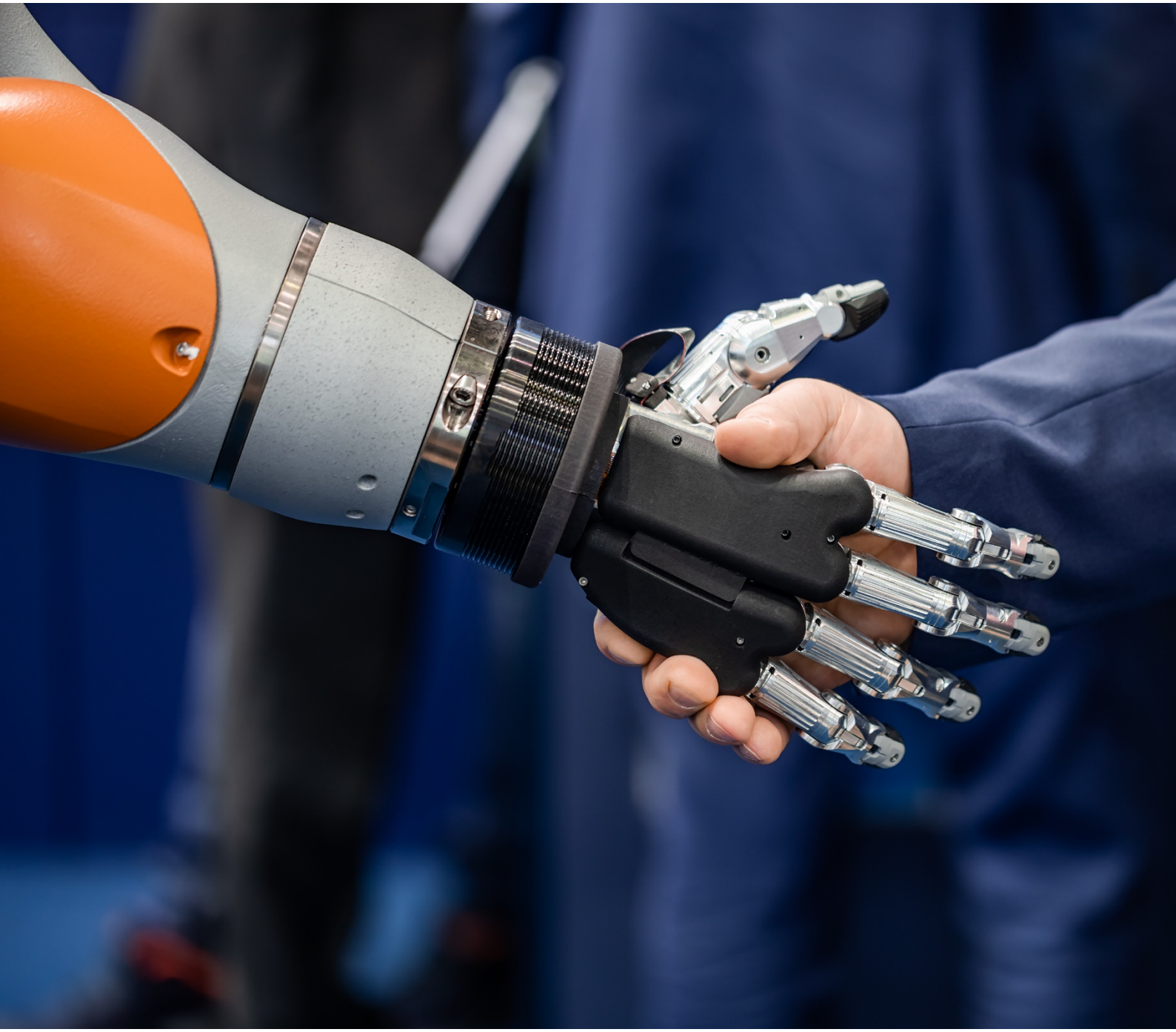
Rathenau Instituut

# More grip on digitisation

## An international comparison of parliamentary working methods



Report

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**Illustrations**
Rathenau Instituut

**Cover photo**
Andrey Armyagov/Shutterstock

**Preferred citation:**
Rathenau Instituut (2020). *A better grip on digitisation – An international comparison of parliamentary working methods*. The Hague (De Jong, R., I. van Keulen, L. van Hove & G. Munnichs)

# Preface

On 10 April 2018, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg appeared in a hearing before the U.S. Senate. He had to answer for the improper use of 87 million Facebook profiles by the data company Cambridge Analytica on behalf of Donald Trump's election campaign. Beforehand, everyone expected verbal fireworks, but during the five hour hearing Zuckerberg never really gets into trouble. The senators don't know how to ask the right questions.

The public discussion afterwards is, therefore, mainly about the senators' incompetence to put the Facebook founder to shame. For Congress itself, this notorious hearing is a direct reason to strengthen the official support for the subject of 'technology'. In the Netherlands, the Dutch House of Representatives (Dutch: *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*) has set up the Temporary Committee on the Digital Future, which is also considering working methods that will give parliament a better grip on developments in technology. Social and political questions related to this can then be discussed earlier and better.

The Committee is interested in other parliamentary methods. The Rathenau Instituut has been asked to map out how parliaments in other countries organise themselves around digitisation. Through our sister organisations we have been able to make this overview. At the Commission's request, we zoomed in on recent developments in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark and Norway. All these parliaments have a range of working methods, embedded in their own parliamentary culture. It is now up to the Commission to examine which working method it considers to be appropriate for Dutch politics with its broad representation of social and philosophical views.

The Rathenau Instituut does its work for the Dutch House of Representatives from an independent position in which it supports the formation of political opinions, without advising on political decisions. We do this by identifying social aspects at an early stage through research and dialogue. In recent years, we have made an inventory of various values, arguments and associated policy options in relation to digitisation issues, with our task primarily being to consider the effects of digitisation where citizens are confronted with it. Whatever working method the Committee chooses, the Rathenau Instituut will be happy to support the House in this.

**Dr. ir. Melanie Peters**
Director Rathenau Instituut

# Summary

**Introduction**
The Temporary Committee on the Digital Future (*Tijdelijke Commissie Digitale Toekomst,* TCDT) of the Dutch House of Representatives has asked the Rathenau Instituut to conduct an international comparative study into how other parliaments deal with digitisation issues and what working methods they use. With this study, the TCDT wants to examine how the Dutch House of Representatives can strengthen its knowledge position in the field of digitisation and get a better grip on the desired and undesirable developments associated with digitisation.

**Approach**
The research carried out by the Rathenau Instituut consisted of two phases. In phase I, a quick scan was made of the various working methods used by ten parliaments to address digitisation: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Norway, United Kingdom, United States and Switzerland. For each working method, we described - mainly on the basis of desk research - the function and positioning of the working method, the approach, and the digitisation issues dealt with. In phase II, a selection of five countries with working methods that seemed most relevant and promising for the Dutch situation was further investigated. These were Germany (with three different interesting working methods and a parliamentary system somewhat similar to the Dutch one), the United Kingdom (with many different working methods and results that have received international recognition, including on disinformation and AI), the United States (with standing committees that have many and various forms of support), Denmark (with an interesting working method that has a coordinating function for the entire parliament), and Norway (with an interesting accessible method for informing all members of parliament). In phase II, the functioning of the various working methods in practice was also explicitly examined by means of semi-open interviews with parliamentarians and civil servants (including substantive support services).

### Types of working methods used

The following table gives an overview of the working methods we examined, per country.

| Country | Working method |
|---|---|
| Germany | • Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment, including the *Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag* (TAB)*.<br>• Committee on the Digital Agenda<br>• Study Commission on Artificial Intelligence (AI) |
| United Kingdom | • Commons Select Committee Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), including the subcommittee on Disinformation<br>• Commons Select Committee Science & Technology<br>• Lords Select Committee Science & Technology<br>• Lords select Committee on AI (ad hoc committee)<br>• Lords Select Committee on Democracy and Digital Technologies (special inquiry committee)<br>• The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)* |
| United States | • Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation<br>• House Committee on Science, Space and Technology<br>• House Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce<br>• The Government Accountability Office (GAO), including the Technology Assessment and Analytics team (STAA) & Center for Strategic Foresight*.<br>• Congressional advisory commissions on Cyberspace and AI* |
| Denmark | • The Parliamentary Working Group on World Goals, including the broad 2030 network |
| Norway | • Parliament's Teknogruppe, including Norwegian Board of Technology (NBT)* |

* For our analysis, we take into account the role of these support services in relation to the working methods of parliament.

### More political recognition

The study shows that there is more recognition of the political importance of the digital transition in other countries than in the Netherlands. For example, Germany has a special minister with digitisation in her portfolio; the United Kingdom has a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport; and the United States has the White House Office of Science and Technology (OSTP), which devotes a great deal of attention to digitisation. The German Bundestag and the British Parliament also

have an institutionalised focus on digitisation. For example, the Bundestag has a permanent parliamentary committee on digitisation and both the Bundestag and the British Parliament have appointed several committees of inquiry into digitisation. With this study, we try to illustrate how the various working methods and their institutional embedding contribute to parliamentary grip on social and political questions surrounding digitisation.

**Three levels**

We describe the results of the research on three levels:

- **Committee level**: all working methods aimed at strengthening the grip of temporary or standing parliamentary committees on digitisation;
- **Individual parliamentarians**: all working methods aimed at strengthening the individual (knowledge) position of parliamentarians in the field of digitisation;
- **Parliamentary support**: all working methods that support the political process surrounding digitisation issues from the staff of parliament.

For each option, we indicate in brief what the working method comprises, what the impact has (been) based on practical experiences in the relevant parliament and which function(s) the working method primarily fulfils. However, it is not possible to fully determine the impact. The literature on impact assessments shows that impact is notoriously difficult to demonstrate (The World Bank, 2009). In this context, impact refers to the effects of the working methods that directly involved parliamentarians and staff members experience. For example, the political status and weight of new or temporary committees appear to play a crucial role in daily practices. We also indicate, for each option, whether the particular method exists in the Dutch House of Representatives, or whether it would fit in with the Dutch parliamentary system or culture.

In addition, we distinguish two types of questions that digitisation raises:

- **Domain-specific questions**: new digital technologies are changing all kinds of professional and social practices, such as healthcare, education and justice. This raises all kinds of technical, economic, ethical and legal questions, some of which are specific to that particular practice. An important political question is whether existing regulatory frameworks still suffice, or need to be adapted. These questions must be addressed by the already existing standing committees.
- **Cross-domain questions**: moreover, new digital technologies touch on broader issues such as privacy, justice, control over technology, and a changing balance of power. These issues can only be understood to a limited extent from the perspective of the individual domains and thus require a broader debate. This concerns, for example, the question of whether there is an comprehensive supervisory regime in the field of digitisation. These questions are best addressed by an investigative committee or standing committee that focuses specifically on digitisation.

**Domain-specific support for standing parliamentary committees**
These working methods mainly focus on supporting the standing parliamentary committees in their monitoring, agenda-setting and legislative tasks. This support can be provided by increasing the knowledge of all committee members or by specialising a few specific (staff) members (division of tasks). **Knowledge enhancement** involves forms of parliamentary research to retrieve information from society. In the British parliament they make frequent use of inquiries for this purpose. The inquiries consists of thoroughly prepared hearings, which result in a joint report from the committee with recommendations to the government. The government is obliged to respond. Committees can use this to put issues on the agenda and monitor the government. The Dutch House of Representatives is increasingly organising round table discussions on digitisation issues, but these are not as comprehensive as the inquiries in the British Parliament with its solid parliamentary research culture. Another way to enhance knowledge is by organising working visits, which are a common instrument for all parliaments. Working visits can contribute to a better understanding of digitisation issues and lead to important issues being put on the agenda. However, the Dutch House of Representatives makes little use of this working method in the field of digitisation. Finally, we have seen that in other parliaments, more than in the Dutch House of Representatives, members organise themselves into more informal ways of working in order to delve into digitisation issues. These are: temporary partnerships that work towards new legislation, political consensus or broader social and political debate. The American caucuses, the all-party parliamentary groups in the UK, and the more formal variant of the Norwegian Teknogruppe are examples of this.

**The division of tasks** involves working methods in which a few members of a parliamentary committee or staff specialise in digitisation, in order to support other (committee) members. For example, the Bundestag has clear spokespersons on digitisation. In the Dutch House of Representatives, this differs per political group. The German spokespersons function within the political groups as contact points on digitisation, write briefings for fellow group members, or replace their colleagues. In addition, rapporteurship is used in which one or two members are informed on behalf of an entire committee and subsequently report to them. The Dutch House of Representatives is somewhat cautious about this because it requires a certain degree of neutrality. Finally, committees in the British Parliament regularly make use of a permanent or temporary (hired) specialist advisor, among other things in the field of digitisation. These advisors support the staff in the preparation of an inquiry, for example, but also look at whether there are any digitisation issues that need to be addressed politically. The Dutch House of Representatives is not familiar with this form of work.

Both working methods that focus on general knowledge enhancement and those that focus on specialisation can help the Dutch House of Representatives to get a better grip on social and political issues surrounding digitisation. This would mean

that, in practice, the preparation and completion of the roundtable discussions and working visits would be more firmly supported by the *Dienst Analyse en Onderzoek* (analysis and research service for permanent committees) or an independent external organisation. A more informal working method, such as the Teknogruppe in Norway with closed sessions on a specific digitisation topic to which, in principle, every Member of Parliament is entitled, might also be interesting to organise more grip. The rapporteurship is also a good form for issues surrounding digitisation because it is currently less politically charged than migration or climate change, for example. A specially appointed knowledge coordinator from the staff could help members get a better grip on digitisation

**Cross-domain commissions**
In addition to all kinds of working methods that support the standing committees in their domain-specific questions on digitisation, there are also working methods that support the entire parliament in the cross-domain questions. These can be temporary research committees or standing committees on digitisation. The first category concerns committees with an agenda-setting and legislative (framework-setting) function, which present a coherent narrative including recommendations to parliament and government on digitisation, such as the Special Inquiry Committee on AI of the British House of Lords. The second category differs from parliament to parliament. On paper, the German Committee on the Digital Agenda has the most ideal task description with both an agenda-setting, legislative (framework-setting), monitoring, and coordinating task on digitisation.

The challenge of a temporary research committee is to make sure the final results will be followed up sufficiently in government policy or in parliament itself. Structural attention to follow-up is important. In the British Parliament, the Liaison Committees have now taken on the task to improve the process. The House of Commons is familiar with establishing a subcommittee to monitor follow-up on the government side, as in the case of disinformation. Most research committees in the Dutch House of Representatives focus on monitoring the government, especially on files where much has gone wrong, such as government ICT projects, house prices and Fyra. However, the Dutch House of Representatives could choose to set up a committee of inquiry that focuses more on the future and works towards an integrated political vision on digitisation, from which the standing committees could then benefit in their work.

In the Bundestag we have seen that the challenge for a standing committee on digitisation is to have a similar political status and weight as other standing committees. The Committee on the Digital Agenda in the Bundestag has too little status - it is almost never *federführend* (the leading committee) on important digitisation issues, the way all other standing committees are. As a result, it is unable to actually take on the tasks assigned to it. One of the reasons for this is that the committee is not one on one mirrored to a ministry. At the moment, its most

important function is only to further inform the committee members through working visits, hearings, etc. so that they can support their colleagues on their digitisation files through their own political group. One working method that manages to carry out all of the above tasks in practice, albeit not in the field of digitisation, is the Danish working group for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This working group has acquired a solid status to inform, advise and help committees set their agendas in the area of SDGs. The committee also includes a large number of prominent parliamentarians. An important reason for this is that the subject is widely discussed in Danish society and politics. In the Dutch House of Representatives, the Committee on European Affairs has the kind of role we might envision for a permanent Committee on Digitisation. A committee on Digitalisation could have a similar working method, but focusing on digital developments instead. This study does not consider the impact of the Committee for European Affairs. It would be a good idea to look at it before the Dutch House of Representatives decides to set up such a committee for digitisation as well.

**In conclusion**

The parliamentary support in the Netherlands is small compared to the other investigated countries. Moreover, the Dutch House of Representatives has fewer members of parliament than other parliaments. Whatever working method the House of Representatives chooses in order to get a better grip on digitisation, increased support is indispensable. This can be organised internally or externally. Fortunately, the Netherlands also has a strong and diverse landscape of advisory and research organisations that can support the Dutch House of Representatives from outside. Organisations such as the Rathenau Instituut can help the Dutch House of Representatives to retrieve information from society when it comes to social changes due to the emergence of new digital technologies.

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# 1 Introduction

How can the Dutch House of Representatives strengthen its knowledge position in the field of digitisation (information law) and get a better grip on the desirable and undesirable developments related to digitisation (monitoring and legislative task)? This is the central research question of the Temporary Committee on the Digital Future (TCDT).

In order to answer this question, the TCDT has asked the Rathenau Instituut to conduct international comparative research into how other countries, particularly their parliaments, deal with digitisation issues: which methods are used there?

The TCDT is looking for strategies and working methods that can help the Dutch House of Representatives in the field of digitisation:

- to update its knowledge position and maintain it in the future;
- to fulfil its monitoring task optimally;
- to make timely, well-founded and targeted adjustments when necessary.

## 1.1 Digitisation in a nutshell

Digitisation involves much more than converting analogue data into bits and bytes. Through converting, the properties of information change: digital information is easier to cut, share, and edit. Digitisation thus creates new possibilities, organisational processes, (social) habits, and business models. As a result, it has a radical transformation force (Prins et al., 2012) that, in recent years, has brought about major changes in the music, retail, travel, taxi industries, and others.

Digitisation is now increasingly seen as a transition and no longer as a collection of smart gadgets or an issue for the IT department. Shaping this transition is an important social task (Kool et al., 2018). The role of government and politics is to steer towards a socially responsible digital society. In order to substantiate the opportunities of digital innovation, it is important that administrators and politicians think about what direction our digital society should take. How can digitisation contribute to important societal challenges? At the same time, they must be aware of the undesirable effects and risks associated with new technology (Van Est et al., 2018).

In order to manage the digital transition properly, politicians must have insight into both the current state of affairs and the possibilities of various digital technologies, as well as their social effects. These include, for example, robotics, Internet of Things (IoT), biometrics, persuasive technology, digital platforms, virtual and augmented reality, big data and artificial intelligence (AI) (Kool et al, 2017). Politicians also need to gain insight into the underlying forces that are important in order to interpret the meaning of digitisation. These include, for example, the continuous struggle to control data value chains (the collection, analysis, and application of data), geopolitical relationships with respect to cybersecurity, and the tendency of large technology companies to monopolise. Politicians must be able to anticipate these developments. Any new working methods in the Dutch House of Representatives must be set up to identify such forces at the right time.

## 1.2 Research questions and approach

To address digitisation, in phase I of this study we carried out a quick scan of the various working methods used by ten parliaments. In doing so, we opted for: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Norway, United Kingdom, United States, and Switzerland.

This choice is based on:

- the comparability of political systems with the Netherlands (Denmark, Belgium, and Germany);
- a high score with regards to digitisation in the country rankings of the OECD[1], European Commission[2], and the IMD *World Competive Rankings*[3] (Finland, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, United States, France);
- prior knowledge about relevant working methods from the TCDT itself (United Kingdom, Finland, Germany);
- pragmatic reasons. To make the descriptions and comparison manageable and clear, we chose a limited selection of countries.

