The work of EPRS
The first two years:
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The work of EPRS

The first two years: 2014 and 2015

Summary

The European Parliament’s Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS) was established in November 2013, in order to provide Members of the European Parliament, and where appropriate, parliamentary committees, with independent, objective and authoritative analysis of, and research on, policy issues relating to the European Union, and so assist them in their parliamentary work. It aims to provide a comprehensive range of products and services, backed by specialist internal expertise in all policy fields, so empowering Members and committees through knowledge and contributing to the Parliament’s effectiveness and influence as an institution.

This report describes the work of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) during its first two years of full operation, from January 2014 to December 2015. During this twenty-four month period:

- the Members’ Research Service of EPRS answered 4,655 requests for research and analysis from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and their staff - 1,660 in 2014 and 2,995 in 2015 - in some cases with assistance from the Library. The Members’ Research Service also replied to 1,278 requests for research and analysis from other parliamentary clients (745 in 2014 and 533 in 2015).

- the number of Members using the Members’ Research Service rose throughout the period, with 76 per cent of Members having made requests for research or analysis by December 2015 (and 70 per cent on an annual basis).

- the Members’ Research Service issued 825 publications on EU policies, issues and legislation, for the use of Members generally, during the two-year period (231 in 2014 and 594 in 2015).

- the Directorate for the Library also answered over 37,000 reference requests from within the Parliament and over 90,000 citizens’ enquiries, as well as processing some 950 meters of archival files and providing in-house training to almost 2,500 persons.

- the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value published 176 papers in support of the work of parliamentary committees in scrutinising the executive and holding it to account.

- adding in Library publications and blog articles, there were a total of 1,511 EPRS publications during the two years in question (541 in 2014 and 970 in 2015). All of these publications can be accessed via the EPRS catalogue\(^1\) for that period.

- these EPRS publications and other material elicited over 3.2 million ‘page views’ on the Parliament’s intranet in the two-year period in question, as well as some 2.4 million page views on the internet.

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Creation, role and philosophy of EPRS

The Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS) was established on 1 November 2013, following a decision of the Parliament’s Bureau on 20 May 2013, and became fully operational on 1 January 2014. Its creation followed detailed analysis, undertaken by a Joint Working Group of the Bureau and the Budgets Committee, of the strengths and weaknesses of the various kinds of support given to Members in their work. The working group identified areas both for potential savings and for potential reinforcement over time. Among the latter, it recommended specifically that the provision of ‘independent scientific advice’ to Members and of analytical support in exercising scrutiny and oversight of the executive should both be enhanced. A detailed comparative study of the roles of parliamentary research services and libraries in Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States identified the services available and best practice to be found elsewhere.

The overall purpose of establishing the new directorate-general was thus not only to re-organise certain existing services in a more coherent manner, but to enhance those services and to develop new ones, so that the European Parliament would have at its disposal a world-class parliamentary research service, capable of providing Members and (where appropriate) committees with independent, objective and authoritative research on, and analysis of, policy issues relating to the European Union. It was also intended to increase the practical capacity of Members and committees to scrutinise and oversee the European Commission and other executive bodies throughout the EU policy cycle.

To strengthen administrative support in these fields, the new directorate-general brought together, in the form of a single European Parliamentary Research Service, two previously separate entities. These were the Directorate for the Library (previously located in DG Presidency) and the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value (previously in DG Internal Policies), and it added to them a new directorate, the Members’ Research Service, of a kind which the European Parliament previously lacked. The latter offers closely tailored briefing and personalised research for individual MEPs, and produces a wide range of (synoptic and more detailed) publications for Members as a whole. Together these three principal components form a single service, designed to offer the kind of comprehensive research capability to be found, in whole or in part, in several other parliamentary democracies.

The basic philosophy of DG EPRS, as defined by the Bureau, reflects the following core principles:

- to be independent, objective and authoritative in the work undertaken;
- to provide a comprehensive service, backed by specialism in all policy fields;
- to be client-oriented and responsive directly to the needs of Members;
- to offer a single point-of-entry for Members and a rapid response to requests;
- to ensure the clear, simple branding of all products and services; and
- to complement written material with greater ‘in person’ briefing of Members.
In such a spirit, the directorate-general aims to provide a comprehensive range of products and services, backed by specialist internal expertise in all policy fields, so in effect empowering both Members and committees through knowledge.

The administrative title of the directorate-general is the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS). The acronym ‘EPRS’ stands for ‘European Parliamentary Research Service’, a name which the DG may use on its publications, webpages and other public material.

Organisationally, DG EPRS comprises three directorates, as well as two horizontal units - for Strategy and Coordination, and for Resources:

- **Directorate A** - Directorate for the Members’ Research Service;
- **Directorate B** - Directorate for the Library;
- **Directorate C** - Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value.

The organigramme of the directorate-general is provided in an annex to this text.

### Work of the Members’ Research Service

The central task of Directorate A of DG EPRS, the **Members’ Research Service**, is to provide all Members with independent, objective and authoritative analysis of, and research on, EU-related policy issues, in order to assist them in their parliamentary work.

