POLICY DEPARTMENTS
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES

Delivering scientific expertise to Parliamentary Committees – European Parliament model

European Parliament
Policy Departments

20 May 2019

Parliamentary Committees

- 20 Parliamentary committees prepare the work of the Parliament, especially (not exclusively) as co- legislator; apart from that they are together with the Council the budgetary authority;

- The EP is since the Lisbon Treaty co-legislator in most areas; the EP has also the power and responsibility to hold the other institutions accountable;

- The scrutiny of the other institutions and especially of the Commission (the Executive) is increasingly important. The committees play also a crucial role in this scrutiny;

- The committees are the motor of the parliamentary work.

Committee organisation

- Each committee has a number of Members ranging aproximately between 25 -75 representing the different political groups and the different Member States.

- Each committee elects a chair and 4 vice-chairs constituting its bureau as well as a secretariat carrying out the necessary administrative and neutral content support.

- Each political group within a Committee has a coordinator; the coordinators of a Committee take the strategic decisions for the Committee.

Focus of the work of a Committee

- It prepares the position of the European Parliament on legislative proposals;

- It takes initiatives; independently or takes position on some initiatives and prepartory legislative work of the Commission;

- It scrutinizes the activities of the other institutions.

Role of Policy departments

- In order to support the committees in these mainly legislative activities, the Policy departments were established in 2004.

- The « Poldeps » are research departments which provide independent expertise and support to the legislative activities of the committees.

- They work exclusively for the Parliamentary bodies, mainly for the Committees .

- They have a distinctive role as compared to the Members Research Service (MRS) of DG EPRS which provides briefings and research to individual members. EPRS also provides a wide range of other products (see Mr Rufas Quintana's presentation).

Background and Overview

Policy departments were established in 2004 in order to bring expertise closer to the committees.

5 Policy Departments covering all policy areas:
- Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies
- Structural and Cohesion Policies
- Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs
- Budgetary Affairs
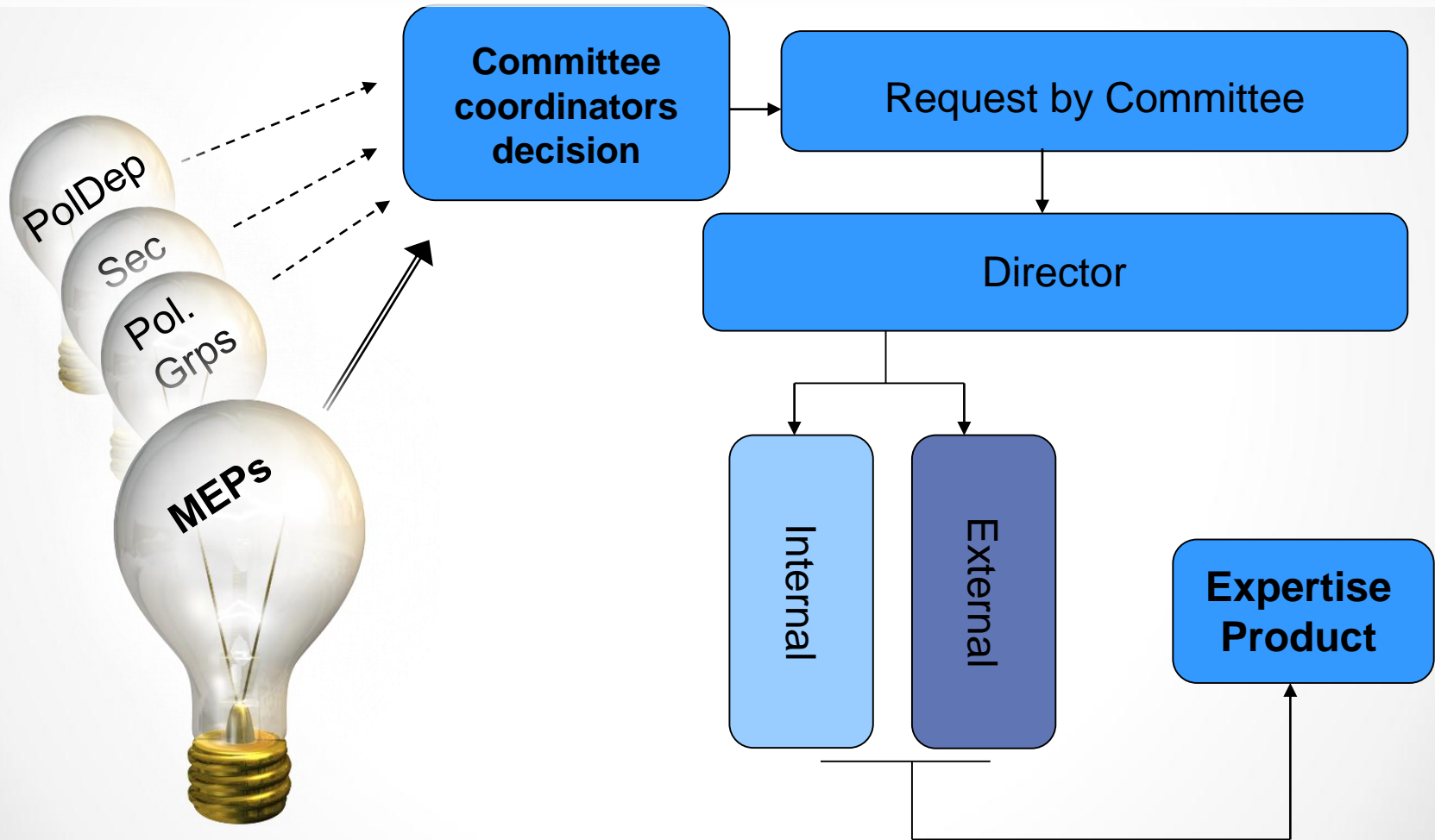- External policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Role:

