Introduction

The main purpose of the case study was to gather empirical data about internal environment and external factors influencing the daily work of parliamentary committees through the eyes of the members of parliament and committee staff. The focus of case study was on the research problems and questions, described and analyzed in the previous part of the current thesis, including the development of democratical parliamentary tradition, the role and content of committees work in parliamentary process and parliament's relations with the executive. For this purpose a questionnaire was compiled and distributed among committee chairpersons, faction chairpersons and committee chief-secretaries.

The questions were aimed to reflect the current practices and experiences of committees everyday work and how the persons involved with managing committees and those assisting them perceive the committees role as well as their own function in parliamentary process.

With the help of the questionnaire the author tried to find answers to the following research questions (please note that these are not the actual questions used in the distributed questionnaires):
1. How does the overall load of functions prescribed for Riigikogu influence committees work?
2. Is the competence of MP-s and staff of sufficient level to ensure the smooth functioning committees and the plenary?
3. How do MP-s and staff see the functions and management of committees as compared to committee staff?
4. How do the members of coalition and opposition see the committees role in uniting different political interests?
5. How do MP-s and staff see the committees role in supervising executive power?
6. How is the co-operation between factions and committees perceived by MP-s and staff in ensuring the legitimacy of parliament?
7. What are the development perspectives of committees as perceived by MP-s and staff?

Getting answers to those research questions would help to clarify, if the committees are really achieving permanence and how the committee model in Riigikogu corresponds to the German and Scandinavian model of strong and comprehensive committees by committees having a strong influence on what is happening at the plenary. It would also reflect the willingness of different committees to co-operate, as well as the co-operation perspectives between committees and factions and last, but not least between MP-s and committee staff.

How members of parliament perceive the role of committees in supervising executive power and how they see the role of investigation committees helps to describe how willing and how well prepared the MP-s are to scrutinize government actions. One indicator of the polarization of party groups is the relationship and respect to the internal procedure of parliament by MP-s, stipulated by Riigikogu Rules of Procedure Act.

The distributed questionnaire consisted of 15 questions, based on the general research questions listed above. The questions used in the questionnaire could be grouped into six categories - questions focusing on committees place and committees management in the organization of Riigikogu (questions 2, 6 and 9 in the questionnaire), questions focusing on general functions and development of Riigikogu (questions 1, 3 and 7 in the questionnaire), questions about the role of coalition and opposition (questions 5 and 7 in the questionnaire),
questions focusing on legislature-executive interactions (questions 7, 8 and 12 in the questionnaire), questions about co-operation between factions and committees (questions 4, 11,13 and 14 in the questionnaire) and questions about the development and perspectives of parliamentary committees in Riigikogu (questions 10 and 15 in the questionnaire). As the target groups were the committee chairpersons, faction chairpersons and committee chief-secretaries, all the questions reflect the point-of-views of both MP-s and staff.

Analysis of the answers to the questionnaires

The results are based on the returned 23 questionnaires of the whole target group of 27, consisting of three sub-groups of ten standing committee chairpersons (CC), ten chief-secretaries of standing committees (CS) and seven faction chairpersons (FC). Perhaps the fact that around four-fifths of MP-s who returned their questionnaires have also been members of the previous compositions (either VII or VIII composition or both) of Riigikogu adds some weight to the analysis to follow. The committee chairpersons filled out and returned nine questionnaires, chief-secretaries of standing committees also returned nine filled out questionnaires and the faction chairpersons returned five filled out questionnaires.

The content of the following analysis is perhaps better explained by the fact that two of the three examined sub-groups - committee chairpersons and faction chairpersons consisted of both the members of coalition and opposition. Some differences in answers could therefore be contributed to coalition-opposition dichotomy rather than to MP-staff or committee-faction dichotomy. The whole group of 14 MP-s who returned their questionnaires consisted of 9 members of coalition (7 CC and 2 FC) and 5 members of opposition (2 CC and 3 FC). During the IX composition of Riigikogu there are altogether 3 chairpersons of standing committees who belong to opposition and 7 standing committees chairpersons who are the members of coalition. Respectively, 3 faction chairpersons represent the ruling coalition and 4 faction chairpersons represent opposition.

The questionnaires were distributed and respondents interviewed on 18,19 and 24 October 2000 in the Toompea Castle where the Riigikogu resides. The questions covered not only the standing committees, but also the ad hoc and select committees. Most of the questions were not normative, i.e. the respondents were asked to evaluate the existing, not the desired situation. Normative questions are to be recognised by the use of a subjunctive mood (questions 7, 10 and 15).

The results analysis of the questionnaires does not aim to reflect the situation conclusively or tell the absolute final truth, but is rather aimed at helping to describe the existing situation and to bring out some general trends and developments in committees work.

