management applications



Results ranked in descending order of share of support provided by Parliamentary staff (Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 11)

31. Contractors are heavily involved with in-house staff in the development of knowledge management tools, some of which tend to be more generic in nature.

Since a number of knowledge-management tools tend to be "off-the-shelf" it is understandable that contractors play a major role in this area. This appears to be another area where the combination of outside technical expertise and inside knowledge of the institution can be linked to provide better support.

A comment from one of the respondents also highlighted the practice that is common in many organizations of using outside staff support to assist in the development of applications that are then maintained primarily by in-house staff.

- The applications are supported within the parliament; however the original applications were developed by contractors or were off-the-shelf products. Some products have some vendor support in addition to internal support.

32. Training for in-house staff is vital to be able to maintain current knowledge of ICT developments within parliament. It is a concern, therefore, that over one third of respondents indicated that they do not have training programmes for in-house ICT staff. Of those who do have programmes, the average number of staff receiving training in the last year was 50%.[6]

Budget

There were two survey questions related to parliament's budget for ICT. One referred to the total budget allocation for ICT infrastructures, including managers, staff, contractors, hardware, software, systems and services, and the other to the percentage of this allocation over the total parliament budget.[7]

6 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 16 and Question 17.
7 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 19 and Question 20.

As noted in the introductory portion of this chapter, respondents faced a number of challenges in providing reliable answers to these questions. Comments accompanying the answers made it clear that it was difficult for some chambers and parliaments to identify a reliable figure for the total ICT infrastructure budget because funds for ICT are provided to various offices within the parliament and come from various parts of the parliament's budget. Further complicating the results from this question is the fact that some respondents included staff costs while others did not.

Of the 56 respondents who answered the question concerning the percentage of the ICT infrastructure budget over the total parliament's budget, the median resulted in 2.8% and the mean resulted in 4.3%, suggesting a wide difference between the high and low end of the range of responses. This is borne out by the fact that 25% reported that the ICT budget was less than 2% of the total budget for parliament, while 25% reported that it was 6% or more.

These numbers are offered as an indication of the range of responses among chambers and parliaments surveyed who responded to this question. However, as noted previously, the challenges involved in providing reliable figures are significant and the true total costs are likely to be higher.

Although the survey results concerning ICT budget cannot be offered as formal findings, some indications may still be ascertained from those survey results. For example, the three-fold difference in the percentages cited above suggests that a significant number of parliaments may be under investing in their infrastructure, not necessarily in absolute terms but as a portion of the total parliamentary budget. This inference is supported by findings reported in later chapters which indicate that many parliaments are not yet making the most effective use of ICT. Future research efforts will be required to attain a more accurate estimate of ICT budget in parliaments and should help to determine where additional investments could usefully be made.

EXAMPLES FROM TWO PARLIAMENTS

The survey results provide an overall view of the components of infrastructures and services and how widely available they are in parliaments around the world. It could also be useful to place these findings in context by describing the infrastructures in two different parliaments - one that has been developing its technical capacity for many years and another that is just beginning this process. These two examples reflect the diversity and range of infrastructure development that can be found in parliaments globally.

Some parliaments, such as Parliament A described below, already have or are planning an infrastructure that can accommodate most of the systems and services outlined above. Other parliaments, such as Parliament B, are in the early stages of building their technical infrastructures - a multi-year and gradual process on the assumption that resources are committed and available on an ongoing basis. While they may have few resources and limited technology at this point, it is important to note that many, such as Parliament B have developed a strategic plan to guide their decisions on ICT. As outlined in Chapter 3, a strong strategic plan will help ensure that resources are allocated to the most important goals of the parliament.

Parliament A

Parliament A is representative of the few large legislative bodies with more than 500 seats (see Figure 4-20). It has been developing its infrastructure for many years and has attained a relatively high level of technical capacity. In summary form, this parliament has the following:

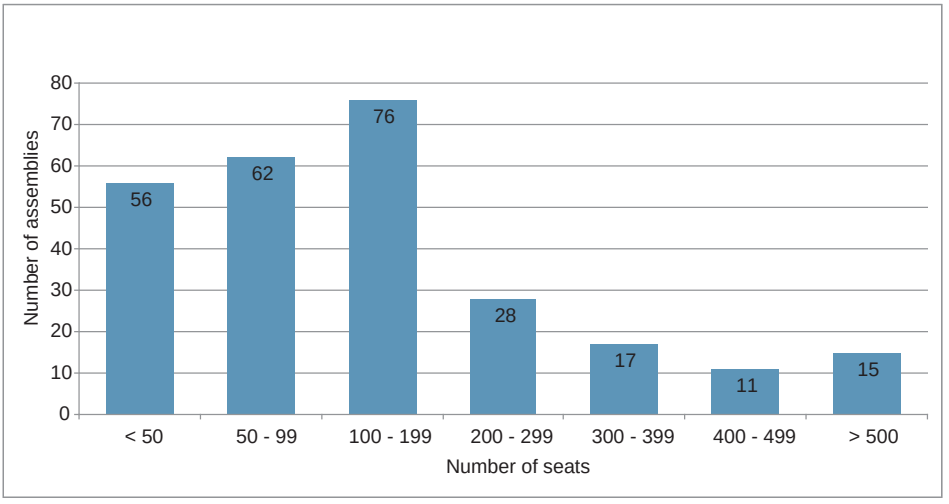
- 300 IT applications
- 150 servers, 3000 PCs, 230 network devices
- 700 km of copper cables, 20 km of fiber optic cable
- 3,000 e-mail boxes
- Network that provides 100 Mbit/s at workstations, 1-2 Gbit/s among network devices, backup links, backup network devices, remote access
- 7 TB of storage
- Internet access at 32Mbits/s
- Wi-fi in plenary
- Access to online news services and online databases
- Parliamentary website with 4 million web pages, audio/video for all plenary sittings for over 5 years, 3.5 million pages of parliamentary documents, 1 million press articles
- All members have: PC and printer, on-site support, portable PC, Internet, e-mail, fax
- Security is centrally managed with a dual firewall, anti-spam, strong – two factor authentication (tokens), and data encryption
- Standards: they are introducing ITIL Version 3 model, and project management methodology
- Staff: 75 staff in-house, 80 contractors
- Budget = € 20M

Parliament B

Parliament B is representative of parliaments that are relatively new and that are just beginning to build their ICT infrastructure. This parliament has around 120 seats, limited funds and currently depends on outside donors, but has a strategic plan in place. It has:

- 200 PCs
- No LAN, no fiber optic cabling, buildings not linked, no remote access
- Limited storage capacity
- No document management system
- A limited website
- An Internet café
- No video of sessions
- No means of preparing and distributing draft bills on a timely basis
- Limited access to related information, partisan control of what information is available
- All groups that provide legislative support to members and the parliament lack PCs, networks, access to the Internet, DMS and file sharing, and general communication capabilities
- There is a strategic plan calling for: staff training, LAN, Internet access, knowledge management, document management system, human resources system, a financial management system
- Few staff: ICT skills are low (most word processing; little understanding of other software or the Internet), no database administrator (no database), no programmer, no network manager, no webmaster
- Financial support primarily from donors

Figure 4-20: Number of assemblies grouped by number of seats



(Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, January 2008)

COMMENTS ON PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES

The survey requested parliaments to provide examples of practices in the area of infrastructure development. The following examples from respondents are worthy of note. One involved the use of ITIL processes (Information Technology Infrastructure Library), a set of documents describing best practices in IT service areas such as Change Management, Configuration Management, Software Control & Distribution and Help Desk, etc. The second described sharing the results of tenders with the other chamber.

- We have implemented formal ITIL processes in incident management, major incident management and change management which have improved our customers' experience of IT as we have more formal method of assuring quality delivery of services. We can objectively show that we have improved our service delivery on the measures of leadership, policy, planning, resources, people and training and are now also improving delivery performance.

- One interesting experience has been that by implementing procedures [of] published tenders for the procurement of goods and services in the field of IT and telecommunications, the Senate has been able to gain access to new technology, which is often offered at low cost… which [also] allows the House with few resources …to provide… their legislators the best technology in the field of parliamentary work to support developers.

FINDINGS

An adequate infrastructure - broadly defined as hardware, software, systems and people - is the essential foundation for providing effective ICT support and services to legislatures. Infrastructures for modern parliaments are complex and expensive but they are a necessary investment that must be maintained and continually upgraded, expanded to provide new services when necessary, and made sufficiently secure to ensure availability twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Responses to the survey regarding the budget for ICT suggested that some parliaments may need to increase their investment in technology to achieve greater benefit. Resources are always limited, however, and investment in infrastructure should be based on the strategic plan to ensure that the funding is directed to the parliament's most important goals.

The survey attempted to gather information on the current state of the following major components of parliamentary infrastructures.

General ICT services. These are the basic operational and service components necessary for the effective use of technology in parliament. They include such things as data network management, PC support, systems administration and programming, application development and maintenance, web publishing, and voice communications. Most parliaments (almost 90% in all cases) are able to provide the majority of these services, although slightly more than 10% indicated that they do not, which surely affects their capacity to provide adequate ICT support. Most services are provided by in-house staff, although the reliance on contractors for application development and maintenance suggests an area for inter-parliamentary collaboration that might help reduce costs. Many, almost 60% of respondents, do not have service level agreements in place.

Systems and services for members and staff. This category focuses on the range of hardware, software, and services provided to members and staff. Findings suggest that many parliaments do not yet provide full services to members. For example, only 64% provide a computer, 54% a printer, and 50% a cell phone. In some parliaments, staff may be more likely than members to have a computer and a printer, which may reflect a reliance on staff for technical assistance.

Networks and servers. Questions regarding these elements, which affect access to Intranets, Internet, and databases, were open-ended and more difficult to summarize. As expected, the range in capacity among parliaments appears significant. However, most parliaments (over 90%) do provide a local area network and some level of Internet access.

General applications. These applications are generic in nature and cover a wide range of functions such as word processing, document management and videoconferencing. Office suites that provide a range of desktop applications are widely available, and predominantly proprietary as opposed to open source. Document management systems are provided by only 55% of respondents. This finding is a concern because of the importance of document management to parliaments for fundamental operations like bill drafting, amending legislation, and providing minutes of plenary sessions. Fewer than 50% of respondents have systems for audio and video streaming, workflow, and video or teleconferencing.

Applications specific to parliament. While large percentages of respondents have systems for maintaining websites and for recording plenary debate and minutes, only 59% report systems for bill and amendment drafting. This mirrors the finding on document management systems above. Similarly, only 64% have systems for supporting the preparation of committee documents. Only 46% provide committee websites and 34% provide member websites; and both are critical for achieving the goal of transparency. Although most provide members with e-mail accounts, far fewer (37%) provide other systems for constituent communication, perhaps reflecting the challenge of managing such systems effectively. Many parliaments provide support for knowledge management through access to the Internet and Intranets and automated library systems. It seems common to many respondents that a number of knowledge management applications are developed outside the parliament and then brought inside for support.

Staff. Skilled staff who are knowledgeable about legislative bodies are an integral part of an e-parliament infrastructure. They are vital for developing, managing, and maintaining ICT services and applications that are tailored to the needs of member, committees, and officials and that support the highest goals of the legislature. The average number of in-house staff among respondents is 31; the average number of contractors is 22. As expected, ranges for these figures are large. Data reflect the general approach of relying on in-house staff for applications or projects that require knowledge of the complexity of legislatures, while employing contractors to support more generic functions or develop common applications.

Budget. Formal findings can not be offered in this area as data provided is not consistent and reliable. However, indications suggest that many parliaments are not investing adequately in ICT. Later chapters will discuss where legislatures could provide additional resources to obtain greater strategic benefits for the institution and for its members.

Chapter V
Documenting the Legislative Process

Box 5.1

> "Parliaments function through the medium of documents. Debate in parliamentary chambers is recorded as documents. Legislation is passed through the voting process via a combination of documents; the proposed legislation itself, proposed amendments, committee working papers and so on."
>
> Legal Informatics and Management of Legislative Documents, edited by Giovanni Sartor (EUI, Florence), November 2007

Parliamentary documents, such as bills, amendments, committee reports and texts of debates and hearings, are the fundamental records of legislatures. These documents must be prepared quickly, efficiently and accurately. They must be distributed easily and then amended, revised and redistributed just as easily. And they must be archived effectively to ensure availability and long-term preservation. Modern technologies enable these processes to occur in a way that provides members and committees more time and flexibility to consider and to craft their proposals and their reports.

The documents of the legislature must also be made readily available to citizens and to civil society. Access to these documents serves to legitimize the authority of the parliament and provides one of the most important means of ensuring respect for the rule of law. In addition, "individual citizens' capacity to access government documents significantly affects their capacity to participate in and critique public decisions. It is impossible to engage in successful public debate or reasoned critique of government action without firm knowledge of the content and implications of these actions…"[1].

For many years - and in the case of some parliaments, for several hundreds of years - the creation and distribution of legislative documents have been both controlled and limited by the fact that they existed only on paper. While this has facilitated their long-term preservation and availability, it has also meant that the processes for preparing and disseminating them have been relatively slow, inflexible and expensive. Moreover, access to documents that exist in paper only can be restricted to a few members, at least in the often critical formative stages of the legislative process. Editing paper documents takes time and discourages last minute improvements or accommodation to achieve wider consensus. Informal methods - the proverbial amendment written on a piece of scrap paper - bypass cumbersome drafting exercises. And most citizens have to "…go to the law to see it…". That is, they have to go to the parliament or to a library - once a copy of the law has arrived there - or to some other office that makes it available. In short, timely access was possible only for those who could afford to be present during the many stages in the life of a bill.

However, the use of modern technologies has dramatically changed the parameters and the dynamics involved in documenting the legislative process. This has often resulted in greater efficien-

1 Laura DeNardis and Tam Eric, *Open Documents and Democracy – a Political Basis for Open Documents Standards*, Yale Information Society Project White Paper, 2007.

cies, lower costs, and faster and wider distribution for both members and the public. While this does not necessarily allow citizens to affect the outcome directly, it has significantly increased the openness and transparency of the process and therefore imbued it with greater legitimacy. The value of employing technology to enhance public access to laws and regulations was specifically identified in the declaration arising from the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, as in Box 5.2.

Box 5.2

> "We urge governments, using the potential of ICTs, to create public systems of information on laws and regulations, envisaging a wider development of public access points and supporting the broad availability of this information."
>
> Tunis Commitment, para. 17, World Summit on the Information Society

PREPARING BILLS AND AMENDMENTS

Systems for drafting and managing proposed laws and their accompanying amendments have become an essential requirement for modern legislatures in carrying out their law-making responsibilities. They can be customized to accommodate requirements based on a legislature's specific procedures and practices to reflect where proposed legislation originates, who can amend it, and who prepares the final version. It can be modified to deal with differences such as whether there is a drafting office, whether members can prepare their own amendments, and how the final text is codified into the existing body of law.

Systems for bills

Despite the importance for parliaments to have the capacity to manage bills in digital format, as shown in Figure 5-1, only 43% of the respondents stated that they have a system in place. Although 38% said that they are planning or considering such a system, the relatively low percentage of those who have an operational system in existence must be considered as evidence of slow adoption of ICT in parliament.

Figure 5-1: Use of systems for creating and managing bills in digital format, by country's income group

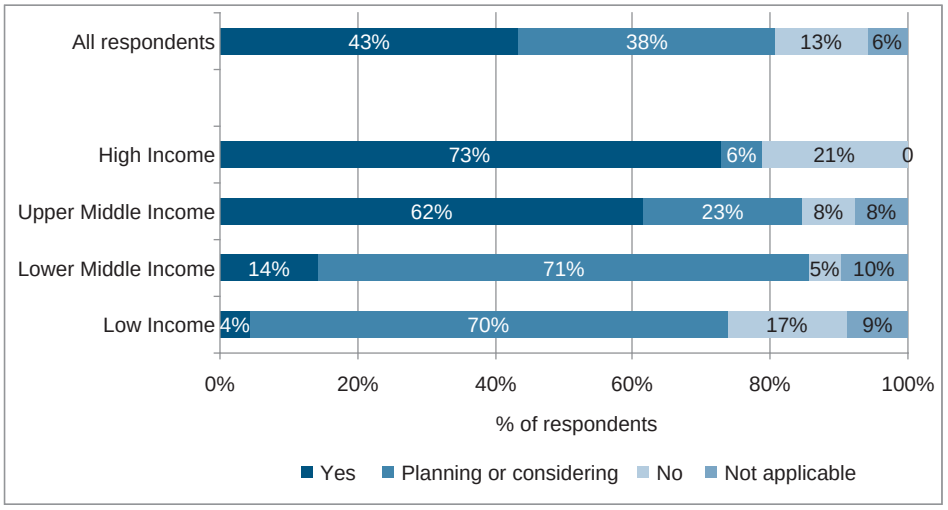


Figure 5-1 also shows a substantial difference between chambers and parliaments from the lower and higher income groups, although the fact that so many who do not yet have a system in place are planning or considering one is a positive sign.

(Source: Survey, Section 3, Question 1)

While there are many understandable causes for this, lack of resources being prominent, the result is that many legislative bodies are less effective in carrying out their law-making responsibilities and that public access to the legislative process is reduced.

Capabilities of bill systems

Systems for managing bills must have a number of characteristics to be responsive to the needs of the officers and members of parliaments. The survey asked about several of these, including:

- *Workflow*. This allows bills to be moved automatically and smoothly among the members, officers and organizational units responsible for preparing and distributing them. Workflow also should include the ability to control versions so that authorized changes by one person or office are not overwritten by another.
- *Accommodations of all versions of bills*. Procedures differ among parliaments for handling draft legislation, and these can result in different versions of a bill as it moves through the legislative process. It is important that all versions of proposed bills be introduced in the system as soon as possible. These include preliminary versions that are under active consideration for presentation to the body, versions that are considered and reported by committees - along with committee amendments if they are part of the process -, versions considered and voted upon in plenary sessions - along with amendments considered in plenary -, and versions sent from the legislature to the executive.
- *Exchange and integration of documents and information*. To have the complete legislative history of an act, it is essential that a bill system be able to integrate relevant documents and information related to a specific measure, such as amendments, plenary votes, status steps, and committee reports and activities, along with documents from other chambers, the government, or the judiciary.
- *Accommodation of bills with special formats*. Some types of bills, such as those dealing with the budget, may have particular requirements that affect their presentation online and in paper. A bill system must accommodate these requirements.
- *Authentication of users*. This is a crucial security procedure for ensuring the accuracy and authoritativeness of the text of the bill. There are various ways to implement authentication and the most secure systems involve several levels of authentication, for example by requiring both a fixed password and a constantly changing password or a physical token.

Of those who declared having a system for managing bills, the percentages of chambers and parliaments that have these capabilities are shown in Figure 5-2.[2]

Figure 5-2: Capabilities of systems for managing bills

Capabilities	%
Supports workflow	45%
Accommodates all versions of bills	67%
Exchanges information with other chamber	63%[3]
Accommodates bills with special formats	69%
Requires User Authentication	88%

(Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10)

Quality control procedures

Because the process of preparing and disseminating bills is subject to errors, it is also important for a bill system to have procedures for ensuring accuracy. Many parliaments have established practices for identifying and correcting mistakes. A representative example is found in the Parliament of Austria, which de-

2 Figure 5-2 is based on the responses of those who answered "yes" to Question 1 in Section 3 of the survey, indicating that they have systems in place now. As can be seen in the summary of responses to Question 1 (Figure 5-1), 43% (45) of respondents said that they have systems. A few respondents who have systems did not answer the questions concerning their capabilities; the percentages in Figure 5-2 are based on those who did answer these questions.

3 This percentage is based on the number of parliaments who have a bicameral system and who have systems for creating and managing bills in digital format (n=24).

termined that "…in view of the large number of possible error sources in drafting and formatting texts, quality control instances must be introduced at various stages of the procedures".[4] A respondent to the survey also noted that "…usually bills are received from the government as hard copy and when converting it to digital format a chance that both copies might not be the same is high. Therefore a procedure should be set as to make sure that both copies are exactly the same".

Of those who have bill systems, 69% reported that they do have procedures in place for identifying and correcting errors. And of those who have such procedures, 41% reported that they are carried out on a daily basis, and 17% reported a weekly basis. In 90% of the cases, errors were corrected within the same day or less.[5]

While it is positive that a large percentage have procedures in place, the numerous possibilities for introducing errors in the preparation of documents as complex as bills suggest that the percentage of respondents with procedures in place for detecting errors on a daily basis is low. Even though the survey indicates that mistakes are corrected quickly when they are found, the overall timeliness of quality control of draft bills may need to be improved in a number of parliaments.

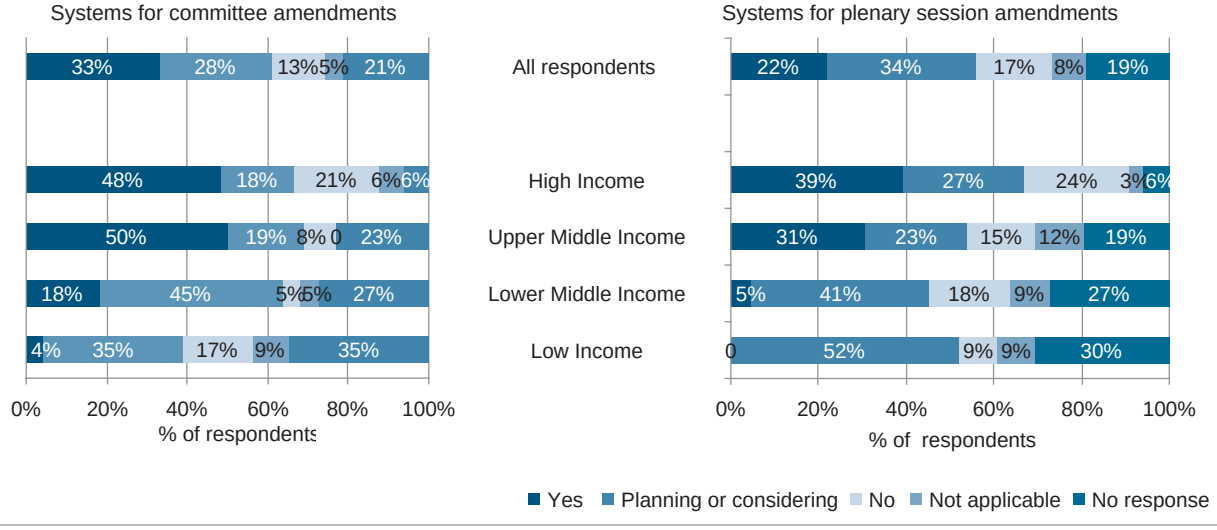
Timeliness

Technology-based systems for managing bills also allow them to be made available to members and to the public quickly. Of those who have systems, 89% make the text of proposed legislation available to members as soon as the text could be completed and verified, and 7% by the next day. For the public, availability was somewhat slower but still impressive; 66% make bills available as soon as the text was completed and verified and another 24% by the next day. Thus 90% or more of those who have a system to prepare and manage bills are able to make them available for both members and the public as soon as they can be completed and verified or by the next day.[6]

Systems for amendments

Fewer respondents reported having systems for managing amendments to bills offered in committee (33%) or in plenary sessions (22%). As with systems for bills, there were substantial differences based on income level.

Figure 5-3: Use of systems for committee and plenary session amendments to bills in digital format, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 15 and 18)

4 The E-Law Project in Austria, Vienna, October 2006. Available at www.parlament.gv.at.
5 Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 7 to 9.
6 Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 11 and 12.

Of those who do have systems for committee or plenary amendments, about one in two reported that their systems are able to show the changes in the bill that the amendment would make.[7] This is a sophisticated capability that can make it easier for members to assess the impact of the amendment and greatly enhance the efficiency of the legislative process. As discussed later in this chapter, this capability can be more easily implemented by the adoption of an open standard for tagging text.

COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

A system for preparing and managing documents and activities is also a key requirement for supporting the work of committees, which in many legislatures are considered the "policy workshops" where bills are closely reviewed, debated, revised and initially approved or disapproved. Some committees prepare reports that summarize their deliberations and recommendations regarding specific proposals.

A critical need of committees, therefore, is a drafting and document management system that supports the editing of bill texts, the preparation of amendments and the final report of the committee. This system should produce and manage documents so that they can be easily incorporated into or linked to other documents, distributed to members of the committee and to the public, and reported to the full legislature.

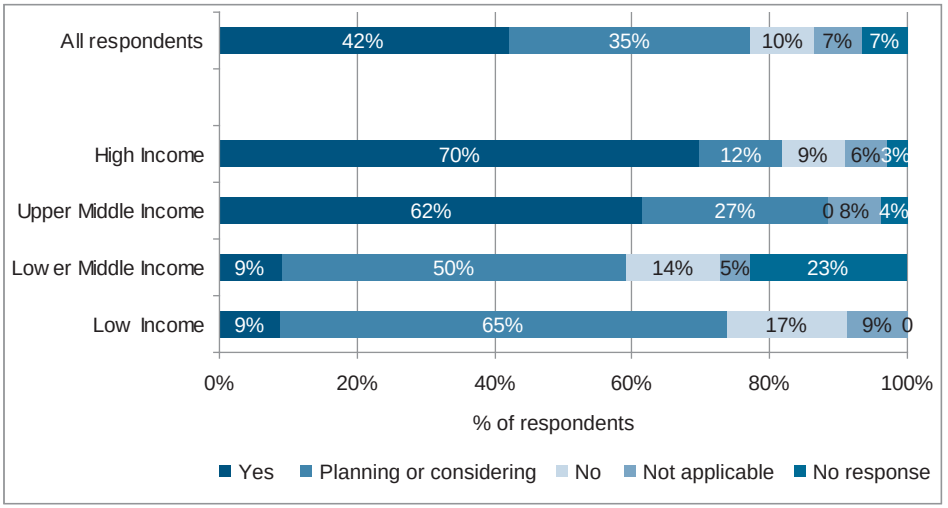
In the course of their deliberations, committees may also hold hearings during which they receive evidence or testimony in a variety of formats. Committees need systems that support all of these modes of information gathering and the preparation of a report that permits both verbatim reporting and summarization.

The previous section of this chapter reported the survey findings on systems for committee amendments. This section discusses the findings related to committee hearings, committee reports on proposed legislation, and committee meetings.

Systems for hearings

Fewer than half of all respondents (42%) reported that their chamber has systems for recording and managing the text of committee hearings. The differences among income groups for hearing systems are significant but, as Figure 5-4 shows, the percentage of those planning or considering systems (35 %) is a positive indication.

Figure 5-4: Use of systems for recording and managing text of committee hearings in digital format, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 4, Question 3)

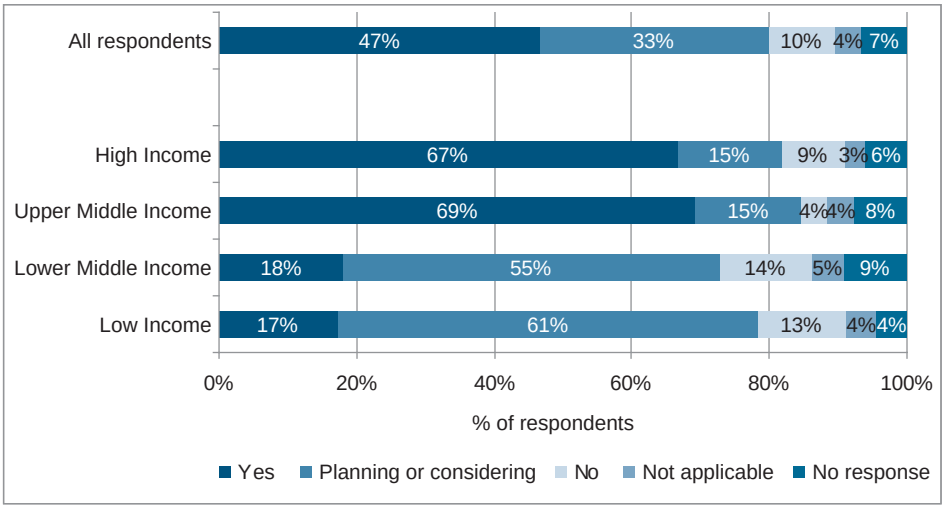
7 Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 15-17 and 18-20.

These percentages are similar to those who have a system for bills (43%) or are planning for one (38%) as shown in Figure 5-1. The differences among income groups are also similar for systems for bills and hearings. A further analysis of some survey questions revealed that 73% of those who have bills systems also have committee hearing systems, 13% are planning hearing systems, and 11% report that hearing systems do not apply to them. Of those who are planning a system for bills, 67% are also planning a system for hearings and 15% already have one in place.

Systems for reports

Closer to half of respondents (47%) have systems for preparing committee reports in digital format. Again, the differences among income groups, as represented in Figure 5-5, are significant but not quite as disparate as they are for hearings or bills.

Figure 5-5: Use of systems for recording and managing text of committee reports on proposed legislation in digital format, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 4, Question 5)

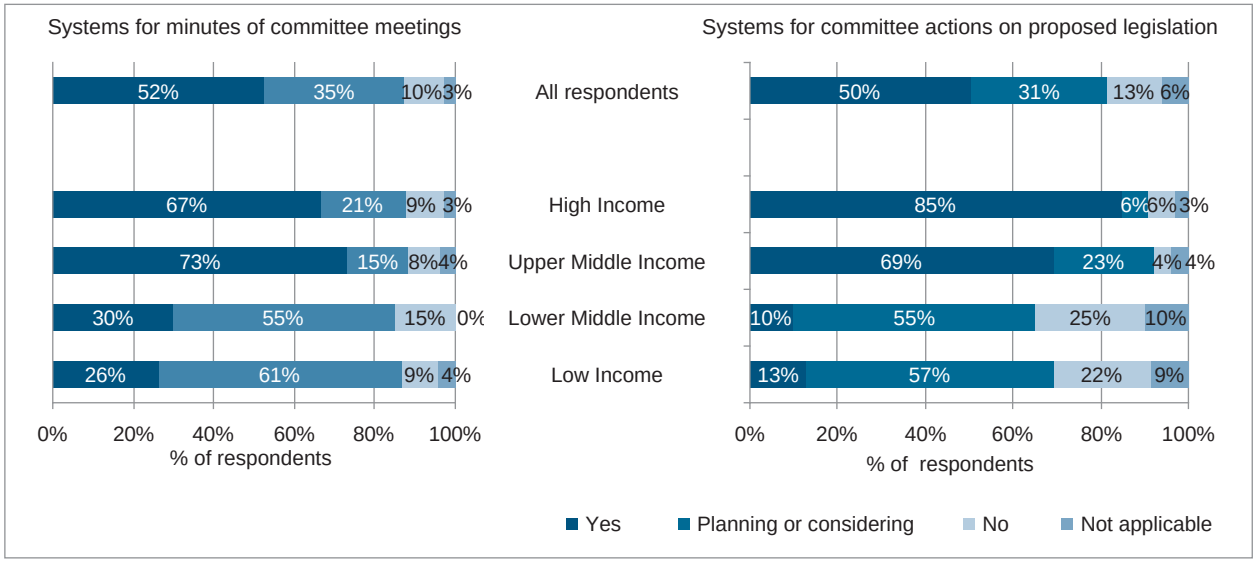
A further analysis of these questions found that 83% of those who have bills systems also have committee report systems, 5% are planning report systems, and 12% state that report systems do not apply to them or that they are not planning a system. Of those who are planning a system for bills, 22% already have a system for reports and 76% are planning a system.

Systems for meetings and actions

Figure 5-6 shows that just over half of chambers and parliaments (52%) reported that they have systems for preparing the minutes of committee meetings. Also, 50% reported that they have systems for recording committee actions on proposed legislation.

Committees hold meetings on a variety of topics, including but not limited to actions on proposed legislation. The survey therefore made a distinction between these two types of information: committee minutes and committee actions on bills. For some committees, the minutes of their meetings may take a longer time to produce and may be seen as less critical than other documents. Committee actions on bills, on the other hand, while they may be part of the minutes, can also be treated as distinct information items that are collected and added to the status information for a bill in a process separate from that of preparing minutes. For these reasons, the survey posed different questions on minutes of meetings and on actions taken on bills.

Figure 5-6: Use of systems for recording and managing in digital format: a) the text of the minutes of committee meetings and b) information about committee actions on proposed legislation, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 4, Question 1 and Section 5, Question 1)

A further analysis of responses found that over 90% of those who have systems for bills either have or are planning to build systems for committee minutes and committee actions on bills.

In addition to preparing a variety of documents, some parliament committees use audio and video technologies to make their deliberations available in real time. This can include the use of TV and satellite channels, as well as webcasting. With sufficient technical and staffing resources, some are also able to maintain an electronic archive that allows on-demand access after the event. Audio and video webcasting and the maintenance of an archive require an additional investment in technical infrastructure and staff with skills in these technologies. But the ability to observe committees at work without being present in the room is increasingly valuable to staff, the press and others in the civil society. Many parliaments are seeking to do more in terms of real time webcasting and providing on-demand access. Further discussion of this trend is presented in Chapter 6.

A summary of the survey findings on systems that support the work of committees is shown in Figure 5-7.

Figure 5-7: Respondents with systems for committee documents and activities

Document or activity	%
Committee Hearings	42%
Committee Reports on Proposed Legislation	47%
Committee Meetings	52%
Committee Actions on Proposed Legislation	50%

(Source: Survey, Section 4, Questions 1, 3, and 5; and Section 5, Question 1)

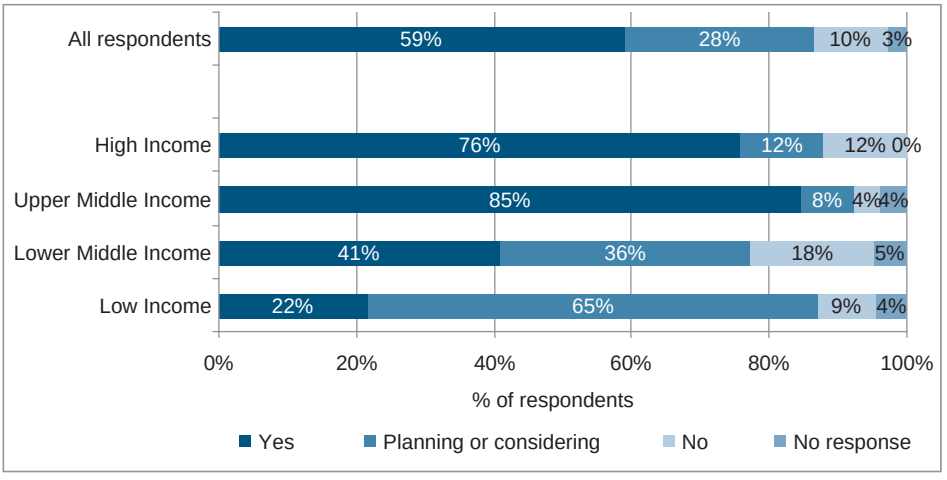
PLENARY DOCUMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Plenary sessions are fundamental to the work of legislative bodies. It is in plenary that the final decision on proposed legislation is made by the body. The document management technologies required to support plenary or floor activities are much the same as those needed by committees. Through different applications these systems must be able to produce a verbatim record of debate, a record of votes, and a record of other actions that occurred during a session.

Systems for debates and speeches

A number of parliaments have made highly effective use of ICT to provide accurate verbatim accounts of debate in plenary sessions on a timely basis, sometimes on the same day and sometimes within a few hours. Others offer text summaries of floor actions in near real time using sophisticated recording and transcription technology. Some parliaments use technology to prepare and publish an official record of the debate and actions taken in plenary session within a day, or at the most in a few days.

Figure 5-8: Use of systems for recording and managing text of debate and speeches in plenary sessions in digital format, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 4, Question 9)

Almost three fifths of chambers and parliaments (59%) reported that they have systems for recording and managing the text of debates and speeches in plenary sessions; and a further 28% are planning a system.

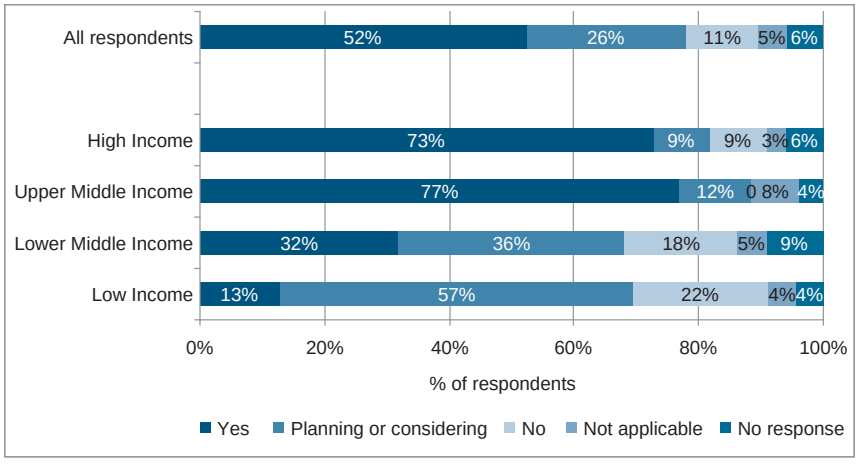
The nearly 10% who are not planning a system may reflect a different role of debate in the plenary session or perhaps a need to defer planning until higher priorities are addressed.

Systems for votes

52% of all respondents reported that they have systems for recording and managing votes, and 26% reported that they are planning for one. 11% are not planning or considering a system for plenary votes, 5% reported that it does not apply, and 6% had no reply.

Providing access to the voting records of individual members is important for transparency. However, because of differences in the way that voting is carried out - for example it may not be done very often or it may be done by party blocks - a system for tracking individual votes may not be as important a priority in some legislatures. However, in those parliaments in which the votes of individual members do matter, a system for tracking them is essential to ensure accountability to the electorate.

Figure 5-9: Use of systems for recording and managing votes in plenary sessions in digital format, by country income group



(Source: Survey, Section 4, Question 11)

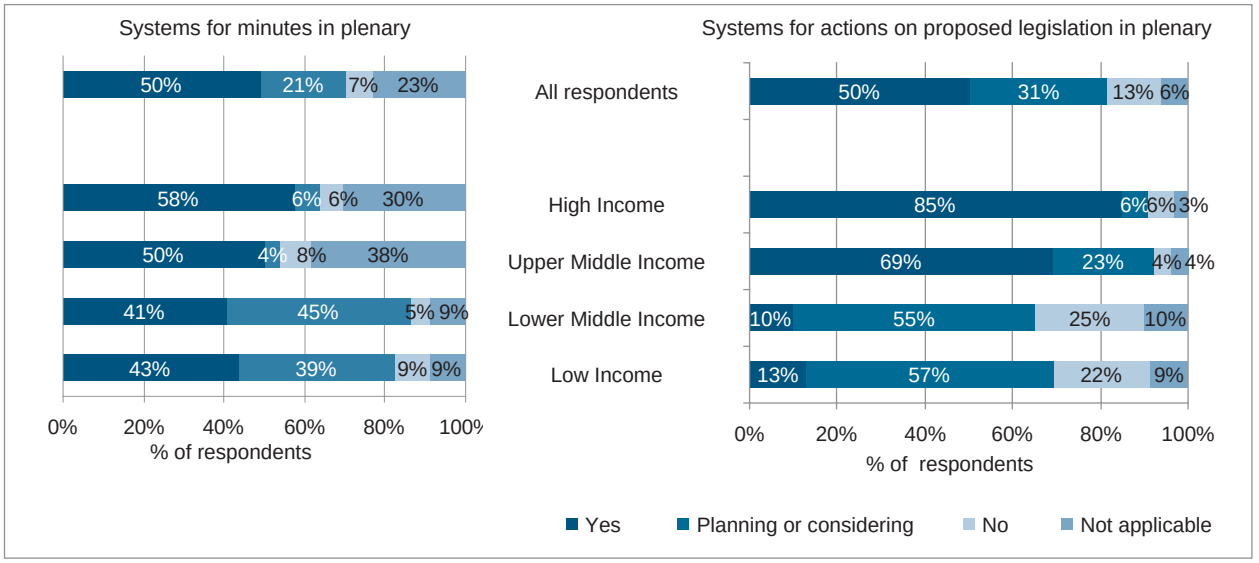
Systems for minutes of sessions

The actions of plenary sessions, along with verbatim accounts of speeches and debates, are typically recorded in some form of published record that is made available to members and the public. In many legislatures this is one of the oldest publications of the institution. These actions can involve a great many aspects of the work of the parliament. Of special interest for many are the actions taken in plenary on proposed legislation. For this reason, the survey inquired about minutes of plenary sessions, which cover all activities, and also about actions taken on proposed legislation.

