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ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES
GENERAL OF PARLIAMENTS

CONTRIBUTION

by

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to the General Debate on

“How does your parliament provide factual information to parliamentarians to support evidence-based decision-making?”

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The Senate of the Republic of Poland, referred to in Polish parliamentary law as ‘the chamber of reflection and prudence,’ has, since its establishment, attached great importance to the level and quality of parliamentary debate. Discussions held in the chamber are characterised by respect for the diversity of opinions and by a commitment to identifying problems and seeking shared solutions. Extensive use is made of opportunities to seek expert opinions, appoint specialists, and conduct in-depth deliberations. Live broadcasts and recordings of both plenary and committee sittings enable the public to familiarise themselves with the positions of various sides. Ensuring the transparency of the decision-making process helps to strengthen public trust in state institutions and in those entrusted with the responsibility of taking final decisions.

A parliamentarian’s access to comprehensive, reliable, and objective information is the foundation of responsible law-making and of the effective functioning of parliament. In the face of current threats—particularly hybrid warfare and the spread of disinformation—critical thinking and multi-level verification of data are of paramount importance. Since senators are keen to ensure that the way they formulate their views, proposals, and recommendations is factual, rational, and comprehensible to the public, they expect from us support in the form of trustworthy expertise. The public confrontation of arguments, as well as the exposure of false or divisive content during parliamentary debate, weakens the impact of disinformation and also has an educational value.

In the Chancellery of the Polish Senate, expert, legal, and information support for the chamber is provided by the Analyses and Petitions Office (BAP) and the Legislative Bureau, while matters relating to the European Union fall within the remit of the Bureau of International Cooperation. These offices have, among their core responsibilities, the task of assisting senators by supplying analyses, legal opinions, and materials essential for the functioning of the chamber and the performance of parliamentary duties.

The Analyses and Petitions Office is responsible for preparing documents useful in the legislative and decision-making processes. The Section for Research and Thematic Studies, which forms part of the Analyses and Petitions Office (comprising 12 specialists), is responsible for preparing various types of analyses (including comparative studies), opinions, information notes, and statistical data. In addition, at the request of the Senate’s authorities (the Marshal and Deputy Marshals of the Senate, the Presidium of the Senate, or committees), external opinions and expert studies are commissioned, and consultations with external experts are organised. These experts include academics working at leading Polish universities, researchers from scientific institutions, and specialists from think tanks.

The Section for Petitions and Correspondence (5 specialists) focuses on handling the process of examining petitions. This involves analysing the submitted issue and preparing a set of necessary materials, including presenting the petition during a committee sitting.

In accordance with a relevant resolution of the Presidium of the Senate, advisory services provided to the Senate and its bodies aim to ensure access to consultations, expert opinions, and analyses related to ongoing or planned activities of the Senate and its organs. For this purpose, in addition to commissioning external expert opinions, Advisory Teams may be established to act as consultative and advisory bodies. Such teams are appointed by a resolution of the Presidium of the Senate, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Marshal or Deputy Marshals of the Senate, or following a resolution of a committee.

It is worth emphasising that the staff of the Analyses and Petitions Office, who prepare materials for senators, make it an absolute priority to ensure that all information—both domestic and international—comes from reliable and verified sources. To avoid bias and manipulation, analytical and informational materials are based primarily on government and expert reports, studies by

independent research institutions and recognised international organisations, as well as statistical data and legislative information. The prepared materials, presented with a list of sources and viewed from different perspectives, are designed to provide parliamentarians with the most objective picture possible. Any limitations in data availability or uncertainties are duly noted, enabling critical assessment and effective verification of the information provided.

The Legislative Bureau of the Senate Chancellery ensures the quality and correctness of the legislative process. Its primary responsibility is to provide legal and legislative assistance to the Senate, its bodies, and individual senators, as well as to carry out impact assessments, including analyses of the anticipated socio-economic effects of legislative initiatives undertaken by the Senate and selected acts adopted by the Sejm, as well as petitions submitted to the Marshal of the Senate.

In particular, the Legislative Bureau is responsible for managing the process of examining bills adopted by the Sejm, including drafting and reviewing amendments proposed by senators; supporting the Senate's legislative initiatives and other resolutions; ensuring that the proceedings of the Senate and its committees comply with the Rules of Procedure of the Senate; providing legal assistance in interpreting those Rules; preparing legal opinions and analyses concerning the law-making process and the Senate's legislative activity; and identifying legal issues that require consideration and action by the Senate or its bodies.

The Bureau employs a team of over a dozen lawyers—legislative drafters (including two specialists in constitutional and parliamentary law and in the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Tribunal) and two economists specialising in impact assessments and the preparation of Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs). These economists have experience in analytical work, including the application of data analysis, forecasting, and simulation methods, as well as knowledge of statistics and econometrics.

The key document prepared by Senate legislative drafters is the opinion on a bill adopted by the lower chamber (the Sejm). This document discusses the content of the bill, outlines the legislative process, and presents any comments resulting from an assessment of the proposed regulation in the context of the legal system (including its compliance with the Constitution) and the Principles of Legislative Technique.

A Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) presents the results of an evaluation of the anticipated socio-economic effects of a proposed intervention, estimated at the stage of drafting a legal act. The RIA is one of the tools used to modernise regulatory policies, allowing for the enhancement of regulatory effectiveness (understood as the achievement of regulatory objectives) and efficiency (understood as the ratio of the costs of achieving those objectives to the expected benefits). The growing importance of the RIA reflects an international trend towards improving the regulatory process within the framework of the so-called Better Regulation Agenda. The development of this trend and the level of implementation of RIAs in various countries are monitored by the OECD.

The Bureau of International Cooperation employs five specialists in European affairs analysis. Their main task is to prepare opinions on draft legislative acts of the European Union that are submitted to the Senate in accordance with the provisions of Protocol No. 1 annexed to the Treaty of Lisbon. Their work is supported by the Permanent Representative of the Senate Chancellery to the EU, whose primary role is to facilitate the exchange of information between the Senate and EU institutions concerning the progress of the EU legislative process and current developments.

The upper chamber of the Polish Parliament stands out as a genuine platform for dialogue between representatives of the authorities and civil society on matters of significant public importance. The Senate serves as a venue for open discussion with all interested stakeholders, taking into account a

diversity of opinions and perspectives. The involvement of various communities and social groups in the exchange of views, as well as the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, helps senators make thoughtful and well-founded decisions. It also strengthens the resilience of all parties involved against manipulation, propaganda, and fake news.

The Senate hosts numerous conferences and seminar meetings addressing a wide range of contemporary issues. The participation of distinguished speakers, who bring with them knowledge, experience, and authority, ensures a high substantive quality of debate on current challenges. Such events also offer an excellent opportunity to gather valuable information and data, enabling parliamentarians to base their work on reliable and verified sources. A sound understanding of complex scientific and social phenomena positively influences public discourse and reduces susceptibility to oversimplifications and false explanations that may take the form of conspiracy theories.

The Senate Chancellery and its competent staff spare no effort to fulfil their duties, including information and analytical tasks, to the highest possible standard. The staff of all departments within the Chancellery provide professional, reliable, and dedicated assistance to all senators, regardless of political affiliation. The long-standing practice of ensuring that senators have access to comprehensive and objective information guarantees the operation of the institution in accordance with the highest standards.