

Summary of Responses Received

The following represents a summary of responses received under the headings of "Written Answers" and "Production and publication of Parliamentary Debates"

Written Answers:

Of the ten parliaments surveyed, the workloads generated by Written Answers vary widely as does the political importance placed on same in each individual jurisdiction. For example, the Swiss responded that written answers are of minor political importance in the Swiss context, with 12 answers on average per week, whereas written answers are clearly central to the Irish process with some 2000 answers per week. The Irish Parliament and the House of Commons recorded the most written answers in the comparison with approximately 2000 answers per week. The Swiss Federal Assembly and the Serbian National Assembly recorded the least number of written answers with 12 and 11.7 answers per week each. Of the ten parliaments, only the Serbian National Assembly and the Czech Senate do not include written answers in the Official Report of Parliamentary Debates. The system of submission of written answers is fully electronic in New Zealand while all other nine parliaments publish an electronic form of written questions and answers. The Welsh response to the survey illustrates the extra challenges of working in a bilingual environment where the English response to a question must be produced in 2 working days, the Welsh answer requires an extra 8 working days and as such the full answer is not available for 10 working days.

Swiss Federal Assembly: Written answers are included in the official report of Parliamentary Debates. They are however published in a separate volume and made accessible by links on the website. There were 144 so called "written questions" in the year 2008, which are however of minor political relevance.

Serbian National Assembly: In 2007, MPs tabled 436 parliamentary questions. Parliamentary questions are not included in the Official Report of Parliamentary Debates.

Czech Senate: Parliamentary questions are not included in the Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates.

House of Commons: There are approximately 2,000 written answers a week, and they are published over the recess as well. They are included in the official report of Parliamentary Debates and in all formats, i.e., hard copy and web publishing. The questions side is dealt with by the Clerks in the Table Office, who take the questions from Members and send them to be printed. They then go on to an internal database. When Departments are ready to answer, they send hard copies to us. Our office admin people scan the questions and the answers into the system, working in departmental blocks. They are edited and sent for printing. The printed version is proof read by House Reporters before the Bound Volume is printed.

House of Lords: An administrator processes the Written Statements and Answers. They are read by a sub-editor before publication. About 36 per day on average written answers (so, about 150 a week) plus perhaps 20 or so Written Statements per week. A database of Questions tabled is maintained. When the Answers come in (on paper) The pages are scanned and then cut and pasted on to the individual Questions. When all the Questions have been dealt with, they are put together into a single section, which is proof read by a sub-editor.

Australian House of Representatives: The Clerk arranges for both question and reply to be printed in Hansard. In addition the Clerk arranges for copies to be supplied to the press. Answers are neither read nor presented to the House. This Parliament began on 12 February 2008 and to date there has been 205 Questions in writing with 96 or 46.8 % answered.

Scotland: Some 300 Written answers are processed by chamber office clerks weekly. This is done administratively rather than editorially; questions and answers are matched. There is minimal editorial input.

Wales: Some 20 to 30 questions a week. An English file is created daily, and the business unit has two working days in which to publish the file. Once the file has been translated into Welsh, we have 10 working days to publish it on the Welsh side of the website.

New Zealand: Some 400 questions for written answer per week are administered in the House Office, rather than Reporting Services. They are administered using a web-based system for receiving questions and replies from members and Ministers. While questions are edited to some extent, this is primarily to ensure compliance with the Standing Orders, rather than to improve their readability. Replies are not edited at all. Previously, bound volumes of questions for written answer and replies (called the *Replies Supplement*) were prepared by Hansard staff, but this practice was discontinued when the searchable, web-based questions system commenced in 2003. Replies to questions for written answer are due no later than the sixth working day after the day the questions were lodged. Both questions and replies are lodged electronically using the QWA system. They must be signed by members by way of an electronic signature, although in practice some members may permit their staff to apply their signatures. After a reply is received, it is automatically published to the website on the third working day thereafter, allowing time for the member who asked the question to have first use of the information contained in the reply.

Production and Publication of Debates:

New Zealand: The publication measure is 4 working days after the sitting day, although the average is 3 working-days. The first publication is to the website. Uncorrected transcripts of questions for oral answer are published to the website by 5.30 pm each sitting day (Question time generally runs from 2 pm to about 3.15 pm). The daily report is not published incrementally on the Internet throughout the sitting day, but presently the New Zealand Parliament is trialling (on Intranet) videos of debates. Alongside the electronic Hansard of a member's speech or question time there is a "Watch Video" button. The Parliament website provides a link to the Radio New Zealand website, which provides live audio of sittings, and replay of recent question time. Parliament TV—live televising of sittings of Parliament—began a year ago, and can be viewed on the website and several digital platforms. High-quality PDF files are produced that are used by the printer to produce the printed Hansard.

