

# **SERVICE CHARTER**

## **I. OUR MISSION – VALUES – VISION**

**1.** The Library of the Federal Parliament is an independent, impartial and professional service of the Chamber of Representatives that supports Belgium's Federal Parliamentarians and parliamentary activities. It carries out this mission by providing its users, in a timely manner, on their request or proactively, with reliable and relevant information of high quality, and in accordance with their needs, or by allowing them to find the information themselves.

- We are an **independent** service: we autonomously evaluate the way in which we carry out our mission, according to the guidance documents written for this purpose.
- We are an **impartial** service: we are politically and ideologically neutral. We guarantee the equal treatment of any person authorised to use our services. We work without distinction for all: political groups of all sizes, Members do not belong to any political groups, majority and opposition parliamentarians and their assistants, in accordance with Chapters II and IV.
- We are a **professional** service: professionally qualified employees provide the service according to the best practices and standards of the profession. Any provision of documentary information is based on a rigorous and precise selection of reliable, relevant and up-to-date sources of information that we communicate to the user requesting the information, in an orderly and accessible manner.
- We are **oriented towards our users**: their needs are at the basis of our services, which we evaluate regularly and adapt if necessary.

We meet the needs of our users:

- insofar as these are related to parliamentary activities or the exercise of the parliamentary mandate,
  - provided that the information is intended for an authorised user in accordance with Chapter II,
  - time, staff and resources permitting.
- We ensure **timely processing** of requests, taking into account the agenda of parliamentary activity.
  - We guarantee the absolute **confidentiality** of the identity of the users requesting the information as well as the information requested. We never share this data with third parties.
  - We scrupulously respect the **privacy** of the users when processing their data. The user can access it at any time and have it modified.

2. The Library of the Federal Parliament has the ambition to be the Parliament's reference centre for documentary information and to continue the development of its services according to its users. In concrete terms, this means that we aim to:

- give our users as much direct access as possible to as many sources of information as possible,
- make our historical and valuable collections more accessible through digitisation,
- customise our services as much as possible,
- continually develop our services and collections according to the needs of our users, new technologies and the evolution of parliamentary activity, and to involve the users in this,
- train our users in the use of tools and databases that can facilitate their research work,
- permanently train our staff to assist the user in the best possible way,
- intensify collaboration with the other parliamentary information centres of the European, federal, regional and community institutions.

## II. OUR USERS

The Library of the Federal Parliament is primarily an internal library. Our services are primarily intended for parliamentarians, their assistants and the parliamentary services.

3. **Category 1.** The following persons and groups have priority with regard to all our services:

- Members of the Chamber and the Senate,
- political assistants of parliamentarians who are paid by the Chamber or by the Senate,
- staff of the political groups of the Chamber and the Senate,
- services of the Chamber and the Senate,
- staff of the Chamber and the Senate.

4. **Category 2.** The following persons have access to the reading room and can use some of our services – time, resources and staff permitting:

- former Members of the Chamber and the Senate,
- staff and managers of the documentation services of the regional and Community Parliaments,
- staff and managers of the documentation services of the Court of Cassation, the Constitutional Court, the Council of State,
- staff of the parliamentary “satellite institutions”,
- former Members of the House and Senate staff.

The Board of Directors decides whether we can provide that support and, if so, about the modalities.

5. **Category 3.** Persons who do not belong to the above categories (researchers, doctoral students, civil servants, etc.) can use the reading room of the Library after sending an application letter and permission from the Board of Directors. In principle, they must do their own searches, but we offer support where necessary and if possible. In case of doubt, the Board of Directors decides whether we can provide that support and, if so, about the modalities.

See appendix 1 for an overview of which categories of users are entitled to which services.

### **III. OUR COLLECTION**

6. We are a hybrid library: our collection consists of paper and digital documents. It mainly reflects the competencies of the Federal Parliament and the topics that are useful for parliamentary activity, in particular from the political, legal, economic, social and political-historical domain.

We develop our acquisition policy ourselves in order to best meet the needs of our users.

Category 1 users can make purchase suggestions that relate to federal competencies and parliamentary activity. We nevertheless reserve the right not to approve requests.

### **IV. OUR SERVICES**

7. We offer our users two major services: documentary information provision on the one hand, digitisation and digital consultation of administrative documents, historically valuable works on the other.

The provision of documentary information includes the following services:

- consulting and borrowing works,
- simple and complex research work,
- overviews of available information sources on a current theme,
- documentary monitoring and alerting,
- overviews of acquisitions and tables of contents of scientific journals,
- a daily press review.

The digitisation of administrative documents is part of the digital archiving policy of the Chamber. The digitisation of historical and valuable works from the Library's own collection is part of the conservation mission of the Chamber's heritage collection.

Most services are provided on request. The Library also proactively offers a number of services (see Appendix 1).

## V. OUR OPERATING PRINCIPLES

### A. PROVISION OF DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION

#### GENERAL PROVISIONS

8. The users send their requests for documentary information (see points 15, 18, 19, 27) by e-mail addressed to the Library: [bibliotheek@dekamer.be](mailto:bibliotheek@dekamer.be) or [bibliothèque@lachambre.be](mailto:bibliothèque@lachambre.be). This also applies to reasoned requests for access to the reading room (point 5).
9. We process the requests for documentary information in order of receipt.
10. When the number or the nature of requests for documentary information exceeds the capacity of the service, we give priority to processing requests from category 1 users and related to ongoing parliamentary activity.
11. We respond to each request for documentary information in the applicant's language. We deliver the documents in the language in which they are available (mainly in French, Dutch, English or German). We do not translate those documents.
12. In principle, we deliver our documentary information in digital form. We only send a paper version upon explicit request or when a digital version is not available.
13. We maintain an electronic register of incoming requests. The collected data is processed anonymously for statistical purposes to illustrate and improve the functioning of the Library.
14. The user finds the rules relating to the access to the reading room and book lending in the internal rules of procedure, in Appendix 2 of this charter.

