

Introduction

In recent years parliaments have begun to exploit advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) to support their many functions and modernize their institutions. Activities carried out through inter-parliamentary and international cooperation have helped facilitate this process and assist parliaments in applying ICT in the legislative environment. However, to date, there has not been any assessment from a global perspective about how these technologies are being employed across the array of activities for which a parliament is responsible.

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 represents a first effort to guide interested readers through this unique and evolving environment. The complexities of parliamentary processes, combined with the key role that parliaments play in society and the fast pace of ICT developments, make this a particularly challenging task.

The Report has been written with the principal aim of helping legislatures – leadership, membership and staff alike - evaluate the potential benefits of technology for their work and establish key goals and priorities for exploiting this critical resource. Its publication is intended to advance a shared knowledge base among the parliaments of the world and promote international debate on these matters.

The Report also accomplishes several other objectives.

First, it establishes an authoritative baseline of how parliaments are using, or planning to use ICT to help them fulfill their responsibilities for law-making, oversight, and representation. The Report contains specific conclusions about the current state of technology in parliaments on a global basis and discusses their implications for legislative bodies. These conclusions also allow parliaments to measure their own current use of ICT in daily operations to confirm strengths and to identify areas for possible improvements.

Second, the Report provides an opportunity for sharing lessons learned and good practices from different regions of the world that may be of interest to many parliaments, both in developing and developed nations. The globalization of technology has greatly increased the opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience among such institutions. Collaboration and the exchange of information are essential to identifying good practices and helping ensure that ICT are used to positive effect.

Last, the analyses and findings contained in the document can be extremely useful to parliaments, multilateral organizations, development agencies, donors and experts engaged in inter-parliamentary cooperation and in assisting legislatures to fulfill their constitutional duties.

Data and analyses

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 is based on the results of the Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures¹ conducted by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament between July and November 2007. A questionnaire was sent to 263 chambers of unicameral and bicameral parliaments in 188 countries and to two regional parliaments. 105 assemblies replied. 48 responses (46%) were received from unicameral parliaments, 56 (54%) from bicameral parliaments and one from a regional parliament. Of the 105 replies, eight bicameral parliaments answered the questionnaire as one entity due to their administrative and organizational structure.

1 See Annexes for the Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures.

Chambers and parliaments that responded to the survey are listed in the next page. They represent national legislative bodies from 89 countries and one regional legislative body from Europe.

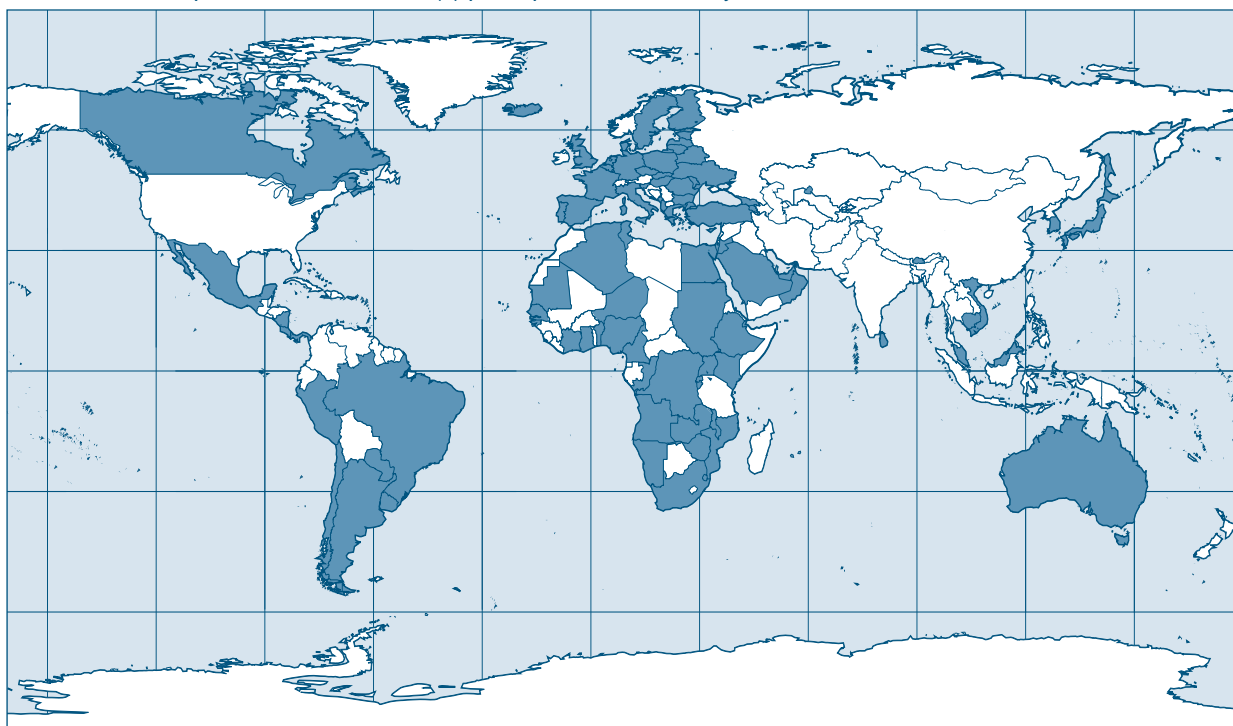
The analysis of this Report is based on the 105 questionnaires as submitted by these chambers and parliaments.