House of Lords: No reporting/editorial work is contracted out at the moment, but if Select Committee evidence sessions start to be reported, this may be necessary. The Hansard Production Unit produces the pdf file for printing. They also produce the html for the web. The actual physical printing and distribution is done by The Stationery Office (not in-house). They also host the html. Website publication takes place breakfast time the next day. However, the provisional text is put on a temporary website about three hours or so after the speech was made (Chamber only). This is replaced by the final html the next morning. The two Houses at Westminster have a website called parliamentlive.tv, which carries webcasts of all Chamber and Committee sittings of both Houses. It has a 28-day archive at the moment, after which the sound and picture files (cameras not available in every Committee Room) disappear. There is no direct linking to the Hansard text –yet.

Australian House of Representatives: No reporting work is contracted out. Reports may be printed in-house if they are of small scale, but most report print-work is outsourced. Reports are formatted in-house and most cover designs are prepared in-house. An electronic version of the Votes and Proceedings, known as the House Live Minutes, are published on the Internet on sitting days. The Live Minutes are updated every few minutes. A proof version of the Votes and Proceedings is published on the Internet within two hours of adjournment.

Wales: Reporting/editorial work was trialled a few times with different transcription companies when the capacity was not available to complete all work in-house, but the standard was so poor that it took longer correcting the transcripts than doing the work in-house. Publication is by web only. For Plenary a bilingual Record is available within 24 hours of the end of the sitting. As such, because the report is bilingual it must be translated before publication and is therefore not available incrementally on the internet throughout the sitting day or within two hours of adjournment. For Committees a verbatim Record with contributions in Welsh is usually available within five working days of the meeting (depending on capacity).

Scotland: Printing is done by a print contractor. Website publication takes place for Parliament at 8am the morning after the meeting. For committees, according to our publication schedule, which is published on the website. No sound file is published on the

Internet and the report is not published incrementally on the Internet throughout the sitting day. The full day's proceedings are not available within two hours of the adjournment.

Switzerland: There is no hard paper copy of the draft version of the Parliamentary Debates produced/printed in-house for internal use. The printed report is not produced within the section supporting the reporting of the debates of parliament.

A sound and video file is produced on the internet. Segments of National Council and Council of State debates are published as soon as they are written throughout the sitting day (between 1 and 3 hours after each speech). The internet site is updated every 30 minutes. There is no need for a separate intranet publication as everything is accessible on the internet at once. The debates of both the National Council and the Council of States up to 10 p.m. are published before 11 p.m., any remainder being added the following day.

The minutes of the Committee meetings are made available to the Committee Secretary in electronic format within two weeks of the Committee meeting. The Secretary makes them available to the Committee members on the extranet website of the Members of Parliament and hardcopy to the relevant representatives of the Federal Administration. The minutes are not made available to the public, the Committee debates being confidential by law. A summary of the Committee debates is presented orally by the speaker of the Committee during the session of the respective Council. The final printed version of the Official Bulletin (two paperback volumes for each Council) is published within 6 weeks of the Debates. A DVD of the Debates is also published (an updated version after every session, i. e. four times a year).

Serbia: The printed stenographic records are the main output. MPs have access to parts of debates in electronic form (CD, USB) even in the course of debate. Shorthand notes are delivered to Deputies' Groups not later than the following day. A hard paper copy of the draft version of the Parliamentary Debates is produced in-house for internal use. Parliamentary Debates are not published on the intranet or internet.

Czech Senate: A hard paper copy of the draft version of the Parliamentary Debates is produced in-house for internal use. The Parliamentary Debates are published on the intranet and internet throughout the sitting day.

House of Commons: Proceedings in the two Chambers are available to Ministers' secretaries and to Members who have spoken within two and a half hours of the end of their speeches, and are on the internet within three to four hours. The internet version is replaced at 8.30 with the official version. Printed copies of the debates up to about 1 am are available by 7.30 the next morning. Production of written answers depends on when they are made available by Departments, but at least 75 per cent of those received on the day are published overnight. All other written material is published overnight. All are available by 7.30 the next morning. For General Committees, publication depends to some extent on work load, but the aim is to produce as many as possible overnight, and they are placed on the internet the next morning. Select Committee proceedings are published in accordance with the timetable set by the Committee Clerk, but are usually produced within four working days. The corrected Bound Volume is on the internet within 12 weeks, although the published version takes somewhat longer.

Denmark: The speeches from the Danish Parliament Chamber are recorded and saved digitally as sound files. The Folketing Hansard is using an IT-system with speech recognition for the production and publishing of the official report of the parliament proceedings – Edixi. When the sitting in Chamber is in progress, a reporter is always present in Chamber to make time stamps every time a speaker starts speaking. On a daily basis 2 reporters form a partnership and take turns of approximately 1 hour in in Chamber respectively in the Folketing Hansard's premises, where the reporter monitors the time stamps made by the colleague in Chamber and corrects mistakes. Approximately 10 reporters share these tasks.