50% of chambers and parliaments reported that they have systems for recording the minutes of the session, and 21% indicated that they are planning or considering a system. In addition, 7% said they were not planning or considering a system. Nearly ¼ of respondents (23%) gave no reply to this question, which may, regrettably, reflect some confusion over its meaning. It is interesting to note that the differences among income groups on this question were much less substantial among those who have such systems.

On the other hand, a larger percentage (55%) reported that they have systems for recording plenary actions on proposed legislation and 28% are planning one. In this instance the differences among income groups seen for other systems reappeared. Only 6% gave no reply, while 11% said they were not planning or considering a system.

Figure 5-10: Use of systems for recording and managing in digital format: a) text of minutes of plenary sessions and b) information about plenary or floor actions on proposed legislation, by country income group



(Source: Survey, Section 4, Question 7 and Section 5, Question 3)

As with committees, a number of legislatures also broadcast and/or webcast their proceedings for themselves and for the public at large, and provide archival access. Further discussions of this trend are presented in Chapter 6.

A summary of the survey findings on systems that support plenary sessions is shown in Figure 5-11

Figure 5-11: Respondents with systems for plenary documents and activities

Document or activity	% of respondents
Debates and Speeches	59%
Votes	52%
Plenary Meetings	50%
Plenary Actions on Proposed Legislation	55%

(Source: Survey, Section 4, Questions 7, 9, and 11; Section 5, Question 3)

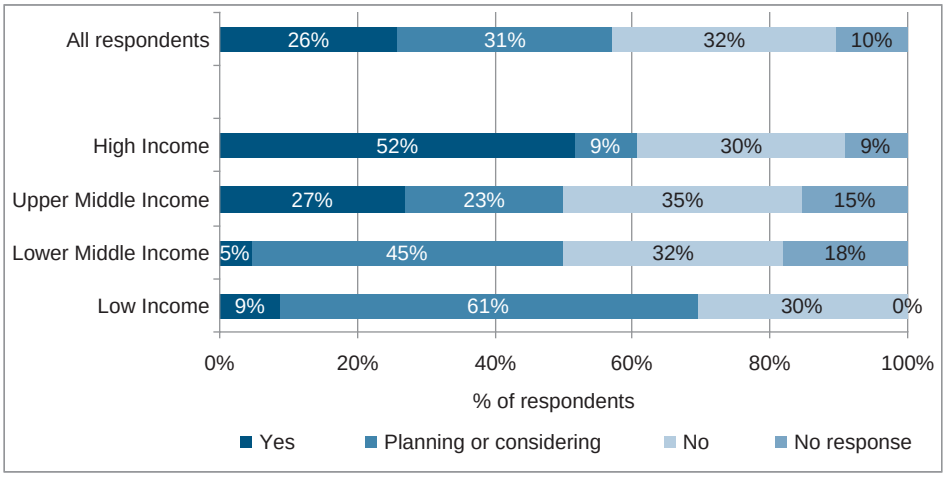
GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Government actions play a major role in the legislative process. The survey inquired whether parliaments had a system for recording these related status steps. Such actions might include the submission of the bill, responses to questions about the bill, revisions submitted, final agreement, or a host of other steps specific to the particular rules and procedures of the country. Information on government actions is also important for providing a comprehensive legislative history of a bill.

Only 26% of the chambers and parliaments reported that they have a system for recording government actions on proposed legislation, and 31% reported that they are planning one. A large percentage (32%) indicated that they are not planning or considering such a system. It is interesting to note that this percentage was consistent across income groups.

The relatively low percentage of respondents who have or are planning a system to track government actions may have several causes. It may reflect a lack of commitment to providing a complete history of a bill; it may rest on an assumption that government actions are available on other systems; or it may be an indication of the difficulty of obtaining this information easily and reliably. Whatever the cause, the net result of not tracking government actions of proposed legislation is likely to be an incomplete legislative information system.

Figure 5-12: Use of systems for recording and managing information in digital text format about Government actions on proposed legislation, by country income group



(Source: Survey, Section 5, Question 5)

CHARACTERISTICS OF SYSTEMS FOR COMMITTEE, PLENARY, AND GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

As with systems for bills, parliaments were asked about the authentication and error corrections procedures in the systems for tracking committee, plenary, and government actions on proposed legislation. The results from these questions are summarized in Figure 5-13, which shows that authentication is required by the largest percentage of systems (ranging from 62% to 88%), but error correction procedures are reported by one third or less of respondents for all systems, except those for the text of bills.

Figure 5-13: Comparison of characteristics of systems for bills and systems for tracking actions on those bills

	Authentication	Error Corrections Procedures
Preparing and Managing Bills	88%	69%
Tracking Committee Actions	67%	33%
Tracking Plenary Actions	62%	33%
Tracking Government Actions	70%	30%

(Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 7 and 10; Section 5, Questions 2, 4, and 6)

DOCUMENT STANDARDS

Document management systems must use some method of marking or tagging the elements of a document. In the past these "markup codes" or "tags", as they are sometimes referred to, have been used to markup the typographical features of documents to primarily control the format of a document, specifying, for example, that a section of text should be indented, or bolded, or enclosed in quotes. More recently, systems for tagging elements of documents have become increasingly sophisticated, and they are now meant to markup the structural element of a document, such as whether the text is a heading for a section, a paragraph of text, the title of the document, etc., and also the parts of the text that are semantically relevant for the documents in question. Software is then used not only to control the appearance of the document based on these structural tags, allowing the same content to be tailored for print, online, or some other presentation medium or format, but also to enable the development of high value information services based on the structural and semantic markup of the documents.

There is a concerted effort among some legislatures to use open standards such as XML (eXtensible Markup Language) as the standard for documents. Open standards are, by definition, non-proprietary, which means that any company has the possibility to use them to develop software applications. This helps to avoid reliance on a single vendor. The use of open standards is valuable because it extends the accessibility of legislative documents, not only within the parliament, but between the legislature and the government, between parliaments and the civil society, and among parliaments internationally. It can also help to increase competition among vendors and reduce on the long-term costs for parliaments.

Box 5.3

> "Given that the process is document-centric, the key enabler of streamlined information technology in Parliaments will be the use of open document standards for the principal types of documents. Such open document standards will allow easy exchange and aggregation of parliamentary information, in addition to reducing the time required to make the information accessible via different electronic publishing media."
>
> Legal Informatics and Management of Legislative Documents, edited by Giovanni Sartor (EUI), Florence, 2007

Advantages of open standards for legislative documents

There are a number of important advantages to the use of open standards in parliaments:

1. ***Exchange of documents.*** Open standards make it easier to exchange documents between individuals and organizations even if they use different software for editing and managing documents. This can facilitate the exchange of documents between departments within the parliament, with another chamber, between parliament and the government, with citizens and the civil society, and with legislative bodies and organizations in other countries.
2. ***Search.*** Search engines can provide more accurate results, and users can formulate more precise queries, if data is tagged for its specific content. Open standards permit documents to be used with a variety of search engines, thereby giving legislatures choices in the selection of a search engine.
3. ***Linking among documents.*** Legislative documents are highly interrelated. Open standards allow links among documents to be created automatically and even have the potential, depending on the depth of tagging, to support linking between elements within documents. For example, a section of a proposed bill could be automatically linked to the portion of an existing law that it would amend.
4. ***Multiple forms of output.*** A source document tagged with an open standard could be used to produce different appearances of a bill such as for an online website, a paper copy, or a version modified to be incorporated into another document. XML can also be used to produce versions which could be easier for persons with disabilities to access by supporting, for example, large type fonts or audio output.
5. ***Consistency in formatting.*** Tagging standards can be used to encourage or even enforce proper formatting so that members and others who prepare the texts do not have to know the exact conventions used when they draft bills or amendments.
6. ***Ease of preparation.*** Open standards can be demanding to use but once understood they can ease the effort required to prepare a bill or amendment by guiding the drafter through the required formatting steps.
7. ***Preservation.*** One of the most important uses of open standards is to ensure the long-term preservation of documents. Proprietary systems change constantly in response to market pressures for new capabilities. As these systems are enhanced, they often reach a point where they cannot be used to access documents prepared using older versions of the same software because the documents use tags that are not understood by the newer software. Over time this has the potential for making it difficult, if not impossible, to read the digital version of documents prepared earlier. It becomes a more complex version of the kind of problem faced by programmers at the beginning of the year 2000 when many systems could not properly read dates because they used only two digits to represent the year.[8]
8. ***Access for citizens.*** The problem of long-term preservation becomes most acute in the context of ensuring permanent access for citizens to legislative documents. The quote in Box 5.4 eloquently summarizes this problem.

8 Hence 00 would have meant 1900 rather than 2000 in systems that did not permit four digits for the year.

Box 5.4

> "The archiving of documents is also a fundamental responsibility of democratic governments, as access to such records is important for holding governments accountable and for deliberation over the effectiveness of government institutions and policies. Standards can raise serious problems of backward incompatibility, non-interoperable proprietary formats, and rapid software and media obsolescence. Any of these could prevent government agencies from guaranteeing that electronically archived public records will remain accessible in the future… Electronic information accessible today may become inaccessible in ten years because previously dominant physical media, software, and other proprietary formats are no longer supported."
>
> Laura DeNardis and Tam Eric, Open Documents and Democracy – a Political Basis for Open Documents Standards, Yale Information Society Project White Paper, 2007

Challenges in establishing and using open document standards

There are several significant challenges that must be addressed when implementing an open document standard such as XML, and it is important not to underestimate the effort required to achieve the potential benefits.

First, word processing software that can accommodate open standards is not yet as widely used as proprietary word processing software. There is good progress in this area, but the extent of the installed base of older proprietary software can act as a constraint on the implementation of newer systems and standards. In this regard, the survey results cited in Chapter 4 noted that very few respondents reported the use of open source word processors, which rely on open standards such as XML. The vast majority of respondents reported that they use commercial proprietary word processing software.

Even as better drafting software for open standards becomes available and is adopted in parliaments, it may mean that users have to learn two different word processors - a proprietary one that has been installed for a number of years and is used on many existing documents, and a different one for drafting bills. Some parliaments have attempted to address this problem by modifying installed proprietary software to accommodate an open standard. This may be a viable solution for the short term, but it can lead to problems later on when the proprietary software is upgraded.

Second, open standards such as XML require a substantial investment of time and effort by key stakeholders to agree on the format of official documents and on the tags to be used to mark them up. This can sometimes be an easier task for legislatures that do not already have an investment in an existing drafting system. However, regardless of whether a new or a replacement system is being developed, it is important to take note of the effort needed to reach agreement on how the standard will apply.

Sometimes differences are significant enough that agreement cannot be reached on a shared format for drafting and editing. This may require the development of several formats to accommodate differences in drafting practices, and then the development of an exchange format to facilitate the movement of documents from one group or organization to another. These are reasonable solutions and would have to be implemented regardless of whether the standards being used were open or proprietary. The most important task is to establish a commitment to exchange documents and to ensure their long-term accessibility in digital form.

Third, drafting systems and their associated document management systems must sometimes be tailored to meet the procedures and practices of a particular legislature. Customization increases efficiency but adds to cost in both the development phase and subsequent updates.

Collectively or individually, these items can increase the cost of a project to develop a system based on open standards. Even though cost savings may eventually be realized, the initial outlays can raise concerns. In the legislative environment, however, the concept of "return on investment" needs to be judged differently. The values that legislative bodies are pursuing through e-parliament - transparency, accessibility, accountability and effectiveness- need to guide decisions on such a critical aspect of access to public documentation as open standards. As mentioned in Chapter I, there are important political implications for enhancing democracy in providing full access through open document formats.

Political support for the use of open standards in parliament is therefore essential. There is no easy solution to this particular issue. As noted in previous chapters of this Report, these challenges require the engagement and leadership of senior officials and managers within the parliament who understand the long-term benefits of developing systems with open standards, and who will support the effort and the resources required. Without such support, the goals and the benefits are unlikely to be achieved. The declaration that emerged from the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis recognized the validity of use for both proprietary and open source software, but encouraged collaboration and open approaches particularly in areas where public access is critical.

Box 5.5

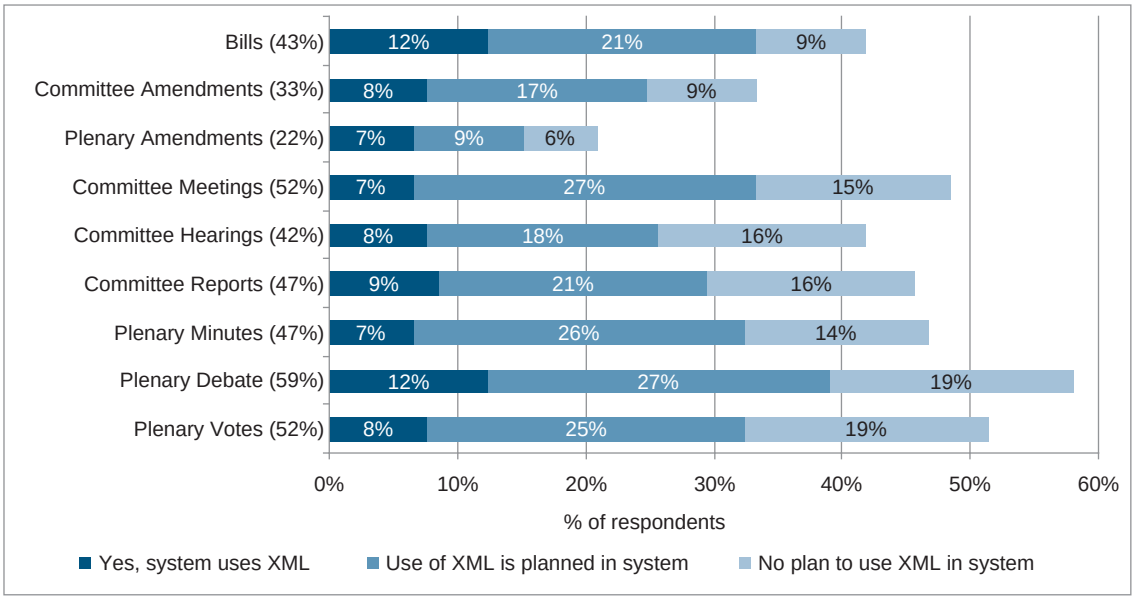
> "Our conviction is that governments, the private sector, civil society, the scientific and academic community, and users can utilize various technologies and licensing models, including those developed under proprietary schemes and those developed under open-source and free modalities, in accordance with their interests and with the need to have reliable services and implement effective programmes for their people. Taking into account the importance of proprietary software in the markets of the countries, we reiterate the need to encourage and foster collaborative development, interoperative platforms and free and open-source software, in ways that reflect the possibilities of different software models, notably for education, science and digital inclusion programmes."
>
> Tunis Commitment, para. 29, World Summit on the Information Society

Survey results on open document standards

The survey asked about the current or planned use of XML by parliaments that have any of the types of systems discussed in this chapter.

Figure 5-14 provides an integrated view of a number of the findings that have been discussed separately in earlier sections of this chapter. As the percentages in parentheses indicate, only three documents are reported by 50% or more of respondents to be prepared and managed using an ICT-based system - plenary debate (59%), plenary votes (52%) and committee meetings (52%). All others fall below 50%.

Figure 5-14: Use of XML among chambers that have the system listed for creating/recording and managing legislative documents in digital format (over all 105 respondents)



The total length of the bar roughly corresponds to the percentage of chambers that have the system listed (% in parenthesis) (Source: Survey, Sections 3 and 4)

Very few of these systems currently use XML. The case of proposed legislation illustrates this point. As noted previously, only 43% of all respondents (representing 45 chambers) currently have systems for preparing and managing bills. Of these, a total of 13 chambers (12% of all respondents) have bill systems that utilize XML. The countries and their chambers are: Argentina (Chamber of Deputies), Belgium (Senate), Brazil (Federal Senate), Canada (House of Commons), Estonia (Parliament), Israel (Parliament), Italy (Senate), Luxembourg (Chamber of Deputies), Poland (Sejm), Republic of Korea (National Assembly), Spain (Congress of Deputies), Sweden (Parliament) and the United Kingdom (House of Commons).

Among the 105 respondents, there are also 13 chambers which have an XML-based system for recording and publishing plenary debate. These countries and their chambers are: Argentina (Chamber of Deputies), Australia (Senate), Canada (House of Commons), Estonia (Parliament), France (Senate), Iceland (Parliament), Israel (Parliament), Italy (Senate), Mexico (Chamber of Deputies), Republic of Korea (National Assembly), Sweden (Parliament), the United Kingdom (House of Commons) and the European Parliament.

All other systems using XML fall into single digit percentages. The low rate of implementation for XML has several likely causes. As noted above, using open standards can entail a significant startup effort as well as costs. Although XML itself is a stable standard, the experience base of use within parliaments is still relatively small. It is primarily technologically mature parliaments that have taken the initiative to implement XML to date. Also, many systems may have been developed before XML was a viable standard and the conversion of an older system using proprietary document tags can be particularly challenging.

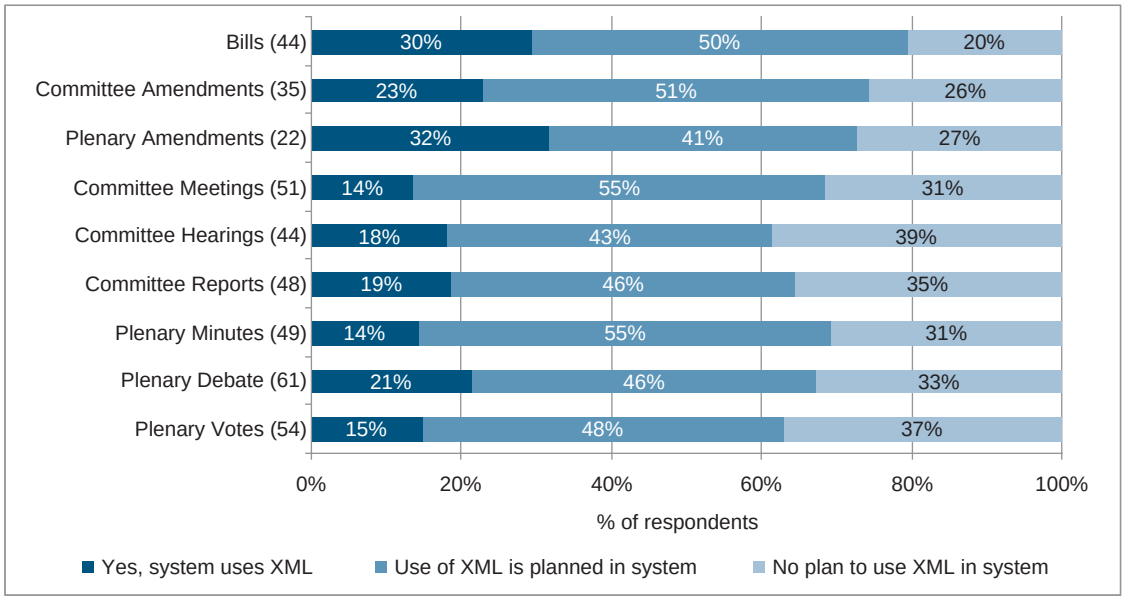
Figure 5-15: Chambers with bill or plenary debate systems using XML

Chamber	Bill system with XML	Plenary debate systems with XML
Argentina (Chamber of Deputies)	✓	✓
Australia (Senate)		✓
Belgium (Senate)	✓	
Brazil (Federal Senate)	✓	
Canada (House of Commons)	✓	✓
Estonia (Parliament)	✓	✓
European Parliament		✓
France (Senate)		✓
Iceland (Parliament)		✓
Israel (Parliament)	✓	✓
Italy (Senate)	✓	✓
Luxembourg (Chamber of Deputies)	✓	
Mexico (Chamber of Deputies)		✓
Poland (Sejm)	✓	
Republic of Korea (National Assembly)	✓	✓
Spain (Congress of Deputies)	✓	
Sweden (Parliament)	✓	✓
United Kingdom (House of Commons)	✓	✓

(Source: Survey, Section 3, Question 2 and Section 4, Question 10)

Figure 5-16 presents a somewhat more optimistic view of portions of this data. In this figure, the number of respondents who have systems and who have or are considering XML is calculated as a percentage of the number who currently have systems rather than as a percentage of all respondents.

Figure 5-16: Use of XML among chambers that have the system listed for creating/recording and managing legislative documents in digital format (over total number of chambers which have the system listed)



In parentheses the number of chambers which have the system listed and which reported its status with respect to XML (=100%)
(Source: Survey, Sections 3 and 4)

Figure 5-16 shows that of those who do have a system, 50% or more are planning or considering XML in the case of four of the nine types of documents. In addition, in a separate calculation that looked at all systems together, it was found that 25% of chambers or parliaments have at least one system that uses XML.[9] On the other hand, figure 5-16 also shows that a substantial percentage of respondents ranging from 20% to 39% are not considering XML at this time. Again, this finding may reflect the effort of converting an existing system, which may have required a significant effort to build, to a new document standard. It can be difficult to make the case for the resources required to move from an existing system that may be "satisfactory" to a better system whose benefits will take time to realize. This challenge is summed up effectively by the following comment in Box 5.6 provided by a chamber in the questionnaire.

Box 5.6

> "The project endeavours to upgrade a system which has been in place for almost 10 years. The upgrade of electronic systems and the requirement for extensive internet publishing and searching capabilities has found the current system lacking. With the upgrade there is also an expectation to move to a workflow based system enabling document sharing and versioning not available with the current system. It is also anticipated that any new system will provide a functionality to convert certain records currently maintained on paper to electronic format. This, in turn, will enable more sophisticated searching and reporting which will flow on to the production of other related electronic documents."
>
> Respondent to Survey

The survey did not ask those who do not yet have systems in place whether they plan to use XML as the document standard. However, a number of respondents who do not yet have a system for bills nevertheless chose to answer the question about XML. While these responses cannot be regarded as definitive, the overwhelming majority who provided an answer said that they are considering XML.

COMMENTS ON PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES

Several chambers and parliaments provided examples concerning upgrade or replacement strategies worth sharing.

- Functional upgrade and increased security of access and content. Introduction of electronic exchanges integrated with other actors of legislative process.
- 1. Contribute to efficiency in the legislative processes; 2. managing documents by workflow.
- 1. Automate all actions 2. Develop advanced applications of [commercial products] 3. Develop applications of software Open office and Open Source.
- 1. Open formats of documents (XML, ODF) 2. Workflow capability 3. Upgrade of software versions.
- A system in XML is in development to record the daily meetings and reports of Commissions. The main objective of this system is that internal and external users can access directly to the topics and speakers (senators) of documents that record the legislative work. Currently the minutes of the sessions are being recorded and work is done on the applications for recording consultations.

9 Source: Survey, Section 3, Questions 2, 16 and 19; and Section 4, Questions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14

- a) Workflow capabilities; b) versioning control; c) workgroup management; d) XML and open standards.
- Achieve the acquisition of bills and amendments directly in electronic format by leveraging and promoting the use of appropriate tools, as well as by involving in the process the actual drafters.
- Greater efficiency in the processing bills; greater availability of versions of bills. Better integration with other systems and websites; more efficient use of current technologies.
- ICT leadership is introducing workflow management in the existing systems.
- Our strategic plan is to migrate all the present system toward an XML-based system.
- Standardization by XML Schemes; Unified Resource Name Application; Assisted Editing of Bills; SOA Architecture.
- To achieve an integrated solution with work flow automation where content can be re-used and shared for many purposes.
- To make legislative texts more accessible to national and international members and to the public as well as to facilitate interaction between members and electors.

EFFORTS TO DEVELOP LEGISLATIVE OPEN DOCUMENT STANDARDS

In addition to the efforts already described from the survey, there are several related initiatives on open document standards underway in different parts of the world that are worth noting. Despite the challenges associated with implementing open document standards, the initiatives listed below have made significant progress and have begun to provide effective results in this field.[10]

Italian Norme in Rete Project

One noteworthy example of what can be achieved by a standards-based approach to the management of legislative documents is the Italian project Norme in Rete. On the basis of the definition of a common standard for legislative documents, a federated system has been developed using a distributed model involving all bodies which adopt normative acts: parliament, government and ministries, authorities and local authorities.

In this model each public administration is supposed to store its documents in a separate database, but to markup the documents according to the shared standard, and make them accessible to centralized retrieval facilities. The central indexes are built automatically by web spiders visiting the sites of the federated authorities.

It is interesting to note that in this model no editorial intervention is envisioned, since it is assumed that new documents will be provided by the normative institutions in a standard-compliant format, and that all software dealing with such documents - for drafting them, for managing their workflow, for their storage, for their retrieval, for their further processing - will take the standard into account. It is further assumed that the availability of a common standard will favour the development of software tools enabling these documents to be prepared from the start in a standard-compliant form.

Interestingly, the project is committed not only to providing information to the public, but also to making normative documents in the required format available to publishers and other third parties so that the documents can be reused and further distributed. According to this idea there is no state monopoly on

10 These examples are drawn from the work of Enrico Francesconi and Monica Palmirani in *Legal Informatics and Management of Legislative Documents*, pages 62-76, Edited by Giovanni Sartor (EUI, Florence), November 2007.

legal information; on the contrary, the provision of legal information to the public is open to the contribution of non-governmental institutions. Such institutions, while aiming at their legitimate commercial or non-commercial goals also contribute to the public goal of increasing knowledge of the law.

Box 5.7

"At the end of 2000, the Parliament of Italy passed a law (art. 107 of the act n. 388/2000) according to which: a) the current Italian legislation is to be made available on a public website which is to be freely accessible; and b) this task has to be carried out by both the Government and Parliament. The Secretaries General of the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers are on the Steering Committee of the project.
The emphasis is on the word "current". In the Italian legal system what is really difficult for citizens, as well as for the interpreter (the judge), is to recognize the final legislation resulting from the continuous, fragmentary and sometimes dispersed law-making process. This activity may involve the comparison of many acts and of explanatory notes, given that in the Italian legislation only very few consolidated codes are present. This is why the "107" project is extraordinarily ambitious and is taking up more time than expected.
Two features of this project can be pointed out as best practices:

- the creation of data processing standards that are progressively becoming nation-wide standards for all applications in the field of legislative informatics: URN (Public Administration Information Agency-AIPA circular n. 35 November 6th 2001, published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 262, November 10th 2001) and DTX-XML (Public Administration Information Agency-AIPA circular n. 40, April 22nd 2002, published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 102, May 3rd 2002).
- the involvement in the project of the Italian Parliament and parliamentary administrations (from both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies), together with government administration. This approach is proving to be highly positive: the architecture of the database (repository of current legislation) is seen as being closely linked to the legislative workflow (production of new legislation). Moreover, every future development of the legislative segments of the Parliamentary Information System will have to be carried out in compliance with the "107" standards and procedural rules.

Very recently, the Parliament of Italy intervened again on this issue, in order to strengthen this project by means of new funding and better coordination with other related national projects in the field of consolidation and improvement of the quality of legislation (Art. 2, paragraph 584, of the act n. 244/2007). According to the new provisions, the "107 project" is extended even to legislation issued by the regional legislative assemblies."

Enrico Seta, Research and Study Department, Chamber of Deputies of Italy
Contribution to the World e-Parliament Report 2008

Austrian e-Law Project

The Austrian E-Law project is another example of one of the most complete XML based systems for managing legislative proposals. The system has workflow capability to manage the status and exchange of draft bills from the time they are received from the government until they are digitally signed by the President and published in the Federal Law Gazette. The system uses a modified version of a commercial word processing software for editing, but converts documents to XML for exchange between offices. A "competence centre" has been established to support the rapporteurs of committees and committee secretaries in preparing committee reports, as well as the staff responsible for executing the legal enactments of the Nationalrat. The centre is also responsible for quality management and for the layout of legislative documents. The benefits of the system have been significant, including faster availability of documents (from weeks to days and even hours). Also, because the official version of laws are now digitally signed and published electronically, savings from printing costs are being estimated at potentially one million euro per year.

Canadian Prism Project

One of the most advanced examples of a comprehensive system can be found in the House of Commons in Canada. Over the past several years this chamber has developed an XML-based integrated technology system called Prism to replace nine stand alone systems that had been used to create and manage parliamentary documents and related information. Prism uses a shared database environment that allows staff of the secretariat to capture information once, at the source, eliminating duplicate data entry and increasing the consistency and integrity of the information across parliamentary publications.

Prism tracks a bill's progress through the legislative process as a series of events: it begins with the submission of a notice for the Notice Paper; continues through first and second readings cataloguing the speeches in the House of Commons and testimony and interventions in committee; the tabling of the committee's report; debate at the report stage, if any, and eventually the passage of the bill at third reading. A list of these events can be published to a web page for each bill, with links to the relevant extracts of the publications, giving users a huge advantage over the previous scenario whereby they themselves must take the time to find and follow the applicable entries in the various publications.

Similarly, users are able to find all events associated with a particular Member of Parliament, creating a comprehensive index of all his or her interventions in Commons and committee proceedings.

PRISM uses XML in all its facets including but not limited to the following:

- XML as an e-business enabler to allow the parliament and its partner to author, manage, publish and exchange parliamentary content; such as bills.
- XML as a means to separate the presentation aspect of the content from the semantic aspect of the content.
- XML as a messaging mechanism between disconnected application components.
- XML as a vendor independent archival format.
- XML as a searching, filtering and re-purposing tool.

African AKOMA NTOSO Project

At the international level a very good example is AKOMA NTOSO ("**A**rchitecture for **K**nowledge-**O**riented **M**anagement of **A**frican **N**ormative **T**exts using **O**pen **S**tandards and **O**ntologies"), a standard for legislative documents for Africa developed within the framework of the United Nations initiative "Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan". A suite of applications (named Bungeni) are also being developed to support the use of the standard.
AKOMA-NTOSO provides an XML standard for legislative acts, legislative reports, debate reports, and other documents. A standard for judicial precedents is also being defined.

AKOMA NTOSO has the following strategic goals:

- To create a "lingua franca" for the interchange of parliamentary, legislative and judiciary documents between institutions in Africa. For example, parliament/court *X* should be able to easily import a piece of legislation made available in AKOMA-NTOSO format by parliament/court *Y*. The goal here is to speed up the process of drafting new legislation, writing sentences, etc. by reducing the required amount of re-keying, re-formatting, etc.
- To provide a long-term storage and access format to parliamentary, legislative and judiciary documents that allow search, interpretation and visualization of such documents several years from now, even in the absence of the specific applications and technologies that were used to generate them.
- To provide an implementable baseline for parliamentary, legislative and judiciary systems

in African institutions. It is envisaged that this will lead to one or more systems that provide a base layer of software "out of the box" that can then be customized to local needs. The goals here are twofold. Firstly, to facilitate the process of introducing IT into African institutions. Secondly, to reduce the amount of re-invention of the wheel that would result if all institutions pursued separate IT initiatives in the area of parliamentary, legislative and judiciary document production and management.

- To create common data and metadata models so that information retrieval tools and techniques used in parliament/court *X* can be also be used in parliament/court *Y*. To take a simple example, it should be possible to search across the document repositories of multiple parliaments/courts in a consistent and effective way.
- To create common resource naming and resource linking models so that documents produced by parliaments/courts can be easily cited and cross-referenced either by other parliaments/courts or by other users.
- To be "self-explanatory", that is to be able to provide all information for their use and meaning through a simple examination, even without the aid of specialized software.
- To be "extensible", that is it must be possible to allow local customizations to the models within the AKOMA-NTOSO framework so that local customization can be achieved without sacrificing interoperability with other systems.

MetaLex

Another international project deserving attention is MetaLex, which aims at providing a way of mapping different standards, so as to support the interchange of legislative materials. The MetaLex standard is considered as an interchange format between other, more jurisdiction-specific XML standards. As such it is very abstract, and therefore it is considered a basis for developing the new standard called the MetaLex/CEN schema. It is based on best practices from amongst others, including the previous versions of the MetaLex schema, the Akoma Ntoso schema, and the Norme in Rete schema. Other relevant efforts include, among others, LexDania, CHLexML, and FORMEX. In addition to these open standards established by government bodies, there are many XML languages for publishing legislation in use by publishers.

As a result of different experiences on standards for legislative sources, an initiative was launched at CEN (European Committee for Standardization) in 2006 for a Workshop on Open XML interchange format for legal and legislative resources. This initiative intends to also discuss the definition of a unique identifier for legal measures. A CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA) on an Open XML interchange format for legal and legislative resources has been accepted by the CEN and associated standard organizations as a publicly available specification for the period of three years, after which the agreement must be renewed or upgraded to a norm.

Nagoya University Research Project

The Graduate School of Information Science of Nagoya University in Japan has recently carried out a research on the use of XML to integrate and consolidate legislation into a database of statutes. The researchers at Nagoya University have proposed an automatic consolidation system for Japanese statutes based on the formalization of amendment clauses, which are parts of amendment sentences.

Experiments have been carried on statutes to be amended, using the first versions of seventeen acts enacted since 1947. With each of these, at least one and at most sixteen amendment acts needed to be consolidated to obtain the current versions. From these amendment acts, 965 amendment clauses were extracted. Then the final version of each act was generated by the system and the results compared with the current version which has been prepared by hand. Among 4355 texts compared, 4332 were identical, proving the validity of the approach using automatic consolidation based on XML.

LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL INFORMATICS

Much of the innovative work done in the development of systems and standards for legislative and legal information systems comes from universities as part of the effort to advance the field of legal informatics. These efforts are of special value in that they foster collaboration not only among parliaments, but also between the legislative and academic communities.

Legislative informatics has the goal of supporting the legislative process by providing information to all actors involved in the legislative process; enabling cooperation among such actors, so that each one can contribute to the process; ensuring efficiency, transparency, and control; enabling access to the outcomes of each phase of the legislative process, and contributions to the next phase (managing the workflow); ensuring the quality of the legislative outputs; and, ensuring knowledge of the produced law texts and preliminary documents.

Though legislative informatics is still a young discipline, it has achieved in the last years a number of significant results in different areas, such as in the domains of legislative documentation, management of the legislative process (workflow), communication and information support, and legislative standards.

For legislation to cope with the formidable challenge of providing a suitable regulatory framework for the information society it is necessary that legislative authorities are able to make the best use of the many instruments and models provided by legislative informatics. For this purpose a closer connection would be desirable between academic work on legislative informatics and research and development taking place within parliaments: too often academic research does not pay attention to user needs and development initiatives do not pay attention to research.

Fortunately, there are recent signs that a more intense cooperation between research in legal informatics and development is underway. On the one hand legislative informatics is producing many results which are usable in legislative practice (for instance, with regard to modelling legal texts, dealing with legal dynamics, building legal ontologies), while on the other hand development projects in legislative informatics show awareness of academic achievements.

FINDINGS

Documents are the fundamental records of legislatures, and technology-supported systems for preparing and managing draft bills and other texts and reports are an essential tool for an effective, modern parliament. Members and the public are in fact dependent on these parliamentary systems to be provided with reliable documents and timely and full access to them. However, the results from this survey suggest that much still needs to be done in this area.

1. Fewer than half of the respondents to the survey (43%) reported that they have systems for preparing and managing bills and amendments.
2. One half or fewer had systems for managing various committee documents such as hearings, reports, and minutes of meetings.
3. Slightly more than half of all respondents indicated that they have systems for recording and managing plenary debate, votes, and actions.
4. Quality control procedures are in place for most systems, but speed of error correction could be improved for many. Of those who have bill systems, 69% reported that they do have procedures in place for identifying and correcting errors but only 41% reported that they are carried out on a daily basis.

5. There is evidence that these systems have allowed documents to be provided quickly. Over 90% of those who have a system to prepare and manage bills are able to make them available for both members and the public as soon as they can be completed and verified, or by the next day.
6. There are substantial differences between the Lower and Higher Income groups in terms of the percentage who have systems for managing their documents. While most parliaments in lower income countries do have plans to develop these essential systems, the current differences are quite significant. For example:
    - Only 4% of respondents from Low and Lower Middle Income groups have systems for managing bills and amendments. This contrasts with 62% and 73% respectively for those in the Upper Middle and High Income groups.
    - Chambers and parliaments in the Low and Lower Middle Income groups are three to seven times less likely to have systems for preparing committee hearings and reports than those in the Upper Middle and High Income groups.
    - Over three quarters of chambers and parliaments in the High Income group have systems for recording and managing debate in plenary; this contrasts with less that one quarter of those in the Low Income group.

The adoption of open standards such as XML for structuring and tagging documents is a major undertaking, but it is key to being able to improve interoperability and exchange of documents, the efficiency of search engines, the adequacy of links, and flexibility and efficiency in generating various output formats. It is also vital to long-term preservation and public access to the legislative archive. As parliaments and citizens increasingly rely on documents in digital format, it is a basic obligation of legislatures to increase accessibility to and assure permanent availability of their documents. The findings in this area, however, indicate that the use of XML is limited.

7. Only 12% of all respondents are currently using XML in a document management system for bills. Similarly only 12% are using XML in a system for plenary debates.
8. However, taking into account all systems that are currently in place for managing any type of document (bill, committee document, plenary document) 25% of chambers or parliaments are using XML in at least one of these systems.

Although many indicate plans to adopt XML, the effort is substantial and sustaining political and managerial commitment can be a challenge despite the eventual benefits. Nevertheless, comments from respondents indicate that many are working hard to improve their document management capacity. Examples of good practices in the development and use of systems for preparing legislative documents using open standards can be found in the national and international projects.

Chapter VI

Parliamentary Websites

THE ROLE OF WEBSITES

Websites play an important role for parliaments in supporting their basic objectives of representation, accountability, accessibility, transparency and effectiveness.

Websites that provide access to the daily life of parliament have become a major resource for legislative bodies to support the work of their officers and members, to provide information access to citizens and to communicate with their constituents and with the civil society. The majority of these websites provide the history and a description of the procedures of the legislature, information for visitors, lists of members, committees, and officers, along with ways to contact them, material for students and teachers, and other items of interest. Many also provide information on the text and status of a bill, links to related documents, the history of committee and floor actions, and recorded votes on proposed measures.

Members and parliamentary officials now routinely use legislative websites themselves to view or obtain copies of agendas, draft legislation, proposed amendments, debates and votes. The importance of this function, which supports the daily work of legislatures, is sometimes overlooked. However, it has become an integral and often essential tool that improves the effectiveness of the entire body.

Similarly many citizens, civil society organizations, the media, businesses, and other public and private organizations rely on legislative sites to track proposed legislation and the activities of specific committees and members. Some also find webcasting of committee and plenary sessions to be a valuable supplement to the printed report. The press and others who closely follow legislatures find that archives of audio and webcasts can be especially useful.

Some websites are also beginning to offer, or are experimenting with, methods for enabling the public to register their views on policy issues and proposed bills. These efforts are based on the latest trends within the information society that foster user generated content and user forums.

