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**RESOURCES AND INFORMATION
SHARING OF LEGISLATION**

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TBMM PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION SYSTEM
AND
RESOURCE SHARING IN LEGISLATION

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For many centuries human beings wanted to have the power of establishing the rules of the administration of the society they live in. Again, for many centuries many nations have struggled for this objective and some were successful in achieving it. Today, the nations adopt the ideas and actions which developed at the end of such struggles. However, the desire of people to share the authority of the administration still continues to be the unattainable goal. The strife for obtaining the basic and most fundamental rights, together with the strife for increasing the already gained rights continues as an indispensable element of human character.

The parliaments where the will power of people is represented are formed by different means. Parliaments are important institutions because they are the platforms where the public pulse beats; parliaments have priority of finding the remedies for the problems of the public, moreover they are significant institutions for passing the urgent decisions when it is deemed necessary. Above mentioned three elements, importance, priority and significance are first reflected in the services

given to the members of parliament and then to the systems which are formed for the purpose of giving such services.

In the information age we live in, parliaments are in need of many elements to function. In implementing the legislative function the most important factor for the parliamentarian is to have immediate access to objective information. For the achievement of this goal, members can easily receive the necessary administrative understanding and support. When the members use the advantage of such services directly or indirectly, they voluntarily become the genuine supporters of it.

Almost all the parliaments have established an information system. Effective operation of the system depends mostly on the importance attached to information in the country, information requirement of the parliament, view point of the administration about the information services and moreover the habit of information usage of the individual member. These factors are interrelated and mesh into one another.

When the parliamentary information systems are examined, it is observed that most of them are established within the framework of the Parliamentary Libraries. In some countries the classical parliamentary libraries have gained new titles because of the new functions attached to them. For this reason, as far as parliamentary information systems are concerned the standardisation of titles is diminishing gradually throughout the world. Especially, the documentation which is the result of analysed information and research services means subject specialisation have brought a new dimension to parliamentary

information systems. As a result of this, the parliamentary libraries which were supplying book type information previously have become the centers for supplying all sort of information in the analyzed form and in requested coverage and format.

Another evolution phase of information is related to information sources. Until very recently, the information sources were limited to books, magazines, reports, microfilms, and microfiches etc. But today, in addition to these electronic mail, various data banks and networks enabling the access to these came into account. Such inventions do not remain limited to just adding some new means to recording media, but bring thoroughly new logic to information market, as well.

Globalization has made the distances among people, institutions and countries very short all throughout the world. Philosophy of "never mind" is no longer existent. Any kind of problem showing up at any part of the world may become the problem of another country the following day. Today, balances of power are built upon economic and social interests of countries rather than territorial expansionism.

Thus, in such a world, information is no more left like a decorative element on shelves, or possessed as a monopoly by certain distinguished persons to make them more respectful, on the contrary information has become an element of personal life, economic, social and cultural development and power. As a natural consequence of above mentioned points, parliaments which are the platforms of the people, are forced to live with much more information than ever.

The countries which realised this point early, took the necessary measures many years ago while the developing countries were in a position to trace new developments from behind.

The reason for the difference between the efficiency of the parliamentary information systems of the developed and developing countries is the national characteristic of the problem. Though this reason seems to be secondary, it affects informing the users of parliamentary information systems and the development of the system itself. When the parliaments of the developed countries are examined from the administrative point of view, four basic service units are observed. These are legislation, administration, information and maintenance units. However, in the developing countries, the place of information falls back rows in the list. This evolution is the first sign of the view point of developed and developing countries. There is no doubt that, this concept brings along some basic elements such as software, hardware, financial sources and qualified manpower. Nowadays, no one is a mobile library. Nobody's brain power has the capacity to hold all the information produced. Therefore, the information need of members in parliaments makes it necessary to establish a system based on qualified manpower, sufficient financial sources and technical support. Such a system can be established by due concept and belief.