1. QUESTION.
Which of the mentioned factors most influences the work of Riigikogu?

The question was aimed at reflecting the vision and understanding of the work of Riigikogu in the broader context. The question was answered by 7 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. The respondents were asked to rank the offered seven factors and also had an opportunity to contribute a factor themselves.

The rankings of different factors influencing the work of Riigikogu, based on the summarized results of the answers of the three target groups are given below (see Table 1). The numbers in brackets after every factor reflect the numerical values of rankings given by respondents as the table is drawn by adding up the values of rankings to each factor, starting from the lowest sum. Below every target group is given the number of respondents to that specific question.
The same principle of ranking also applies to questions 3, 6, 7 and 10 (Tables 3, 4, 5 and 8 respectively).

Table 1. The rankings of different factors influencing the work of Riigikogu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees (CS) 7 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees (CC) 9 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions (FC) 5 respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Political priorities of state (1123455/ 21)</td>
<td>1. General political culture in society (111223356/ 24)</td>
<td>1. General political culture in society (11123/ 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Influence of interest groups (1123377/ 24)</td>
<td>2. The tradition of parliamentary democracy (112233456/ 27)</td>
<td>2. The tradition of parliamentary democracy (12245/ 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Executive-legislative relations (1224566/ 26)</td>
<td>3. Political priorities of state (112234456/ 28)</td>
<td>3. Political priorities of state (23355/ 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. General political culture in society (1224677/ 29)</td>
<td>4. Executive-legislative relations (112344555/ 30)</td>
<td>4. -5. Influence of interest groups (14566/ 22) Executive-legislative relations (23467/ 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The tradition of parliamentary democracy (3335557/ 31)</td>
<td>5. Influence of interest groups (233455567/ 40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The factors could be divided into two groups - cultural-environmental factors and political factors. "General political culture in society", "tradition of parliamentary democracy", "international environment" and "lack of monetary means" could be considered cultural-environmental factors as "political priorities of state", "executive-legislative relations" and "influence of interest groups" could be considered political factors.

The committee chairpersons and faction chairpersons ranked the cultural-environmental factors relatively higher than the chief-secretaries. The political factors are ranked higher by chief-secretaries than by MP-s.

The list of individually contributed factors that respondents considered important is given below (See Table 2). The list is not ranked. Each of the factors was contributed by one respondent, altogether by 3 CS, 1 CC and 1 FC.

Table 2. The list of individually contributed factors influencing the work of Riigikogu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the unwillingness of MP-s to improve their qualifications</td>
<td>- The Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu</td>
<td>- the political culture of the government coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- personal interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the communication culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of MP-s

CS contributed factors included mainly the (negative) traits of MP-s and. "The Rules of Procedure Act" could be considered as part of the tradition of parliamentary democracy and "the political culture of the government coalition" could be considered as part of the general political culture, the latter naturally being a statement by an opposition politician.

The general conclusions to be made from the answers to this question is the somewhat different understanding of the work of Riigikogu in its external environment as well as understanding the work of parliament as an entity by the committee staff and MP-s. The fact that MP-s emphasized cultural factors and CS political factors is perhaps explained by the fact that CC and FC are closely tied to their parties and sometimes do not perceive politics and procedural activities of committees as separate phenomena. To make the distinction is perhaps easier for CS who take more of a bystanders role in party politics. The cultural factors influence the work of CC and FC more long-term than short-term and they have taken a broader approach in ranking the offered factors.

The MP-s and staff see the external environment and factors influencing the work of Riigikogu differently, each proceeding from its own position. When the daily work of staff is influenced and directed by the members of committee and especially the committee chairperson, then MP-s depend on the rules of procedure as a directing and constraining factor. Opposition is naturally occupied with observing the activities of coalition and inevitably, with pointing out the shortcomings in their work. When an opposition politician points out that the political culture of government coalition influences the daily work of parliament, then this raises a question whether political culture is a factor characteristic to only coalition, or is rather a more universal phenomenon, involving the work of parliament, if not the whole society?

2. QUESTION
What is the main role of committees in the work of Riigikogu?

The question was aimed at reflecting the understanding of functions of parliamentary committees. The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC.
The respondents were asked to pick one of the five offered alternatives - "preparing legislative drafts for the plenary", "achieving political compromises", "supervising executive", "all of the above-mentioned activities" and "none of the above-mentioned activities".
All three target groups pointed out "preparing legislative drafts for the plenary" as the most important function of standing committees (6 CS, 5 CC and 3 FC, respectively). One third of the CS (3 respondents), almost half of CC (4 respondents) and 2 CF considered "achieving political compromises" and "supervising executive" equally important goals of standing committees by picking the alternative "all of the above-mentioned activities".
There is a common understanding of the functions of standing committees; perhaps the chairpersons of the committees and chief-secretaries see committees functions in a more integral and complete manner.

