Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Mapping engagement between parliament and science

Report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Working Group on Science and Technology

IPU Science for Peace Parliamentary Meeting, held in the International Centre for Interdisciplinary Science and Education (ICISE) in Quy Nhon, Viet Nam, from 11 to 13 September 2023.

Chair's foreword

Dear colleagues,

We all know that policy development is complex, often involving the accumulation of evidence and information from many sources. This mapping report aims to inspire you, as parliamentarians, to develop a more evidence-informed approach by offering practical insights from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Working Group on Science and Technology (WGST) into engagement between MPs and the scientific community in parliamentary work.

Why should we focus on an evidence-informed approach?

In today's complex world of misinformation and trust issues, using evidence in decision-making is vital. We, as parliamentarians and as citizens of this planet, also face unprecedented challenges, or "wicked problems", such as climate change, energy security and artificial intelligence – to name but a few.

Addressing these challenges requires policy and legislative changes. An evidence-informed approach can enhance the effectiveness of any changes, particularly when there are no simple solutions, providing robust evidence as well as an overview of the implications of alternative possibilities. Moreover, many parliamentarians now recognize the need for transparency in the use of evidence. By referencing research sources and encouraging governments to do the same, you can help to legitimize and strengthen arguments or proposals.

How can we effectively do this?

Looking to others and identifying best practices can help. That is the aim of this report: to highlight how parliaments worldwide facilitate engagement between MPs and science. I hope that it will inspire you to use research and evidence in your work and to encourage other colleagues to do the same.

I want to give special thanks to Charlotte Cousins of the Oireachtas Library & Research Service for helping me design the questionnaire, and to all parliamentary administrations and staff who responded. Their assistance was crucial in understanding how scientific data and expertise are accessed and used in their respective parliaments.

If your parliament, or a process within your parliament, is not represented or you would like to propose amendments to the report, please write to us at science@ipu.org.

Yours sincerely,
Denis Naughten
Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Working Group on Science and Technology
Member of the House of Representatives of Ireland

Table of contents

Executive summary

Studies increasingly show that, by using the best available academic research evidence, decision makers – governments and parliamentarians – can enhance their problem-solving capabilities, improve policy effectiveness and optimize the use of scarce public resources.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), such evidence-informed policymaking is crucial for good governance and achieving societal goals. However, it is challenging to ensure that academic evidence is available to decision makers in a format that is both agile and responsive to complex policy challenges. The term "evidence-informed" acknowledges that academic research evidence is often only one of several factors that influences policymaking, alongside context, public opinion, equity, feasibility, affordability, sustainability and stakeholder acceptability.

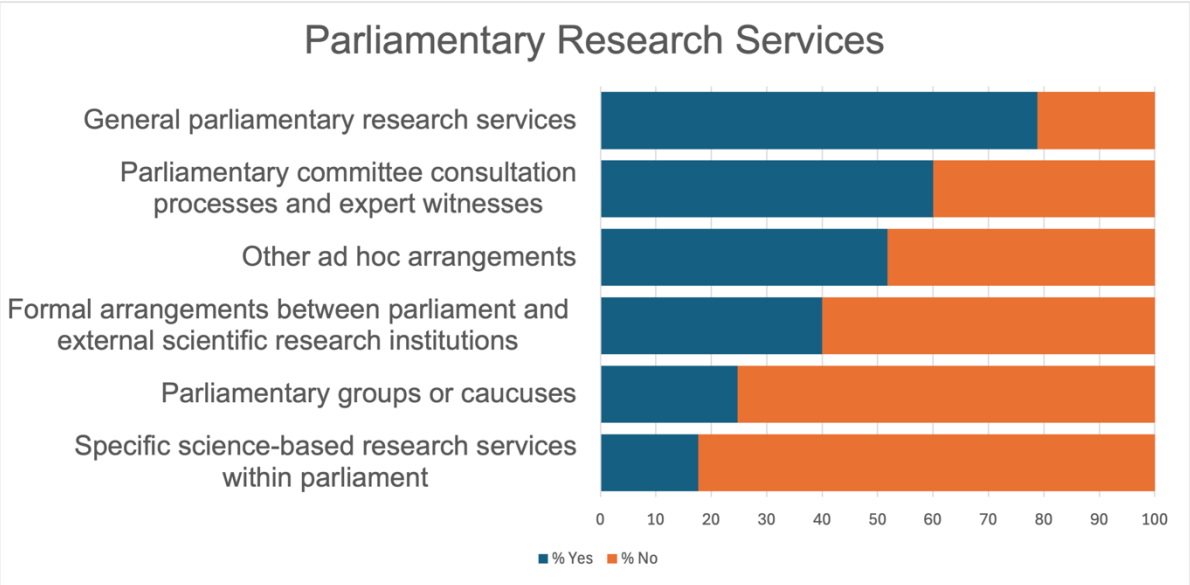
Moreover, trust in decision makers and government institutions is essential for addressing current global crises equitably and sustainably. Using transparent and verifiable research evidence in decision-making builds trust and supports democracy, especially in a world increasingly affected by misinformation. An evidence-informed approach is crucial for legitimizing and protecting democracies and ensuring better policy and legislative outcomes. Decision makers, such as MPs, can foster trust by presenting the research evidence that guides their policy decisions. However, barriers to evidence-informed policy, such as poor access to quality research, remain.

In this report, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Working Group on Science and Technology (WGST) has mapped the parliamentary support services for science engagement available in parliaments globally. The aim is to highlight and promote good practice by parliaments in facilitating engagement between MPs and the scientific community, thus encouraging greater engagement at both individual and institutional levels.

