A Policy Department of the European Parliament
A new model for research support to parliamentary committees

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Introduction

- Worldwide, research support to committees is *"of growing importance"* (IFLA Guidelines 2009, p. 63)

- National Democratic Institute – parliamentary research services in C. Europe should "*place more emphasis on assistance to committees, as committees are the primary actors in the legislative and oversight process*" (NDI report 'Development of Parliamentary Research Services in Central Europe and the Western Balkans', p. 6)

- Service to committees is the preeminent objective in parliamentary research today

Key features of the Policy Department

- Research service **attached to the Committee structure**, working directly with Members and the Secretariats

- Delivers **customised support dedicated to the Committees** and their Chairs

- Provision of **in-person expertise** through e.g. oral briefing, in-the-room advice in legislative work, interactive workshops

- Extensive use of **outsourced expertise** with budget of €1.5M in 2015, for five Committees

Background

- The research service, like the Library, existed even in the predecessor organisations to the European Parliament, dating from c. 1953/4

- Conventional parliamentary research service – connected to the Library, following legislative work <u>and</u> Members' interests/requests; autonomous in operation. By 1990s using a mix of internal & (some) outsourced expertise

- 2004/5 – reform. Organisational link with Library broken. Attached to Committee Secretariats. 'Expertise Budgets' allocated *per Committee*. Direct & near-exclusive gearing to <u>Committee</u> requirements.

Background

- After ten years of innovation, experience & evolution, useful to reflect and seek feedback

- Service not represented at IFLA in last ten years+ and innovations have never been presented

- Presentation refers to <u>one</u> of the five Policy Departments

- My background:

  – 'Head of service' in EP Library 2000-13
  – Chief of Dag Hammarskjöld Library, United Nations 2013-15
  – Head of Policy Department, EP, from **June 2015**

Policy Department for Structural & Cohesion Policies (STCO)

AGRI Committee
Agriculture & Rural Development

CULT Committee
Culture & Education

PECH Committee
Fisheries

REGI Committee
Regional Development

TRAN Committee
Transport and Tourism

- Serves 5 Committees (of 20 in the EP)

- This group of Committee Secretariats & the Policy Department are under one Director

- Five Policy Departments to cover all Committees (& Delegations)

Main source of work programme:

1. Generation of proposed research projects by Policy Department based on 'scanning'
2. + Spontaneous requests
3. Formal consideration of proposals, often leading to new & revised proposals
4. Committees <u>decide</u> on topics
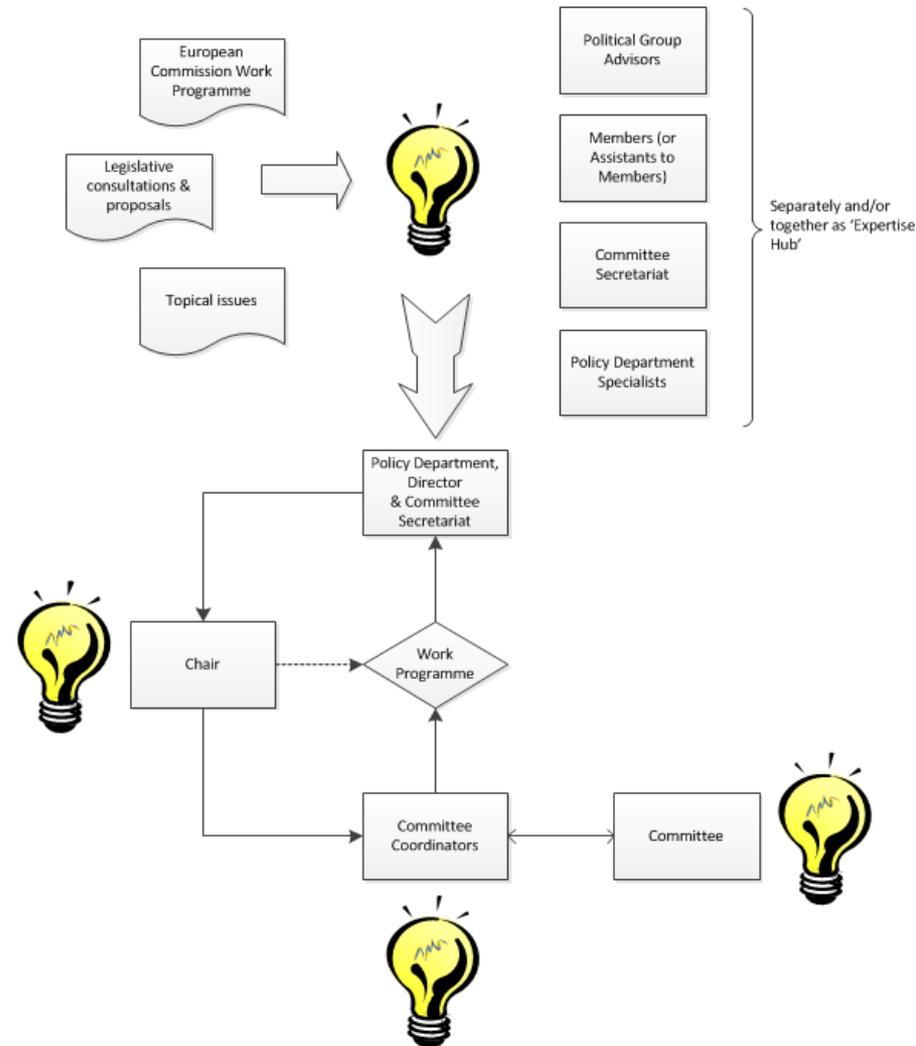
Work Programme - initial proposals
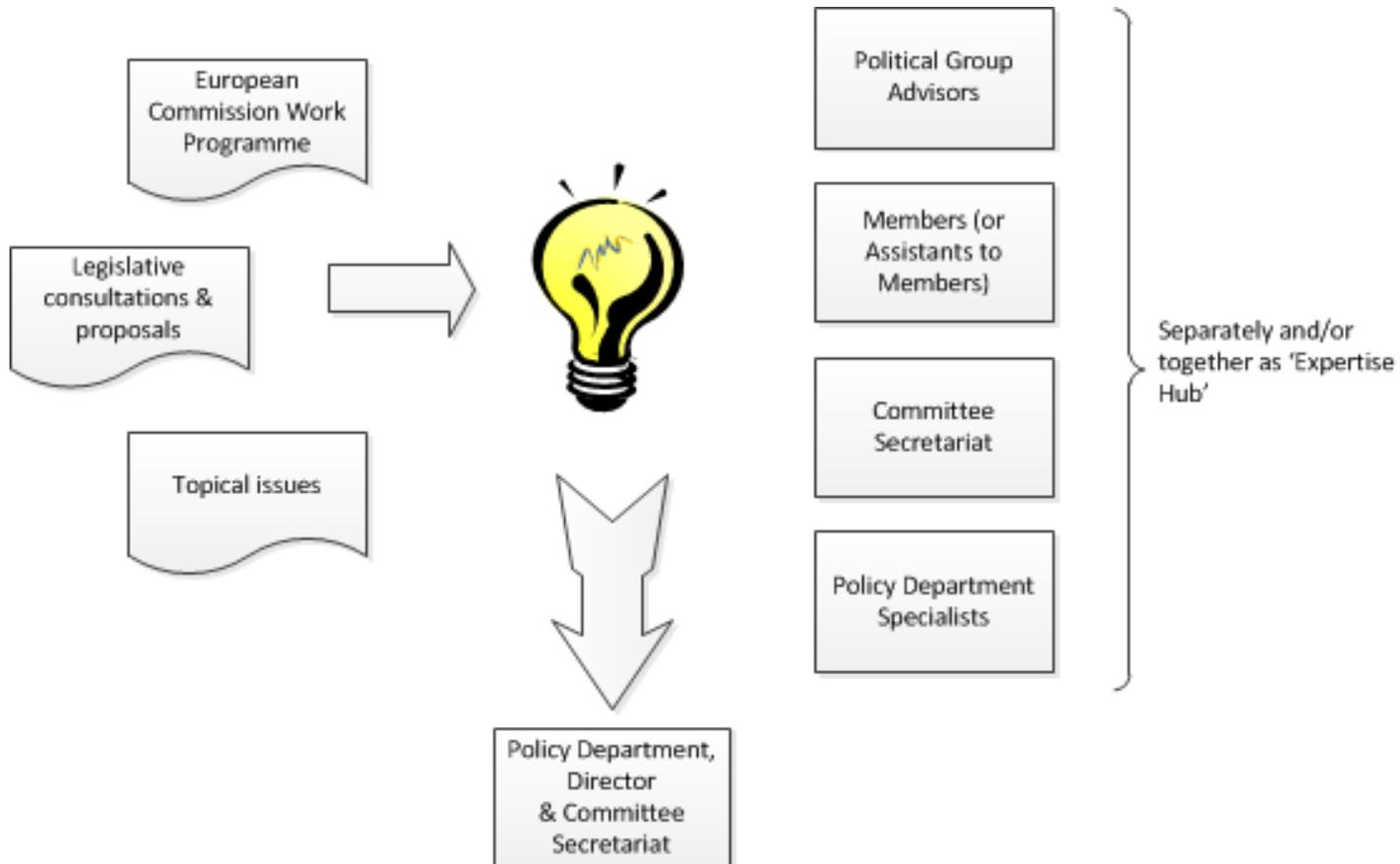
Work Programme proposals & decision
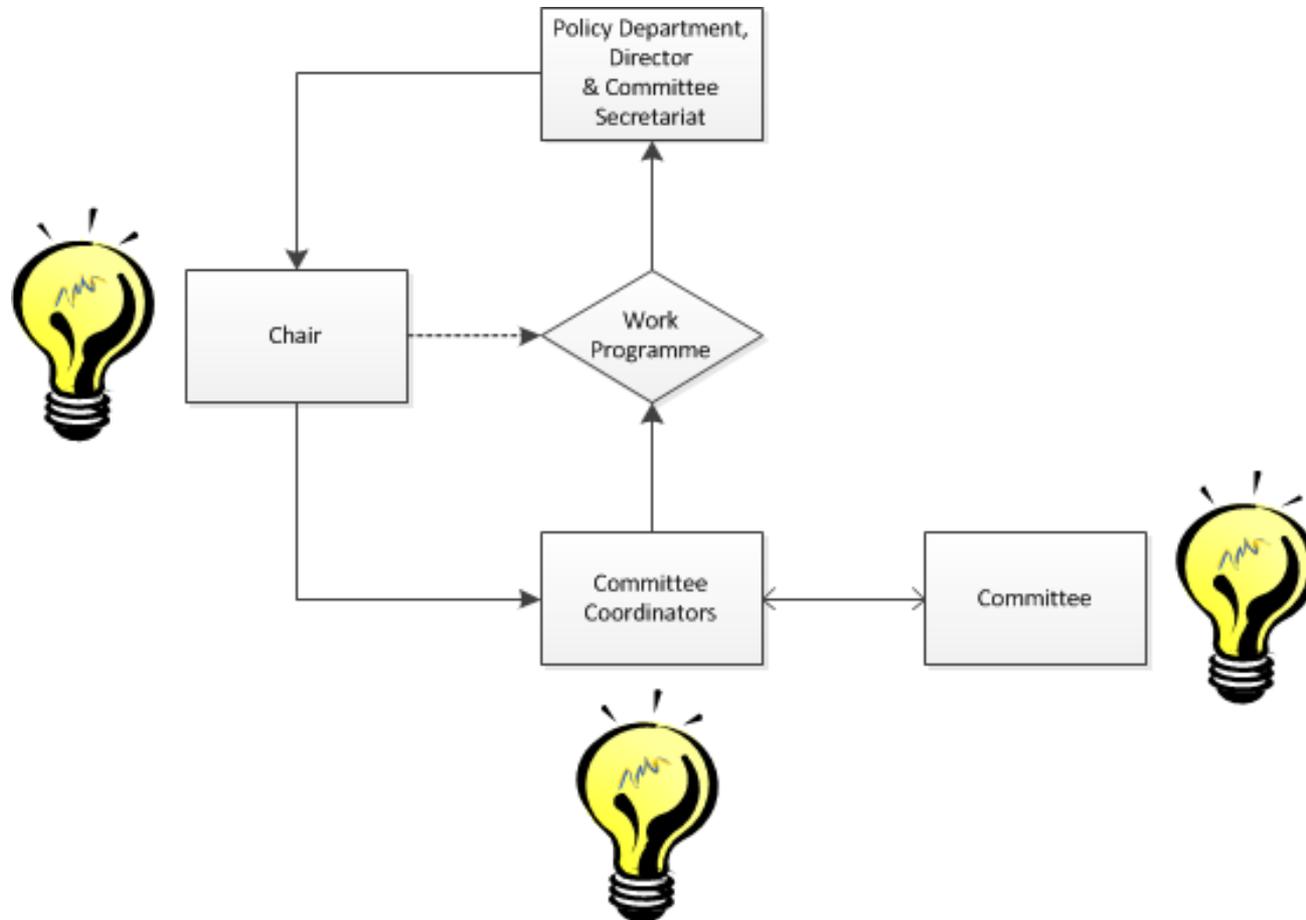
Sources of work