The survey covered the following eight topics:

1. Oversight, management, and planning of ICT (15 questions)
2. Services, infrastructure, applications, and resources (20 questions)
3. Systems for creating bills and amendments (20 questions)
4. Systems for creating documents other than bills and amendments (14 questions)
5. Recording and tracking legislative actions (8 questions)
6. Knowledge management: library and research services (23 questions)
7. Websites for parliament and the public (29 questions)
8. Systems for supporting communication between citizens and parliament (22 questions)

The 151 questions in the questionnaire were designed to be answered as easily and quickly as possible. For ease of use, the questions relied extensively on a “yes/no” answer format. More specific topics were addressed in a checklist form. A few questions were open-ended. Respondents had the option of adding a qualification or comment to any question. At the end of each section, respondents had the opportunity to share any lessons learned or good practices they felt to be of interest to others.

Countries whose parliament or chamber(s) participated in the survey



Parliaments and chambers participating in the survey

National	Diet of Liechtenstein
People's Assembly of Albania	Parliament of Lithuania
Council of the Nation of Algeria	Chamber of Deputies of Luxembourg
National People's Assembly of Algeria	National Assembly of Malawi
General Council of Andorra	Parliament of Malaysia
National Assembly of Angola	House of Representatives of Malta
Senate of Argentina	Senate of Mauritania
Chamber of Deputies of Argentina	National Assembly of Mauritius
National Assembly of Armenia	Senate of Mexico
Senate of Australia	Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
House of Representatives of Australia	Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique
Council of Representatives of Bahrain	Parliament of Namibia
House of Representatives of Belarus	Senate of the Netherlands
Senate of Belgium	National Assembly of Nicaragua
National Assembly of Benin	National Assembly of Niger
National Assembly of Bhutan	National Assembly of Nigeria
Federal Senate of Brazil	State Council of Oman
Chamber of Deputies of Brazil	Consultative Council of Oman
National Assembly of Bulgaria	Legislative Assembly of Panama
National Assembly of Burundi	Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay
Senate of Cambodia	Congress of the Republic of Peru
National Assembly of Cambodia	Senate of Poland
National Assembly of Cameroon	Sejm of Poland
Senate of Canada	Assembly of the Republic of Portugal
House of Commons of Canada	National Assembly of the Republic of Korea
National Assembly of Cape Verde	Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Senate of Chile	Chamber of Deputies of Romania
Chamber of Deputies of Chile	Parliament of Rwanda
Senate of Congo	National Assembly of Sao Tome and Principe
Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica	Consultative Council of Saudi Arabia
National Assembly of Cote d'Ivoire	National Assembly of Senegal
House of Representatives of Cyprus	Parliament of Singapore
Senate of the Czech Republic	National Council of Slovakia
Senate of the Democratic Republic of the Congo	National Assembly of Slovenia
National Assembly of Djibouti	Parliament of South Africa
People's Assembly of Egypt	Senate of Spain
Parliament of Estonia	Congress of Deputies of Spain
House of the Federation of Ethiopia	Parliament of Sri Lanka
House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia	The National Legislature of Sudan
Parliament of Finland	Parliament of Swaziland
Senate of France	Parliament of Sweden
Federal Diet of Germany	Chamber of Councilors of Tunisia
Parliament of Ghana	Chamber of Deputies of Tunisia
Hellenic Parliament of Greece	Grand National Assembly of Turkey
National Assembly of Hungary	Parliament of Uganda
Parliament of Iceland	Parliament of Ukraine
Parliament of Israel	Parliament of the United Kingdom
Senate of Italy	Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay
Chamber of Deputies of Italy	National Assembly of Viet Nam
House of Councilors of Japan	National Assembly of Zambia
House of Representatives of Japan	Parliament of Zimbabwe
National Assembly of Kenya	
Parliament of Latvia	Regional
National Assembly of Lebanon	European Parliament