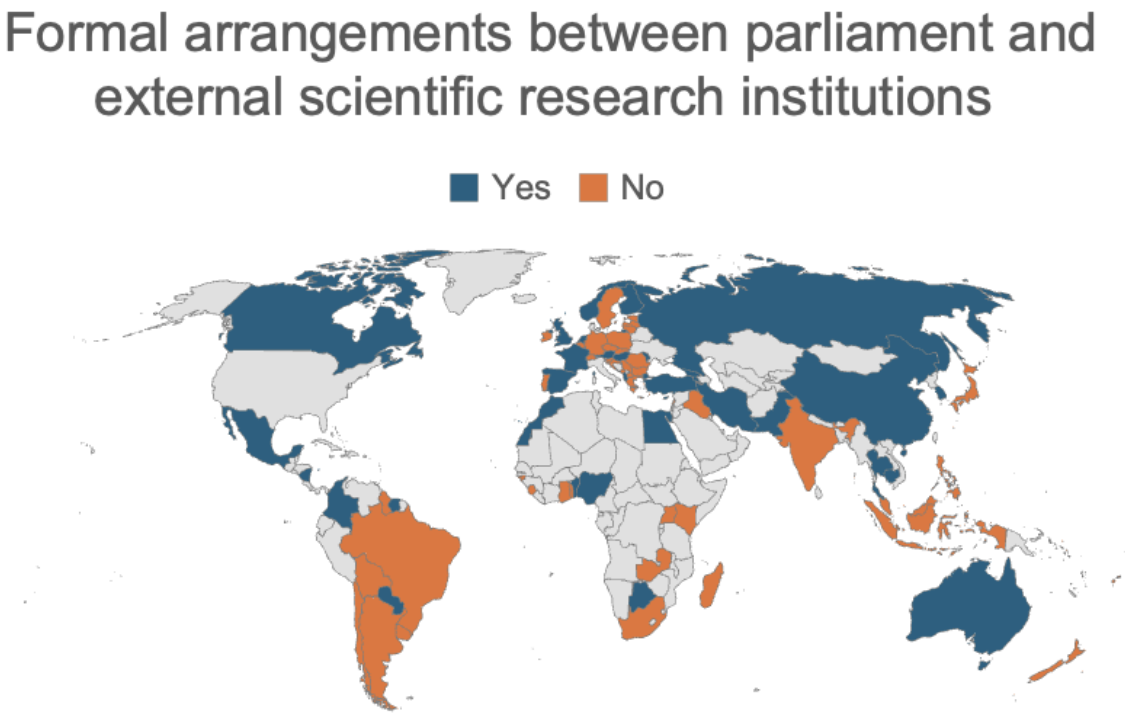
Results

The results of this exercise show that engagement between parliamentarians and the scientific community occurs through both formal and informal channels. The most common way in which this engagement happens is through parliamentary committees inviting expert witnesses to meetings considering specific legislation.

Conversely, the least common channel of engagement is the provision of "specific science-based research services within parliament", which is only available in 18% of cases.



The mapping process also reveals that parliaments are more than twice as likely to have "formal arrangements" with "external scientific research institutions" than to have a "specific science-based research service within parliament", with 34 out of 85 respondents (40%) reporting the existence of such arrangements.



“Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions” exist in 34 out of 85 parliaments (40%).	Albania, Australia, Austria, Benin, Botswana, Cambodia, Canada, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Parliament, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Spain, Suriname, Thailand, Türkiye, United Kingdom.

“General parliamentary research services” are available in over three quarters (79%) of legislatures. These services often focus on specific areas such as law, economics and social sciences. They sometimes collaborate with external services and organizations, as well as with other parliaments.

Ad hoc arrangements or informal engagement services such as one-off events facilitated by parliament and arranged by parliamentarians or groups of MPs, are common, existing in over half of the parliaments mapped (51%). These arrangements provide an important communication channel, allowing interested parliamentarians to organize their own engagement with the scientific community.

The results indicate the need for more work by parliaments worldwide to provide access to scientific research and offer opportunities for parliamentarians to engage directly with science.

The WGST is currently conducting a more comprehensive survey to explore how parliamentarians use available science and research in their work.

Introduction

A growing body of research points to the positive impact of academic evidence on policy, resulting in increasing support for evidence-informed policymaking.[1] By using the best available evidence, decision makers can increase their problem-solving capabilities, improve the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of policies, enhance the use of scarce public resources, and strengthen transparency and accountability.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), evidence-informed policymaking is essential both for good public governance and for achieving societal goals.[2] However, evidence is a resource that needs to be invested in to ensure that decision makers are in a position to be "agile and responsive" to complex policy challenges.[3]

The term "evidence-informed" – as opposed to "evidence-based" – decision-making and policymaking reflects an acknowledgement that "research evidence is often but one of several factors influencing policymaking processes".[4] Evidence-informed policymaking is driven by an analysis of the best available evidence from research, along with many other factors including context, public opinion, equity, feasibility of implementation, affordability, sustainability and stakeholder acceptability. It is based on the idea that the successful use of evidence in policy requires the production of useful and trustworthy evidence to begin with, followed by its "skilful translation for end-users"[5] by both policymakers (i.e. those who design and draft policy) and decision makers (i.e. the ministers and parliamentarians who decide on such policies).

Evidence-informed policymaking and trust

It is widely recognized that many of the crises the world currently faces are caused by a fundamental governance challenge linked to people's trust in decision makers and government institutions, and in their capacity to meet the needs of all people equitably and sustainably.[6] The promotion of a more evidence-informed approach to decision-making enhances the effectiveness of a particular policy and legitimizes the policy approach taken.[7]

The use of "better, transparent and verifiable evidence in decision-making"[8] is essential to building trust and supporting democracy. In today's complex and polarized world, the rise of misinformation and disinformation has made the creation, sharing and consumption of information closely tied to trust. This, in turn, affects the public's perception of decision makers' ability to make balanced decisions that serve the interests of all citizens. An evidence-informed approach is therefore an important driver of public trust and is crucial to legitimize and protect democracies and ensure better outcomes for both policy and legislative changes. Decision makers such as MPs can establish and grow this trust by presenting the research evidence that guides their approach and policy reforms.

---

1 Kathryn Oliver and others, "A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers", *BMC Health Services Research*, 14(2) (2014): doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-14-2.

2 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences*, (Paris: OECD, 2020): www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/building-capacity-for-evidence-informed-policy-making_86331250-en.

3 *Ibid.*, 9.

4 World Health Organization (WHO), *Evidence, policy, impact: WHO guide for evidence-informed decision-making* (Geneva: WHO, 2021): www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240039872.

5 Peter D. Gluckman, Anne Bardsley and Matthias Kaiser, "Brokerage at the science–policy interface: from conceptual framework to practical guidance", *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 8(4) (2021): doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00756-3.