There is an educational system in all societies, offered to people. While the individuals complete their formal education within this framework they acquire habits of gaining and utilising information. While such habits continue all throughout

the educational period, the ones who complete their education, obtain their information requirements either from the public libraries or from the information systems established within the institutions they work. If this general habit of information usage is not widespread in the society, then we can not expect a different attitude to the information systems from the parliamentarians who are also the members of the society. For this reason, the administrators of the parliamentary information systems of the developing countries start their duties one step behind the developed countries. It is the task of the administrators of these countries, to make the system known to its real users besides their duty of establishing the system and then operating it. In other words, they are to raise the demand for the system. Another duty of the administrators of the parliamentary information systems is to orient the users of the system to the system and vice versa. In the developed countries there is no such problem. The member who joins the parliament, knows that there exists a system to fulfill his information requirement. The only problem for him is to learn where the system is. Besides, the unfulfilled information requirements of the member yields to determination of the insufficient parts and supporting of a highly developed system in collaboration with the administrator.

After this general outlook, if we are to view the institutional, national and international usage of legislative functions of the parliaments, the legislative sources they produce, we come up with the fact that they show no

standardization. These implementations, the reasons of which are explained as "national philosophy", "national culture" and "traditions", have never been thought to be standardized and there exists no concept or work within the literature. The parliaments which are considered as conservative in their structure, keep their traditions in their working procedures and even in the format of documents produced. For this reason, parliamentary information systems are in a position to find best suiting objectives and operate within the limiting reasons, in parallel with the international standards.

Parliamentary information system must be an integrated system. This system must comprise the private data banks, library system, legislative information system and the system of administrative services. These sub-systems which seem to be different from each other must be compatible with each other, as far as, their hardware and software is concerned.

The TBMM which is the parliament of Turkish Republic and founded in 1920 makes all the operations related to legislation still manually. The Project of automation of the legislative functions and services which was started in 1993 still continues. We expect to complete the project at the end of 1994.

However, the information center of the TBMM is familiar with the automation since 1978. Within this framework the following implementations have been made.

1. KITBAN ** This Data Bank holds 210.000 volumes of books. Average of 5000 volumes of books, 4000 in Turkish and about 4000 in foreign languages, are added to the system every year.

2. As a result of the documentation activities various data banks are established. These data banks are mainly institutionally based. In fact, when the details are studied, some of them may not seem in direct relation with parliamentary information system. There comes another problem which is peculiar to the developing countries. For example, a parliamentarian is closely interested in the press. He wants to have access to all the information present in press whenever he wants. If there is no private or commercial data banks available in the country, the parliamentary information system has no excuse. The service has to be given in one way or the other. Then, measures has to be taken. That is to say , the parliamentary information center has to organize the necessary information to fill the gap.

Within the light of such necessities various data banks are established in TBMM. These are:

a. DOKBAN (Newspaper Clippings Data Bank)

This bank includes the clippings falling within pre-defined subjects from the selected Turkish press. Storage is in optical media and indexing is manual. In this operation another problem comes into existence. It is the quality of printing equipment in the country. That means if you scan newspaper clippings you can not use OCR or lately so called ICR. The only chance is to use image storage techniques which means that indexing should have to be done manually.

b. TUTBAN (Parliamentary Papers Data Bank)

Every parliament has an indexing system for its papers. TBMM started to use computer technology for indexing purposes

since 1987. The first step was to build an infrastructure for the project, that is creation of an thesaurus and analysing the source itself. Most of the available indexes have been studied in detail. In addition to it, an expert has been invited from House of Commons to train our indexers, and 2 of our indexers have spent 2 weeks at House of Commons to see the actual operation. At the end of these searches the indexing system is designed in such a way that it would be able to answer all kinds of questions related to parliamentary activities of the individual members and type of activities occurred at the Assembly and recorded in the parliamentary papers. Since, in the country there was no nationally accepted subject heading list or a thesaurus, the construction of such a tool has been very time consuming and difficult. Now, the system is 8 years old and in use efficiently. On the other hand, as far as the direct access to the information is concerned, the system may define as an incomplete system. Because, what we get throughout the index is the bibliographic citation instead of full text. After completion of legislative data base, the indexing method should be reconsidered.