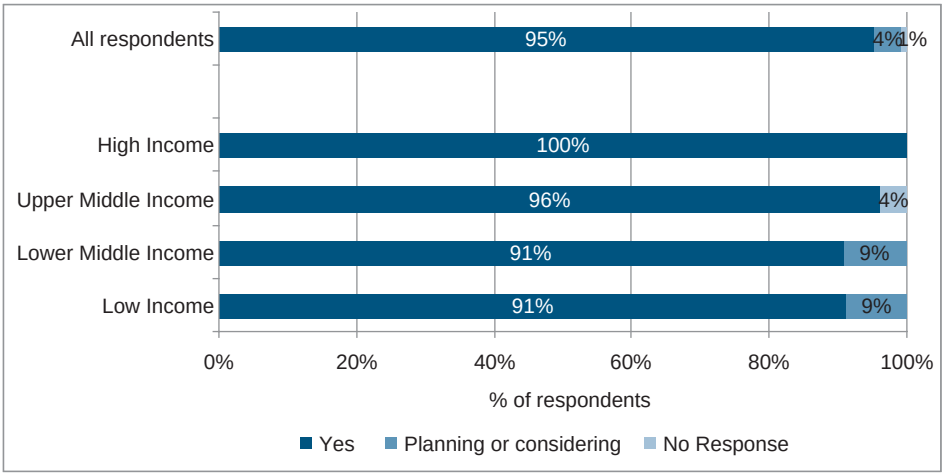
Of course for many citizens the primary sources of information about parliament remain television broadcasts, radio programs and printed media. To these sources parliaments have added other communication channels in an effort to reach the widest possible audience, such as dedicated phone lines, information offices open to the public, e-mail addresses, and, in many cases, access to the parliamentary library. In this context, parliamentary websites have becomes an important part of a broader strategy for informing and communicating with citizens.

Box 6.1

> "Informing citizens about the work of parliament is not just a concern for independent media, however, but is a responsibility of parliaments themselves. Over the past few years, parliaments everywhere have been making strenuous efforts to inform and educate the public about their activities, and to engage their interest and attention. In this they have been helped by the rapid development of new forms of communication such as the Internet, which also facilitates an interactive relationship between representatives and citizens rather than just a one-way communication.
>
> Citizens cannot hope to influence parliaments unless they are first fully informed about what they are doing; neither will they be able to hold their representatives properly to account."
>
> Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice,
> Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006

Figure 6-1 shows that 95% of chambers and parliaments responding to the survey reported that they have websites, used by the institution, that contain parliamentary documents and actions. There are some slight differences related to a country's income levels as somewhat fewer respondents from Low (91%) and Lower Middle Income (91%) countries have websites compared with those from Upper Middle (96%) and High Income (100%) groups. However, nearly all of those who do not have a site reported that they are planning one or considering it. This is a positive finding and expresses the overwhelming consensus around the importance of having a parliamentary website.

Figure 6-1: Use of a website that contains parliamentary documents and actions by parliament or chamber, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 1)

A major challenge confronting parliaments is how to make the information they provide clear and understandable to those inside and outside the institution. Parliamentary websites can be difficult to understand because they present information about legislative procedures that may seem obscure, even to those who use them. Many of these procedures have evolved over time to improve efficiency and fairness in the legislative process, but as a consequence they may present a less transparent process to the eyes of some citizens.

The actual text of legislative proposals can also be difficult to understand because they often are written using complex legal terms. Furthermore, those proposals that modify existing laws may not be fully comprehended without reading the text being amended. In these instances, the availability of a proposal on a timely basis is of limited benefit if it is not accompanied by an explanation that clarifies its meaning and provides some context for understanding its intent.

Finally, the great diversity of users and their different degrees of knowledge of the legislative process may impact on the general ability to understand the texts of proposals. Users may be members, staff, party whips, academics, lobbyists, the press, representatives of civil society organizations and of foreign governments, or simply citizens inquiring after their own interests. Building a website that enables such diverse users to find useful information quickly and with confidence is a formidable task.

The ways in which parliaments address these challenges can have a significant impact on the transparency of their work and the development of an open and equitable information society. On the one hand, the use of ICT tools can help alleviate many of the problems highlighted above. For example, there are sources that explain or provide background material on proposed legislation that can be linked directly to a bill on a legislative website. Many of these linkages can be created with ICT tools, and can be readily integrated with a variety of similar sources to provide the user with easy access to a more comprehensive picture of a bill.

At the same time, there is a risk that ICT can exacerbate the impact of the digital divide on the legislative process if sophisticated tools, that can be used effectively only by those who already have the access, knowledge and means to influence public policy, are to be provided. If this occurs, then technology will serve to further disenfranchise the "have-nots" and likely augment the power of the "haves".

Achieving a balance approach to place the website at the service of all requires parliament's commitment and political and managerial decisions to make it more comprehensible, user-friendly, content -riented and content-rich, as well as easily accessible by all.

Committee websites

In many parliaments, although not all, committees are the "policy workshops" where proposed legislation is discussed, analysed, debated, revised, and put forward to the full body, often with an accompanying report. The workload of many modern legislative bodies is so great that much of the work must be done in these smaller representative groups that can operate more flexibly than the entire chamber. It is for this reason that websites devoted to the work and the documents of committees are becoming increasingly important.

In addition to the views of their own members, committees in many parliaments have the means, if they wish so, to call upon others with knowledge of the subject or issue treated, such as stakeholders who may be affected by the resulting law or administrators called upon to implement it once is passed. Committees can seek the views of citizens, or, as happens often in today's complex and structured civil society, solicit input from lobbying groups and other associations who represent the interests of many individuals. It is in the committee stage that those who care about the outcome of legislation often need to know the most about it.

Knowing what a committee has done and why is essential for understanding the resulting proposal. Knowing when the committee is planning to take specific actions is very important to those who want to affect the outcome. And knowing what these actions might be can be critical. Committee websites that are transparent and timely play therefore a pivotal role in providing this information to members of the parliament and the public.

Member websites

As more citizens turn to the Web for information about the work of their governments, their legislatures and their elected officials, they expect to find authoritative and meaningful content, and, increasingly, to be able to communicate their own views on policy issues.

The websites of members, therefore, have become a potentially important resource for the public. However, their development faces a number of challenges. There can be a tendency by some to use the website primarily as an instrument for political advertisement. Yet, as some studies have indicated, constituents want more focused information tailored to their different needs, and prefer to be informed about policy issues and the member's views and actions in addressing them.

These studies have shown that member sites that meet these requirements are considered relevant and useful to citizens. In their efforts to be more understandable and focused on the needs of their constituents, they also advance the objectives of transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and more equitable access. This can help to further the goal of a more informed and engaged electorate.

An important recent development on member sites has been the use of the newest web technologies to communicate with constituents. Some representatives have begun to express their views through blogs or place video clips on publicly available services to present their ideas through new media. Several are also testing the value of web-based social networks, particularly those who are involved in election campaigns. These are exploratory efforts, but the resulting experiences should prove interesting and informative. These developments are further discussed in Chapter 8.

Guidelines and standards for websites

As websites have become integral to the work of parliaments, it is important to develop guidelines and standards to assist in creating effective sites. Such guidelines would be helpful to committees, members and parliamentary officials to establish goals and benchmarks for their sites and to judge their quality periodically.

One set of long-standing guidelines was released by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2000[1]. While some portions of this document need to be updated in light of the most recent developments concerning the Web, it is still a valid and useful instrument to help assess the state of parliamentary websites throughout the world. A number of questions in the survey were included on the basis of the IPU guidelines.

Other questions relating to parliamentary websites were included in the survey on the basis of additional criteria reflecting the following concerns:

Accuracy. Are documents correct in content and presentation and are activities reported correctly? How is this ensured? Are there procedures or systems in place to identify and correct errors? Are the procedures both pro-active and retro-active? How quickly are errors corrected?

Timeliness. How soon are documents available and activities (debates, votes, etc.) reported? Do members have access before others? How are the competing demands of accuracy and timeliness resolved?

Completeness. Are all relevant documents and actions related to the bill linked so the users can obtain a complete understanding from a single location on the website?

1 Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000.

Clarity. Especially in the case of legal language, is an explanation provided? Are the legislative actions understandable or are there links to explanatory material?

Impact. Do any documents provide an understanding of the possible impact of a proposed bill? What issue does it purport to address? What are the pros and cons? What data supports the proposal? How does it affect existing law?

Usability. How understandable is the website to users? How is this verified? Are special measures taken to ensure that those with disabilities can use the site?

Intranet and Internet websites

Some parliaments maintain a single website with exactly the same information for both the parliament and the public. Others maintain two websites or two different views of one website: one for the officials and members of the parliament and one for the public. This is a choice for each parliament and is often dependent on the extent to which the website used by the members of parliament needs to provide access to information that is confidential, proprietary, or in draft formats. For parliaments that maintain two different views or different sites for members and the public, the survey sought only to determine whether the public has access to the same non-confidential information and documents, such as final votes and final versions of documents, on the same basis as members.

RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

The section of the survey that dealt with parliamentary websites covered the following topics:

1. Goals and management of parliamentary websites
2. Content
3. Linking of documents to proposed legislation
4. Interface design
5. Use of audio and video technology
6. Notification systems and services
7. Differences between sites for parliament only and sites for the public (if applicable)
8. Enhancements planned for the website

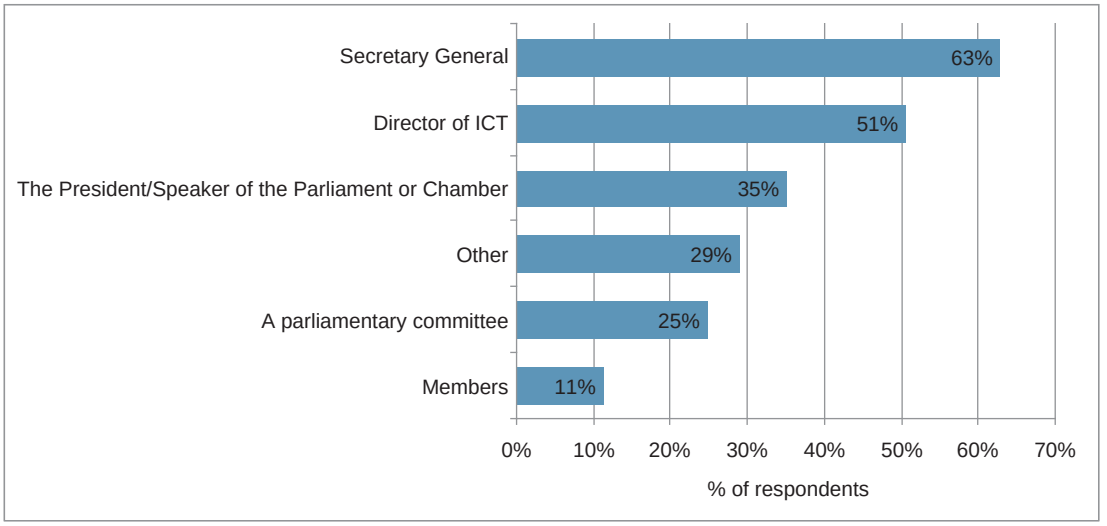
Goals and management of parliamentary websites

The website of a parliament is a reflection of the values embodied in its vision of developing an e-parliament for increasing transparency, accessibility and accountability. The content of the site; the timeliness of its documents, schedules, and vote results; the clarity of the information presented; the comprehensiveness of the links to related material both internal and external; the ease and understandability of the use interface; the utilization of a variety of formats, such as audio and visual to portray the work of the legislature; and, the capacity to support dialogue with citizens in multiple ways, are all indications of a legislative body's commitment to the quality of the website and the achievement of those values.

It can require a considerable amount of time to obtain both the political consensus and the resources needed to build and maintain an effective parliamentary website. For this reason, the establishment of goals for the website, the development of implementation plans, the gathering of resources and the oversight of the work must all be effectively managed. As in the case of ICT vision and strategic planning for the parliament as a whole, creating a valued and authoritative website which would establish

the institution's presence in the information society requires the engagement of the highest officials. Figure 6-2 shows that 63% of the chambers and parliaments responding to the survey indicated the Secretary General as the person who establishes the goals for the website for parliament. The Director of ICT was the second most frequently mentioned person (51%).

Figure 6-2: Who establishes overall goals for the parliamentary website (multiple responses possible)



Often mentioned in "Other": Information Office, Public Relations Office, committee for website management
(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 2)

Combined with the results from Chapter 3, this finding underscores the important role of the Secretary General for technology in general and for the website of the legislature in particular. The finding also emphasizes the reliance that many parliaments have on the Director of ICT for the goals of the website, which is understandable given the need of the website to be reliable, secure and well maintained. The fact that over one third of respondents report that the President/Speaker is engaged in setting goals for the website is also a positive finding considering the importance of this instrument for the institution in today's interdependent society.

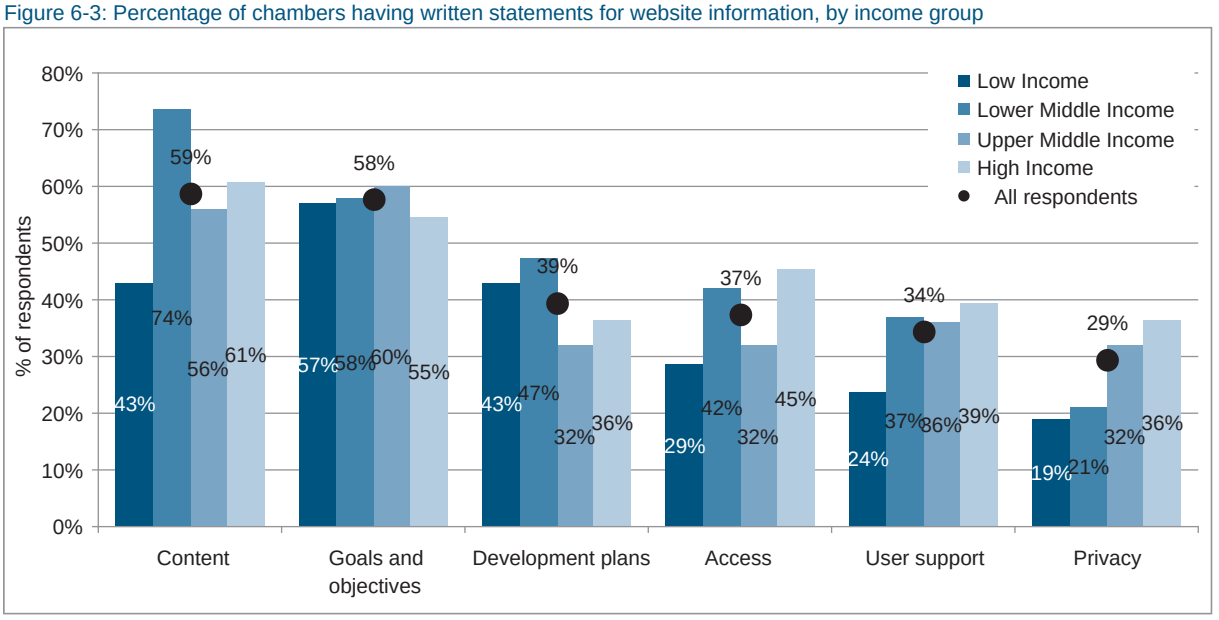
When respondents indicated that the parliament maintains a different website for the public, they also indicated the Secretary General as instrumental in establishing the goals for this site, and highlighted the role of the Director of ICT and the President/Speaker.[2]

Written guidelines are a good management practice for making public the kind of information that is critical to the policies and laws of the country. As shown in Figure 6-3, while a relatively high percentage of respondents have guidelines regarding Content (59%) and Goals and Objectives (58%) for their websites, fewer have written statements regarding development plans (39%), Access (37%), User Support (34%), and Privacy (29%).

It is interesting to note that respondents in the Low and Lower Middle Income groups are somewhat more likely to have statements on development plans, while Upper Middle and High Income groups are somewhat more likely to have written statements on privacy and user support.

2 Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 20.

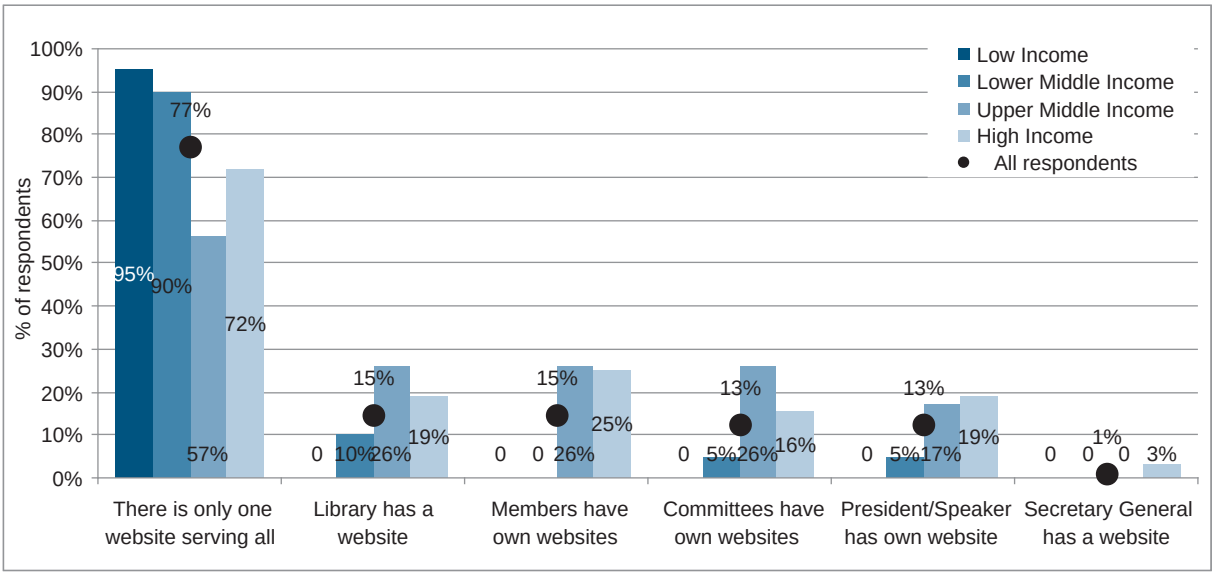
Figure 6-3: Percentage of chambers having written statements for website information, by income group



Results ranked by percent of all respondents having written statements for website information
(Source: Survey. Section 7, Question 3)

Figure 6-4 suggests that relatively few members (15%) and committees (13%) have their own websites. The response to this question regarding members is confirmed by the responses on services provided to members[3], according to which only 20% of respondents said they provide members with their own websites. However, it is qualified by 42% of respondents who reported in a different section of the survey that members "use website to communicate their views on policy issues and proposed legislation".[4] The most reasonable conclusion is that members do use websites to communicate with citizens but these may not necessarily be provided by the parliament. Members may use a website maintained by a political party or other policy group, or create a website without institutional support.

Figure 6-4: Availability of websites for different users



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 4)

3 Source: Survey, Section 2, Question 3.
4 Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 15.

It is important to note the differences among income groups regarding member websites. As Figure 6-4 shows, members from countries in the Upper Middle and High Income groups are much more likely to have their own websites. Given the cost of building and maintaining a website this difference is clearly understandable. With limited resources, the higher priority must go to the website for the parliament as a whole.

This is another area where collaboration among parliaments could be of benefit, particularly to individual members who want to use a variety of means to communicate with their citizens. The desire to customize websites for each member is understandable, but can be expensive and time consuming. A shared approach could also allow best practices for member sites to be incorporated into the design. This presupposes, of course, that there are a sufficient number of constituents with Internet access to make the effort worthwhile.

Content of websites for parliaments and IPU guidelines

The content of a website is fundamental to its authoritativeness and its value both to members and the public. Accuracy and timeliness are essential. It should also be comprehensive in scope and designed to cover all facets of the work of the legislative body. This includes basic and complex information, ranging from directions on how to visit the parliament to legislative and oversight activities of the institution.

Many websites meet a number of the IPU guidelines that were included in the survey. In Figure 6-5 the following nine items recommended in the guidelines appear on the websites of at least 80% of respondents:

1. Alphabetical list of all members of parliament
2. Overview of the composition and functions of the national parliament
3. Overview of how parliament works, its duties, and its responsibilities
4. Text of standing orders and/or rules of procedure
5. Political information about each member, including constituency, party affiliation, membership in committees and/or commissions, with hyperlinks to members' personal websites
6. Text of the country's constitution
7. History of the national parliament
8. Information about organization and operation of secretariat of parliament
9. Text of official press releases

However, there are still many items recommended in the guidelines that have not been incorporated in the websites. At least 40% of respondents reported that each of the following is not included on their sites:

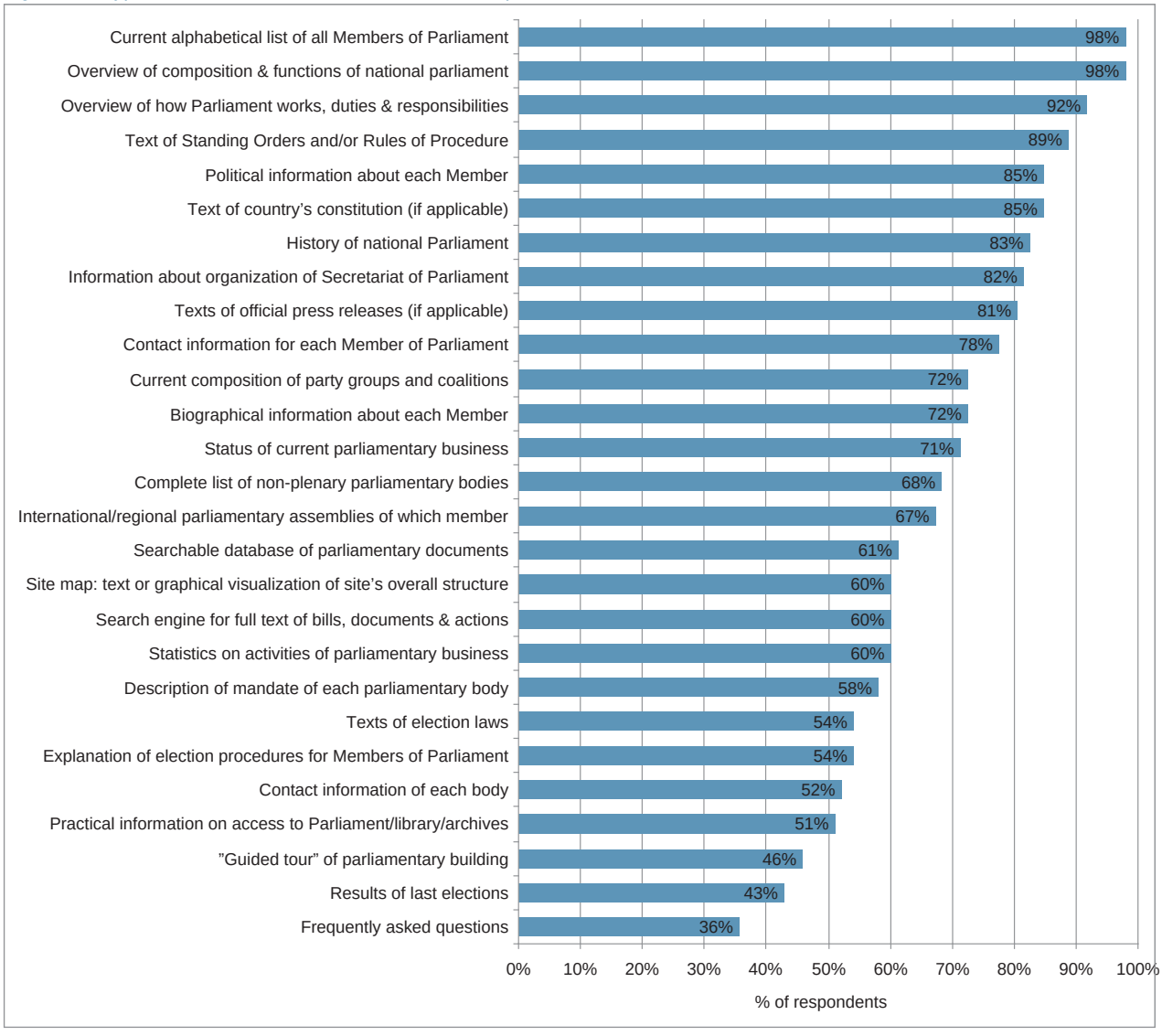
1. Searchable database of committee reports, records, hearings, votes, and other parliamentary documents pertaining to the current legislature
2. Search engine that allows user to search full text of proposed legislation, parliamentary documents and actions
3. Description of the mandate of each parliamentary body
4. Contact information
5. Statistics on the activities of parliamentary business of each body
6. Texts of election laws
7. Explanation of the election procedures for members of parliament
8. Results of the last elections
9. Practical information on access to the parliamentary building, library, and archives (where applicable)
10. "Guided tour" of the parliamentary building

11. Site map – a text or graphical visualization of the site's overall structure
12. Frequently asked questions

In addition, over 25% do not include each of these five items:

1. Status of current parliamentary business by bill number, topic, title, date, document code, parliamentary body, etc.
2. Complete list of non-plenary parliamentary bodies
3. Current composition of party groups and coalitions
4. Biographical information about each member of parliament
5. List of international and regional parliamentary assemblies of which the parliament is a member

Figure 6-5: Type of information included on the website of parliaments



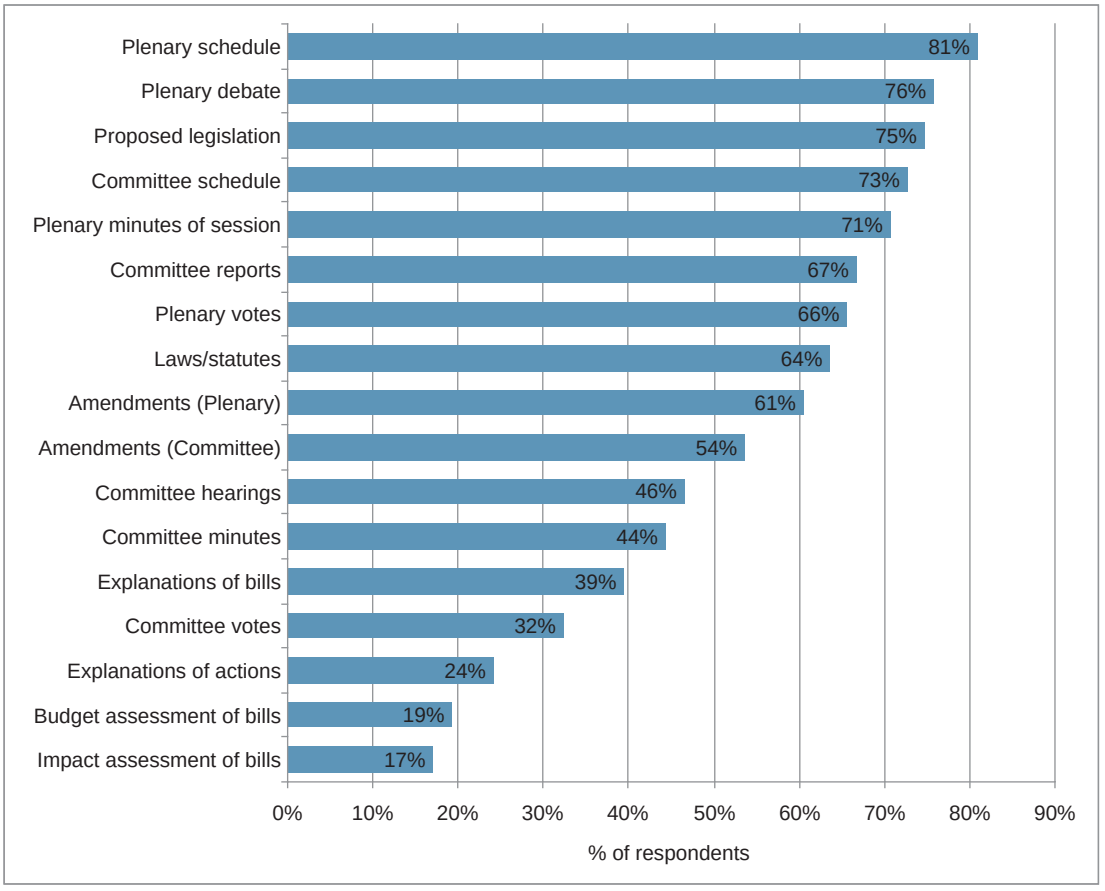
(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 5. Percentage over 98 total respondents)

Given the fact that these guidelines have been published for over seven years by the world parliamentary organization – the IPU -, it is a concern that so many items are still not included in many parliamentary websites. Particularly striking is the lack of a search engine and searchable database of committee reports, records, hearings, and votes in 40% of the chambers and parliaments responding to the survey and the absence of status information for current parliamentary business by bill various references. This is especially evident among Low and Lower Middle Income groups. The functionality of a search system is common for many parliaments and this is another example of where collaboration could offer substantial gains at potentially low costs. However, as noted in Chapter 5, many of the chambers in the Lower Income groups do not have systems for creating and managing bills and amendments, committee, and plenary documents, and it will be difficult to provide search and status features on the website until those supporting systems are in place.

Content of websites: availability and timeliness of documents

The IPU guidelines addressed broad categories of information and capabilities. The survey further asked about the availability and timeliness of specific documents on parliamentary websites. Respondents were asked which documents or items - such as proposed bills or plenary votes - were made available on the website and when they were made accessible - same day, next day, within the week, or longer. The results are summarized in Figures 6-6 and 6-7.

Figure 6-6: Availability of documents on the website



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 6. Percentage over 99 total respondents. 8% of these did not check any of the above documents)

Figure 6-6 shows that five documents are made available on the website by at least 70% or more of the total respondents to the survey.

1. Plenary schedule
2. Plenary debate
3. Proposed legislation
4. Committee schedules
5. Minutes of plenary session

This list represents some of the most important parliamentary documents and the percentage of those making them available is a positive finding. It is understandable that three of the five are plenary session documents, given their political significance to all members and their legal importance to the law-making process.

Between one half and two thirds of respondents make the following documents available.

1. Committee reports
2. Plenary votes
3. Laws and statutes
4. Plenary amendments
5. Committee amendments

The positive interpretation of this list is that at least half of the respondents report that these important documents are available on their website. Yet, the negative interpretation is that at least one third report that they are not available.

The following documents appear to be not available on at least one half or more of respondents' websites.

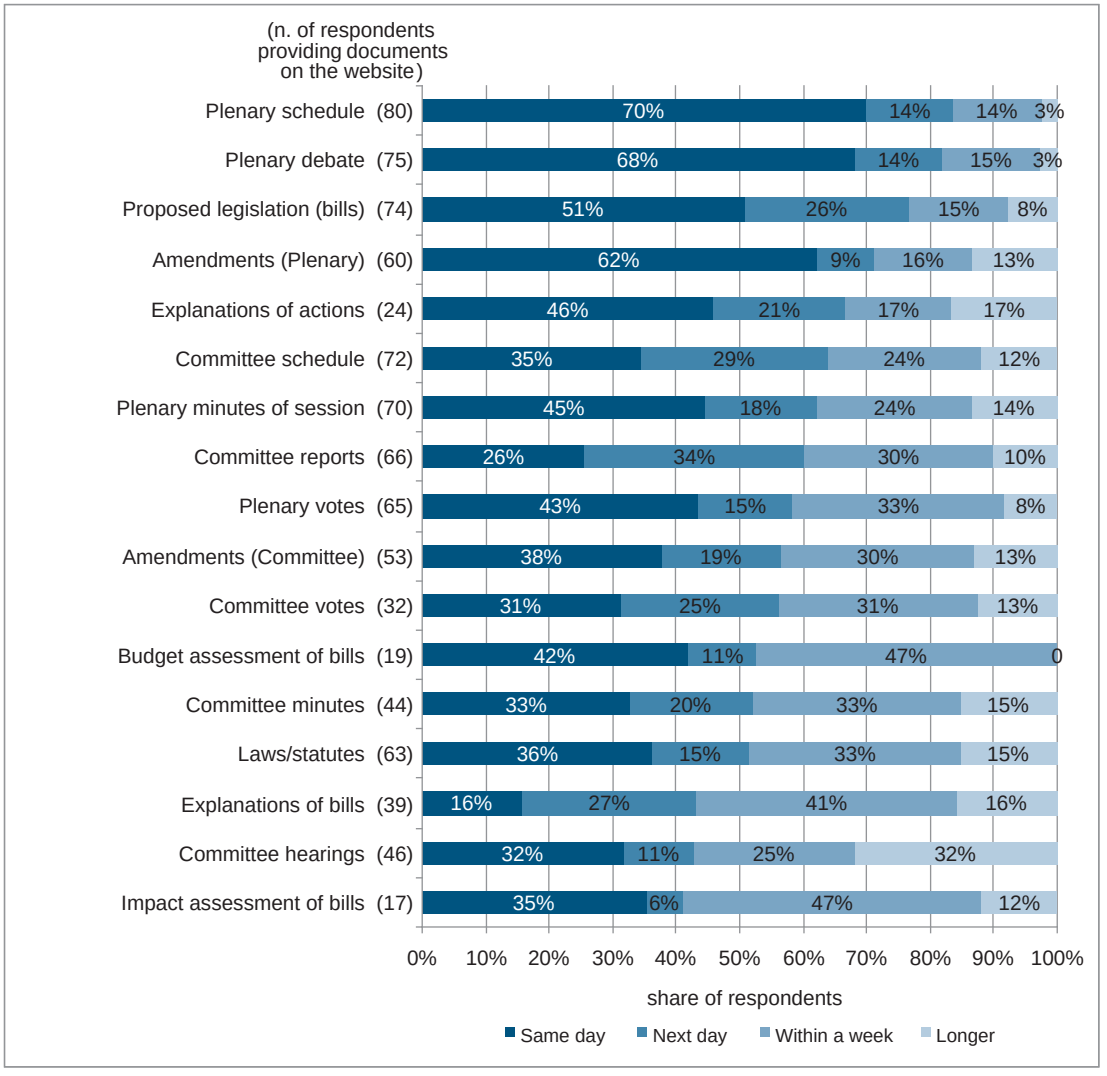
1. Committee hearings
2. Committee minutes
3. Explanations of bills
4. Committee votes
5. Explanations of actions
6. Budget assessment of bills
7. Impact assessment of bills

Most of these documents group themselves into two categories – committee documents and documents that provide some kind of explanatory information. Because the survey did not request information on the role of committees in each parliament, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions at this point regarding the availability of committee documents on parliamentary websites. The committee document reported to be on the parliamentary website by the largest percentage of respondents (67%) is committee reports. This implies that over 30% of the chambers represented in the sample either do not prepare committee reports or do not make them available yet on their website.

This issue requires further research. These results may suggest that more needs to be done to make committee information more accessible. On the other hand, they may also indicate a lesser role for committees in some of the chambers and parliaments who responded to the survey, resulting in fewer documents produced and actions taken.

The second category of documents that are relatively scarce on parliamentary websites are those that provide explanatory information. In the context of the proposed criteria addressed above, especially clarity and impact, it is important to underscore how few chambers make such documents available on their websites: explanations of bills (39%); explanations of actions (24%); budget assessment of bills (19%); and impact assessment of bills (17%). It can be difficult and resource intensive to prepare valid budget and impact assessments of bills, and this may account in part for there being so few who make them available. Also, legislative actions can be very difficult to understand and any effort to make them clearer would also be a benefit to the public. Perhaps most positive is that 39% of respondents report that they provide some explanation of bills on their websites. While this figure should ideally be higher, it is a benchmark that should grow as more parliaments attempt to improve communication with citizens.

Figure 6-7: Timeliness of documents on the website



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 6. Results ranked in descending order of percentage providing documents on the same or next day)

Timeliness, as well as availability, is also a key criterion for assessing the quality and value of a website for both members and the public. Plenary schedules and plenary debate are the timeliest, appearing by the "same" or "next day" on the websites of over 80% of the respondents who make this information available, as Figure 6-7 indicates. Among the other documents that meet this standard of timeliness for a high percentage of respondents are proposed legislation (77% of respondents); plenary amendments (71%); and committee schedules (64%). Also available within a day, but provided by far fewer are explanations of bills and explanations of actions.

To be useful, schedules must be timely, and this finding suggests that parliaments are doing well in this regard. While explanatory material is less prevalent, it is at least available on a relatively timely basis by many of those who provide it. The timeliness of plenary votes, debates, and proposed legislation is also a good sign. It would be better if more parliaments could make available proposed legislation sooner, but this may improve over time as more document management systems are brought online and the efficiency of the process of preparing draft bills increases. The examples in Chapter 5, and particularly the experience of the Parliament of Austria, provide evidence of this potential.

Committee documents are relatively slow to appear on parliamentary websites or do not appear at all for many respondents. As shown in Figure 6-7, committee minutes appear on the website in a week or even in a longer time frame for 48% of respondents; committee hearings for 57%; and committee reports for 40%.

The survey also sought information on how far back in time parliaments have documents in digital form. Specifically respondents were asked to indicate the total number of years the institution has existed and the number of years each type of document was available in digital format. Many older parliaments face the challenge of converting old paper documents if they wish to have a complete set in digital format. This can be an expensive and operationally daunting process. Newer legislative bodies have in fact the advantage of being able to start sooner and to have to convert less. Results from this question are summarized in Figure 6-8.

Figure 6-8: Years of documents in digital format

Document	Average number of years in digital format	Years as a % of the age of the parliament	Percent of non response or not available
Proposed legislation	20	40%	34%
Amendments – Plenary	18	41%	50%
Committee Reports	17	38%	46%
Committee Minutes	14	34%	56%
Committee Hearings	15	35%	63%
Plenary Minutes	21	44%	42%
Plenary Debate	24	43%	40%
Plenary Votes	18	34%	48%
Laws and Statutes	29	48%	51%

(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 7)

It is interesting to note that the average number of years that documents are available in digital format ranges from 14 to 29. This means that a number of documents are in digital format for over one third of their historical life span. Given the efforts involved, this would seem to be a fairly significant achievement.

Linking documents to proposed legislation

Drafts of proposed legislation do not stand alone. Their origins can be highly varied - an economic problem, a court case, a natural disaster, a civil movement, or a myriad of other events and activities. There is often news coverage of the topic that increases public and parliamentary interest. As the issue is discussed, there may be studies by the government or other organizations, and a parliamentary committee may hold information hearings. If a bill is drafted, it may be accompanied by background documents or statements that provide an analysis of the issue, a review of the options, and the rationale for the approach being proposed. There may be references to existing laws, if any are being amended, and there may be budget and other impact assessments made. Additional meetings may be held within parliament on the bill. A variety of witnesses may be asked to testify, and the views of other members of the civil society may be sought in writing, as well as additional views of the government. One or more committees may prepare amendments for vote within the committee and the plenary, and the committee may issue a report on the bill. During plenary there will be debate, the views of others may be cited, and votes taken on amendments and on the final version of the bill.

Nearly all of these activities result in documents or information items, such as status steps, that are necessary to understand the bill fully. A well designed parliamentary website will link proposed legislation to all of the relevant documents and information items that are available in digital form. Users of the website - whether they are members of the parliament or the public - should be able to find all of these related items from a single location so that they can easily see the background documents, explanatory material, status information, committee reports, plenary debate, and final vote on the bill. Websites that do not present these links, and leave to users the task of learning about related information and finding it on their own, cannot be considered fully effective and are failing both the members and the public.

As discussed in Chapter 5, many of these links can be created automatically and reliably if there is appropriate tagging of documents using open standards such as XML. At other times, as explained in Chapter 7, these links may need to be identified and created by staff. Although automatic linking is the most cost-effective approach, manual efforts are sometimes quicker in the short term and may be needed until sophisticated tagging and linking algorithms can be developed. Linking by staff may also be needed if the documents being correlated are outside the control of the parliament, such as news stories, and tagging standards cannot be enforced. With political leadership and a willingness to collaborate, it should be possible to establish automatic links with the other chamber in a bicameral legislature and with other branches of government. And if parliament takes the lead in establishing open standards for legislative documents, others outside the government, such as news organizations, may be willing to adopt the same standards.