6 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), "Good governance and climate change: IPU forum highlights role of parliaments in tackling global goals", 18 July 2024: www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2024-07/good-governance-and-climate-change-ipu-forum-highlights-role-parliaments-in-tackling-global-goals.

7 Christian Adam, Yves Steinebach and Christoph Knill, "Neglected challenges to evidence-based policy-making: the problem of policy accumulation". *Policy Sciences,* 51 (2018), 269–290: doi.org/10.1007/s11077-018-9318-4.

8 OECD, *OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results: Building Trust in a Complex Policy Environment* (Paris: OECD, 2024), 12: www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/oecd-survey-on-drivers-of-trust-in-public-institutions-2024-results_9a20554b-en.

Trust is also an indicator of how people perceive the quality of public institutions and how they interact with them. It is both an input to, and an output of, governance and can help to ensure citizen support for public policies. However, according to the results of the 2024 OECD Trust Survey, just 41% of respondents believe that decision makers use the best available evidence in decision-making, and only 39% think that communication about policy reforms is adequate.[9]

There are a number of barriers to evidence-informed policy, with the primary one being "poor access to good quality relevant research".[10] In order to explore this subject further and to promote good practice, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Working Group on Science and Technology (WGST) carried out a mapping exercise on parliamentary support services for science globally.

The findings of this exercise are detailed in this report, which looks at how parliaments facilitate engagement between MPs and the scientific community, particularly in relation to legislative and policy matters. Specifically, the report examines the facilitation of engagement in the following six areas:

- Specific science-based research services within parliament
- Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions
- General parliamentary research services
- Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses
- Parliamentary groups or caucuses
- Other ad hoc arrangements

Sources of information

This report is based on three sources of information:

- A survey of European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) member parliaments, conducted by the Oireachtas Library & Research Service (L&RS), Ireland, at the request of the Chair of the WGST, Mr. Denis Naughten
- A mapping exercise conducted by the WGST to explore channels of engagement between the parliamentary and scientific communities based on the framework of the first survey
- Additional information from *Global mapping of parliamentary mechanisms for accessing academic research*,[11] a mapping exercise undertaken in 2021 by Ms. Vicky Ward and Mr. Mark Monaghan, at the request of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), United Kingdom, to investigate the services or mechanisms used by parliaments to access and harness academic research

Sample

Responses were received from the following 57 parliaments – both those that had replied to the initial ECPRD survey (33 parliaments) and those that responded to the additional WGST survey (31 parliaments, in **bold**):

- Albania, **Andorra**, Armenia, Austria, **Belgium**, **Benin, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria**, **Canada**, **China,** Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia (Chamber of Deputies), **Egypt**, Estonia, the European Parliament, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany (Federal Council), Greece,

---

9 *Ibid.*
10 Kathryn Oliver and others (2014), 1.
11 International Parliament Engagement Network (IPEN) "Global mapping of parliamentary mechanisms for accessing academic research": ipen-network.org/global-mapping/.

Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, **Ireland**, **Japan**, **Kenya**, **Latvia**, **Lithuania**, **Luxembourg**, **Madagascar, Malaysia, Monaco,** Montenegro, Netherlands, **Nicaragua**, North Macedonia, Norway, **Paraguay**, Poland, Portugal, **Republic of Moldova**, Romania (Chamber of Deputies), **Russian Federation, Serbia, Seychelles**, Slovakia, Slovenia (National Assembly), Spain (Congress of Deputies), **Suriname, Switzerland (National Council)**, Sweden, **Thailand, Togo**, **Tonga**, Türkiye, **United Kingdom** and **Uruguay**

In addition, information from the *Global mapping of parliamentary mechanisms for accessing academic research* report was added for the following 28 parliaments that had not responded to either of the two surveys:

- Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia

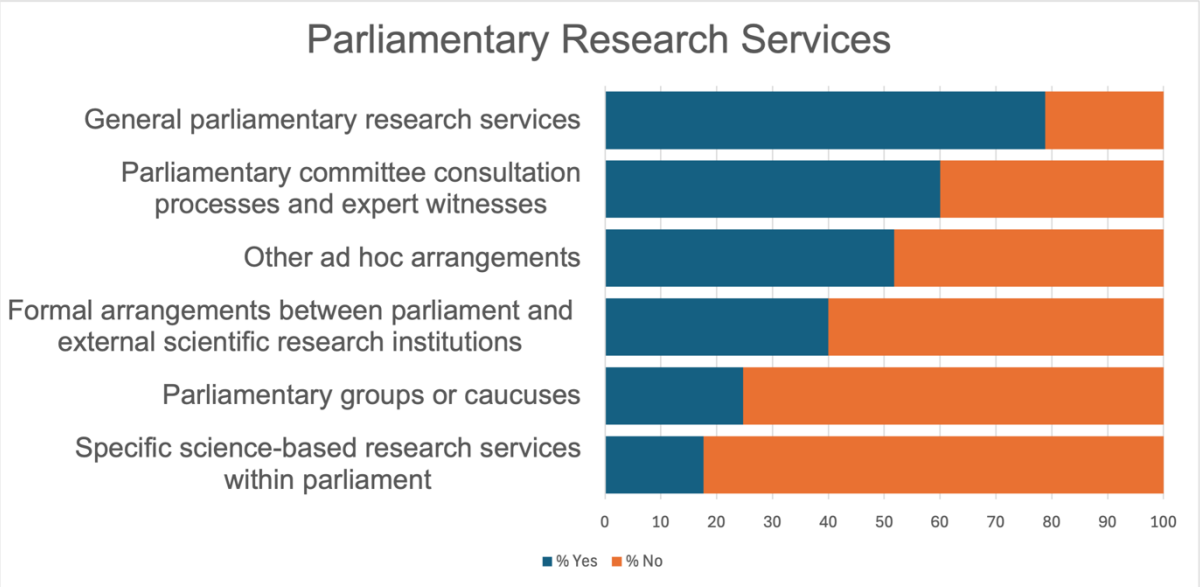
The following parliaments submitted responses from both houses:

- Belgium, France, Japan and Poland

For quantitative purposes, duplications and replies from separate houses/chambers within a parliament were counted as one reply. For qualitative purposes, information from both responses was used.

