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Building Parliamentary Analytical Capacity: The Science and Technology Office of the Spanish Congress of Deputies

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Abstract
This article analyses the Science and Technology Office of the Spanish Congress of Deputies (Oficina C) as a case of parliamentary technology assessment institutionally distinct from parliamentary research services. The article draws on the literature on evidence use, analytical capacity and science-policy mediation. It also compares European parliamentary technology assessment models, examines institutional and parliamentary documents, includes an interview with Meritxell Batet, Speaker of the Spanish Congress of Deputies at the time Oficina C was created, and uses an exploratory survey of 40 Members of Parliament (MPs). The Spanish model follows a hybrid formula. Parliament sets the direction, while the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology supports the technical process. Expert review and open publication reinforce the credibility and accessibility of the Office's work. The evidence shows methodological credibility, positive reception among experts and growing circulation in administrative, academic, media and public settings. Parliamentary use, however, remains limited. Most surveyed MPs know and value the Office, but few use its products directly. Oficina C is therefore a legitimate and reusable source of parliamentary analytical capacity, but not yet a routine part of parliamentary work.

Keywords: parliamentary technology assessment, parliamentary science advice, evidence-informed policymaking.

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Construir capacidad analítica parlamentaria: la Oficina de Ciencia y Tecnología del Congreso de los Diputados

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la Oficina de Ciencia y Tecnología del Congreso de los Diputados (Oficina C) como un caso de evaluación parlamentaria de tecnologías institucionalmente diferenciado de los servicios de estudios e investigación parlamentaria. El análisis se apoya en la literatura sobre el uso de la evidencia, la capacidad analítica y la mediación entre ciencia y política. Asimismo, compara distintos modelos europeos de evaluación parlamentaria de tecnologías, examina documentación institucional y parlamentaria, incorpora una entrevista con Meritxell Batet, presidenta del Congreso de los Diputados cuando se creó la Oficina C, y utiliza una encuesta exploratoria realizada a 40 diputados. El modelo español responde a una fórmula híbrida. El Parlamento fija la orientación, mientras que la Fundación Española para la Ciencia y la Tecnología presta apoyo al proceso técnico. La revisión por expertos y la publicación en acceso abierto refuerzan la credibilidad y la accesibilidad de los trabajos de la Oficina. Los resultados muestran credibilidad metodológica, una valoración positiva entre los expertos y una circulación creciente en la Administración, el ámbito académico, los medios de comunicación y el debate público. Sin embargo, su uso parlamentario sigue siendo limitado. La mayoría de los diputados encuestados conoce la Oficina y la valora positivamente, pero pocos utilizan directamente sus productos. La Oficina C constituye, por tanto, una fuente legítima y reutilizable de capacidad analítica parlamentaria, aunque todavía no forma parte de manera habitual del trabajo parlamentario.

Palabras clave: evaluación parlamentaria de tecnologías, asesoramiento científico parlamentario, uso de la evidencia en las políticas públicas.

1. Introduction

The growing presence of scientific and technological issues on the public agenda raises an institutional problem for parliaments. Matters such as artificial intelligence, public health, disinformation, climate change, drought or the regulation of digital platforms require political decisions, but they also demand a sufficient understanding of evidence, uncertainty, risks and alternatives. The executive typically has ministries, agencies, administrative data and permanent technical teams at its disposal. Parliamentary chambers, by contrast, work with more fragmented timeframes, more limited analytical resources and an agenda exposed to political conflict. This informational asymmetry is at the core of the debate on parliamentary analytical capacity (Howlett, 2015; Russell & Cowley, 2016).

It is in this context that the Science and Technology Office of the Spanish Congress of Deputies (Oficina C) was created in 2021. Its purpose is to provide the Chamber with organised, reviewed and understandable scientific and technological knowledge for parliamentary work, through a hybrid formula: parliamentary direction, operational collaboration with the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT), expert review, open publication and final selection of topics by the Bureau of Congress.