- Formally, Committee 'requests' but often as a result of Policy Department proposal, including anticipation of future legislative work

- Chair can also request personal support for role e.g. drafting of briefings and source material or speaking points for speeches

- Pure 'own-initiative' products possible but so far infrequent (i.e. products without formal request)

Types of product/service

Standard papers:

- 'At-a-glance' note
- 'Briefing'
- 'In-depth Analysis'
- 'Study'

- EP Factsheets

Other products:

- Workshops
- Oral briefings
- Embedded support

- Background notes & speaking points

Source of expertise

- Roughly half of published products are produced by in-house STCO specialists (more in some other Policy Departments)

- External expertise mainly for longer pieces and expert-led events such as workshops

- External experts are selected through:

  - Individual, published, competitive process
  - Framework contracts following competition
  - Market research and solicited individual tender for smaller pieces of work

Resources

- Expertise Budgets averaged €100K per Committee in 2005; Expertise budget for STCO alone = €1.5M in 2015 (i.e. Committee average for STCO = €300K)

- Current staffing in STCO Policy Department:

  - 11 research administrators (+ 1 Seconded National Expert)

  - 1 contracts specialist & 1 information specialist

  - 6 Assistants

  - Head of Unit

Production process

- Major piece of work - can take six months to set up contract and six months or more to deliver

- Timing of decision for research is critical

- Labour-intensive & lengthy procurement process
  - Mixed views on use of framework contracts

- Combination of subject specialist input, legal and administrative work; Contract Management

- Internal reviews & use of anti-plagiarism tool

- Outsourced independent expert peer review

Trends in recent years

- In-house products taking higher share

    (e.g. for AGRI 2005-9: 17% products in-house; 2010-14: 38% in-house; based on published products in the digital archive)

- Text products generally more concise

- Smaller contracts – faster, more precise selection of experts and better targeted output

- Rise in applied expertise/interactive products

Issues

- Overhead and speed of procurement process

- In-house expertise – getting, using, maintaining and keeping; Subject & Contract Management

- Variation by sector (the five Committee areas)

- Quality management (external & internal)

- Usability/volume of use **v.** Real added value

- Integrated and customised service **v.** Maintaining authority, objectivity & impartiality

- Quality of interaction with Members

Conclusion

- Challenging to operate but

  1. Research/expertise actually integrated in the legislative process, driven by specific Committee request and customised for the Committee

  2. Able to bring in the precise expertise required, not limited by in-house knowledge

  3. Not limited by traditional 'research' publication formats – can provide directly operational, live and interactive expert support

Conclusion

Thank you!

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