3. QUESTION.
Which of the offered activities best describes the functions and work of Riigikogu?

The question was aimed at reflecting the understanding of functions of Riigikogu. The question was answered by 8 CS, 7 CC and 5 FC.
The respondents were asked to rank the five offered activities - "legislative activity", "adopting the state budget and supervising its execution", "oversight of the executive", "representing the interests of the electorate" and "nominating the leading officials of constitutional institutions".

The rankings of offered activities, based on the summarized results of the answers of the three target groups are given below (see Table 3). For explanation of ranking methodology see the explanation before the first question.

### Table 3. The rankings of functions of Riigikogu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 respondents</td>
<td>7 respondents</td>
<td>5 respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Legislative activity (8)</td>
<td>1. Legislative activity (7)</td>
<td>1. Legislative activity (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.-3. Adopting the state budget and supervising its execution (22234444/25)</td>
<td>2. Adopting the state budget and supervising its execution (2222334/18)</td>
<td>2. Representing the interests of the electorate (22344/15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversight of the executive (22333345/25)</td>
<td>3. Oversight of the executive (2333345/23)</td>
<td>3. Adopting the state budget and supervising its execution (23344/16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Representing the interests of the electorate (22234455/27)</td>
<td>4. Representing the interests of the electorate (2344455/27)</td>
<td>4. Nominating the leading officials of constitutional institutions (22355/17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Nominating the leading officials of constitutional institutions (33455555/35)</td>
<td>5. Nominating the leading officials of constitutional institutions (2445555/30)</td>
<td>5. Oversight of the executive (34555/22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here a difference could be seen between the answers - CS and CC being on one side and FC being on the other side.

All three target groups pointed out "legislative activity" as the most important function of the parliament. "Representing the interests of the electorate" was ranked second by the faction chairpersons and fourth by committee chairpersons and chief-secretaries. One explanation to this could be the fact that factions are better connected to the electorate through political parties. However, it is still rather interesting that both committee chairs and chief-secretaries ranked this function which most indicates the legitimacy of the system only fourth.

"Adopting the state budget and supervising its execution" was also considered relatively important by all target groups. This function has to do with the confidence vote to the government and is also an extremely important law in terms of legitimacy.

"Nominating the leading officials of constitutional institutions" is more of a political-administrative than substantial nature, not to mention its episodical nature, and this might be one of the reasons why it is placed at the bottom of the list. The relative unimportance of this function, especially considering the more general nature and purpose of parliament's work raises a question whether this function must be solely within parliament's competence, or should it in some manner be divided between the executive and legislature?
4. QUESTION.

To what extent do the factions consider the opinion of different interest groups before making political compromises to vote the legislative bills in the plenary?

The respondents were asked to pick one the three offered alternatives - "sufficiently", "too much" or "too little". The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. Here a difference is seen between the answers of the MP-s (committee chairpersons and faction chairpersons) and administrative staff of the standing committees (chief-secretaries). The majority (four fifths, altogether 11 respondents) of MP-s evaluated the inclusion of opinions of interest groups as "sufficient". Almost half of the CS (4 respondents) evaluated the inclusion of opinions of interest groups as "sufficient", one third of CS (3 respondents) as "too much" and less than one fifth of the CS (2 respondents) as "too little". The conclusion that could be made here is that MP-s tend to be content with themselves in terms of discussing the drafts with the interest groups involved, whereas there is no consent among the CS in evaluating this category. This could in part be explained by the different working cultures of different committees, especially in terms of inviting the representatives of interest groups to committee meetings.

A comparison could be made with the answers to the first question where CC ranked the 'influence of interest groups' fifth and FC fourth among seven offered factors. The question arising from the comparison concerns the controversy of understanding the factors determining the work of Riigikogu and evaluating the work of their suborgans in terms of representing the electorate to which interest groups inevitably belong to.

When talking about the parliament-electorate information channel, then its functioning has room for development, as far as the media's coverage of parliamentary affairs has dropped to a great extent during the past years and MP-s themselves do not seem to entirely acknowledge the importance of the existence of the regular information exchange with the electorate. This trend is also confirmed by the results of the Saar Poll public opinion polls "State and Nation" conducted in 1996-2000, indicating that more than half of Estonian residents are not informed about laws and thus do not trust them. 66% of residents think that Estonian laws are not good enough to regulate the societal life in a fair and just manner (see http://www.riigikogu.ee/osakonnad/msi/uurimused/maibaro_ana.html and http://www.saarpoll.ee/raud1.htm 20.12.00).

