

Questions for Joseph Dunne, Director, European Parliament Liaison Office in Washington

1. Can you outline the services EPRS provides to the European Parliament?

- Replying to individual Members' confidential research requests
- Providing pro-active publications on all non-trivial legislative and on non-legislative EU topics and issues
- Providing research support to parliamentary committees pro-actively and on demand through publications at distinct points of the legislative and policy cycle
- Publications on scientific and policy foresight
- Library services, including digital library services
- Answering citizens' enquiries

2. Can you describe the structure of your organization?

Basically, EPRS relies on a three-pillar structure:

- First, the Members' Research Service, serving individual Members
- Second, the Directorate for Impact Assessment and Foresight, mainly serving parliamentary committees
- Third, the Directorate for the Library and Knowledge Services, serving the wider parliamentary community

These three pillars are complemented by three horizontal units and supported by a Directorate for Resources.

3. Who is responsible for oversight of EPRS?

Politically, the Bureau of the European Parliament, composed of the President and the 14 Vice-Presidents.

Administratively, two Vice-Presidents are formally in charge for the MRS and the Library, Othmar Karas MEP and Michal Šimečka, MEP and another for foresight, Marc Angel MEP, and the Secretary-General as the highest official of the European Parliament administration.

In addition, the Directorate for impact assessment reports to the Conference of Committee Chairs.

4. What is the typical work product produced by EPRS? a. How is this work-product evaluated?

EPRS produces a broad variety of output with the aim to cater for different needs of Members and other users of EPRS research in different formats at different times. We aim at providing the right subject to the right Member in the right format at the right time. There is no one-size-fits-all product.

Research publications in the European Parliament are divided in four categories: 'At A Glance' notes (up to two pages), Briefings (up to 12 pages), In-depth Analyses (up to 32 pages) and Studies (above 32 pages).

To increase the recognition value of its publications EPRS created ‘publication series’. Brief ‘Plenary At A Glance’ notes, for example, are meant to bring Members quickly up to speed on topics on the agenda of the next plenary session. ‘Legislation in Progress’ briefings that EPRS updates at several stages throughout the legislative process are intended keep Members updated on developments surrounding a particular dossier. ‘Initial Appraisals of European Commission Impact Assessments’ are issued at the beginning of the legislative phase to provide committee Members an easily accessible analysis concerning the quality and completeness of impact assessments. ‘Outlook’ and ‘Outcome’ briefings are provided before and after meetings of the European Council’ respectively to inform about the decisions taken, to prepare parliamentary debates and to allow Parliament to exert its oversight function. It should be mentioned, however, that about half the number of EPRS publications in 2022 (444 of 877) did not form part of any ‘series’.

In addition to classical PDF/print publications EPRS produces an increasing output in various multimedia formats. Since 2015, EPRS has recorded more than 450 podcasts, about four to five per plenary session.

Since 2016, EPRS has produced 16 ‘animated info-graphics’, mini-websites that allow users to consult research content independently and to browse facts about a subject in their preferred way.

Moreover, since its beginnings, EPRS organises several dozen events every year, online, physically and in hybrid mode, on EU policies, issues and history. In 2022, the duration of EPRS event totalled 161 hours and they were attended by more about 13,500 participants.

More recently, EPRS established a special multimedia team (in 2020). Since then, the production of content-rich videos in various formats (‘In facts’, ‘In a nutshell’, ‘In focus’, ‘Animations’, ‘EPRS Chronicles’ and ‘In short’) increased from 66 (in 2020) to 98 (in 2021) to 137 (in 2022). Furthermore, EPRS also publishes videos from the EPRS events, based on the podcasts and a handful of purely promotional videos. The total amount of published videos is currently 1,038.

5. How does EPRS measure/evaluate its overall effectiveness? a. How often does EPRS conduct these evaluations?

EPRS regularly monitors several indicators on the uptake of a broad variety of its products and services. Weekly monitoring includes the number of requests received from individual Members through the Members’ Hotline, the provision of tailored analyses in reply to those, the contact visits to Members, the use of EPRS publications at events organised by Members, their attendance of info sessions and trainings offered by EPRS, the use of alerts on new publications, the access to the EPRS Intranet, the consultation of Model Answers to citizens’ enquiries, the interaction of Members with EPRS on social media.

Monthly monitoring includes the EPRS Lead Indicator ‘Hours of Attention’, which is composed of 12 products and services (Replies to Members’ Hotline requests, Presentations of EPRS research to parliamentary committees, Model Answers, EPRS Intranet, Digital Reading, Printed publications, EPRS trainings and info sessions, EPRS events, interaction with partners, Answers to citizens’ enquiries, Social media, EPRS Internet pages), requests submitted through the Members’ Hotline and specific library services.

Annual statistics include additional data sets, about 150 in total.

In addition to monitoring statistics on the uptake of EPRS products and services, EPRS is continuously gathering feedback from Members and their offices through its dedicated Members' Needs Team, which channels approval or criticism back into the production line.

6. Are there any support and customer services offered by EPRS?

The Members' Research Service is a support service for individual Members of the European Parliament and includes a Members' Hotline for individual requests. In addition, as mentioned above, services include the provision of tailored analyses, contact visits to Members, the use of EPRS publications and web services to assist operations and events organised by Members.

Other support services provided by EPRS in the area of impact assessment and policy support are intended for parliamentary committees.

7. Has EPRS undertaken any modernization efforts? a. If so, please describe.

Since its inception, EPRS has continuously undertaken efforts to further improve its functioning, to modernise its ways of working and to enhance its offer. There have been incremental steps to make EPRS, which was only founded in late 2013, a fully-fledged parliamentary research service, accompanied since 2014 by pre-programmed projects within the European Parliament administration's Strategic Execution Framework and supplemented by ad hoc measures, for example in order to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic or to cover Russia's war against Ukraine.