



Bridging the Information Gap: Parliamentary Transparency and the New Media

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Two columns of democratic legitimation

- Fiction of representation (*Kelsen*)
- Fiction of deliberative democracy:
„interplay of the public sphere based on
civil society with the institutionalised
structures of opinion- and decision-making
in the parliamentary complex“ (*Habermas*)

Procedural vs. material legitimation

- Procedural legitimation requires transparency,
brought about by information and
communication (interplay with public sphere)
- Material legitimation of public decision-
making would require democratic participation
in decision-making, based on information and
communication
- NICT are offering both options (openness of
technology)

Parliamentary Transparency

„Transparency of the parliamentary procedure
is functionally serving the inter-dependency
of the (relatively) autonomous spheres of
political communication, which is a basic
requirement of democracy.“ (*Oberreuter*)

Instruments of parliamentary transparency - traditionally

- Public access to parliamentary proceedings
- Written documentation of parliamentary proceedings
- Mass media coverage of parliamentary proceedings

Instruments of parliamentary transparency – new media

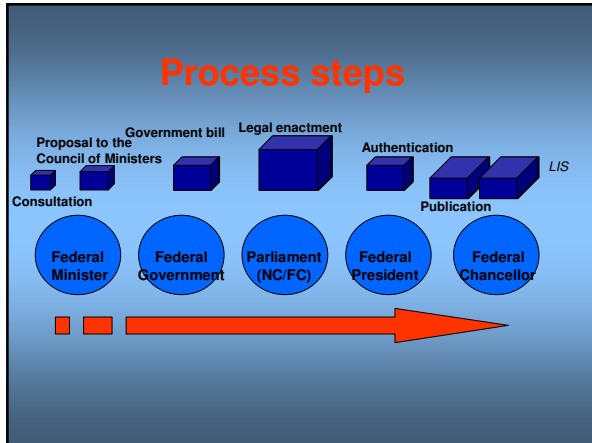
- Public access to parliamentary proceedings – live audio/video streaming
- Written documentation of parliamentary proceedings – available online
- Mass media coverage of parliamentary proceedings – available online

Trends in parliamentary transparency

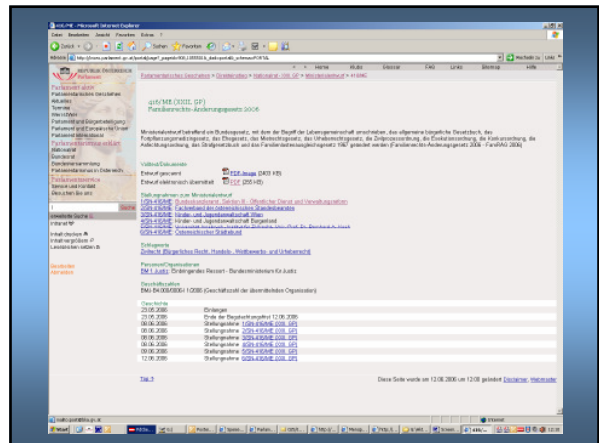
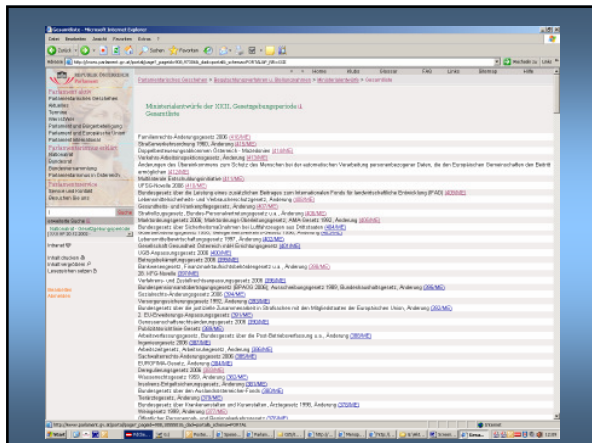
- NICT are allowing easier as well as customized access to parliamentary information
- Easier retrieval, SDI services, clearer document structures, abstracts, improved information services
- Information as a prerequisite for participating in the public sphere!

(Future) trends in parliamentary communication policy

- Modified understanding of the parliamentary communication function: activating and responsive
- One-way communication (information) to be supplemented by two-way communication
- Particular ways of participation: consultation and petition



- ## Pre-parliamentary consultation procedure
- Corporations have a legal claim to be consulted by the Federal Ministries drafting bills
 - Parliament involved since 1961
 - Opening of the consultation procedure to the public through the parliamentary website since 1999
 - More than 100 draft bills/year undergoing consultation procedure (more than 70 % resulting in government bills)



„Information gap“

- Complexity of parliamentary business and proceedings immediately mirrored in written documentation
- Complexity of parliamentary business and proceedings overly reduced in mass media's coverage (impact of TV coverage style on print media – and on parliamentary debate style)

Closing the gap – new media

- Easier retrieval of parliamentary business via web portal (but still kind of experts' system)
- Customizing information: push and SDI services (but still complexity of contents)
- Clearer document structure in XML (but still complexity of language)

Closing the gap – procedural complexity

- Making parliamentary procedure (of particular business or as such) understandable
- Providing access (links) to procedural rules
- Glossaries
- (E-)learning systems
- Roleplay scenarios

Closing the gap – material complexity

- Abstracts of parliamentary business
- Synopses of consultation results
- Consolidated versions of legal texts
- Linking legal texts with explanatory remarks
- Improving and observing legislative drafting rules (structure and language)

Challenges

- „Information flood“: competitive situation
 - How to advertise transparency? – „Infotainment“?
- vs.
- „Information class society“
 - How to enable people with different social and educational backgrounds to make use of parliamentary transparency?