Oficina C is not analysed within the well-researched field of parliamentary research services (PaRS), which provide on-demand analytical and documentary support to members and committees within established mandates (Geddes, 2019; Kenny et al., 2017). Instead, it is looked upon from the parliamentary technology assessment (PTA) perspective: the anticipatory, reflexive assessment of the social, ethical, economic and political consequences of scientific and technological developments, produced for and used by parliament (Grunwald, 2019; Nentwich, 2016), even though it operates in a parliamentary ecosystem that also contains research and documentation services.

The article examines Oficina C's institutional design, report-preparation method and early uses inside and outside Congress. It draws on literature on evidence use, parliamentary analytical capacity and science-politics mediation; a comparison with European PTA models; reports, annual activity reports and parliamentary and administrative records; an interview with the former Speaker of Congress when the Office was created; and an exploratory survey.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 presents the origins, institutional design and scientific production of Oficina C. Section 3 develops the analytical framework. Section 4 sets out the research design and explains the use of documentary sources, the interview and the exploratory survey of 40 Members of Parliament. Section 5 compares the main models of parliamentary analytical and foresight support. Section 6 presents and discusses the survey findings on MPs' awareness, valuation and use of Oficina C, together with documentary and interview evidence on its parliamentary and wider circulation. Section 7 concludes by assessing the Office's contribution, limitations and prospects for consolidation.

2. The Creation and Evolution of Oficina C

The Science and Technology Office of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, Oficina C, was created in 2021 to organise and make available to Parliament scientific and technological evidence usable in its work. Since then, it has published 17 C Reports, i.e. in-depth, expert-reviewed syntheses of the state of knowledge on a given issue, with regulatory and comparative contextualisation, involving more than 400 experts and drawing on more than 3,000 scientific publications, all openly published with full traceability of sources. The Office has also published two C Notes, a briefer format designed to answer specific requests from committees or the Bureau through reviewed evidence and clear language (Congreso de los Diputados, n.d.). The reports seek to objectify what can be tested, e.g. the state of knowledge, assumptions, risks and uncertainties, without presenting as neutral what belongs to democratic choice, thereby avoiding both the politicisation of the expert and the replacement of politics by an appearance of technical decision.

The Office was formalised through an agreement between the Congress of Deputies and the FECYT. The proposal originated in the scientific community, was examined by the Presidency, presented to the Bureau and approved unanimously — a cross-party endorsement intended to prevent the Office from being perceived as an instrument of a temporary majority (M. Batet, interview). The choice of FECYT rather than the existing research service is significant. Congress already possesses strong legal, procedural and documentary capacities through its PaRS. But the regular production of anticipatory scientific syntheses requires different capabilities: systematic literature review, selection and management of expert panels, evidence appraisal, technical coordination and specialised editing. Assigning this to an internal service that is already dealing with different demands (e.g. legal and procedural) risked overburdening the experts, creating an in-house scientific committee raised problems of composition, while delegating the task to a single university posed a question of comparative legitimacy. FECYT,[2] a public foundation attached to the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, with a legally autonomous governance that protects the independence of its processes, offered scientific networks, technical expertise and experience in science communication while preserving parliamentary direction.

The resulting design is deliberately hybrid, and combines a parliamentary mandate, operational collaboration with FECYT and the open production of evidence. The Bureau of Congress selects the topics; the Office organises the technical process with FECYT and holds editorial responsibility; products are published openly with persistent identifiers. Governance includes shared coordination between FECYT and the General Secretariat of Congress, a technical evidence team, and an Advisory Board composed of representatives from twelve national research, university, scientific-society and innovation bodies, including the Spanish National Research Council and the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities. The Board proposes topics, recommends experts and advises the Office on scientific and technical matters.