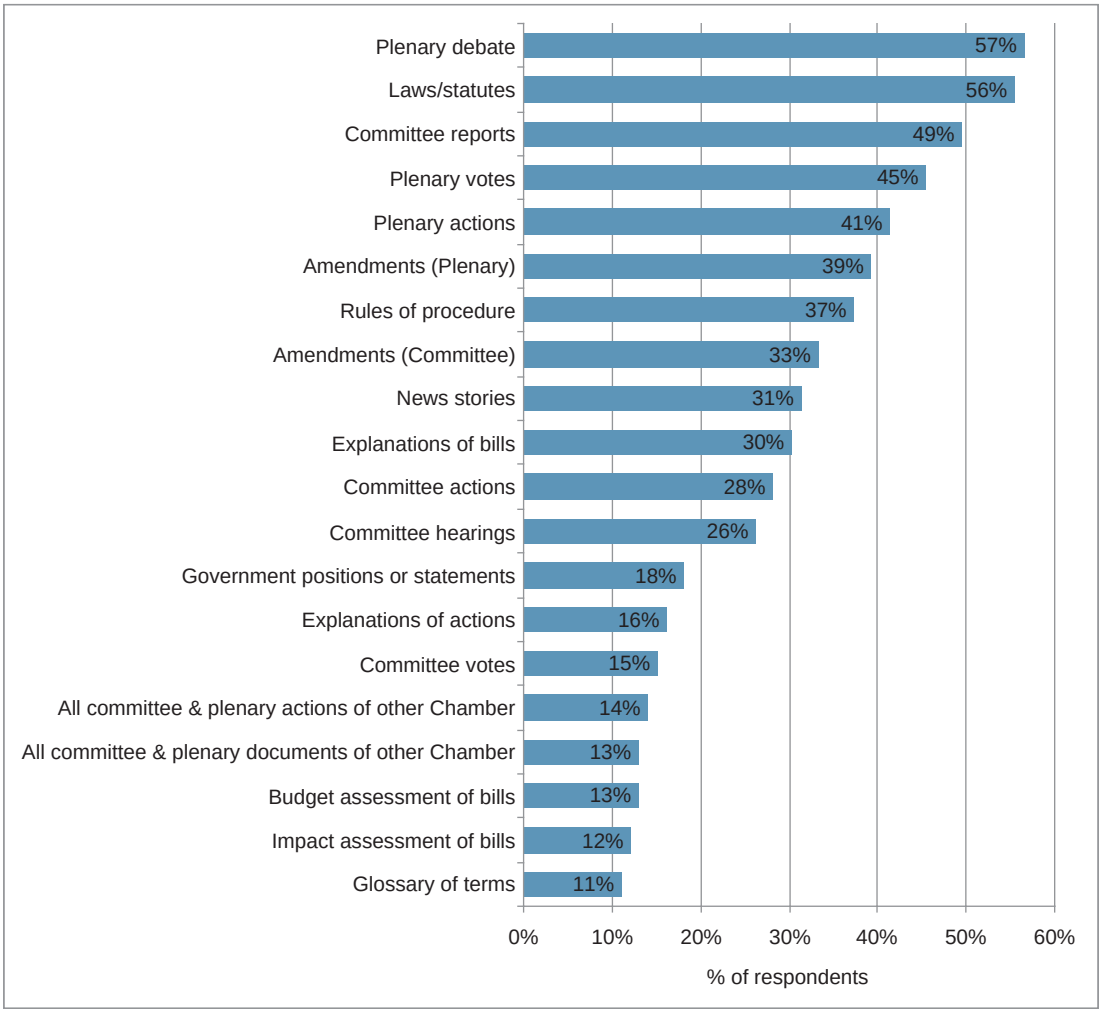
The survey asked whether 20 documents or information items were linked directly to bills on the website. These dealt primarily with parliamentary or government documents. The results are summarized in Figure 6-9.

Only three types of documents are reported by approximately half of respondents to be linked directly to proposed legislation: 1) plenary debate; 2) laws and statutes; and 3) committee reports. Plenary votes are linked on 45% of respondent websites and plenary actions on 41%. All remaining items - 15 in total - are linked on the websites of fewer than 40% of respondents. These include all other committee documents, government documents, news stories, and explanatory information.

A deeper analysis of this question found that of the 52 respondents from bicameral legislatures with websites, only 15 acknowledged that they linked to documents or actions of the other chamber.[5]

5 Source: Survey, Section 1, Question 1 and Section 7, Questions 1 and 8.

Figure 6-9: Percent of chambers that have various documents linked directly to proposed legislation on their website



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 8)

The criteria presented at the beginning of this chapter included a recommendation concerning the linkage of the proposed legislation to as many relevant documents and items of information as possible. Taken together these findings indicate that the websites of many parliaments are not meeting this criterion for completeness. Even in chambers from High Income countries, the largest percentage of respondents who reported an item linked was 61% and most documents and items were well below this figure.

The low percentage of bicameral legislatures responding to the survey who reported that they do not link to the committee or plenary actions or documents of the other chamber is a special concern. While there may be differences in authority and the relationship between the chambers that account for some of this result, the figures reported raise the question of how difficult it may be to find a complete picture of the state of draft legislation on many parliamentary websites.

Interface design

Usability studies and techniques have become important for ensuring that websites are clear and understandable to their intended users. They can be especially helpful for resolving conflicts of opinion among stakeholders about how a website should look, how it should work, and how it should present documents and other legislative information. While usability studies and techniques are part of an evolving discipline they can be highly beneficial in creating a well designed website.

Usability, as applied to the creation of websites, is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on the information needs of users and on the design of systems that are easy to understand and satisfying to use. Drawing on lessons from ergonomics, information architecture, and document and interface design, usability identifies the characteristics of the various audiences who will use the system and their most important information requirements. As the system is developed, a variety of techniques, such as paper reviews by experts and before-and-after tests, are employed on an iterative basis to assess how well the system works and how it is seen by users. The most important contribution of usability is to ensure the users are kept at the center of the website development process.

Usability studies and techniques are also critical for designing websites accessible to persons with disabilities. As the Web has become integral to the way in which governments deliver services and parliaments communicate with citizens, some countries have mandated standards to guarantee equitable access for all.

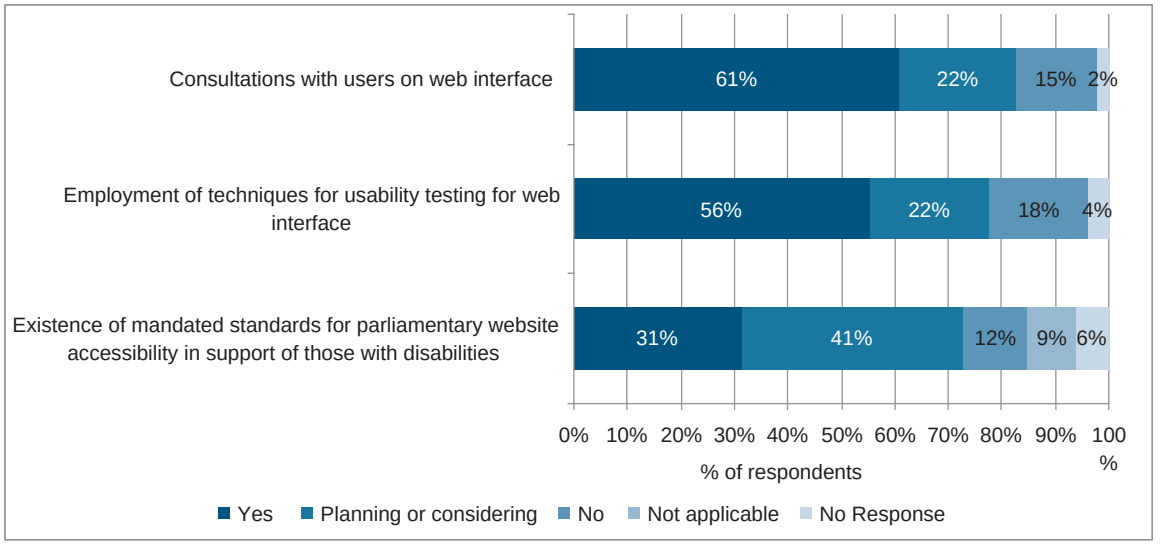
As shown in Figure 6-10, the survey sought to determine how many legislative chambers were using techniques for assessing usability - including some of the most basic ones such as consulting with users about the design of the site. It also asked about efforts to meet accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.

Over 60% of respondents report consulting with users on the design of the website interface and an additional 22% are planning or considering it. Over 50% use formal usability testing, and an additional 22% are planning or considering it.

However, only 31% of respondents have to meet mandated standards of accessibility in support of persons with disabilities. While 41% stated that they are planning or considering doing so, 21% are not planning on meeting such standards or reported that such standards were not applicable.

The combined percentages of those who currently do, or are planning to, consult with users and who employ formal usability techniques is a positive finding and should lead to the continual improvement in the understandability of parliamentary websites. Yet, the fact that over 20% are not required or do not plan to meet the needs of citizens with disabilities is of great concern and it means that the goal of universal access will be difficult for these parliaments to achieve.

Figure 6-10: Usability assessment in web interface design



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Questions 9, 10 and 11)

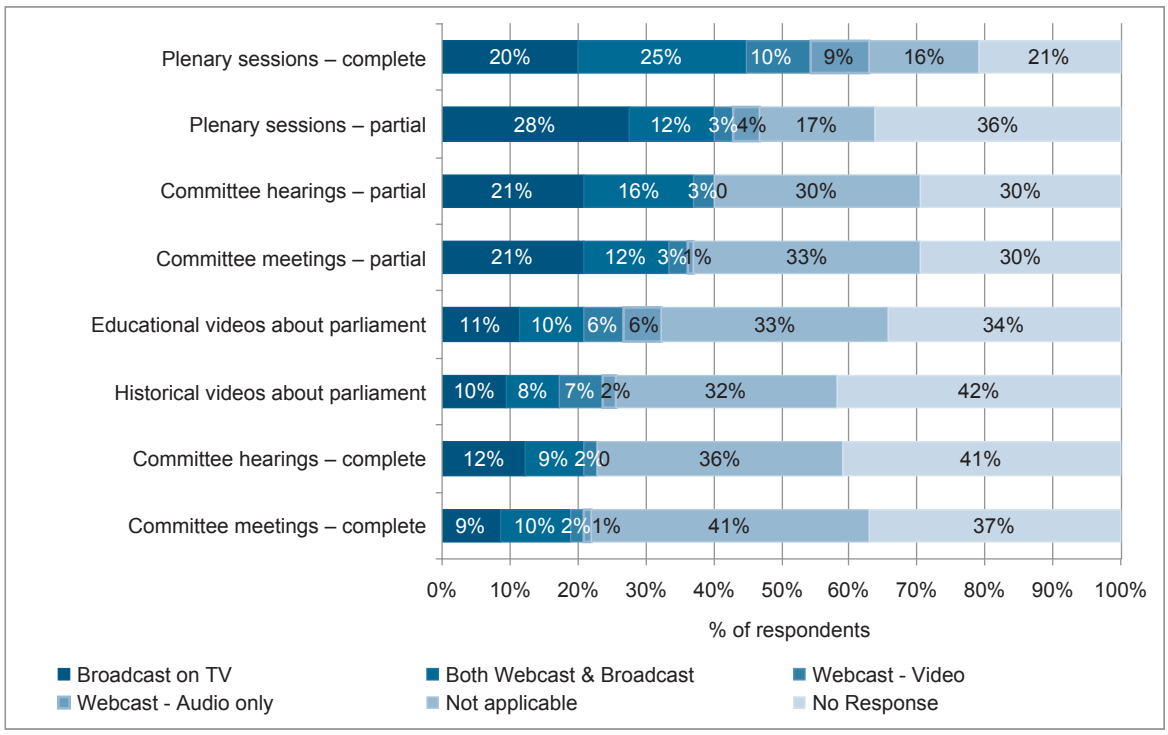
Chambers thet are meeting standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities for their websites and that have also implemented XML in one or more of their legislative documents are making efforts to use ICT to further the parliament's value of representation, accessibility and transparency. By doing so, they are in fact exploiting modern technology to provide citizens with more opportunities to access parliamentary documents and activities. It is interesting to note that among all respondents only 13 chambers use this combination of ICT tools.

Audio and video technology

Since the first television broadcasts of plenary sessions began in the 1970s, audio and video technologies have become popular methods for parliaments to make their work available to the public. Many now broadcast some or all plenary sessions by television and an increasing number are also making them accessible on the Internet via webcasting, which can be less expensive. A number of parliaments have also extended these technologies to committees and are broadcasting or webcasting their meetings and hearing as well, although not yet as many do it for plenary sessions.

As can be seen in Figure 6-11, 28% of respondents reported that they broadcast selected or partial plenary sessions on television, 20% reported that they broadcast complete sessions, 25% reported that they make their complete sessions available on both television and the Web. In addition approximately one third broadcast or broadcast and webcast at least partial or selected committee hearings and meetings.

Figure 6-11: Type of activities webcast or broadcast on television



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 12)

Among respondents who webcast at least one activity (55 chambers, i.e. 52%), 41% report that their websites support video streaming of plenary sessions – the highest percentage for any of the audio/video formats. There are substantial differences among income groups on this question, as can be seen in Figure 6-12.

Of those who do use audio and video technology (83 chambers, i.e. 79% for at least one activity), almost two thirds (64%) maintain archives of these recordings. The average age for these archives is almost eight years.[6]

Figure 6-12: Percent of chambers supporting audio and video formats on their websites, by country's income group

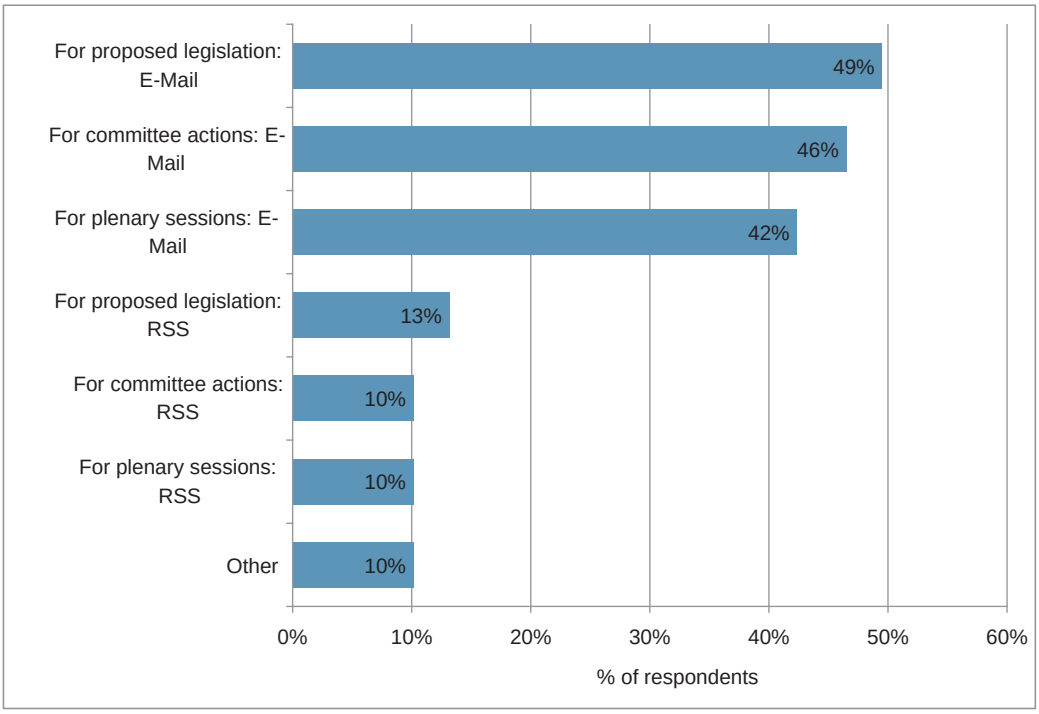
	All	Low Income	Lower Middle Income	Upper Middle Income	High Income
Streaming Video of Plenary/floor meetings	41%	0	21%	60%	64%
Streaming audio of Plenary/floor meetings	28%	10%	21%	44%	30%
Streaming Video of committee meetings/hearings	21%	0	16%	24%	36%
Streaming audio of committee meetings/hearings	16%	0	11%	20%	27%
Downloadable Video files of Plenary/floor meetings	16%	0	11%	28%	18%
Downloadable audio files of Plenary/floor meetings	14%	14%	16%	20%	6%
Downloadable Video files of committee meetings/hearings	8%	0	5%	16%	9%
Downloadable audio files of committee meetings/hearings	7%	0	11%	12%	6%

(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 15)

Notification systems and services

Systems for notifying members, parliamentary staff, and the public are being offered by an increasing number of parliaments. These systems use both e-mail and a newer technology called RSS (Really Simple Syndication). Over 40% of respondents reported that their websites offer users notification through e-mail of: a) proposed legislation; b) committee actions; and, c) plenary session. The same information was offered through RSS feeds by only 10%-13% of respondents, as seen in Figure 6-13.

Figure 6-13: Notification systems offered to users



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 16)

6 Source: Survey: Section 7, Questions 13 and 14.

Differences between websites for parliament and the public

Twenty-four respondents (25% of the 96 chambers that have public websites) reported that the website for the public is a different website or provides different information from the one available to the parliament. For these chambers, the survey sought only to determine whether the public has access to the same public information and documents, such as final votes and final versions of documents, on the same basis as members. However, since the number of respondents who indicated that the public website is different from the parliamentary site is small, the percentage who selected a particular response to a question about those differences is somewhat less reliable. Consequently the results are summarized here at a general level.

More than a third of those who reported differences between the website for parliament and the website for the public cited the following documents as being "Not available to the public": 1) Committee votes; 2) Committee minutes; 3) Impact assessments for bills; 4) Explanations of actions; and, 5) Explanations of bills.[7]

Earlier findings in this chapter showed that committee documents appear less often on many of the parliamentary websites. This finding implies that on some websites committee documents are even less available for the public. This finding can only be considered suggestive at this point, as the issue requires further research and analysis. It may be, for example, that in some instances where committee documents are not available, committees have a lesser role in the legislative process.

69 chambers responded to the two questions concerning consulting with users of the public website and the parliamentary website on website design. Of these 69, 36% consulted with public users versus 64% who consulted with parliamentary users. However, over half of all respondents who answered both questions reported that they use formal usability testing for both parliament and the public websites.[8]

Slightly more than a third of those who responded to the questions concerning accessibility of both the parliamentary and public website indicated that they do have mandated standards for accessibility for public users with disabilities. However, approximately one quarter are not planning to meet such standards.

Availability of downloadable documents and information files

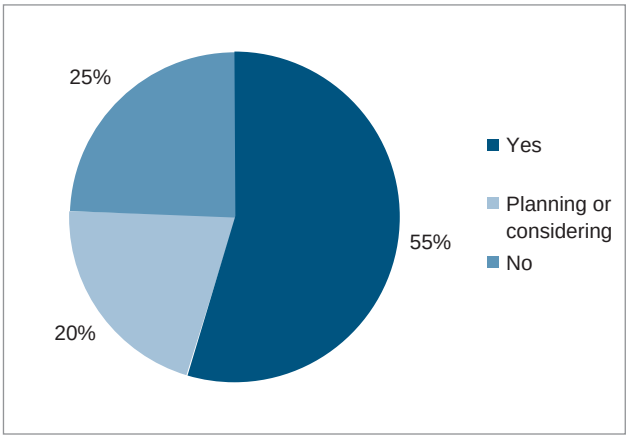
One issue of interest to many in civil society is whether parliaments make their documents available to the public not only on the Web but also in downloadable formats that can be incorporated into systems developed by others. When this occurs, groups within civil society are able to create systems that offer views of parliamentary actions that are not normally available on the official websites of the legislative body. In the United States, for example, groups have created websites that link members' votes to their campaign contributors. In the United Kingdom groups have created enhanced views of parliamentary proceedings. These are illustrative of some of the creative uses that can be made of parliamentary information when it is made available in digital formats.

Sometimes non-governmental organizations have to gather data themselves from the websites of the legislative bodies because it is not available in a downloadable format or is available only for a fee. This can constrain innovative uses of legislative information. On the other hand, many in parliament may not view such systems positively and may not wish to make the information more easily available.

Among those who responded to this question (73 chambers), the majority make their files available for downloading and 20% are planning or considering doing so. It is interesting to note that there is relatively little difference among income groups on this issue.

7 Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 21.
8 Source: Survey, Section 7, Questions 9 and 23.

Figure 6-14: Availability of source files to public users (downloadable from the website)



(Source: Survey, Section 7, Question 22. N=73)

Improvements planned

Over 60 respondents provided information about improvements planned for their websites. The list was both extensive and substantive, clearly reflecting the importance that parliaments attach to their websites and the resources they are prepared to commit to them. In the interest of sharing this wide range of ideas among legislative bodies, many of the enhancements being undertaken are included below.

- A major redesign, moving away from a vast archive of print-orientated documents structured around organization and procedure to a site which is organized around the needs of a range of users, serving up information by topics placed in context.
- Intranet site for members of parliament to be used for communication, exchange of documents, editing their profiles and inclusion of constituency map that links the constituency to its member.
- Complete system recast in terms of content, browsing and ergonomics. Introduction of optimized access tools and information diffusion, for example subscription system to real time evolution of parliament's files. Introduction of streaming RSS. Making available public session to audiovisual archives with indexation in real time and functionality of multi-search.
- Improvements: 1-New design with flash web based 2-User support 3-User login for Members of Parliament 4-Webcam capability and broadcast audio and video 5-Download file (audio, video and files) 6-Streaming Audio and video.
- Improving the video catalog: more VOD for committee meetings -Creating participation spaces for citizens.
- 1) Implementation of search engine, 2) Change to .NET platform, 3) Implementation of a portal for access for the blind; 4) Other languages (French, English 5) Change from windows 2000 to win 2003 platform.
- 1. The House is planning to introduce a system via our website whereby any person may subscribe to various mailing lists that cover forthcoming plenary and committee meetings. 2. A virtual tour of the Parliamentary precincts. 3. All documents relating to Parliamentary and Committee meetings shall be uploaded through a document managements system.
- 1. To make the website more user friendly and dynamic 2. Integration of hyperlinks and video/audio files for the webcast system.

- All above relates to services available through main public site. A new intranet site aimed more specifically at the internal/professional user is under development. The existing intranet system is essentially restricted to administrative matters (members and staff).
- A corporate portal is under construction. At the moment we do not have a website for members only.
- As for the design, some animations are envisaged in order to improve the quality of the website. Furthermore, we are working on the creation of sections containing audios/videos of different sessions. Plus, a discussion forum and other modules will be created.
- Web broadcasting, Intranet access, search engine, multimedia broadcasting.
- FAQs, educational material, new design and technology analysis.
- Improved search integrated with all sources of information; increase corporate RSS services, add information management.
- Integrate multimedia files (video, audio).
- Intranet 1) new graphic 2) administrative applications and navigation 3) enriched with dissemination of rules and procedures, technical guides in the areas of technical support, parliamentary and administrative.
- It is expected to implement the following points: Glossary of terms, reading page for the blind, interactive calendar of legislative activities, library, virtual tours to parliament, radio and online gallery of video files.
- Live video and video-on-demand with adobe flash, feedback on videos, development of a petition system to deliver, sign and discuss petitions.
- Make more accessible to persons with disabilities. RSS, video.
- More collaboration tools in the intranet portal (real-time as chat, video conference, VOIP, wiki, blog, teamroom).
- More dynamic content, online submission process, online recruitment and course/seminar registration and providing electronic copies of all tabled papers since 1901.
- New design, new functionality focused on enabling contact between citizens - legislator, as well as additional services to the legislator, and adhering to the accessibility norms.
- Our office needs to redesign the website by considering audio and video format information.
- Parliament is planning to have streaming video for plenary debates/discussions.
- Planning to introduce separate internet site for the parliament (intranet) - Integrated Information System in 2008.
- RSS feeds. Tracking of amendments made to bills. Personal customization of members through log-ins.
- The current website does not provide for enough space to capture citizen's opinions and demands. It is necessary to render the web site interactive to promote electronic democracy (e-democracy) through the development and application of e-parliament principles and practices.
- The House plans to improve the Intranet content, increase conformance to JIS specifications (i.e. web content design standards for accessibility to seniors and disabled persons, in particular), and adopt other measures designed to improve operational efficiency and increase the quality and extent of materials presented, at the same time promoting coordination with the departments and sections concerned.

- There are a number of projects that are currently underway to improve the parliamentary website: - Parlinfo (the main database and search tool for the website) is being redeveloped - The Bills system is being redeveloped - Video on demand is being considered - electronic petitions are being considered - other interactive options are being considered.
- Visual redesign. Structure redesign. Make it W3C compliant. Add Accessibility Content Syndicating.
- We are in the process of building a new CMS website.
- We have recently worked on optimizing information in order to facilitate the access to web content as well as the internal navigation of the website.
- We need to develop a dynamic and interactive website that which will allow web broadcasting of video and audio.
- We plan to achieve better quality of audio and video broadcasting (webcasting) from plenary sessions.

COMMENTS ON PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES

A number of respondents identified parliamentary practices or lessons learned that warrant sharing among a wide audience. These are practices or experiences that provide insight into how these parliaments manage their website effectively.

- The general internet site was completely overhauled in 2004. The decision was taken that the site should first and foremost serve a public information and communications function. It was therefore placed under the operational responsibility of the services responsible for information (press, media relations, etc.) and oriented towards the general public. The 'top' pages therefore focus on accessible news coverage of Parliament's activities, rather than providing a documentary resource. As a result the site became much more accessible to the general, non-specialized user. Frequentation figures have increased dramatically. However, a consequence was that specialized, internal users expressed some frustration at a perceived complication of use from the perspective of the users familiar with parliamentary procedures and documentation. A new, professional-oriented intranet is thus under development, but in the meantime, the public site is doing dual service and has had to be modified to accommodate professional needs in a manner not fully compatible with the 'communications' vision behind the 2004 overhaul.
- As many web pages as possible are automatically generated by the internal information system. It's important to avoid duplication in the management of data (for the Internet/Intranet websites and for the internal Information System). Data must be "caught at the source" during the internal office daily activities.
- Audio and Video: Webcasting and Broadcasting - All open hearings convened in [the capital] are held in the parliamentary meeting rooms and are transmitted via webcast, whereas open hearings held in regional cities are not uploaded on the House website.
- Meetings in the Chamber, House Committees and other occasions are accessible in streaming mode. Legally speaking, neither House can make a direct broadcast to the general public. Neither house has television broadcasting channels. Nevertheless, each House operates a cable television network which transmits video footage of House proceedings to its own premises, ministries and administrative agencies, and political party offices as a parliament proceedings television transmission. The video contents of the above cable television network are uploaded onto each House's website for live and archive viewing. The contents of such transmissions are

plenary sessions, committee meetings, meetings of … delegations, and speeches of other visiting dignitaries from overseas. The Standing Committee on Rules and Administration has set down the transmission policies of fair, and equitable, and partisan neutrality. Accordingly, meeting proceedings are transmitted without editing or explanatory remark from opening to close. 1. The parliament produces video footage and transmits it within its premises, and stores it in video tapes and other storage devices for record-keeping. 2. In order to ensure fair video footage, images center on speakers and have to be transmitted without any editing or comment as meeting proceedings are from opening to close. 3. Video footage can be, after the parliamentary approval, made public to the press and broadcasters for second-usage, as well as to the citizens.

- The good thing that we did last year is that we moved away from the centralized model of updating the website to the distributed model where more than 15-20 staff is currently updating the website and hence contributing to developing the content and improving the design and services.
- We have learnt that the website is a powerful tool for information dissemination. It has drastically reduced the time spent in reacting to information demands by stakeholders and it has also made it possible for stakeholders to make submissions to committees using email facilities or submission forms.

FINDINGS

Parliamentary websites are a key resource for both supporting the work of the institution and communicating with citizens and civil society. This is demonstrated by the fact that over 95% of respondents reported that they have websites for use by the parliament and the public. Differences in a country's income level affects only slightly the online presence of parliaments, and nearly all respondents without a website are planning to have one operational in the near future.

Slightly more than 40% of respondents reported that individual members are using websites to communicate their views on policy issues to their constituents. Since members from parliaments in lower income countries are far less likely to have their own websites, cooperation among parliaments could help to bridge this gap by creating shared website software and sharing good design practices for member sites.

Goals and management. The Secretary General and the Director of ICT are respectively the first and second persons most often indicated by respondents to establish the goals for the parliamentary website. Over one third reported that the President/Speaker is also engaged in setting goals for the website, which is a positive finding in terms of leadership commitment. However, as a good management practice and in view of survey results, more needs to be done by parliament to develop written guidelines for website information, particularly with regard to access, user support and privacy.

Content. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has published *Guidelines for the Content and Structure of Parliamentary Web Sites* in 2000, which has proven to be a useful tool for helping assess the state of parliamentary websites throughout the world. Additional criteria to evaluate them include accuracy, timeliness, completeness, clarity, impact, and usability. Many websites meet a number of the IPU guidelines for information. However, there are still many items recommended in the guidelines that have not been incorporated in the websites. Most of these fall into two categories – committee documents and documents that provide some kind of explanatory information. Since committees play a key legislative role in many parliaments, greater attention may be required to make committee information more accessible and accurate. The amount of explanatory and assessment material available on parliamentary websites could also be improved to enhance the transparency of the legislative process.

Linking documents to proposed legislation. A well-designed parliamentary website would link proposed legislation to all of the relevant documents and information items that are available in digital form. Users of the website - whether they are members of the parliament or the public - should be able to easily consult all of these related items from a single location, including the background documents, explanatory material, status information, committee reports, plenary debate, and final vote on the bill. Websites that do not include these links and that leave it to users to gather information are failing the values of transparency and openness. The survey results show that when links exist they are most likely between proposed legislation and plenary debate, laws and statutes, and committee reports. The results also indicate that much more need to be done to link legislation to other related documents that will assist the user in gathering the complete picture of all information relevant to specific bills under consideration.

Interface design. The survey indicated that a substantial number of respondents currently consult with users on the design of the website interface and use formal usability testing or are planning to do so. While only 30% of respondents have to meet mandated standards of accessibility in support of persons with disabilities, another 40% are planning or considering doing so. Of great concern is the 20% of respondents not planning on meeting such standards or who reported that such standards were not applicable. A greater effort is needed by parliaments to respond to this issue affecting the accessibility of key public information by an important segment of the society.

Use of audio and video technology. Audio and video technologies have become popular methods for parliaments to make their work available to the public. Many chambers and parliaments responding to the survey now broadcast some or all plenary sessions by television and an increasing number are also making them accessible on the Internet via webcasting. Of those who do use audio and video technology, over half maintain archives of these recordings.

Notification systems and services. Considering the fast evolution of technologies a rather low percentage of websites offer notification systems and services. Less than 50% of respondents reported that their websites offer users e-mail notification of proposed legislation, committee actions and plenary session. The same information was offered through RSS feeds by only 10% to 13% of respondents.

Differences between websites for parliament and the public. Approximately one quarter of the respondents indicated that they maintain different websites for use by parliament and the public. Most frequently, respondents reported that the public version of the website does not provide committee votes and minutes, impact assessments for bills, and explanations of legislative actions and bills, while the version used by parliament does. The public also is less likely to be consulted concerning website design.

Availability of legislative documents in downloadable formats. Of interest to many in civil society is whether parliaments make their documents available to the public not only on the web but also in downloadable formats that can be incorporated into systems developed by others. Of those respondents who addressed this issue, the majority makes their files available for downloading. 20% are planning or considering doing so.

Over 60 respondents provided substantive information about improvements planned for their websites. This extensive list clearly reflects the importance that parliaments attach to their websites and the resources they are prepared to commit to them. It provides a positive indicator that parliamentary websites will continue to be enhanced in support of both the members and the public, as well as the willingness to share experiences and future plans.

Chapter VII

Building a Knowledge Base for Parliament

PARLIAMENTS AND INFORMATION

Parliaments are information intensive and information demanding organizations. Acquiring, organizing, managing, distributing and preserving information is fundamental to their constitutional mandate. Legislatures create information themselves through their documents and their actions, and require information from many external sources, including the government, the judiciary, civil society, experts, the media, academicians, international organizations, other legislative bodies and citizens. To ensure that parliament is properly informed in today's fast evolving environment, it is increasingly important to have a comprehensive approach to identifying, managing and providing access to critical resources. Internal information resources, such as databases of proposed bills, committee and plenary documents, and other related sources materials, need to be organized in ways that make them easily accessible to members, officers and staff. These must be integrated with the most relevant sources from outside the parliament. Access to a coherent body of information is of great importance to legislatures. Making this information accessible to the public serves the goal of transparency and contributes to an informed legislature and an informed society.

Like all major institutions, parliaments are confronted by a vast array of information in many formats, including print, numeric, graphical, audio and video. Members, their assistants and staff also need to handle information that comes to them through a variety of channels - on paper, via internal networks, by video and audio, and through the Internet. Despite the increased number of activities that are performed online, paper documents remain the prevalent format for distributing much material within legislatures. At the same time, the growth of local area networks (LANs) and e-mail systems within parliaments now facilitates the electronic exchange of information and digital document creation. Furthermore, the exponential growth of web resources vastly increases the amount of information available to anyone with an Internet connection. The net result can sometimes be overwhelming.

Locating the information that specifically responds to a member's request, identifying what is most useful, ensuring that someone has the correct version of a document, providing links to other relevant information, and organizing the accumulated material in a fashion that is easy for busy parliamentarians to use is a major challenge. Skilled staff making use of effective ICT tools and managing content are critical for productively handling internal parliamentary documents and information resources and the influx of information from outside.

As parliaments enhance their capacity for organizing and integrating information resources, legislators become better informed about the issues they confront, and can more effectively contribute to, and track the progress of, legislative proposals under consideration. This in turn results in more efficient parliamentary processes and more effective members. These capabilities not only provide substantial benefits to legislators, but also are critical for supporting the work of their assistants, committee staff, and of various offices within the parliament.

Box 7.1

"In our vision, the Parliamentary Information system becomes the Parliamentary Knowledge System, where each piece of information of interest to the Parliament becomes interrelated, interconnected and organized."

Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy
Statement at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

BUILDING BLOCKS

Personal computers, databases, networks, and the Web have significantly improved access to timely and authoritative information, as well as to research and analyses relevant to policy issues. Within parliaments, Intranets are a major mechanism for sharing key information resources. Besides being the backbone of administrative services, an Intranet can be used for a variety of other important purposes, such as transmitting confidential requests for information, providing additional security for private e-mails, and managing working documents that are still being revised prior to release. Intranets can also be an important asset during periods of negotiation and political compromise.

Yet, while computer and communication technologies provide access to a growing world of information, creating "knowledge" from this vast store of information is a major challenge. Transforming these many information sources into something that is helpful to legislators requires librarians, information specialists, and policy and legal analysts who can present knowledge in an organized way that is useful in the legislative setting.

While the specific organizational arrangement varies among countries, most parliaments have access to some type of library services. For parliaments the library and information centre, combined with available in-house research services, are critical to effectively retrieving needed information and prepare the ground for policy discussions. Librarians have the expertise to access a broad array of digital resources, validate the reliability of the source, and identify those that are most useful to respond to questions posed by members and other staff. Skilled staff who are capable of performing research using a variety of sources, selecting the most relevant information, analyzing issues discussed in parliament, and preparing documents that summarize legislation and related issues play a key role in supporting the work of legislative institutions. These skills also enable them to work effectively with ICT staff in the design of online resources such as parliamentary websites. In addition, library and research staff can help ensure that online resources developed by the parliament are both comprehensive and easy to use by different audiences, inside and outside the institution.

Box 7.2

"The same technologies and protocols used in the parliamentary Internet can be employed in the parliament Extranet, which gives to citizens (as well as to their associations and to economic and social organizations) access to information and applications existing within parliament and ways of participating in the parliamentary activity."

Legal Informatics and Management of Legislative Documents, edited by Giovanni Sartor (EUI, Florence), November 2007

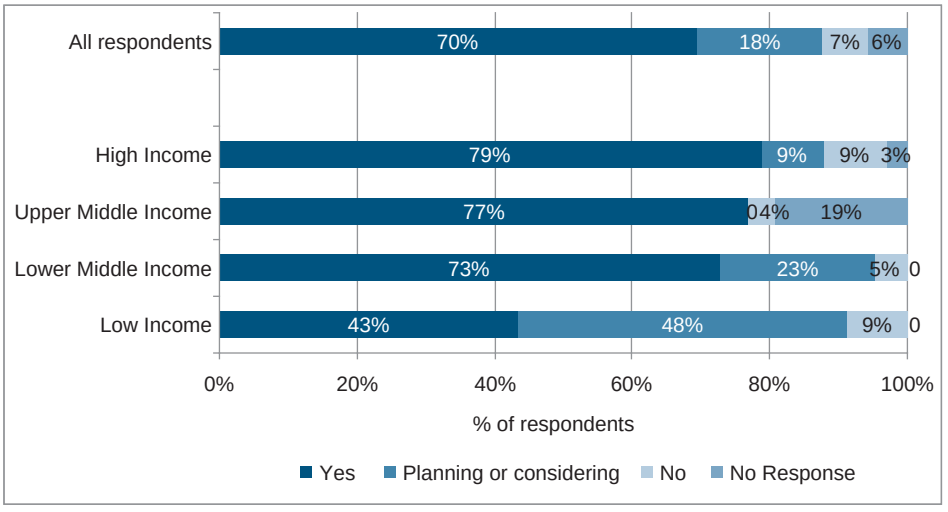
ICT tools can be deployed to help ensure that lawmakers are better informed about what has been done before and about some of the possible outcomes of their decisions. Through its capacity to support communication with experts, wherever they may be located, ICT can significantly expand the scope of information, knowledge, and experience brought to bear on an issue. Nevertheless, ICT-based decision support tools will never be able to replace either parliamentary staff who prepare background documents and identify key resources for members nor the role of the elected representative in making challenging and often difficult choices.

USE OF ICT BY LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES

As parliamentary libraries have transitioned to more extensive use of digital online resources, and research offices have come to rely on the Internet to access needed information, both have become strong advocates of the value of ICT in the parliamentary setting. Through the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and other regional and national groups, parliamentary libraries and research services have created a forum for exchanging good practices for applying ICT to their activities.

Results from several questions in the global survey concerning library and research services underscored the role that library and research staff have as early adopters of ICT and as important contributors to advancing its broader use in parliaments. Figure 7-1 shows that 70% of the chambers and parliaments responding to the survey have automated systems for managing library resources. This is the highest percentage of respondents who reported the adoption of a specific ICT application except for parliamentary websites themselves. Furthermore, 18% more are planning to introduce one. Although there is evidence that a higher number of parliaments in countries with more resources have currently automated systems, a significant number in countries with fewer resources indicated that they have plans for such library systems in the future.

Figure 7-1: Use of an automated system for managing library resources, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 1)

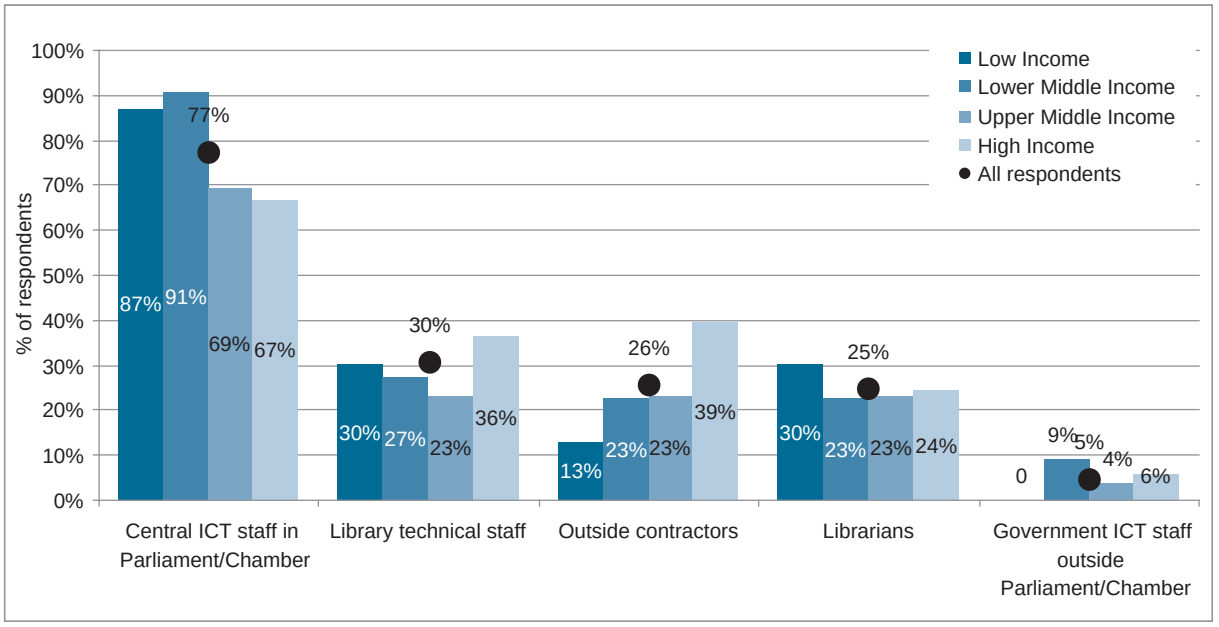
The survey also found that approximately 70% of those using automated systems are taking advantage of web platforms.[1] These systems provide the capability for cataloging acquisitions and for searching in over 90% of the cases. In addition, 66% use these systems for acquisitions of serials and 60% for

1 Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 2.

acquiring monographs. Approximately half indicated that the system has the capability for archiving digital resources and 34% said their system have e-resource management capabilities.[2] These results confirm that many libraries serving parliamentary bodies have a strong base of ICT infrastructure that enables them to organize and manage their materials and provide effective access to them.

