



národní
úložiště
šedé
literatury

Parlamentní institut

Caletka, Stanislav
2015

Dostupný z <http://www.nusl.cz/ntk/nusl-200848>

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Datum stažení: 21.04.2019

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PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTE

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Abstract

Parliamentary Institute is one of the departments of the Office of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The Institute performs tasks of parliamentary scientific, informative and educational center. Parliamentary institute has been divided into three departments – Department of General Analysis, Department of EU Affairs and Department of Communication and Education. The paper will provide information on the activities of particular Departments. Emphasis will be placed especially on the processing of various documents, background materials for MPs, analyses or studies.

Keywords

Parliament of the Czech Republic, Parliamentary Institute, National Repository of Grey Literature

Introduction – presenting the Parliamentary Institute¹

The Parliamentary Institute (also referred to as “PI”) is one of departments of the Office of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The origins of the PI stretch back to 1990, when an initiative of Deputies was established in 1990 within the scope of the Federal Assembly of that time to create a workplace whose aim it was to provide expert services to Deputies (mainly economic and legal analyses). Most employees of the Office of the Federal Assembly were released following the demise of the Federal Assembly

¹ The text of this chapter is taken from the statistical yearbook of the Parliamentary Institute: Parlamentní institut, Parlament České republiky, Kancelář Poslanecké sněmovny, XII. vydání, Praha: [Kancelář Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu ČR], 2014, 293 str., page 7 and 29 – 35. The yearbook is available from the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Institute or at the Chamber of Deputies' information centre.

at the end of 1992, but employees of the Parliamentary Institute, the Parliamentary Library and certain other departments were taken on in April 1993 by the newly-created Office of the Chamber of Deputies. It became an independent department within the Office of the Chamber of Deputies in September 1995 following the adoption of a new organisation order.

The competencies of the PI are defined in the organisation order, according to which the Parliamentary Institute discharges tasks of a scientific and informative nature and those of a training centre for the Chamber of Deputies, its bodies, Deputies and the Office of the Chamber of Deputies. It also carries out such tasks for the Senate, its bodies, officials, Senators and the Office of the Senate. The Parliamentary Institute has within it three departments: The Department of General Analysis mainly compiles answers to questions and requests submitted by members of both parliamentary chambers and provides a general service for the bodies of the Chamber of Deputies or information from the sphere of foreign policy. The Department of EU Affairs mainly functions as an expert base for the Committee on European Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies. It processes the database of documents arriving from European Union bodies and other matters to concern the EU. The Department of Communication and Education provides services to the general public (such as guided tours, information about the work of the Chamber of Deputies etc.) and operates the Information Centre of the Chamber of Deputies. The individual departments of the Parliamentary Institute are in close contact with each other, jointly providing (in particular) expert training and seminars for members of both chambers of parliament and for the general public. Authors from all departments share in larger joint projects and studies.

How the Parliamentary Institute works – the basic principles²

The Parliamentary Institute discharges tasks of a scientific, informative and educational nature and, within the scope of its activity, answers questions posed by members and bodies of both chambers of parliament and by the Office of the Chamber of Deputies and the Office of the Senate. It mainly deals with legal and economic issues and issues of political science and with other questions.

Requests for the Parliamentary Institute to provide an answer to a question can be made by telephone, by e-mail or using the form available at the Chamber of Deputies' website.³ Deputies or Senators can use the answers or studies compiled, for example, for their own legislative activity, for criticism or consideration of adopted laws, for decision-making on adopted laws and for other needs of the performance of a mandate, for example to reply to voters, for making speeches etc. The PI, however, does not compile studies to provide information for assistants or other people.

The Parliamentary Institute places considerable emphasis on providing objective information irrespective of who submits the request to compile a study or analysis. The submitter of the

² The text of this chapter is taken from the statistical yearbook of the Parliamentary Institute: Parlamentní institut, Parlament České republiky, Kancelář Poslanecké sněmovny, page 26 – 27 and 40 - 41.

³ <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?k=59>[cit. 2015-10-07]

question (i.e. Deputy, Senator, body of a parliamentary chamber etc.) remains anonymous and his/her/its name is not published.