The answers to this questions bring out a certain controversy with answers to questions 2 and 3 where the interests and representation of the electorate were not ranked high compared to other factors. One explanation to this controversy might be the prevalence of a few dominant interests groups who are well represented in parliament, but who are representing only a fraction of the electorate.

5. QUESTION.

Does the opposition work in a more active manner in committees than coalition?

The respondents were asked to pick one of the three offered alternatives - "the opposition works in a more active manner", "the opposition works in a less active manner" or "there is no difference between opposition and coalition".

The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. The majority of respondents in all three target groups (altogether 15 respondents, among them 6 coalition members and 4 opposition members) agreed that there is no substantial difference between the activeness of the opposition and coalition members in committees. Five respondents (2 CS, 2 CC and 1 FC) picked "the opposition works in a more active
manner”. One possible conclusions to be made here is that, among other factors, the difference in the activeness of work manners tends to depend on the personal characteristics of the MP-s rather than on their political orientation.

Proceeding from the answers the opposition seems to take an equally active part in committees work than coalition, which assumes a potentially nurturing environment for supervising the executive.

6. QUESTION.
What is the role of committee chairperson in committees work?

The question was aimed at reflecting the management of committees and the role of committee chairperson. The question was answered by 8 CS, 8 CC and 5 FC. The respondents were asked to rank the four offered roles - "Co-ordinating of committees work and preparing drafts for the plenary", "maintaining contacts with the electorate and interest groups", "maintaining contacts with factions" and "maintaining contacts with other committees".

The rankings of offered roles, based on the summarized results of the answers of the three target groups are given below (see Table 4). For explanation of ranking methodology see the explanation before the first question.

Table 4. The rankings of offered roles of committee chairpersons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees 8 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees 8 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions 5 respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Co-ordinating of committees work and preparing drafts for the plenary (8)</td>
<td>1. Co-ordinating of committees work and preparing drafts for the plenary (8)</td>
<td>1. Co-ordinating of committees work and preparing drafts for the plenary (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Maintaining contacts with factions (22222333/ 19)</td>
<td>2. Maintaining contacts with other committees (22223344/ 22)</td>
<td>2. Maintaining contacts with factions (22244/ 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Maintaining contacts with other committees (22234444/ 24)</td>
<td>3. - 4. Maintaining contacts with factions (22234444/ 25) Maintaining contacts with the electorate and interest groups (23333344/ 25)</td>
<td>3. Maintaining contacts with the electorate and interest groups (23334/ 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Maintaining contacts with the electorate and interest groups (33344444/ 29)</td>
<td>4. Maintaining contacts with other committees (23344/ 16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three target group pointed out 'Co-ordinating of committees work and preparing drafts for the plenary' as the most important function of the committee chairpersons. This function of committees corresponds to the legislative function of the plenary and indicates that the respondents see the work of the parliament and its organs in an integral manner.

'Maintaining contacts with the electorate and interest groups' was ranked third and 'maintaining contacts with factions' second by faction chairpersons whereas the former was marked fourth by committee chairpersons and chief-secretaries. Faction chairpersons consider
maintaining contacts with the electorate and interest groups almost as important as maintaining contacts with factions in committee chairpersons work, bringing out the need for both factions and committees to stay connected with the electorate and the public. 'Maintaining contacts with other committees' is ranked higher by CS and committee chairpersons than by faction chairpersons. One of the reasons might be that CS and CC are more involved in committees work and see the practical need to cooperate with other committees more clearly as a need arising from their daily work. This need is also emphasized in the individual suggestions to improve committees work (see question 15). At the same time CS consider keeping contacts with factions more important in committee chairpersons work than committee chairpersons themselves.

7. QUESTION.
Which amendments are to be made to the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu?

The question was aimed at reflecting the understanding of the parliamentary procedures and their development perspectives. Most of the offered amendments are being adopted by Riigikogu by the present time but the rankings given below nevertheless serve as an example of the preferences of the target groups at certain point of time and are thus relevant to the present discussion. The question was answered by 9 CS, 8 CC and 4 FC. The respondents were asked to rank the seven offered amendment proposals and there was also a possibility to offer an additional amendment proposal by the respondent.

The rankings of amendment proposals to the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu, based on the summarized results of the answers of the three target groups are given below (see Table 5). For explanation of ranking methodology see the explanation before the first question.