Because libraries are so essential to the management and sharing of information, providing adequate technical support to them is a high priority. The survey found that while libraries primarily received their ICT support from the central staff in parliament or in their chamber, a significant number also rely on their own technical staff and librarians, as presented in Figure 7-2. Over three quarters of respondents cited the central ICT staff as support providers, but, in addition, 30% indicated that library technical staff provide support and 25% that librarians provide support. Interestingly, the largest percentage of respondents that identified librarians as a source of ICT support (30%) was from Low Income countries. That may imply that in countries with fewer resources and less access to technical

Figure 7-2: Providers of ICT support to the library, by country's income group



Not applicable/No response is 0 for low income, 9% for high & lower middle income, 23% for upper middle income, 10% for all respondents.
(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 22)

ACCESS TO INTERNET RESOURCES

70% of chambers and parliaments participating in the survey provide Internet access to electronic information resources.[3] A significant number of those in low and lower middle income countries that do not currently provide access to electronic resources indicated that they plan to do so in the future. Again, providing such services may be related primarily to having the capacity to do so or to the country's level of Internet penetration. As one respondent commented: "Due to our means, the Internet connection is only available to the President of the Assembly and his Secretary General (on a shared basis)."

Those who responded that Internet access to electronic information resources is available, further indicated that it is primarily available to members (96%), staff (96%), and the library (88%). A smaller number (62%) provide Internet access to the public. Based on respondents' comments, it appears that in some

2 Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 3.
3 Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 4.

parliaments public access is available only from inside the library rather than remotely. Generally speaking the library often acts as the primary venue for facilitating broad access to electronic information resources. A good example given by one respondent speaks to the role of the library in offering such services, and also highlights the issue of developing a long-term retention policy for electronic resources.

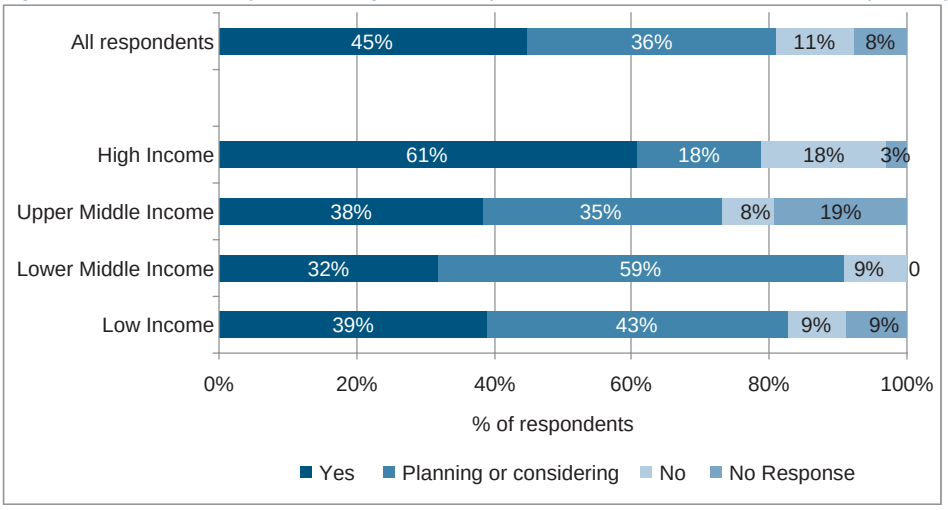
Box 7.3

> "The Library provides access to a range of Internet resources, some directly, others through the Library's electronic repository. The Library will be working on a digital collection policy to set down what electronic resources should be held by the Library and what can be accessed as required from other trusted repositories."
>
> Respondent to Survey

According to survey results, the internet-based information resources provided most often are government websites and databases (82%), parliaments of other countries (77%), free news services (77%), and international organizations (72%). A significant number of chambers offering Internet access to electronic resources also make public policy journals (66%) and scientific journals (62%) available to their users. The number decreases substantially, to 38%, for fee-based news services.

In addition to offering Internet searching, Figure 7-3 shows that 45% of chambers and parliaments have a portal that organizes and provides access to Internet resources. 36% more stated that they are planning to do so in the future. This reflects a commitment on the part of parliaments to serve as a conduit for providing organized information resources available on the Internet. Portals facilitate searching for information online by systematically arranging access to information resources in ways that are more useful to end-users, such as by subject or type of information. While to produce such tools as Internet portals may require considerable efforts by skilled staff, portals can be extremely helpful for identifying information that is particularly relevant to parliaments and reducing the amount of "information overload" that often occurs when searching the Internet. The relatively high percentage (18%) of chambers in the high income group not planning to transition from their website to a portal is rather surprising.

Figure 7-3: Presence of a portal that organizes and provides access to Internet resources, by country's income group



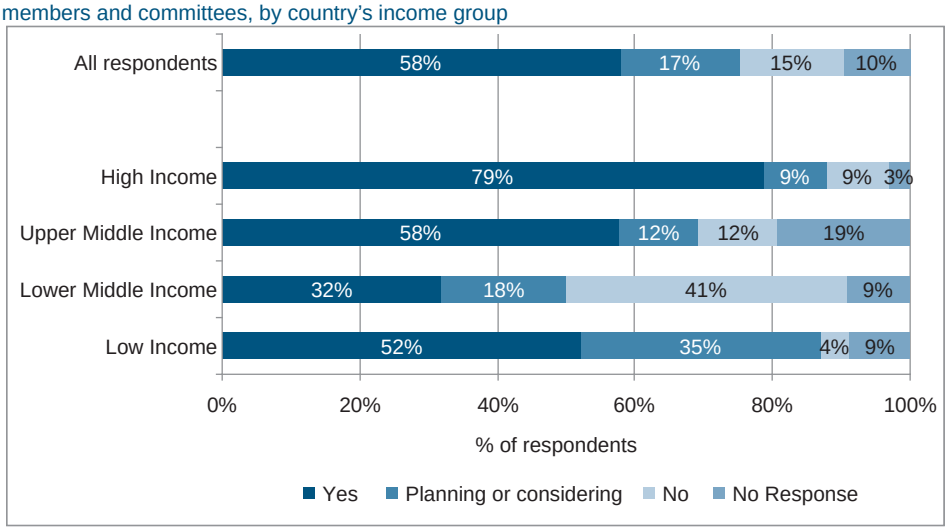
(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 7)

ACCESS TO POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

In addition to library and information centre staff, many parliaments retain subject matter experts, either on staff or through contract, who can provide research and analysis for members and committees on public policy issues.

As Figure 7-4 shows, 52% of respondents in Low Income countries have policy analysis expertise available to them, while in Higher Income countries the percentage rises to 79%. Since such expertise is expensive, using ICT tools to gain access to knowledge at other parliaments may provide an important benefit to parliaments with fewer resources.

Figure 7-4: Use of subject matter experts on public policy issues to provide research and analysis for members and committees, by country's income group

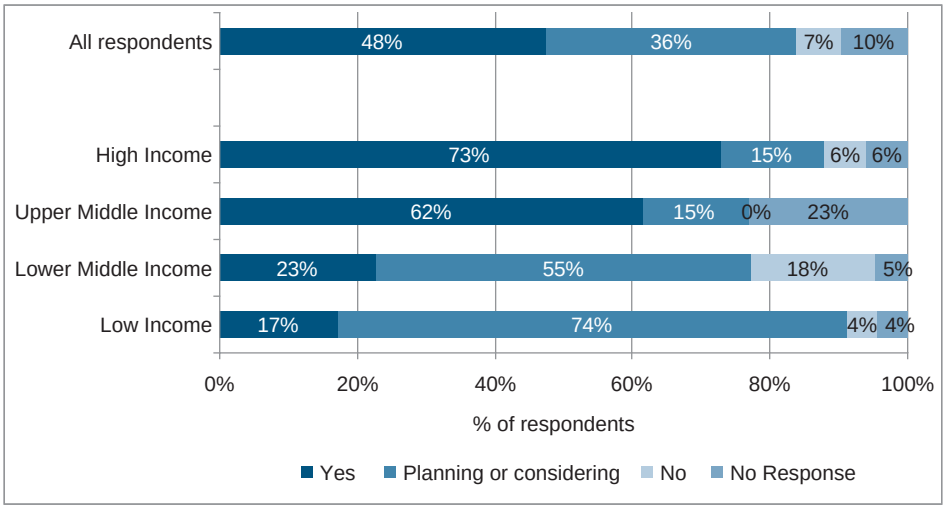


(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 16)

Three quarters of those indicating that they have experts also reported that the analyses produced by them were available in digital form. In 54% of the cases these analyses are made available on the parliament's website. Fewer (36%) also put these analyses on a website for the benefit of the public.[4]

ICT can prove highly beneficial for capitalizing on the expertise available to parliaments and managing this knowledge most effectively. Using the parliament's Intranet for access to and distribution of library and research services can improve member access to staff expertise. However, as presented in Figure 7-5, less than half of all chambers stated that they have an Intranet and made use of it for this purpose. This may be an area deserving priority attention as parliaments could better leverage their investment in human resources to effectively transform into knowledge organizations.

Figure 7-5: Use of a parliamentary Intranet to enable library and research staff make their services available to members, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 10)

4 Source: Survey, Section 6, Questions 17-19.

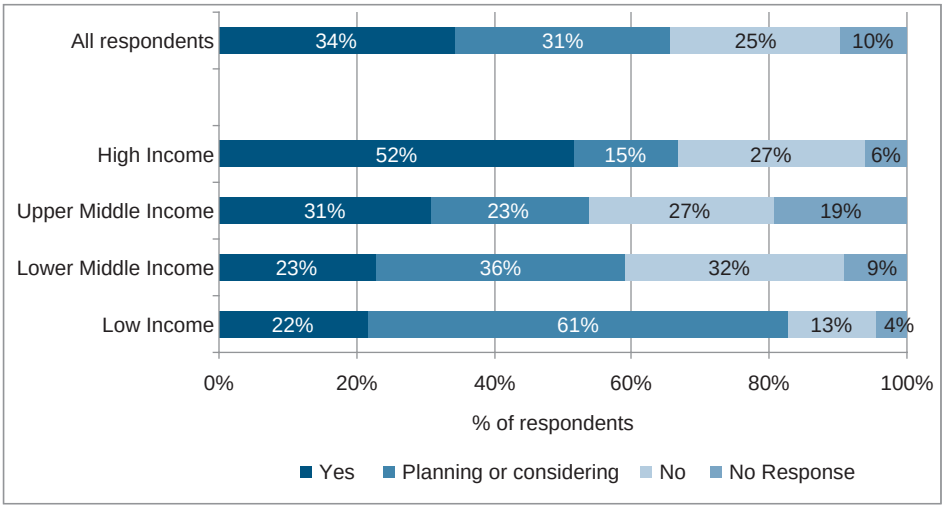
One respondent offered the following description of a library Intranet and its services, providing a good example of what can be done in this area.

Box 7.4

> "The library's Intranet is part of the PARLANET developed especially for MPs, their staff, and for the office of the National Assembly. The library's Intranet provides the following services:
> 1. Access to background materials (research papers, info-packs for hearings and of speeches, media/ press reviews, etc.)
> 2. Access to the Statistical Database of Constituencies
> 3. Access to a suggested and selected collection of useful links
> 4. Access to an anniversary calendar."
>
> Respondent to Survey

ICT can also be used effectively for providing information services linked specifically to policy issues and legislation being considered by parliaments. Although only 34% of chambers and parliaments indicated that they provide such policy or legislation-oriented services, as shown in Figure 7-6, those that did, indicated that they make heavy use of ICT for research and information gathering, as well as preparation and distribution of the product or service.[5] It is interesting to note that in this area the percentage of those in the High Income group saying that they have no plans for it is significant.

Figure 7.6: Provision of information services linked to policy issues and legislation before the Parliament, by country's income group

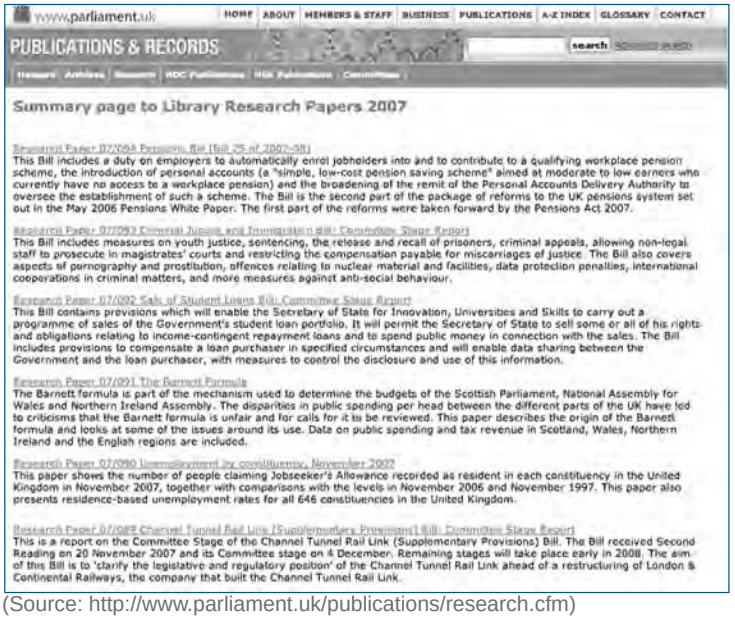


(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 11)

5 Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 13.

One of the analytical staff services provided in some parliaments is the preparation of a summary or "comment" on each bill that is considered. For example, the Library research staff of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom prepares bill analyses and makes them available on their website.

Figure 7-7: UK House of Commons Library example of research papers on pending legislation

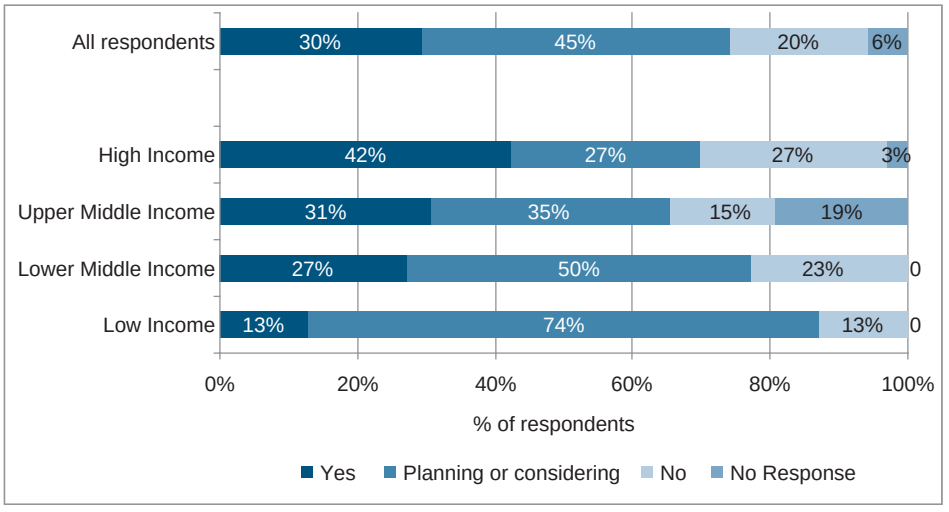


(Source: http://www.parliament.uk/publications/research.cfm)

More effective deployment of ICT can further enhance the utility of these useful documents in which parliaments already have made major investments. For example, linking all relevant summaries and research analyses on pending bills to the official version of the legislation and to related documents and actions provides a much more comprehensive understanding of the legislation under consideration. The ability to provide these kinds of links will be greatly facilitated if open document standards are implemented.

Enhancing collaboration among parliamentary staff is another area where ICT can be helpful. In many parliaments the work of library staff and research staff is not always closely integrated organizationally or in terms of the information products they develop. Based on the survey results it is clear that parliaments are not yet fully utilizing technologies that might improve this situation. Only 30% of chambers and parliaments surveyed have a system that supports collaboration among library and research staff, as seen in Figure 7-8. The use of collaboration software is only beginning to be used within parliaments, but a growth in its use would be anticipated based on the large number indicating plans to do so. Interestingly, the largest percentage of respondents that stated that they planned to have systems to support collaboration in the future were from low income countries (74%), while high income countries show the highest percentage of respondents that said they had no plans to have such systems (27%).

Figure 7-8: Use of a system that supports collaboration among library and research staff, by country's income group



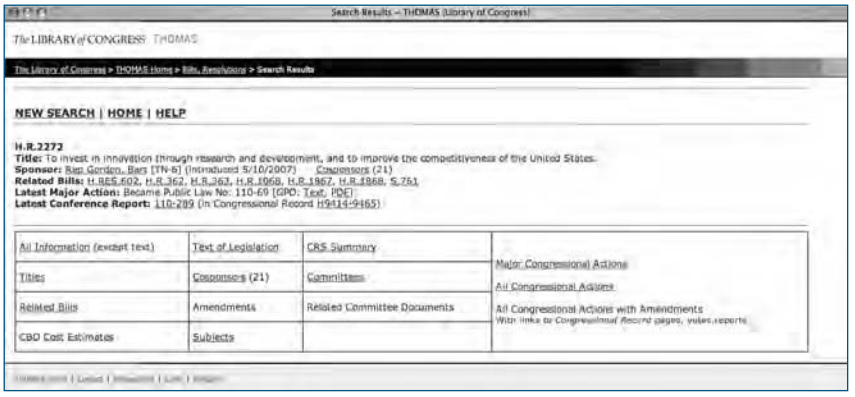
(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 8)

INTEGRATING AND ORGANIZING INFORMATION

The growth of information in digital formats, coupled with new technological developments, are enhancing opportunities for incorporating information from diverse sources and for customizing it to serve specific users. One example can be illustrated in *Thomas*, the legislative system created by the Congress of the United States of America for the public. Through the integrated approach used in this system users can search on a particular bill and can receive not only all the versions of a legislative proposal to date, but also find links to committee reports, introductory statements and debate on the legislation that might have occurred in either chamber, amendments to the bill, any related actions taken by either the House or the Senate, and summaries of the bill prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress. Additional links, such as to analytical reports prepared by CRS, are available to members and staff on the congressional Intranet version of the system.

Many of the links in *Thomas* are currently created manually or through complex programming. However, the increasing use of the open document standard XML will make it much easier in the future to generate these links automatically using simpler algorithms. Both the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States have undertaken projects to prepare bills and other legislative documents using XML.

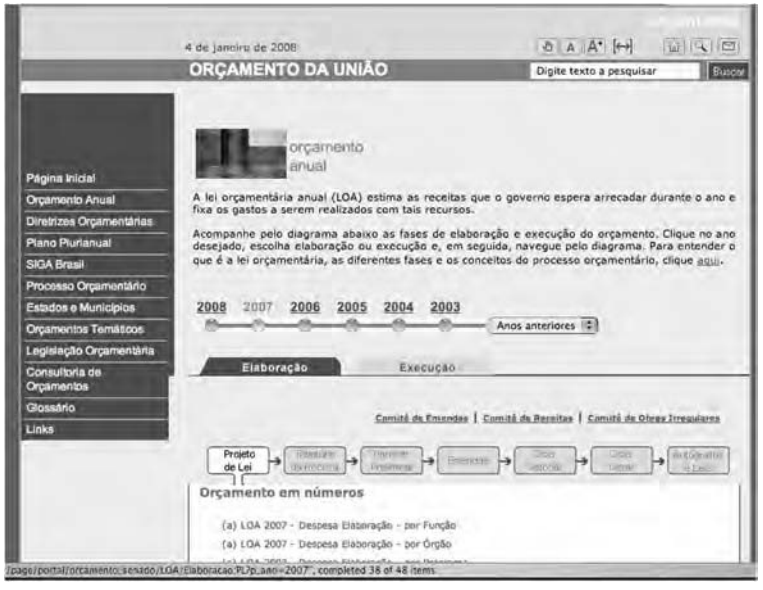
Figure 7-9: Example from the U.S. Congress *Thomas* system



(Source: http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:HR02272:|TOM:/bss/d110query.html|)

In addition to passing legislation, a major area of parliamentary responsibility is the approval and oversight of the government's operating budget.

Figure 7-10: Senate of Brazil webpage for tracking federal budget



(Source: *http://www9.senado.gov.br/portal/page/portal/orcamento_senado*)

The Senate of Brazil offers another example of using linking to extend the access to critical information used in parliament through its website, which tracks the federal budget process from the proposal stage through expenditures. This site is a valuable resource for supporting the work of parliament and for enhancing government accountability and transparency by making this information publicly available. The website provides links to numerous documents and information resources related to the budget.

Box 7.5

THE SIGA BRASIL PROJECT

"The SIGA BRASIL project was developed about seven years ago, initially for internal use of the Advisory Office of Budget, Oversight, and Control of the Brazilian Senate. It is now open to public access at http://www9.senado.gov.br/portal/page/portal/orcamento_senado. SIGA BRASIL has proven to be an important tool to promote transparency in public spending.

The key to the success of the project was a result of two primary factors: a correct process of negotiation with information producers within the executive to feed the data bases; and the close partnership with the Advisory Office of Budget, Oversight, and Control of the Senate to create reports and pre-programmed consultations, along with training for budget specialists of the Senate. Such reports and consultations are also available to Internet users, and especially to those with little experience in budgetary matters.

The Senate budget portal – where SIGA BRASIL can be accessed - brings additional budgetary information, such as technical reports, important news, description of the budget process, the entire legislation on budget matters (in a timeline, since the Brazilian constitution of 1824), a glossary of technical terms and other important documents. SIGA BRASIL is able to release detailed information that allows for the accurate identification of bank transfers of federal funds to municipalities, including information about the recipient's account, the amount, date, etc. With this, more efficient control of transferred funds will be achieved and data consolidations at several levels will be accomplished.

To have an idea of the evolution of the system, in 2001 - a year after its release -, SIGA BRASIL had 1.92 million records in its database. In 2007, the database exceeds 231 million records, distributed in approximately 101 universes, countless facts, dimensions and classes. SIGA BRASIL receives more than 8,000 queries monthly and has about 1,800 registered users at the specialist level. These users are entitled to access special functions, and able to generate and register new reports into the system.

SIGA BRASIL greatly facilitates the oversight of federal funds' transfers to all 26 Brazilian states and more than 5,500 Brazilian municipalities, in addition to allowing benchmarks. Users are provided with ready-made reports on areas that are vital to the municipal administration, such as education and health. Users also have access to interactive features that allow for changes in existing reports, data comparison and other data analyses. The implementation of the approved budget amendments can also be monitored. SIGA BRASIL also provides structured information to members of parliament, to the agencies of the executive responsible for implementing the budget, and to the civil society as a whole. It also provides detailed information to the general public about how tax payers' money is spent.

Due to its widespread use by specialists, such as professionals from the Auditor General's Office (Tribunal de Contas da União-TCU), the Controller-General's Office (Controladoria-Geral da União-CGU), the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management (Ministério do Planejamento, Orçamento e Gestão - MPO), and the Central Bank of Brazil (Banco Central do Brasil), among others, the development of this project awarded the Brazilian Senate national recognition with the 2007 Brazilian Information and Communication Technology Prize.

From the perspective of the legislative body, SIGA BRASIL represents a basic and essential tool for both analyzing and voting on the budget laws. It provides extensive resources for analyses and consultations from members of the Congress and parliamentary committees, which include the works of inquiry committees to track the misuse of public funds. SIGA BRASIL also allows for a fast cross-check of information on the transactions carried out by municipal city halls, identifying the recipients of bank transfers and money orders utilizing public funds. All data and the resulting reports are provided in real time, thus ensuring that information is always up-to-date.

SIGA BRASIL, along with all application systems that give support to the budget process, was developed in-house by the Subsecretariat of IT Solutions of the Senate Data Processing Center (Prodasen)."

Carlos Magno Santoro, Director, Subsecretariat of IT Solutions – Prodasen
Contribution to the World e-Parliament Report 2008

This same approach could be used to establish links to information at other government entities, state and local public authorities, civil society organizations, and other outside information resources useful in the context of developing and debating legislation. Similarly, there could be great value in creating links to related information in other parliaments.

Chapter 5 has already discussed the use of open standards for documenting the legislative process, but it is useful to highlight their value in the context of building an integrated parliamentary knowledge base. As more legislative documents, such as bills, committee reports, plenary minutes and votes are put into digital form and tagged using open document standards, the opportunities for creating automated linkages among related materials on a specific piece of legislation are greatly enhanced. Rather than retrieving separate pieces of information or documents from different websites, users will be able to go to a single website that integrates all the relevant information. Tagging using the open standard will also make it possible to identify particular sections within a document or bill so that specific provisions can be tracked, incorporated in other documents, or linked to them directly. These capabilities will be exceedingly beneficial to parliaments and legislators because they will have much easier access to the diverse range of documents, studies, and other important information sources related to their legislative and oversight functions. As more legislative bodies begin to apply open standard tags to their documents, the potential for sharing information across institutions, as well as within them, will grow considerably.

ARCHIVING INFORMATION

Effectively managing the entire life cycle of documents is fundamental to building a robust parliamentary knowledge base. One aspect of this that often fails to receive adequate attention is the archival preservation of digital information for the future. Parliaments face a significant challenge in establishing digital archives of their documents and actions. Maintaining a permanent, authoritative record of parliamentary activities in a digital form that can be accessed despite changes in technology requires a major commitment of resources and expertise. Moreover, this commitment is essential if parliaments are to fulfill their obligation to the public to provide a full record and an accounting of their work. Just as the written record of parliaments has been accessible over time, efforts need to be made to ensure the permanence of digital records.

For example, as parliaments update the content of their websites, move from one legislative session to the next, or change leadership, it is critical that information that has been publicly available online is not lost and can be accessed in some fashion in the future. This is another area where establishing policies and fostering use of open document standards should greatly improve the ability to archive digital parliamentary records and maintain them over time.

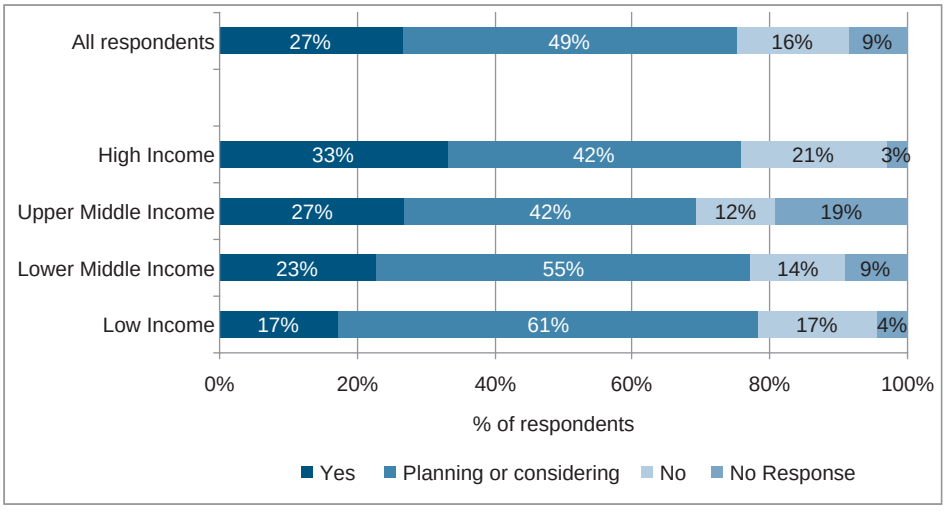
Box 7.6

> "The archiving of documents is also a fundamental responsibility of democratic governments, as access to such records is important for holding governments accountable and for deliberation over the effectiveness of government institutions and policies. Standards can raise serious problems of backward incompatibility, non-interoperable proprietary formats, and rapid software and media obsolescence. Any of these could prevent government agencies from guaranteeing that electronically archived public records will remain accessible in the future."
>
> Laura DeNardis and Tam Eric, Open Documents and Democracy – a Political Basis for Open Documents Standards, Yale Information Society Project White Paper, 2007

Unfortunately, as Figure 7-11 shows, less than 30% of respondents reported having a policy for retaining digital resources permanently, although an additional 49% indicated that they are planning or considering one.

Providing permanent access to digital resources is essential for a parliament if it is to ensure the authenticity of digital documents and a permanent institutional record. This relatively small number of parliaments that have a policy for permanent access is a concern, although the larger number of those planning it for the future offers some positive indication that there is growing awareness of the importance of instituting a system for addressing this problem. As in other areas, there is a correlation between the higher income level of the country and the existence of a policy. However, when one adds the number of chambers with plans to establish a policy in the future, the gap disappears. In fact, fewer chambers in Low Income countries stated that they have no plans for developing a policy for retaining digital resources permanently than in high income countries (17% versus 21%). The willingness of chambers and parliaments with fewer resources to consider policies of this nature is a positive sign, particularly in those cases where the institution is starting to embark along the e-parliament path.

Figure 7-11: Presence of a policy for retaining digital resources permanently, by country's income group



(Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 14)

Of those few chambers that have a digital archiving policy, 82% have practices in place to ensure permanent access to digital resources.[6] This is a positive finding and suggests that once parliaments focus on the issue of preservation of digital resources and establish a policy, they are likely to move forward with creating practices and developing a system to support a digital archive. Political will and management foresight need to be combined with ICT to make this a priority.

FINDINGS

Acquiring, organizing and integrating parliamentary and external information sources in a way that enables the creation of a parliamentary knowledge base has major value for legislative institutions. A solid ICT infrastructure combined with skilled library and research staff can greatly enhance member access to key information resources whether they are from inside the legislature, from other parts of the government or from a variety of outside sources. In addition, as more legislative documents, along

6 Source: Survey, Section 6, Question 15.

with external public policy sources, are created using open document standards, the opportunities for establishing automated linkages among related materials on a specific piece of legislation are greatly enhanced. These capabilities in turn contribute to more informed deliberations on proposed legislation.

Developing a robust knowledge base also enables parliaments to increase transparency by providing public access to their core documents and to the workings of the parliament. The more comprehensive and better organized such information resources are, the more the media and the public are able to monitor parliament's activities and to understand the content and implications of measures under consideration.

The survey results indicate that library and research staff are at the forefront of using ICT to perform their jobs, whether acquiring documents and other information, conducting research, preparing reports, or disseminating information. Additionally, parliaments use the Internet as a major source of information for internal purposes and to provide information to the citizens. Specifically, the responses received show that:

- 70% of the chambers have automated systems for managing library resources and a majority of these systems are web-based.
- 70% of chambers offer Internet access to electronic resources.
- The resources most often provided by these chambers are government websites and databases (82%), parliaments of other countries (77%), free news services (77%), and international organizations (72%). A significant number of chambers also make available public policy journals (66%) and scientific journals (62%).
- 45% of chambers have a portal that organizes and provides access to Internet resources and another 36% plan to provide portals in the future. However, close to 20% of respondents in high income countries stated that they had no plans to provide portals.
- While only 34% of chambers provide information services linked specifically to policy issues and legislation, they make heavy use of ICT for research and information gathering as well as preparation and distribution of products and services.
- Three quarter of those who have subject experts reported that the analyses they produced were available in digital form and in over half of those chambers they made these analyses available on the parliament's own website. However, fewer had them publicly available.

The results also highlight the need for additional efforts to be made in several areas. These include archiving of digital materials created by parliaments, Intranet access to library and research services, and collaboration among staff serving the parliament. Specific findings include:

- Less than 30% of chambers reported having a policy for retaining digital resources permanently, although almost 50% more said they are planning to develop one.
- Less than half of chambers stated that they have an Intranet that provides access to library and research services.
- Only 30% of chambers have a system that supports collaboration among library and research staff.

Finally, the findings show that in addition to the central ICT staff, library technical staff (30%) and librarians (25%) can also be a source of ICT support to the library.

Chapter VIII

Parliaments and Citizens: Enhancing the Dialogue

"The early years of the twenty-first century have witnessed a marked paradox. On the one hand democracy, both as an ideal and as a set of political institutions and practices, has triumphed in most countries of the world. As the outcome statement of the United Nations 2005 World Summit declared, 'democracy is a universal value' which 'does not belong to any country or region'. On the other hand, these years have also seen a considerable disillusionment developing with the results of democracy in practice, one that is shared by citizens of the 'old' democracies as much as by those of the 'new and emerging' ones."[1]

Such disillusionment has translated into declining citizen participation in government affairs, partly caused by lack of public confidence and trust in policymakers, and in some cases exacerbated by the inability or ineffectiveness of public institutions to inform the community and devise mechanisms to include citizens and stakeholders in the policymaking process. The OECD's 10 guiding principles for information, consultation and active participation of citizens in policymaking, presented in Box 8.2, well express the challenges facing governments.

There is a growing concern in many legislatures that unless effective channels of communication are established between the institution and their citizens, as well as among legislators and their constituencies, there could be a risk of further erosion of public's trust in the legislative body.

The growth of ICT and the newest web applications that allow user generated content have already started to alter the traditional relationship between citizens and their elected officials. In order to respond to these developments, parliaments must define new strategies to avoid marginalization in today's public sphere. When developing an e-parliament vision some see the potential to add new means for informing and interacting with citizens to re-engage the electorate in parliamentary affairs, in the hope that the negative trends in public satisfaction and participation in elections can be reversed. While the use of interactive technologies alone is not enough to rebuild political trust, it may be an important instrument for addressing this problem.

Box 8.1

"The world around parliaments is changing. Parliaments must step into the fray with courage and farsightedness as they strive to cope with this complex and contradictory process. If parliaments want to be part of the reinvention of politics, which is occurring in any case, they have to be prepared to reinvent themselves."

Stefano Rodotà, Professor of Law, University of Rome "La Sapienza"
Keynote address at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

It is incumbent on parliaments to take the initiative to improve the way they inform and communicate by intelligently exploiting emerging technologies. The OECD guidelines for engaging citizens, even though published in 2001, still have relevance today and offer a useful framework for legislatures seeking to improve dialogue with the electorate.

1 *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice,* Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006.

Box 8.2

OECD's 10 guiding principles for information, consultation and active participation of citizens in policymaking

1. Commitment
Leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is needed at all levels – from politicians, senior managers and public officials.

2. Rights
Citizens' rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent institutions for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights.

3. Clarity
Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and active participation during policy-making should be well defined from the outset. The respective roles and responsibilities of citizens (in providing input) and government (in making decisions for which they are accountable) must be clear to all.

4. Time
Public consultation and active participation should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective. Information is needed at all stages of the policy cycle.

5. Objectivity
Information provided by government during policy-making should be objective, complete and accessible. All citizens should have equal treatment when exercising their rights of access to information and participation.

6. Resources
Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in policy-making are to be effective. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports their efforts.

7. Co-ordination
Initiatives to inform, request feedback from and consult citizens should be co-ordinated across government units to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of "consultation fatigue" among citizens and civil society organisations. Co-ordination efforts should not reduce the capacity of government units to ensure innovation and flexibility.

8. Accountability
Governments have an obligation to account for the use they make of citizens' inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing government accountability overall.

9. Evaluation
Governments need the tools, information and capacity to evaluate their performance in providing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens, in order to adapt to new requirements and changing conditions for policy-making.

10. Active citizenship
Governments benefit from active citizens and a dynamic civil society, and can take concrete actions to facilitate access to information and participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens' civic education and skills, as well as to support capacity-building among civil society organisations.

Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-making, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2001

As discussed in Chapter 6, websites can be powerful instruments for parliaments. They can help educate the public on the history and role of the legislature and its past and current representation (political groups, votes, gender balance, etc.); inform citizens on already existing communication channels (information offices, access to sessions, visits to buildings); enhance parliamentary accountability by showing key documentation (budget of the institution, code of conduct, rules and procedures, members' salaries and allowances, missions abroad, etc.); and, provide an open and transparent window on the legislative process.

However, by using ICT to initiate two-way communication with the public, parliament and its membership may be able foster a higher degree of openness and at the same time improve their understanding of citizen concerns by hearing a broader range of opinions.

Having multiple channels for receiving and disseminating information extends the options available to the public for interacting with parliament. For example, the use of the Web and social networking tools is particularly attractive to the younger generation, who often lack interest in more traditional means of learning about the workings of their government. In addition, by ensuring that their websites and related applications adhere to standards for persons with disabilities, parliaments can reach audiences that might otherwise be disenfranchised.

Box 8.3

> "The public - in any parliamentary democracy - have a right to expect a parliament which communicates its work promptly, clearly and usefully, but also one that reaches out to all citizens and invites participation and interaction."
>
> Ross Ferguson, Director of e-Democracy, Hansard Society
> Presentation at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

As the use of the Web has become more widespread and new applications for involving citizens with government more available, the concept of e-democracy has begun to receive a growing attention. Because many people increasingly use the Web in all aspects of their daily lives, whether to conduct business, be entertained, or communicate with friends, they expect to be able to use the same technology to interact with the different branches of government. At the same time, governments see the value of exploiting ICT for disseminating information more effectively, performing better service delivery, and for engaging their citizens directly in policy discussions.

There is a growing body of literature concerning e-democracy that spans all levels of government, all branches of government, and a full range of electronic interactions from Internet voting, to online petitioning, to offering online comments on draft regulations. In addition, a number of major initiatives have been launched by international organizations focusing on e-democracy. Among them, for example, the Council of Europe (CoE) has established an *ad hoc* Committee on e-Democracy, which has convened several symposiums on the topic, produced a set of papers and is currently working on identifying standards for e-democracy. The Committee has taken a broad approach to e-democracy that entails "the support and enhancement of democracy, democratic processes and institutions, and linked to the (re-) engagement of citizens in democracy and governance."[2] Another major e-democracy effort is DEMO-net, a network of excellence designed to strengthen the body of research on the topic of e-participation by improving its quality and impact through a coordinated approach within the European Union's member states.[3] The recent report of the United Nations "UN e-Government Survey 2008: From e-Government to Connected Governance" also addresses the dynamic nature of

2 Thomas M. Buchsbaum, Presentation at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007. For more information on the COE e-Democracy Project see: http//www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/democracy/.
3 For more information on DEMO-net see: http//www.demo-net.org/demo.

interaction between citizens and elected officials, and offers a framework for showing the numerous factors at work.[4] In addition, several major non-profit research institutes and academic centres in different countries are carrying out programmes on e-democracy or e-participation. Just within the UK alone, examples include the International Centre of Excellence for Local eDemocracy (ICELE), the Hansard Society's e-Democracy programme[5] and the Centre for Digital Citizenship at the Institute of Communications Studies of the University of Leeds.[6] While all of these efforts are contributing to a better understanding of the broad area of e-democracy, work in this field is still at any early stage and more research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of specific approaches and technologies, and on developing better analytical tools for assessing e-democracy.