After presenting the study compiled, the Parliamentary Institute reserves two weeks for the submitter of the question (according to the principle of exclusivity). During this time the study is not made available to any other interested parties. It may then be made available to other Deputies and Senators after two weeks. If such a study has a broader scope of use, it is filed in the relevant database of selected works, which are subsequently published on the Chamber of Deputies' website in the Parliamentary Institute section.⁴ Answers to questions and other work that is/are not timeless in nature are archived at the Parliamentary Institute for further internal use or as base material for the creation of new studies or analyses. The PI compiles some studies in advance in relation to presented and planned legislation. In such case, studies are immediately made available to all Deputies and Senators in distributed newspapers and are also published on websites.

The Parliamentary Institute administers in its internal databases all materials compiled, including approximately 2,800 shorter analyses and other specialised works sent to the relevant submitters in the past as part of the answer to a question.

Studies are made available to the public on the Chamber of Deputies' website (in the Parliamentary Institute section) that are also regularly entered in the database of the National Repository of Grey Literature, administered by the National Library of Technology (NLT), based on a contract between the NLT and the Office of the Chamber of Deputies. These are studies compiled by the Parliamentary Institute from a whole range of areas of interest (for example, law, international policy, public administration, economics, security etc.).

Furthermore, the Parliamentary Institute publishes information on its website that provides an overview of economic events in the EU, selected economic, currency and social indicators (monthly) and selected topics (i.e. anticipated topics that are to come up for debate at the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate). The Parliamentary Institute is currently preparing new material regarding the issue of migration, which it will regularly post on the Internet.

The Parliamentary Institute compiles internal materials for Deputies and Senators to concern the Common Foreign and Security Policy, statements regarding the printing of non-governmental bills, foreign political documents and reports by the Permanent Representative of the Chamber of Deputies at the European Parliament and compiles a selection of EU documents.

The work of the Parliamentary Institute⁵

Requests for answers to questions sent to the Parliamentary Institute are mainly processed by the Department of General Analysis. This department therefore prepares various types of materials, which can be divided into "work on request" and "regular overviews and core topics".

⁴ <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/ppi.sqw?d=1>[cit. 2015-10-07]

⁵ The text of this chapter is taken from the statistical yearbook of the Parliamentary Institute: Parlamentní institut, Parlament České republiky, Kancelář Poslanecké sněmovny, page 8 – 11.

Answer to a question provides basic information on an issue, answering the questions asked by Deputies and Senators in an operative way. These materials need not contain a link to the source of information from which they were compiled. Informative materials provide more detailed answers to questions. Comparative studies are a special form of material, providing an overview of the way of dealing with certain areas in different countries. Comparison, however, concentrates mainly on European Union Member States. The final group is studies, which are based on expert analyses of a certain topic. Employees at the Department of General Analysis also provide interested Deputies and Senators with personal consultation, the content of which depends on mutual agreement.

One special type of document is the regular overview of documents regarding Common Foreign and Security Policy, which is compiled for the Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs at the Chamber of Deputies, or indeed other interested parties. Informative materials follow on from this overview, elaborating in more detail on information about areas of the Common Foreign and Security Policy which the committees mentioned have decided to consider in more detail and over the long-term. In terms of foreign policy, the Department also processes documents for foreign-policy discussion involving members and bodies of the Chamber of Deputies. Due to developments in the eurozone, the Parliamentary Institute also compiles an Overview of Economic Events in the EU (published twice a month). Material on the topic of Selected Economic and Social Indicators is prepared and published once a month. A series of Selected topics is also published. This series mainly considers up-and-coming topics that are to come under consideration at the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The results of elections and the latest political developments, in particular in Member and Candidate EU States, are also presented in this series, as is economic development within the countries of the eurozone. The aim of the series is to provide members of Parliament with information at the time the relevant topic reaches the agenda. Employees also process core topics within their own specialisations, topics which the Chamber of Deputies deals with over the long term or regularly returns to. Such topics include election systems, the performance of the mandate of members of representative unions and the institute of immunity, the system of electing a head of state, the issue of referenda and their role in a system of representative democracy, the system of municipal democracy etc.