The Directorate is organised in **five policy units**, currently covering Economic Policies (EPOL), Structural Policies (SPOL), Citizens’ Policies (CPOL), Budgetary Policies (BPOL) and External Policies (XPOL), following the standard committee groupings used within the Parliament’s administration. The work of the five policy units is supported by a central Publications Management and Editorial Unit (PMEU), which also serves the directorate-general as a whole.

The five policy units provide, *inter alia*, the following **main services**:

- the provision of **in-house, specialist expertise** in all areas of EU policy, based on the work of policy analysts and information specialists;

- **responses to specific requests from individual Members** for research, analysis and in policy fields covered by the European Union, notably by means of tailored, personalised briefing to Members, both in written form and through in-person meetings;

- a **comprehensive range of pro-active, content-rich, easy-to-read publications** (and other analysis and research) for Members collectively on major EU policies and issues, including the automatic and systematic provision of analysis on EU legislative proposals at their successive stages of passage;

- the contribution of **online content** in all policy fields for use on the Parliament’s various external and internal websites.
Policy specialism

Since a key part of the EPRS design was the creation, through the new Members’ Research Service, of a dedicated research capability for individual Members - responding to their requests for research and analysis - and to generate a much wider and deeper range of in-depth analytical and briefing publications for all Members, across all major policy fields, it follows that this needed to be underpinned by the development of a much higher degree of policy specialism among staff than in the past.

As a result of the reallocation of existing staff and recruitment of additional staff to the Members’ Research Service, as foreseen by the Bureau and budgetary authority, the central aim of building a team of policy specialists who cover all EU policy areas has already been substantially accomplished. By the end of 2015, there were 81 policy analysts and 30 information specialists in the Members’ Research Service. By comparison, in October 2013, the old Library had only 20 colleagues corresponding to a policy-analyst role, most of whom were generalists. As a result of these and other changes, the volume and quality of output of the new Members’ Research Service has been on a rapidly rising curve.

Tailored research for individual Members

The Members’ Research Service has been responding to an increasingly large number of personal requests for research or analysis from Members or their staff. All requests are handled on a strictly confidential basis, in accordance with the rules of the Members’ Research Service adopted by the Bureau in June 2014.

- There were 1,660 substantive requests from Members or their staff for research or analysis in 2014, and 2,995 such requests in 2015 - making a total of 4,655 such requests in the two-year period in question.

- Of the above total, in 2014, 1,376 requests were answered by the Members’ Research Service alone, and another 284 with the support of the On-site and Online Library Services Unit (see below). In 2015, the respective figures were 2,745 and 250.

- Some Members’ requests needed to be broken down into 1,300 sub-requests, sometimes requiring input from as many as 28 EPRS country experts for a comprehensive answer. If sub-requests are added to the total, as in the reporting of several other parliamentary research services, the total number of responses provided goes up to almost 6,000.

- By the end of December 2015, 76 per cent of Members or their offices had made requests for substantive research or analysis to the Members’ Research Service since July 2014, and 70 per cent had done so in the previous twelve months. The corresponding figure in December 2014, covering the second half of 2014, immediately after the European elections, was 50 per cent.

- Throughout the last two years, the number and sophistication of enquiries has risen steadily, partly as a result of the EPRS’s conscious ‘client needs’ approach.
In addition, the Members’ Research Service and/or the On-site and Online Library Services Unit together also replied a further 1,278 requests for substantive research and analysis from other parliamentary clients, such as other directorates-general within the administration (745 in 2014 and 533 in 2015).

The requests for research received in 2014 and 2015 concerned all EU policy areas, with an emphasis on economic policies (24 per cent in 2014 and 28 per cent in 2015) and external policies (22 per cent in 2014 and 25 per cent in 2015). Citizens’ policies accounted for 17 per cent in 2014 and 18 per cent in 2015, structural policies for 14 per cent in 2014 and 16 per cent in 2015, and budgetary policies for two per cent in both years. Other requests, mainly of a horizontal or purely documentary kind, accounted for 21 per cent in 2014 and 11 per cent in 2015.

Around a 46 per cent of the requests received since January 2014 - which came from 1,044 individuals in 2014 and 1,292 in 2015 - were answered within 24 hours, and 86 per cent within less than a week.

The Members’ Research Service also started providing the possibility of in-person briefing of Members or their staff on any topic, a service which is being actively developed as part of its client-oriented approach.

Publications for all Members

The Members’ Research Service has generated an increasing number of publications, all aimed at being clear, accessible and easy to read.

The Members’ Research Service produced 384 publications in 2014 and 732 in 2015. Of this total of 1,121 publications over two years, 825 (74 per cent) were available in both physical (printed or PDF) and digital forms, and 296 (26 per cent) were available only online.

A clickable PDF list of the 1,121 Members’ Research Service publications produced between January 2014 and December 2015 can be accessed here.2

In parallel, a downloadable summary of some of the most interesting publications by the Members’ Research Service during this period is available here.3

All physical EPRS publications can also be found on the Parliament’s Think Tank internet website, at www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank, as well as on the EPRS intranet at www.eprs.sso.ep.parl.union.eu and EPRS blog at www.epthinktank.eu. On-line only publications are available on the EPRS intranet and blog.