Via *desk research*, a broad enquiry via the *European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation* (ECPRD) and the *European Parliamentary Technology Assessment*-network (EPTA)[4], we have gathered information about the various working methods. We looked at three dimensions: positioning, approach, and content.

1 https://goingdigital.oecd.org/en/
2 https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi
3 https://www.imd.org/wcc/world-competitiveness-center-rankings/world-digital-competitiveness-rankings-2019/
4 A network of 22 sister organisations of the Rathenau Instituut, both in Europe and abroad (United States and South America) who are either in or outside parliament. They conduct research and give advice on issues related to science, technology and innovation. See: https://eptanetwork.org/

Based on an analysis of the methods, we - in consultation with the TCDT - arrived at a further selection of countries that, because of their specific working methods, seemed to be the most relevant and promising for the Dutch situation. Phase II focused on the following five countries: Germany, United Kingdom, United States, Denmark, and Norway (see table 1). The latter two have been studied in less depth and we will only highlight one method that offers an interesting addition to the rest of the material. The working method from Denmark does not relate to digitisation but to another cross-committee topic: the sustainable development goals. It is particularly interesting in terms of form because it has a coordinating function for the entire Danish parliament.

We investigated the different working methods of the five countries, as well as their political impact. The proceeds of phase II should provide the Committee with further arguments that can be used to choose a new institutional direction for the Dutch House of Representatives to get a better grip on digitisation issues.

Table 1 Working methods we studied per country

| Country | Working method |
|---|---|
| Germany | • Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment, including the *Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag* (TAB)*.<br>• Committee on the Digital Agenda<br>• Study Commission on Artificial Intelligence (AI) |
| United Kingdom | • Commons Select Committee Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), including the subcommittee on Disinformation<br>• Commons Select Committee Science & Technology<br>• Lords Select Committee Science & Technology<br>• Lords select Committee on AI (ad hoc committee)<br>• Lords Select Committee on Democracy and Digital Technologies (special inquiry committee)<br>• The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)* |
| United States | • Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation<br>• House Committee on Science, Space and Technology<br>• House Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce<br>• The Government Accountability Office (GAO), including the Technology Assessment and Analytics team (STAA) & Center for Strategic Foresight*.<br>• Congressional advisory commissions on Cyberspace and AI* |
| Denmark | • The Parliamentary Working Group on World Goals, including the broad 2030 network |
| Norway | • Parliament's Teknogruppe, including Norwegian Board of Technology (NBT)* |

* For our analysis, we take into account the role of these support services in relation to the working methods of parliament.

**Research questions**

For each working method, we looked at how it contributes to 'getting a better grip' on digitisation. We started from three main functions based on the three most important tasks of the Dutch House of Representatives:

1. **Monitoring** means that the working method checks the government on the subject of digitisation. This may involve, for example, monitoring the implementation of a digitisation strategy.

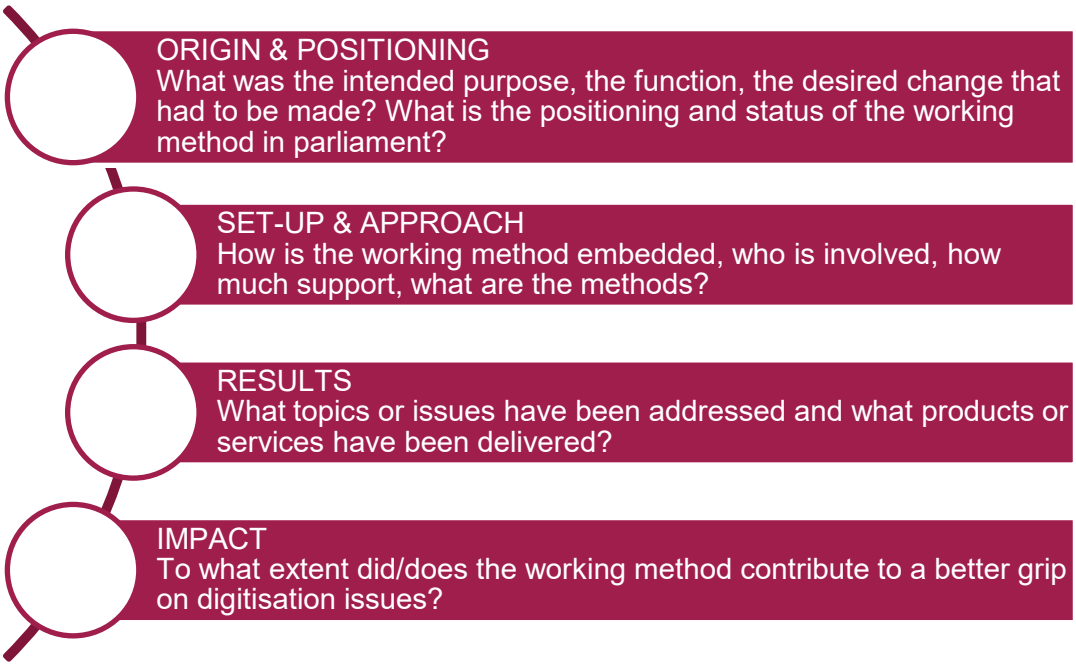
2. **Legislation** means that the working method prepares and possibly submits legislative proposals in the field of digitisation. It is also important to assess the legislation and regulations adopted by the government and, where necessary, to adapt them.
3. **Representing the people** stands for putting political questions about digitisation on the parliamentary agenda in its own right, regardless of whether and how the government puts the subject on the agenda.

Two other functions that we see in the various working methods are supportive of these three core functions:

1. **Inform** means that the working method tries to strengthen the knowledge base of parliamentarians in the field of digitisation, both in terms of technical knowledge and the more socio-ethical questions and associated (framework) policy options.
2. **Coordinate** means that the working method has a role towards different committees, political groups and/or individual parliamentarians. For example, by means of passing on knowledge acquired in a targeted way or by supporting other working methods when it comes to digitisation. This is an important function for the entire parliament to get a better grip on the cross-domain subject of digitisation.

Appendix I contains the background document. For the five countries we have examined in Phase II, this document describes all the working methods - per country - on the basis of four main questions (see Figure 1). The last two questions are new in relation to phase I. The background document is in English so that we were able to have it checked by the interviewees.

Figure 1 The four main questions




In appendix II, we included abridged the descriptions of the working methods from the phase I countries (Finland, France, Belgium, Estonia and Switzerland – which we did not elaborate on in consultation with the TCDT), answering questions 1 and 2.

We used the following research methods to test our findings as much as possible from different sources (triangulation):

- desk research based on online information from the parliamentary websites and associated knowledge organisations;
- desk research based on (scientific and 'grey') literature;
- semi-open interviews with parliamentarians and the administrative staff of the parliaments and sister organisations of the Rathenau Instituut. We conducted one to two interviews per working method. The interviews had two purposes:
  a. to identify missing factual information (main questions 2 and 3);
  b. to obtain information about the impact of the method (main questions 1 and 4).

We spoke to the interviewees during working visits to Berlin (Bundestag) and London (House of Commons and House of Lords) and by telephone (Congress in the United States, Folketing in Denmark and the Storting in Norway). An overview of the interviewees and their positions can be found at the end of this report.

They were approached via contacts of the sister organisations of the Rathenau Instituut in the various parliaments (Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom and the

United States), via the innovation attachés in Washington and via a contact of the ECPRD (Denmark). They have all received a letter from the chairman of the TCDT, Kathalijne Buitenweg, inviting them to participate in this research. The interviewees received a tailor-made questionnaire in advance with specific questions about the form of work in which they were involved. The interviews were extensively minuted and recorded (to be listened to where necessary). Due to the reluctance of staff members in Congress to share insights with foreign researchers, we were less able to deepen the working methods in the United States.

**Delimitation**

Central to this study are the various working methods that parliaments use to get a better grip on digitisation. By working methods, we mean ways that help to shape parliamentary decision-making on digitisation. These can be specific temporary or permanent committees, but also forms of parliamentary support that help committees or individual members of parliament to improve their grip on digitisation.

In this study, we looked at parliamentary working methods that address issues related to the digital transition both broadly (e.g. focused on AI) and specifically (e.g. focused on disinformation). Incidentally, in practice, it appears that many broadly oriented working methods also look at specific technology areas such as 5G and drones and specific practices such as e-government and cyber warfare. The purpose of this is often to identify broader dilemmas surrounding digital issues on the basis of specific examples.

Typical for the societal issue of digitisation - whether they have a broad or specific focus - is that they are not confined to the field of activity of a single ministry, but cross departmental boundaries. This also applies to the parliamentary forms of work on this subject. In this sense, digitisation can be compared to that other major social transition of our time: the sustainability transition. This comparison was made several times by the people we interviewed for this study.

The following working methods have not been included in this study:

- working methods that deal with the digitisation of the parliament itself (e-parliament);[5]
- working methods that address specific topics such as biotechnology or e-health that have an important digitisation component because digitisation (or ICT) is an enabling technology.

5 In response to the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) request, quite a number of countries indicated that they have working methods that rather address this particular theme.

## 1.3 Reader's guide

In chapter 2 we briefly describe the five parliaments and their working methods that we have studied. We explain for each country how the parliament tries to get a grip on digitisation issues and place this within the parliamentary culture of the country.

In chapter 3 we structure the different working methods we have identified at the following levels: committees, individual members of parliament and support. We compare the different working methods per level and describe their function and their impact on the political process. We also make a comparison with the situation in the Dutch House of Representatives. Chapter 3 ends with a figure that gives an overview of all working methods.

In Chapter 4 we show what the most important options are for the Dutch House of Representatives, based on the most important political questions about digitisation that need to be addressed. These include:

- Practice-specific questions raised by all the standing parliamentary committees, such as: how are new digital technologies changing professional and social practices, such as healthcare, energy supply, the police, the judiciary and education? What technical, economic, ethical and legal questions do these technologies raise? How can these questions best be addressed?
- Broad questions that need to be addressed, transcending the committees, about where the Netherlands wants to go with the digital transition. How can digitisation contribute to major societal challenges and under what conditions? But also the broad governance questions about, for example, the organisation of supervision and the general legal frameworks to which digital innovation should relate.

# 2 Brief overview of the five parliaments

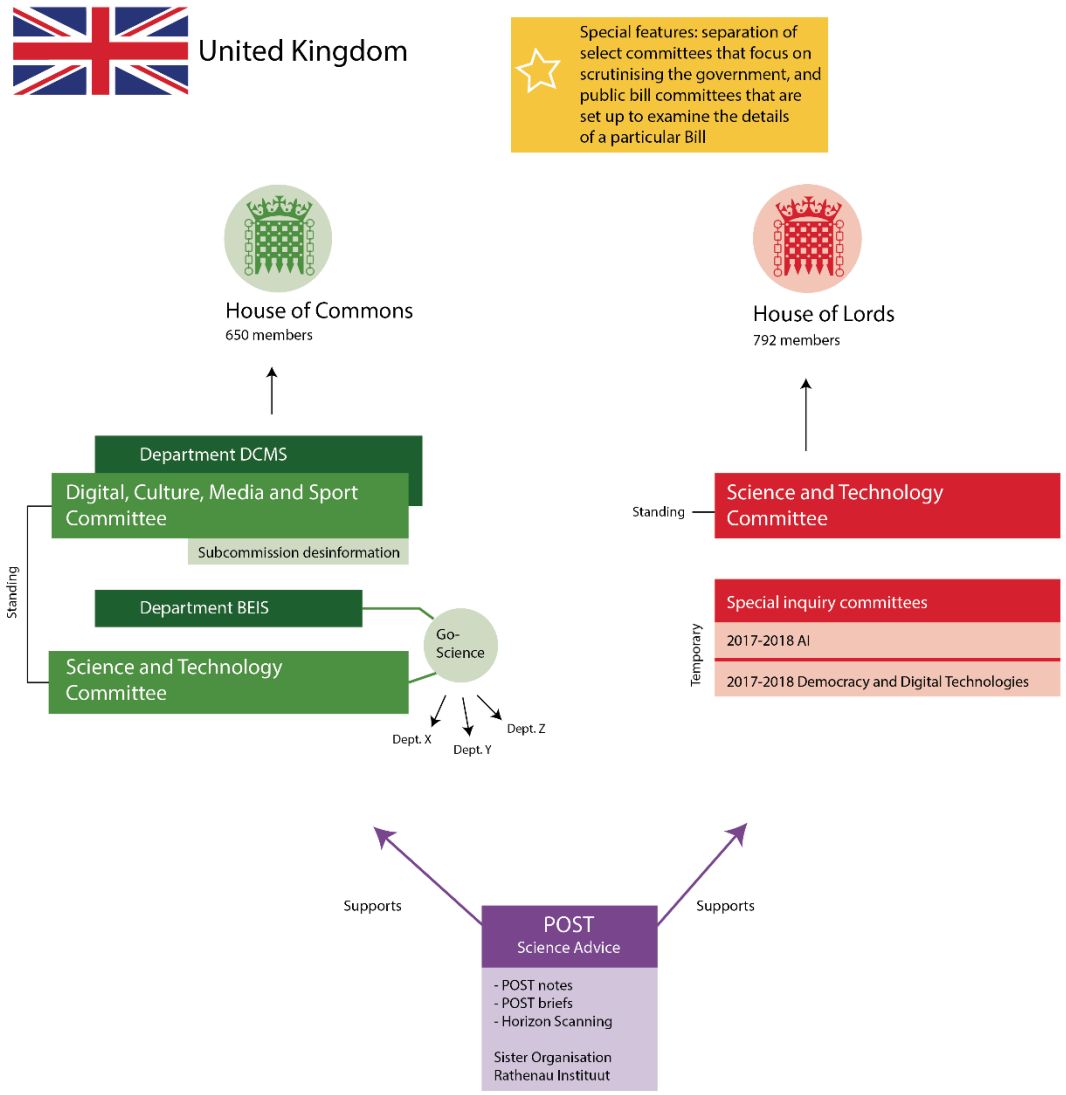
This chapter provides an introduction to the five countries and their parliaments that we examined in Phase II of this study. It contains:

- An overview of all working methods per parliament in an infographic.
- A brief description of the working methods per country in a table.
- A general outline for each parliament of the way in which attempts are being made to get to grips with digitisation issues, and how this works out in practice in the context of the existing parliamentary culture and customs.

## 2.1 United Kingdom

Digitisation is a theme that is discussed in various committees in the British Parliament, depending on the specific subject. In order to get a better picture of how the UK deals with digitisation issues, we have studied six different parliamentary committees. These include committees from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. We also looked at the role of POST (a sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut).

Figure 2 Overview working methods in the House of Commons and House of Lords



### 2.1.1 Description of the working methods in the House of Commons and House of Lords

The committees below have a formal task to focus either on political issues related to the broader theme of science and technology (II and III), or issues related to digitisation (I and IV). There are working methods on digitalisation issues in both the House of Lords (I and II) and the House of Commons (III and IV). Some are of a permanent nature (I, II, III), others of a temporary nature (IV).

| **UNITED KINGDOM** | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (Commons Select Committee), including the subcommittee on Disinformation<br><br>*(DEPARTMENTAL)* | Scrutinises the work (expenditure, policy and implementation) of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and sets up inquiries on current issues. The research into disinformation and fake news and the research into immersive and addictive technologies received a lot of media attention thanks to the prominent figures who were heard by the committee. This public attention reinforced the committee's recommendations. The Subcommittee on Disinformation offers a way to permanently follow up on this research by continuing to gather evidence and monitor the government. |
| II | Science and Technology Committee (Commons Select Committee)<br><br>*(CROSS-DEPARTMENT)* | Scrutinises the Government Office for Science (GO-Science), which works with the Departement for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). This is a semi-autonomous organisation that focuses on the scientific underpinning of government policy. It monitors the activities of various departments and focuses on both science for policy and policy for science. The committee has carried out research into, among other things: algorithms in decision-making, commercial and recreational drone use, digital government, the impact of social media and screen use on the health of young people, and quantum technologies. |
| III | Science and Technology Committee (Lords Select Committee)<br><br>*(INVESTIGATIVE)* | Scrutinises government policy by conducting interdepartmental research on activities in the field of: (1) science for policy, (2) opportunities and challenges of technology, (3) policy for science. The House of Lords' investigations are often more in-depth than those of the House of Commons. Shorter investigations, as a follow-up or focused on topical issues, are also possible. Recently there has been no research specifically focused on digital issues. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | However, last year's research into forensic science and the ongoing research into healthy ageing do touch on digital issues. |
| IV | | Focus on a specific research question. The Liaison Committee advises the House of Lords on the establishment of special inquiry committees. |
| | Artificial Intelligence Committee (ad hoc Lords Select Committee) | In 2017, an ad hoc committee investigated the economic, ethical and social implications of AI. In April 2018 it published the report “AI in the UK: ready, willing and able?” which was much appreciated both within and outside parliament. |
| | Democracy and Digital Technologies Committee (special inquiry Lords Select Committee)<br><br>*(AD HOC)* | In 2019, a special committee of inquiry was set up on how representative democracy can be strengthened, not undermined, in the digital world. It looks at transparency in political campaigns, privacy and anonymity, disinformation, effects of digital technologies on public discourse and digital literacy. The report is expected in June 2020. |
| V | Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)<br><br>(SUPPORTIVE) | POST is the internal source for independent, balanced and accessible analysis of public policies related to science and technology. Recently, POST has received more and more requests for research on digitisation. About one-sixth to one-quarter of POST's work deals with digitisation issues. POST notes are based on horizon scanning and highlight urgent policy-relevant topics such as drones, cybersecurity, consumer devices and care robots. POST letters are produced at the request of committees, for example on 5G technology. |

### 2.1.2 In context

Within our study, the British Parliament has the highest number of working methods dealing with digitisation issues. The British government is the only ministry with an explicit reference to digitisation in its title[6]. Nevertheless, other departments and committees also deal with digitisation issues. Interviews have shown that this sometimes causes some friction between the committees. Nevertheless, there is no need for a different parliamentary approach to digitisation issues. On the contrary, it

6 News story: Change of name for DCMS (3 juli 2017) URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/change-of-name-for-dcms

is considered useful to look at digitisation from different methods, domains and application areas.

This has to do with a strong science advice culture in the British parliament. Scrutinising the government, but also putting issues on the agenda itself, are carried out by committees mainly through inquiries, which produce a report with recommendations to which the government must respond within 60 days. The quality of these Cabinet responses vary considerably and depends, among other things, on the concreteness of the recommendations, the timing and the media attention for the report. Sometimes the answer simply consists of "no, we're not going to do this", or "good idea, we're already doing this". Sometimes the Cabinet response is extensive and recommendations are adopted, although the committees do not always get the credits for that. This makes it difficult to determine the exact effects of the committee's work. The committees are supported in their inquiries by an extensive civil service and parliamentary knowledge organisations such as POST and the libraries. Members of the House of Commons can confidentially submit substantive requests, receive general briefings, and receive training and guidance on the use of information by staff members of the libraries.