1. To provide timely specialised **advice** to committees and inter-parliamentary delegations
2. To assist in **carrying out research** addressing the needs of parliamentary bodies
3. To **manage the allocated budgets for external expertise** in the areas and on the subjects identified by committees, under the supervision of the competent Authorizing Officer

Products

- At-a-glance notes (1-2 pages)
- Briefings (3-10 pages)
- In-depth Analysis (11-36 pages)
- Studies (36 pages or above)
- Background notes and speaking points
- Workshops
- Expert panels
- Oral briefings
- Factsheets

HOW TO MAKE A REQUEST?

PolDep

Sec

Pol. Grps

MEPs

Committee coordinators decision

Request by Committee

Director

Internal

External

Expertise Product

Quality, time and public procurement management:

- Objectivity and independence

- Transparency and accessibility

- Academic excellence

Quality

- The essential requirement of the expertise provided is its objectivity and neutrality;

- It needs to be transparent and easily accessible;

- Of academic exellence;

- Therefore for external expertise quality assurance is essential.

Quality and Performance Assessment (as per contract)

- performance of tasks in accordance with the highest professional standards and highest academic integrity throughout the process
- delivered services shall stand up to scrutiny in a political context and that even small errors
- where appropriate, geographical balance shall be ensured
- factual accuracy, including most recent information and data
- existing work within the relevant scientific community shall be taken into account
- contradictory findings shall not be excluded at the outset
- reflexive awareness of the impact of the contractor's own possible views and opinions
- methodologies used and results obtained should be transparent
- no plagiarism

Ex-Ante Quality Assurance

Evaluation of tenders for individual or framework contracts:

- Exclusion, selection and award criteria
- Involvement of specialists from within the European Parliament
- Use of structured evaluation sheets as a basis for the comparative assessment of respective strengths and weaknesses

"Continuous" Quality Assurance:

- Inception meeting
- Intermediary evaluation of on going notes/studies:
  - Structured progress report prepared by contractors
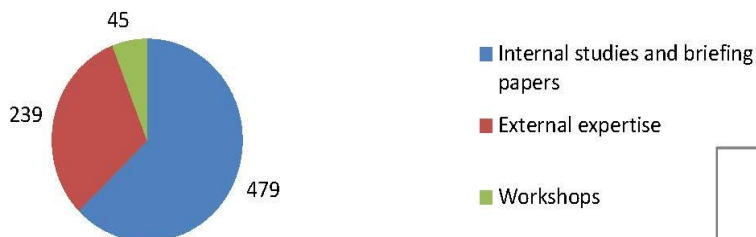 - Feedback from the Policy Departments with suggestions for changes/revisions

Ex-Post Quality Assurance:

- Evaluation of draft versions of notes/studies that have been contracted:
  - Involvement of multiple experts from within the European Parliament
  - General feedback and specific recommendations
  - Use of plagiarism detection software
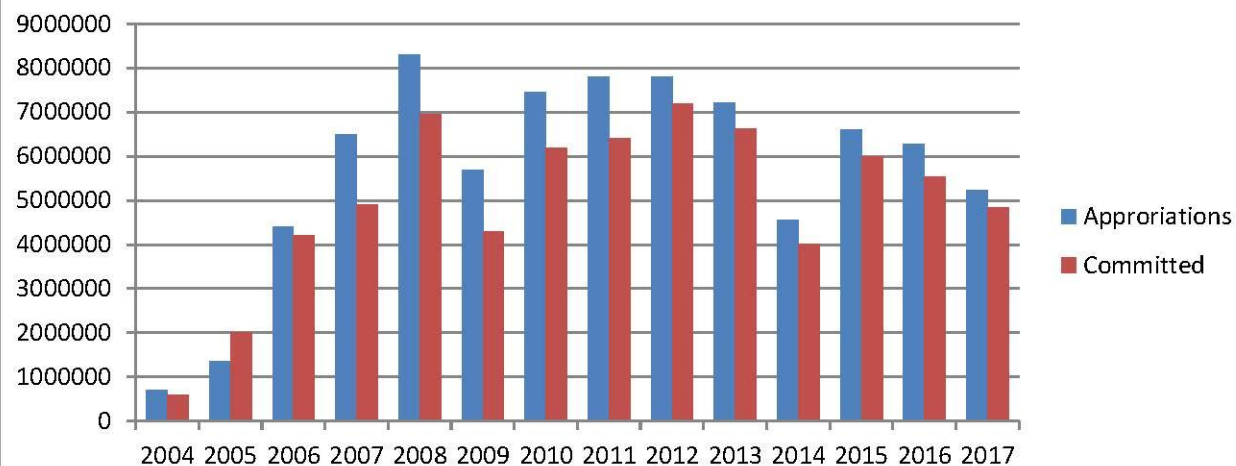
Policy Departments: statistics

DG IPOL EXPERTISE IN 2017

- Internal studies and briefing papers
- External expertise
- Workshops

45
239
479

DG EXPO EXPERTISE IN 2017

- Internal studies, notes and briefings
- External expertise
- Workshops

40   9
290

EXPERTISE BUDGETS 2004-2017

- Approriations
- Committed

Cooperation with Parliamentary Committees

Cooperation with Parliamentary Committees

Policy Department

Committee Secretariat

Expertise in research and procurement

Academic expertise

Knowledge of relevant studies in other EP bodies/EU institutions

Policy expertise

Knowledge of legislative and political background

Expertise in committee work and procedures
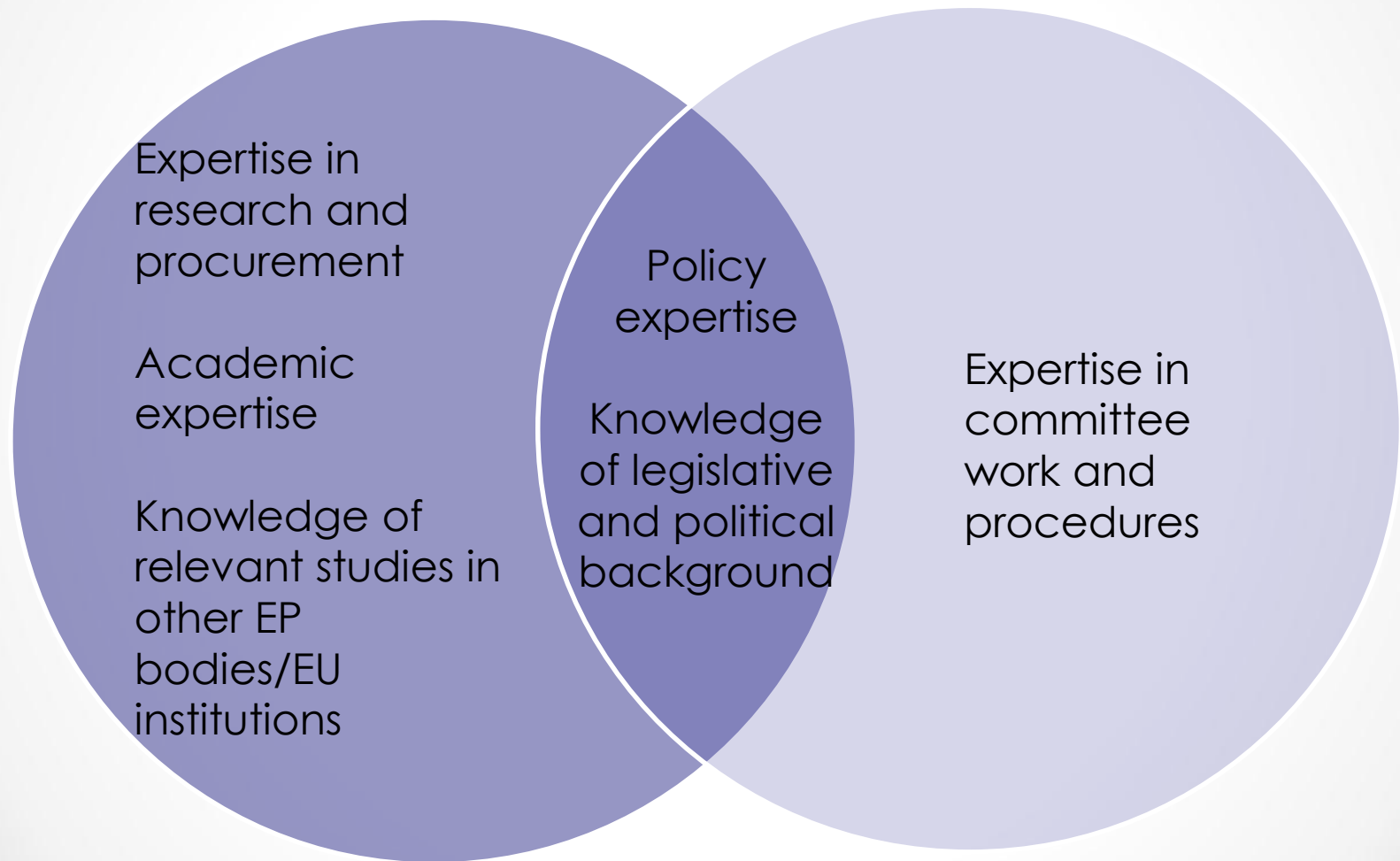
Upstream