Finally, while this report was designed for parliamentarians and parliamentary secretariats, it may also be of interest to other organizations working at the interface between science and policy, as well as to the broader research and policy communities.

Main results



The most common services available in parliaments are “general parliamentary research services” which, based on the results of the mapping exercise, exist in 79% of cases. The next most common service is “parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses”, which is available in 60% of parliaments.

The least commonly available services are “specific science-based research services within parliament” and “parliamentary groups or caucuses”, which only exist in 18% and 24% of parliaments, respectively.

Across both surveys and the mapping report, one parliament was identified as having all six engagement services; the United Kingdom (please see the “spotlight” section later in this report). Conversely, three parliaments – Croatia, Madagascar and Monaco – were identified as not having any of the research services mapped in the exercise.

Method

The original L&RS survey was used as a framework. This was then expanded upon to produce this comparative paper, which shows how parliaments facilitate and organize engagement between MPs and the scientific community on legislative and policy matters.

Through the members of WGST and other international contacts, online and hard-copy versions of the questionnaire were distributed, in English and French, to parliamentary administrators or staff.

The survey questions are listed below. A sample response from Ireland was also included as a guide. This can be found in Annex 1.

Questions

How does your parliament facilitate and organize engagement between MPs and the scientific community on legislative and other matters?

Please respond with reference to the following channels of engagement:

1. Specific science-based research services within parliament

2. Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions

3. General parliamentary research services

4. Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses

5. Parliamentary groups or caucuses

6. Other ad hoc arrangements

The data from the two surveys was then combined with information from the mapping report to provide a more comprehensive overview. Information from parliaments that submitted a survey response after this additional research was included was considered and, if more information was provided in the survey response, this was generally the response used.

Country	Specific science-based research services within parliament	Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions	General parliamentary research services	Parliamentary Committee consultation processes and expert witnesses	Parliamentary groups or caucuses	Other ad hoc arrangements
Albania	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Andorre	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Argentina	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Armenia	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Australia	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Austria	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Belgium	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Benin	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Bolivia	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Botswana	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Brazil	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Bulgaria	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cambodia	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Canada	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chile	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
China	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colombia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Croatia	No	No	No	No	No	No
Cyprus	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Czechia	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Egypt	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Estonia	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Fiji	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Finland	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
France	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Georgia	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Germany	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Ghana	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Greece	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Guinea Bissau	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Guyana	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Hungary	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
India	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Indonesia	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Iran	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Iraq	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Ireland	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Japan	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Kenya	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Latvia	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lebanon	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Lithuania	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Madagascar	No	No	No	No	No	No

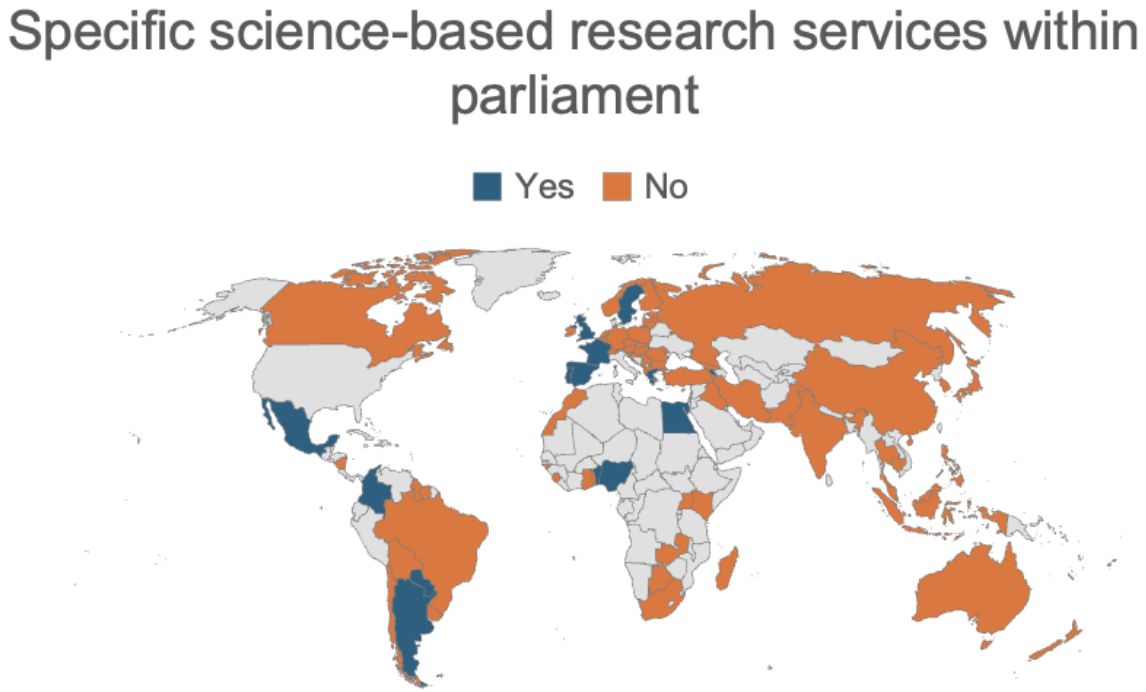
Figure 1 | Table of Countries showing Methods of Scientific Engagement

Country	Specific science-based research services within parliament	Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions	General parliamentary research services	Parliamentary Committee consultation processes and expert witnesses	Parliamentary groups or caucuses	Other ad hoc arrangements
Malaysia	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Moldova	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monaco	No	No	No	No	No	No
Montenegro	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Morocco	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Netherlands	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
New Zealand	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Nicaragua	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Nigeria	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
North Macedonia	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norway	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pakistan	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Paraguay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philippines	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Poland	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portugal	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Romania	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Russian Federation	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Serbia	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Seychelles	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Sierra Leone	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Singapore	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Slovakia	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovenia	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Solomon Islands	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
South Africa	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
South Korea	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Spain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Suriname	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sweden	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thailand	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
The European Parliament	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Togo	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Tonga	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Turkiye	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Uganda	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uruguay	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Zambia	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Figure 1 | Table of Countries showing Methods of Scientific Engagement

Analysis of services

1. Specific science-based research services within parliament



"Specific science-based research services within parliament" exist in 15 out of 85 parliaments (18%).	Argentina, Benin, Colombia, Egypt, European Parliament, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nigeria, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Overall, only 18% of the parliaments mapped have internal services that identify as providing specific science-based research. Some examples are given below:

- **Argentina:** The Scientific Office for Legislative Advice (OCAL), established in 1983, is tasked with "informing parliament of scientific and technological options in order to enlighten its decisions", working with external institutions to achieve this aim. It provides all parliamentary groups with technical information and scientific advice. Its work includes carrying out studies on social challenges, gathering scientific knowledge from experts, connecting legislators, scientists and citizens, and running training programmes.