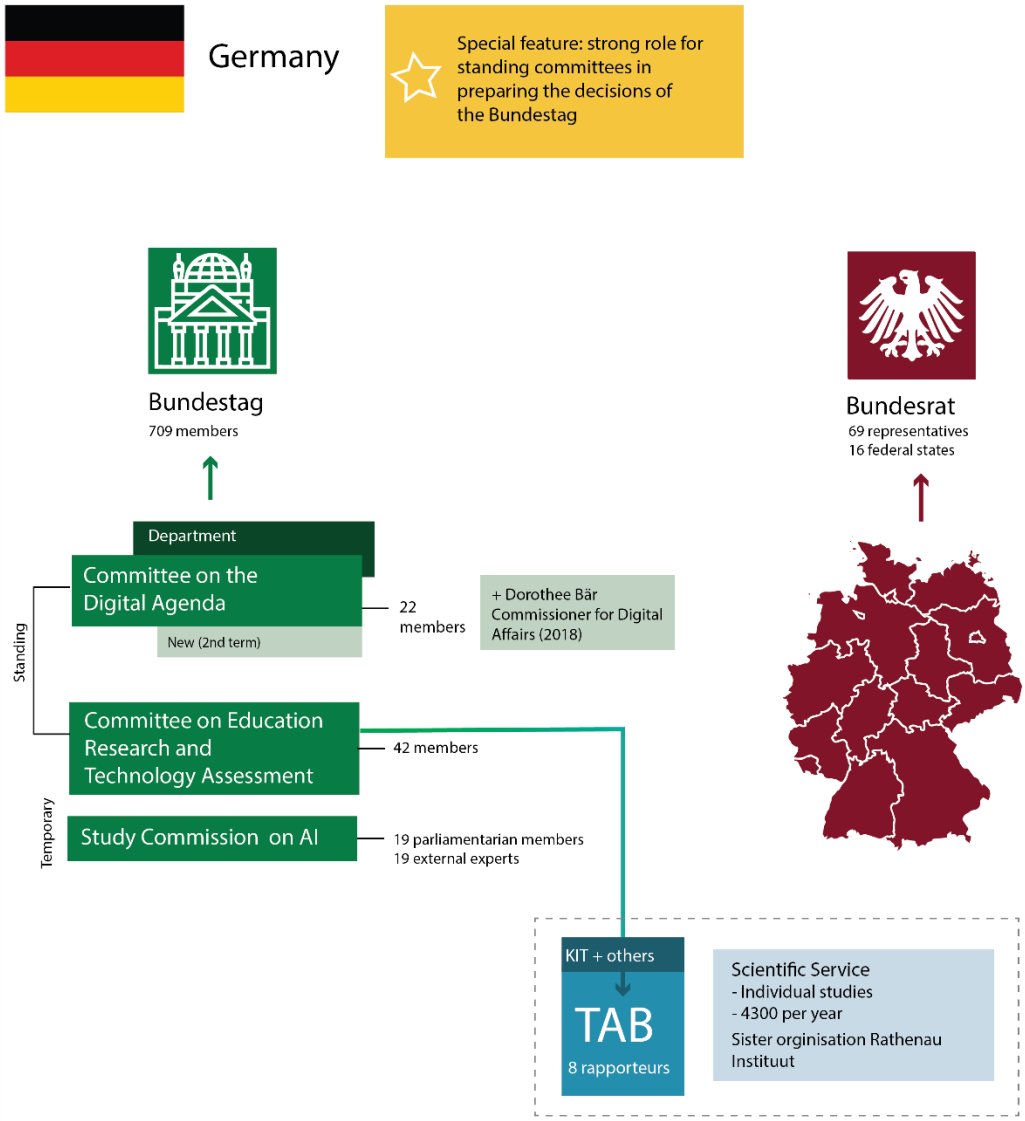
It is also relevant that the UK Parliament has two types of committees: the select committees and the public bill committees. The select committees are mirrored to the ministries and the public bill committees are set up on an ad hoc basis for each piece of legislation to be dealt with in the House of Commons. Only in the public bill committees, which deal with legislation and regulations, parliamentarians speak from their party political background. The focus of the select committees is on checking the government's policy and expenditure. The most important instrument is the inquiry. Through extensive hearings, which are prepared by the staff, the committee members arrive at a consensual report. The members let go of their party political ideology as much as possible. Together they look for a better understanding of and grip on an issue. These committees are strongly focused on informing their own members and monitoring and advising the government.

The strong research culture in the British parliament seems to mean that there is no need for specific new working methods to get a better grip on the theme of digitisation. Permanent committees have the possibility to start inquiries, special inquiry committees can do more extensive research on a specific subject, and the research organisation of the British Parliament (POST) also publishes a lot about digitisation topics. This offers sufficient opportunities for parliamentarians to be thoroughly informed - including about social and ethical questions and framework and regulatory measures - so that they can carry out their parliamentary, supervisory and legislative duties.

## 2.2 Germany

In the Bundestag, subjects relating to digitisation are often dealt with within the permanent committees and the policy areas they touch upon. However, a number of working methods show that digitisation is recognised within the Bundestag as an important cross-committee issue. In this section, we will elaborate on three forms of work that we have studied in more detail: a new standing Committee on the Digital Agenda, a standing committee in which TAB (a sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut) has a role to play, and a temporary Study Commission on AI. None of the sixteen permanent committees of the Federal Council is specifically dedicated to the theme of digitisation.

Figure 3 Overview of working methods in the Bundestag



### 2.2.1 Description of working methods in the Bundestag

| **GERMANY** | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | Committee on the Digital Agenda<br><br>*(COORDINATE)*<br><br>Offiicial name*: Der Ausschuss Digitale Agenda* | Focuses on different aspects of digitisation, and aspires to act as a catalyst in parliamentary work on digital policy issues by connecting policy areas and providing interdisciplinary perspectives. In practice, the committee hardly ever takes the lead in dealing with strategic documents and legislation in the field of digitisation. It is mainly helpful for the members themselves - the spokespersons for Digitisation of political parties - who become more informed. Their knowledge is shared through the political groups. The committee is not attached to any ministry, but there is a kind of state secretary (*Staatsministerin*) for digitisation who falls directly under the office of the Chancellor (*Kanzlerarmt*). The subjects range from digital media, internet policy and digital infrastructure, to digital inclusion, civil rights and security. |
| II | Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment, including TAB<br><br>*(MONITOR & COORDINATE)*<br><br>Official name*: Ausschuss für Bildung, Forschung und Technikfolgenabschätzung* | Focuses on the policy area of the Ministry of Education and Research. The *Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag* (TAB) plays an important role within this committee. The TAB's scientists work exclusively for Parliament - under the supervision of committee members who are called rapporteurs. They provide the Bundestag with studies on science and technology issues (including foresight studies and technology assessments). Their analyses deal with the social, economic and ecological opportunities and risks of, for example, the digital transformation in the agricultural sector, autonomous weapons or the future of work. |
| III | Study Commission on AI<br><br>*(RESEARCH)*<br><br>Official name*: Enquete-Kommission Künstliche Intelligenz – Gesellschaftliche Verantwortung und wirtschaftliche, soziale und ökologische Potenziale* | Focuses on informing and advising the entire parliament about the opportunities and risks of AI and the need for national and international policies to keep both in balance. To this end, she looks at technical, legal and ethical issues and focuses on six areas: business, state, health, work, mobility and media. The committee consists of as many parliamentarians as external experts. The committee was established in September 2018 and will produce a report and recommendations in 2020. |

### 2.2.2 In context

Within the Bundestag, there is a clear recognition of the political importance of digitisation. Several forms of work are used to get a better grip on the subject. The fact that only the German parliament has set up a permanent parliamentary committee that focuses specifically and exclusively on digitisation can be explained by the strong committee culture of the Bundestag.

Committees in the Bundestag mainly focus on the legislative process. The rules of procedure describe the committees as 'the bodies responsible for preparing the decisions of the Bundestag'. There is always one committee with final responsibility (*federführend*). The plenary session appoints which committee has final responsibility and ultimately has to make recommendations to the Bundestag on a specific government document or legislation. Other relevant committees have the task of advising the committee with final responsibility.

The problem with the Committee on the Digital Agenda is that it is almost never appointed as the committee with final responsibility. Not even when it comes to the national digital strategy. Because she is one of the few committees without an 'own' ministry, she mainly has an advisory role towards other federated committees. There is an ongoing discussion in Germany about whether or not to set up a ministry for digitisation. The current Cabinet does not want it, but recently there was a petition calling on the coalition (CDU, CSU and SPD) to embed digitisation more firmly in the federal government and to appoint a separate minister for it[7]. According to one of our interviewees, the CDU has recently put the door ajar for this.

The interviews show that the members of the Committee on the Digital Agenda are relatively young and especially tech-savvy. They are often also the spokespersons for digitalisation of their group. The committee therefore mainly serves to further strengthen the knowledge position of these spokespersons, for example by working visits to other countries and parliaments. In this way, the members gain insight into how digitisation issues can be tackled differently or better. The exchange of information then mainly takes place via the party political lines (political groups). The spokespersons (and their staff) write briefings for the other members of their group. They also replace them during debates when it comes specifically to digitisation.

The Study Commission on AI is more focused on informing and advising the entire parliament (and not the government as in the British parliament). Contrary to British research (inquiries), the German study commissions are generally less focused on consensus building. They are an instrument for forming political opinions, but their report often also contains minority opinions, based on different party political lines.

7 Find the petition on op https://digitalministerium.org/.

Incidentally, the Committee on the Digital Agenda also resulted from a recommendation of a study commission.

The reports of the TAB aim to inform all members of the Bundestag on specific technological topics and contribute to the political opinion-forming process. About 80% is about digitisation. The TAB reports are widely supported in the Bundestag because they are based on the full consensus of the rapporteurs involved, who each come from a different political group. This makes the reports a fairly neutral source of knowledge for parliamentarians. The political impact of the reports is different and depends, among other things, on timing.

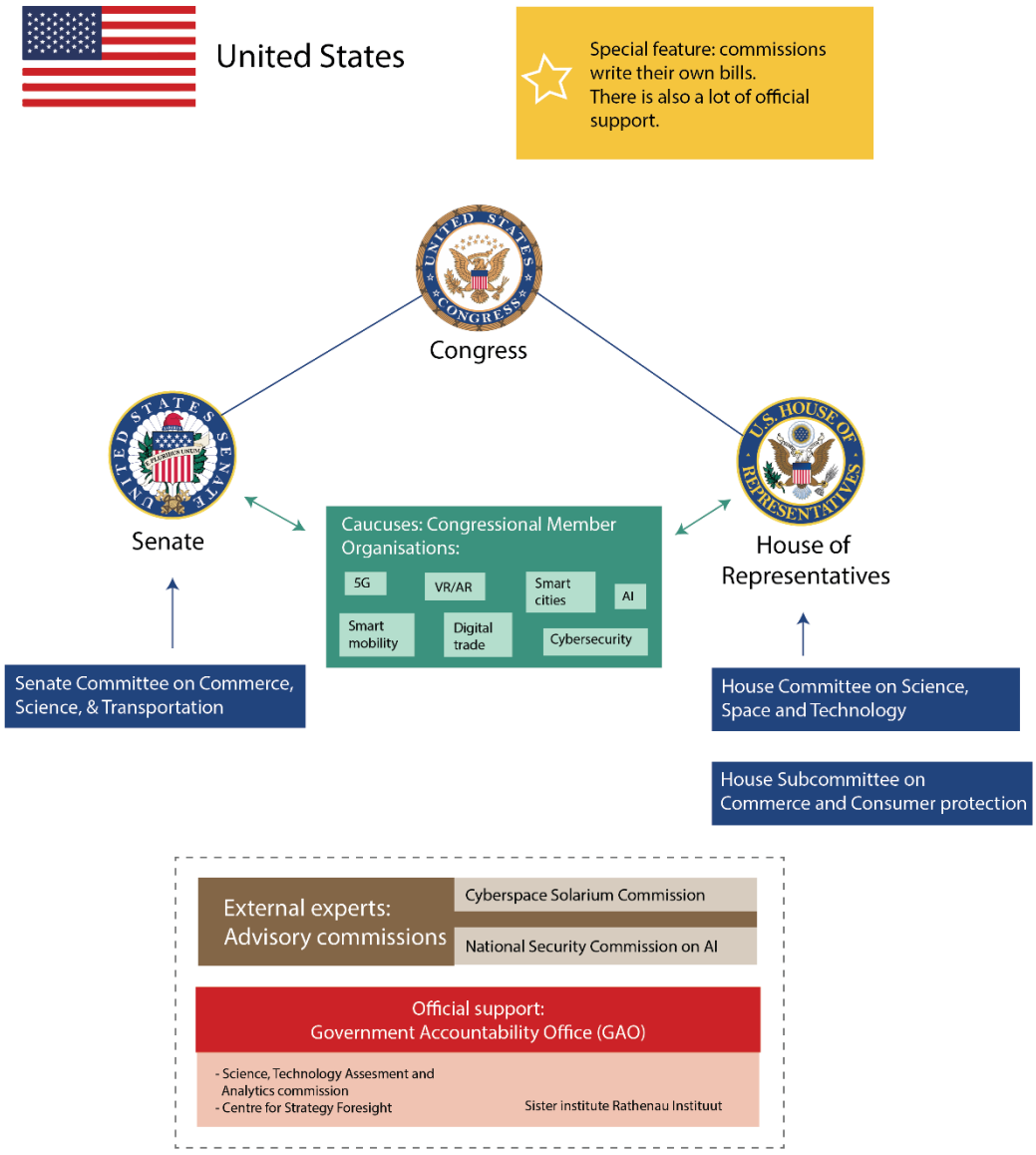
An important difference with the Dutch House of Representatives is that the Bundestag is a larger and less fragmented parliament. As a result, there is less of a lack of capacity among parties to engage in digitisation. The administrative staff of the Bundestag has much more of a procedural task than within the British parliament, and not a content-preparing task. However, each member of the Bundestag has an extensive personal staff with a chief, a secretary, a substantive (research) expert and often a few trainees.

It seems that German parliamentarians are able to inform themselves sufficiently about digitisation issues in various ways; through total immersion in a study commission, through research proposals for TAB, or the expertise of fellow party members and the members of the Committee on the Digital Agenda.

## 2.3 United States

For this study, we also investigated how the U.S. Congress deals with digitisation issues. Here, we look in more detail at a committee of the Senate, two committees of the House of Representatives, partnerships of congressmen interested in digitisation (caucuses), three support services and two advisory committees with external experts appointed by both houses. We have been able to do less in-depth research than at the British Parliament and the Bundestag. An important reason for this is that informants such as staff members are often reluctant to speak to foreign researchers.

Figure 4 Overview working methods in Congress



### 2.3.1 Description working methods in Congress

| UNITED STATES | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation<br><br>*(REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE)* | This committee is the largest standing committee in the Senate. It covers the broad field of interstate trade, science and technology policy and transport. The committee has several subcommittees:<br>• *Aviation and Space*<br>• *Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet,*<br>• *Manufacturing, Trade, and Consumer Protection,*<br>• *Science, Oceans, Fisheries, and Weather,*<br>• *Transportation and Safety*<br>• *Security.*<br>The third subcommittee focuses on issues related to mobile phones, the internet, satellite communications, broadband, 5G, consumer electronic equipment, IoT, etc. This committee has held regular hearings on disinformation with, among others, Facebook top man Mark Zuckerberg. |
| II | U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, & Technology<br><br>*(REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE)* | This committee focuses, for example, on emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles, AI, commercial use of facial recognition technologies and deep fakes that have received media attention. The committee intends to investigate unintended possible consequences of emerging technologies in the social, public health, economic, security and other domains. There are subcommittees for:<br>• *Energy*<br>• *Environment*<br>• *Research and Technology*<br>• *Space and Aeronautics*<br>• *Investigations and Oversight*. |
| III | Subcommittee Consumer Protection & Commerce in the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce[8] *(REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE)* | This is a subcommittee of the 'House Committee on Energy & Commerce'. It deals with topics such as data privacy and cybersecurity, trade issues and consumer protection. |

8 The 'House Committee on Energy & Commerce' is interesting, with its subcommittees 'Communications and Technology' and 'Consumer Protection & Commerce'. We are now only looking at the latter subcommittee. Another interesting committee that we have not investigated further is the subcommittee 'Cyber Security, Infrastructure Protection and Innovation', which falls under the 'House Committee on Homeland Secruity'.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| IV | Caucuses or 'Congressional Member Organisations'<br><br>*(SUPPORTIVE)* | Caucuses are groups of senators and/or representatives with shared interests or goals. They mainly serve as forums for the exchange of information and ideas. This may involve direct legislative objectives, informing congressmen or staff about policy issues, or generating a wider public awareness of a topic. This form of work facilitates interactions between members. There were 854 caucuses in the last term. Some of them focus on the political debate on digitisation. There are caucuses on 5G, digital commerce, unmanned systems, smart cities, cybersecurity, VR and AR, AI, IoT and smart transport. |
| V | Government Accountability Office<br><br>*(SUPPORTIVE)* | The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is the independent, non-partisan office that works for Congress. It is seen as the 'congressional watchdog' and conducts research on government spending. It also produces reports in the field of digitisation, such as on the future of warfare, cybersecurity and blockchain. There are recent initiatives to reorganise and increase capacity in the field of science and technology.<br><br>The Science Technology Assessment and Analytics (STAA) team was launched in January 2019 and brings together several GAO technology and science groups. This group acts as a one-stop-shop for technical expertise needed by members of Congress and their staff.<br><br>The Center for Strategic Foresight (CSF) was launched in September 2019 and is intended to complement the STAA team. CSF writes the more science-fiction-like versions of STAA's technical analysis. They look more broadly at the impact of emerging technologies. How will they affect society as a whole? What are the consequences for the form and function of government? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| VI | Advisory commissions<br><br>(*SUPPORTIVE)* | Advisory committees are formal groups set up to provide independent advice. They consist of policy experts elected by members of Congress and/or civil servants. The advisory committees conduct research, hold hearings, analyse data and conduct field visits. They exist on a temporary basis and report to Congress and make recommendations. There are currently two committees in the field of digitisation.<br>• In May 2019, the Cyberspace Solarium Commission was launched, which will make recommendations for the national cyberspace strategy in spring 2020.<br>• In August 2019, the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence was launched. This committee investigates which methods and means are needed to promote that AI can be used by the U.S. for national security and defence. It will issue a final report in October 2020. |

### 2.3.2 In context

On the basis of an overview of hearings, it is striking that in Congress almost all committees - both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate - pay attention to digitisation. Some committees do a little more than others. For example, there is the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, with a subcommittee on research and technology. This committee has the explicit responsibility for auditing the White House Office of Science and Technology (OSTP). The OSTP coordinates the entire science and technology policy throughout the government. For example, the OSTP has just published ten draft guidelines for the entire federal government that should be leading in all legislation and regulations developed for the use of AI[9]. The United States is keen to maintain world leadership in technological innovation. That is why the White House is now producing one strategy after another in the field of technology.

Another subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce also regularly deals with digitisation issues, such as self-propelled cars, IoT, FinTech and digital commerce.

9 The main message is that all new laws and regulations must be based on a thorough risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis. The OSTP explicitly warns against overregulation. See: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Draft-OMB-Memo-on-Regulation-of-AI-1-7-19.pdf.

In addition to hearings, Congress also has other types of support at its disposal to properly carry out its parliamentary tasks. For example, there are various (research) organisations that support the committees and parliamentarians in their work, such as the Office of General Counsel, the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and the Governmental Accountability Office. Approximately 10,000 people are employed by these organisations and other support institutes within Congres.

Furthermore, the committees have a lot of support, consisting of both permanent committee staff (2,500) and personal staff of the parliamentarians (12,000)[10]. The number of staff members varies greatly per committee. The staff of a senator has between 20 and 60 members, the staff of a representative consists of a maximum of 18 people. This is considerable compared to the support of an average member of parliament in the Netherlands. One of the reasons for this difference is the electoral district system in the United States. Every representative in Congress has obligations towards the supporters in his or her district. Many of the personal staff members are busy answering questions and requests from the constituency.