2 https://www.fecyt.es

FECYT and the Office may propose the topics for parliamentary reports, but only the Bureau decides which ones are prepared. The agenda draws on an issues radar, consultation with the Advisory Board and an annual proposal to the Bureau. Each report then proceeds through an interdisciplinary literature review combined with interviews and iterative exchanges with national and international experts, recording consensus, disagreement and areas of uncertainty. Before closure, drafts undergo internal methodological review and external review by participating experts. The final phase adds professional editing, accessible language, visual resources and activities connecting the work with committees and MPs. Both C Reports and C Notes rest on traceable bibliography, expert consultation and open publication under a CC BY 4.0 licence, an openness that extends their usefulness beyond Congress and allows the materials to circulate among administrations, academia, journalists, social organisations and other parliaments (Oficina de Ciencia y Tecnología del Congreso de los Diputados [Oficina C], n.d.-b, n.d.-c).

The Office has also developed C Dialogues, fellowships and a Science–Congress pairing programme, through which researchers accompany MPs and parliamentary staff in their daily work. These initiatives form part of Horizonte C, the Office's long-term framework for strengthening mutual understanding between Parliament and the scientific community and improving the incorporation of scientific evidence into parliamentary activity. Batet describes this underlying logic as a "double approximation": "that scientists should understand the times and constraints of Parliament, and that MPs should better understand how scientific knowledge is produced" (M. Batet, interview, 18 May 2026; Oficina C, n.d.-c).

3. Analytical framework

3.1 Two distinct functions: research services and technology assessment

Parliament needs reliable information of its own to perform its representative, legislative and scrutiny functions (Norton, 2013; Judge, 1993). The executive produces information, organises it administratively and decides when to introduce it into public debate. Parliament works with shorter timeframes, more limited resources and an agenda exposed to conflict. When a debate depends on scientific or technological knowledge, this asymmetry becomes acute, and parliament may scrutinise government from a weaker cognitive basis (Russell & Cowley, 2016).

Howlett (2015) defines analytical capacity as the institutional ability to acquire, process and apply knowledge in policy formulation. Wu et al. (2015) distinguish analytical, operational and political capacities across individual, organisational and systemic levels. Applied to parliament, this reveals a specific gap: chambers possess democratic legitimacy and procedural authority, but not always sufficient analytical capacity in specialised matters. Parliamentary libraries, legal services and committee secretariats address part of this need, yet they are not generally designed for systematic scientific synthesis or technological foresight.

Two institutional responses to this gap coexist in contemporary parliaments, and they are frequently conflated.

The first is PaRS: bodies such as scientific services, parliamentary libraries and research directorates that provide on-demand, impartial and confidential analytical and documentary support to individual members and committees, within established mandates and short timeframes. Their work is reactive and client-driven (Geddes, 2019; Kenny et al., 2017). Their guiding question is operational: *what does a member or committee need to know now to carry out a specific piece of parliamentary business?*

The second is parliamentary technology assessment (PTA): the anticipatory, reflexive assessment of the social, ethical, economic and political consequences of scientific and technological developments, produced for parliament and oriented to the medium term (Grunwald, 2019). PTA selects emerging issues, organises expert knowledge and publishes reviewed syntheses before a technology has reshaped rights, markets or public services. Its guiding question is anticipatory: *what should parliament understand about a technology before it must decide?*

The two functions are complementary, and the boundary between them matters for institutional design, staffing and evaluation. A body evaluated as if it were a research service will be judged by responsiveness to member requests; a body evaluated as PTA will be judged by the credibility, salience and reach of its anticipatory syntheses. This article situates Oficina C within the PTA framework, while recognising that it operates in a chamber that also possesses research and documentation services, and that this coexistence is itself part of the Spanish design.

Alongside PaRS and PTA bodies, some parliaments have created future committees to address long-term challenges. Embedded in the ordinary committee structure and composed of parliamentarians, they represent a distinct form of anticipatory capacity rather than a subtype of PTA (Koskimaa & Raunio, 2020).

The systematic comparison of the European Parliamentary Technology Assessment (EPTA) network identifies several models: internal parliamentary offices, parliamentary panels or committees, bicameral bodies of parliamentarians, and external institutes operating under a legislative mandate (Cruz-Castro & Sanz-Menéndez, 2005; Nentwich, 2016). Each model represents a different approach: how to bring expert knowledge close to parliament without turning it into an extension of the executive, of a particular university, of an interest group or of a temporary majority.