#### WHAT SERVICES DO WE OFFER?

15. The users submit their requests for **borrowing books and for photocopies** (see Appendix 1, services 1 and 2) preferably by e-mail to the Library. They can also submit their requests in person to the desk clerk of the reading room (Forum). The requested books and copied articles are made available at the front desk of the reading room or are sent by internal mail upon request. We never send books by regular mail.

A Category 1 or Category 2 user can request any book or article from a scientific journal related to parliamentary work. If it's not part of our collection, we try to get it through Interlibrary Loan (Service 1).

16. **Consulting external databases** in the reading room (service 4) takes place under the supervision of the responsible reading room staff member. The user has the right to download and/or print documents that are useful for any research work, insofar as the database consulted offers these options.

The access codes for the databases remain the property of the Library and may not be used outside the reading room of the Library.

The user can consult the internal databases of Chamber and Senate, as well as LIMO, the online catalogue of the Library.

**17.** The **daily press review** (service 5) is a general-purpose press review focusing on federal institutions and competencies. Our staff makes it every working day in Gopress and it is published there at 9:00 at the latest. All members of the parliamentary community – Chamber and Senate – have access to this press review.

**18.** The users submit their **requests for articles** from domestic or foreign scientific journals or other sources (service 6) preferably by e-mail to the Library.

During the working hours, we process any request sent by e-mail to the Library. Normally, we respond the same day. If the response time is longer, we inform the requesting user, taking into account the requested deadline as much as possible.

**19.** The user send their **requests for complex searches** (service 7) also by e-mail to the Library.

All users of categories 1 and 2 can submit requests for complex searches. We guarantee the absolute confidentiality of the identity of the requesting user and the information provided. However, we reserve the right to re-use the collected information in an anonymous way for other services.

If the requesting user are entitled to the requested service and the subject of the request belongs to the work domain of the Library, they will be assigned a contact person who will handle the request and whom they can turn to for any questions. We agree with the requesting user on the period within which we will answer the application.

**20.** If the subject of a request (service 6 or 7) belongs to the domain of work of another service of the Chamber, we will send it to the service concerned. The requesting users thus do not have to reformulate their requests to the other service.

**21.** If we cannot respond to the request (service 6 or 7) because we do not possess the sources, we inform the applicants of the possibility of eventually obtaining the information from another institution. If it is possible and desired, we help them in doing this.

**22. Information bundles for parliamentary missions** (service 8) are intended for the Commission service or the PRI service. We compile these bundles at the request of and in consultation with the service concerned.

**23.** The choice of topics for the overviews of available information sources (**DocFlash**, service 9) is determined as much as possible in consultation with the users of category 1.

**24. Documentary monitoring** (service 10) is carried out at our initiative or at the proposal of one or more Members of Parliament, a political group or a service of the Chamber or the Senate.

**25.** The Head of the Documentary Information department evaluates all request and proposals for services 6 to 10, taking into account the availability of staff and resources.

**26.** We inform our category 1 users about the recently purchased books (**BibFlash**, service 11).

**27.** Upon simple request by e-mail to the Library, we can also inform users of categories 1 and 2 about the **content** of the most recently received scientific **journals** (service 12).

## **WHAT WE DON'T DO**

**28.** We reserve the right not to accept certain requests:

- We do not purchase books that are intended for private or commercial purposes, or that fall outside our working domain.
- We only deal with requests that are related to parliamentary activity or the exercise of the parliamentary mandate. We do not process requests for commercial or private purposes.
- We do not make analyses. We, on the other hand, deliver the collected information to the requesting users in as clear and accessible a manner as possible, in accordance with their wishes.
- We do not provide legal or other advice.
- We do not give any political or ideological opinion about the information provided.
- We do not participate in or support any political party or political ideological activities.
- We do not provide information that could possibly affect the reputation of the Library.

## **B. DIGITISATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS**

- 29.** The DIGIDOC team from the Collection Management Department digitises administrative documents from parliamentary services of both the Chamber and the Senate.
- 30.** The board director of the requesting department submits their requests by mail ([biblioheek@dekamer.be](mailto:biblioheek@dekamer.be) or [bibliotheque@lachambre.be](mailto:bibliotheque@lachambre.be)) to the head of the Collection Management department.
- 31.** We assess each application on the basis of the justifications of the requesting user (timing, deadline, technical requirements, etc.).
- 32.** The DIGIDOC team gives priority to work in progress, unless the new request comes from the highest authorities of the Chamber or Senate and/or there is a demonstrable urgency. When the maximum capacity of the DIGIDOC team is reached, the accepted requests are placed in a queue and handled in that order.
- 33.** We can refuse a request on the basis of the nature of the material to be digitised. Requests that are not related to parliamentary activity are refused.

## **C. DIGITISATION OF ANCIENT AND VALUABLE WORKS**

- 34.** The DIGIDOC team from the Collection Management department digitises historical and valuable works from the Library collection.

The digitisation of old and valuable works is only carried out at the initiative of the Collection Management department depending on the physical state of the works or parliamentary activity (exhibitions, lectures, etc.). It is thus not possible to submit a request for the digitisation of ancient or valuable works.

After digitisation, the works are accessible via the library catalogue Limo to all users (i.e. not only to the authorised users of the Library). Certain digitised works may however have limited access, e.g. works that are intended for internal use only or works subject to copyright.