Finally, Congress also has the instrument of parliamentary advisory commissions composed of experts. In addition, there is a vibrant culture of Congressional caucuses, in which members acquire information about and collaborate in a more informal way on issues such as digitisation.

When it comes to getting to grips with digitisation issues, we see first and foremost that Congress is in the process of considerably expanding its official support in this area. The Science and Technology Assessment and Analytics (STAA) team, which issues independent reports on subjects such as AI and 5G, will double its staff with 70 full-time staff members to meet the growing number of research requests. In addition, the Center for Strategic Foresight was established in September 2019, which will focus primarily on technological issues related to societal developments. There are proponents of reviving the old Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). This was the research bureau in Congress that closed in 1995 because the Republicans who came to power at the time thought it was 'wasteful and hostile to their interests'[11]. The new OTA was to be called the Congressional Office of Technology. But the proposal for this has not yet passed both Houses and has yet to be signed by the president.

President Trump's government has great ambitions in the field of new technology and innovation. It is therefore understandable that Congress wants to be better able to compete with the government on these issues. Recent hearings in the Senate with, among others, Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg, made it clear that senators'

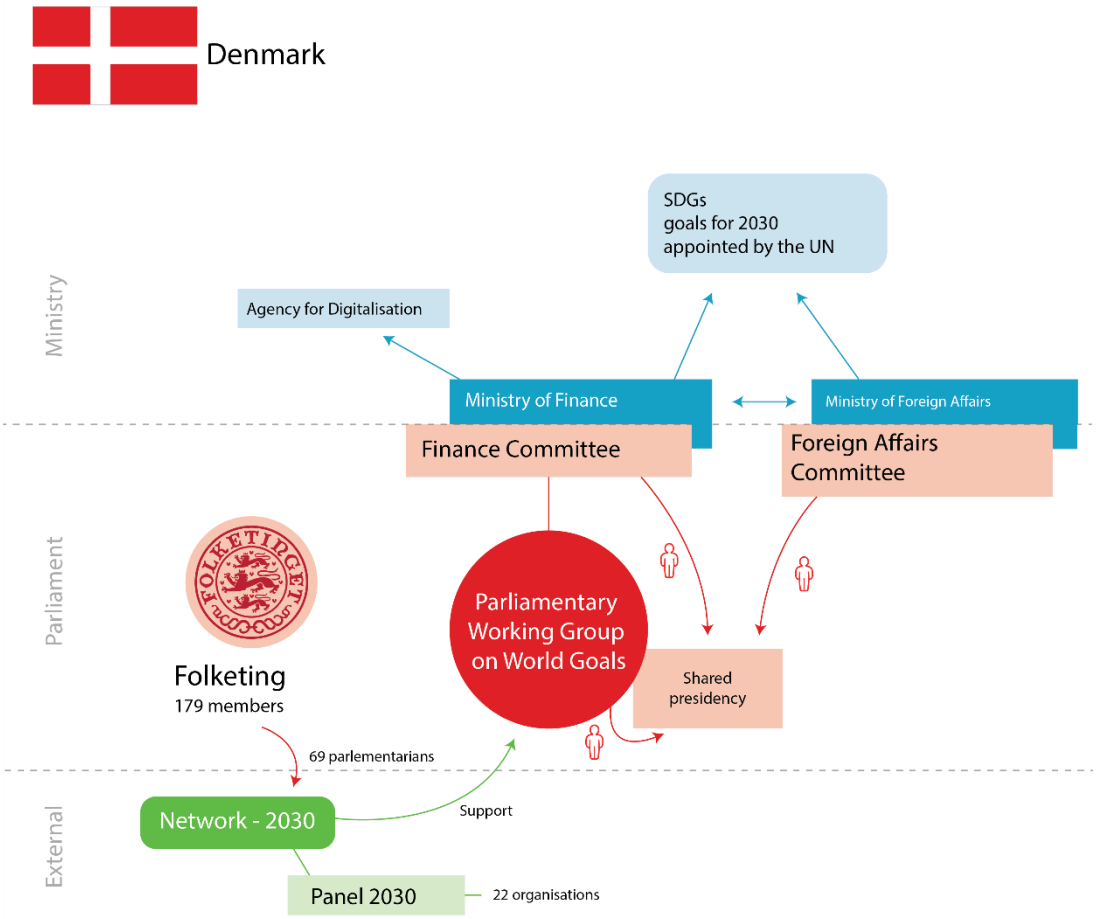
10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congressional_staff#cite_note-C-SPAN-5 (figures from 2000).
11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Office_of_Technology_Assessment

knowledge of digitisation leaves a lot to be desired. The public ridicule about this is an important driver of the expansion of support.

## 2.4 Denmark

The Folketing is the Danish Parliament. There is one Chamber, and no specific committee dealing only with digitisation. There is, however, a working method that we have explored in more detail in this study. The parliamentary Working Group on World Goals is not directly related to the theme of digitisation but is interesting because it coordinates the work of various committees around one theme: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result, Denmark has a different character as a case study from the previous three countries.

Figure 5 Overview working methods in the Folketing



### 2.4.1 Description of working methods in the Folketing

| DENMARK | | |
|---|---|---|
| I | The Parliamentary Working Group on World Goals | There is a parliamentary working group across multiple committees - set up by the Finance Committee - which can make recommendations to the government regarding SDGs. This working group also has the overall responsibility and coordinating role to strengthen the work of the Parliamentary Standing Committees on SDGs, thus promoting progress on SDGs.<br><br>In 2017, 69 Danish parliamentarians united in a network for the UN goals: *Folketingets Tværpolitiske Netværk for FN's Verdensmål* (the 2030 network). This network, in which more than a third of all Folketing members participate, created a forum for a broad debate and a platform for cooperation with civil society and other interested parties. In Denmark, there are many initiatives in the field of SDGs. It is a major social issue on which, for example, NGOs, universities and companies also have a strong commitment.<br><br>In May 2018, the network proposed to set up a parliamentary working group from several committees that could make recommendations to the government. A number of committees were already actively working on SDGs, others not yet. The network felt it was important to place the overall responsibility for SDGs with a specific group that could also take on the coordination.<br><br>In October 2018, the Finance Committee decided to set up such a parliamentary working group. A parliamentary working group is usually composed of 29 members from at least two different committees, which produces a report with recommendations within 6-12 months. The Working Group on World Goals targets all committees in the Folketing and will be reviewed in October 2020 and possibly continued for a longer period in the form of a special committee[12].<br><br>The 2030 network[13] which functioned outside parliament, has also continued; twice a month 15 to 20 parliamentarians meet |

12 https://www.ft.dk/da/udvalg/parlamentarisk-arbejdsgruppe-om-verdensmaal
13 https://www.2030netvaerket.dk/om

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Official name: *Parlamentarisk arbejdsgruppe om verdensmålene* | to exchange knowledge. In addition, a panel[14] of 22 organisations advises the 2030 network. The 2030 network regularly invites ministers to informal meetings. Individual members of parliament contribute knowledge to their committees. In order to improve coordination between the working group and the network, it was recently decided to transfer the secretariat of the network to the secretariat of the working group in Parliament.<br><br>The working group meets every three weeks and organises (via the Finance Committee) consultations, expert meetings, study trips and company visits. The working group also questions ministers and parliaments of other countries (through the ECPRD). Through these activities, it supports the work of the Finance and Foreign Affairs Committees in scrutinising the government. The working group supports other committees of the Folketing by providing advice and information, and assistance in setting the agenda. In this way, they are inspired and encouraged to work with the SDGs. |

### 2.4.2 In context

Denmark does not have a Ministry for Digitisation, but it does have a Agency for Digitisation[15].This organisation was founded in 2011 as a division from the Ministry of Finance. She is in charge of the digital transition in Denmark, and is responsible for implementing the government's digital ambitions in the public sector, such as education and healthcare.

Together with the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, Denmark is in the top 4 of the European ranking Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) of 2019. Denmark has two digitisation strategies: one focused on business innovation policy ('Digital Growth Strategy', January 2018) and one focused on public innovation policy ('Digital Strategy for 2016-2020: A Stronger And More Secure Digital Denmark, of May 2016). The Danish National AI Strategy was issued by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Financial Affairs (in March 2019).

At the parliamentary level, however, there are no committees or working groups specifically dedicated to digitisation issues. The Commission for Home and Social Affairs is specifically charged with the theme of digitisation of the public sector. In addition, there are other committees that deal with digitisation issues when they touch upon their policy area. There is also a list of spokespersons for digitisation on

14 https://www.2030netvaerket.dk/2030-panelet; https://www.2030netvaerket.dk/2030-panelet-udvides-med-8-staerke-

15 https://en.digst.dk/about-us/

the Folketing website. On the website of the Dutch House of Representatives, for example, this cannot be found. This may also be due to the fact that not all parties in the House of Representatives have separate spokespersons for digitisation.

Denmark scores high on international rankings, both in terms of SDGs[16] and digitisation[17]. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for both the SDGs and the Agency of Digitisation. During the interview, we asked whether there are any ambitions to also set up a parliamentary working group on digitisation. This option appears to have been discussed extensively in parliament but has so far led to nothing (see chapter 4).

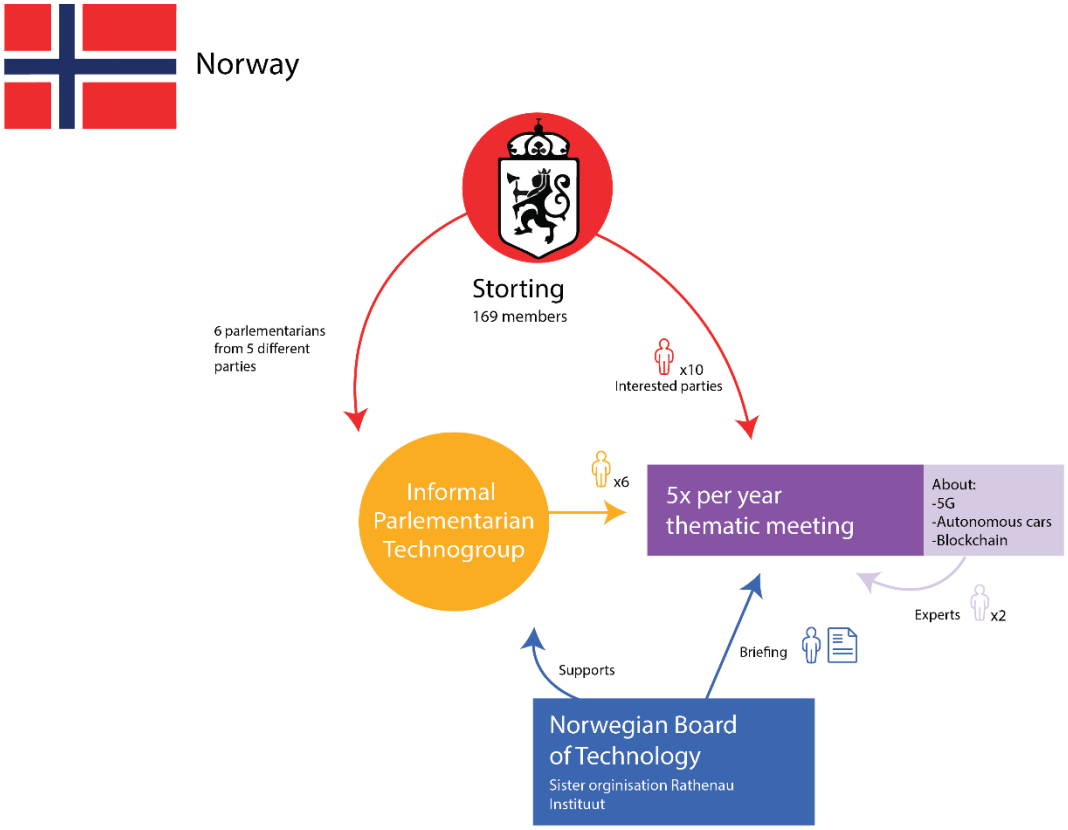
16 Denmark ranks second out of 156 countries in the world rankings. The main points of attention are sustainable consumption and production (SDG12) and life below water (SDG14). See: https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2018/2018_sdg_index_and_dashboards_report.pdf

17 Together with the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden, Denmark is in the top 4 of the European ranking Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) of 2019. See: https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/desi

## 2.5 Norway

Also for the Norwegian parliament - the Storting - we only looked at one working method. In 2015, members of parliament with an interest in technology set up their own group for 'technology and politics', with the aim of analysing trends. The Norwegian Board of Technology, (a sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut), offers them both substantive and procedural support.

Figure 6 Overview working methods in the Storting



### 2.5.1 Description of the working method in the Storting

| NORWAY | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Informal parliamentary Teknogruppe<br><br>Official name: *Stortingets Teknogruppe* | This group is an informal network of Norwegian parliamentarians that organises meetings on technological developments. The Teknogruppe is not bound to committees within the parliament but wants to function as a 'technology radar' of the parliament. By timely analysing technological trends it wants to have a fruitful discussion in parliament about the impact of emerging technologies[18].<br><br>The group consists of six members of parliament from five different parties. The Norwegian sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut, the Norwegian Board of Technology (NBT), provides the secretariat. The NBT is an independent body that emerged from an initiative of the Norwegian Parliament in 1999. The NBT investigates the societal impact and possibilities of technology and science, stimulates public debate on these issues and advises parliament and other governmental bodies. The NBT has 15 members appointed by the government.<br><br>The NBT supports the Teknogruppe in the preparation of meetings that are organised annually, and in determining the topics to be discussed there. Examples of topics discussed are 5G, technology and democracy, autonomous cars, lifelong learning, solar energy and digitisation, CRISPR and blockchain. About five meetings are organised per year, with the participation of external experts. The aim is to facilitate a meeting place for all political parties where technological developments are approached from a multidisciplinary perspective. In addition to the members of the Teknogruppe, there are usually about ten other members of parliament taking part in the themed meetings, which last 75 minutes. |

### 2.5.2 In context

Norway has appointed a Minister of Digitisation since 2019[19]. This minister does not have its own department but is part of the Ministry of Local Government and

18 https://teknologiradet.no/forsiden/om-oss/stortingets-teknogruppe/

19 https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kmd/organisation/minister-of-local-government-and-modernisation-nikolai-astrup/id2626348/ en https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kmd/id504/

Modernisation. She is responsible for ICT policy and e-communication, including the Norwegian Agency of Digitalisation[20]. Besides, the Minister is responsible for the Altinn-portal (an Internet portal for digital dialogue between businesses, citizens and public organisations), business-oriented ICT, the Digital21 strategy for the digitisation of businesses in Norway and resources for ICT research.

At the parliamentary level, there are no formal working methods that specifically address digitisation issues. The meetings of the Teknogruppe aim to update as many parliamentarians as possible from all kinds of committees on digital crosscutting technologies and related societal issues; every member of parliament is welcome.

## 2.6 Conclusion

None of the countries we studied in Phase II has a separate Ministry for Digitisation. Compared to the Netherlands, the political recognition for the digital transition is, however, more often institutionalised. Germany, for example, has a separate minister, the United Kingdom a ministry that explicitly includes digitisation in its remit, the United States a separate government organisation for technology strategy, Denmark an Agency for Digitalisation and Norway a minister for digitisation, albeit without its own ministry.

At the parliamentary level, we do not see any specific working methods in Denmark in the area of digitisation. However, the working methods discussed in Denmark and Norway do provide inspiration for a new working method within the Dutch parliament. The German Bundestag and the American Congress, in particular, have developed new working methods to get a better grip on digitisation. The House of Commons, together with the permanent DCSM committee, is following the government closely when it comes to strategic documents concerning digitisation. Traditionally, this parliament has had a solid research culture that can give its members a better grip on digitisation issues.

It goes beyond the scope of this research to explore all the differences between the five parliamentary systems and cultures in full detail. In any case, this chapter has shown that the options for new working methods to get a better grip on digitisation in the Dutch House of Representatives cannot always be adopted on a one-to-one basis. It is important to look at them in their context and to consider to what extent they can have the same function and impact in the Dutch context of the House of Representatives. These considerations will be addressed in the next chapter, in which we will list the various options.

20 https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kmd/organisation/etater-og-virksomheter-under-kommunal--og-moderniseringsdepartementet/Subordinate-agencies-and-institutions/digitaliseringsdirektoratet/id2684200/

# 3 Options for new ways of working

In this chapter, we will go deeper into the various working methods and experiences with them in practice. In research phase II, and especially through the interviews, we have gained a better insight into this. Although the focus was on specific - permanent and temporary - parliamentary committees for digitisation, we also came across other working methods that contribute to a better political grip on the subject of digitisation.

Interesting initiatives that offer support at other levels include an International Grand Committee on Disinformation, in which spokespersons from various parliaments question international experts. Or a scientific advisor on digitisation in the civil service with a coordinating function for all digitisation dossiers.

In this chapter we discuss the options per level to which they relate:

- **Level of commissions**: all working methods that somehow attempt to strengthen the grip of permanent committees on digitisation (paragraph 3.1.1) or a specific type of committee (temporary or permanent) in the field of digitisation (3.1.2).
- **Individual parliamentarians**: all working methods that serve to strengthen the individual (knowledge) position of Members of Parliament on digitisation (3.2)
- **Parliamentary support**: all working methods that support the political process surrounding digitisation issues, by the administrative staff of the parliament (3.3).

For each option, we briefly indicate what it entails, what the impact is or has been, based on the experiences in the various parliaments, and what function it fulfils. We also indicate whether this form exists in the Netherlands in any way and whether it would fit into the Dutch parliamentary system (or culture). Although one option will fit more easily than the other, we see all options as potentially interesting for the TCDT to consider for its final advice to the Dutch House of Representatives.

## 3.1 Commission level

In the study, we see various ways in which parliaments are using the committee's work to better respond to digitisation issues. This can be done in two ways:

- Strengthen all **standing committees** in the field of digitisation (paragraph 3.1.1) by:
  a. more and more extensive research by each committee;
  b. setting up a subcommittee on a specific theme;

c. adding a special investigative task to one particular standing committee.

- Setting up a **new committee** to get a better grip on digitisation (paragraph 3.1.2) by:
  a. a standing committee 'Digitisation' or 'Science & Technology';
  b. a temporary committee with an investigative function;
  c. a coordinating committee with an advisory role.

### 3.1.1 Strengthening all standing committees on digitisation

Digitisation is a cross-cutting subject. All standing parliamentary committees have to deal with it. In our study, we came across various working methods that support all standing parliamentary committees - in both their monitoring, agenda-setting and legislative tasks on digitisation issues within their own policy domain.

**Each commission is a commission for digitisation**
A striking appearance is the committee in the United Kingdom with the word 'digital' in its name. In 2017, its departmental counterpart was named Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS), because a significant proportion of its responsibilities gradually came to cover digital issues[21]. Nevertheless, it appears that DCMS does not focus more on digitisation issues than other committees and departments. Each committee has to deal with digitisation issues.

Within the domain of the DCMS committee is the general digitisation policy, and a subject such as online harm[22]. DCMS released policy documents such as the UK digital strategy (2017), Digital Charter (2018), Artificial Intelligence Sector Deal. (2019)[23]. At the departmental level, close cooperation takes place with the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). For example, the departments share responsibility for the Office for Artificial Intelligence. DCMS also shares responsibility with the Department for Education and Home Office for the UK Council for Internet Safety.