Early on, the presentation of EPRS’s physical publications was standardised in an attractive new format offered in the following categories, based on length: ‘At a glance’ notes, providing a one- to two-page summary of a topic; Briefings, offering a more detailed overview of a policy, issue or piece of legislation (up to 12 pages); and In-
**depth Analyses** and **Studies**, giving a much more comprehensive and detailed analysis of the same (up to 32 pages and longer, respectively).

- There has also been a strong emphasis on the enhanced **use of infographics** in all publications, to offer a concentrated visual presentation of useful information and statistics on a subject.

The detailed **rules for the operation of the Members’ Research Service**, which were adopted by the European Parliament’s Bureau in June 2014, can be accessed [here](#). These identify its role in supporting Members individually and collectively, and specify who has the right of access to its services and on what basis.

In undertaking its work, the Members’ Research Service works very closely not only with the other directorates within EPRS, but with other services within the Parliament’s administration. Joint publications, events and/or training sessions have been undertaken with the Directorates General for Internal Policies (IPOL), External Policies (EXPO), Presidency (PRES) and Communication (COMM) during the period in question.

**Next steps**

During the course of 2016, the Members’ Research Service is engaged in the continued development and launch of **new products and services** for Members, both individually and collectively. The development of **coordinated ‘series’ of publications** is being further promoted and refined, and the capacity to **react rapidly to events** is being strengthened.

The production of **In-depth Analyses** is being intensified, so that they (and shorter briefings) cover all major EU policy areas. The recently-launched **‘legislative briefings’** - a series of easy-to-read publications which systematically track and analyse the passage of all major legislative proposals, at the successive stages of the law-making process - will be extended as the volume of legislation increases during the parliamentary term. The parallel **‘How the EU Budget is spent’** series of briefings on 70 spending programmes under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) will be completed. Other new series of publications will be introduced shortly.

Efforts are being made to offer Members (and their staff) greater accessibility to publications when they are **outside the EP premises**. As part of this process, an experiment was started in mid-2015 with **podcasting**, both of ‘At a glance’ notes on major **up-coming items of plenary business** and on various **longer-term policy issues**.

In return for the 60 posts made available to the Members’ Research Service under the Parliament’s agreements with the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and Committee of the Regions (CoR) of February 2014, the Members’ Research Service began **delivering services to members of the two Advisory Committees** in the course of 2015, on the basis foreseen in those agreements.

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5 [www.europarl.europa.eu/rss/podcast/eprs-plenary-podcast/or.xml](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/rss/podcast/eprs-plenary-podcast/or.xml)
6 [www.europarl.europa.eu/rss/podcast/eprs-policy-podcast/or.xml](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/rss/podcast/eprs-policy-podcast/or.xml)
Work of the Library

The most visible role of Directorate B of DG EPRS, the Directorate for the Library, is to operate the Library Reading Rooms in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg, housing the Parliament’s physical collections, which it acquires and manages. However, it also provides digital and online access to subscription-based publications for the institution, manages the Parliament’s Historical Archives, answers citizens’ enquiries, and deals with public access to parliamentary documents and other transparency issues. The Directorate is organised in five units.

On-site and Online Library Services

The On-site and Online Library Services Unit (LIBS) operates the Library Reading Rooms in Brussels and Strasbourg, and provides physical and online access for Members and staff to books, journals, databases, and news and information sources (whilst also providing training in the use of such sources). It helps provide substantive content for the Parliament’s internet and intranet presence, and it hosts various policy-roundtables and other meetings organised by the Directorate-General in the Library Reading Room in Brussels.

- The Library responded to 17,391 reference requests (and other comparable requests) from parliamentary clients of various kinds in 2014. In 2015, there were 20,207 such requests.

- 1,044 persons within the parliamentary community made reference enquiries to the EPRS in 2014, and 1,292 in 2015.

- A total of 4,900 people used electronic newswires, news agencies and external databases in 2014 - with the Parliament subscribing to 100 such sources - and 5,100 in 2015.

- 9,500 books were borrowed from the Library in 2014, and 11,000 in 2015. A total of 10,000 books and electronic documents were catalogued in 2014, and 9,500 in 2015.

- In July 2014, the Library opened a small new Members’ Reading Room on the ground floor of the Altiero Spinelli building, connected to the Astrid Lulling lounge, to complement the existing reading rooms in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

- The provision of training support to EP and Members’ staff in the use of databases and other information sources was actively developed: over 1,000 individuals participated in 124 training sessions of various kinds in 2014. There were 1,500 participants at 184 training sessions in 2015.

The Library Reading Room and other Library facilities in Brussels have been used much more actively for the holding of seminars and roundtables on policy issues, as well as for book launches and other events. The 26 events held by EPRS between January 2014 and

7 www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/AstridLullingReadingRoom.pdf
December 2015 included joint discussions, open to all Members and staff, with partner organisations, such as the European University Institute, EUISS and OECD, as well as briefing sessions and exchange of best practice with other parliamentary research services and libraries in EU member states and worldwide. The Library Reading Room also served as setting for 28 events organised by individual Members of the European Parliament.