Table 5. The rankings of amendment proposals to the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees 9 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees 8 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions 4 respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To limit the opportunities to block the work of the plenary (111111333/15)</td>
<td>1. To limit the opportunities to block the work of the plenary (11111225/14)</td>
<td>1. To limit the opportunities to block the work of the plenary (1123/7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To surrender the attendance check before voting the motions to amend (112244556/30)</td>
<td>2. To increase the role of the Board of Riigikogu (11233455/24)</td>
<td>2. To give the plenary an opportunity to question all the cabinet ministers directly in reading the state budget (1225/10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To increase the role of the Board of Riigikogu (222233567/32)</td>
<td>3. To give the plenary an opportunity to question all the cabinet ministers directly in reading the state budget (12333456/27)</td>
<td>3. To surrender the attendance check before voting the motions to amend (2344/13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To give the plenary an opportunity to question all the cabinet ministers directly in reading the state budget (123446666/38)</td>
<td>4. To surrender the attendance check before voting the motions to amend (22233477/30)</td>
<td>4. To increase the role of the Board of Riigikogu (1346/14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. To determine the number of interruptings in second and third reading of the bill (233445577/40)  
6. To make a distinction between interpellations and written questions (445555677/48)  
7. To give the investigation committees a legal warranty to exercise state supervision (234667777/49)

5. To determine the number of interruptings in second and third reading of the bill (235666677/41)  
6. To give the investigation committees a legal warranty to exercise state supervision (444566777/43)  
7. To make a distinction between interpellations and written questions (445567777/45)

5. To determine the number of interruptings in second and third reading of the bill (34555/17)  
6. To make a distinction between interpellations and written questions (56777/25)  
7. To give the investigation committees a legal warranty to exercise state supervision (66777/26)

'To limit the opportunities to block the work of the plenary', 'to surrender the attendance check before voting the motions to amend', 'to increase the role of the Board of Riigikogu' and 'to determine the number of interruptings in second and third reading of the bill' could be grouped under a key-word 'management of Riigikogu', while 'to give the plenary an opportunity to question all the cabinet ministers directly in reading the state budget', 'to make a distinction between interpellations and written questions' and 'to give the investigation committees a legal warranty to exercise state supervision' could be grouped under a key-word 'supervision over the executive'. All the offered amendment proposals, except perhaps 'to increase the role of the Board of Riigikogu' are also related to resolving the tension between coalition and opposition in parliament. The amendment proposals concerning the management of Riigikogu were ranked relatively higher by all target groups than those concerning the supervision over the executive.

All three target groups ranked 'limiting the opportunities to block the work of the plenary' first. This trend indicates the common understanding to make the work of the plenary and the parliament as a whole more effective both in terms of time and content. There is also another way of looking at this proposal, considering the parliamentary practice so far - the problem is not so much the possibility the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu provides to block the work of the plenary, but rather the frequency of the usage of that possibility. Blocking the work of the plenary can be useful sometimes, for democratic purposes.

The other amendment proposals contributing to the first-ranked one and aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the plenary were 'to surrender the attendance check before voting the motions to amend' (ranked second by CS, fourth by CC and third by FC) and 'increasing the role of the Board of Riigikogu' (ranked third by CS, second by CC and fourth by FC).

'To give the plenary an opportunity to question all the cabinet ministers directly in reading the state budget' (ranked fourth by CS, third by CC and second by FC) has to do with making the scrutiny of the executive more transparent and to make cabinet ministers directly responsible for the budget proposals, instead of delegating the budget presentation and reasoning to the ministry officials.

Considering the highest-ranking amendment proposals a question between the discrepancy between theory and practice arises. According to the present survey the MP-s seem to have a common understanding about the work of Riigikogu and how it should be organized better. However, in practice and while observing the actual discussion in parliament about the rules of procedure, this common understanding and aim is not seen very often. Perhaps the actual
practical politics too often shadows the common sense most MP-s have in matters outside their political endeavors and ambitions.

To give the investigation committees a legal warranty to exercise state supervision was ranked last by CS and FC and one before last by CC. The role of investigation committees functions of which are mainly concentrated on supervising the executive is thus not considered very important in the whole spectrum of functions prescribed for Riigikogu.

Additional amendment proposals offered by the respondents are given below (see Table 6). Please note that the amendment proposals are not ranked, but given as a list.

The FC did not offer any individual amendment proposals to the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu. Most of the proposals were contributed by one respondent. When a proposal was contributed by more than one respondent, the number of respondents offering the proposal is indicated in brackets immediately following the proposal. Altogether 6 CS and 3 CC offered their individual proposals.

