IFLAPARL Pre-Conference: Workshop Report

On the second day of the 35th Pre-Conference of Parliamentary Research and Library Service, which took place in the premises of the Hellenic Parliament, the hosts organized a special twin workshop on **Science and Innovation in Parliamentary Libraries and Research Services.**

The workshop featured some innovative case studies from the Hellenic Parliament Library, the Scientific Service and beyond, as a series of lightning talks, leading into an interactive discussion of participants' own experiences. Some of the case studies included, but were not limited to:

• Crowdsourcing of parliamentary studies,

• Users' access to legal discourse in parliamentary Libraries and

• Doing science in the parliament.

Workshop organizer and IFLA member Dr. **Fotis Fitsilis**, Head of Department for Scientific Documentation and Supervision in the Hellenic Parliament, opened the session with a presentation of the Hellenic Optical Character Recognition (OCR) Team, which represents a novel scientific crowdsourcing approach aiming exclusively at the processing and study of parliamentary data. This is an informal yet powerful initiative which builds on the simple idea that a decentralized group of people may accelerate both processing and study of textual data with the goal to create parliamentary (linked) open data. The highlight of the talk was a short video to display the methods and technologies used by the *Hellenic OCR Team*. Dr. Fitsilis described participation in the platform as a unique opportunity for members to network and contribute towards a higher cause in a state-of-the-art scientific field. Creative opportunities of financial and inter-institutional support were mentioned, such as the successful participation at the Google Summer of Code and the efficient use of internships from affiliated domestic universities.

Dr. **Maria Kamilaki**, Head of the Parliamentary Library Department in the Hellenic Parliament and a linguist, focused on the role of parliamentary libraries in facilitating users' access to legal discourse, i.e. the idiosyncratic genre used by lawyers, government officials, administrators and others, which is often completely foreign to the layperson. Given the importance of the popularization of legal texts, libraries can go a step further from providing simple access to reliable legal resources to becoming key intermediaries for the public in close reading of parliamentary texts. Apart from traditional interventions, such as citing sources of plain language information and printed glossaries of legal terminology, librarians can navigate readers through a wide variety of open-access digital tools, such as comparative multilingual

legal vocabularies like the one accessible through the webpage of the [Court of Justice of the European Union](#). Controlled vocabularies (e.g. [Eurovoc](#)) and terminology data bases (e.g. [IATE](#)) allow users to explore legal terms, collocations and coinages, by citing definitions, semantic relations (proximity, equivalence, opposition etc.), comments on stylistic and pragmatic usage and many more. Moreover, syntactic parsers can simplify complex sentences, providing part-of-speech recognition, while automatic summarization of lengthy documents and powerful visualization tools (e.g. [Voyant](#)) can help everybody see through the opaque legal text. The options are endless, so long as someone is ready to think out-of-the-box!

Dimitrios Garantziotis, intern in the Scientific Service of the Hellenic Parliament and law student in the Law School of Athens, made a short presentation on the possibilities and the opportunities a parliament can offer to a prospective lawyer in the field of scientific research. Starting from common problems in the field of legal research and assistance, Mr. Garantziotis focused on the analogy that exists between parliamentary discourse and scientific research, where in both occasions there is a debate on often controversial matters, highlighting that a parliament should encourage and promote closer collaboration with scientists, and showcase key contributions to society as a way to increase people's trust in the institution.

There was a vivid interest for the presentations, for crowdsourcing in particular, and several participants contributed to the subsequent discussion. For instance, **Blagnienė Renata**, Head of the General and Bibliographic Information Unit at the Seimas, Lithuania, referred to the ability to consistently add and train new members to the *Hellenic OCR Team*. Dr. **Alexandros Koutsogiannis**, Hellenic Parliament Scientific Service, mentioned that data-driven results from academic research could positively contribute to parliamentary discourse. **Wojciech Kulisiewicz**, Director of the Sejm Library, Poland, questioned the possibility to universally apply FAIR data principles to parliamentary data, due to their considerable size and different formats. **Krisztina Kardos,** Hungarian National Assembly, described the use of infographics to attract and inform a larger audience, a practice that is also widely used by the European Parliament. Furthermore, **Janice Silveira**, Library Director in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, underlined the inherent difficulties due to the lack of financing, mentioning that creative solutions are not always without risk.

All in all, it has been a successful workshop that motivated participants to look after possibilities for cooperation, e.g. within the IFLA or the Interparliamentary Union networks, to fuel exchange of good (or bad) practice and to be innovative in each dimension of institutional development.