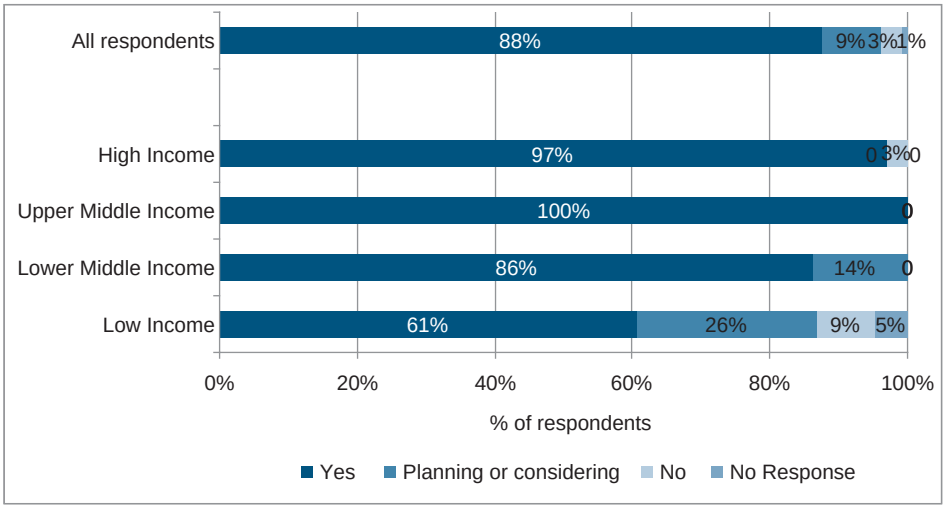
It is outside the scope of this Report to provide a review of the entire field of e-democracy. Rather, using data drawn from the global survey and presentations and discussions at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007, this Report will focus more narrowly on the specific topic of enhancing the dialogue between legislative bodies and their constituents within an e-parliament context. It is hoped that these findings will contribute to the growing understanding of how ICT may be used to enhance interaction between citizens and their legislatures.

METHODS FOR CITIZENS TO COMMUNICATE

E-mail

As e-mail has become a more universally available and widely used form of communication, parliaments have begun to provide public e-mail addresses on websites to allow direct contact with members and parliamentary offices. E-mail provides the potential for good two-way communication, enabling citizens to establish a dialogue with members of parliament without necessarily going through a political party, a central administrative office or visiting the parliament building. Results from the survey show that in 88% of the chambers and parliaments who replied to it the public can contact parliament by e-mail to express opinions, with chambers and parliaments in the Upper Middle and High Income groups respectively reaching 100% and 97%.

Figure 8-1: Citizen-parliament e-mail exchanges to express opinions



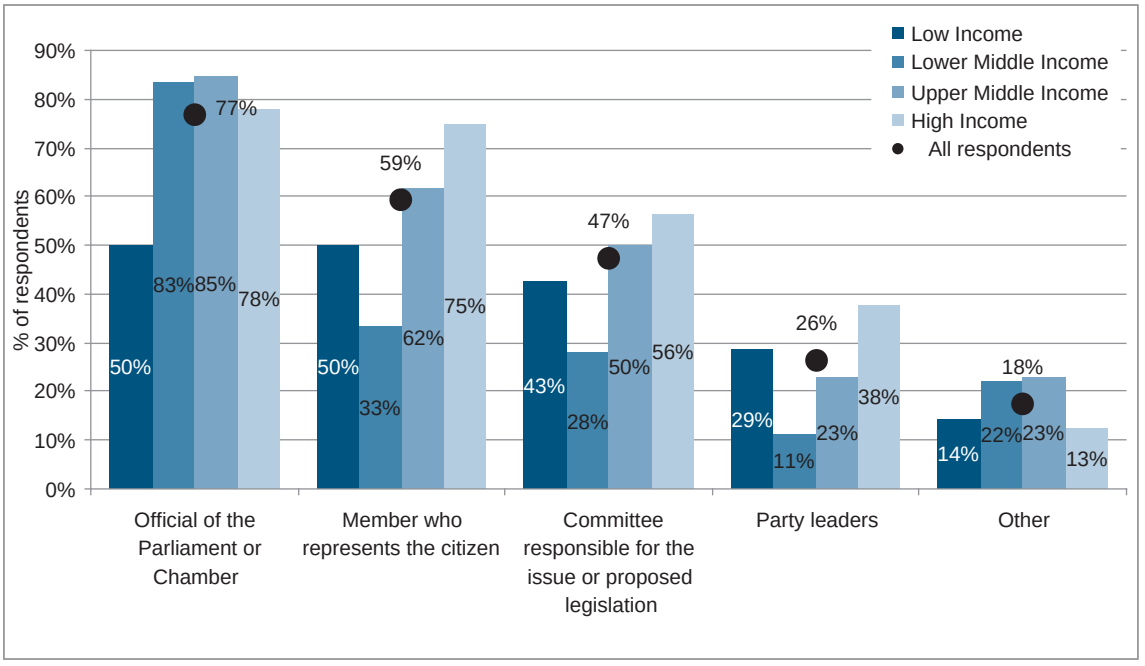
(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 1)

4 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, *UN e-Government Survey 2008: From e-Government to Connected Governance*, New York 2008, ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/112, p.110-112.
5 For more information see: http://hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/edemocracy/.
6 For more information see: http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/cdc/.

However, the largest percentage (77%) indicated that an official of the parliament or chamber receives the e-mail, compared to 59% stating that the member who represents the citizen receives it.

Comments provided by respondents confirm that in many legislative bodies citizens can send e-mails to several different locations, often including an information office or public affairs unit. Several respondents noted that a designated person such as the webmaster or the external relations officer receives the e-mail and then forwards it to either the designated member, the relevant committee, or to another office that is responsible for answering it.

Figure 8-2: Who receives e-mail?



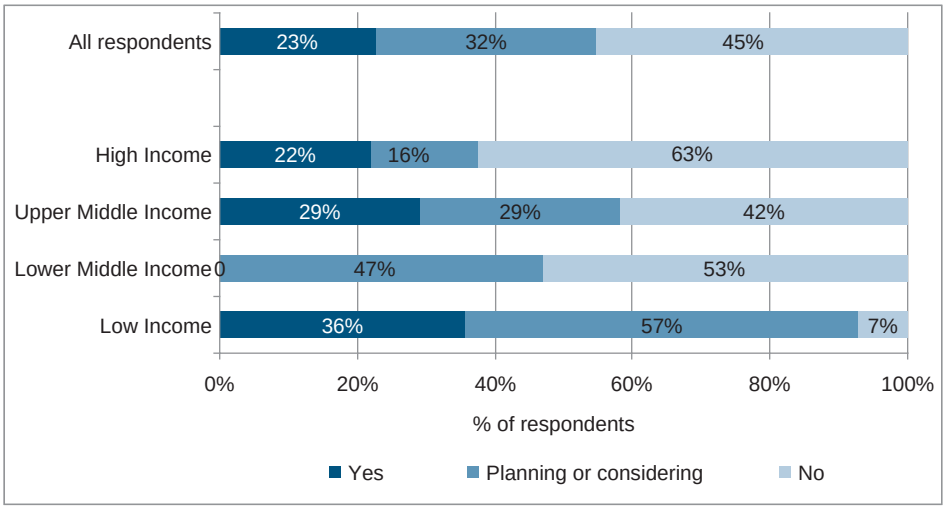
(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 2)

The majority of chambers and parliaments are not aware of how many e-mails are received each year, and of those who supplied a number, e-mails range from a few hundred to millions. The lack of specificity about volume of e-mail is understandable given the amount of e-mail transmitted, especially if e-mail traffic does not go through a central office. However, as shown in Figure 8-3 the fact that only 23% of respondents with e-mail access indicated that they have an e-mail management system demonstrates that many legislative bodies that responded to the survey lack the capacity for monitoring e-mail traffic. Moreover, it is striking that 63% of chambers and parliaments in the High Income group are not even planning or considering such a system.

When asked if members or others in parliament respond to e-mails, approximately 83% of those chambers providing e-mail access said they do. This indicates that e-mail inquiries are taken seriously by those in parliaments and generally receive a response. What is not known more specifically is the timeframe for responding and the different approaches used for answering e-mails, including whether it is done by staff or others designated for this purpose. The high volume of e-mail is a major concern for parliaments and members, who want to be responsive to constituents, yet may lack the time and staff resources to provide prompt replies.[7]

7 Survey, Section 8, Question 6.

Figure 8-3: Availability of e-mail management systems



(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 5)

Online discussions

One mechanism that governments are exploring for soliciting comments from the public is online discussion groups. There are a growing number of examples where governments at local, state or regional, and national levels have employed this approach to get input on specific proposals or general topics. The U.S. General Services Administration prepared a compilation of experiences from within the United States and around the world where interactive web-based programmes and other electronic tools have been used for actively engaging citizens in government. Examples included a Web dialogue about plans to improve water quality in the Great Lakes region of the United States of America and from around the world, Australia's development of principles for ICT-enabled citizen engagement, and online citizen participation in the Republic of Korea.[8] An additional example is Italy's online consultation on its action plan for the simplification and quality of regulation.[9]

While these activities can provide indicators of the potential value of online discussions, and on issues associated with convening them, there is not yet a coherent knowledge base that can assist parliaments in developing approaches to online discussions that are useful and cost-effective.

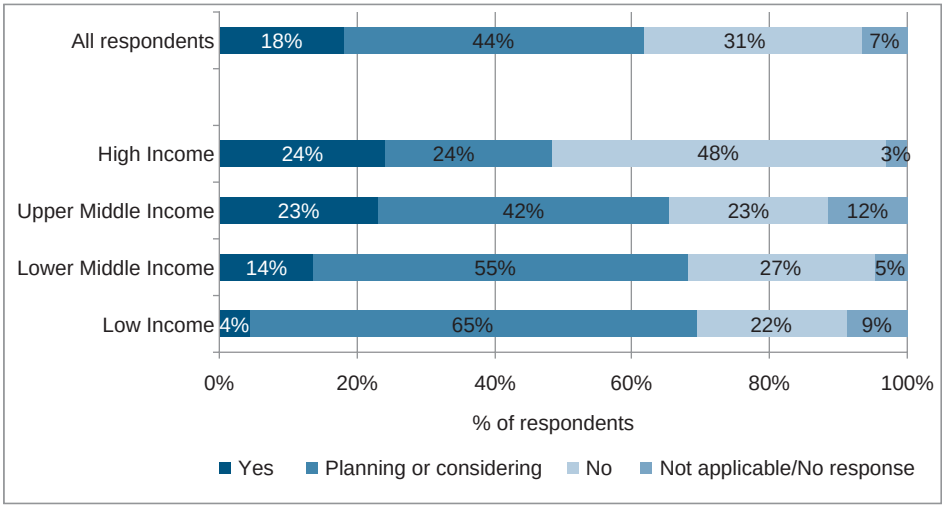
Berntzen, *et al.*, in a study of e-participation among 10 parliaments concluded that "Most parliaments are still not using the full range of Internet technologies as participatory tools in order to involve citizens".[10]The survey results confirm that use of online discussion groups is at a very early stage of adoption in parliaments. As shown in Figure 8-4, only 18% of respondents stated that citizens could express their opinions through online discussion groups. In higher income countries they were more likely to have such systems, but still only 24% answered the question affirmatively. Interestingly, close to 50% of respondents in the high income group said that they had no plans to implement online discussion groups. This is over twice the number of respondents from lower income levels who said they have no plans.

8 USA Services Intergovernmental Newsletter, GSA Office of Citizen Services and Communications. *How E-Government is Changing Society and Strengthening Democracy: New Opportunities for Involving Citizens in the Democratic Process*. Issue 21, Fall 2007. http://www.gsa.gov/intergovnewsletter.

9 For more information see: http://www.governo.it/questionario/

10 Berntzen, L., Healy, M., Hahamis, P., Dunville, D., Esteves, J. 2006. *Parliamentary Web Presence : a Comparative Review*. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on e-Government, 2006, pp. 17-25. London: Academic Conferences.

Figure 8-4: Availability of online discussion groups supported by parliament

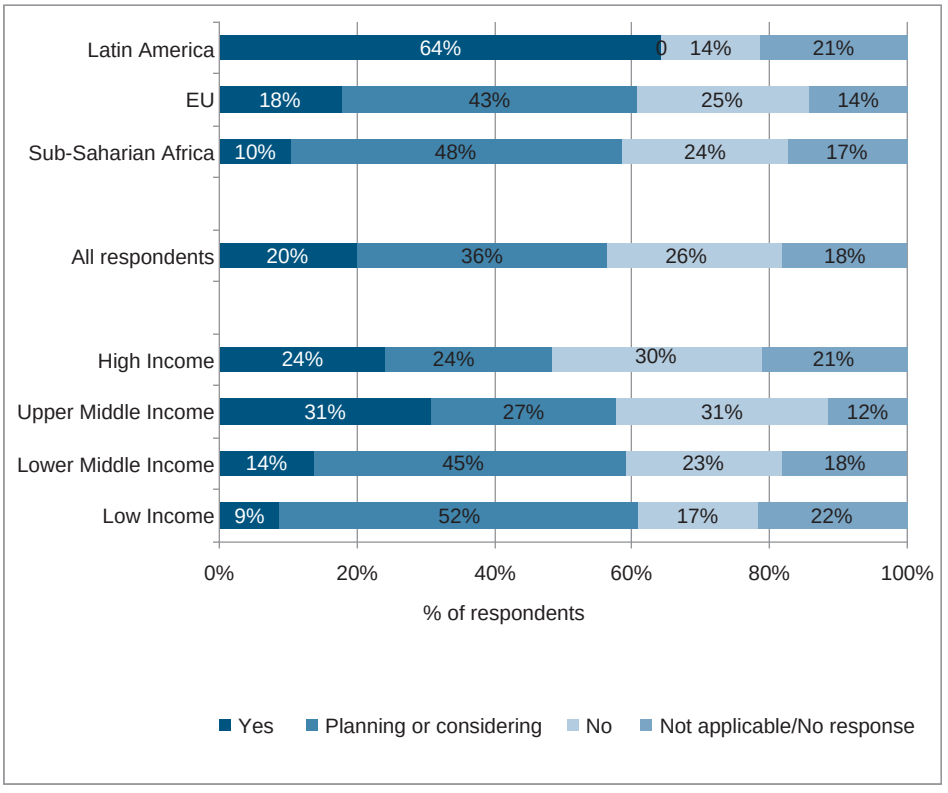


(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 7)

Other methods for communicating views

When asked about other electronic means for enabling citizens to express their views on policy issues and proposed legislation, only 20% responded that they did have other methods or were planning for them. A further analysis based upon respondents from countries in three geographic regions (sub-Saharan Africa, European Union and Latin America) yielded some interesting results. As shown in Figure 8-5, by far, the greatest number of chambers stating that they have other electronic means for citizens to voice their comments was in Latin America.

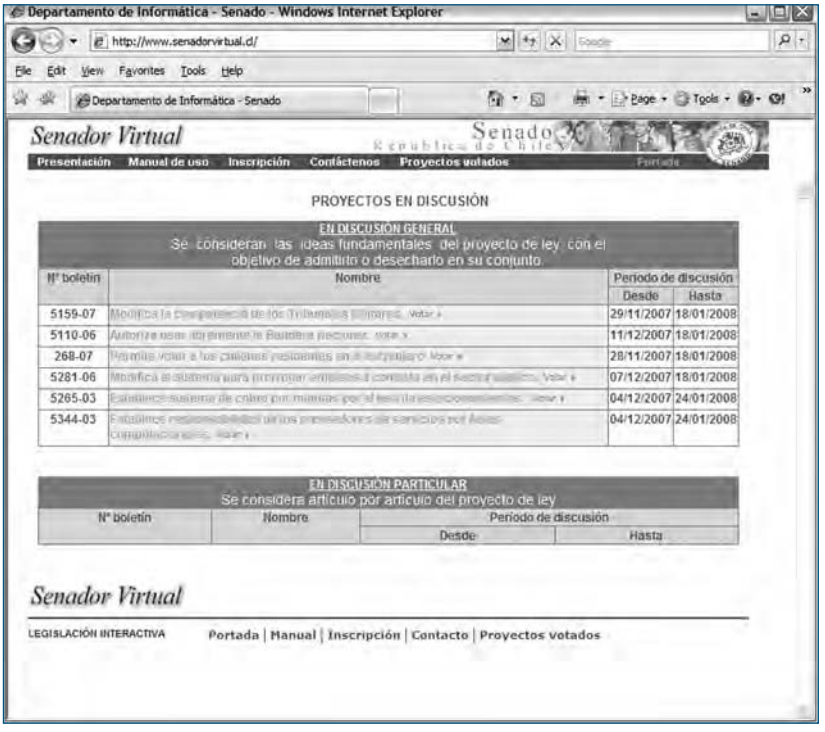
Figure 8-5: Use of other electronic means for citizens to express opinions, by income group and for countries in three geographic regions



(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 12)

The Senate of Chile offers a good example of a system that enables public input to the legislative process. Figure 8-6 shows the Virtual Senator (*Senador Virtual*) website of the Senate of Chile, which was designed to encourage citizen participation and enable senators to hear the views of their constituents. The system gives citizens the opportunity to view online major bills being considered by the Senate and to provide feedback through comments and registering a vote for or against the bill. The information gathered via the website is made available to the Senate and its committees. When citizens sign on to a discussion of a particular bill they are given additional information, including the text of the bill and the views of members who both support and oppose the proposal. Items are listed either under General Discussion or Specific Discussion, depending on whether the focus is on the whole draft or on specific articles within it. In both cases, individuals can register their vote and can provide comments or proposed text. Preliminary results of the votes and proposed text are made available within a day of their entry. Final results are provided once the designated period for the discussion is over. These results are made public and are forwarded to the relevant Senate entity responsible for consideration of the bill. Registered users receive e-mails after the bill in question has been voted on in Senate sessions or by a Committee and after a new bill is published in the Virtual Senator website for discussion/voting.

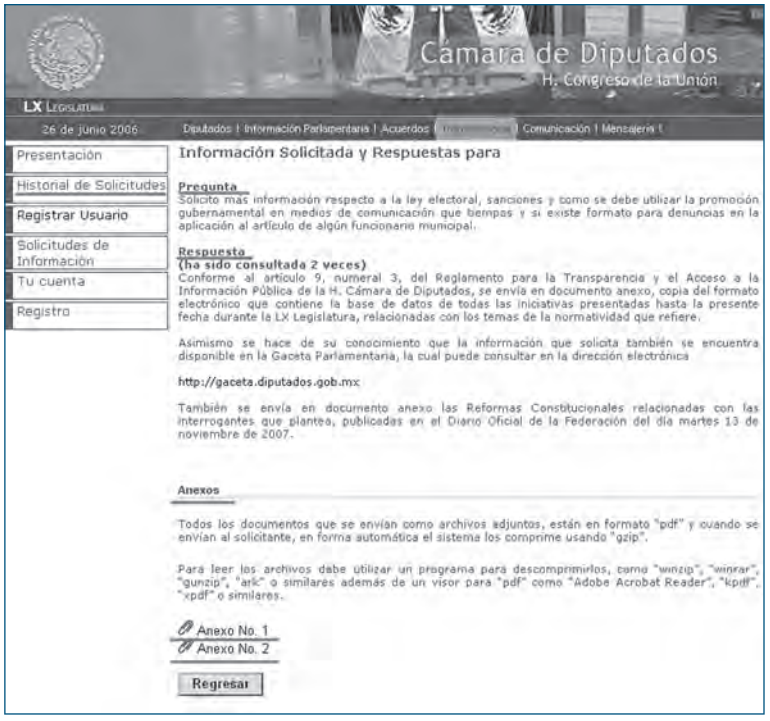
Figure 8-6: The Virtual Senator of the Senate of Chile



(Source: website at http://www.senadorvirtual.cl/)

Another approach to enabling citizens to provide their views and interact with the legislature is found in the "transparency website" of the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico (Figure 8-7). This website is one component of the implementation of Mexico's Federal Law of Transparency and Access to Public Government Information, which promotes public access to information held by any branch of government. One part of this system allows citizens to submit questions to the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico on many aspects of the parliament's work and on its members. The Chamber is responsible for replying, providing when necessary the relevant documentation. The archive history of inquiries, dating back to April 2005, contains all questions received and associated replies and can be searched by several variables. The results give details on the inquiry made and the answer given by the Chamber, including the applicable documentation.

Figure 8-7: The transparency website of the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico



(Source: http://transparencia.diputados.gob.mx)

Another example can be seen on the website of the Parliament of Ukraine. Through a simple online tool, the public is able to indicate whether it views the activities of the parliament as open and transparent.

Figure 8-8: Website homepage of the Parliament of Ukraine

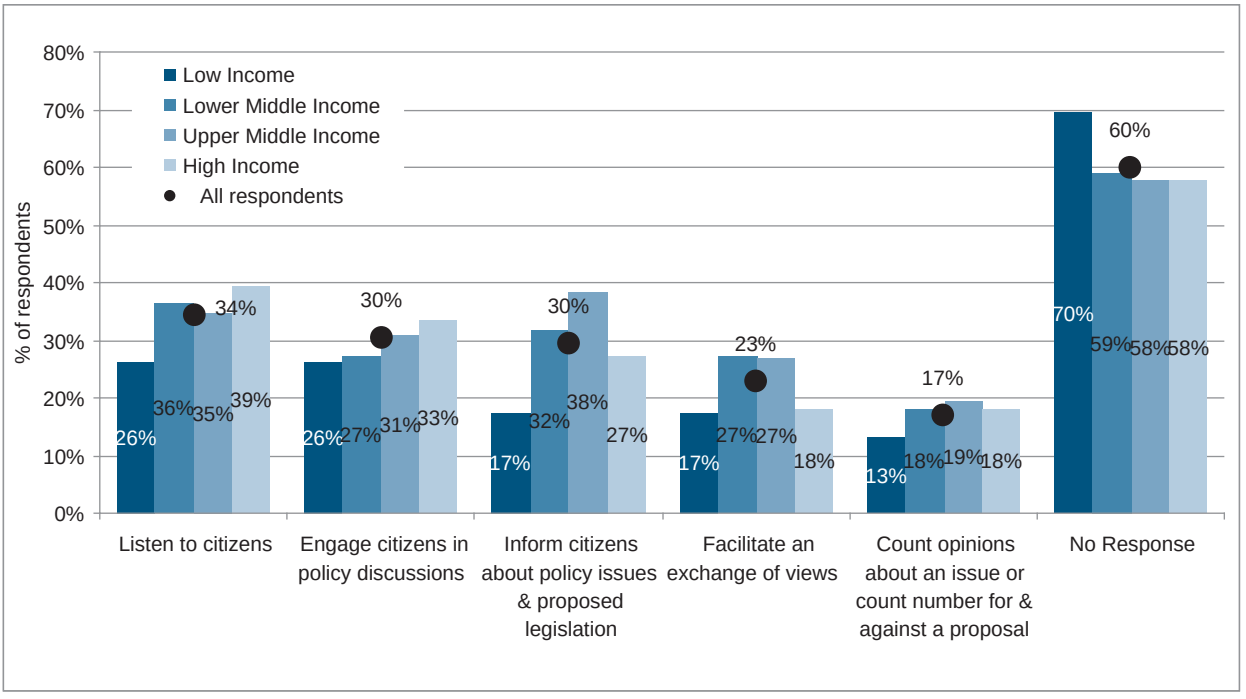
(Source: http://portal.rada.gov.ua/rada/control/en/index)

Many other chambers and parliaments responding to the survey offered indications of the kinds of online capabilities they hope to implement in the future. Among these, the most mentioned included:

- Online petitioning systems
- Online forums and discussion groups
- Blogs
- Citizen e-consultations and comments on legislation

Finally, as shown in Figure 8-9 when asked about the most important objectives of these systems from a parliamentary point of view, respondents to the question stressed the desire to "listen to citizens", "inform citizens about policy issues and proposed legislation", and "engage citizens in policy discussions". These responses were fairly consistent across all income levels. Respondents identified "*count opinions about an issue or count the number for and against a proposal*" the least number of times, indicating that they are more interested in the broader goals of citizen engagement than using these systems as opinion polls.

Figure 8-9: Percentage of chambers indicating the most important objectives for the systems in place concerning citizens engagement in policymaking



(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 14)

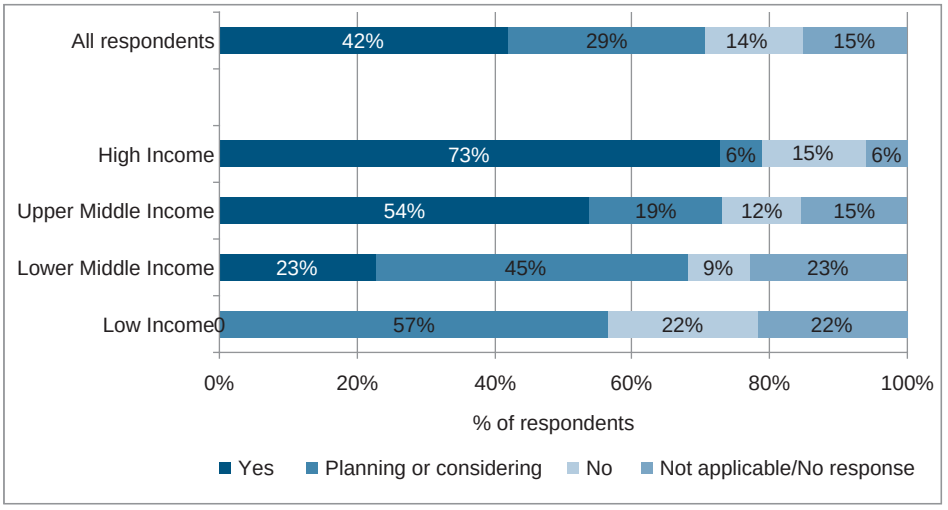
METHODS FOR MEMBERS TO COMMUNICATE

Websites

The survey asked specifically about the use of websites by members to communicate their views on policy issues and proposed legislation. Members may make use of different websites for this purpose. In some cases, this occurs on the member's website provided by the parliament, while in other cases it occurs on the personal website maintained by the member. Political party websites also are an avenue for members to offer their views to the public. Figure 8-10 shows that 42% of the chambers and parliaments that replied to the survey reported that members use websites of some kind to communicate their positions. In the majority of cases, members are responsible for maintaining the site on their own or jointly with the parliament.

Almost three quarters of members of parliaments in the High Income group use websites to communicate their views, while over half of those in the Upper Middle Income group do so. This is another example where there is a wide variation by income level. While not currently having websites for members to communicate their views, 57% of those from the Low Income group indicate plans for providing this capability. However, 22% are not planning to do this.

Figure 8-10: Use of website by members to communicate views on policy issues and proposed legislation



(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 15)

Some members have begun to create blogs through which they can provide ongoing commentary to their constituents about events that are occurring and activities in which they are involved. Members hope that this will engage constituents and encourage them to comment on legislative matters.

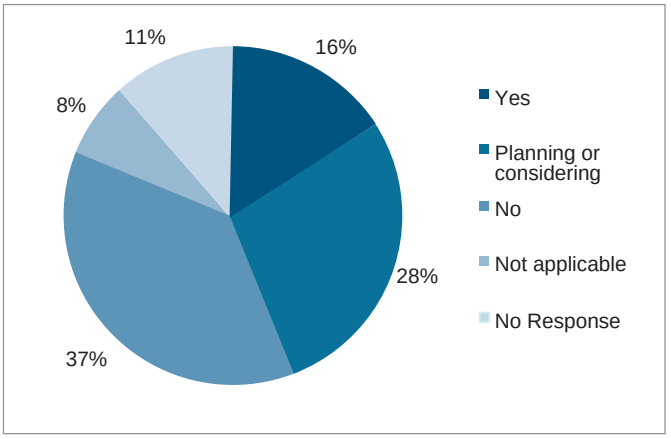
Political parties also use websites for communicating their views on pending legislation and policies under discussion in almost half of the chambers and parliaments that replied to the survey. In parliaments where political parties use websites, with very few exceptions, respondents stated that all parties have websites. The parties generally are responsible for providing support for these websites. A series of papers published in the *Journal of Legislative Studies* provided the results of a comparative study of four parliaments within the European Union (UK, European Parliament, Portugal, and Sweden) and found that political parties played an important role in determining the level of Internet usage by parliamentarians. Other findings showed that such factors as the level of financial support for ICT provided by parliaments to individual members has an impact on the amount of ICT usage. The same study also concluded that while websites were valuable tools for parliaments and individual members to make information available to the public, the amount of actual interactive engagement between citizens and parliaments was quite low.[11]

Broadcasting and webcasting

As presented in Figure 8-11, only 16% of chambers and parliaments responding to the survey stated that they have other ICT means for enabling members and parties to communicate their views. When asked to indicate which, the primary response related to the use of TV and radio programmes. In most instances this is done through traditional broadcast technology, while some parliaments are making use of webcasting technology.

11 Dai, Xiudian and Norton, Philip (2007) *Parliamentary Democracy Online: Lessons from Europe*, The Journal of Legislative Studies, 13:3, 477-482.

Figure 8-11: Use of other electronic means for communicating to citizens members' and parties' views on policy issues and proposed legislation



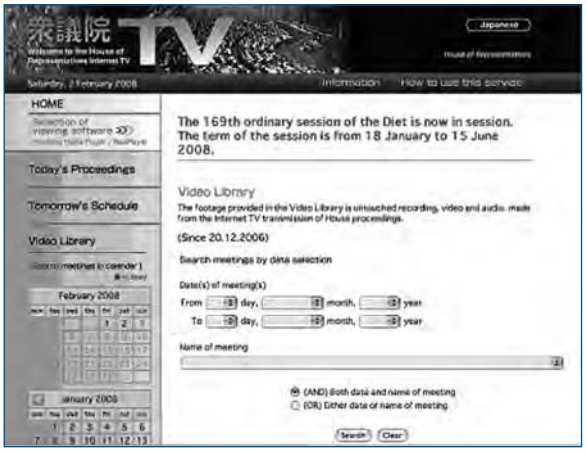
(Source: Survey, Section 8, Question 21)

The European Parliament, for example, provides coverage of its plenary sessions via its webpage in 23 languages, enabling citizens all over the European Union to follow the debates in real time and hear the arguments put forward by different members in their own language. Figure 8-12 shows a view of webcasting of a session of the European Parliament.

Figure 8-12: European Parliament webcasting page

(Source: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/faces/live/live-video.jsp?language=en)

Figure 8-13: Webcasting Video Library of the National Diet of Japan



(Source: http://www.shugiintv.go.jp/en/index.cfm)

The National Diet of Japan also provides webcasting of its sessions and offers the public the possibility of consulting a complete video library searchable by date or name of the session, as shown in Figure 8-13.

With regard to parliaments that have established their own radio stations or TV channels that transmit directly to the public, a few, such as the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil, produce their own in-house news programme and formats, including live interviews followed by public debate with host journalists.

Some bilateral agreements exist for the exchange of parliamentary channels. For example, Public-Sénat (France) and C-SPAN (United States) signed a partnership agreement to strengthen cooperation between both entities. It is interesting to note that discussions are ongoing among parliaments to establish a forum where several parliamentary channels can exchange content of mutual interest. For example, a vote of confidence or a debate between presidential candidates could be of possible interest for parliamentary channels around the world. The exchange would be reciprocal and copyright-free. Moreover, options for the exchange of content between parliamentary channels and broadcasters specializing in political affairs are being explored. [12]

FINDINGS

While much interest, and in some cases great enthusiasm, exists within parliaments and in civil society for using ICT to enhance communication with citizens, many challenges remain before expectations are translated into reality. Parliaments have made progress in using ICT to disseminate information to the public, but there are few truly interactive parliamentary websites currently functioning. Websites are still primarily used as a one-way communication device by members, parliaments and political parties. Some experiments with blogs and other interactive features of websites are underway, and there are several efforts in different countries to develop online discussions and receive citizen comments on pending legislation and policies under consideration by parliament. These initiatives should be helpful for identifying good approaches to engage citizens more actively. Many chambers and parliaments that replied to the survey have confirmed their plans to further develop these channels of communication.

In some cases, these technologies are just beginning to be widely deployed and so it is understandable that it will take time before they are made available for parliamentary purposes. In other cases, major challenges remain in terms of which technologies work best, how to capitalize on the positive aspects of interactive technologies while managing information overload or possible abuse of the systems, and how to use ICT in ways that engage citizens while ensuring coherence with the representative function and role of parliament.

12 *Proposal for a content exchange for parliamentary channels and broadcasters specializing in political affairs,* European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Presentation to the Meeting of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament, Geneva, October 2007. Source: http://www.asgp.info/en/pastmeetings/.

Survey results indicate the most widely used methods for citizens to communicate with parliament and the extent of their deployment. Specifically, they show that:

- E-mail is the primary way for citizens to contact parliaments electronically, with 88% of chambers and parliaments providing e-mail addresses for the public to connect directly with their legislature.
- 77% indicated that an official of the parliament or chamber receives the e-mail, compared to 59% stating that the member who represents the citizen receives it.
- Parliaments respond to e-mails in 83% of cases reflecting the importance placed on providing replies. Comments made by respondents reflected the difficulty of dealing with information overload from the high volume of e-mails, especially for those who have limited staff and resources.
- Very few chambers or parliaments have e-mail management systems in place and over 60% in the High Income group indicated that they have no plans to implement one.
- Only 18% of chambers or parliaments have the capability for group online discussion. This is another area where the resources needed, both in terms of technology and trained staff, may not be available.
- 20% indicated that they also have other methods for enabling citizens to make their views known to the parliament. Parliaments and chambers in the Latin American group reveal the highest percentage of providing such methods for online citizen input (64%).
- Legislatures that have such systems view them as serving the goals of listening to the concerns of citizens and engaging them in policy discussions, rather than as a means to conduct opinion polls.

In the area of members communicating with citizens, websites were most often cited by those responding to the survey. Specifically, the results show that:

- 42% of chambers and parliaments indicated that members use websites to communicate their positions; however, there is a wide variation among income level groups with 73% in the High Income group compared to none currently in the Low Income group.
- There is some experimentation with members having blogs to communicate ongoing activities to constituents, but the numbers are very small at this time.
- Only 16% of chambers and parliaments offers other electronic means for enabling members and parties to communicate their views. TV and radio programs were identified most often, with some parliaments making use of webcasting technology, TV and radio broadcasts of sessions.

As legislatures more fully explore the potential for using interactive technologies for engaging citizens, several issues will need to be addressed. For example, there is a potential for unmet expectations on the part of the public. If citizens believe that parliaments or individual members employ new technology but never use the public's input when developing positions, they will become disenchanted and further disengaged from parliament. Maintaining the interest of the public over the long term and keeping their involvement in parliamentary issues alive will require considerable effort beyond one-time experiments with interactive technologies. Parliaments will need to pursue the use of ICT in a coherent, strategic fashion that invites public interaction with the parliamentary process and fosters effective multidirectional communication with citizens. They will also have to consider what other factors beyond technology will need to be addressed to help increase public trust in parliament as an institution.

Other issues to be confronted before interactive systems begin to realize their full potential for parliaments include, among others, spam, people transmitting misinformation, and how to cope with particular individuals dominating online discussion groups. Codes of conduct need to be established and system capabilities created to address these difficulties.

Since the use of interactive communications technologies is still at an early stage and because parliaments operate in a unique environment, finding the most effective technologies that will accomplish their desired goals for greater citizen engagement remains a challenge. Many of the experiments that have been undertaken have not proved their added value in a definitive way. Those that have reported success have generally been narrowly focused and well supported by staff. The ability to scale such efforts up to the level of a parliament remains questionable. This is an area where the exchange of experiences among parliaments may be especially helpful.

In addition, more academic research needs to be undertaken to better understand what approaches will be most effective and what changes in technologies need to be made in order to better support actual dialogue between the public and parliaments. For example, research into argument mapping being conducted at the University of Leeds shows the potential for enabling citizens to follow the lines of discussion visually rather than in the current linear mode, thereby improving their capability to be fully engaged in the deliberative process. "The type of online environment provided for such engagement needs to support informed debate and to foster deliberation and allow for evolving argument development where citizens will bring opposing views and contradictions."[13]

Case studies have demonstrated that once given the chance to connect online many citizens are interested in doing so, and if they have a positive experience they are interested in using interactive technologies for engaging with government on a regular basis. Clearly there is a potential to transform citizens who are disaffected into actively engaged participants in representative government. However, to accomplish this goal parliaments and members will need to pay attention to the many issues addressed here and commit to adapt to the changing web environment.

13 Ann Macintosh, *Argument mapping: its potential to support eParticipation,* The Institute of Communications Studies, The University of Leeds. Presentation at ESF-LiU Conference on Electronic Democracy: Achievements and Challenges, 21-25 November 2007.

Chapter IX
Cooperation and Coordination

Parliaments have a long tradition of bilateral and multilateral cooperation on many levels and on a wide array of subjects. Thousands of agreements and partnerships exist among chambers and parliaments to carry out common activities or achieve shared goals. The last decade has witnessed a significant surge in international activities undertaken by legislatures. This has been accompanied by the establishment of new regional and transnational parliaments and by the creation of formal parliamentary assemblies, informal parliamentarians' associations and networks of legislators. As the Inter-Parliamentary Union highlighted in a recent publication "One common feature of regional inter-parliamentary assemblies is the aim to foster greater integration and legislative coordination between member countries."[1]

Although the majority of these exchanges have taken place among members of assemblies, many parliaments have also engaged in bilateral or multilateral efforts directed at mutually strengthening, improving or evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of their administrations. ICT is one area where cooperation among legislatures has especially increased. In addition, several bilateral technical assistance programmes have been initiated to build the capacity of parliaments in developing countries or emerging democracies to better perform their functions.

Box 9.1

> "Technical assistance typically covers a wide variety of areas, such as standing orders and rules of procedure, committee systems, legislation, the representational function of parliament, oversight, administration, and library, documentation, research and archives services. Gender and human rights are cross-cutting issues which feature prominently in training programmes and advisory services. For its part, infrastructural support covers public address systems and audio-visual recording and broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, printing, transportation and refurbishment of premises. Technical assistance is delivered in the form of advisory services, seminars and workshops, study tours, attachments and other in-service training programmes, as well as meetings and conferences. Increasingly, information and communication technologies are taking centre stage in technical assistance programmes."
>
> Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice,
> Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006

At the multilateral level, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has gained considerable experience in technical assistance due to its long standing efforts to foster democracy around the world, as have other parliamentary associations, such as the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. More recently, the United Nations and its agencies and programmes have intensified their support to legislative bodies under their good governance agenda. Similarly, multilateral and international institutions, as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Commission; and non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, have increased their attention towards parliamentary bodies. Bilateral donors and development cooperation agencies are increasingly including parliamentary strengthening among their priorities.

1 *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006.

There is no doubt that the recent evolution and growth of technology has helped to intensify the number of exchanges and facilitate communication between parliaments and supporting institutions. There is also no doubt that global coordination among all the actors involved - including recipient parliaments - needs to improve to ensure coherence of action, avoid the risk of overlapping efforts, and foster better analyses of lessons learned.

Box 9-2

"Surprisingly, up to now, parliaments and supranational/international organizations have operated virtually with no kind of linkage or coordination. This lack of coordination entails a risk of duplication and inefficiency, as well as a significant waste of resources.

This lack of coordination is particularly astonishing in the EU where so far the European Commission and the EU parliaments have been acting without any form of linkage.

The EU parliaments have been receiving an increasing number of requests for technical assistance directly from parliaments of countries all over the world. Parliaments possess the best expertise on both the political and the technical dimensions of parliamentary experiences. At the same time, however, they do not always have sufficient financial resources to respond to these requests.

On the other hand, the European Commission has substantial resources at its disposal, but it only responds to some of these requests for assistance, and even when it does so, it uses a tendering system that does not take into account the special role and unique know-how of EU parliaments and their administrations.