3.2 How evidence is actually used in parliament

Understanding what PTA can achieve requires a realistic model of how evidence enters decision-making. The influence of evidence rarely follows a linear path from a report to a law. Weiss (1979) distinguished instrumental uses, when research helps solve a specific problem; conceptual uses, when it reshapes how a problem is understood; and political or

symbolic uses, when it supports a position already held. In parliament, conceptual use is often the most significant, as evidence changes the terms of a hearing, refines an amendment or forces a ministry to justify a technical premise.

Evidence use is both a social and institutional process. It occurs where there are relationships, trust, suitable formats, compatible timeframes and organisations with absorptive capacity (Nutley et al., 2007). Oliver et al. (2014) identify common barriers such as limited access to relevant research, lack of timeliness, weak researcher–decision-maker relationships and difficulty interpreting results in decision contexts empirically. These obstacles intensify in parliament, where agendas are reactive and deadlines short. Cairney (2016) adds that evidence never enters politics as a neutral instruction: it competes with values, interests, institutional rules and limited attention. It is more accurate, then, to speak of *evidence-informed* rather than evidence-based decisions.

It is argued that knowledge is useful for decision-making only when it combines credibility, salience and legitimacy (Cash et al., 2003), which in a chamber means being acceptable to the scientific community, useful to members and committees, and sufficiently neutral to circulate between majority and opposition. Yet, Weingart (1999) warns of the twin risks of politicising science and scientising politics. Pielke's (2007) *honest broker* offers the corresponding ideal, in which the adviser broadens and clarifies the range of options rather than imposing an answer. These criteria flow into the analysis of the Oficina C case.

4. Methodology

This article combines qualitative and quantitative evidence on Oficina C's institutional design, working method and early uses. It utilises data from several sources: the Office's documentation, including C Reports, annual activity reports and public consultations; parliamentary and administrative records citing C Reports; an elite interview with Meritxell Batet, who was Speaker of the Spanish Congress of Deputies when Oficina C was created; and an exploratory survey.

The author's previous experience as a Spanish MP and Senator facilitated access to institutional information and relevant actors, including the interview conducted for this study. This institutional proximity also informed the interpretation of the case and is made explicit here as a matter of methodological transparency.

The study addresses two closely related research questions:

1. To what extent do members of the Congress of Deputies know of, value and use the products of Oficina C in their individual parliamentary work?
2. What does the gap between awareness, valuation and use reveal about the incorporation of science advice into the ordinary activity of the Chamber?

The research questions deliberately place the individual member, rather than the parliamentary group, at the centre of the analysis. The underlying assumption is that access

to independent, peer-reviewed scientific evidence strengthens the analytical capacity and autonomy of the individual member, including within their own parliamentary group. Accordingly, the survey measures individual awareness, valuation and use.

The target population for the survey was the 350 members of the Congress of Deputies, the chamber to which Oficina C belongs; senators and parliamentary staff were excluded by design because the study focused on elected members of the lower chamber. From this population, 100 members were selected through simple random sampling by computer, and each was contacted at the public email address listed on the official website of the Congress. Of the 100 invited members, 40 completed the questionnaire in full, yielding a response rate of 40%. The 40 respondents represent 11.4% of all members of the Congress.

Surveys of political elites are difficult to conduct, and response rates vary substantially according to survey mode and national context; online surveys generally achieve lower response rates than face-to-face studies (Vis & Stolwijk, 2021). Against this background, the 40% completion rate obtained here is comparatively strong, while responses from 11.4% of the Chamber provide valuable exploratory coverage for this study. Simple random sampling strengthens the design, although the final respondent group may still be affected by non-response bias, and the sample is not claimed to reproduce the Chamber's composition by parliamentary group, sex or seniority. The findings should therefore be read as indicative rather than conclusive.

The survey instrument comprised three closed (yes/no) questions to minimise ambiguity and response burden and encourage completion among a hard-to-reach population. It was not formally piloted or psychometrically validated, and brevity and direct wording were used to support straightforward interpretation. A short standard description of the Office preceded the second question, allowing members previously unaware of Oficina C to assess the initiative.