- **Benin**: Through several mechanisms, the National Assembly maintains excellent cooperative relationships with the scientific community, both nationally and internationally, in order to help achieve its constitutional aim of passing laws for the benefit of the citizens of Benin. The parliament has a documentation service which allows parliamentary and committee officials and staff to carry out research, which is then presented to the relevant committees.

- **Colombia**: The Centre for Research and Higher Legislative Studies (CAEL) aims to strengthen the functions of the legislature through scientific, research and academic support, working with higher education institutions and research centres both nationally and internationally.

- **Egypt**: In the Parliament of Egypt, each committee has its own specialists and researchers who assist MPs.

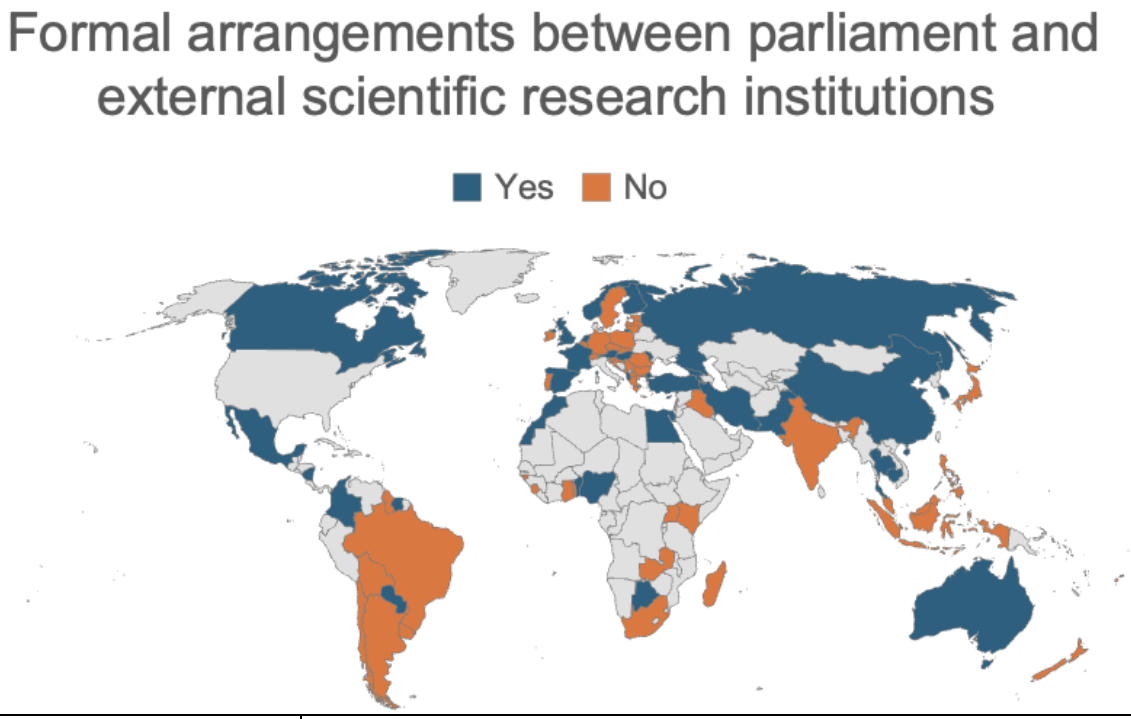
- **France**: The Parliamentary Office for Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options (OPECST) is a bicameral structure composed of 18 members of the National Assembly and 18 members of the Senate. It was established in 1983 to "inform parliament of scientific and

technological options in order […] to make its decisions clear". Since 2005, the OPECST has had a partnership with the Académie des Sciences. Matters can be referred to the OPECST by the bureau of either chamber or by a special or standing committee. Any matter referred to the OPECST leads to the designation of one or more rapporteurs (usually one member of the National Assembly and one member of the Senate), exclusively selected from among its members. The rapporteurs conduct numerous hearings and have special powers allowing them to carry out investigations and access any available document. The OPECST is a member of the European Parliamentary Technology Assessment network.

- **Mexico**: The Office for Information of Science and Technology for the Congress of the Union (INCyTU) was established and is operated by the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum. Its mission is to provide legislators with accessible and relevant information, produced through rigorous research, in order to contribute to evidence-informed policymaking and decision-making in Mexico.

- **United Kingdom**: More information about POST can be found in the dedicated "spotlight" section later in this report.

2. Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions



"Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions" exist in 34 out of 85 parliaments (40%).	Albania, Australia, Austria, Benin, Botswana, Cambodia, Canada, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Parliament, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Spain, Suriname, Thailand, Türkiye, United Kingdom.

Overall, 40% of the parliaments mapped were identified as having formal arrangements with external scientific research institutions. Examples of these external institutions are given below:

- Public and private universities (such as in Benin, Luxembourg and Thailand)