The reason why digital has been specifically added to DCMS is not entirely clear. The coverage of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, and the fact that this company was based in the UK, naturally contributed to the pressure on the government to fight the spread of disinformation. Also, DCMS is sometimes referred to as a

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21 The Ministry's website now states its mission as 'creating a world-leading digital economy, promoting the UK's cultural, sporting and artistic heritage and building a bigger, stronger civil society'. The Ministry is responsible for policy areas such as broadcasting (including the BBC), freedom and regulation of the press, internet and international ICT policy, telecommunications and broadband and the digital economy. See: https://www.civil-service-careers.gov.uk/departments/working-for-the-department-for-digital-culture-media-and-sport/

22 For example, the independent advisory body Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation is part of this department. Its task is to connect policymakers, industry, civil society and the public to develop a good governance regime for data-driven technologies. See: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/centre-for-data-ethics-and-innovation

23 A National Data Strategy (2019) has also been released. Url: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-data-strategy. For more: Annex I.

bucket-department to which more and more subjects are linked. The interviews also revealed that the personal interest in digitisation of the committee chairman also played an important role.

The DCMS commission monitors the department and focuses its research (inquiries) mainly on issues related to media and sports. In recent years there has been a lot of attention for fake news and disinformation. Other committees also deal with digitisation issues.

***Own research as committee work***

The strong research tradition in both chambers of the British Parliament contributes to getting a grip on digitisation within committees. The most common method for both scrutinising government (select committees) and looking at legislatislation (bill committees) is the inquiry.

Committees can set up inquiries into subjects that they themselves determine. They often make a broad call for input, which leads to large numbers of written and oral contributions. There is consensus among all committee members on the final report with recommendations to the government[24]. An inquiry can be about a specific subject, such as the addictive effects of digital technology, but also about government policy or draft legislation. An inquiry can be small or large, lasting a few months or more than a year. The government is obliged to respond to each recommendation within two months.

It is striking that the inquiries from different committees are sometimes somewhat similar. While the DCMS Committee focused on fake news and disinformation, the Commons Science and Technology Committee, for example, investigated the impact of social media and screen-use on young people. And while special inquiry committee in the House of Lords was working on a study of artificial intelligence, the House of Commons was investigating algorithms in decision-making. Although there is sometimes some friction between committees, it is considered useful to look at digitisation issues from different domains and application areas.

Hearings are an important instrument in the American Congress, but they are not nearly as extensive as the inquiries in the House of Commons. In fact, the hearings and roundtable discussions organised by permanent parliamentary committees in the Dutch House of Representatives and the Bundestag are even less akin to the British inquiries. However, the Dutch House of Representatives does make use of written and oral contributions from experts and interested parties. Committees also use technical briefings to inform themselves about a particular subject. But these

24 Contrary to the strong party-political public bill committees, the select committees are not. The standard is that members abstain from their party political views during inquiries and other work for the select committees. It is therefore striking that the process is mainly aimed at obtaining a shared understanding of an issue.

instruments do not involve the level of preparation and scope of an inquiry, including a committee report based on consensus and a mandatory government response[25]. In the Bundestag, members invite their own experts and ask only their own questions to those experts.

***Subcommittees on anchoring digitisation themes***

It is interesting that in April last year, the DCMS committee chose to set up a subcommittee for disinformation. The subcommittee can be seen as a spin-off of the previous inquiries and the generated media attention for the subject.

With the establishment of the subcommittee, the DCMS committee shows its intention to continue to take the issue seriously and gather evidence. In all types of inquiries, it is difficult for British parliamentarians to monitor whether the recommendations are adopted after the report has been completed and the Cabinet response has been received. The subcommittee, therefore, ensures that the subject of digitisation is further embedded in the permanent DCMS committee.

Setting up subcommittees within permanent committees is also common practice in the U.S. Congress. In Congress, subcommittees are a way of dividing up the tasks of the parent committee[26]. A subcommittee may deal with a specific piece of legislation or a specific subject. The subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce in the House of Representatives, for example, has many digitisation issues on its agenda. Subcommittees are a way to devote more time and attention to a subject and/or legislation. The subcommittees also serve as a way of showing that the parliament considers a subject to be of extra importance follow and delve into.

The Dutch House of Representatives is not familiar with this form of subcommittees. Standing committees do have annual knowledge agendas, however, since the House of Representatives Knowledge Position Enhancement Operation (*Versterking Kennispositie Tweede Kamer*, VKTK) in 2018. As a result, more emphasis has been placed on conducting their own research and consulting external parties. The State Committee on the Parliamentary System (*Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel*) also advocates strengthening parliamentary research. It argues that by conducting its own research, the House of Representatives will gain more control over its own agenda. In addition, the parliamentary monitoring task will become more incisive and socially relevant if it is based on information gathered from society by members of parliament themselves (Staatscommissie, 2018: 266).

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25 This is the case with the heaviest parliamentary instrument of the House of Representatives, namely a committee of inquiry or parliamentary inquiry. But this is not a form of work that is available to all permanent parliamentary committees.

26 The autonomy of subcommittees is quite different between 'parent committees'. There are no rules for this.

***Investigation via a standing committee***

In the Bundestag we came across another support mechanism to strengthen the knowledge position in the field of digitisation for all standing committees. Since 1989, the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment has functioned there as a gatekeeper for all research requests in the field of science and technology. All standing committees, as well as the political groups, can submit proposals. A selection of these - about six per year - is then taken up by the *Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag* (TAB), a sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut. The research projects are supervised and approved - based on consensus - by a permanent group of rapporteurs from all political groups[27]. After approval, the report is sent to all 709 members of the Bundestag, the plenary and the standing committees that requested the report or to whom it is of particular relevance. Over the next two years, it turns out that 80% of the TAB reports deal with digitisation issues.

We, in the Dutch House of Representatives, are not familiar with this mechanism. Members of Parliament do little or no research themselves but they set out requests. The advantage of the German working method is that the rapporteurs and TAB also coordinate research into digitisation (and other technology areas) and monitor quality.

**Impact and role**

When digitisation issues are dealt with within different standing committees, there is also a need for more coordination. In the United Kingdom, we have seen that there is sometimes overlap between inquiries. Even though this is not seen as a reason to set up a new committee to deal with digitisation or to coordinate digitisation better, ambitions for better coordination and exchange were voiced in every interview. We heard that the clerks of various committees are reaching out to each other on their own initiative in order to coordinate research agendas. In section 3.3. we look in more detail at the role of staff in supporting committee work. Before we discuss the options for devoting a separate committee to digitisation, here we discuss a number of factors that contribute to the grip on digitisation within standing committees.

As emerged from the DCMS Committee, standing committees often have a role to scrutinise the policy and expenditure of their departmental counterparts. Are they doing the right things in the right way? If an inquiry concerns a specific law or regulation, the working method also has a legislative role. The form of self-chosen research projects is also a good way of informing politicians and the wider public. It can also play a role in putting specific digitisation issues on the agenda that are not yet on the mind of the government (as happens in the UK), or parliament (as happens in Germany). This can be done by indicating possible solutions and policy options. However, the political and public impact can vary widely. For both the

27 Every year some 50-70 requests come in.

British inquiries and the German TAB reports it turns out that one report has more impact than the other.

Our research reveals various success factors that help parliamentarians to get a better grip on digitisation. Firstly, the timing of a report - an inquiry or TAB project - is important. In the British Parliament, they pay a lot of attention to creating momentum for the publication. The impact of an inquiry on the government is always greater when the government has not yet taken major decisions and the inquiry report helps it to move forward in a particular policy area. This was, for example, the case with the AI report of the House of Lords. Towards parliament, it is important that the political trenches are not yet involved (as in the case of a TAB report on nuclear energy), and the report can contribute in time to an important political debate. It is of great added value that the TAB reports are perceived as highly independent because six rapporteurs from different political groups have approved them on the basis of consensus. However, in addition to their regular parliamentary work, it takes a long time for the rapporteurs to read the voluminous reports and reach a consensus. This regularly leads to delays, as a result of which TAB reports can sometimes not be published until a year after they have been delivered. Sometimes the content is, therefore, already outdated.

Secondly, the impact also depends on the subject: is there any public concern about it? For example, the discussion about AI was already alive among many German citizens because they were worried about losing their jobs and their autonomy. Thirdly, the quality of the research process is important. For example, it helps that the TAB reports in the Bondstag are seen as independent and free of political ideology, thanks to the rapporteur's construction. In the inquiries, it is important that several and influential people come to testify and that as many parliamentarians as possible are present. The role of the chairman as a figurehead is crucial[28].

Finally, it is important for the Committee to organise a proper follow-up by continuing to monitor whether and how the government adopts and implements the recommendations. This does not happen in the Bundestag, but in the British Parliament, they are improving that process. The staff plays an important role in this, by monitoring the impact but also making proposals for follow-up actions such as new hearings, inviting the minister to the House of Commons, asking questions and using social media.

28 https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/parliamentary-monitor-2018/select-committees

### 3.1.2 Setting up a new committee

In addition to strengthening the position of the permanent committees which mirror the ministries, we also see in our study that parliaments are setting up permanent or temporary committees that transcend ministries in order to better meet society's broad challenge of the digital transition.

We came across three different forms. We explain the setting up of a permanent committee for digitisation using the example in the Bundestag. We then discuss the tradition of a permanent committee for science and technology in the Bundestag, the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the American Congress. Finally, we discuss the special coordinating function of the SDG group in the Danish Folketing.

***A committee for digitisation***
The Committee on the Digital Agenda from the Bundestag stands out most. No other European country has such a commission. The reason for the establishment was a recommendation of a temporary study committee on the Internet and Digital Society (2009-2013). It concluded that: digitisation is a cross-sectoral theme that concerns various social domains. It has also become clear that digitisation is a far-reaching development in all kinds of domains, which is by no means completed[29].

In 2018, the Committee on the Digital Agenda was established for a second term of four years. According to the committee, it acts as a catalyst in parliamentary work on digital policy issues by advising other committees on (national, European and international) policy documents, motions, laws and reports on digitisation. The committee holds public hearings, consultations and closed meetings - such as on e-health, open data, quantum computing, start-ups. It invites experts from industry, science and civil society organisations and pays regular working visits inside and outside Germany.

The Committee on the Digital Agenda does not appear to be fully able to fulfil its role in practice. This is partly because, thanks to its broad policy area, it is not linked to one particular ministry but to four (out of a total of fourteen). In the strong committee system of the Bundestag, this leads to problems. The standing committees that are mirrored to one ministry have more status and are therefore more often in a leading role (*federführend*) when dealing with important government documents such as proposed legislation and regulations. Other committees involved subsequently only advise the committee which has final responsibility and ultimately submits the final recommendations. The plenary usually relies heavily on these recommendations when voting.

29 Zie http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/122/1712290.pdf (p.100).

To date, the Committee on the Digital Agenda has twice been able to play the role of lead committee on two minor issues. It had no final responsibility for the national digitisation strategy[30]. In addition, permanent committees may make their own recommendations to 'their' ministry to take certain policy measures. Here too, the Committee on the Digital Agenda falls between two stools because there is no ministry for Digital Affairs. And when a socially disruptive digital incident occurs, such as recently due to a major data breach, the Committee on the Digital Agenda is only the last in line to hear the responsible ministers.

A long-established working method in the United Kingdom and the United States is a standing parliamentary committee that deals with political issues relating to the broader theme of science and technology, often including digitisation[31]. These committees in the UK House of Commons and Congress do not mirror a particular ministry, but they are linked to a number of specific government bodies concerned with science and technology[32]. The work of these three committees, therefore, all cross-cut different departments. Many of the subjects they deal with are about digitisation issues[33]. Their work mainly consists of research projects including hearings. On this basis, the committees often determine their own agenda, after which they try to (re)direct the government. Congress also has the power of the purse. For example, it can indicate that a certain implementing organisation needs more money in the field of digitisation because the committee wants it to carry out an extra task.

***A temporary research committee***

There is no standing committee on digitisation or a broader committee on science and technology in the Dutch House of Representatives. There is, however, the working method of temporary research committees. In the Dutch House of Representatives, most committees of inquiry focus on monitoring the government, especially on cases where much has gone wrong (government ICT projects, house prices, Fyra). In the case of a theme committee, another important objective is to follow the agenda of society and to strengthen the representative function of the House of Representatives by working towards an integral political vision on a particular subject for the medium and long term[34].

This is also the purpose of the temporary committees of inquiry for AI of the British House of Lords and the Bundestag. These committees are not involved in the day-

30 The plenary finally appointed the Committee on Economic Affairs for this purpose.

31 Phase 1 of this study also showed that Finland, Greece, Canada, Poland and Israel have a standing committee on science and technology. https://www.scienceinparliament.org.uk/publications/guide-

32 Such as the GO-Science in the UK and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) in the US.

33 Such as algorithms in decision making, commercial and recreational use of drones, quantum technology, self-steering cars, smart mobility, disinformation, bitcoins, use of AI in decision making, AI and labour and the impact of social media and screen use among young people.

34 See https://www.managementissues.com/index.php/cultuuranalyse/80-cultuuranalyse/375-een-nieuwe-relatie-tussen-regering-en-parlement.

to-day running of the parliament; they have a clearly defined task for a specified period of time. In the House of Lords, it is the Liaison Committee that evaluates proposals for special committees of inquiry and makes a selection. Four such intensive, temporary committees of inquiry are usually appointed per parliamentary term.

Our study brings to the fore this working method has the great advantage of immersing parliamentarians in a subject for a certain period of time, which gives them a much better grasp of it. There are two comments to be made in this respect. Some of the members of the German study commission are already spokespersons for digitisation, which means that they are already well informed about a number of subjects. The German parliamentarians occasionally combine their membership of a study commission with their daily political work, which also continues as usual. In comparison, the members of the House of Lords have more time to fully immerse themselves in a subject.

The reason why the instrument of theme committees is rarely used in the Netherlands is that there is no independent political impact of the report. Thematic committees submit their work to the standing committees of the Dutch House of Representatives. As a result, the visibility of the results of a theme committee is not as high as that of the German and British temporary committees of inquiry. For example, the report on AI by the British House of Lords was very well received by both the central government[35], and science, business, and civil society in the United Kingdom and abroad[36]. It has received a lot of media attention.

***A committee for the coordination of goals***

Another working method that we have studied in this study, but which is neither concerned with digitisation nor a formal committee, is a working group of parliamentarians on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Danish parliament. This working group is anchored in the Finance Committee and has an interesting supporting and coordinating function towards other standing committees on the SDGs. Such a function might also be interesting to invest in the field of digitisation, for example in a separate working group or in a committee[37]. The working group meets every three weeks and organises activities such as consultations, expert meetings, study trips and company visits. It also questions ministers and parliaments of other countries. With these activities, the working group, on the one hand, supports the work of the Finance and Foreign Affairs committees in monitoring the government. On the other hand, it supports other

35 For example, the new Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation has used the recommendations as a basis for its consultation process. Two former members of the committee sit on the board of the centre.

36 The report has also been discussed in the United Nations, by the governments of Canada and Japan and by the UAE.

37 In October 2020, the working group will be evaluated and possibly continued for a longer period in the form of a special committee.

Folketing committees by informing, advising and helping them set the agenda. This working method to some extent resembles the standing Parliamentary Committee on European Affairs in the Dutch House of Representatives, which informs and advises other standing Parliamentary Committees on European developments. This happens mainly via the EU-advisors who are on the staff of the European Affairs Committee, but who mainly work for the other standing committees.

**Impact and role**

The working methods discussed here have different functions, and their impact varies. There is some discrepancy between how the role of the Committee on the Digital Agenda is described on paper and how it works out in practice. The Committee on the Digital Agenda currently mainly has an informative function for its own members. Although the committee is hardly ever the 'leading committee', it does have a monitoring function towards the government. This means that - just like other permanent committees - it may advise on certain (national, European and international) policy documents and legislative proposals. Furthermore, communication and coordination mainly take place via the political groups. The members of the Committee on the Digital Agenda include young, tech savvy politicians who speak on digitisation for their political groups. They use their membership of the committee to better inform themselves about all kinds of digital issues. They then bring this knowledge to their political groups and support their colleagues on the subject by replacing them in political debates on digitisation, or by writing briefings.

The British and American Science and Technology Committees have as their most important task to put subjects on the agenda. They have a scrutinising role to the governmental bodies which fall under their jurisdiction. The Committee in the U.S. also has a legislative role; as all committees in Congress have a strong legislative function anyway. The committees of inquiry mainly have an informational function, both for the participating parliamentarians and for the entire parliament, the government and the public debate. For the temporary committees of inquiry, their impact stands or falls with the follow-up that is given to the results. According to the British parliament, the knowledge gained will flow away if the members and staff focus on other dossiers after the conclusion of the investigation. Ways to consolidate the impact of the results must be carefully considered in advance. Interestingly, the American and British Science and Technology Committees, which - like the Committee on the Digital Agenda - work across departments, do not suffer from a low status which would reduce their political impact.

Strikingly enough, the Danish Working Group on World Goals is doing well because of the public interest in the topic. To a certain extent, this working group works the way the German Committee on the Digital Agenda was intended to work. The coordinating task of the working group on SDGs is well reflected in practice. The way in which the working group is embedded in the Finance Committee - which

itself has a cross-domain character - probably contributes to this. For example, the fact that the Ministry of Finance is responsible for the national action plan drawn up by the government and the European follow-up on SDGs means that there is ongoing coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for SDGs in the context of the United Nations and other international forums. In the working group, explicit coordination between national and foreign policy objectives is ensured. For example, the chairman of the working group must also be chairman or vice-chairman of the Finance Committee. And one of the vice-chairs of the Working Group must be a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

As stated above, the Dutch House of Representatives currently has one standing parliamentary committee that transcends the domains of the various ministries, namely the standing parliamentary committee for European Affairs. To what extent this coordination task on the European dossier works better in practice than with the Committee on the Digital Agenda, is up to the TCDT to assess. It might be an option to set up such a committee also for the subject of digitisation, which is pre-eminently cross-domain.

There has also been a permanent cross-domain committee that did not make it in practice, namely the Committee on National Expenditure, which fell vacant in 2016. The task of this committee was to audit the government's expenditure. The committee also contributed to improving the quality of budgets and annual reports, the major projects scheme and advised on parliament’s own investigative function. These tasks were ultimately assigned to the standing parliamentary committee on Finance. In the end, the tasks and portfolio turned out not to be politically interesting enough for members of parliament; they could not profile themselves well enough on them. The question is whether this also applies - or to a lesser extent - to the digitisation dossier. It emerged from our interviews that being the spokesperson for digitisation is not at the top of the list for many members of parliament, partly because also citizens are busier about other issues. According to the State Committee on the Parliamentary System, coalition factions often block a working method that transcends domains, because ministers in the Netherlands generally value their 'own' standing committee (State Committee, 2018, p.275).

## 3.2 Level of MPs

Different ways have emerged from the various parliamentary working methods to increase the knowledge position of Members of Parliament in the field of digitisation. A distinction can be made between initiatives aimed at:

- investing in the expertise of a number of individual MPs with a pronounced interest and/or spokespersonship in digitisation, and
- investing in the (basic) knowledge position of all MPs.

Precisely because digitisation is a complex challenge, there is a need for expertise. At the same time, no parliamentarian can escape the subject in her/his work. In this section, we will, therefore, discuss the various examples we have come across in other parliaments, and explain how they serve both purposes.