The questionnaire consisted of the following three yes/no questions. The questions are presented here in English translation.

1. Before receiving this questionnaire, were you aware of the existence of Oficina C?
   Respondents were then given the following brief description: *Oficina C is the Science and Technology Office of the Spanish Congress of Deputies. It prepares reports and notes that synthesise scientific evidence on issues relevant to parliamentary work.*
2. After reading this description, do you consider Oficina C a useful initiative for parliamentary work?
3. Have you consulted or used any reports, notes or other materials produced by Oficina C in your parliamentary work?

The survey was administered online, from 12 January 2026 to 2 March 2026. Participation was voluntary and not anonymous, since responses were provided directly by the members themselves; consent is therefore implicit in their voluntary participation.

Given the exploratory nature and size of the sample, the analysis relies on descriptive statistics.

The qualitative component consisted of a semi-structured interview with Meritxell Batet, Speaker of the Congress of Deputies when Oficina C was created, conducted online on 18 May 2026 and lasting approximately 40 minutes. Batet was purposively selected because of her direct involvement in the establishment of the Office. The interview was intended to reconstruct its institutional origins and rationale, and to provide context for the interpretation of the documentary review and survey findings, rather than to offer a representative account of parliamentary views.

5. Models of analytical support

Our desk review shows that parliaments have institutionalised analytical and foresight capacity in different ways. This section compares several institutional models using four variables: institutional location, parliamentary direction, scientific depth and connection with legislative routine. The comparison includes core PTA bodies, parliamentary research services and future committees as related but institutionally distinct forms of parliamentary analytical and anticipatory capacity.

The internal office. Established in 1989 and incorporated into Parliament as an internal office in 1993, the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) is one of the most consolidated PTA institutions. It currently has a core team of around 14 staff working across management, scientific and social-science advice, and knowledge exchange. POST provides independent, balanced analysis to both Houses, and its POSTnotes summarise reviewed evidence in a brief, usable format (Parliament of the United Kingdom, n.d.). It is worth noting that POST operates within a parliament that also has extensive research services, illustrating that PTA and PaRS coexist rather than substitute for one another.

The parliamentary panel. Launched in 1987 and operating on a permanent basis since 1988, STOA, the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology of the European Parliament, combines political direction by MEPs with permanent technical support. The Panel determines the work programme, while the Scientific Foresight Unit within the European Parliamentary Research Service provides analytical and administrative support through a core team of eight staff members, including its Head of Unit, assisted by additional personnel. This structure links technology assessment to explicit parliamentary direction while maintaining specialised professional capacity (European Parliament, n.d.).

The external model. Established in 1990, Germany's Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag (TAB) is operated under contract with the Bundestag by the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS) at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, in cooperation with the IZT and the Institute for Innovation and Technology (iit). Unlike STOA, TAB is not a parliamentary panel composed of legislators: its scientific work is carried out by an external research organisation. Its official team currently comprises eleven core staff members and six named staff from the partner institutes, with

additional KIT/ITAS researchers involved on a project basis. The responsible Bundestag committee, supported by a cross-party group of rapporteurs, selects the topics and reviews the final reports, while TAB retains responsibility for the scientific work. The model therefore combines external scientific production with parliamentary direction and oversight (Büro für Technikfolgen-Abschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag, n.d.).

The bicameral parliamentary body. Created by statute in 1983, France's Office parlementaire d'évaluation des choix scientifiques et technologiques (OPECST) is a joint body of the National Assembly and the Senate, comprising 18 deputies and 18 senators, with its chairmanship alternating between the two chambers. Unlike STOA, which combines political direction by MEPs with support from a permanent technical unit, OPECST gives its parliamentary members a direct investigative role: one or more members are appointed as rapporteurs, conduct feasibility studies and hearings, and submit their findings for adoption by the Office. It is supported by the administrations of both chambers and by a scientific council of 24 experts. The model therefore combines bicameral political ownership with member-led scientific and technological assessment (Assemblée nationale, n.d.).