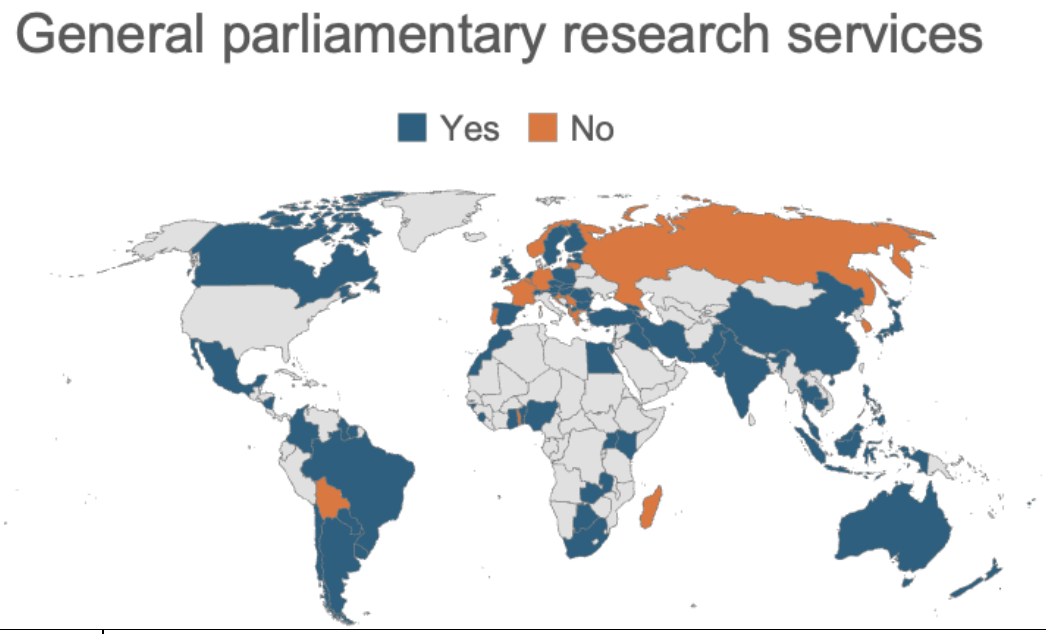
- National science academies (such as the Albanian Academy of Sciences and the Austrian Academy of Sciences)

- Other scientific organizations such as Science and Technology Australia

Country-specific examples are given below:

- **Benin**: Formal arrangements include a partnership agreement between the Centre for Administrative Law and Territorial Administration of the University of Abomey-Calavi and the Parliamentary Institute of Benin (IPaB), and a framework cooperation agreement between the National Assembly of Benin and the Training School for Judicial Professions (EFPJ). These agreements cover:
    - advisory support and capacity-building programmes for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff
    - participation in research programmes
    - organization of, and participation in, educational and scientific activities
    - access to, and sharing of, knowledge
    - joint searches for funding for joint activities
- **Luxembourg**: The Chamber of Deputies co-finances doctoral theses and a Research Chair in Parliamentary Studies at the University of Luxembourg. Framework agreements are being drawn up for other projects with the University of Luxembourg. A cooperation agreement for joint activities (conferences, training courses, workshops, etc.) between the Luxembourg National Research Fund and the Chamber of Deputies has been in force since 2022.
- **Thailand**: The secretariat of the House of Representatives has a formal arrangement with Thailand Science Research and Innovation to host relevant academic seminars.

3. General parliamentary research services



"General parliamentary research services" exist in 67 out of 85 parliaments (79%).	Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Czechia, Egypt, Estonia, European Parliament, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Zambia.

Seventy-nine per cent of parliaments report having a general parliamentary research service, making this the most common service available in parliaments across the sample. Services of this kind are designed to inform members on matters being considered by parliament. They are generally focused on the subjects of law, public administration, economics, health and social policy. In many cases, there is external collaboration with universities and scientific organizations as required.

Interestingly, the parliaments of France, Greece and Portugal – which do not have a general research service – reported having a specific science research service. Some 15% of parliaments have both general and specific research services (Argentina, Benin, Colombia, Egypt, the European Parliament, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nigeria, Paraguay, the Republic of Moldova, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom).

Below are examples of general parliamentary research services in specific countries:

- **Austria**: The parliamentary research service focuses on law, social sciences and economics and is considering adding climate sciences to its remit.
- **Fiji**: The service is tasked with providing high-quality research support and analysis to MPs and staff.
- **Ghana**: The Parliament Research Department carries out reactive research in response to requests from committees and MPs, proactive research (e.g. assessing legislation passed by parliament), and policy and budget analysis. Academic research may be identified by individual researchers in the department depending on their area of interest and the usefulness of the research to the work of parliament.
- **Ireland**: The Oireachtas Library and Research Service is a service staffed by senior legal researchers, social scientists, economists, and environmental and agricultural scientists, who provide legislative analysis, topical briefings and research briefings on request.
- **Pakistan**: The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services offers research, legislative, outreach and capacity-building services to MPs and standing committees to assist with informed policymaking. It conducts or commissions independent research on topical issues and provides training for members and staff of the national parliament and provincial assemblies.

4. Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses

"Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses" exist in 51 out of 85 parliaments (60%).	Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Czechia, Egypt, Estonia, European Parliament, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, United Kingdom, Uruguay.

The survey responses show that parliaments commonly engage with the scientific community through the work of parliamentary committees, typically when considering legislation or policy matters.

In many parliaments, it is common practice for committees – both those focused exclusively on science-related matters, and those whose remit covers other topics and themes – to invite scientists and other experts to present on matters of interest and to give evidence and briefings:

- **Belgium**: All thematic standing committees (health, justice, economy, finance etc.) frequently organize hearings on legislation and policy matters, regularly inviting members of the scientific and academic community to give evidence. The same holds true for advisory committees working on topical societal themes. Special and investigating committees are also usually assisted by a panel of (academic) experts.

- **Canada**: In the Parliament of Canada, there are several standing committees across both houses whose remit includes science and technology matters. These include the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology and the House of Commons Standing Committees on Industry and Technology, and on Science and Research. One of the central functions of these committees is to listen to and gather information from groups and individuals through hearings and written briefs. They also routinely conduct studies on certain topics, as well as on proposed or existing legislation. To do this, the committees invite witnesses to share their expertise at hearings, as well as undertaking public outreach to publicize their studies and seek further input.

- **Guinea-Bissau**: According to the applicable provisions, parliamentary committees may invite experts and any other person whom they consider relevant to their activities to attend specific sessions. Consultation processes are foreseen in parliament's rules of procedure.

- **Japan**: The House of Councillors Committee on Education, Culture and Science can invite interested parties, learned persons and others to give their opinion. The committee can hold public hearings on important issues of general interest, as well as hear opinions from experts and individuals with a genuine interest in the issue at hand.