- Policy Department helps Committee Secretariat put together suggestions for expertise for consideration by coordinators, based on discussions with secretariat, groups and Members

- Policy Department helps firm up scope of study after:

  - checking whether similar work is already in progress in other EP bodies/EU institutions

Ongoing

- Policy Departments organise delivery of expertise but consult MEP(s) appointed by Committee to follow study and secretariat administrator at every stage:
  - during preparation of specifications
  - for the kick-off/scoping meetings
  - when interim/final reports are delivered
  - for the presentation in Committee

Downstream

- Policy Departments evaluate expertise delivered, taking account of comments from secretariat administrator and MEPs

- Policy Departments contribute to committee work on implementation and monitoring, on request and through provision of analytical tools

- Policy Departments propose follow-up and organise follow-up requested

Cooperation examples

- With Committees and Secretariats:
    - Organisation of thematic meetings
    - Joint meetings of PolDeps, Secretariats, political group advisors, MEPs' assistants
    - Improved coordination of the work of Committees/Secretariats and PolDeps
    - Nomination of liaising agents
    - Project teams

Some examples of where expertise can help

- Brainstorming of different policy options available

- Trigger a legislative activity in a particular policy area

- Assisting in policy planning and policy reform

- Help clarify legal, economic and technical questions related to policy making

- Help assess transposition, implementation and enforcement of European law

- Supporting the European Parliament's position in political negotiations with the Council

- Providing background information for delegations to Member States or third countries

Impact

- Long-term planning
- Ability to respond to urgent requests
- Scrutiny
- Shift towards result-oriented and forward-looking research/policy advice (own-initiative papers, proactive analysis)
- Reinforcing role of PolDeps as think tanks
- Excellence
- Contributing to greater role of the EP in setting the political agenda

Dissemination and Visibility

- Widening the (potential) audience
- Better publicising (written) expertise:
  - Intranet/Internet
  - Mailing Lists
  - Social Media
  - Library catalogues
  - Databases
  - National and International Press
  - EP Information Offices
  - Representations of Member States

Cooperation with others

Networks outside the EP – Scientific community

- European Commission, Council, CoR, EESC, Agencies

- Agencies, European External Action Service

- Institutes/Academies/Consultancies

- Universities

- Individual experts

- International organisations (United Nations, International Labour Organisation, World Trade Organisation, etc)

- National organisations (for example political Foundations)

- Civil society organisations

- National governments/parliaments (ECPRD)

Thank you for your attention!

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