In this framework, there is a clear need for coordination among the EU parliaments and between these and the Commission. Then, it is also necessary to step up cooperation at the European and global level in order to better take into account the requests of recipient parliaments and the role of international organizations.

Against this background, the EU Speakers' Conference launched a project on the assistance to parliaments of new and emerging democracies (NEDs) aimed at promoting cooperation and coordination among the EU parliaments and the EU institutions in this field and at fostering coordination at a wider level."

Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy.
Statement at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

The need for more structured and coherent cooperation among parliaments and international actors may even be more urgent and critical in the field of information and communication technologies for several reasons.

1. The fast evolution of ICT requires parliaments to adapt continuously. While the "richest" may have the advantage of greater resources to better exploit ICT to support their functions, they are likely to confront greater obstacles in terms of technology legacies and organizational re-engineering. On the other hand, parliaments with fewer resources that have just started to move through the e-parliament stages may benefit by being able to apply recent ICT advances more quickly due to their greater flexibility and smaller installed technology base. At the same time, they are able to take advantage of the experience, and mistakes, of more technologically mature legislatures. Both of these factors help to level the playing field among parliaments with different access to resources.

2. Capitalizing on the advantages of ICT developments and deployments in legislative settings requires a high degree of collaboration and cooperation between parliaments. Without these efforts it is difficult to exploit the immense opportunities offered by open standards, collaborative software developments and emerging technologies, and by the potential for exchanging products developed in-house that are specifically designed for the complex parliamentary environment. In addition, sometimes the pooling of resources among parliaments may be required to achieve ambitious goals.

3. Regardless of a country's development level, frequent dialogue and consultations, sharing of experiences, targeted knowledge transfers and the exchange of lessons learned are all extremely important mechanisms to strengthen the capacity and skills of the human resources needed to perform a variety of critical tasks in parliamentary administrations.

Unfortunately, too often parliamentary initiatives and bilateral and multilateral technical assistance activities devoted to parliamentary strengthening have included ICT as merely a minor component within a mix of uncorrelated activities. And even then, the focus has often been mainly on hardware, with little attention to the full array of parliamentary functions that ICT tools are able to address. Too frequently the existing parliamentary expertise has not been fully engaged in development projects, either because parliaments were not willing to supply it or because it was not requested.

Therefore, while there has been an increase in specialized cooperation between parliamentary officials and staff in the last few decades, the lack of coordination and the failure to focus on the overall impact of ICT in parliament is likely to have greatly limited its value.

EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION

The last 20-30 years have witnessed the growth of formal cooperative activities at the global and regional level. Two inter-parliamentary networks have been in existence for over 25 years and now have well-developed mechanisms for sharing ICT information and experiences. These are the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) and the U.S. National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Two other large ICT networks – in Latin America and in Africa - took preliminary organizational steps in the last year. At the global level, the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP) and the Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) are important venues for collaboration, although they do not focus specifically on ICT-related issues.

European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation

The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)[2] was created in 1977 in Vienna by the Conference of Speakers of European Parliamentary Assemblies (since 2004, the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments). The Conference delegated the formation and management of ECPRD to the Presidents of the European Parliament (EP) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Since its founding, the ECPRD has adapted to reflect the changes in the European Community and the growth in importance of ICT in parliaments. The Conference of Speakers has reaffirmed at various times the role of the ECPRD in supporting interaction and cooperation among parliaments, the importance of maintaining links among legislative officials, and the use of new technologies to support collaboration.

2 http://www.ecprd.org.

ICT in parliament is designated by the ECPRD as an area requiring "continuity of activity", led by a coordinator appointed for a three-year term. The coordinator arranges meetings that provide an opportunity for technical staff and managers within parliaments to meet to exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues on the latest developments in technology and communications, particularly as they apply to legislative bodies. Typically, staff from the ICT departments of the hosting parliament make presentations on their activities and plans, with speakers from other countries reporting on their work in related areas. Topics are wide ranging as illustrated by the titles of recent meetings, which included discussions of wireless strategies, e-parliament for citizens, information security, the application of service oriented architecture, business relationship management, and webcasting. Materials from these sessions, often including video recordings of the presentations, are made available on the Web.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Conference of Speakers highlighted the role that the ECPRD could play in supporting legislative cooperation on EU matters. This led to the initiation of a collaborative technology-based project to enable the exchange of information among parliaments regarding proposed EU legislation. The project is named IPEX, which stands for Inter-Parliamentary EXchange. IPEX is an example of a new kind of collaborative activity facilitated substantially by ICT to provide a formal exchange of information, including on legislative harmonization, among countries.

Specifically IPEX aims at 1) facilitating the exchange of all EU-related information between parliaments; 2) providing forums for the exchange of views on scrutiny including subsidiarity (the principle that governmental power should be exercised at the lowest possible level); and, 3) maintaining a calendar of inter-parliamentary meetings. The Speakers of EU Parliaments define the objectives of IPEX, while the Secretaries General oversee the project and appoint the members of the IPEX Board for a period of one year. The Board is responsible for the management of the system and supervises the work of the Central Support. Thus objectives come from the highest level of leadership and oversight and management is the responsibility of Secretaries General.

National Conference of State Legislatures

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)[3] was founded in 1975. NCSL's membership is comprised of the legislatures of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. commonwealths and territories. It operates as a non-partisan organization that serves both legislators and staff.

The mission of the NCSL is to 1) improve the quality and effectiveness of state legislatures; 2) promote policy innovation and communication among state legislatures; and, 3) ensure state legislatures a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system. ICT is the focus of one of the 10 designated staff sections within the NCSL, called the National Association of Legislative Information Technology (NALIT). The membership of NALIT includes legislative information technology managers, webmasters, and other staff involved with ICT development in state legislatures. The purposes of NALIT include the following:

- To promote the exchange of ideas and information on all aspects of legislative information systems. This includes, but is not limited to, the management and technical development of these systems.
- To provide a network of information exchange among persons involved in providing management and technical support for legislative information systems.
- To provide improved communications and foster better relations between legislative information systems management and staff, and the legislators and legislative staff they serve.

NALIT publishes a newsletter, gives an online directory of ICT staff in state legislatures, and sponsors sessions at the NCSL Annual Meeting. The newsletter provides an opportunity for ICT staff

3 http://www.ncsl.org

to share information about projects in their respective states that may be helpful to other state legislatures. For example, newsletters have featured articles on supporting mobile devices for legislators and use of Voice over IP (VOIP) telephone. At a recent NCSL Annual Meeting NALIT sponsored several sessions on topics such as computer security and constituent services software.

NALIT has expanded its impact over the last 10 years by convening an annual professional development seminar each fall. The programme is divided into two tracks with one aimed at ICT technical specialists and the other designed for managers involved with ICT programmes and policies. In addition, a pre-conference in-depth training seminar is offered.

NALIT members communicate electronically with each other concerning a variety of legislative information technology issues through the NALIT listserv. The listserv has proved to be a valuable mechanism for exchanging information about technical issues confronting ICT specialists and for discussions by ICT managers of related policies and organizational concerns. Examples of topics covered in online discussions include XML bill drafting systems, wireless networks, and e-mail policies. The seminars and listserv are complementary activities that help to reinforce collaboration among ICT professionals in the state legislatures.

The NALIT website serves as an archive for materials from all its meetings and previous activities, information about legislative IT and Internet policies, and surveys the group has undertaken. One major effort is an ongoing survey on the use of information technology in the 50 state legislatures and territories where the information is collected via forms on the NALIT website. The results of the survey are compiled in a database that facilitates information exchange and the sharing of best practices among the state legislatures. Previous online surveys have covered the topics of website privacy policies, legislator's home pages, and bill drafting tools.

One of the keys to the success of the ECPRD's Working Group on ICT and NCSL/NALIT in enhancing ICT in legislatures is that they were established within the framework of broader parliamentary associations. ECPRD has the responsibility for sharing information in all areas of parliamentary administration and support. NCSL's mission is even more expansive, encompassing all aspects of public policy of interest to state legislatures and serving as an advocate for states at the federal level. In both cases exchanges about ICT take place in the context of the overall mission of parliamentary bodies and not solely in a technical context. This linkage enables them to benefit from high level political support, access to greater resources, and interaction with the users of their systems.

African Parliamentary Knowledge Network

The establishment of a network with a broad mandate similar to that of the ECPRD and NCSL/NALIT is being considered by a number of African parliaments. The African Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN) was discussed among members and officials from twelve parliamentary delegations from African assemblies and the Pan-African Parliament at a meeting hosted by the National Assembly of Nigeria in Abuja in 2007. The meeting, supported by the United Nations, and taking place under the auspices of the Pan-African Parliament, had the opportunity to evaluate a number of options and possibilities relating to the establishment of the APKN, and proposed different modalities for its implementation.

Participants agreed on the establishment of the APKN with the aim of strengthening the information management capacity of parliamentary administrations to better serve their institutions and members. The need to promote at a continental level the training and capacity building of members of parliaments and parliamentary staff in the area of legislation, information, research, documentation and technologies was amply recognized. While acknowledging that ICT is not an end in itself, participants stressed its potential to reinforce other areas of the network, as well as parliaments' core

functions and practices. The value of existing regional initiatives, such as the Network of ICT Managers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, was praised, and the need to take into account these experiences and to benefit from them was highlighted.

It was stressed that strong political backing is required for the African Parliamentary Knowledge Network to grow as a true continental network and to operate in a conducive environment with long-term objectives and sustainability over time. It was therefore recommended that the Pan-African Parliament consider the endorsement of the APKN, the approval of its Charter and ensure oversight with regard to its guidance and implementation.

Latin American Network of IT Experts in Parliament

In October 2007, the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) organized a meeting of Latin American parliamentary officials to provide an opportunity for a regional focus on cooperative activities designed to support ICT in parliaments. The meeting was organized under the framework of a recently launched project named RED-FTiP Américas (Red de Funcionarios de Tecnología de la Información en los Parlamentos de las Américas).

The meeting strengthened existing cooperation among the participants and helped identify ways they could establish broader linkages through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. Participants provided background on the existing collaboration among parliaments in Latin America in support of the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN) and identified some of the objectives of the IDB technical cooperation programme for ICT in Latin American parliaments.

One of the group's initiatives is an assessment of websites in parliaments in Latin American countries. Participants gave presentations on specific components of the research effort to date. The assessment used the guidelines for parliamentary websites developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2000 to identify the degree to which parliaments provide basic information about their activities, electoral systems, legislative procedures, and chamber organization, as well as links to other resources. The assessment provides preliminary indicators to be further developed.

The participants advanced their collaboration efforts by agreeing on a long-term workplan. They committed to a continued evaluation of ICT applications within their parliaments, sharing results of regional assessments of parliamentary websites and use of mobile technology, working on regional ICT conceptual studies, creating a clearinghouse of ICT applications and best practices, and establishing additional methods for collaborating regionally and globally.

They agreed that a core group of representatives from the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, the Inter-American Development Bank, and each regional area would serve as the coordinating body. The group also discussed ways to maintain communication among the members and agreed that virtual distance IT training opportunities in areas like usability, XML, open source platforms, and accessibility for persons with disabilities would be very helpful.

Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

The Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP)[4], constituted as a consultative body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, seeks to facilitate personal contacts between holders of the office of Secretary General in any parliamentary assembly. It is the task of the ASGP to study the law, procedure, practice and working methods of different Parliaments and to propose measures for improving those methods and for securing cooperation between the services of different parliaments. ICT is one of areas of interest to the association and it has provided a number of papers that discuss developments in technology and their impact on legislatures.

4 http://www.asgp.info

International Federation of Library Associations

The Section on Library and Research Services for Parliaments of the International Federation of Library Associations[5] provides assistance and support to parliamentary libraries in accordance with the interest, requirements and stage of development of parliaments in various regions of the world. Specific objectives of the Section are: 1) to encourage bilateral assistance and development programmes and to act as a clearing house in this regard; 2) to encourage programmes which would foster the adaptation of the latest information technologies to parliamentary library services; 3) to examine the relationship of the research work carried out in parliament and by public and private institutions and the needs and work of parliament with special reference to the library and research services of parliaments themselves; 4) to examine the administrative arrangements within parliaments with regard to library, information, and research services; 5) to strengthen the cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and parliamentary libraries, and explore possibilities of joint programmes and activities; 6) to encourage the establishment of regional groups of parliamentary libraries like the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation.

A particular aspect of the Section's work is to promote cooperation among legislatures and especially their libraries because of the growing need for legislators to be well informed about legislative developments worldwide. The Section holds a meeting in conjunction with the IFLA annual meeting once a year.

VALUE OF GLOBAL COOPERATION

The success of long established networks like the NCSL/NALIT and the ECPRD, coupled with plans to create new groups in Latin America and Africa, underscores the value of these organizations. And the growing number of such groups suggests the opportunity to extend the benefits of cooperation to a global level. Formal and informal exchanges among regional groups could in fact be highly useful. They might also help to address in part the concern regarding coordination, potential overlap and inefficiency.

Regional groups are a natural way to gather information from participating parliamentary bodies. The knowledge gained could then be shared with other regions through a variety of channels, including conferences, virtual meetings, online discussion groups, and even simple e-mails. For example, the findings of the survey conducted by the ECPRD on support for the mobile legislator would be of interest to countries in a number of other regions. Another topic of interest to many legislatures would be experiences gained and lessons learned as multiple African parliaments work collectively to implement common open standards for their documents.

The time is right for expanding exchanges among regional groups, between individual countries and regional groups, and between organizations based on shared characteristics other than geographic areas, such as a common language. While ICT can support these exchanges, it is often valuable to sustain these efforts by convening meetings of those who share a common interest and would be open to sharing knowledge.

5 http://www.ifla.org/VII/s3/index.htm

A positive example of what can be gained from sharing information has been described by the Congress of Deputies of Spain in the formulation of its modernization plan. Among the first steps taken was to survey activities and plans being undertaken in other parliaments.

Box 9-3

"The analysis of trends aimed at detecting innovative ideas which are currently being developed in other parliaments, and which have served as the basis for identifying opportunities for improvement in the Congress of Deputies in the following areas: projects focusing on technological and communications infrastructure, training programs, services quality, adde- value services, etc.

The sources used were as follows:
analysis of existing studies within the network of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD);
application of a questionnaire through the ECPRD network, designed to gather information on the main projects currently being carried out;
information from the websites of various international, European and autonomous parliaments;
other websites and the specialized bibliography on the subject."

Modernization Plan of the Congress of Deputies of Spain
Contribution to the World e-Parliament Conference 2007

It is interesting to note that the Congress of Deputies of Spain looked not only at the ECPRD, of which is a member, but also at other parliaments outside the group. The result of their survey informed the development of the modernization plan, both affirming its initial directions, but also expanding its vision of what might be undertaken.

There are, of course, significant challenges in establishing and sustaining cooperation and collaboration. Differences in language, for example, can be a hindrance, especially when there are limited resources to fund translation. Differences in the infrastructure or the technical approach preferred by individual parliaments can limit sharing. The experience of NCSL/NALIT, for example, has been that there is often a useful exchange of information about how a particular requirement was handled, but there has been limited ability to share software code developed by an individual legislature. This can reflect differences in political and legal systems that might require extensive customization of the shared code to be useable in another legislature. The approach of the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan[6] has been to address this problem through the use of open source software that can be customized to meet local requirements. If this approach proves to be successful, it could have a positive effect on collaboration and the development of parliamentary applications in the future.

Participants in networks intended for information exchange also have to be willing to commit the staff time necessary to make the programme a success. It takes time to respond to survey questionnaires, maintain a shared database, answer e-mail questions, or advise a colleague over the phone. The more effective a parliament becomes in using ICT, the more requests for assistance it may receive. Eventually the time needed to respond to the volume of requests may become more than can be reasonably accommodated without additional financial support. However, by engaging as many members as possible the burden on any single parliament can be reduced.

6 http://www.bungeni.org

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

The survey revealed a number of specific areas of ICT where collaboration among parliaments could be especially beneficial.

Application exchange and development. The reliance on external staff for application development, either primarily or in conjunction with parliamentary staff, suggests a possible opportunity for collaboration among parliaments. First, exchanges of applications developed in-house by some parliaments on a non-proprietary basis could be facilitated through a coordinated mechanism, such as a repository, which would place them at the disposal of other parliaments. However, this mechanism should rely on the willingness of legislatures to share products voluntarily and to provide training. Furthermore, although it can be challenging to develop applications on a collaborative basis, the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan is having some success with this approach, and the lessons learned could lead to other viable methods for parliaments to work together in a coordinated way by sharing internal staff expertise and relying less on contractors. Applications suggested by the survey data included: bill and amendment drafting, plenary voting, audio and video webcasting and parliamentary websites.

Implementation of open standards. The use of open standards in the preparation and management of legislative documents is an area that could greatly benefit from sharing experiences among parliaments. Implementation involves many phases including, among others, the development of the document formats, the testing and selection of editing software, the customization of that software to address local practices, the building of database systems that can properly accommodate open standard documents, and so on. All of these are areas in which exchanges among staff of different parliaments or common training could be of considerable value. Moreover, considering the number of parliaments that are planning to introduce open standards in the future, the establishment of a policy dialogue on open standards among parliaments should be seriously explored.

Establishment of website guidelines. The strong reliance on parliamentary websites by both members and the public suggests that joint work for updating the websites guidelines and standards based on the work carried out by the IPU in 2000 would be very helpful. This also applies to committee websites, which are important in the legislative and scrutiny processes of many legislatures, and which the survey suggests are in need of improvement in a number of areas. The same applies as well to member sites, which could benefit from guidelines about the kind of information that is most useful to constituents.

Shared experiences in the use of interactive technologies. The survey confirmed that some parliaments are testing, and in a number of cases using, interactive technologies such as online polls, discussion groups, and blogs to improve two-way communication with constituents. This is still largely an experimental area, however, and there are many good practices to be discovered and lessons to be learned. Exchanges among parliaments and between parliaments and other stakeholders – such as research centres and non-profit organizations - would be especially useful.

ROLE OF THE GLOBAL CENTRE FOR ICT IN PARLIAMENT

The international community has repeatedly called for a stronger cooperation between the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and parliaments around the world in the implementation of the international development agenda, including on the role that governing institutions can play in shaping the information society of tomorrow. The outcome documents of the 2005 World Summit, and several resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, reflect this spirit.

At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the importance of fostering and strengthening cooperation at the international level was repeatedly stressed. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society also highlighted the importance of coordination of multi-stakeholder implementation activities to help avoid duplication of actions, and encouraged information exchange and sharing of best practices.

At the end of 2005, the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union responded to this call by establishing, with the direct participation of a core group of parliaments, a broad partnership around the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, whose aim is to a) strengthen the role of parliaments in the promotion of the information society, including through fostering related information and legislation actions; and, b) reinforce parliaments' capacity to harness ICT tools to better fulfill their democratic functions and to place them at the service of the institutional process and of inter-parliamentary cooperation. The Global Centre for ICT in Parliament intends to achieve these goals by providing a framework for sharing knowledge, coordinating actions and pooling information and resources across legislatures around the world, regardless of their country's economic development level.

The aim of the Centre is not to substitute and overlap with autonomous activities or organizations but rather to multiply the effects of the existing ones, enhance their visibility, expand the space for dialogue and knowledge development, and create the conditions to support legislatures that intend to promote policies and the use of new technologies to achieve their highest goals.

In line with the WSIS principles, the spirit of this initiative is that of an alliance of national and regional assemblies, bilateral and multilateral agencies, international organizations, media, research centres and elements of the civil society that join resources together to accomplish what none could achieve on its own. A partnering mechanism and a common framework of action can in fact be the key to channel knowledge, experiences, good practices, and resources in a more coherent way. The engagement and policy direction by parliamentary leaders in shaping an effort of this kind, and in building consensus around it, is an essential ingredient and a unique feature of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

In this spirit, the Global Centre has worked toward enhancing dialogue among key stakeholders and has undertaken a number of initiatives to promote collaborative approaches, including by bridging at the global level the existing work of regional networks. These include, among others, the establishment of the online Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament, the convening of several workshops and training seminars - involving parliamentary leaders, members and officials as well as international experts -, the organization of study tours in cooperation with national and regional parliaments, the dissemination of information and the provision of technical assistance in different formats.

The broad participation in the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings[7], and the high response rate to the Global Survey on ICT in Parliament conducted by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament with support from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, underscore the potential for this coordination mechanism at the global level in this area. On the basis on the work of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, in 2006, a Subgroup on ICT and Parliaments was established within the framework of WSIS Action Line C1 "The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICT for development".[8] The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) act as co-facilitators of this Subgroup.

Against this background, the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament is well positioned to act as a catalyst for parliaments and a hub for stakeholders to improve cooperation and coordination in the e-parliament domain.

7 The World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings took place in Geneva, Switzerland between 9 and 12 October 2007. It was organized by the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

8 The WSIS Tunis Agenda recommended that implementation mechanisms at the international level be organized by Action Lines and moderated or facilitated by United Nations agencies when appropriate.

Chapter X

Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter distills the most important findings from the survey results, draws conclusions concerning ICT in legislatures, and makes recommendations on how parliaments can fully exploit technology in support of their goals and functions.

HOW PARLIAMENTS ARE DOING: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The results of the Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures carried out between July and November 2007 provide for the first time a baseline for determining the level of adoption of ICT in legislative bodies around the world. With 105 chambers and parliaments responding, the survey results offer an extensive look at various aspects of technology implementation, from vision and strategic planning, through development of infrastructure and services, to managing documents, building key applications and knowledge resources, and exploring new opportunities for communicating with the public. Future worldwide surveys could enable an analysis of trends, establish additional benchmarks and provide the opportunity to examine specific issues in greater depth.

The following sections offer the highlights from the current survey results.

Envisioning, planning and implementing ICT in parliament

- A significant percentage of chambers and parliaments have developed vision statements and strategic plans, but at least one third has not.
- Multiple players are involved in the development and implementation of the vision and the strategic plan for ICT, including the leadership, members, Secretaries General, ICT Directors and other parliamentary officials.
- The Secretaries General are cited most often as having a central role in ICT planning and management. Parliamentary leadership is mentioned as being engaged in the setting of goals and objectives for ICT in less than 40% of the chambers.
- ICT senior officials and staff are mentioned by a vast majority of respondents as providing ideas and proposals for ICT projects, while members are identified in less than 50% of legislative bodies.
- Although the survey was not able to gather definitive data on resources devoted to ICT infrastructure in parliament, allocations appear to vary between 2% and 6% of the total budget of parliament.

Managing legislative information

- More than half of the chambers have systems for recording and managing plenary debate, votes and actions. Slightly less than half have systems in place for preparing and managing bills, amendments and committee documents. There is a substantial difference among legislatures based on their country's income level.
- Fewer than 15% use open document standards, notably XML, in systems to prepare bills or plenary debate. However, taking into account all systems that are currently in place for managing any type of document, 25% are using XML in at least one of these systems. In addition to these, at least 19 parliaments have already planned to use XML when a parliamentary information system for man-

aging bills is implemented.
- Less than 30% of chambers reported having a policy for retaining digital resources permanently, although a significant number indicated plans to develop one.

Providing access to legislative information

- Over 90% of chambers and parliaments have a website. While many websites meet a number of the IPU guidelines for information, other recommended items, especially committee documents and explanatory material, are not available.
- Approximately half of websites provide links from proposed legislation to related plenary debates, existing laws, and committee reports, but far fewer websites provide links to other legislative documents. In bicameral legislatures only one chamber in three establishes links to related documents in the other chamber.
- Over half of the websites do not have a search engine that allows user to search the full text of proposed legislation, parliamentary documents and actions.
- A significant majority employ, or are planning to employ, formal usability testing when planning their website interface. However, only 31% are required to meet mandated accessibility standards in support of persons with disabilities. While 41% are planning or considering doing so, 21% are not planning on meeting such standards.
- One quarter of the chambers and parliaments reported that they make their complete sessions available on both television and the Web.

Technical resources

- Almost 90% of chambers and parliaments provide basic ICT services, such as personal computer support and network management, including a local area network and access to the Internet, either on a shared or personal basis. However, one out of ten does not.
- Over one third do not provide individual members with personal computers and only half provide a personal printer or cell phone.
- Over 40% of chambers and parliaments do not have document management systems.
- 93% of responding chambers and parliaments use commercial software, while 7% use open source software for word processing, presentations, spreadsheets and databases.
- The overall level of technical infrastructure of parliaments is significantly affected by a country's income level.

Human resources

- While legislatures make use of both internal ICT staff and contractors, in almost all parliaments the internal staff play a key role in managing the technical infrastructure and applications needed by parliaments and in interacting with users.
- Despite the critical role played by human resources, over 30% do not have training programs for their ICT staff.

Building an informed legislature

- Almost 70% of the chambers and parliaments have automated systems for managing library resources, and the majority of these systems are web-based.
- Almost two-thirds of parliaments provide Internet access to outside electronic information resources, but less than half have portals that organize Internet resources for users.
- Only 30% have a system that supports collaboration among library and research staff.
- Approximately one-third indicated that they provide information services linked specifically to policy issues and legislation being considered by parliaments. Those that do so make heavy use of ICT for research and information gathering, as well as for the preparation and distribution of the product or service.

Interacting with citizens

- E-mail is still the primary electronic tool available to the public for interacting with parliament and with individual members.
- Websites are primarily used as a one-way tool for delivering information to citizens. Few enable interaction between parliament and citizens.
- Some parliaments are experimenting with a variety of approaches for engaging the public in the legislative process, including online discussion groups, online comments on pending legislation, and blogs, but few assessments have been carried out to date.
- Fewer than 50% of chambers and parliaments have technology to support audio or video streaming and teleconferencing or videoconferencing.

LEVELS OF ICT IN PARLIAMENT

The higher end: extensive ICT use

The analyses of responses from parliaments contained in this report show that some legislatures have been very successful in their use of ICT to support and even enhance their functions. Several of the institutions in this group have developed systems for managing most of their critical documents - bills, amendments, committee reports, plenary debate and votes - and are using open document standards for at least some of them. They have websites that present the most current activities of the parliament, many using both text and real time video formats, and are accumulating archives of this information. They have wide ranging information resources and are building a policy and legislative knowledge base, with numerous links of relevant documents and information to proposed bills, that is available to members and the public. Members have computers in their offices and a laptop that provides remote access to parliament and its information resources - both public and confidential - when they are in their home constituencies or travelling. Many are exploring new ICT-based methods for communicating with citizens and for engaging them in constructive discussions of policy options.

But the percentage of chambers and parliaments that achieve this high level is small and falls entirely in the high or upper middle income groups. Based on the survey responses it is estimated to be less than 10%. And many of these chambers are not yet benefiting fully from ICT to support the values and goals of transparency, accountability, accessibility and effectiveness in carrying out their representative, legislative and oversight functions. Furthermore, the mere existence of a system or service as identified by the survey is not a guarantee of benefits for users and citizens. More attention needs to be given to evaluating the experiences to date and sharing the lessons learned.

The lower end: not meeting basic services

The ability of many chambers is significantly constrained by resources, some to the point that they cannot yet provide even the most basic ICT services. At least 10% of chambers and parliaments appear to fall into this group, and, based on responses to a variety of survey questions, the percentage could be as high as 30%. Results show that many have plans for building their capacities to use ICT and to enhance the effectiveness of their operations. Some have established strategic plans that can be implemented as the resources do become available, but it will take time to build the skills and applications that can adequately support their legislative and representational work. It will also require hard choices and a focus on the most important priorities from among the many that parliaments and parliamentarians might want to implement. Assistance from donors, international organizations and particularly from other parliaments to develop the capacity to transition from planning to implementation also will be needed. Those assemblies that have already made substantial strides in applying ICT should assist others that are only beginning this process through exchanging information, providing examples of good practices, and working collaboratively. There is, throughout the Report, a sense of a great opportunity for cooperation

to help parliaments at earlier stages of technology "leapfrog" and better capitalize on the most recent advances in ICT. This is a comparative advantage, since technologically mature parliaments may have to deal with heavy ICT legacies and related organizational structures, while at the same time upgrading their infrastructure and applications to take advantage of and adapt to the latest developments.

The uneven middle ground: low to mid level ICT use

The status of the ICT systems and services of those in between these two groups would have to be described as uneven at best. Many of them have implemented ICT applications that serve some of their most important functions. But many of these applications appear to be operating at the lowest level of utility and have not been enhanced in a way that takes greater advantage of ICT to improve efficiency and effectiveness, or offer additional services. They have, for example, built systems for managing bills but have not extended this to other areas such as committee documents. The vast majority have built systems that are using proprietary document standards, and, of particular concern, some have stated explicitly that they do not have plans to consider open standards in the future. This means that they will eventually face problems of compatibility with their older documents as the systems that support them are upgraded or replaced. Some have developed websites that have the text of bills but do not have information about committee activities or links to related information or documents. Committees may have websites, but they lack standards for what should appear on the site or be retained. Many of these websites lack a search engine for finding bills and related documents.

In effect, many of these chambers have introduced some of the important ICT tools but they have limited the implementation to the provision of basic services. This is a concern, as it suggests a lack of the technical capabilities needed to support the most fundamental goals of legislatures that want to be transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

PRIMARY CONCLUSIONS

Overall the analysis makes evident that there is a substantial gap in most parliaments between what is possible with ICT to support the values and goals of parliaments and what has been accomplished. This gap is especially pronounced among legislatures from countries with lower income levels. The digital divide that exists between high income and low income countries is reflected in parliaments. This has implications not only for the efficiency of parliamentary operations, but also for the quality of the relation between parliament and citizens.

Lack of resources is one cause of this problem. ICT requires major investments and a skilled staff. Funding of ICT must also be done wisely and parliaments must be wary of unproven expectations and the "hype" that sometimes accompanies the latest technical breakthroughs. At the same time, expenditures must be at a level that is sufficient to enable a legislature to achieve its most important goals and sustain its commitment to democratic ideals. This does not mean that legislatures need to embrace the e-parliament concept in one step. Building a technological infrastructure is a gradual process that occurs over an extended period of time.

While this relationship between income and the level of use of ICT has been noted throughout the Report, it can be seen more broadly through an analysis of selected questions that, taken together, provide an overall indication of the use of ICT.[1] As seen in Figure 10-1, the average percentage for all chambers and parliaments on the selected questions is 51%. Of particular significance is the difference between average percentages for different income groups: the extent of implementation of ICT in the Low Income group (33%), as measured by responses to these questions, is on average about half that in the High Income group (66%). Figure 10-1 also highlights percentages below the total average, which correspond to areas for possible improvements by each group.

Figure 10-1: Level of adoption of ICT: Percentage of parliaments or chambers that state having each item, by country's income group

Items	All	Low Income	Lower Middle Income	Upper Middle Income	High Income	Section/ Question
Has a website used by Parliament that contains parliamentary documents & actions	95%	91%	91%	96%	100%	7/1
Has reliable electrical power 24 hours per day	90%	78%	86%	96%	97%	2/5
Citizens can contact Parliament by e-mail to express their opinions	88%	61%	86%	100%	97%	8/1
Provides Internet access to electronic information resources	70%	48%	59%	73%	91%	6/4
Has a strategic plan with goals, objectives & timetables for ICT	70%	61%	59%	73%	79%	1/12
Has an automated system for managing library resources	70%	43%	73%	77%	79%	6/1
Includes status of current parliamentary business on the parliamentary website	67%	39%	45%	77%	91%	7/5
Provides a PC to each Member of Parliament for his/her personal use	64%	39%	45%	77%	82%	2/3
Has a training program for in-house ICT staff	64%	74%	59%	62%	61%	2/16
Has a system for recording/managing text of debate & speeches in plenary sessions in digital format	59%	22%	41%	85%	76%	4/9
Has a vision statement for ICT in Parliament	59%	52%	45%	69%	67%	1/11
Provides a laptop to each Member of Parliament for his/her personal use	58%	39%	41%	65%	79%	2/3
Has at least 17 types of information included on the parliamentary website (IPU guidelines)	57%	35%	36%	62%	82%	7/5
Has a search engine that allows users to search full text of proposed legislation, parliamentary documents & actions on website	56%	30%	32%	69%	82%	7/5
The system for creating bills has a method for authenticating authorized users	53%	30%	36%	58%	76%	3/10
Within a week, at least 9 types of documents & activities are included or linked on the parliamentary website	52%	13%	41%	65%	76%	7/6
Employs formal techniques of usability testing when designing the web interface	52%	57%	36%	58%	55%	7/10
Provides remote data access to each Member of Parliament	51%	22%	32%	54%	82%	2/3
Has a portal that organizes & provides access to Internet resources	45%	39%	32%	38%	61%	6/7
Has a system for creating/managing bills in digital format	43%	4%	14%	62%	73%	3/1
Has at least 6 items linked directly to proposed legislation on the website	42%	13%	32%	50%	61%	7/8
Webcasts at least 2 activities	35%	9%	18%	38%	61%	7/12
Provides information services linked specifically to policy issues & legislation before Parliament	34%	22%	23%	31%	52%	6/11
Has mandated standards for accessibility in support of persons with disabilities that the website must meet	30%	13%	9%	31%	52%	7/11
Has a policy for retaining digital resources permanently	27%	17%	23%	27%	33%	6/14
Has at least one system for creating documents which uses XML for the data standard	25%	4%	9%	27%	45%	3/2,16,19; 4/2, 4,6,8,10,12,14
Has a system for creating/managing plenary session amendments to bills in digital format	22%	0%	5%	31%	39%	3/18
Has developed other electronic means for enabling citizens to express their views, apart from online discussion groups	20%	9%	14%	31%	24%	8/12
Citizens can express their opinions through online discussion groups supported by Parliament	18%	4%	14%	23%	24%	8/7
Has developed other electronic means for enabling members & parties to communicate their views, apart from websites	16%	17%	9%	19%	18%	8/21
Average	51%	33%	38%	57%	66%	

(Items ranked in descending order of percentage of all respondents having the item)

In addition to resources, however, there are a number of other reasons for this gap. There is sometimes a lack of understanding of what can be achieved with ICT, which leads to the absence of a clear vision that can be shared with others and used as the basis for moving forward. Leaders and members may not be fully committed to the development of ICT in parliament. Management responsibility and accountability may be unstated or ill-suited to the efficient use of technology. Or there may be conflicting objectives and an unwillingness to establish priorities, which can lead to spreading resources over too many projects. Whatever the causes, they must be acknowledged and solved by parliaments that wish to place themselves firmly at the centre of the information society.

Another major conclusion that emerges from this Report is that while many parliaments may not yet be employing ICT to its fullest, most have plans to improve their use of technology to support their stated values and goals. This is evident from the responses received, comments made and practices shared through the survey. The substantial percentage of respondents who acknowledged that they are "planning or considering" a particular application of technology or who noted their intention to enhance a system or service is a positive finding. The willingness of chambers and parliaments to complete this extensive survey and their openness in describing the current state of their technical environment is a demonstration of their interest in exchanging information, in learning from peers, and in cooperating with other legislative bodies. This conclusion suggests that with sufficient political will and availability of resources, there can be a far more effective deployment of ICT in parliaments in the future.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommended solutions emerging from this Report are based on the experiences of those who have been using ICT extensively to support the values and goals of their parliaments. They are intended to identify some of the key steps that legislatures can take to implement ICT more effectively. Although not exhaustive, they point to critical areas where improvements in management and strategic investments in technology, processes, standards, and people can make a significant difference. The recommendations are grouped into two major categories, managerial and technical, and include separate notes on the importance of human resources development and of cooperation and coordination.

Managerial recommendations

- Engage all major stakeholders in establishing a vision for ICT in parliament based on the values and goals of the institution, providing a shared view of priorities and leading to consensus on what needs to be achieved.
- Develop a strategic planning process that creates project plans, assigns management authority and responsibility, allocates resources, establishes deadlines, and ensures that its implementation is managed effectively.
- Consult members of parliament on an ongoing basis on priorities and technological solutions needed to support their representative and legislative tasks.
- Promote strong management by Secretaries General and other senior officers of the innovation process to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately, ICT projects are sustained over time, and meet their objectives.
- Invest in human resources, including by providing training for ICT specialists, other legislative and research staff, and members.
- Advocate collaboration at all levels, internally among IT specialists and major operating units, between chambers, at regional levels, and on a global basis to enable sharing of resources, good practices, and expertise.

Technical recommendations

- Implement a parliamentary information system, ensuring that it encompasses all bills and amendments, plenary debates and votes, and committee documents and actions.
- Create an authoritative, accessible, and engaging website that is accurate and timely, provides a complete and understandable view of parliamentary activities, offers multiple formats and channels of access, and contains the full range of institutional and legislative content.
- Adopt open standards and apply them to all legislative documents to facilitate wider citizens' access, the creation of a comprehensive legislative information resource that can be shared with others, integration of information and documents both internally and externally, and the establishment of a permanent digital archive.
- Build a technical infrastructure that is robust, flexible, secure and based on the strategic goals of parliament.
- Build a coherent knowledge base for parliaments that links all relevant internal and external information resources into an organized system that facilitates search and retrieval of needed information for members, staff, and the public.
- Continue to explore opportunities for using technology to engage citizens and civil society, perform assessments of their utility, and adopt those that are found most useful for supporting fruitful interaction between parliament and the public.

Human resources development

Human resources are a critical success factor for effectively implementing ICT in parliament. Knowledgeable staff from different departments are required to work together harmoniously to fully exploit new technologies. Those in the ICT departments and offices are called upon to ensure the delivery of critical components of the parliament's infrastructure, while making sure that the organization is able to integrate its knowledge effectively. Investing in in-house ICT staff and in their training is critical if parliaments hope to keep pace with the use of technology in society. Library and research staff have been leaders in using ICT to enhance access to knowledge in support of parliaments. This is due to the knowledge and skill of the people providing these services and to their willingness to share information and experience with others, both within their own parliaments and with colleagues from other parliaments. However, moving to the next level of building a strong parliamentary knowledge base will require additional efforts at developing and sustaining human resources throughout the legislature. Accomplishing this necessitates strong political support from the parliamentary leadership.

Cooperation and coordination

The concept of a global information society involves bringing together national and international players to advance the democratic values of openness and equality. All parliamentary institutions are different and rooted in the customs and traditions of their history, their culture, and their people. At the same time, they all - from local, through regional, to national level and beyond - share many of same challenges and opportunities. This is especially true in the use of information and communication technologies. The experiences of others in the public and private sector are useful, but many of the issues and problems that confront legislative bodies are different and belong to their unique and complex environment. To address these, parliaments need to cooperate and collaborate with each other and with other stakeholders, in a more coordinated way.

The Report underlines several areas where enhanced cooperation and coordination can accelerate progress in using technology in the service of parliamentary processes and of parliament's role in the information society:

- Establishing a global dialogue on open document standards among legislatures presents an opportunity not only to learn from others, but also to expand interoperability among different legislative systems and build a global legislative knowledge base. This topic also calls for an international debate on the political implications of e-parliament, as discussed in Chapter I.
- Developing common guidelines for parliamentary, committee, and member websites based on an update of the IPU Guidelines would serve the goals of greater and improved transparency, as well as providing more effective tools for access to parliamentary information.
- Sharing experiences in the development of the most widely used legislative systems would be particularly helpful to those who currently lack the resources and expertise. In certain situations this could open the possibility of collaborative applications development.
- Designing common interactive capabilities for communicating with citizens and training programmes, including using e-learning tools, for a wide range of parliamentary staff and members.

As the conclusions of this Report confirm, collaboration within and among parliaments is vital. Fortunately, ICT can make it eminently possible.

1. For purposes of this analysis, 30 questions were selected to represent a range of ICT systems, services, and management issues. The questions chosen were viewed as relatively neutral with respect to differences in the practices and procedures among legislative bodies. Based on the responses received, questions that might have been misunderstood, or whose meaning seemed ambiguous to some, were excluded.
   Data do not necessarily correspond to data shown in other Figures and Tables elsewhere in this report, since percentages here are always over all 105 parliaments or chambers that responded to the questionnaire, including possible non respondents to the question. For questions that contained a list of multiple choices, percentages refer to chambers that selected a certain number of items above the average.
   The purpose of this analysis was to identify a group of questions that were indicative of the use of ICT. They do not provide a comprehensive picture of technology use, but are simply one measure that provides a somewhat broader view than a single question.