Table 6. Amendment proposals to the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu offered by the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- not to allow to exclude bills from proceeding before the first reading</td>
<td>- to increase the role of Riigikogu in applying the laws (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not to vote on the plenary the motions to amend which have been approved entirely or partially by the leading committee</td>
<td>- to stipulate the functions of standing committees in exercising oversight of executive in a law (e.g. supervising the budget)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to increase the committees role in adopting the motions to amend</td>
<td>- to do away with different interpretations in competitive votings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not to set deadlines for readings of bill</td>
<td>- the habits should be changed, not the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to surrender the competitive votings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to allow to make proposals to exclude a bill from proceeding only on Mondays (when there is no proceedings of bills)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The individual proposals offered by CS are mainly concerned with (increasing) the role of standing committees in legislative proceedings. The individual proposals offered by the CC are more of a general rather than procedural nature and concerned with (increasing) the role of Riigikogu as a whole. The proposal to 'increase the role of Riigikogu in applying the laws' has to do with the legislative impact analysis (LIA), an important component of making the law-making legitimate.

The proposal of 'changing the habit, not the law' is also relevant for the highest-ranked amendment proposal of 'limiting the opportunities to block the work of the plenary' and could be grouped under political culture as a factor influencing the work of Riigikogu as a whole.
8. QUESTION.
What kind of changes are made to the government-initiated legislative bills in the committees?

The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. The respondents were asked to pick one of the three offered alternatives: "mainly specifying and supplementing", "mainly formal-structural" or "principal".
All three target groups picked specifying and supplementing changes most often (19 of all 23 respondents, including 8 CS, 8 CC and 3 FC). One CS, 1 CC and 2 FC picked the "principal changes".
There were no clear differences between the target groups. There were some additional comments from the FC like "too many drafts need to be overwritten because of their poor quality and in that sense principal changes are still made." Considering the additional comments made by the respondents, the nature of the amendments made to the government-initiated bills is more dependent on the characteristics of a concrete bill, so there is really no clear pattern of making certain types changes to government-initiated bills, although the quality of bills reaching committees is often not very high.

9. QUESTION.
What do you consider the greatest weakness in the work of committees?

The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. The respondents were asked to pick one of the following weaknesses offered - "lack of time", "the lack of monetary means to carry out expertise", "the incompetence of administrative staff of committees", "the incompetence of the members of committees" and "the planning and management principles of committees work". The respondents also had an opportunity to contribute a weakness by themselves.
Different weaknesses were emphasized by MP-s and staff. Two-thirds (6 respondents) of the CS considered the greatest weakness in committees work being 'the incompetence of committee members'. Two-thirds (6 respondents) of the CC considered the greatest weakness in committees work being 'the lack of time' as did 3 of the FC. None of the respondents mentioned 'the lack of competence of committee administrative staff'. The 'incompetence of committee members' was mentioned most often (one third of all respondents, including two-thirds of CS and one CC).
The dominating weakness mentioned by CC is 'the lack of time'. It is also an interesting trend, considering the answers of CS and the possibilities the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu foresees for additional committee meetings - and it is within the authorities of CC to arrange them. In fact, one of the FC added a comment to the factor 'lack of time', namely "If there is a need, the time can always be found and additional information gathered."
The conclusions to be made concern the relationship and intercommunication between the administrative staff and members of committees as well as the expertise part of committees work or how the expertise should be arranged and used in committees.
The weaknesses respondents offered themselves are given below (see Table 7). The list is not ranked. Most of the weaknesses were contributed by one respondent. When a weakness was contributed by more than one respondent, the number of respondents who offered the weakness is indicated in brackets. Altogether 2 CS, 1 CC and 2 FC proposed the weaknesses in committees work.

Table 7. The weaknesses in the work of committees offered by the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The unwillingness of committee members to concentrate on the problem

Politization of committee discussions

The unwillingness of coalition to discuss matters in a substantial manner

The lack of preparation and lack of interest of committee members to concentrate on the discussed problem

The lack of administrative personnel of committees (2)

The FC mentioned 'the lack of administrative personnel of committees' which has to do with the lack of means to carry out expertise in the field of committee jurisdiction rather than the qualifications of administrative staff of committees. The factor 'politization of committee discussions' mentioned by one of CC is remarkable, given that the discussions in committees are bound to be of somewhat political nature as the political compromises are formed there. The aim to mention this weakness might have also been to indicate the lack of contextual and well-grounded opinions in committee disputes. 'The unwillingness of coalition to discuss matters in a substantial manner' is a comment offered by an opposition politician and reflects in part the natural coalition-oppositon dichotomy which in some cases can even serve as a contribution to the dispute and to the quality of the draft under question.

10. QUESTION.

In which spheres of work should the committees have a greater role in the work of Riigikogu?