The Department of EU Affairs compiles information on, analyses and comprehensive studies of European Union political documents, legislation and policies. It also compiles regular weekly overviews of European Union documents that are mainly drawn up for discussion at the Committee on European Affairs. The department also prepares background materials for checking government procedure in European Union matters by the Chamber of Deputies. These materials offer a starting point for the proposed resolutions of the Committee on European Affairs. The department compiles materials for this committee in relation to regular consultation on legislative proposals of the government from the perspective of their compatibility with EU law. One important activity is the processing of statements on the compatibility of laws with European Union law in relation to non-governmental bills.

The Department of Communication and Education produces, among other, a regularly updated, special-purpose series of printed informative materials about the activities of the Chamber of Deputies. Materials are freely accessible from the information centre. This department also deals with preparing answers to questions posed by foreign parliaments within the inter-parliamentary ECPRD network (European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation).

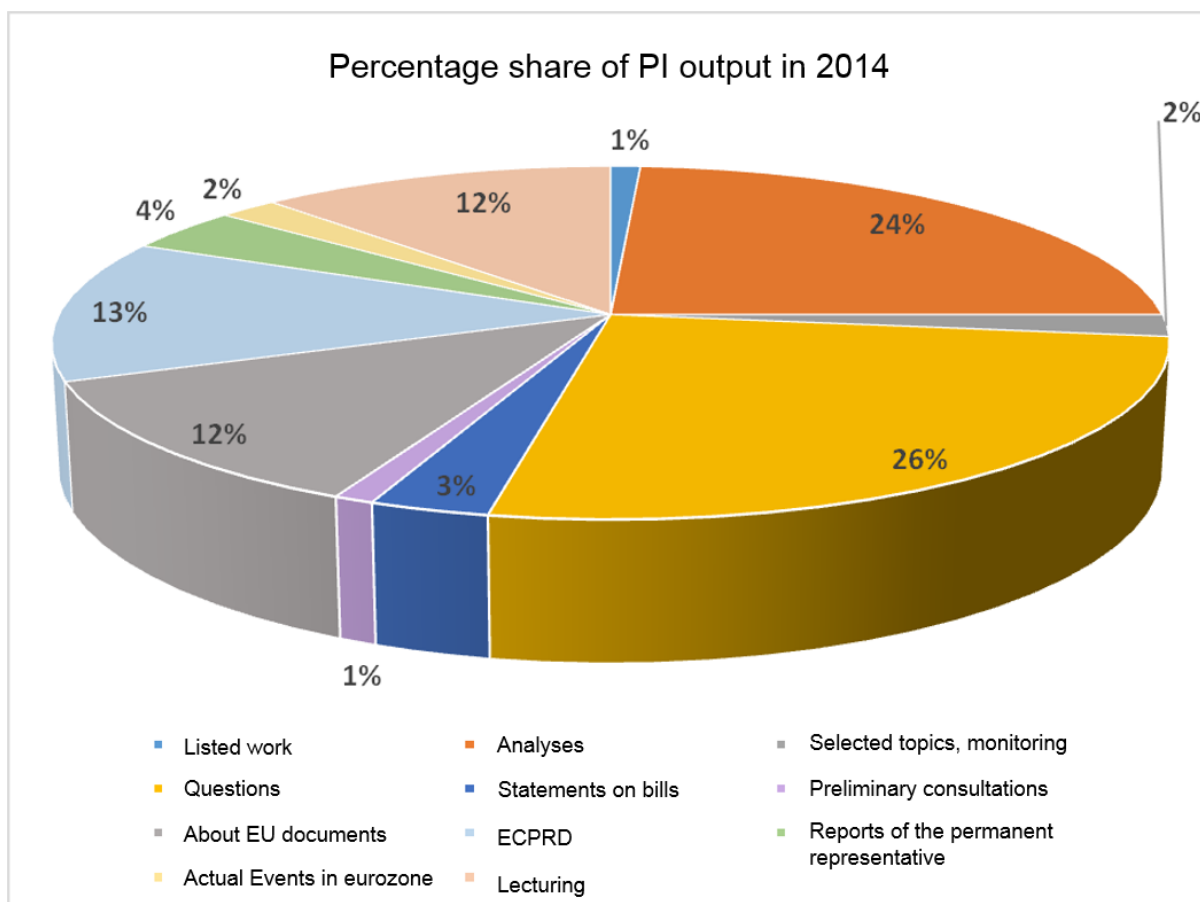


Figure 1 Percentage of outputs of PI in 2014

Percentage share of PI output in 2014			
Listed work	Analyses and specialised work	other	Selected topics, monitoring
Questions: e-mail, fax, telephone	Statements on bills		Preliminary consultation
Information regarding EU documents	ECPRD		Reports of the permanent representative
Current development in the eurozone	Lecturing		