- **Romania**: The Committee for Science, Innovation and Technology frequently invites experts from fields such as artificial intelligence, or national research and development, to its meetings. These specialists can present their work and contribute to the drafting or refinement of national legislation in the areas of science, innovation and technology. This practice enables committee members to hear about complex subjects and new technological developments directly from experts. It also ensures that legislative decisions are informed and aligned with technological progress and societal needs. The committee also consults with specialists in relation to specific bills.

- **Russian Federation**: Parliamentary committees consult with various experts as necessary through events established by the regulations of the Council of the Federation, such as parliamentary hearings, round tables and other meetings. Experts are also consulted during extended committee meetings on topical areas of legislative improvement. Representatives of relevant scientific organizations, along with relevant executive authorities, are involved in these events. Recommendations on improving legislation and legislative support in the area under discussion are then produced.

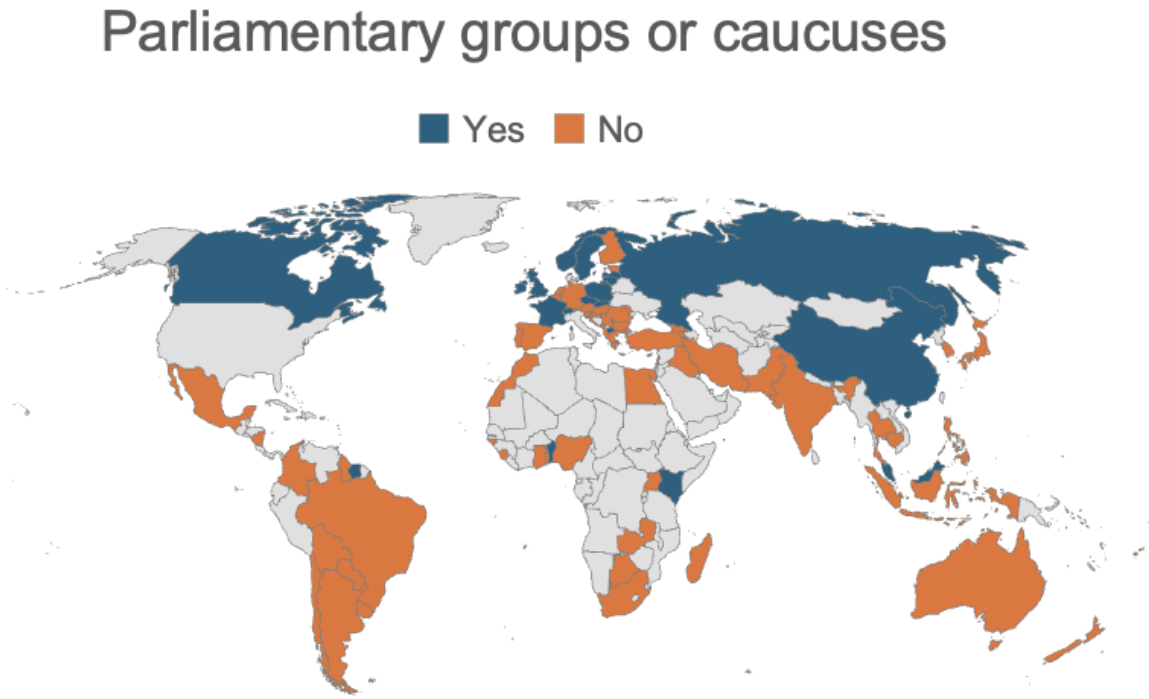
- **Serbia**: In the National Assembly, committees work with representatives of the scientific and academic community, inviting them to present expert opinions regarding legislative matters. Public hearings are the most common instrument for involving the scientific community in the lawmaking process, especially in relation to judicial reform and constitutional change.

- **Thailand**: In both houses, committees regularly consult experts on relevant issues and legislation. Key stakeholders and relevant interest groups are also invited to share their inputs with the committee. It is a common practice to invite experts in specific fields of research to be part of ad hoc parliamentary committees.

In some cases, committees within a single parliament or in different chambers have different practices when it comes to selecting and engaging experts. In Belgium, for instance, the House of Representatives has specific committees for examining scientific matters**,** including an advisory

committee on scientific and technological questions. The Senate**,** on the other hand, engages with the scientific community on an ad hoc basis as required for specific work, such as preparing bills or committee reports. In the Parliament of Latvia, meanwhile, the European Affairs Committee has a tradition of engaging with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

5. Parliamentary groups or caucuses



"Parliamentary groups or caucuses" exist in 20 out of 85 parliaments (25%).	Benin, Canada, China, Czechia, European Parliament, France, Ireland, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

Twenty-six per cent of parliaments reported having one or more parliamentary bodies or caucuses that focus on scientific matters.

In some cases, these bodies or caucuses focus on a single issue:

- **Canada**: The Parliamentary Health Research Caucus and the Parliamentary Caucus on Emerging Technology focus on health issues, and on artificial intelligence and technology, respectively.

- **France**: The National Assembly has several *groupes d'étude* (task forces) that deal with scientific issues in a number of areas, including aeronautics, space, health, sustainable energy and the impact of climate change.

- **Kenya**: The Parliamentary Caucus on Evidence-Informed Oversight and Decision-Making assists in supporting evidence-based decision-making and oversight. It also advocates for key public institutions to provide evidence, as well as facilitating this process, reflecting a move from traditional to results-based monitoring and evaluation.

- **Sweden**: The Association of MPs and Researchers of the Swedish Parliament (RIFO) is a forum for facilitating contact and dialogue between MPs and researchers. It holds meetings and conferences where various scientific topics can be debated.

6. Other ad hoc arrangements

"Other ad hoc arrangements" exist in 44 out of 85 parliaments (51%).	Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Benin, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Zambia.

The mapping exercise revealed that 44 legislatures use "other ad hoc arrangements" to facilitate engagement between parliament with science.

Examples of these ad hoc arrangements are given below:

- Training and information sessions for MPs and staff (e.g. **Benin**, **Luxembourg**, **Mexico**, **Nigeria**, **Romania** and **Switzerland**)
- Visits to scientific institutions (e.g. **Belgium** and **Sweden**)
- Briefings from scientists and experts for MPs and staff (e.g. **Ireland**, **Japan**, **Malaysia** and **Romania**)
- Themed conferences and workshops (e.g. **Luxembourg** and **Paraguay**)
- Other programmes to bring scientists and researchers together with MPs, such as internships, and pairing and mentoring schemes (e.g. **Argentina**, **Cambodia**, **Canada** and **Luxembourg**)
- Creation of voluntary expert councils (e.g. **Russian Federation**)
- Training for scientists working with parliament (e.g. **Switzerland**)

Spotlight on the United Kingdom

The **United Kingdom** is the only parliament identified as facilitating all six methods of engagement between MPs and the scientific community.