Parliamentary research services. Distinct from PTA, parliamentary research services provide impartial analytical and documentary support closely connected to the routine needs of members and committees. Their defining feature is the breadth and responsiveness of their services rather than a specialised mandate for technology assessment. The Australian Parliamentary Library combines confidential research commissioned by parliamentarians and committees with legislative analysis, statistical and mapping services, media monitoring and public research publications. Similarly, the Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile provides multidisciplinary advice to both chambers in support of their legislative, representative and scrutiny functions, based on equal access and political neutrality. These cases illustrate how broad analytical support can be integrated within parliamentary libraries and linked directly to daily parliamentary work, while scientific and technological foresight remains one function among many rather than the institution's principal purpose (Australian Parliament House, n.d.; Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, n.d.).

Future committees are included here as a related but institutionally distinct model of parliamentary foresight. They share PTA's anticipatory focus on long-term scientific and technological change, but differ in their organisational form and primary function: they are standing committees composed of parliamentarians and centred on political deliberation and agenda-setting, whereas PTA bodies are specialised arrangements for producing or commissioning expert assessment. The Finnish Committee for the Future illustrates this model (Koskimaa & Raunio, 2020).

Table 1 presents the aforementioned variables for each one of the models of analytical support. The choice of variables draws on the PTA literature, which classifies institutions by their degree of parliamentary ownership, scientific independence and institutional integration (Cruz-Castro & Sanz-Menéndez, 2005; Nentwich, 2016; Vig & Paschen, 2000). On this basis, parliamentary direction is coded as *high* where the body is composed of

parliamentarians who set its own work programme (panels, bicameral bodies, future committees), *medium* where parliament sets the mandate and approves topics but execution is administrative or technical (internal offices, external institutes, the Bureau-led selection of Oficina C), and *low* where the service reacts to individual requests without political ownership of the agenda (research services). Scientific depth is *high* where the body produces in-depth, expert-reviewed syntheses, *medium* where it commissions or curates external analysis, and *low* where output is primarily documentary or on-demand. Connection with routine is *high* where products feed directly into members' and committees' day-to-day work, *medium* where the link is regular but mediated, and *emerging* where traces exist but are not yet systematic. Institutional location is coded factually as internal, external or hybrid. These criteria are applied uniformly across all rows.

Table 1
Comparative models of parliamentary analytical and foresight capacity

Model	Reference case	Location	Parliamentary direction	Scientific depth	Connection with routine
Internal office	POST (UK)	Internal	Medium	High	High
Parliamentary panel	STOA (EP)	Internal	High	Medium-High	Medium
External institute	TAB (Germany)	External	Medium	High	Medium
Bicameral body	OPECST (France)	Internal	High	Medium	Medium
Research service	Libraries (AU, CL)	Internal	Low–Medium	Low-Medium	High
Future committee	Eduskunta (Finland)	Internal	High	Low-Medium	Medium
Hybrid (this case)	Oficina C (Spain)	Internal + external (FECYT)	High (Bureau)	High	Emerging

Source: Author's own elaboration based on the institutional sources and literature cited in the text.

Our analysis indicates that internal offices and parliamentary research services have the strongest connection with the day-to-day work of members and committees, although through different mechanisms: internal offices because they are institutionally embedded within parliament, and research services because they respond directly to requests from members and committees. Panels and future committees provide political ownership of the work programme, whereas external and hybrid models draw more heavily on specialised scientific capacity located outside the parliamentary administration. Within this comparison, Oficina C is a hybrid model combining parliamentary direction with externally supported scientific production.