The Library’s online project, ‘100 Books on Europe to Remember’, was successfully launched in May 2014, helping to ensure that texts important in the shaping or understanding of post-war European integration are readily available and not forgotten. A summary of each book and biographical details of its author(s) is provided; where possible, access is given to the full text of the book. A major event, involving the President of the Parliament and several living authors, was organised in the Library Reading Room in Brussels in March 2015.

The Library will continue its evolution in supporting the other directorates within DG EPRS in their research and analytical work, in parallel to its existing comprehensive provision of physical and digital collections, news sources and databases for a wide parliamentary clientele. The process of offering training for Members and their offices is being further developed, reflecting the wider and deeper range of EPRS products and services now available.

Continued efforts were made in 2015 to provide access to a wide span of state-of-the-art digital reference materials to the parliamentary community. The EPRS intranet site already provides Members and EP staff with access to around 100 digital subscriptions, notably to European and national news services (such as Agence Europe, AFP, DPA, Reuters and Financial Times) and databases (such as Factiva, Nexis and Oxford Analytica). This is in addition to 700 physical subscriptions to journals, magazines and newspapers. More e-books are being purchased each year.

**Comparative Law Library**

During 2015, emphasis was placed on the improved presentation and accessibility of Library material generally, with particular attention to strengthening capacity in the field of comparative law. In 2015, a small Comparative Law Library Unit (COLL) was created, which will serve as a centre of knowledge and expertise on the law of the European Union, its member states and comparable democratic jurisdictions. It is responsible for building up and maintaining an extensive reference collection of legislation, case law and legal doctrine, as well as engaging in research and analysis, in the field of comparative law.

**Historical Archives**

The Historical Archives Unit (ARCH) manages and preserves the Parliament’s official public documents and other archival material, including papers of individual Members, dating back to 1952. It assists researchers on the history of the Parliament and European integration and publishes historical studies based on the archives. It works closely with the EU Historical Archives and the new Alcide de Gasperi Centre for the History of European Integration at the European University Institute (EUI) in promoting the use of the Archives.
and the study of the history of the Parliament. The unit’s Historical Library Service also manages the Library Reading Room in Luxembourg.

In 2014, the Historical Archives Unit processed over 80,000 electronic files and almost 600 linear meters of paper files, whilst also responding to nearly 700 individual requests for historic documents and other information, supplying 7,800 such documents. The exceptionally high number of files treated resulted mainly from the deposition of a very large number of documents, including 55,000 audio-tapes, by parliamentary committees at the end of the last five-year term.

In 2015, the unit processed over 75,000 electronic files, and processed over 350 linear meters of paper files. 206 linear meters were organised and transferred to the Historical Archives of the European Union. The Unit answered more than 650 individual requests for historic documents and other information, supplying over 6,500 such documents.

The Historical Archives have systematised their publications into two series - the European Parliament History Series and the European Union History Series - with greater emphasis on issues of continuing interest. In 2014 and 2015, the unit published six studies - including the first volume of a major study on the history of the budgetary powers of the Parliament - and three briefings, 19 articles, and two catalogues relating to the Historical Library collection.

The Historical Archives also organised exhibitions around anniversaries and other important occasions - for example, in 2014, on Emilio Colombo, Altiero Spinelli, the Sakharov Prize, the European Year of Development, and successive European election campaigns; and in 2015, on the EP in Luxembourg, the history of the ACP and the Development Committee, and on the ‘100 Books on Europe to Remember’ project.

Round-table discussions were organised on 25 years of Democratic Change in Central and Eastern Europe, on European Electoral Reform and the Elections Act of 1976, and on the Impact of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) on Luxembourg and European integration.

Continued efforts are being made to mainstream the Historical Archives more actively in the daily life of the Parliament, based on easier online access to documents and their use to provide a more systematic history of the institutional development of the Parliament over time.

A new website for the Historical Archives came online in March 2015, and a new intranet site with useful information and practical advice for Members and staff became operational in September 2015.

The annual reports of the Parliament’s Historical Archives for 2014 and 2015 provide a detailed account of their activities over those two years, and can be found in the here.

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Citizens’ enquiries

The Citizens’ Enquiries Unit (AskEP) answers letters and information requests from members of the general public on the Parliament and EU issues. In 2014, the unit replied to over 8,000 individual letters or emails from members of the public, and 2,500 enquiries as part of organised campaigns. In 2015, these figures rose respectively to 9,700 individual enquiries and 68,000 ‘campaign’ enquiries. The latter increase reflected increasingly large numbers of organised write-in campaigns on specific topics.

On average, 47 per cent of enquiries received related to aspects of internal policy, 27 per cent to institutional matters, 12 per cent to external issues, and 14 per cent to other questions. Replies are given in the official language in which the questions are asked. Over the two-year period, 40 per cent of such citizens’ enquiries were answered within three days and 80 per cent within ten days.