The question was answered by 7 CS, 7 CC and 4 FC. The respondents had to rank the five offered spheres of work. The spheres of work asked to rank were "communicating with the public", "proceeding the state budget", "supervising the executive power", "preparing the legislative drafts" and "co-operating with the Board of Riigikogu". The rankings of the work spheres of the three target groups are given below (see Table 8). For the explanation of the ranking methodology see the explanation before the first question.

Table 8. The rankings of the work spheres of committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees 7 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees 7 respondents</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions 4 respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preparing the legislative drafts (111233/ 12)</td>
<td>1. Supervising the executive power (1111235/ 14)</td>
<td>1. Preparing the legislative drafts (1124/ 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supervising the executive power (1112234/ 14)</td>
<td>2. Communicating with the public (1122234/ 15)</td>
<td>2. Proceeding the state budget (1225/ 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Proceeding the state budget (2222334/ 18)</td>
<td>3. Preparing the legislative drafts (1223445/ 21)</td>
<td>3. Communicating with the public (1235/ 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communicating with the public (3344555/ 29)</td>
<td>4. Proceeding the state budget (2334455/ 26)</td>
<td>4. Supervising the executive power (3334/ 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Co-operating with the Board of Riigikogu (4445555/ 32)</td>
<td>5. Co-operating with the Board of Riigikogu (3344555/ 29)</td>
<td>5. Co-operating with the Board of Riigikogu (4455/ 18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five of all the 18 respondents said that there is no need to increase committees role in parliament’s work, indicating that committees are already strong enough and have enough influence in parliamentary proceedings in all the working spheres offered. When ranking 'preparing the legislative drafts' first, then CS are probably indicating that more work should be done in preparing the legislative bills. This allegation is also supported by the additional proposals for improving committees performance CS presented in answering the question 15.

Communicating with the public is ranked higher by CC (and FC) than by CS, probably because they are the ones who will be more affected by the fall of public confidence in Riigikogu. CC also seek to increase the committees power in supervising the executive power which goes back to the discussion of granting committees the rights of state supervision and has to do with the power the MP-s obtain should this right be stipulated by law in the future. Committee chairpersons seem to see the perspective and functions of committees in a more integral and complete manner, as they have brought out the areas in committees work that have not got so much attention so far as the main role of committees to prepare legislative drafts for the plenary.

Proceeding the state budget is also perceived being a sphere where committees role could increase. This is in part supported by the answer to the first question where the amendment proposal to the Rules of Procedures Act of Riigikogu 'to give the plenary an opportunity to question all the cabinet ministers directly in reading the state budget' was ranked 2.- 4. by three respondent groups. Both functions reflect and influence the parliaments relations with the government.

All the target groups indicated that co-operating with the Board of Riigikogu is not the area needing much development in committees work, while they considered increasing the role of the Board of Riigikogu rather important proceeding from the whole internal procedure of parliament (see question 7).

11.QUESTION.
The respondents were asked to evaluate an offered statement “The political compromises are concluded in committees as a result of the previous discussions held in factions” in a scale of four: a) right b) wrong c) preferably right d) preferably wrong

The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. There was no common evaluation of the statement among CS as more than half (5 respondents) evaluated the statement as "preferably wrong" and "wrong" and 4 respondents evaluated the statement as "preferably right" or "right". 8 of the CC evaluated the statement either "preferably right" or "right" and 1 CC picked "preferably wrong". Proceeding from the answers to this question, there seems to be a common understanding between the CC about the role of committee in a political communication in parliament.

There was no common evaluation of the statement among the FC as 3 of them considered the statement "preferably right" and 2 considered this "preferably wrong".

The conclusions that could be made proceeding from the answers to this question is that when there is no common understanding of committees role in intra-parliamentary political communication among the CC and FC then this might affect the quality of the plenary discussions as well as the quality of the legislative bill being adopted, not to mention relationship between factions and committees. As to the lack of common evaluation among the CS, then this might in part be caused by the different working cultures and management styles of different committees.
12. QUESTION.
How well are you informed about the activities of the Government of Republic?
The respondents were asked to give their assessment in the scale of four: a) well b) badly c) preferably well d) preferably badly.

