Cooperation between Dutch parliamentary research and information services

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Descriptive summary of Dutch politics (1)

- Parliamentary democracy
  - Elections every four years

- House of Representatives: 150 seats, direct elections
  - checks the government
  - co-legislator
  - representative of the people

- Senate: 75 seats, indirect elections by the Provincial Councils
  - Approves/rejects legislation from the House of Representatives. No right of amendment.
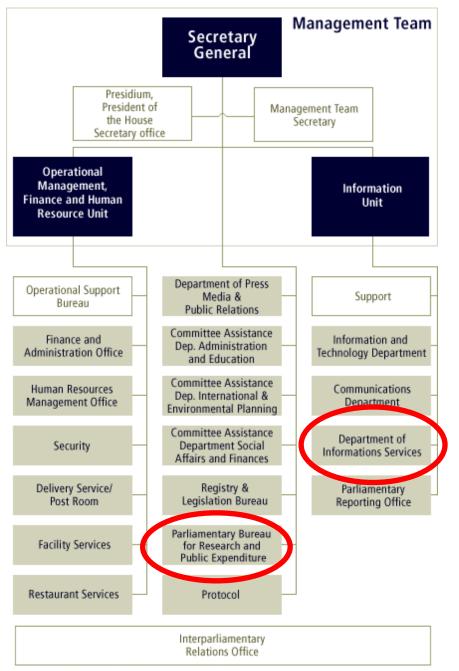
Descriptive summary of Dutch politics (2)

- In the House of Representatives:
- 11 parties: majority from the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the Labour Party (PvdA): 79 seats (coalition)
- Nine opposition parties
- Smallest party: 2 seats

- 5 elections in the past 10 years

- Parliamentary groups and support for MPs

Functioning of the House's administration within a multi-party system

- Under the supervision of the Secretary-General

- Supports MPs and political processes

- 600 civil servants

- Rules of Procedure

- Neutral and non-partisan

- No political ties

- Roles:
  - Individual support (Central Information Desk)
  - Support for each committee
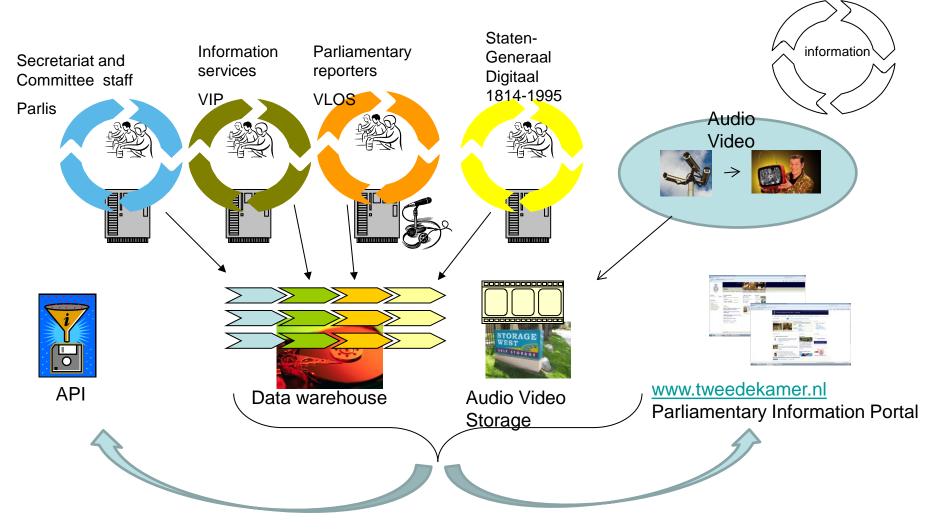 - Institutional memory

Management Team

Secretary General

Presidium, President of the House Secretary office

Management Team Secretary

Operational Management, Finance and Human Resource Unit

Information Unit

Operational Support Bureau

Finance and Administration Office

Human Resources Management Office

Security

Delivery Service/ Post Room

Facility Services

Restaurant Services

Department of Press Media & Public Relations

Committee Assistance Dep. Administration and Education

Committee Assistance Dep. International & Environmental Planning

Committee Assistance Department Social Affairs and Finances

Registry & Legislation Bureau

Parliamentary Bureau for Research and Public Expenditure

Protocol

Support

Information and Technology Department

Communications Department

Department of Informations Services

Parliamentary Reporting Office

Interparliamentary Relations Office

Department of Information Services

- Founded in 1815, 65 fte

- Provides information services to MPs, parliamentary groups, committees, and administrative offices, as well as to journalists, government organizations and citizens

- Selects, acquires and supplements parliamentary and contextual information and connects this information to eachother

- Creates and delivers information products and services (including answering questions; supporting parliamentary inquiries; providing information through the intranet and websites; and ensuring the availability of many sources of internal and external information)

- Manages the Central Parliamentary Archives: the memory of the House of Representatives

- Develops and manages information systems, including search and language technology

Information architecture

Secretariat and Committee staff

Parlis

Information services

VIP

Parliamentary reporters

VLOS

Staten-Generaal Digitaal 1814-1995

information

Audio Video

API

Data warehouse

Audio Video Storage

www.tweedekamer.nl
Parliamentary Information Portal

Parliamentary Bureau for Research and Public Expenditure

- Founded in 1999, 12 fte

- Provides support to parliamentary standing committees by analyzing government documents, including budgets and annual reports; policy memorandums and evaluations; and progress reports (memorandums) on 'Major Projects'

- Provides support for parliamentary investigation committees (coordinating substantive research) and parliamentary inquiries

- Incorporates scientific knowledge to benefit political debate through cooperation with universities, assessment agencies and other knowledge centres.

Cooperation

- Between Research department, staff of committees and Department of information services
- Need for more research products is recognized
- Information specialists not fully equipped yet
- Service level agreement in 2007 and liaison officers appointed
- In 2009: start of the Research Agenda (4 large projects per year)

- Information specialists trained in analyzing, making abstracts and formulating unbiased opinions
- Cooperation is highly valued by both departments and also by MP's

Conclusions

- The cooperation worked out well because there was benefit for both departments
- Both departments still have their own specialties and expertise and maintain these
- The products are complementary
- Good contacts and willingness to cooperate by department heads and senior staff
- Fits in the Dutch custom of the 'Polder Model' (focus on consensus)

The next step?

- Stay separate or integrate into one department?
- Stay information specialist and researcher or become hybrid?
- The difficulties of unbiased information and research
- Role of social media (public opinion) in research?