In addition to global findings, the analysis of data was also carried out, when it proved informative, according to countries' income level. The classification of economies is based on World Bank practices² and included the following: Low Income (23 respondents), Lower Middle Income (22 respondents), Upper Middle Income (26 respondents), and High Income (33 respondents). The European Parliament was not included in the analyses by income level.

Moreover, when a sufficient number of chambers and parliaments responding to the survey allowed for a geographical representation, further analyses were added to enrich the global findings. For the purposes of this Report, meaningful geographical groupings were possible for the European Union area (28 respondents from the European Union, including the European Parliament), sub-Saharan Africa (29 respondents), and Latin America (14 respondents).³

Sharing of practices

Analyses of data in the Report are accompanied by comments and examples of practices in different areas of parliamentary activity. These come from different sources. First, from the survey itself and from respondents who provided comments and examples of practices and lessons learned. Secondly, the Report benefited from the presentations and discussions held at the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings, when representatives of 70 parliamentary delegations, together with experts, academics and representatives of international organizations gathered in Geneva from 9 to 12 October 2007.⁴ And thirdly, the Report was enriched by documents and experiences publicly available.

Structure of the document

The World e-Parliament Report 2008 is organized into the following ten chapters that discuss key issues and present findings drawing on survey results.

- Parliament, ICT and the information society
- Vision, innovation and leadership
- Implementing the vision: management, planning and resources
- Infrastructures and services
- Documenting the legislative process
- Parliamentary websites
- Building a knowledge base for parliament
- Parliaments and citizens: enhancing the dialogue
- Cooperation and coordination
- Conclusions and recommendations

The results from most, but not all survey questions, have been included in the relevant chapters. Full results from some of the open-ended questions were difficult to summarize and could not be included, although highlights have been noted. Selected comments made by respondents on questions and best practices or lessons learned at the end of each section have been included in specific chapters.

The key issue of human resources was treated throughout the Report according to the topics covered in each chapter and given appropriate relevance in the final chapter.

As the goal of the World e-Parliament Report 2008 is not to rank individual legislatures by e-parliament levels, no responses were cited in a way that could identify a specific parliament or chamber, although citations to presentations and material made in a public setting have been attributed to their source.

2 See Annexes for the World Bank categories.

3 See Annexes for the complete lists.

4 United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union and Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, *Report of the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings*, 2008.

Throughout the text of the Report the terms “parliament”, “chamber” or “respondent” have been used interchangeably to indicate those institutions that replied to the survey. The sources of each figure representing findings from the survey results have been identified and placed in a visible way to facilitate the reader in crosschecking questions contained in the annexed Global Survey on ICT in Legislatures.

The many findings, practices and examples offered in this document provide evidence of the complexities of e-parliament as it is evolving. The Report gives an indication of the impact of ICT on the many functions of legislative bodies, and offers some practical illustrations for how barriers to effective use of modern technologies may be overcome, particularly through inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The challenge is now to refine this work in the future by building upon the existing data to measure the progress of parliaments around the world and increase the knowledge and experiences exchanged among legislatures. Only by achieving this result will the World e-Parliament Report 2008 have reached its full objective.