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Geographical groupings

EUROPEAN UNION AREA

- Senate of Belgium
- National Assembly of Bulgaria
- House of Representatives of Cyprus
- Senate of the Czech Republic
- Parliament of Estonia
- Parliament of Finland
- Senate of France
- Federal Diet of Germany
- Hellenic Parliament of Greece
- National Assembly of Hungary
- Senate of Italy
- Chamber of Deputies of Italy
- Parliament of Latvia
- Parliament of Lithuania
- Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg
- House of Representatives of Malta
- Senate of the Netherlands
- Senate of Poland
- Sejm of Poland
- Assembly of the Republic of Portugal
- Chamber of Deputies of Romania
- National Council of Slovakia
- National Assembly of Slovenia
- Senate of Spain
- Congress of Deputies of Spain
- Parliament of Sweden
- Parliament of the United Kingdom
- European Parliament

LATIN AMERICA

- Senate of Argentina
- Chamber of Deputies of Argentina
- Federal Senate of Brazil
- Chamber of Deputies of Brazil
- Senate of Chile
- Chamber of Deputies of Chile
- Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica
- Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay
- Congress of the Republic of Peru
- National Assembly of Nicaragua
- Senate of Mexico
- Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
- Legislative Assembly of Panama
- Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- National Assembly of Angola
- National Assembly of Benin
- National Assembly of Burundi
- National Assembly of Cameroon
- National Assembly of Cape Verde
- Senate of Congo
- National Assembly of Cote d'Ivoire
- Senate of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- National Assembly of Djibouti
- House of the Federation of Ethiopia
- House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia
- Parliament of Ghana
- National Assembly of Kenya
- National Assembly of Malawi
- Senate of Mauritania
- National Assembly of Mauritius
- Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique
- Parliament of Namibia
- National Assembly of Niger
- National Assembly of Nigeria
- Parliament of Rwanda
- National Assembly of Sao Tome and Principe
- National Assembly of Senegal
- Parliament of South Africa
- The National Legislature of Sudan
- Parliament of Swaziland
- Parliament of Uganda
- National Assembly of Zambia
- Parliament of Zimbabwe

World Bank list of economies
(July 2007)

High Income	Upper Middle Income	Lower Middle income	Low Income
Andorra	American Samoa	Albania	Afghanistan
Antigua and Barbuda	Argentina	Algeria	Bangladesh
Aruba	Belize	Angola	Benin
Bahamas, The	Botswana	Armenia	Burkina Faso
Bahrain	Brazil	Azerbaijan	Burundi
Barbados	Bulgaria	Belarus	Cambodia
Bermuda	Chile	Bhutan	Central African Republic
Brunei Darussalam	Costa Rica	Bolivia	Chad
Cayman Islands	Croatia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Comoros
Channel Islands	Dominica	Cameroon	Congo, Dem. Rep.
Cyprus	Equatorial Guinea	Cape Verde	Côte d'Ivoire
Estonia	Gabon	China	Eritrea
Faeroe Islands	Grenada	Colombia	Ethiopia
French Polynesia	Hungary	Congo, Rep.	Gambia, The
Greenland	Kazakhstan	Cuba	Ghana
Guam	Latvia	Djibouti	Guinea
Hong Kong, China	Lebanon	Dominican Republic	Guinea-Bissau
Isle of Man	Libya	Ecuador	Haiti
Israel	Lithuania	Egypt, Arab Rep.	India
Kuwait	Malaysia	El Salvador	Kenya
Liechtenstein	Mauritius	Fiji	Korea, Dem. Rep.
Macao, China	Mayotte	Georgia	Kyrgyz Republic
Malta	Mexico	Guatemala	Lao PDR
Monaco	Montenegro	Guyana	Liberia
Netherlands Antilles	Northern Mariana Islands	Honduras	Madagascar
New Caledonia	Oman	Indonesia	Malawi
Puerto Rico	Palau	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Mali
Qatar	Panama	Iraq	Mauritania
San Marino	Poland	Jamaica	Mongolia
Saudi Arabia	Romania	Jordan	Mozambique
Singapore	Russian Federation	Kiribati	Myanmar
Slovenia	Serbia	Lesotho	Nepal
Trinidad and Tobago	Seychelles	Macedonia, FYR	Niger
United Arab Emirates	Slovak Republic	Maldives	Nigeria
Virgin Islands (U.S.)	South Africa	Marshall Islands	Pakistan
Australia	St. Kitts and Nevis	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	Papua New Guinea
Austria	St. Lucia	Moldova	Rwanda
Belgium	St. Vincent and the	Morocco	São Tomé and Principe
Canada	Grenadines	Namibia	Senegal
Czech Republic	Turkey	Nicaragua	Sierra Leone
Denmark	Uruguay	Paraguay	Solomon Islands
Finland	Venezuela, RB	Peru	Somalia
France		Philippines	Sudan
Germany		Samoa	Tajikistan
Greece		Sri Lanka	Tanzania
Iceland		Suriname	Timor-Leste
Ireland		Swaziland	Togo
Italy		Syrian Arab Republic	Uganda
Japan		Thailand	Uzbekistan
Korea, Rep.		Tonga	Vietnam
Luxembourg		Tunisia	Yemen, Rep.
Netherlands		Turkmenistan	Zambia

High Income	Upper Middle Income	Lower Middle income	Low Income
New Zealand		Ukraine	Zimbabwe
Norway		Vanuatu	
Portugal		West Bank and Gaza	
Spain			
Sweden			
Switzerland			
United Kingdom			
United States			

This table classifies all World Bank member economies, and all other economies with populations of more than 30,000. For operational and analytical purposes, economies are divided among income groups according to 2006 gross national income (GNI) per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method. The groups are: low income, $905 or less; lower middle income, $906–3,595; upper middle income, $3,596–11,115; and high income, $11,116 or more. Other analytical groups based on geographic regions are also used.

Geographic classifications and data reported for geographic regions are for low-income and middle-income economies only. Low-income and middle-income economies are sometimes referred to as developing economies. The use of the term is convenient; it is not intended to imply that all economies in the group are experiencing similar development or that other economies have reached a preferred or final stage of development. Classification by income does not necessarily reflect development status.

Boxes

Figures

Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures

Name of your Parliament or Chamber:

INDEX

SECTION 1: OVERSIGHT, MANAGEMENT, AND PLANNING OF ICT

Purpose. This section asks about the oversight, management, and planning of ICT. The purpose is to understand who gives strategic direction and establishes priorities for ICT in Parliament, how it is overseen, and how it is managed.

Answers. Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices that you have implemented in managing and planning ICT. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a unicameral or bicameral Parliament?
□ Unicameral
□ Bicameral

2. If you have a bicameral Parliament, does each Chamber have its own organization that oversees and manages ICT, or is there a single organization that oversees and manages ICT for both Chambers?
□ Each Chamber has its own organization to oversee and manage ICT
□ There is a single organization that oversees and manages ICT for both Chambers
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

3. Who establishes the goals and objectives for ICT in your Parliament or Chamber? Check all that apply.
□ President/Speaker of Parliament or Chamber
□ Committee of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Members
□ Secretary General
□ Chief Information Officer
□ ICT Director
□ Special group or committee
□ Internal IT experts
□ Contractors/consultants
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

4. If more than one person establishes the goals and objectives, who resolves possible conflicts?
□ President/Speaker of Parliament or Chamber
□ Committee of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Secretary General
□ Chief Information Officer
□ Members
□ ICT Director
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

5. In a typical year, how often does the political leadership make a decision or review the status of ICT in Parliament?
□ Fewer than 3 times
□ Between 4-10 times
□ More than 10 times
Comment and examples (optional)

6. To whom does the Director of ICT report?
□ President/Speaker of Parliament or Chamber
□ A Committee of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Secretary General
□ Members
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

7. Where do ideas and proposals for ICT goals and projects come from? Check all that apply.
□ Senior political leadership
□ Senior ICT leadership
□ Members
□ Committees
□ Departments of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Special group or committee
□ ICT staff
□ Library/information department
□ Users within the Parliament or Chamber
□ Public
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

8. Are there formal or informal working groups of stakeholders from different departments that make recommendations regarding ICT goals and projects?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

9. Is a formal project management methodology used for implementing new initiatives?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

10. If yes, who manages the project?
□ Owner of the project
□ ICT department
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

11. Is there a vision statement for ICT in Parliament or the Chamber?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

12. Is there a strategic plan with goals, objectives, and timetables for ICT?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

13. If yes, who approves the plan? Check all that apply.
□ President/Speaker of Parliament or Chamber
□ A Committee of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Secretary General
□ Members
□ ICT Director
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

14. If there is a plan, is it updated on a regular basis?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

15. Is there a formal enterprise architecture?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in managing and planning ICT. Examples of things you might want to describe include how ICT is governed, how major ICT decisions are made, who can propose ideas for projects, and how these ideas are implemented.
With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?
□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 2: SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE, APPLICATIONS, AND RESOURCES

Purpose. This section asks about ICT services, technical infrastructure, applications, and resources. The purpose is to understand the scope of ICT systems and services within the Parliament and the personnel and budget resources available to support them.

Answers. Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices that you have developed for ICT services, technical infrastructure, applications, and resources. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

Services provided

1. Please indicate which of the following general ICT services are available in the Parliament or Chamber and whether they are provided by ICT staff or by outside contractors.

	Not available	Supported by ICT staff	Supported by contractors	Supported by both
Application Development and Maintenance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Data Network Operations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help Desk	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC Support	☐	☐	☐	☐
Systems Administration	☐	☐	☐	☐
Systems Programming	☐	☐	☐	☐
Voice communications	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web publishing	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

2. Do you have service level agreements with your customers?
☐ Yes
☐ Planning or considering
☐ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

3. Please indicate which of the following are available to each member of Parliament or Chamber, and, where indicated, whether it is for his or her personal use or must be shared:
☐ PC - personal
☐ PC - shared
☐ Laptop - personal
☐ Laptop - shared
☐ Printer - personal
☐ Printer - shared
☐ Fax - personal

□ Fax - shared
□ Intranet - personal access
□ Intranet – shared access
□ Internet - personal access
□ Internet - shared access
□ Remote data access
□ Cell phone (provided by Parliament or Chamber)
□ PDA (provided by Parliament or Chamber)
□ Parliament E-mailbox
□ Personal E-mailbox
□ Personal website
Comment and examples (optional)

4. Please indicate which of the following are available to staff of the Parliament or Chamber, and, where indicated, whether it is for his or her personal use or must be shared:
□ PC - personal
□ PC - shared
□ Laptop - personal
□ Laptop - shared
□ Printer - personal
□ Printer - shared
□ Fax - personal
□ Fax - shared
□ Intranet - personal access
□ Intranet – shared access
□ Internet - personal access
□ Internet - shared access
□ Remote data access
□ Cell phone (provided by Parliament or Chamber)
□ PDA (provided by Parliament or Chamber)
□ Parliament E-mailbox
□ Personal E-mailbox
□ Personal website
Comment and examples (optional)

Technical Infrastructure

5. Do you have reliable electrical power 24 hours per day?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

6. Please indicate the number and type of servers supported by the ICT department.
Answer:

7. Please indicate the type or types of local area networks supported and the number of connections available within the Parliament or Chamber.
Answer:

8. Please indicate the type of Internet access and bandwidth available to the Parliament or Chamber.
Answer:

9. Please indicate the approximate storage capacity available to the Parliament or Chamber (in terabytes):
Answer:

General Applications

10. Please indicate which general applications you provide and, in the comments and examples box below, which software or hardware you use to support them.
□ Application
□ Word processing
□ Databases
□ Publishing (print)
□ Publishing (Web)
□ Document management
□ Workflow system
□ E-mail
□ Groupware
□ Presentations
□ Spreadsheets
□ Web browsers
□ Web servers
□ Teleconferencing
□ Video conferencing
□ Audio streaming
□ Video streaming
□ PDAs
□ Cell phones
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

11. Please indicate who supports the following applications.

	Supported by parliamentary staff	Supported by contractors	Supported by both	Application not available
LEGISLATIVE APPLICATIONS				
Bill and amendment drafting	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bill and amendment status	☐	☐	☐	☐
Budget analysis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Calendars and schedules	☐	☐	☐	☐
Plenary minutes	☐	☐	☐	☐
Plenary debate	☐	☐	☐	☐
Plenary voting	☐	☐	☐	☐
Committee document preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Committee minutes and actions	☐	☐	☐	☐
Committee websites	☐	☐	☐	☐
Journal preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Statutes – compilation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Website for Parliament or Chamber	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐
REPRESENTATIONAL APPLICATIONS				
Website for the public	☐	☐	☐	☐
Constituent communications	☐	☐	☐	☐
Member websites	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financial disclosure	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	☐
OVERSIGHT APPLICATIONS	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hearings	☐	☐	☐	☐
Questions to the Government	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other policy setting and scrutiny documents	☐	☐	☐	☐
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS				
Internal research systems	☐	☐	☐	☐
Library systems	☐	☐	☐	☐
Search engine	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web portal	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaboration tools	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intranet	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internet access	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐	
ADMINISTRATIVE APPLICATIONS				
Accounting/payroll	☐	☐	☐	☐
Building management	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fiscal analysis	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help desk	☐	☐	☐	☐
Human resources	☐	☐	☐	☐
Travel	☐	☐	☐	☐
Document management	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comment and examples (optional)

Resources - Staff

12. How many in-house technical ICT staff do you have?
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

13. What functions does the in-house staff perform? Check all that apply.
- □ Application development manager
- □ Network operations manager
- □ User support manager
- □ PC support manager
- □ Training manager
- □ Systems administration manager
- □ Systems programming manager
- □ Voice communications manager
- □ Programmer/developer
- □ Network operator
- □ User support
- □ PC installation, maintenance, and support
- □ Trainer
- □ Systems administrator
- □ Systems programmer
- □ Voice communications operator
- □ Other:

Comment and examples (optional)

14. How many technical contractors (number of staff) did you employ in the last year?
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

15. What functions do the contractors perform? Check all that apply.
- □ Application development manager
- □ Network operations manager
- □ User support manager
- □ PC support manager
- □ Training manager
- □ Systems administration manager
- □ Systems programming manager
- □ Programmer/developer
- □ Network operator
- □ User support
- □ PC installation, maintenance, and support
- □ Trainer
- □ Systems administrator
- □ Systems programmer
- □ Voice communications operator
- □ Voice communications manager
- □ Other:

Comment and examples (optional)

16. Do you have a training programme for in-house ICT staff?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

17. If yes, what percentage of in-house staff received some training in the last year?
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

18. If yes, what are the most important types of training provided in the last year? Please list.
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

Resources - Budget

19. What is the total budget for ICT in the Parliament or Chamber, including managers, staff, contractors, hardware, software, systems, and services? Please note that this figure will be used in summary statistics only; no individual country's budget will be made publicly available.
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

20. What percentage of the total budget of the Parliament or Chamber is allocated for ICT? Please note that this figure will be used in summary statistics only; no individual country's percentage will be made publicly available.
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have developed for ICT services, technical infrastructure, applications, and resources.
With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?
□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 3: SYSTEMS FOR CREATING BILLS AND AMENDMENTS

Purpose. This section asks about systems for creating and managing bills and amendments. The purpose is to understand whether the Parliament's bills and amendments are currently produced in digital formats, or whether there are plans for developing such a system. If the Parliament does have such a system, this section asks about some of its characteristics.

Answers. Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices that you have implemented in developing systems for creating and managing bills and amendments. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a system for creating and managing bills in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

If yes, please answer the following questions about the system:

2. Does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ No, but we are planning for or considering using XML
□ No, and currently there are no plans or consideration for XML
Comment and examples (optional)

3. Does the system have workflow capabilities, such as the ability to move a document automatically among drafters?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

4. Does the system encompass all possible versions of a bill?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

5. Is the system integrated with, or does it exchange data with any of the following? Check all that apply.
□ Other Chamber of the legislature
□ Government or administration (the executive)
□ Judiciary
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

6. Does the system accommodate bills that may require special formats, such as budget bills?
□ Yes
□ No
□ Not applicable
Comment and examples (optional)

7. Are there procedures in place for identifying and correcting errors?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

8. If yes, how frequently are these procedures carried out?
□ Daily
□ Weekly
□ Monthly
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

9. If yes, how quickly are errors corrected?
□ As soon as found
□ Within hours
□ Within the same day
□ Within a week
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

10. Does the system have a method for authenticating authorized users?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

11. When is the text of proposed legislation made available to Parliament?
□ As soon as completed and verified
□ By the next day
□ Within a week
□ Longer
Comment and examples (optional)

12. When is the text of proposed legislation made available to the public?
□ As soon as completed and verified
□ By the next day
□ Within a week
□ Longer
Comment and examples (optional)

13. Is there an upgrade or replacement strategy in place for the system?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

14. If you do have an upgrade or replacement strategy in place, please state briefly the primary objectives you hope to achieve.

Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

15. Do you have a system for creating and managing committee amendments to bills in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering such a system
□ No, and currently there are no plans or consideration for such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

16. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and currently there are no plans or consideration for such a system
Comment and examples (optional)

17. If yes, is the system able to show the changes in the bill that the amendment would make?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

18. Do you have a system for creating and managing amendments to bills offered during plenary session in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

19. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ No, but we are planning or considering such a system
□ No, and currently there are no plans or consideration for such a system
Comment and examples (optional)

20. If yes, is the system able to show the changes in the bill that the amendment would make?
□ Yes
□ No, but we are planning or considering such a system
□ No, and currently there are no plans or consideration for such a system
Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in developing systems for creating and managing bills and amendments. If you are planning to build a system or to upgrade your existing system, you might want to describe your objectives. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?
□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 4: SYSTEMS FOR CREATING DOCUMENTS OTHER THAN BILLS AND AMENDMENTS

Purpose. This section asks about systems for creating and managing parliamentary documents other than bills and amendments. The purpose is to understand which of the Parliament's documents are produced in digital format, or whether there are plans for developing such systems. If the Parliament does have such systems, it also asks whether any of them use XML for the data format.

Answers. Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices that you have implemented in developing systems for creating and managing parliamentary documents. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

A note on terminology: In this section the word "recording" means to capture in text format. It does not refer to audio or video formats.

Minutes of committee meetings

1. Do you have a system for recording and managing the text of the minutes of committee meetings in digital format?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

2. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Committee hearings

3. Do you have a system for recording and managing the text of committee hearings in digital format?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

4. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Committee reports on proposed legislation:

5. Do you have a system for creating and managing the text of committee reports on proposed legislation in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

6. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Minutes of plenary sessions

7. Do you have a system for recording and managing the text of the minutes of plenary sessions in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

8. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Debate and speeches in plenary sessions

9. Do you have a system for recording and managing the text of debate and speeches in plenary sessions in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

10. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Votes in plenary sessions

11. Do you have a system for recording and managing votes in plenary sessions in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering such a system
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

12. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Laws

13. Do you have a system for recording and managing the text of the current laws of the country in digital format?
□ Yes, and done by the Parliament
□ Yes, and done by the Parliament and the Government together
□ Yes, but done by the Government
□ No
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

14. If yes, does the system use XML for the data standard?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in developing systems for recording and managing the text of parliamentary documents.
With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?
□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 5: RECORDING AND TRACKING LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

Purpose. This section asks about systems for recording and tracking actions on proposed legislation. The purpose is to understand whether there are systems in place, or plans for such systems, and some of their characteristics.

Answers. Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices that you have implemented in developing systems for tracking actions on proposed legislation. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

Note on terms: In this section the phrase "actions on proposed legislation" refers to any activity taken by the Government, a parliamentary committee, or the Parliament in plenary session on a proposed law. This can include such actions as the bill being introduced in Parliament; referred to a committee; reviewed or scrutinized by a committee; amended, approved or disapproved by a committee; debated in plenary; voted on in plenary, etc. This list is meant to be illustrative; many Parliaments will have other actions on proposed legislation that are intended to be included in the scope of this section.

Committee actions

1. Do you have a system for recording and managing information in digital text format about committee actions on proposed legislation?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Not applicable to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

2. If yes, please check the items below that apply to this system:

□ Information is stored in XML
□ System requires authentication of users
□ Procedures are in place to identify and correct errors
Comment and examples (optional)

Plenary/Floor actions

3. Do you have a system for recording and managing information in digital text format about plenary or floor actions on proposed legislation?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

4. If yes, please check the items below that apply to this system:
□ Information is stored in XML
□ System requires authentication of users
□ Procedures are in place to identify and correct errors
Comment and examples (optional)

Government actions

5. Do you have a system for recording and managing information in digital text format about Government actions on proposed legislation?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

6. If yes, please check the items below that apply to this system:
□ Information is stored in XML
□ System requires authentication of users
□ Procedures are in place to identify and correct errors
Comment and examples (optional)

7. How quickly is information about the following actions on proposed legislation made <u>available to Parliament</u>?

	Same day	Next day	A week	Longer
Committee actions	□	□	□	□
Plenary/Floor actions	□	□	□	□
Government actions	□	□	□	□

Comment and examples (optional)

8. How quickly is information about the following actions on proposed legislation made <u>available to the public</u>?

	Same day	Next day	A week	Longer
Committee actions	□	□	□	□
Plenary/Floor actions	□	□	□	□
Government actions	□	□	□	□

Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in developing systems for tracking actions on proposed legislation.
With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?
□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 6: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: LIBRARY AND RESEARCH SERVICES

Purpose. This section asks about knowledge management and the library and research services available to the Parliament. The purpose is to understand how ICT supports these services in providing access to digital documents and information resources, or whether there are plans for providing such support.

Answers. Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in providing ICT support for knowledge management and library and research services. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you have an automated system for managing library resources?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

2. If yes, is the system based on a web platform?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

3. If yes, does the system include the following capabilities? Check all that apply.
□ Acquisition of monographs
□ Acquisition and claiming of serials
□ Cataloguing of acquisitions
□ Search capability
□ Archiving of digital resources
□ e-resource management capabilities
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

4. Do you provide Internet access to electronic information resources?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

5. If yes, to whom is it available? Check all that apply.
□ Library
□ Members
□ Staff
□ Public

□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

6. If yes, does it provide access to the following? Check all that apply.
□ News (free services)
□ News (fee-based services)
□ Scientific journals
□ Public policy journals
□ Government websites and databases
□ Parliaments of other countries
□ International organizations
□ Other resources of particular interest to your Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

7. Do you have a portal that organizes and provides access to Internet resources?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

8. Do you have a system that supports collaboration among your library and research staff?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

9. If yes, what software do you use?

10. Do you have a parliamentary intranet that enables the library and research staff to make their services available to members?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

11. Do you provide information services linked specifically to policy issues and legislation before the Parliament?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

12. If yes, please describe briefly.
Comment and examples (optional)

13. If yes, how do these services make use of ICT? Check all that apply.
□ Research and information gathering
□ Preparation of the product or service
□ Distribution of the product or service
□ Record keeping of requests and services provided
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

14. Do you have a policy for retaining digital resources permanently?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

15. If yes, do you have a system and practices in place to ensure permanent access to digital resources?
□ Yes
□ No
Comment and examples (optional)

16. Do you have subject matter experts on public policy issues who provide research and analysis for members and committees?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

17. If yes, are the research and analyses available in documents in digital format?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

18. If yes, are these documents available to Parliament on a website?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

19. If yes, are these documents available to the public on a website?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

20. Do you provide access to databases that contain detailed and expert research and analysis on public policy issues such as energy, the environment, the economy, etc.?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

21. Do you provide access to modeling systems on public policy issues such as budget priorities or economic projections?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

22. Who provides ICT support for the library? Check all that apply.
□ Library technical staff
□ Librarians
□ Central ICT staff in Parliament or the Chamber
□ Government ICT staff outside the Parliament or Chamber
□ Outside contractors
□ Other
□ Not applicable to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

23. If there are changes needed in ICT support for the library to improve service to Parliament or the Chamber, please state briefly what they are.
Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in providing ICT support for knowledge management and library and research services. Additional details such as links to web addresses for preservation policies, modeling systems, and policy oriented databases would be helpful.
With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?
□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 7: WEBSITES FOR PARLIAMENT AND THE PUBLIC

Purpose. This section asks about websites for Parliament and the public. The purpose is to understand the goals, management, content, and features of these websites, and how ICT support them.

Answers: Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments and examples that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices that you have implemented in providing websites for Parliament and the public. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS REGARDING WEBSITES FOR PARLIAMENT

Some Parliaments have one website to serve both Parliament and the public. Some Parliaments or the Chambers have one website to serve both Parliament or the Chamber and the public. Other Parliaments have one website to serve both Parliament and the public but provide different information on the website depending on whether it is being used by a member of Parliament or the public. Still other Parliaments have one website for the Parliament (an intranet) and a separate website on the Internet for the public.

Please answer this first set of questions about websites used by the Parliament or the Chamber, even if the website is also used by the public. A separate set of questions will follow that ask about websites used by the public.

1. Do you have a website used by Parliament that contains parliamentary documents and actions?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

If yes, please answer the following questions as they relate to the website used by Parliament. As noted above, a separate set of questions will follow that relate to websites used by the public.

Management

2. Who establishes the overall goals for the website? Check all that apply.
□ The President/Speaker of the Parliament or Chamber
□ A parliamentary committee
□ Members
□ Secretary General
□ Director of ICT
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

3. Are there written statements for the website regarding the following? Check all that apply.
□ Goals and objectives
□ Development plans
□ Content
□ Privacy
□ Access
□ User support
Comment and examples (optional)

4. Please check all that apply to websites in the Parliament or Chamber
□ The President/Speaker has his or her own website
□ Committees have their own websites
□ Members have their own websites
□ Library has a website
□ Secretary General has a website
□ There is one website that links all websites
□ There is only one website, and it serves all members, Committee, the Secretary General, and the Library
Comment and examples (optional)

Content

5. Please check all the types of information listed below that are included on the website of the Parliament or Chamber.

General information on the structure and functions of parliament
□ Overview of the composition and functions of the national Parliament
□ Overview of how Parliament works, its duties, and its responsibilities
□ Text of Standing Orders and/or Rules of Procedure
□ Text of the country's constitution (if applicable)
□ History of the national Parliament
□ Statistics on the activities of parliamentary business
□ Texts of official press releases (if applicable)
□ "Guided tour" of the parliamentary building
□ Information about the organization of the Secretariat of Parliament
□ Practical information on access to the parliamentary building, library, and archives (where applicable)
□ List of international and regional parliamentary assemblies of which the Parliament is a member

Electoral system, party groups
□ Explanation of the election procedures for members of Parliament
□ Results of the last elections
□ Current composition of party groups and coalitions
□ Texts of election laws

Members of parliament
□ Current alphabetical list of all members of Parliament
□ Political information about each member, including constituency, party affiliation, membership in committees and/or commissions, with hyperlinks to MP's personal websites (if applicable)
□ Biographical information about each member of Parliament
□ Contact information for each member of Parliament, including email address if applicable

Parliamentary bodies

□ Complete list of non-plenary parliamentary bodies
□ Description of the mandate of each parliamentary body
□ Contact information of each body

Search and Internal navigation tools

□ Search engine that allows user to search full text of proposed legislation, parliamentary documents and actions
□ Status of current parliamentary business by bill number, topic, title, date, document code, parliamentary body, etc
□ Searchable database of committee reports, records, hearings, votes, and other parliamentary documents pertaining to the current legislature
□ Site map – a text or graphical visualization of the site's overall structure
□ Frequently asked questions

Comment and examples (optional)

6. Please check all the types of documents and activities that are included or linked on the website for Parliament and the time when each is made available.

	Same day	Next day	Within a week	Longer	Not applicable
Proposed legislation	□	□	□	□	□
Amendments (Plenary)	□	□	□	□	□
Amendments (Committee)	□	□	□	□	□
Committee schedule	□	□	□	□	□
Committee reports	□	□	□	□	□
Committee minutes	□	□	□	□	□
Committee votes	□	□	□	□	□
Committee hearings	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary schedule	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary minutes of session	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary debate	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary votes	□	□	□	□	□
Laws/statutes	□	□	□	□	□
Explanations of bills	□	□	□	□	□
Explanations of actions	□	□	□	□	□
Impact assessment of bills	□	□	□	□	□
Budget assessment of bills	□	□	□	□	□
Glossary of terms	□	□	□	□	□
Rules of procedure	□	□	□	□	□
Other:	□	□	□	□	□

Comment and examples (optional)

7. Please indicate the total number of years Parliament or the Chamber has existed and the number of years each of the following documents is available in digital format:

Total number of years Parliament or Chamber has existed:

Answer:

DOCUMENT	NUMBER OF YEARS DOCUMENT OR INFORMATION AVAILABLE IN DIGITAL FORMAT
Proposed legislation	
Amendments (Plenary)	
Committee reports	
Committee minutes of meetings	
Committee hearings	
Plenary minutes of session	
Plenary debates	
Plenary votes	
Laws/statutes	

Linking

8. Please check the items below that are linked directly to proposed legislation on the website.

□ Amendments (Plenary)
□ Amendments (Committee)
□ Committee actions
□ Committee reports
□ Committee votes
□ Committee hearings
□ Plenary actions
□ Plenary debate
□ Plenary votes
□ Laws/statutes
□ Explanations of bills
□ Explanations of actions
□ Impact assessment of bills
□ Budget assessment of bills
□ News stories
□ Government positions or statements
□ Glossary of terms
□ Rules of procedure
□ All committee and plenary actions of other Chamber (if bicameral Parliament)
□ All committee and plenary documents of other Chamber (if bicameral Parliament)
□ Other:

Comment and examples (optional)

Interface design

9. Do you consult with users or seek their comments on the design of the web interface?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering

Comment and examples (optional)

10. Do you employ the formal techniques of usability testing when designing the web interface?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering

Comment and examples (optional)

11. Do you have mandated standards for accessibility in support of those with disabilities that the website must meet?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Not applicable to this Parliament or Chamber

Comment and examples (optional)

Audio and video: webcasting and broadcasting

12. Please indicate which of the following activities are webcast or broadcast on television. Check all that apply.

	Not applicable	Webcast-audio only	Webcast-video	Broadcast on television	Both webcast and broadcast
Committee meetings – complete	□	□	□	□	□
Committee meetings – partial or selected	□	□	□	□	□
Committee hearings – complete	□	□	□	□	□
Committee hearings – partial or selected	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary session – complete	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary sessions – partial or selected	□	□	□	□	□
Educational videos about Parliament	□	□	□	□	□
Historical videos about Parliament	□	□	□	□	□
Other:	□	□	□	□	□

Comment and examples (optional)

13. Do you maintain an archive of activities that have been webcast or broadcast?

□ Yes
□ No
□ Not applicable in this Parliament or Chamber

Comment and examples (optional)

14. If yes, how many years of activities do exist in the archive?

Number of years of video archives:

Comment and examples (optional)

15. Which of the following audio and video formats are supported on your website? Check all that apply.

□ Committee sessions Downloadable audio files of committee meetings or hearings
□ Committee sessions Downloadable video files of committee meetings or hearings
□ Committee sessions Streaming audio of committee meetings or hearings
□ Committee sessions Streaming video of committee meetings of hearings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Downloadable audio files of plenary/floor meetings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Downloadable video files of plenary/floor meetings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Streaming audio of plenary/floor meetings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Streaming video of plenary/floor meetings
□ Other:

Comment and examples (optional)

Notification systems

16. Which of the following notification systems are offered to users?
Check all that apply.
□ For proposed legislation email
□ For proposed legislation RSS
□ For committee actions email
□ For committee actions RSS
□ For plenary sessions email
□ For plenary sessions RSS
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

Enhancements

17. Please describe briefly any improvements that you are planning to the website.
Comment and examples (optional)

QUESTIONS REGARDING WEBSITES FOR THE PUBLIC

These questions pertain to websites for the public that provide access to parliamentary documents and actions.

18. Do you have a website for the public that contains parliamentary documents and actions?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

If yes, please answer the following questions as they relate to the website for the public.

19. Is the website for the public the same website that is available to the Parliament or is it a different website?

□ Website for the public is the same website and provides the same information that is available for Parliament.
□ Website for the public is a different website or provides different information from the one available to the Parliament.

If the website is different, please answer the following questions. If it is the same please go to the Lesson learned/good practices heading at the very end of this section.

20. Who establishes the overall goals for the website for the public? Check all that apply.
□ The President/Speaker of the Parliament or Chamber
□ A parliamentary committee
□ Members
□ Secretary General
□ Director of ICT
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

21. For each document or type of material below, please put a check in the appropriate column to indicate whether the document or material is

	Same for parliament and public	Not available to public	Available to public but later than for Parliament	Other difference (please specify)	Not applicable
Proposed legislation	□	□	□	□	□
Amendments (Plenary)	□	□	□	□	□
Amendments (Committee)	□	□	□	□	□
Committee schedule	□	□	□	□	□
Committee reports	□	□	□	□	□
Committee minutes	□	□	□	□	□
Committee votes	□	□	□	□	□
Committee hearings	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary schedule	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary minutes of session	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary debate	□	□	□	□	□
Plenary votes	□	□	□	□	□
Laws/statutes	□	□	□	□	□
Explanations of bills	□	□	□	□	□
Explanations of actions	□	□	□	□	□
Impact assessment of bills	□	□	□	□	□
Budget assessment of bills	□	□	□	□	□
Glossary of terms	□	□	□	□	□
Rules of procedure	□	□	□	□	□
Educational materials regarding the Parliament	□	□	□	□	□
Other:	□	□	□	□	□

Comment and examples (optional)

22. In addition to making parliamentary documents available on your website, do you make the source files available to public users so that they can be downloaded in their entirety and incorporated into other systems?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering

Comment and examples (optional)

23. Do you consult with public users or seek their comments on the design of the web interface?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering

Comment and examples (optional)

24. Do you employ the formal techniques of usability testing when designing the web interface for the public?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering

Comment and examples (optional)

25. Do you have mandated standards for accessibility in support of those with disabilities that the website must meet?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Not applicable to this Parliament or Chamber

Comment and examples (optional)

Audio and Video: Webcasting and Broadcasting

26. Please indicate which of the following activities are webcast or broadcast on commercial or public television for the public. Check all that apply.

	Not applicable	Webcast	Broadcast on television	Both webcast and broadcast
Committee meetings – complete	□	□	□	□
Committee meetings – partial or selected	□	□	□	□
Committee hearings – complete	□	□	□	□
Committee hearings – partial or selected	□	□	□	□
Plenary session – complete	□	□	□	□
Plenary sessions – partial or selected	□	□	□	□
Educational videos about Parliament	□	□	□	□
Historical videos about Parliament	□	□	□	□
Other:	□	□	□	□

Comment and examples (optional)

27. Which of the following formats are supported on your website for the public? Check all that apply.

□ Committee sessions Downloadable audio files of committee meetings or hearings
□ Committee sessions Downloadable video files of committee meetings or hearings
□ Committee sessions Streaming audio of committee meetings or hearings
□ Committee sessions Streaming video of committee meetings of hearings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Downloadable audio files of plenary/floor meetings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Downloadable video files of plenary/floor meetings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Streaming audio of plenary/floor meetings
□ Plenary/floor sessions Streaming video of plenary/floor meetings

Comment and examples (optional)

28. Which of the following notification systems are offered to the public? Check all that apply.

□ For proposed legislation email
□ For proposed legislation RSS
□ For committee actions email
□ For committee actions RSS
□ For plenary sessions email
□ For plenary sessions RSS
□ Other:

Comment and examples (optional)

29. Please describe briefly any improvements that you are planning to the website.

Answer:

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in providing websites for Parliament and the public.
With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.
Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?

□ Yes
□ No

SECTION 8: SYSTEMS FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CITIZENS AND PARLIAMENT

Purpose. This section asks about systems supporting communication between citizens and Parliament. The purpose is to understand whether and how this is done, or whether there are plans for developing such systems. If the Parliament does have such systems, it also asks about some of the features.

Answers: Please check the answer that most closely describes the situation in your Parliament or Chamber. Comments that provide additional information about your answers are optional and welcomed at any time in the space after each question.

Good practices/Lessons learned. At the end of this section, you are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented in developing systems for supporting communication between citizens and Parliament. With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. Responses to this portion of the survey are encouraged in the interest of sharing knowledge but are entirely voluntary.

QUESTIONS

Citizens to Parliament - Email

1. Can citizens and civic societies contact Parliament by email to express their opinions?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

If yes, please answer the following questions.

2. Who receives the email? Check all that apply.
□ Member who represents the citizen
□ Committee responsible for the issue or proposed legislation
□ Party leaders
□ Official of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

3. Approximately how many emails are received each year? (Type Unknown if applicable)
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

4. Do members or others in the Parliament respond to these emails?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

5. Is there an email management system in use supporting the handling and answering of incoming email using a knowledge base?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
Comment and examples (optional)

6. Who is responsible for managing the email system?
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

Citizens to Parliament - online discussion groups

7. Can citizens and civic society express their opinions through online discussion groups supported by the Parliament?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

If yes, please answer the following questions.

8. Who initiates these discussions groups? Check all that apply.
□ Members
□ Committees
□ Parties
□ Officials of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

9. Who moderates these discussions groups? Check all that apply.
□ Members
□ Committees
□ Parties
□ Officials of the Parliament or Chamber
□ No one
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

10. Who views or receives the comments in these discussions? Check all that apply.
□ Member who represents the citizen
□ All members
□ Committee responsible for the issue or proposed legislation
□ All committees
□ Party leaders
□ Official of the Parliament or Chamber
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

11. Approximately how many comments are received each year?
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

Citizens to Parliament - other methods

12. Has Parliament developed other electronic means for enabling citizens and civic societies to express their views on policy issues and proposed legislation?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

13. If yes or if planning or considering, please describe briefly.
Answer:

14. If there are systems in place for citizens and civic societies to express their views on policy issues and proposed legislation, what are the most important objectives of these systems from Parliament's point of view? Check all that apply.
□ Listen to citizens
□ Count opinions about an issue or count the number for and against a proposal
□ Engage citizens in policy discussions
□ Inform citizens about policy issues and proposed legislation
□ Facilitate an exchange of views
□ Other:
Comment and examples (optional)

Parliament to citizens - websites

15. Do members use websites to communicate their views on policy issues and proposed legislation?
□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber
Comment and examples (optional)

If yes, please answer the following questions.

16. Approximately what percentage of members maintains websites for this purpose?
Approximate percentage of members who maintain such websites:
Answer:
Comment and examples (optional)

17. Are these websites supported by Parliament or by the members themselves?
□ By the Parliament
□ By the members
□ By both
Comment and examples (optional)

18. Do parties use websites to communicate their views on policy issues and proposed legislation?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber

Comment and examples (optional)

19. If yes, approximately what percentage of parties maintains websites for this purpose?

Approximate percentage of parties who maintain such websites

Comment and examples (optional)

20. If yes, are these websites supported by Parliament or the parties?

□ By the Parliament
□ By the parties
□ By both

Comment and examples (optional)

Parliament to citizens - other methods

21. Has Parliament developed other electronic means for enabling members and parties to communicate their views on policy issues and proposed legislation to citizens?

□ Yes
□ Planning or considering
□ No, and not planning or considering
□ Does not apply to this Parliament or Chamber

Comment and examples (optional)

22. If yes, or if planning or considering, please check all that apply and describe briefly others not on this list.

□ TV programmes
□ Radio programmes
□ Town hall meetings on the web
□ Other:

Comment and examples (optional)

Good practices/Lessons learned. You are invited to describe any lessons learned or good practices you have implemented. It would be especially useful to have a brief description of any systems that you have established that you believe are helpful in improving communication between citizens and Parliament.

With your permission your responses will be shared with other Parliaments who might benefit from your experiences. We welcome any contribution to this portion of the survey you may wish to make, but it is entirely voluntary.

Answer:

Do you grant permission to share with others any information you provide related to lessons learned or good practices?

□ Yes
□ No