Table 1 Percentage share of PI output in 2014 (Source: internal statistics of the Parliamentary Institute)

Statistics regarding work produced at the Parliamentary Institute for the year 2014		
(from 1.1.2014 to 31.12. 2014/	Quantity of work produced	
	number	%
Total quantity of work produced	1016	100%
of which:		
presented in the List of Selected Work ("Listed Work")	14	1%
Analyses and other specialised work	248	24%
selected topics and monitoring	20	2%
answers to questions (letter, fax, e-mail)	261	26%
statements on bills	33	3%
preliminary consultation	4	1%
information regarding EU documents (source materials, overviews)	122	12%
The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)	133	13%
reports and materials of the permanent representative to the European Parliament	41	4%
current development in the eurozone	17	2%
lecturing activity	123	12%
Work produced:	1016	100%
on request (total)	931	92%
for the Chamber of Deputies	695	75%
for the Senate	49	5%
for MEPs	1	0%
foreign parliaments	158	17%
other	28	3%
at the PI's own initiative	85	8%
Work ordered by the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate:	744	100%
by a Chamber of Deputies or Senate committee or commission	307	41%
by a Deputy or Senator him/herself	437	59%

Work according to political affiliation of the submitting deputy or senator	437	100%
ČSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party)	66	15%
ODS (Civic Democratic Party)	16	4%
TOP09+S	106	24%
KSČM (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)	35	8%
SZ (Green Party)	3	1%
ANO 2011	69	15%
KDU-ČSL (Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party)	52	12%
Dawn - National Coalition	84	19%
Independent	6	2%

Table 2 Statistics regarding work produced at the Parliamentary Institute for the year 2014 (Source: internal statistics of the Parliamentary Institute)

The Parliamentary Institute and the National Repository of Grey Literature

The origins of cooperation between the National Library of Technology and the Office of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in relation to cooperation with the National Repository of Grey Literature date back to the second half of 2011, when the director of the National Library of Technology contacted the director of the Parliamentary Library in a letter. The Parliamentary Institute was contacted, given the nature of the work and the documents produced, to become the main contributor to the grey literature database for the Chamber of Deputies. Several months of exchanging information were followed at the end of 2012 by signing an agreement on the terms and conditions of using original works. The Parliamentary Institute progressively enters major studies in the National Repository of Grey Literature database, in that these are also available at the Parliamentary Institute website.⁶ A total of 120 such papers were stored in the National Repository of Grey Literature database on 28th September 2015, dating back to the years 1992 – 2013. According to the available statistics for 2013, the Parliamentary Institute entered a total of 84 documents in the database for the relevant year, the highest number of all cooperating institutes.

Conclusion

The aim of this brief paper was to present the work of the Parliamentary Institute and emphasise the material produced, some of which is also stored in the database of grey literature. The specialised activity of the Parliamentary Institute helps members of both parliamentary chambers access up-to-date, objective and apolitical information. It also allows the general public to find important facts and data from a whole range of expert studies and

⁶ <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/ppi.sqw?d=1> [cit. 2015-10-07]

other analyses that they would otherwise find difficult to access thanks to the database of the National Repository of Grey Literature and the Parliamentary Institute website. The aim of the Parliamentary Institute is to enter all studies or selected major papers intended for broader use in the database of the National Repository of Grey Literature, which should allow the general public to enjoy better accessibility to analyses and studies already having been compiled.

References

PARLAMENTNÍ INSTITUT. *Parlamentní institut, Kancelář poslanecké sněmovny: Ročenka* [online]. 12. ed. Praha: Kancelář Poslanecké sněmovny Parlamentu České republiky, 2014 [cit. 2015-11-25].

Poslanecká sněmovna Parlamentu České republiky: Parlamentní institut [online]. Praha [cit. 2015-11-25]. Available from: <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/hp.sqw?k=40>.