### 3.2.1 Immersing individual parliamentarians

The far-reaching digitalisation of society leads to complex issues. There is a technological side, but there are also social, legal and socio-psychological issues that require attention. For many individual members, digitisation is often still seen as complicated and overly remote, and a subject they do not always like to immerse themselves in because it is seen as too 'technical' a subject. Our research into the various parliamentary practices shows that immersion is the most effective method for getting a better grip on digitisation issues. By immersion, we mean that parliamentarians master a subject within a defined timeframe and then form their political opinion. This is actually the process that is now also taking place in the TCDT itself. We have come across several examples of this. Of course, this is not a working method that is feasible for all members of parliament.

**Participation in committees of inquiry and (international) working visits**
The strong tradition of research within the British Parliament has already been extensively discussed in the previous paragraph. Inquiries are a way for members to study a particular issue, and it is an important method in both permanent departmental and cross-departmental committees in both houses. The House of Lords also sets up four special inquiry committees each year. As an example, we will further explain the Committee on AI here. An important aspect of the approach in these special inquiry committees is that each member sees every piece of evidence. In the case of the Committee on AI, this involved 223 pieces of text and 57 oral contributions during 22 public sessions.

The flow of information during inquiries is monitored and facilitated by the staff, to prevent committee members from being approached from outside by organisations and lobbyists. The staff prepares clear biographies and sample questions with background information. The thirteen members also meet prior to the sessions with each other in order to discuss and make the best possible use of each other's expertise. Another interesting element are the working visits and the workshop. In a hands-on workshop, the committee members built a neural network in order to gain more insight into the underlying technology. This helped the members enormously with the visualisation and concretisation of the subject, it increased their enthusiasm and ensured a shared understanding of AI. In their final report “AI in the UK: ready, willing and able?”, the 80 questions that the members and staff had gathered at the beginning were all answered.

The German variant, the study commissions in which as many parliamentarians as external experts participate, is also a good example of total immersion. Just as with the British inquiries, the parliamentarians themselves are the researchers. Participation is very intensive and the learning curve is steep. In the Study Commission on AI in the Bundestag, experts are not only extensively heard through evidence sessions, some of them are actually full members of the study commission. As a result, there is an even more intensive exchange between experts and parliamentarians throughout the process. Unlike a roundtable discussion as we know it in the Netherlands (where members ask questions to the experts chosen by them or the staff, who also always make a written contribution in advance), members and experts really enter into discussion with each other. They try to come to a better understanding together and take a few months to do so. The setting up of the Study Commission for AI was the result of a motion. Its purpose is to gain insight into what concrete policy actions and regulations are needed at national, European and global level. The work for the 19 parliamentarians and the 19 experts is divided over six different project groups.

There is also an example of international cooperation. In November 2018, the British DCMS Committee set up an International Grand Committee (IGC) on Disinformation. This brought together parliamentarians from different countries to discuss the spread of disinformation, the threat of fake news and issues surrounding privacy and the protection of individuals' data. In May 2019, the members of the IGC issued a joint statement in which they pleaded for the protection of 'fair competition, increasing the accountability of social media platforms, protecting privacy rights and personal data, and maintaining and strengthening democracy'[38]. In November 2019, the ICG came up with a number of principles to improve international cooperation in the field of social media regulation. To date, the Netherlands has not participated in the ICG's inquiries. The interviews also reveal a mixed picture. On the one hand, the Committee's effectiveness is questioned, because the political differences and regulatory mechanisms between countries are too far apart to really be able to take joint action. On the other hand, the ICG has helped to persuade large global technology and other companies to testify to a broad group of parliamentarians.

In addition to inquiries, parliamentarians also visit each other for working visits and study trips. The members of the Committee on the Digital Agenda, in particular, make use of this option to learn about best practices abroad. Recently, members of this committee have been to the Agency of Digitalisation in Denmark, heard in Sweden how fibre and broadband technology is being tackled, discussed mobile coverage issues in Oman, and discussed smart cities and port digitisation in Dubai.

38 https://www.cigionline.org/igc

**Impact and role**
In the first instance, the above methods mainly have an impact on the individual members of parliament who participate; they are ways to become well-informed and to form a political opinion. A number of members are then well informed and that is valuable in itself; rather have someone than no one who knows the ins and outs. In practice, the interviewees noticed that transferring knowledge obtained via the above-mentioned working methods to other members of parliament is another point of attention. The fact that it is difficult to disseminate knowledge further and to monitor the impact of reports is not something that only the committees of inquiry encounter. The timing of reports and making the content accessible are also an important challenge for organisations such as POST, TAB and the American STAA (we will discuss this further in section 3.3).

The reports produced by the House of Lords in the special inquiry committees are widely read by think tanks, NGOs and academics. The reports are always addressed to the government who is also obliged to respond. The parliament itself is not an explicit target group. The reports not only have an informational but also an agenda-setting function. By means of concrete recommendations, they can influence the government's policy or course of action.
The pressure on the government can be increased by the amount of media attention the investigations receive. When prominent people come to testify and when the chairperson fanatically presents him/herself as the figurehead, this can have an enormous impact. In addition, the chairperson is an important player in the follow-up after the investigation is completed and the committee is disbanded. The biggest challenge of the immersion method is time pressure. The special inquiries are done by the House of Lords, where members usually have more time to delve into something than the House of Commons. In general, the Commons take up issues that are more political and more urgent, and tend to have shorter inquiries. The reports from the Lords tend to be more in-depth and can contain more specialised recommendations. One of the interviewees had been told by a government official that they have to prepare more thoroughly for Lords' evidence sessions, because the questioning is more in-depth. There is less of a political spectacle at Lords' evidence sessions.

Working visits are also regarded as a time-consuming way of gaining knowledge of how other governments and parliaments deal with digitisation issues. They turn out to be enormously informative for the individual participants. And they can have an impact on the government if the knowledge gained is put to good use. The working visit to Oman from the Bundestag Committee on the Digital Agenda provided inspiration that found its way into new federal government policy (via committee members from the coalition parties). Following in Oman's footsteps, efforts are currently underway in Germany to improve mobile coverage based on a publicly funded infrastructure with an open-access approach. As a result, working visits not only have the potential to increase knowledge in the technical field, policy aspects

and implementation but can also contribute to the agenda-setting and advisory function of elected representatives. To date, the Dutch House of Representatives has not very often made international working visits in the field of digitisation. We have managed to find three of them: Estonia on e-government (BiZa Committee, 2016), Brussels on data protection (Interparliamentary Committee, 2018) and Paris on platform economy (SZW Committee, 2020)[39]. In addition, working visits are also organised within the Netherlands, for example to specific platform companies, but information about this is difficult to find out.

### 3.2.2 Cross-domain parliamentary forums

In addition to working methods that focus on immersion, we have also come across various working methods by groups of parliamentarians in various formations who try to shape perceptions and opinions and, where necessary, collaborate in order to initiate certain laws and regulations or policies. Precisely because the digital transition is cross-domain, this sometimes requires breaking through the silos of the committees and bringing together multidisciplinary perspectives. We have come across various working methods with the aim to address croscutting themes. They can consists of informal consultative structures, and they can involve collaboration with external parties, to give shape to some sort of radar function.

**Informal and more formal consultation structures**
We have come across several examples of more or less informal consultation structures between members of parliament from different political parties and experts from academia and industry. They often form temporary collaborations that strive for new legislation, political consensus, and social and political debate.

In the American caucuses and the British all-party parliamentary groups (APPGs) parliamentarians come together and often involve people from outside the parliament. Not all groups are part of the formal parliamentary process and therefore they are not on the official websites of parliaments (such as those of the U.S. Senate). There are some 700 APPGs in the United Kingdom, and the United States had as many as 854 caucuses in the past term. This working method offers parliamentarians the opportunity to inform themselves, but also to profile themselves to voters with an interest in digitisation issues, or parties that have an interest in it. For companies, universities and civil society, it offers the opportunity to discuss their interests with parliamentarians on a regular basis. In the Netherlands, we are not really familiar with this working method, although it is somewhat comparable to the thematic events (so-called "*Poorten*" or Gates) that take place weekly on various subjects within *Nieuwspoort* (a press and debate centre). Representatives from journalism, civil society, administrators and politicians come

39 With thanks to the staff of the TCDT.

together to discuss a particular theme. Examples are the Education Gate, Care Gate, Financial Gate and Mobility Gate. There is also an *iPoort* that 'wants to contribute to an understanding of the added value that ICT offers. In addition, *iPoort* wants to deal with the issues and dilemmas among various stakeholders'[40].

Norway has a more formal variant of the caucuses and APPGs in the form of their Teknogruppe. This group has a board of six parliamentarians from five different parties and strives for fruitful discussions in parliament about the impact of emerging technologies. To this end, the members organise an accessible meeting five times a year for all their (interested) fellow parliamentarians on subjects such as 5G, self-driving cars and blockchain (see also section 2.5).

This Norwegian working method can be compared to the private breakfast meetings where Dutch MPs can discuss a specific topic with external experts. However, the preparation of these meetings is not as extensive as with the Teknogruppe. Both in terms of content and organisation, the parliamentarians in the Teknogruppe are supported by the Norwegian Board of Technology (NBT), the Norwegian sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut. The NBT prepares a two-page briefing per session with a description of the technology and the most important social questions[41]. The NBT always wants to provide insight into short-term relevance and long-term impact and to help parliamentarians ask the right questions. In addition, NBT approaches the experts for the meetings. During the meetings, the NBT has a facilitating role and external experts present their ideas, and the participants can enter into discussion with each other. On average about ten members attend these meetings (of the 169 members of the Norwegian parliament).

**Impact and role**

We did not study the impact of caucuses in Congress and the British APPGs in Phase II. Research into the American caucuses does show that they help in the political opinion-forming of Congress members on complex, often cross-domain issues that do not always fit within the formal parliamentary structure (such as digitisation). The same research also shows that caucuses play an important role in influencing policy and determining the legislative calendar, and that membership of a caucus has a significant independent effect on voting behaviour. According to this research, caucuses can also contribute to better coordination, efficiency and even more effective political planning. On the other hand, they can also fragment the political system by being an alternative source of information, communication and voting coalitions outside the formal structure of Congress (Webb Hammond, 2001).

The Norwegian Teknogruppe is a striking working method because it promotes the knowledge position of the (board) members involved, but also contributes to

40 See https://www.nieuwspoort.nl/debatcentrum/poorten/overzicht/ipoort/.

41 https://teknologiradet.no/en/publication/5g-what-does-it-mean-for-norway/. Een voorbeeld van zo'n briefing over 5G.

increasing the basic knowledge of other members of parliament. The NBT keeps track of the interest of parliamentarians in the meetings and receives follow-up questions from parliamentarians and the standing committees. The meetings of the board of the Teknogruppe are always discussed afterwards. It turns out to be difficult to find out if and how the political discussion is influenced by the meetings of the Teknogruppe; however, in debates, they are occasionally referred to. Ultimately, these meetings are not intended to have a direct influence on voting behaviour, for example, as is the case with the caucuses. It is mainly an informative working method to facilitate the members to form their own political opinions.

### 3.2.3 Different forms of rapporteurship

Finally, we distinguish a type of working method in which a number of parliamentary pioneers actively focus on acquiring and disseminating knowledge to their colleagues. As was also emphasised in the previous section (committee level), it is necessary to involve all members of parliament (in 3.1.1 each committee) in digitisation issues. In doing so, it helps to assign responsibility for this theme and a coordinating role to specific parliamentarians (in 3.1.2 a dedicated committee on digitisation). In this section, we discuss a number of examples of this working method.

**Supporting colleagues on the subject of digitisation**
In several parliaments, we see that either from personal interests or more steered by the political groups, clear spokespersons for digitisation have emerged who are also so formally known (for example through the parliamentary website as in Denmark[42]). Whether or not there is a (clear) spokesperson for digitisation in Dutch the House of Representatives varies from group to group. Spokespersons can be an important linchpin for other members, the praesidium and official support. If spokespersons join forces, they can help to improve the execution of monitoring tasks and timely interventions.

In the Bundestag, we have seen that information exchange on digitisation takes place to a large extent at group level. For example, the spokespersons for digitisation and their staff write briefings for colleagues. Sometimes they replace colleagues during debates when it comes specifically to digitisation. In the Dutch House of Representatives, most groups have policy advisors who write briefings on specific subjects for group members, usually in preparation for a political debate. We do not know to what extent this also happens with the digitisation dossier. Within several political groups, however, there is now a member of parliament who takes the lead and presents him/herself on the theme of digitisation (such as the members of the TCDT).

42 https://en.digst.dk/about-us/.

An interesting working method that also works with some sort of rapporteur system is the Danish Working Group on World Goals. An important part of the work of the members of this group is to give presentations to permanent committees to motivate and inspire them to take up the SDGs in their work. During this type of activity, it sometimes appears that a committee was already working on the goals, but did not explicitly relate it to the SDGs or the government's action plan. By doing so, awareness about the SDGs is raised in parliament. Precisely because the SDGs are a major social issue in Denmark, the working group has acquired a solid status in a short period of time. It informs and advises other committees and helps them set their agendas. There is optimism about a continuation of the group as a permanent committee. Soon the working group will have a joint secretariat with the wider 2030 network[43], allowing for better coordination. In Germany there is a similar body; the Advisory Council on SDGs takes up the monitoring tasks even more thoroughly and in a more structured way. It monitors and reports on hundreds of indicators and provides feedback for each committee. In the Dutch House of Representatives, we are familiar with the aforementioned Committee on European Affairs, which has such a coordinating function. This committee explicitly has the task of alerting other permanent parliamentary committees to relevant European developments and advising them on them. However, it does not use rapporteurs but officials: the EU advisors. We will return to this issue in the next section on the level of official support.

In Germany, we also came across an initiative in which spokespersons for digitisation joined forces on an international level. In 2019, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) took place in Berlin, and the Committee on the Digital Agenda organised a preliminary session for parliamentary spokespersons from all countries. The participation of parliamentarians in the IGF was already felt to be highly desirable a year earlier in Paris, as it could contribute to national political debates on internet governance. The German government financed the initiative[44]. We have not been able to find out whether members of the Dutch House of Representatives were present at this special session at the Internet Governance Forum in Berlin 2019. The next IGF will take place from 2-6 November in Poland. The idea is that another session will be organised for parliamentary spokespersons on digitisation. It is an opportunity for knowledge exchange between fellow spokespersons, not only

43 In 2017, 69 Danish parliamentarians (over a third of all Folketing members) joined a network for the UN's Sustainable Deverlopment Goals (SDGs): Folketingets Tværpolitiske Netværk for FN's Verdensmål (the 2030 network). This network created a forum for a broad and inclusive debate and a platform for cooperation with civil society and other interested parties.

44 The session dealt with Artificial Intelligence (AI), international cooperation for a safer, open and free internet, the impact of digital social networks on democracy and cyber peace, (see https://dig.watch/sessions/parliamentary-perspective-and-opportunities-action) and also aimed at establishing an international network on data governance, digital inclusion, and cyber security, certainty, stability and resilience from the perspective of citizens, (see: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2019-pre-event-36-parliamentary-perspective-and-opportunities-for-action); de hele sessie is hier te beluisteren https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxhZ-yV0GP8&list=UUk0zf4oI0IsJLh1owvUQSfQ&index=7

in the field of internet regulation but, as last time, also on broader topics such as disinformation and AI.

Finally, the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment in the Bundestag also has rapporteurs. These parliamentarians have a kind of coordinating role in assessing and prioritising the requests of all parliamentary committees and political groups for the TAB research bureau. They also have a role in approving the reports and distributing them to the various committees and members of the Bundestag.

The Dutch House of Representatives is not familiar with this specific role of rapporteur as a supervisor and quality controller of research. However, rapporteurship is an option referred to in the Rules of Procedure (Rule 30a), but more in the traditional role. The tasks may vary from one rapporteur to another, but the main focus is that the rapporteur looks at a subject in greater depth and advises the committee on it, often supported by the House's *Dienst Analyse en Onderzoek* (Analysis and Research Service), the EU advisor and/or the clerk the committee. 'A committee may nominate one or more members to take on a dossier that has been placed in her hands, a major project with which it has been entrusted, or any other subject that concerns it.'

In the field of digitisation, a rapporteur has not often been appointed. The only example we could find was in 2018[45]. At that time, the standing parliamentary committee on Finance appointed the members Sneller (D66) and Alkaya (SP) as rapporteurs for two proposals of the European Commission on taxing the digital economy: a digital services tax and a tax for significant digital presence. Both members issued a report of their findings in February 2019 in preparation for a round table discussion on taxation of the digital economy in the same month.

A rapporteurship is a form of division of tasks within a permanent parliamentary committee. It means that the rapporteurs are informed on behalf of the entire committee and report to the entire committee. Certain neutrality is of course desirable. That is why the Dutch House of Representatives has been cautious in its use to date. The rapporteurship is only used in the case of extensive but politically less sensitive subjects and/or legislative proposals. Digitisation is currently still a subject that is generally less politicised than migration or climate change, for example. It could, therefore, lend itself more often to a rapporteurship, as it can ultimately provide all members of a committee with a better grip on a specific digitisation issue.

**Impact and role**

The various rapporteur positions or aspects can serve as a source of inspiration. Distribution of portfolios/subjects is customary at parliamentary level. After all, it is

45 Thanks to the staff of the TCDT.

unrealistic to expect parliamentarians to provide expertise on every dossier. Precisely because digitisation is a subject that recurs in various places, a group of well-informed parliamentarians can also take on the role of rapporteur (advising and supporting colleagues). The previously discussed methods of immersion and informal consultation structures form a kind of basis for this. In this way, these rapporteurs can form the link with other members of parliament by, for example, acting as a source of information, or by inspiring others (putting items on the agenda) and making connections (coordinating). In specific cases, parliamentarians with expertise on digitisation can replace colleagues, as happens in the Bundestag.

## 3.3 Level of official support

In our research we have seen that other parliaments such as the Bundestag, the British Parliament and the American Congress have strong official support - much more extensive than in the Dutch House of Representatives. Some of them are explicitly concerned with technological and digitisation issues. At this level we have come across two working methods.

- Content support for parliament as a whole - committees and individual parliamentarians - such as research bureaus and parliamentary advisory committees.
- Content and coordinating official support for the standing committees such as digitisation advisors.

### 3.3.1 Research support for Parliament as a whole on digitisation

Both the British Parliament (POST), the Congress (STAA and the Strategic Foresight Unit) and the Bundestag (TAB) have an independent research bureau that supports the parliament with research in the field of science and technology. Much of the research at these agencies, which sit in parliament, deals with digitisation issues. They are all sister organisations of the Rathenau Instituut. Together they also form a European network: the European Parliamentary Technology Assessment Network (EPTA), to which a number of non-European partners are affiliated, such as the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to which STAA belongs[46]. These organisations stem from the tradition of parliamentary technology assessment that originated in the United States at the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) in 1972. This office no longer exists under that name (although there have recently been calls to revive OTA).

Technology Assessment (TA) is a tradition that investigates the relationship between science, technology and society, thinking from multiple disciplines, such as

46 https://eptanetwork.org/

the technical and life sciences, philosophy and ethics, sociology, public administration, political science and economics. The common goal is to explore how current technological developments are changing the world in which we live. TA is often aimed at supporting political decision-making and public opinion formation on technology and science. There are three main areas of focus for many TA organisations:

- More insight into the social questions surrounding digitisation and the mapping of interests from society;
- More attention to the translation into proposals for policy options and legal frameworks;
- Making technical and social knowledge about digitisation more accessible and manageable.