In parallel, intensive efforts have been made to promote greater diffusion and use of the work of the Citizens’ Enquiries Unit within the Parliament itself. Since May 2015, it has been making available ‘model answers’ for Members (and their staff) on the EPRS intranet, in order to facilitate MEPs’ written communication with constituents. Currently, around 140 such replies are available, covering a wide range of issues. This builds on the provision of a range of ‘EP answers’ to frequently asked questions, available since March 2015 on a specially developed platform, called AskEP.net, on the Parliament’s website.

Transparency

The Transparency Unit (OPEN) manages public access to EP documents, over 90 per cent of which can be downloaded from the Parliament’s website. As in the field of citizens’ enquiries, the objective is to improve the Parliament’s interaction with citizens through rapid response to requests and easy access to material wherever legitimate. The unit handled around 400 freedom-of-information requests for documents in 2014 and 446 requests in 2015. It has also produced a new handbook on access to documents for use by the Parliament’s administration.

The Transparency Unit also manages (jointly with the European Commission) the Transparency Register of representatives of outside interests (lobbyists). There were over twice as many registrations in 2014 as in 2013 - with over 2,200 organisations registering, to bring the total to over 7,500 - and this pattern continued during 2015, with the total number of registrations reaching almost 9,000 by December 2015. Compliance checks on registered entities are being conducted on a regular basis. The unit has also taken on new responsibilities which flow from the updating of the EP-Commission agreement on the Transparency Register in 2014.

The Parliament’s Transparency Unit produces annual reports in respect of both access to documents and the Transparency Register. The 2014 and 2015 reports are available here.

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10 www.askepnet.ep.parl.union.eu/modans
11 www.europarl.europa.eu/AskEP
Work on Impact Assessment and European Added Value

The third directorate within EPRS, Directorate C, the **Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value**, works to strengthen the Parliament’s capacity to exercise effective **scrutiny and oversight** over the executive at EU level, at successive stages of the legislative and policy cycles, as well as contributing to the quality of law-making itself. It does this by providing timely and targeted support to **parliamentary committees** in their work in these fields, including by supporting the identification, quantification and justification of parliamentary initiatives. The Directorate works very closely with the Directorates General for Internal Policies (IPOL) and External Policies (EXPO) for this purpose.

The Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value is organised in **seven units** dealing with various aspects of **ex-ante or ex-post evaluation** of EU legislation and policies - as well as undertaking foresight work, whether in the fields of science and technology or wider global trends.

- Over the two-year period in question, the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value produced **175 publications** of various kinds (69 in 2014 and 106 in 2015). Work was undertaken at the request of **15 parliamentary committees**, with findings presented orally in full committee or to coordinators on 18 occasions.

The increasingly high priority attached to the involvement of the Parliament throughout the legislative and policy cycles and to enhanced **scrutiny and oversight of the executive** are being reflected in a general strengthening of support to parliamentary committees (and the institution as a whole) through the services of the Directorate. Existing work in the fields of impact assessment and European added value is being further developed, so that committees are better placed to analyse legislative options available to the EU institutions, on an **ex-ante** basis, and to review outcomes on the part of those institutions, on an **ex-post** basis.

**Ex-ante evaluation**

The **European Added Value Unit** (EAVA) analyses the potential benefit of future action by the Union through **Cost of Non-Europe Reports** in policy areas where greater efficiency or a collective public good could be realised through common action at European level; it provides European Added Value Assessments to underpin legislative initiative reports put forward by parliamentary committees; and it identifies the added value of existing EU policies in practice.

- In 2014, the European Added Value Unit produced four **Cost of Non-Europe Reports** and four other publications. Among topics covered were five sectoral dimensions of the EU single market, as well as transport and tourism. In 2015, the unit produced four **Cost of Non-Europe Reports** - which were on water legislation, volunteering, passenger rights and Banking Union - and two **European Added Value Assessments** - on EP electoral law and corporate tax policies in the EU.
• Work was undertaken by the European Added Value Unit for **seven parliamentary committees**: the Employment and Social Affairs Committee; the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee; the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee; the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee; the Constitutional Affairs Committee; the Culture and Education Committee; and the Transport and Tourism Committee.

The substantial work undertaken between 2012 and 2014 in identifying the potential added value of new EU-level initiatives and on the cost of non-Europe in various sectors was brought together in a major horizontal publication, entitled *Mapping the Cost of Non-Europe, 2014-19*[^13] which has attracted substantial positive attention in media, academic and policy-making circles, over three editions. It proved valuable in the run-up to the European elections in May 2014 and assisted committees during the hearings for European Commissioners-designate in autumn 2014. It was most recently updated in April 2015.

The **Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit** (IMPA) analyses the quality of impact assessments (IAs) produced by the European Commission - in the form of initial appraisals of these documents, which are routinely supplied to parliamentary committees in advance of their consideration of new legislative proposals - and it then offers the committees a range of follow-up services, including more detailed appraisals of Commission IAs, substitute or complementary IAs, and IAs on parliamentary amendments.