Usually the reporter will work on a sequence of speeches (approximately 5 to 10 minutes) at a time. To make the official report the reporters will listen to the sound file and then dictate what was said by the speaker, slightly editing the speech. Edixi will then type the dictation in a Word document. The speeches are reported in a linguistically correct version with a sense of each speaker's peculiarities and the particular political language. When the reporter has finished dictating the speeches of their or their sequence, the reporter will release the sequence to the Internet (www.ft.dk) as a first edition for the MPs and public to read.

Most of the reporters will work on the first edition of the verbatim record of a sitting while others may work on the second edition of a previous sitting. When the entire verbatim record of a sitting has been published in first edition – the reporters proofread the verbatim record and listen to the sound recordings again. If they proof-read any speeches that they themselves have edited in the first place, the interface will give them a warning. The second (and final edition) is then published on the Internet overwriting the first edition.

Currently, the Office of the Folketing Hansard produces the text for printing, involving 5 reporters and approximately 1 man-year. The type file is converted to PDF-files and sent to the printer company. The verbatim records take up to 7,000 AS5 pages per year. Finally the verbatim records form parts of the complete Folketing Hansard which also comprises submitted and passed Bills, Committee reports etc. The target is to be able to publish the verbatim records of 85% of the total sitting volume within 2-3 hours from a speech is delivered. The aim is not yet achieved due to the necessity to upskill staff and ICT problems.

Greece: Each stenographer types/records the proceedings for five minutes. Each stenographer dictates their five minutes' proceedings to the typists working on the computer. Immediately after, the written text is corrected by the Supervisor and distributed to the journalists accredited to the Parliament. Proceedings are also recorded by a tape recorder and the Parliament's own TV channel provides another source of footage if required for checking.

The first printing of the Minutes is on a five minutes' basis under the name of each stenographer. When the written text is corrected by the Supervisor then the pages are numbered in continuity. Approximately one hour after the end of the Parliament's sitting the shorthand Minutes are given to the IT directorate of the House and are uploaded on the website. Three days after, once the shorthand Proceedings have been overviewed by the supervisors and the respective orators (i.e. the MPs) the final version of the Proceedings is uploaded on the Parliament's website.

In any case all corrections by the orators (the MPs) are made within the three days time when the Minutes' final version are uploaded on the website.

Norway: The speeches are recorded in shorthand (hand stenography), but the parliament are increasingly dependent on sound recordings, and now have a digital sound recording system. The system was developed in-house about three years ago and has worked well. Both reporters and revisers are present in the hall during the meetings.

There are two Norwegian languages; Norwegian and New Norwegian. The MPs must choose which one they want to use for reporting their speeches. To make reports in New Norwegian is sometimes a challenge and a time-consuming task.

Transcript of the preliminary report is forwarded to the revisers, who collect the turns from the respective reporters, check the reports and make corrections if necessary. The manuscript is also checked by the assistant head of the service and 10% of the time by the head.

Transcripts of the reporter's turns are normally ready 2-3 hours after a speech is delivered. From about that time an electronic version of the preliminary report is made accessible from any computer in the Parliament. The internal document is updated currently as new turns are ready. When the first, preliminary report of the whole day is complete, it is transferred to the Internet. In the course of the next day (weekday) an updated version of the report is transferred to the Internet and replaces the first, preliminary version. The Internet version is then only updated if we discover more mistakes.

Two days after a meeting the updated electronic version is sent by e-mail to the external printing office. 2-3 hours later (or the next morning) proof sheets are returned to us for proof reading, adding column titles on top of the pages and – when we have an adequate amount of reports for publishing a booklet – making the necessary indexes; index of speakers and table of contents. The booklets – containing 1-5 meetings – are published continuously and are normally available two weeks after a meeting is held. When the final, official version of the report is printed, the equivalent electronic version is transferred back to us and to some other data banks, replacing the previous Internet versions.

Sweden: The stenographers take a record of everything that is said in the Chamber. They are divided into three teams, with one stenographer in each team having a coordinating responsibility. The team assistants (there is one for each team of stenographers) check the stenographers' notes against audio recordings of meetings of the Chamber, review and correct these notes according to Riksdag style guides and check factual information and quotes. They check all background information connected with speeches, such as speech numbers, titles, names, headings and other formalities. The team assistants also combine the stenographers' individual texts into larger documents (hourly) and at the end of the day they put together the entire record to create a product that is ready for printing, send it to the web editors and give printing permission.

Slovakia: Digital Audio Recording and transcription is the method used in Slovakia for the recording of parliamentary debates. Working transcripts and audio records from the National Council sessions are published on the web page The Report is printed and is also published on the internet. Both text and audio records are archived.

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