**Parliamentary research offices**

In the United Kingdom, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) has been providing the parliament with independent and accessible analyses of policy issues relating to science and technology since 1989. The board of POST is appointed according to official parliamentary procedures and consists of 14 members. These are members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords and non-parliamentary members who provide professional input from science. The board sets the priorities and ensures an effective working relationship with both chambers, parliamentary committees and organisations outside the parliament. The bureau consists of one head plus eight scientific advisors. In addition, the bureau makes extensive use of external scientific experts on secondment. Approximately 15% to 25% of POST's research is about digitisation.

In Germany, there is the *Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag* (TAB), mentioned in section 3.1.1, which is headed by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology[47]. It is linked to the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment in the Bundestag. A group of rapporteurs - parliamentarians from all six political groups - supervises its selection, publication and distribution in the Bundestag. The eleven TAB researchers are politically and academically independent and work exclusively for parliament. They provide the entire Bundestag with studies and recommendations on science and technology issues. Approximately 80% of the recommendations are about digitisation.

It is striking that since last year, many initiatives have also been taken in Congress in the United States to provide better substantive support in the field of science and technology. This is in response to the widely shared public amazement at the quality of the questions asked by senators during hearings in April 2018 with, among others, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. Congress has recently set up new support institutes. These are the Science, Technology Assessment and Analytics

47 In collaboration with the Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment (IZT) and VDI / VDE Innovation und Technik GmbH.

team (STAA) and the Center for Strategic Foresight, which will focus specifically on new emerging technologies. Both fall under the independent Government Accountability Office (GAO) which is based in Congress. In the field of technology and society, the STAA team will support Congress with insight (informing), oversight (scrutinising) and foresight (agenda-setting). In addition, the STAA team is working on a third supporting institute to be called the Congressional Office of Technology. The law that formed the basis of the old OTA has been revived by two members of the House of Representatives but has not yet been adopted by both Houses (after that, it would also have to be signed by the President).

The three research offices in Germany, the UK and the U.S. not only offer research reports, but also the expertise of their staff in technical briefings, inquiries and hearings about digitisation. Most of the work of these parliamentary research offices is at the request of standing committees and sometimes political groups. The bureaus also have an agenda-setting role by offering publications on new and future technologies and scientific developments based on horizon scanning. Part of the work is answering questions and requests from individual parliamentarians. But there are also separate parliamentary organisations to support individual questions and requests from members in the field of digitisation. In the Bundestag, for example, there is the *Wissenschaftliche Dienste* (scientific services) and in Congress there is the Congressional Research Service. The British parliament has the libraries.

There is less official support in the Dutch House of Representatives than in most other parliaments in this study. Similarly, there is no internal research service that conducts research into technology or digitisation issues in particular. In the Netherlands, the Rathenau Instituut has been charged with this task on behalf of the Cabinet since 1986 (with particular reference to the formation of opinions in the parliament and society at large). The Dutch House of Representatives does not have a parliamentary research culture like that in the United Kingdom. Since 2018, however, more attention has been paid to this. The operation Strengthening the Knowledge Position of the House of Representatives (*Versterking Kennispositie Tweede Kamer*, VKTK) has led to more attention for the use of knowledge from outside, from all kinds of knowledge organisations.

The knowledge coordinator - a new position in the staff of each permanent parliamentary committee - has an important role in organising the exchange of knowledge between politics and science. Each committee also has one or two information specialists who help gather information and compile specific dossiers. Both the knowledge coordinators and the information specialists fall under the Department of Analysis and Research (*Dienst Analyse en Onderzoek*, DAO). Each committee also has an EU advisor who supports all EU documents, for example in the field of digitisation. In addition, each committee now also has an annual knowledge agenda with subjects that, according to the committee, need deepening,

for example by outsourcing research, a round table discussion or a working visit. Individual members of parliament can contact the Information and Archive Service (*Dienst Informatie en Archief*, DIA) for their knowledge questions. The internal parliamentary support in the Dutch House of Representatives is therefore modest compared to other countries.

The Netherlands does have a diverse landscape with research and advisory organisations that also support the House of Representatives. In addition to the Rathenau Instituut, which was set up especially for this purpose, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid*, WRR) and the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (*Adviesraad voor Wetenschap, Technologie en Innovatie*, AWTI) are important external sources of knowledge for the Dutch House of Representatives in the field of digitisation. In the pluralistic Dutch tradition, there are also several multi-stakeholder initiatives that in recent years have both shared knowledge with the House of Representatives (the Parliament and Science platform of a number of umbrella organisations from science and research, such as KNAW, NWO, VSNU, TNO and HBO-raad) and also shared information from the stakeholder field itself (the ECP platform for the information society to which all kinds of companies, government and knowledge organisations are affiliated). Consultative organisations, such as the SER, ROB and national knowledge institutes, are also paying increasing attention in their research and advice to digitisation in their domain.

**Impact and role**

According to the interviewees, it is not easy to determine the impact of the parliamentary research bureaus on the political decision-making process. They are often one of the voices that speak out about digitisation. They are intended to provide an independent knowledge base in the political debate. For these reasons, all three offices are also valued in their own parliaments. The TAB reports, for example, are seen as truly independent and free from any political ideology because of the rapporteur structure with six rapporteurs from the various groups who are responsible for the quality control of the reports. Incidentally, one disadvantage of this system is that the reports are sometimes outdated before they are published because the consensus process between the rapporteurs takes too much time.

The interviews revealed a number of important success factors for the political impact of the work of parliamentary research offices. First, the subject; is there any public concern about the subject? For example, in case of AI, German citizens are concerned about the loss of their jobs. Secondly, the timing; are the political trenches already involved (as was the case with a report on nuclear energy)? Is the report in time for an important political debate (as in the case of a report on prenatal diagnosis that provided important input for a debate on abortion)? And thirdly, the

request: if a report is the result of a request from a political group or a standing committee, then there is a kind of standard-bearer for the report in advance who feels responsible for the embedding of the report.

Box 1 The Rathenau Instituut

In 1978, the Dutch government wished to identify the likely societal effects of computer automation, then a rapidly emerging technology. Would the introduction of the micro-chip lead to mass unemployment, or would it bring new (economic) opportunities? The commission charged with answering this question was led by Prof. G.W. Rathenau (1911-1989), who was successively Professor of Experimental Physics at the University of Amsterdam, director of the Philips Physics Laboratory in Eindhoven, and a member of the Scientific Advisory Council on Government Policy.

One of the commission's recommendations was that there should be ongoing and systematic monitoring of the societal significance of all technological advances. Rathenau's activities led to the foundation of the Netherlands Organisation for Technology Assessment (NOTA) in 1986. On 2 June 1994, this organisation was renamed the 'Rathenau Instituut'. While it remains an independent and autonomous organization, the institute now falls under the administrative responsibility of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

In 2004, at the request of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, a new task was added to the Rathenau Instituut's remit: Science System Assessment (SciSA).

**Parliamentary advisory commission**

The U.S. Congress has the option of establishing a congressional advisory commission. This is a form that we do not know in the Dutch House of Representatives; advisory committees in the Netherlands, such as the recent committee on the regulation of work led by Hans Borstlap, are generally set up by the government. There are, of course, all kinds of existing independent advisory councils, colleges and other knowledge organisations that not only serve the central government but also parliament with their advice. Although they sometimes also conduct research at the request of the Dutch House of Representatives, they generally set their own agenda.

The temporary advisory commissions in Congress consist of experts chosen by the members of both chambers and are partly appointed by the Minister. They investigate a particular issue and make policy recommendations. These committees may also hold hearings, as may the standing committees, and they conduct (policy) research and make working visits. They report back to Congress. In the United States, such committees are a parliamentary instrument for important issues that bring together all kinds of expertise which is normally not available to the standing committees. In these advisory commissions, complex issues can be studied in greater depth over a longer period of time than parliamentarians themselves can. The independent nature of these advisory commissions means that their findings and recommendations are more politically acceptable, both in Congress and among the general public. The advisory commissions differ from each other quite a lot in terms of organisational structure and weight[48].

There are currently two advisory committees in the field of digitisation:

- The **Cyberspace Solarium Commission** started in May 2019. This commission will come up with recommendations for a national strategy for cyberspace in the spring of 2020[49].
- The **National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence** was launched in August 2019 and will produce a report in October 2020[50]. The purpose of this commission is to identify the methods and resources needed to promote the development of AI, machine learning and related technologies in order to best support national security and defence needs in the United States[51].

**Impact and role**

The function of this working method is mainly to inform Congress and to help parliamentarians to better control the government. The final advice can also be put on the agenda if new recommendations are made to the federal government or to Congress itself. The evaluation of congressional commissions by the Congressional Research Center (CRS) in 2019 shows that these commissions can contribute to:

- providing specific expertise;
- increasing public visibility around a given topic;
- addressing issues of increasing political complexity (e.g. when they cover several policy areas and are therefore covered by several standing committees);
- building consensus on a topic;
- providing unbiased advice;
- solving a social problem.

48 https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40076.pdf
49 https://www.lawfareblog.com/announcing-cyberspace-solarium-commission.
50 https://www.nscai.gov/home.
51 https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL33313.pdf.

The same evaluation also mentions three points of criticism that recur on a regular basis. The committees:

- give politicians the opportunity to shirk their responsibilities;
- are undemocratic because appointed commission members replace elected politicians; and
- are often unbalanced in terms of costs and benefits because they are relatively expensive and their findings are regularly ignored by Congress[52].

### 3.3.2 Additional substantive and coordinating staff support for the standing committees

Every committee in the British Parliament has a policy advisor who often leads the substantive preparation of the inquiries but also writes notes in preparation of a meeting of the committee with a minister. This position is very similar to that of the knowledge coordinator in the staff of the permanent committees in the Dutch House of Representatives. The DCSM committee in the House of Commons has a policy advisor who specialises in digitisation issues. This person pays special attention to digital subjects with important political relevance that have not yet been picked up by one of the committees. An example of this - as mentioned in one of the interviews - is section 230 of U.S. trade treaties in which U.S. technology companies are shielded from foreign regulators. This is important for the UK because after the Brexit, the government is in the process of drawing up its own trade treaty with the US.

Other select committees do not have this specialised function for digitisation on their staff. However, they do have the option of hiring a specialist advisor. Each permanent and temporary committee has its own research budget, as do the permanent parliamentary committees in the Dutch House of Representatives. They use this budget either to outsource research or to hire (temporary) expertise for a temporary job, such as digitisation. These advisors often come from the academic world or from a public knowledge organisation, and support the staff in the preparation of an inquiry or other content-related jobs, such as looking back on the impact of completed inquiries. Specialist advisors are paid per day.

Incidentally, the staff in the British Parliament also have cluster consultations among themselves - there is now also a call for cluster consultations in the field of technology - and there is also - albeit to a lesser extent - personal consultation between staff members about coordination on digitisation issues. In the Dutch House of Representatives, the EU advisors of the various committees have the same kind of coordinating function.

52 Idem

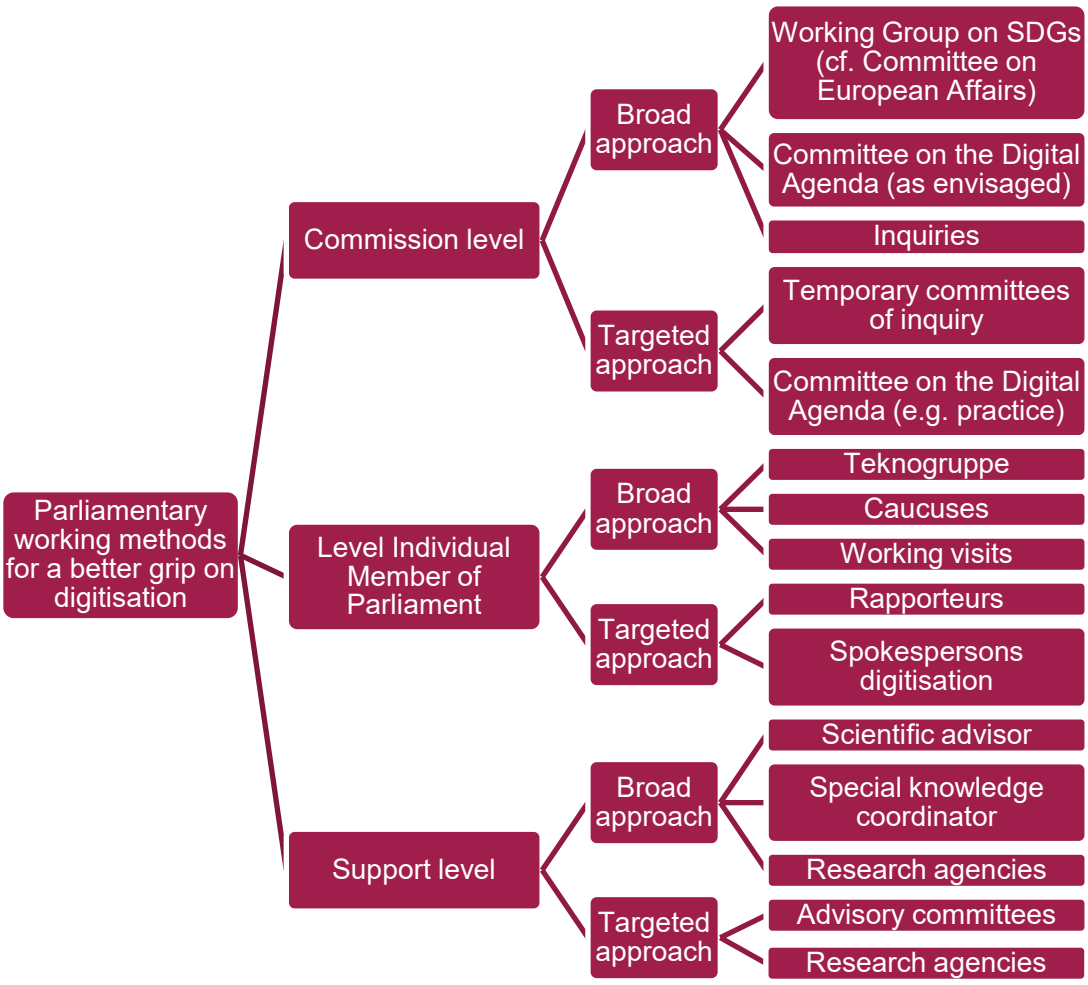
**Impact and role**
In comparison with the Bundestag, the staff of the committees in the British House of Commons and House of Lords are more concerned with content than with procedures. This is because the inquiries, with their extensive preparation, are so central to the political process in the British Parliament. Their contribution is therefore mainly on the substantive level and also on the coordinating level, although they indicate that they have less time for this than they would like. A specialist advisor can help lighten the substantive work of the committee's staff, for example when it comes to digitisation issues. Such an option could also be considered from time to time in the Dutch House of Representatives. The research budget of the standing committees is now often used to outsource research, but the committees could also consider using this budget to hire an expert who temporarily supports the committee in a subject that touches on digitisation. Another option is to appoint an extra knowledge coordinator who works on the digitisation dossier for all the standing parliamentary committees as a query point and coordinator.

## 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, various working methods have been described that all aim to strengthen the grip of members of parliament on digitisation. In general, we see two different approaches here:

- A broad procedural approach in which support and coordination on the digitisation dossier are central. This approach is particularly important for the parliamentary functions of scrutinising the government and the legislative (regulatory) part of the government.
- A targeted approach to content in which deepening of the digitisation dossier is central. This approach is particularly important for the parliamentary functions of representatives of the people (agenda-setting) and legislating (setting the framework).

Figure 7 overview working methods per level



# 4 Concluding remarks

In the countries we investigated for our research, the digital transition as a theme is more often institutionalised within the government. Germany, for example, has a special minister within the Chancellor's Office, and the United States has a separate government organisation that coordinates science and technology policy throughout the government and devotes a great deal of attention to digitisation (the White House Office of Science and Technology). The United Kingdom has a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport that explicitly has digitisation in its name and duties. Denmark has a Digitalisation Agency as part of the Ministry of Finance that is in charge of the digital transition. Norway has a Norwegian Digitalisation Agency with the same tasks and a Minister for Digitalisation, who also has regional development in its portfolio. In practice, the weight of this institutionalisation in terms of content varies from country to country.

Digitisation is not always explicitly institutionalised within the parliaments of the five countries we investigated. In the German Bundestag and the British parliament, it is. The Bundestag has set up a permanent parliamentary committee for digitisation and a number of committees of inquiry. The British Parliament has also appointed committees of inquiry into digitisation. Through inquiries, digitisation issues are regularly put on the agenda by various permanent committees as well. The American Congress recently devoted a great deal of attention to the expansion of official support for digitisation with two new organisations within the General Accountability Office (GAO). A third organisation may be added via the re-establishment of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), which has served as an example to many sister organisations of the Rathenau Instituut. The Norwegian parliament is keeping it more modest and, with the meetings of the Teknogruppe, has found an easily accessible way for interested members of parliament from various committees to delve into digitisation issues. We know that there has been a substantial discussion in the Danish parliament about whether a separate committee on digitisation should be set up by analogy with their parliamentary working group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The preliminary conclusion was that this would be difficult in practice because there is not such a clear assessment framework as with the SDGs. There is also a less prominent culture around digitisation in the Danish parliament than around the SDGs.

It is clear that all studied parliaments are constantly looking for a better grip on the subject of digitisation and, in particular, for an integral, cross-domain approach to this dossier. The latter, incidentally, applies less to the British parliament, which, with its inquiry culture, thinks it has enough opportunities to address the cross-domain questions surrounding digitisation.

In the report 'Urgent Upgrade: protect public values in our digitalised society' (2017), which the Rathenau Instituut wrote at the request of the Senate, we also advocate this integrated approach. Some parliaments have taken more steps in this direction than others. The question now before us is what the Dutch House of Representatives can and wants to do to get a better grip on digitisation and possibly arrive at a cross-domain approach. The working methods and experiences in other parliaments can provide inspiration. At the same time, this question will also have to be answered in conjunction with the other studies that the TCDT has set out, such as, for example, historical research into how the House of Representatives has dealt with a number of digitisation issues in previous years, and what has gone well and less well.

Based on the research at the Rathenau Instituut, we see that digitisation raises two types of questions that will both have to be addressed by politicians:

1. **Domain-specific questions**. New digital technologies are changing professional and social practices such as care, education, energy supply, police and justice. This raises technical, economic, ethical and legal questions, some of which are specific to that practice. The dynamics and relationships between the parties involved are different in every practice. This has consequences for the embedding and associated conditions of digitisation in that practice, such as, the prioritisation of specific public values. In the social domain this works differently than in the judiciary domain or agricultural domain. In addition, each practice will have its own (legal) framework and implementing bodies. An important political question for the House of Representatives is whether these frameworks are still adequate or whether they need to be adapted. In addition, the use of algorithms for self-driving cars, for example, places very different demands on regulation than in the case of online platforms. This means that bottlenecks must be tackled as specifically as possible in practice, particularly where general frameworks do not offer sufficient starting points.
1. **Cross-domain questions.** In order to tackle the more domain-specific issues, it is necessary to have sufficient insight into the broader social effects of digitisation, which have an impact on several policy domains, but which can only be made transparent to a limited extent from the perspective of the individual domains. Examples include social and ethical issues in the areas of privacy, security, autonomy, justice, human dignity, control over technology and the balance of power. These are issues that require a broad democratic debate because they also partly address the question of where the Netherlands wants to go with the digital transition: how can digitisation contribute to major societal challenges and under what conditions? There are also broad governance questions, such as how regulators can (or should) cooperate better and about the general legal frameworks to which digital innovation should relate. The European Commission is in the process of

renewing policy frameworks, which requires members of the House of Representatives to determine their input in good time. It is up to the House of Representatives to monitor this process on the governance of the digital transition and to assess whether public values are sufficiently safeguarded[53].