- In 2014, the Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit produced 31 initial appraisals of Commission impact assessments, two detailed appraisals, three substitute or complementary impact assessments, and one impact assessment on amendments. In 2015, the unit produced 13 initial appraisals and one impact assessment on four amendments. Compendia of all initial appraisals carried out from **July 2013 to June 2014**[^14] and from **July 2014 to December 2015**[^15] are available online.

- Work was undertaken by the Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit for the following **ten parliamentary committees**: the International Trade Committee; the Industry, Research and Energy Committee; the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee; the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee; the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee; the Employment and Social Affairs Committee; the Fisheries Committee; the Legal Affairs Committee; the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; and the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee. Among topics covered were the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), novel foods, air quality, equal treatment, consumer product safety, and money market funds.

**Ex-post evaluation**

In 2014 and 2015, the **Ex-Post Impact Assessment Unit** (IMPT) and (renamed) **Policy Cycle Unit** (CYCL) jointly provided a central information and support service on: (i) work being done by the Parliament, Commission and other bodies on the implementation and

effectiveness of EU law and policies in practice; and (ii) the successive phases of the EU policy cycle, upstream and downstream of the adoption of EU law.

Since the summer of 2014, when the two units first came on stream, support for ex-post impact assessment (evaluation) by parliamentary committees was deepened through the launch of important new products, including short Implementation Appraisals, longer European Implementation Assessments, and horizontal ‘rolling check-lists’ of various kinds - the latter so far on review clauses in EU legislation, on Court of Auditors’ special reports, on evaluation in the European Commission, and on review clauses in international agreements - as well as various other background publications. Implementation Appraisals are produced on the operation of existing legislation in practice, notably whenever a new proposal to update such legislation is foreseen in the Commission’s Annual Work Programme.

- From July 2014, when they became operational, to December 2015, the two units produced five European Implementation Assessments, 22 Implementation Appraisals, and 13 other publications (six rolling check-lists and seven other publications).

- The five European Implementation Assessments were undertaken for the following four parliamentary committees: the Constitutional Affairs Committee, the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, the Legal Affairs Committee, and the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee. The topics covered were the Copyright Framework, European Citizens’ Initiative, the European Year for Active Ageing, micro-financing, and equal opportunities and equal treatment.

The European Council Oversight Unit (ECOS) monitors and analyses the delivery of the European Council (of EU heads of state or government) in respect of the commitments made in the conclusions of its meetings, as well as of its various responsibilities either in law or on the basis of intergovernmental agreements. The unit maintains a rolling database of all such commitments and/or responsibilities, provides routine briefing notes on their degree of attainment within the Council system, and undertakes detailed research in fields related to the latter. Among its products are rolling-check lists on the implementation of European Council conclusions and country-specific recommendations (CSRs), as well as briefing notes before and after each European Council meeting.

From July 2014, when it became operational, to December 2015, the European Council Oversight Unit produced 28 publications of various kinds. It also held a major seminar with the out-going President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, assessing his experience in office during its first five years a formal EU institution.

**Foresight**

The Scientific Foresight Unit (STOA) undertakes science and technology options assessment and analyses emerging policy issues and trends in these fields. It undertakes a broad range of forward-looking studies, workshops and other activities, at the request of the Science and Technology Options Assessment (STOA) Panel of Members of the European Parliament, nominated by eight parliamentary committees, and it provides the secretariat of the latter body. In May 2015, the Parliament’s Bureau decided to increase the size of the STOA Panel from 15 to 24 Members. The new STOA Panel endorsed the ‘STOA strategy for
the future’, calling notably for the work and output of the STOA process, backed by greater in-house research, to focus more on issues related to scientific foresight, operate through somewhat shorter projects, and be made more widely available than in the past.

The Scientific Foresight Unit produced 11 publications in 2014 and 20 in 2015. These can all be found on a clickable PDF list - accessible here\textsuperscript{16} - or on the dedicated STOA website\textsuperscript{17}. STOA annual reports for 2014 and 2015 are available here\textsuperscript{18}.

Finally, a new Global Trends Unit (TREN) was established in April 2015 to identify, track and analyse medium- and long-term global trends - especially changes in the international economic, social and political environments - which may affect the European Union in the years to come. It keeps Members informed about such trends and their potential implications, by publishing briefings and organising seminars. It also supports the Parliament’s participation in administrative-level dialogue with other EU institutions on global trends, and facilitates contact more widely with outside organisations, notably think tanks and universities, working in this field.

In November 2015, the Global Trends Unit co-organised - together with the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), the in-house think tank of the European Commission - the annual conference of the inter-institutional foresight network at administrative level known as ESPAS (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System). The 2015 conference was focussed on the ‘global economic and technological revolution’.

The two activity reports for EP work in the fields of Impact Assessment and European Added Value covering the period in question are available here\textsuperscript{19} (for June 2012 to June 2014) and here\textsuperscript{20} (for July 2014 to December 2015).

A clickable PDF list of all publications of the Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value from January 2014 to June 2015 is available here\textsuperscript{21}.