6. Study results and discussion

The analysis of Oficina C's impact relies on the data obtained from the exploratory survey, the article's main source of original evidence. The survey measured three dimensions: awareness, valuation and use, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Awareness, valuation and use of Oficina C among surveyed Members of Parliament (n = 40)

Dimension	Question	Result
Awareness	Knew of the Office before the survey	32 of 40 (80%)
Valuation	Considered it a useful initiative (after a brief description)	38 of 40 (95%)
Use	Had consulted or used its materials in parliamentary work	12 of 40 (30%)

Source: Author's exploratory survey, conducted between 12 January and 2 March 2026

The patterns present in the results answer the research question directly. Awareness is high (80%) and valuation almost unanimous (95%), but effective use falls sharply (30%): this suggests that the Office has achieved broad recognition among respondents but has not yet become a routine source of support in hearings, questions, amendments or debates. Read through the lens of individual analytical capacity, this indicates that the Office has succeeded in building recognition and legitimacy at the level of the individual member, but has not yet converted that recognition into a routine resource that members draw on to strengthen their autonomy within hearings, questions, amendments and debates.

Alongside the survey, our review of Office materials confirms early parliamentary use, though none permits a claim of normative causality. The C Report *Ageing and Wellbeing* appears in two non-legislative motions (on digital training for older people and on a national strategy against unwanted loneliness); the report *Forest Fires and Restoration of Burnt Areas* was cited in the plenary sitting of 17 September 2025 in a speech on major fires and risk management; and during the consideration of initiatives on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) the Office organised a dialogue based on its report on neurodegenerative diseases, attended by sixteen MPs from different groups (Congreso de los Diputados, 2025; Oficina C, 2025). This provides evidence that scientific terminology, concepts and technical knowledge have begun to enter parliamentary activity.

Beyond Congress, C Reports increasingly function as reference materials. The report on *Disinformation in the Digital Age* has been cited in work on media literacy and electoral vulnerability to generative AI, and the report on *Artificial Intelligence and Education* was cited as a source in the Basque Government's official *Guide for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, a recognisable transfer into a policy instrument (Gobierno Vasco, 2025; Oficina C, 2024). According to Oficina C's 2024 Activity Report, its reports had been cited in ten

academic journals, ten policy or third-sector reports, eleven university research projects and two non-legislative motions, and had received 34 specific press mentions. Among the 57 experts who responded to the satisfaction survey on the 2024 reports, 96.3% rated the methodology as adequate or very adequate, and 98.2% stated that they would collaborate with the Office again (Oficina C, 2025).

However, activity data should be read critically in the absence of independent evaluation. Press mentions and website traffic measure public presence, which should not be conflated with parliamentary effectiveness. Nonetheless, external circulation is an asset that broadens the ecosystem of actors reusing the Office's work products, and may reinforce parliamentary use indirectly.

These findings are consistent with Cash et al.'s (2003) framework as the Office has built credibility and legitimacy, but its work still rarely enters parliamentary business directly. This again matches an honest-broker role (Pielke, 2007) and suggests the Office has expanded Congress's analytical capacity (Howlett, 2015; Wu et al., 2015).

7. Conclusions

Oficina C constitutes an institutional innovation in the Spanish parliamentary system. It responds to a recognisable problem in contemporary democracies, that is the distance between the scientific and technological complexity of many public issues and the ordinary capacity of parliaments to examine them with their own independent, usable information. Analysed as a case of PTA, distinct from research services, it shows that a parliament can build a credible procedure for producing reviewed evidence without eroding the autonomy of political decision.

Our findings show that the Office is widely known and almost unanimously seen as worthwhile, yet directly used by only a minority of members. This distance shows that Oficina C has secured recognition and legitimacy but not yet routine incorporation into the daily work of hearings, questions, amendments and debates. Its hybrid design, parliamentary direction with externalised scientific production, accounts for both its methodological credibility and its still-limited salience in parliamentary practice.

The Spanish model should therefore be understood as an institutional infrastructure still at an early stage of consolidation. The methodological quality of its reports has been positively assessed by participating experts, while surveyed MPs show high awareness of and support for the Office. The central challenge is now to translate this recognition into more regular use in parliamentary work. This will depend on the timely delivery of relevant outputs, closer interaction with committees and parliamentary groups, and greater use of shorter instruments such as C Notes. Whether the analytical capacity created by the Office becomes embedded in the ordinary practice of the Chamber will only become clear over time.

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