Both questions deserve ample political attention. In practice, the first question will mainly be addressed by the separate standing parliamentary committees, which have an important monitoring role here. It is desirable that the standing committees also have an agenda-setting task by drawing the government's attention to problems with the digital transition in specific practices (within the domain of a standing committee). In practice, the extent to which attention is paid to specific digitisation issues within that committee's domain varies from committee to committee. The standing committee on Economic Affairs and Climate, the committee on Internal Affairs, and the committee on Justice and Security generally devote more attention to these issues, because the ministries they monitor are the driving forces behind the government's digitisation strategies.

The second broad question about general legal frameworks and the governance landscape of the digital society has not been structurally invested in the House of Representatives (an important reason for the establishment of the TCDT). Until recently, this debate was mainly fragmented and incidental, as we noted in the report 'Urgent Upgrade' (2017). In 'Directed Digitisation' (2018), we showed that the attention paid to social and ethical issues has increased considerably in political and policy terms. For example, we see that various permanent committees have been active in recent years with initiatives to inform themselves, for example about autonomous weapons or the platform economy. The need for a broader political debate on further strengthening the governance system remains undiminished.

In our study we have seen both working methods that aim to support the standing parliamentary committees on the more practice-oriented questions surrounding digitisation, and working methods that aim to support the entire parliament on the broad questions. Below we will revisit these working methods from the perspective of these two questions.

## 4.1 Digitisation support for the standing parliamentary committees (question 1)

To a large extent, these working methods involve supporting the standing parliamentary committees in their scrutinising and agenda-setting tasks, and partly in their legislative tasks (if we interpret this task more broadly in terms of testing

53 Think of the policy framework on the Internet of Things (IoT) that affects trade, consumer affairs, consumer privacy, but also cybersecurity and drones, for example.

existing legislation and regulations in digitisation practices). This support can be provided in two ways: forms aimed at increasing the basic knowledge of all committee members, or forms aimed at the specialisation of a number of specific (staff) members through the division of tasks. Both are aimed at getting the committee to ask the right questions in the political debate on digitisation issues.

### 4.1.1 Active knowledge enhancement for all members

Parliamentarians all over the world are conducting their own investigations. It is mainly about retrieving information from society. In the British parliament, there is a commonly used term for this: the inquiries of the select committees (roughly comparable to the standing parliamentary committees). Inquiries are thoroughly prepared hearings that end with a report to the government that also contains recommendations. The government must then respond within 60 days. It is the most important instrument for these committees to carry out their scrutinising and agenda-setting tasks. We in the House of Representatives are not familiar with this form of intensive parliamentary involvement (except in research committees and committees of inquiry). Nowadays, the standing committees have an annual knowledge agenda which includes subjects on which the committee as a whole wishes to focus that year, for example by outsourcing research (but also by means of round-table discussions or working visits). A number of these agendas also include digitisation issues[54]. But our research shows that if members of parliament conduct their own research, they get a better grip on the subject.

**Working visits** are also a widely used instrument for parliamentarians to gain a better understanding of digitisation practice in their committee domain. All parliaments use this method, although some committees such as the parliamentary study commissions and the Committee on the Digital Agenda in the Bundestag do more than permanent committees. Working visits are fairly intensive - especially when they are abroad. Not only do they have the potential to provide better insight into technology, social aspects and implementation (think of the Special Inquiry Committee on AI from the House of Lords, which has learned to build its own neural network), but they can also contribute to the agenda-setting function, as we have seen in the Bundestag.

To date, the Dutch House of Representatives has not made very frequent working visits in the field of digitisation. However, the House of Representatives does

54 Digitisation (committee of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and the committee on Economic Affairs and Climate Policy), drones and killer robots (committee on Foreign trade and Development Cooperation), groundbreaking IT (Committee of Defence), digital economy taxation (Finance Committee) and cyber security (Committee on Justice and Security). See: https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/20190410_kennisagendas_kamercommissies_2019.pdf

regularly hold roundtable discussions, and more and more often these are about digitisation issues[55]. An important feature of these roundtable discussions is that they - including the written contributions of the participants - are always public. We have seen that this is by no means always the case in other parliaments. We see several options for improvement.

- The House of Representatives could consider making even better preparations for the roundtable discussions by writing a starting memorandum on the subject including sample questions and processing the findings. Not by means of a consensus report as in the case of the British inquiries, but by listing all the arguments and policy options mentioned, with extra attention for the domain-specific legal frameworks. This can be done with the help of the Analysis and Research Department and/or with the help of an independent party such as the Rathenau Instituut.
- The House of Representatives could also consider organising more frequent working visits in the field of digitisation, which could be prepared and concluded in the same way as suggested above during the round-table discussions. Another option is to coordinate as closely as possible the digitisation studies carried out as part of the knowledge agendas of the individual committees, so that they can - if possible - be useful to several committees.

We have also seen members of parliament organise themselves in more **informal working methods** such as 'coalitions of the willing' that strive for new legislation, political consensus or broader social and political debate. This is reflected in the caucuses in Congress, the all-party parliamentary groups in the UK, and in Norway in the Teknogruppe. They are all examples of consultative structures between members of parliament from different political parties and experts from academia and industry. This working method offers parliamentarians the opportunity to inform themselves, but also to profile themselves towards voters with an interest in, and parties with an interest in, digitisation issues. In the Netherlands, we are not really familiar with this working method, although it can be compared to the weekly thematic "*Poorten*" (Gates) that take place for various subjects within Nieuwspoort, such as iPoort.

- The House of Representatives could consider the somewhat more formal working method of the Teknogruppe - led by six members of parliament. This is an informal working method in which MPs from all committees are informed in a small closed meeting and can discuss new digitisation issues that often transcend committee boundaries. This partly resembles the already existing breakfast meetings that are also closed, at which MPs can discuss a specific subject with external experts. These generally focus on technical knowledge

55 For example, digitisation of higher education (Education, culture and science), digital heritage, data society and democracy (both The Interior and Kingdom Relations), digitisation and financing of the judiciary (Justice and Security, Digitax (Finance), Strategic Action Plan for Artificial Intelligence (Economic Affairs and Climate Policy).

questions. However, the preparation of these breakfast meetings is not as extensive as at the Teknogruppe, where the Norwegian Board of Technology (NBT) - the Norwegian sister organisation of the Rathenau Instituut - makes a brief overview of the digitisation issue, and of the most important social questions and options for parliament.
- An additional point of attention would be not only to seek input from science and stakeholders during those sessions, but also to provide relevant knowledge on various governance issues (e.g. the desirability of establishing or improving cooperation between regulators, industry codes, certification, legislation or guidelines).

### 4.1.2 Specialisation and division of labour

Although it is worth striving to increase the basic knowledge of all committee members, it may (also) be beneficial for a number of committee members, or a staff member in support, to specialise. It is a form of division of tasks in which a number of people develop expertise in order to be able to support the entire committee in the area of digitisation issues.

In the Bundestag, we saw that there are clear spokespersons on digitisation who also specialise in all sorts of ways because they are members of the permanent Committee on the Digital Agenda and often also of the Study Commission on AI. Within the political groups, they act as an important point of contact on digitisation; they write briefings for fellow group members who have to hold a debate on digitisation issues within their committee and sometimes even replace their colleagues. In Denmark, all spokespersons on digitisation are listed on the parliament's website.

- In the Dutch House of Representatives, it varies per political group whether there is a specific spokesperson in the field of digitisation. If there were to be a standing committee on digitisation, each group would, in any case, have to appoint a spokesperson on digitisation.

Many parliaments are familiar with the working method of rapporteurship. In the Bundestag, we saw a specific form of it in the permanent Committee for Education, Research and Technology Assessment. A rapporteurship is usually an agreement on the division of tasks within a permanent parliamentary committee. This means that the rapporteur(s) are informed on behalf of the entire committee and report to the entire committee. A degree of neutrality is, of course, desirable in this respect. Incidentally, a rapporteur is often supported by one or more staff members.

- To date, the Dutch House of Representatives has been reluctant to use it. The rapporteurship is only used in the case of major but politically less sensitive

issues/legislative proposals, and the discussion of budgets. Digitisation is currently still a subject that is generally less politicised than, for example, migration or climate change. As a result, it could lend itself more often to a rapporteurship - for example, on European developments concerning new legislation on technologies. Ultimately, this could give all members of a committee a better grip on a specific digitisation issue.

In the British Parliament, permanent and temporary committees have either a permanent specialist advisor or the option of hiring one for a temporary job on digitisation, for example. These advisors support the staff in the preparation of an inquiry or other jobs such as identifying subjects on digitisation that are not dealt with by any committee.

- Each committee has had a research budget since the House of Representatives Knowledge Position Enhancement (VKTK) operation in 2018. This budget is often used to outsource research, but the committees could also consider using this budget to hire an expert who temporarily supports the committee on a subject that touches on digitisation. Another option would be to appoint an extra knowledge coordinator who would work for all the standing parliamentary committees as a source of information and coordinator on the digitisation dossier.

## 4.2 Setting up a new committee on digitisation (question 2)

In our study, we have seen that some parliaments choose to set up new committees with the explicit task of addressing the broad overarching questions surrounding the digital transition. One form is a temporary research committee and the other is a permanent committee on digitisation. The former is a committee with an agenda-setting and legislative (framework) function. The second form differs from parliament to parliament. On paper, the Committee on the Digital Agenda has the most ideal task description, with both an agenda-setting, legislative (framework-setting), scrutinising and a coordinating task on digitisation.

### 4.2.1 (Temporary) committee of inquiry

A good example of a successful temporary committee of inquiry that has had an important agenda-setting and, in part, framework-setting role, is the Special Inquiry Committee on AI of the British House of Lords. This committee has made a clear statement that the UK cannot compete with the U.S. or China on AI, not in terms of funding and not in terms of manpower. It suggested that the UK could have a competitive advantage with a focus on ethics in AI. The committee's final report also

contains an AI code with five principles that can be seen as a kind of framework-building move towards the UK government, which has enthusiastically embraced the report and adopted several recommendations.

The challenge of such a temporary committee is always whether the final results are followed up sufficiently in government policy or in parliament itself. An obligatory Cabinet response is a first step, but structural attention to the follow-up after the committee has been disbanded is also important. The British parliament is now trying to organise this better. The liaison committees in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords have recently committed themselves to this by regularly reviewing the committee of inquiry and the inquiries, and steering for effective coordination between the two houses in this area. Other solutions are the appointment of an impact manager in the staff and the form of a subcommittee in order to be able to monitor the follow-up on the side of the government, such as in the case of disinformation.

- Depending on the work done by the TCDT[56], it could be worthwhile for the Dutch House of Representatives to set up another committee of inquiry. Most committees of inquiry in the House of Representatives focus on scrutinising the government, especially on cases where a lot has gone wrong (such as: ICT projects at the government, house prices, Fyra).
- The Dutch House of Representatives currently still[57] has the instrument of a so-called ‘theme committee’ whose task is to follow society's agenda. It also strengthens the representative function of the House of Representatives by working towards an integral medium- and long-term political vision on a particular subject. A theme committee can be set up for the duration of a session at most. However, little use is made of the theme committee instrument. This is due to the fact that the reports of theme committees do not have their own political impact, because theme committees have to submit their work to the standing committees of the House of Representatives. The visibility of a theme committee is therefore certainly not as high as is generally the case with a committee of inquiry. If the House of Representatives opts for this form, it should, therefore, make sure it has its own political impact, just like a committee of inquiry. In addition, the committee should focus more on the future and work towards an integrated political vision on digitisation.

56 For example, the extent to which the Committee wishes and is able to provide an assessment framework as stated in its research question.

57 The van der Staaij Commission recently proposed that only permanent and temporary committees should be set up in the future. The proposals of this committee have yet to be discussed in the House of Representatives.

### 4.2.2 Permanent committee

In the Bundestag, we saw that a permanent Committee on the Digital Agenda was established in 2014, and continued for a second legislative period. On paper, this commission has the most ambitious remit of all the working methods that have been studied: it scrutinises the government on all government-wide strategies related to digitisation, it informs and it puts on the agenda points that the government does not yet pay enough attention to (blind spots) or where government policy falls short (e.g. when it comes to supervision). It coordinates and advises other standing committees on new developments in the field of digitisation, and is the point of contact for the international debate on digitisation. This is largely in line with the task of the standing committee on European Affairs in the Dutch House of Representatives in the area of European developments. However, in the practice of the Bundestag, this does not appear to be working for the time being. The Committee on the Digital Agenda has too little status – it is almost never *federführend* (leading committee) on important digitisation issues – and is unable to fulfil its intended role. At the moment, its most important function is mainly to further inform the committee members by means of working visits, hearings, etc. so that they can support their colleagues in their digitisation files through the group.

The Danish working group for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a working method that is able to carry out all of the above tasks in practice, albeit not in the field of digitisation. An important part of the work of the members of this group is to give presentations to permanent committees on their own initiative in order to motivate and inspire them to take up the SDGs in their work. Because the SDGs are a major social issue in Denmark and have broad political support, the working group has gained a solid status in a short period of time to inform, advise and help committees to set their agendas. The committee also includes a large number of prominent parliamentarians. There is a chance that, following the evaluation in October 2020, the committee will continue as a standing committee.

- Important challenges in the working method of a Committee for Digitisation are, therefore, that such a committee should have a similar political status and weight as other permanent committees. This will apply to the Dutch House of Representatives because, as much as it does in the Bundestag, because of the similar strong committee culture. However, a Committee for Digitalisation cannot have the same status as a standing committee, as long as it is not mirrored to one ministry. In any case, it helps if it is clear who the main political contact person(s) are in the Cabinet. This will also help to attract members with enough experience to sit on such a committee. A risk of this working method could be that digitisation is seen too much as an expertise, rather than a subject that all members should understand.

- In the Dutch House of Representatives, the committee for European Affairs has the same kind of tasks as we could imagine with a permanent Committee for Digitisation. Much of the work is done by several EU advisors who are linked to other permanent parliamentary committees. They play an important coordinating role. In our study, we did not consider the impact of the committeefor European Affairs. It would be a good idea to look at it before the House of Representatives decides to set up such a committee for digitisation.

- An important point for both the temporary and permanent variant is that a committee for digitalisation will to a large extent be a writing committee. Precisely because its task mainly consists of looking at broader questions and at new issues that are coming our way, it is not enough to be (only) reactive towards Cabinet proposals. Rather than reacting mainly to what the government brings in, the committee will have to come up with new insights to provide other committees with new information. As a rule, this does not mean that MPs should write the reports themselves: this can also be left to staff members. But in the latter case, too, members of parliament will have to delve deeply into the subject matter and comment on draft reports.

**In conclusion**

An important point on which the Dutch House of Representatives differs from most of the other parliaments we have studied is the size of the parliamentary support, which is relatively small. This applies not only to administrative support but also to support at the political parties and groups within parliament. In the Dutch parliament, administrative support is limited in comparison with the government's civil service, but especially in comparison with other parliaments[58]. Moreover, the Dutch House of Representatives has even fewer members than other parliaments. The motion adopted in September 2019 to substantially increase the subsidy to political parties is an important step forward. However, the level of official support remains the same to date. This is unfortunate, because stronger substantive support for the parliamentary committees, as is now largely provided by the Analysis and Research Department, is indispensable if the House of Representatives is to devote more structural attention to digitisation issues.

Fortunately, the Netherlands also has a strong and diverse landscape of advisory and research organisations that can support the House of Representatives from outside. Organisations such as the Rathenau Instituut can continue to help the House of Representatives in retrieving information from society when it comes to social changes due to the emergence of new digital technologies. After all, doing research for parliament is not the same as scientific research. Parliamentary research is more about bringing together and analysing different experiences, interests and opinions in order to bring them into the political debate. The societal perspective is indispensable in this respect and is an important starting point for the

58 W. van der Woude, ‘Staten-Generaal en wetgeving’ in: RegelMaat, 2014, p. 332.

House of Representatives as a body representing the people. In this way it can get a better grip on digitisation and, moreover, better determine its own agenda on the subject.

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NBT - Teknologirådet (2 april 2019) *Saken forklart: 5G – hva betyr det for Norge?* [De kwestie uitgelegd: 5G - wat betekent dit voor Noorwegen?]

NBT - Teknologirådets (15 maart 2019) *Teknologirådets årsrapport for 2018* [jaarverslag NBT]

NBT - Teknologirådet (november 2018) *Rapport: Teknologi For Livslang Læring: Fjernt, Nært Og Simulert* [Technologie voor levenslang leren: op afstand, dichtbij en gesimuleerd]

NBT - Teknologirådet (september 2018) *Rapport: Kunstig intelligens - muligheter, utfordringer og en plan for Norge* [Kunstmatige Intelligentie – Kansen, Uitdagingen en een Plan voor Noorwegen]

NBT - Teknologirådet (9 mei 2018) *Saken forklart: Blokkjeden – på tide å ta grep?* [De kwestie uitgelegd: de blockchain - tijd om actie te ondernemen?]

NBT - Teknologirådets (15 maart 2018) *Teknologirådets årsrapport for 2017* [jaarverslag NBT]

NBT - Teknologirådet (9 november 2017) *Saken forklart: Kunstig intelligens: smart eller skremmende?* [De kwestie uitgelegd:Kunstmatige intelligentie: slim of eng?]

NBT - Teknologirådets (23 maart 2017) *Teknologirådets årsrapport for 2016* [jaarverslag NBT]

# List of people we spoke to

### United Kingdom

Conor Durham, Digital and technology specialist at the DCSM Committee in House of Commons

Lorna Christie, POST Physical Sciences and IT Advisor, seconded to DCMS disinformation subcommittee in the House of Commons

Danielle Nash, Clerk of the Commons Science & Technology Committee

Simon Cran-McGreehin, Clerk of the Lords Science & Technology Committee

Luke Hussey, Clerk of the Table Office, previously Clerk to AI Committee

Olivia Crabtree, Clerk of the Lords Democracy and Digital Technologies Committee

Grant Hill-Cawthorne, Head of POST

Chris Tyler, former Head of POST

### Germany

Jacob Prehn, staff member Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment

Andreas Meyer, Head of Secretariat Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment

MP Stephan Albani, member of the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment

Jana Leichsenring, staff member Committee on the Digital Agenda

MP Domscheit-Berg, member of the Committee on the Digital Agenda

MP Rene Röspel, member of the Study Commission “Artificial Intelligence’ and of the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment

Theresa Essers, staff member Study Commission ‘Artificial Intelligence’

Reinhard Grünwald, deputy chief Office of Technology Assessment at the German Bundestag (TAB)

Prof. dr. Julia Schwanholz, Professor of Ethics in Political Management and Society, Universität Duisburg-Essen

## United States

Anca Butcaru, Senior Advisor to the President Congressional Institute

Imre Grevers, policy advisor Innovation, Technology & Science, Innovation Attaché Network, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Sigrid Johannisse, Counselor for Innovation, Tech & Science and Head of Innovation Attache Network North-America, Embassy Kingdom of the Netherlands in Washington DC, USA

Timothy M. Persons, Chief Scientist and Managing Director, Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics, United States Government Accountability Office

Stephen Sanford, Director, Center for Strategic Foresight, United States Government Accountability Office

Jack Loveridge, Associate, Weatherhead Scholars Program, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Harvard University

## Denmark

Anders Helmuth Knudsen, professional committee staff of the Working Group on World Goals

## Norway

Tore Tennøe, Director of the Norwegian Board of Technology (NBT)

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