All such physical publications can be found on the Parliament’s Think Tank internet website, at www.europarl.eu/thinktank, as well as on the EPRS intranet website at www.eprs.sso.ep.parl.union.eu and EPRS blog at www.epthinktank.eu. On-line only publications are available on the EPRS intranet and blog.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS_catalogue_2014-2015.pdf#page=37
\item \textsuperscript{17} www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa
\item \textsuperscript{18} www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/cms/home/studies/reports
\item \textsuperscript{19} www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/536372/EPRS_STU(2014)536372_EN.pdf
\item \textsuperscript{21} www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS_catalogue_2014-2015.pdf#page=30
\end{itemize}
EPRS-wide services

The development of a range of EPRS-wide services has played an important part in the successful launch and operation of the new Directorate-General. These include notably the provision of a Members’ Hotline for access to EPRS products and services, the pursuit of a conscious ‘client needs’ approach, underpinned by a dedicated team, and the widening and deepening of the EPRS presence on various electronic platforms.

Members’ Hotline

A new Members’ Hotline was established, immediately on the creation of EPRS, to provide a single point-of-entry for all Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and their staff to the products and services of both the Members’ Research Service and the Library.

The Members’ Hotline operates online, through the EPRS intranet site - where there is an online enquiry form - and an email address for enquiries - eprs@europarl.europa.eu; by telephone, on EP internal extension number 88100 and on 00 322 284 8100 from outside the Parliament; in person, at the information desks in the Library reading rooms; and by fax, on EP extension 44990. The aim is to provide an initial response to all enquiries within three hours.

To underpin the Members’ Hotline concept, the EPRS has strengthened its internal enquiry management system (EMS), to allow a better and quicker treatment of the requests submitted by Members and their staff.

Client needs

The developing breadth, depth and availability of EPRS services have been drawn actively to the attention of Members. At the beginning of the new parliamentary term, a ‘welcome desk’ and a personalised welcome pack facilitated this process.

A small, dedicated Client Needs Team has been established to increase knowledge of EPRS products and services among Members and their staff, presenting the support to potential clients individually and in groups, through briefing visits of various kinds. Between June 2014 and the end of 2015, over 80 per cent of Members received briefing visits on an individual or collective basis.

As of December 2015, 177 Members or their offices were subscribing to automatic alerts on EPRS publications, as soon as they are published, and over 300 were pro-actively accessing the newswires and press sources available on the EPRS intranet. Guidance on how to set-up alerts on EPRS publications is given here.22

The Client Needs Team also ensured the distribution of relevant EPRS publications at over 135 parliamentary meetings of various kinds, notably hearings, conferences, seminars and debates organised by EP bodies, individual Members and/or political groups. At some of these events, EPRS policy analysts were invited to present their papers in the discussion.

Electronic presence

The availability of EPRS products has been enhanced by a significant improvement in both intranet and internet capabilities, and the Directorate-General is experimenting with services for mobile use and multi-media communication, and is increasing the targeted diffusion of EPRS output through social media.

= Use of the EPRS intranet site

- A new EPRS intranet site, incorporating a range of new or enhanced features, was launched in May 2014.

- The great majority of the ‘Europarl’ community uses the EPRS intranet at some point in the year. In 2014, there were 9,600 unique users of the EPRS intranet, with an average of about 2,300 each month; and for 2015, the respective figures are 9,100 unique users, with an average of 2,400 per month.

- In 2014, there were around 3,000 unique users specifically of the search functions on the EPRS intranet, and 3,500 in 2015.

- The 2014 figure for unique users includes 684 Members personally using the EPRS intranet at some point in the year (before or after the European elections), and over 1,500 parliamentary assistants doing so. For 2015, they were 497 MEPs and over 1,400 assistants.

- Overall, the EPRS intranet site elicited over 1.3 million ‘page views’ in 2014. In 2015, the corresponding figure was 1.85 million page views.

- The various EPRS electronic platforms carried a total of 541 publications in 2014 - 303 of which were available in both physical and digital forms, and 238 on-line only. The figures for 2015 were 970 publications, 702 of which were available in both physical and digital forms, and 268 on-line only. The EPRS thus produced over 1,500 publications during the two years in question.

- A new Graphics Warehouse was created on the EPRS intranet site and on the EPRS blog, in order to make the (so far) 836 downloadable charts, tables, maps and other infographics used in EPRS publications more easily available for use by Members and staff in their own publications.

= Use of the EP 'Think Tank' internet site and EPRS blog

- The Parliament’s updated internet site for the public came on stream in August 2014: coordinated by the EPRS and known as ‘Think Tank’, it features inter alia all EPRS publications. In the last four months of 2014, it registered a total 150,600 page views (or an average of 37,600 per month), with a total of 65,300 unique visitors. In 2015, the Think Tank elicited over 600,000 page views (or an average of 50,000 per month), reaching a total of 235,000 unique visitors.
In addition, some **250,000 unique users** visited the **EPRS blog** during 2014. The latter published more than 500 posts, receiving some **550,000 page views**, during 2014. In 2015, the respective figures were **370,000 unique users**, 470 posts and **750,000 page views**. (On a like-for-like basis, the number of page views and visitors has risen by approximately 40 per cent).