Population: 68.21 million (2021)[12]
Structure of parliament: Bicameral
Statutory number of MPs: 650 (lower chamber) + 800 (upper chamber)[13]

More information about the Parliament of the United Kingdom can be found on the IPU website.

1. Specific science-based research services within parliament

Science-based research services are provided by the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST), a research and knowledge exchange service based in the UK Parliament. POST was established in 1989, brought into parliament in 1992 and made a permanent feature in 2000. It works to ensure that the best available research evidence is brought to bear on the legislative process and scrutiny of the government. It primarily supports select committees, but also sources reliable and impartial scientific research evidence for the UK Parliament as a whole. Its output is also used within the justice system, as well as by academic communities and the media.

2. Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions

Academic fellowships working through POST are schemes that typically last three months, where academics from learned societies, professional associations and funding bodies work with the office and learn about the workings of parliament. The academics in question learn how to write for parliamentarians by contributing to some of the outputs of POST such as POSTnotes and POSTbriefs. They also have the opportunity to explore new areas of research, and develop lasting relationships within parliament.

3. General parliamentary research services

These services are provided by the libraries of both the House of Commons and the House Lords, as well as by POST.

The House of Commons Library provides the following:

- Research reports in areas of legislation, topical interest, policy and constituency issues
- Answers to MPs' questions and requests for bespoke research
- A collection of books, journals, databases, news subscriptions and parliamentary material for MPs and staff
- Inductions, research skills training and talks on topical issues

The House of Lords Library provides impartial research, reference and resource services to support members. It supports the work of the chamber by providing a range of research publications, and a collection of books, journal articles and newspapers.

4. Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses

Committees invite expert witnesses to attend and inform proceedings on legislation and policy matters. This process may also be supported by POST, which provides training and guides for the scientific community when engaging with parliament.

---

[12] UNdata, "United Kingdom": data.un.org/en/iso/gb.html.
[13] There is no restriction on the number of members of the House of Lords (the upper chamber of the UK Parliament). In practice, the upper limit has been around 800 members.

5. Parliamentary groups or caucuses

In the UK Parliament, there are many All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) across a wide range of scientific topics. APPGs are informal, cross-party groups that have no official status within parliament. They are run by and for members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. They may also involve individuals and organizations from outside parliament. One of these groups is the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, the purpose of which is to be "a primary focus for scientific and technological issues, providing a long-term liaison between parliamentarians and scientific bodies, science-based industry and the academic world".[14]

6. Other ad hoc arrangements

In addition to official engagement, there is the flexibility to arrange informal events. Moreover, a number of members of both houses come from scientific and academic backgrounds and parliament traditionally enjoys strong relations with UK universities and other academic and scientific bodies.

[14] UK Parliament, "Register Of All-Party Parliamentary Groups [as at 8 April 2024] – Scientific": publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/240408/scientific.htm.

Annex 1

Questions and model answer for Ireland

Parliamentary engagement with the scientific community

Introduction

A member of the Oireachtas has requested a comparative paper on how parliaments in member States of the Council of Europe facilitate and organize engagement by members of parliament with the scientific community. They are interested in engagement associated with legislation and policy matters.

Earlier requests relevant to this issue include: 5036, 5123, 4519, 3666, 2136 and 1367.

We would be very grateful if you could respond to the following question by outlining all channels of engagement between parliament and the scientific community.

Questions

How does your parliament facilitate and organize engagement between members of parliament and the scientific community on legislative and other matters?

Please respond with reference to the following channels of engagement:

1.	Specific science-based research services within parliament	YES/NO
2.	Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions	YES/NO
3.	General parliamentary research services	YES/NO
4.	Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses	YES/NO
5.	Parliamentary groups of caucuses	YES/NO
6.	Other ad hoc arrangements	YES/NO

Model answer for Ireland

In the Houses of the Oireachtas, engagement between members of parliament and the scientific community is facilitated and organized through the following channels.

It is worth noting that the introduction of MS Teams facilitates wider engagement with scientists across Ireland and abroad.

1.	**Specific science-based research services within parliament**	NO
2.	**Formal arrangements between parliament and external scientific research institutions**	NO
3.	**General parliamentary research services**	YES

The Oireachtas Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) is staffed by senior researchers who provide a legislative analysis service, producing commissioned research briefings for members and committees as well as topical briefings. Currently the staff is comprised primarily of legal researchers (seven), social scientists (seven) and economists (four); there is also a dedicated Environmental and Agricultural Science Team of three people.

As part of the PRS academic engagement strategy 2019–2021, six researchers were seconded to the Houses of the Oireachtas Library & Research Service as part of the Science Foundation Ireland public service fellowship programme. The researchers had papers published and they presented their research to members and staff within parliament. Working within parliament, they had the opportunity to learn new ways to bring their research to the attention of members of parliament. A new academic engagement strategy is currently being developed.

4. **Parliamentary committee consultation processes and expert witnesses** YES

- Committees invite expert witnesses to attend and inform proceedings on legislation and policy matters.

- Committees also use public consultations to get input from interested individuals and organizations in relation to any matter on their work programmes.

5. **Parliamentary groups or caucuses** YES

The Oireachtas Friends of Science and Technology is a cross-party group of TDs and Senators who aim to help the Houses of the Oireachtas engage with scientific research.

The Oireachtas Friends of Science & Technology Friendship Group was established with the goal of providing a long-term liaison between the Oireachtas, scientific and engineering bodies, science- and engineering-based industry, the academic world, and those affected by science and engineering, and to provide members of both Houses of the Oireachtas, through meetings and other activities, with authoritative scientific information from time to time in connection with Oireachtas business. It meets four to six times per year with one or more recognized academic researcher(s) presenting on a topic of interest to members.

6. **Other ad hoc arrangements** YES

Individual members of the Oireachtas can and do organize briefings for members and staff.