International Workshop

Technological Options for Capturing and Reporting Parliamentary Proceedings

Organised by the European Parliament (OPPD) and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament

14-16 July 2010
European Parliament
Brussels, Belgium

DRAFT AIDE MEMOIRE

Background

Parliamentary documents such as committee reports and texts of debates and hearings are fundamental records of the legislature. 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. The findings of the 2010 edition of the World e-Parliament Report indicate that timely public availability of such legislative records is a key ingredient for a more open, transparent and accountable legislature, and therefore a cornerstone of healthy parliamentary democracies. The Report further considers it a key criteria for assessing the level of e-parliament that a legislature can achieve, with those at the top levels more likely to have technological systems for managing all parliamentary records and making them available to citizens through multiple channels and in a timely manner.

The use of modern technologies has dramatically changed the parameters and the dynamics involved in documenting the parliamentary process and in producing a verbatim record of debates, a record of votes and a record of other actions that occurred during a session. This has often resulted in greater efficiencies, lower costs, and faster and wider distribution for both members and the public, and it has significantly increased the openness and transparency of the process and therefore imbued it with greater legitimacy.

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.

However, a significant number of parliaments around the world have not developed yet such capabilities and are still struggling to produce accurate records within an acceptable timeframe. Many of these parliaments have voiced their need for support in order to understand the technological options that could be available to legislatures and to implement them in their environment.

The work of parliamentary reporting - i.e. the recording of plenary and committee sessions and the production and publication of reports (Hansards) - has changed substantially over the years. Whereas in the past reporters relied mostly on shorthand and traditional stenography machines, over time technological developments started to offer a variety of new tools and instruments enabling easier production of transcripts and which provided parliaments the opportunity to establish a diverse set of reporting practices according to their needs and resources. Examples of these methods include the use of audio recording in combination with electronic document writers or real-time transcription software.

The type of technology chosen by legislatures very often depends on the available resources of the parliament, both in terms of budget and human skills. For example, tape recording can be very cost effective but offers limited functionality, while the more expensive digital recording provides more possibilities such as the publication of digital audio records on the parliamentary website. More promising is the application of voice recognition technology, although it still involves complexities and additional costs.

Overall, there is a lack of understanding regarding the range of technologies being used around the world for recording and publishing parliamentary proceedings; the benefits and drawbacks of each approach; which technology is more appropriate for a specific context, taking into account the income level disparities as well as language and cultural differences among countries; and what opportunities for bi-lateral or multi-lateral parliamentary cooperation exist, regardless of the development level of each parliament.

Goals and objectives

During a specialised session on this topic at the World e-Parliament Conference 2009, participants called for more inter-parliamentary cooperation in this important area in order to share available expertise on the implementation of different technological solutions. The Workshop on *Technological Options for Recording Plenary and Committee Sessions in Parliament* intends to assist parliaments of developing countries that still do not publish recordings of plenary and committee proceedings regularly or timely, and those that are looking to improve their capacity to deliver a better service, to identify the good practices, ideas and technologies most appropriate for their needs for improved transparency and accountability, availability and preservation.

It will do so by inviting selected parliaments using advanced technologies for recording plenary and committee sessions to deliver in-depth presentations and engage in open discussions with a view to exchange experience and knowledge with their peers, both at the theoretical and operational level.

Structure of the workshop

The Workshop will be structured around four key steps in the workflow – capturing, processing, managing and publishing - and on some of the most commonly used technologies for recording and publication of parliamentary proceedings, such as stenography, speech recognition and digital recording and transcription.

In the first two days, each morning and afternoon session will feature two in-depth presentations by legislatures on the solutions adopted, followed by an open discussion on one key step of the process. The third day will be dedicated to the identification of the key steps that parliaments should follow in order to record and make available plenary and committee proceedings in a timely manner. The Workshop will conclude with the identification of a possible course of action for future inter-parliamentary cooperation in this field.

Targeted Audiences

The workshop is directed to:
- Parliamentary reporters (Heads of offices or senior staff), as they need to understand the potential of ICT for their work and to know how to make effective use of newer ICT tools and methods for producing verbatim records
- Staff providing IT services and support to parliamentary reporters, as they are the ones who maintain the audio recording / transcript producing technology and provide appropriate services

The European Parliament thought its Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy (OPPD) and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament will be able to sponsor a limited number of participants from developing countries to participate in the workshop. However, the workshop will be open to self-sustained participants and participants sponsored by other entities willing to cooperate in its implementation.

Meeting dates and venue

The Workshop will take place on 14, 15 and 16 July 2010 at the European Parliament in Brussels - 60, rue Wiertz - 1047 Brussels - *Meeting room .ASP1 G2.. .*

For security reasons, participants need to register *before 25/06/2010* at the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament (*251, Corso Vittorio Emanuele – 00186 Rome, Italy, email: info@ictparliament.org, tel: +39 06 6813 6320, fax: +39 06 6821 1960*)

Languages

The workshop languages will be English, French and Spanish.

Organisers

The Workshop will be co-organised by the European Parliament and Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

Sponsors

The participants needing financial support to attend the workshop should introduce their request *before 25/06/2010*

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DRAFT PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 14 July

08:00 – 09:00	Registration and distribution of documents
09:00 – 09:30	Opening session
09:30 – 10:15	In-depth Case Study - CAPTURE
10:15 – 11:00	In-depth Case Study - CAPTURE
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 13:00	Open discussion focused on capturing plenary and committee proceedings
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 14:45	In-depth Case Study - PROCESS
14:45 – 15:30	In-depth Case Study - PROCESS
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:30	Open discussion focused on processing plenary and committee recordings

Thursday, 15 July

09:00 – 09:45	In-depth Case Study - MANAGE
09:45 – 10:30	In-depth Case Study - MANAGE
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:30	Open discussion focused on managing recorded plenary and committee digital assets
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:15	In-depth Case Study - PUBLISH
14:15 – 15:30	In-depth Case Study - PUBLISH
15:30 – 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:00	Open discussion focused on publishing plenary and committee proceedings
17:00 – 18:00	Hands-on: Tour of the European Parliament facility

Friday, 16 July

09:00 – 11:00	Synthesis panel: What solution for each specific context? 2 Presentations Open discussion
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 12:30	Panel: Next steps – Working group/Handbook on Technological Options for Capturing and Recording Parliamentary Proceedings
12:30 – 13:00	Closing session