One linked set of publications by the Members’ Research Service - on the Hearings of the Commissioners-designate - was downloaded 125,000 times in autumn 2014.

EPRS is also present on **social media**. Its LinkedIn, Twitter, Youtube and Pinterest accounts elicit increasing interest. For instance, followers of EPRS on Twitter have quintupled in two years, rising from 2,000 in January 2014 to over 10,000 (including 175 MEPs) in December 2015. The EPRS Youtube page offers podcasts, videos of selected EPRS events, and animated representations of some of its publications.

In improving EPRS’s digital offer, online-only publications have been consolidated into **three main categories**: **key-sources** and **navigators**, which are shorter and longer sets of annotated web-links to key materials on a specific topic; **blog posts**, usually in the form of short articles on a publications or topics; and ‘**EP answers**’, a new service from the Citizens’ Enquiries Unit (see above).

All the **publications of the Members’ Research Service** can be found on the Parliament’s **Think Tank** internet website, at [www.europarl.eu/thinktank](http://www.europarl.eu/thinktank), as well as on the **EPRS intranet** at [www.eprs.sso.ep.parl.union.eu](http://www.eprs.sso.ep.parl.union.eu) and on the **EPRS blog** at [www.epthinktank.eu](http://www.epthinktank.eu). On-line only publications are available on the EPRS intranet and blog.

**Horizontal support - Resources, Strategy and Coordination**

The provision of these EPRS-wide services - and indeed of all the activities of the three directorates detailed above - has been underpinned by the contribution of **two horizontal units**, respectively for resources, and for strategy and coordination.

The **Resources Unit** (RESU) is responsible for the efficient management of the Directorate-General’s **human, financial and information-technology resources**, with three services reflecting each of those activities. The unit is also in charge of local property management and security issues. It works very closely with other directorates-general within the Parliament’s administration on a wide range of issues, including on joint training projects.

The Resources Unit successfully undertook the **recruitment of new staff** in both 2014 and 2015. The number of staff within the directorate-general rose from 214 persons (on its creation) in November 2013 to 327 persons in December 2015, mainly as a result of the cooperation agreements signed between the Parliament and the two Advisory Committees in February 2014 (see above), whereby 60 of the latter’s staff (or posts) are being transferred to EPRS, and the recruitment of 40 contractual researchers through an open competition, following a reallocation of internal EP spending priorities by the budgetary authority.

The Resources Unit has also ensured the harmonisation of **procurement and financial procedures** across the new directorate-general, with a focus on securing optimal value for
money. The team verified a total of 1,718 files (from units managing the budget) in the two years under consideration.

Efficient financial management has been facilitated by the fact that, starting in 2015, nearly all of the budgetary allocation for the directorate-general was regrouped, for sake of clarity, into a single line in the European Parliament’s annual budget (line 3210). On a like-for-like basis, the total budget assigned to the DG EPRS was €9.03 million in 2014 and €9.28 million in 2015. This was largely allocated to general library services, subscriptions, databases, information technology, and archival support of various kinds, as well as expertise in the fields of impact assessment (both ex-ante and ex-post evaluation), European added value, and science and technology options assessment.

The Strategy and Coordination Unit (SACU) coordinates the overall provision of EPRS services to Members, including through the central Members’ Hotline and Client Needs Team. It communicates the directorate-general’s activities to internal and external audiences, including by coordinating the EPRS intranet and blog, and the Parliament’s Think Tank internet web-pages.

The unit oversees outreach, liaison and dialogue by all parts of the Directorate-General with national parliamentary research services and libraries. In 2015, there were 13 visits to or from research services of national parliaments, including the German Bundestag, British House of Commons, Italian Senate, Dutch House of Representatives and Hungarian National Assembly. There were also visits from the US Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the parliaments of Japan, Canada and Cambodia. The unit also facilitates relations with relevant think tanks, research institutes, and academic and other outside organisations and networks, such as the European University Institute, EUISS and OECD, with all of whom conferences or events were organised jointly in 2014 and 2015.

Anthony Teasdale
Director General

March 2016.
Annex A

Number of research, reference and information requests answered by EPRS from January 2014 to December 2015, by category of client

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Research requests</th>
<th>Reference and information requests</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEPs and their offices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4,655</td>
<td>29,228</td>
<td>33,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,660</td>
<td>12,013</td>
<td>13,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,995</td>
<td>17,215</td>
<td>20,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committees, political groups and other EP clients</strong></td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>8,370</td>
<td>9,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>5,378</td>
<td>6,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>2,992</td>
<td>3,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General public</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>90,606</td>
<td>90,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11,555</td>
<td>11,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>79,051</td>
<td>79,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5,933</td>
<td>128,204</td>
<td>134,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2,405</td>
<td>28,946</td>
<td>31,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>3,528</td>
<td>99,258</td>
<td>102,786</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex B

EPRS organigramme on 1 March 2016
Brussels-based EPRS staff in the Library Reading Room

Luxembourg-based EPRS staff in the Historical Library

EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service