c. MILBAN (Members Biographical Data Bank)

Finding biographical information about the members of parliament has always been a problem. In order to answer these kind of questions, TBMM generated a special data bank which is in use and covers the period since 1983. The main scope of the project is to cover the whole parliamentary period, since 1920.

d. KABBAN (Cabinets Data Bank)

The content of this data bank is cabinets and cabinet members since 1920.

e. LIDBAN (Leaders Data Bank)

Since the parliamentary papers, in other words official debates are not in computer media, to locate a specific word, message or sentence by a leader of a political party has always been a problem. The reason of having a special data bank on their speeches is to fulfill this gap. After completion of the legislative data bank, if free text search is available, there will be no need for this data bank in the future. Because the new one will replace it.

TBMM has been connected to various national and international data bases other than its own. Among these are POLIS (Parliamentary On-Line Information System of House of Commons), EPOQUE's of European Parliament, PROFILE, a commercial foreign press coverage, INTERNET and Turkish University Libraries System.

While TBMM Information System conducts all these works, it also continues its relations with other parliamentary information systems. In the international context, IFLA and Europewide ECPRD (European Center for Parliamentary Research and Documentation), other than supplying legislative information, provides for inter-parliamentary staff intimacy, an essential element of all information sharing activities. Within this framework, in recent years TBMM hosted librarians from Russian Federation, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Furthermore, TBMM in

the next month, June 1994, is going to host delegates from the member countries of the Parliamentary Union of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation who will participate in a workshop regarding an information network that may be established among the parliaments of the countries concerned.

Another important element of the TBMM Information System is the Research Services. The research unit is composed of subject specialists and does every kind of research and keep the members informed either in report form or by oral briefing. The results of some of the research are distributed to all the members in the form of research reports, kept in the computer media and updated constantly. Some of them have been published as books and distributed to the members, institutions and organizations concerned. Apart from all these, the Research Service publishes a quarterly periodical titled "Bilgi". Some of the issues of Bilgi are special ones covering a particular topic in details. These topics are determined parallel to the changing agenda of the parliament, the country and the world.

There are several ways to reach the legislative documentation produced by the other parliaments through manual and technical means. The first one is the mutual relations established by individual parliaments. The second is to have a legislative information network between parliamentary information systems, and the third is to follow the publications of regional parliaments that come together and produce bibliographical sources of their own research for common use. For example, the research done by the member parliaments of the European

Parliament are published in ECPRD Newsletter's special issues. January 1994 edition of this Newsletter covers the index of those research. So, member parliaments can request the copies of these reports either directly from concerned national parliament or through the European Parliament.

In spite of all optimism, language problem in exchange of information among the national parliaments, continue to be a major obstacle. Since it is not very easy to find any Turkish speaking Thai in your country, it is also not easy in Turkey to find any Turkish citizen speaking Thai language. Because of this difficulty, there is an extra duty on our shoulders that we have to find a common language in order to help each other for immediate information need. We, as the Turkish Grand National Assembly Library and Documentation Center, try to supply the requested information in such a way, as far as the language of the source is concerned, that could be in use without too much extra effort. So, we expect the same thing from other parliaments.

As a result, TBMM continues to develop and to organise its own information system within the limits of its capacity and international standards. Our doors, phones and faxes are open to any parliament that request information from us. We, the Turkish people are always ready to share our meal with needy people. It has been the life philosophy of Turkish people. You, our friends living in this part of the world, we will be more than happy to share with you whatever we know and also expect to receive similar response from you, as far as our knowledge and

information sources are concerned. To establish healthy institutional relations, there has to be healthy personal relations. If we look from this point of view, we will see that it is very meaningful that Thai Parliament hosted this international meeting, and we hope that meeting will constitute the first step of the establishment of a wider information network and understanding of cooperation between our parliaments. Thank you.



TBMM

GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TURKEY

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