The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. There were 7 coalition members among the CC and 2 coalition members among the FC. The answers to this question reflected well the coalition-opposition dichotomy in terms of information exchange with the government as well as the broader context of the role of opposition in Riigikogu.
Two-thirds of the CS (6 respondents) answered they were informed about the activities of the government "preferably well", as one third (3 respondents) answered "badly". More than two thirds of the CC (7 respondents) answered they were informed about the activities of the government "preferably well" and one fifth (2 respondents) said they were informed "badly" or "preferably badly". These answers inevitably reflect the division of respondents into opposition and coalition, which also influences the CS as their work is co-ordinated by committee chairpersons.
Two of the FC said they were informed about the activities of the government "well", as 3 answered "badly". One of the reasons is most likely the fact that some of the responding FC were members of the opposition.
As both CS and CC were informed about the activities of government rather well than badly, then one conclusion to be made here is that either the CC are passing on the information they get to the CS or CS are able to get the necessary information themselves. However, in answering to this question the CC who belonged to the opposition evaluated their access to the government activities related information rather badly than well. There are 3 committee chairpersons (2 among the respondents) in IX Riigikogu who do not belong to the coalition among the overall 10 committee chairpersons.
When talking about the government - parliament information channel, then it seems to function depending on the coalition-opposition axis as well as on concrete persons or individual MP-s.

13. QUESTION.
How does the information concerning the activities of factions reach the committees?
The respondents were asked to give their evaluation in the scale of four: a) well b) badly c) preferably well d) preferably badly.

The question was answered by 9 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. Eight of the CS gave their evaluation as "badly" or "preferably badly" and 1 picked "preferably well". There was no common evaluation among the CC as 5 answered "preferably well" and 4 "preferably badly". Four of the FC answered "well" and 1 "badly".
One of the possible reasons why CS think the faction-committee information channel does not work might be that the committee members and committee chairperson are reluctant to provide them with the information they obtain in faction meetings. FC answers to a certain extent express their evaluation to their own work and might reflect the fact that they are not directly affected by the tendency of factions-related information not reaching the committees as they are potentially the ones who have most of the information about the decisions made in factions.
When talking about the faction - committee information channel, then it seems not to function soundly, as far as there are no clear and visible information exchange mechanisms between factions and committees.
The faction-committee information channel also depends on the working culture of the committee in question. There are committees where the information from factions is reaching well and with regularity (e.g. Social Affairs Committee, Cultural Affairs Committee) and there are committees where this channel is almost invisible to observe (e.g. Defence Committee).

14. QUESTION.
In your opinion, does the MP represent in committees: most of all herself b) most of all her faction. The respondents were asked to pick one of the two offered alternatives.

The question was answered by 8 CS, 9 CC and 5 FC. Majority of all the respondents (i.e. 18 respondents of 22) answered "most of all her faction", including all the FC. 2 CS and 2 CC picked "most of all herself".

The committee practices, however, do not entirely confirm this trend which may also be called 'self-perception'. The answers indicate that the respondents understand the MP-s role in committee discussions and this opinion is also supported by the CS who can mostly closely observe this practice.

One of those few CC who answered "most of all herself " added a comment, saying that "there are inevitably some matters in which you cannot bypass the faction". There seems to be a general understanding about the role of factions opinions in committees as opposed to individual preferences, but like making amendment proposals to the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure Act, the practice at times undermines the theory.

15. QUESTION.
In your opinion, what else could be done to improve the performance of committees? The respondents were asked to contribute proposals by themselves.

The question was answered by 7 CS, 5 CC and 3 FC. The list of summarized proposals offered by the respondents is given below (see Table 9). The list is not ranked. When the proposal was offered by more than one respondent, the number of respondents is indicated in the brackets after the proposal.

Table 9. Summarized proposals to improve the performance of committees offered by the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief-secretaries of committees (CS)</th>
<th>Chairpersons of committees (CC)</th>
<th>Chairpersons of factions (FC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) To train both the committee members and administrative staff</td>
<td>a) To enable the access to in-service training for committees administrative staff</td>
<td>a) To increase the number of service personnel (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) To co-operate with more diverse interest groups</td>
<td>b) To strengthen the composition of committees administrative staff (2)</td>
<td>b) To gather and process information in the field of committees work sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) To consolidate the cooperation between committees (3)</td>
<td>c) To find means to carry out expertise</td>
<td>c) To balance the management of committees between coalition and opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) To improve the quality of legislative bills</td>
<td>d) To enhance the cooperation between</td>
<td>d) To improve the democratic culture in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committees (2)</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) To develop the discussion in a committee</td>
<td>e) To arrange public meetings of committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) To train the members of committees in the sphere of committees work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proposals could be grouped under four key-words: relations with the public, management, expertise and intercommunication. Proposals CS (a,d), CC (a,b,c,f), FC (a,b) could be grouped under the expertise; proposals CS (c), CC (d), FC (c) under management; proposals CS (b), CC (e) under relations with the public and proposals CS (e) and FC (d) under intercommunication.

Expertise proposals constitute the majority of proposals made by all the target groups and here a controversy with the answers to the first question could be noted as 'the lack of monetary means' was ranked sixth by FC and seventh by CC and CS among seven factors influencing the work of Riigikogu.

When expertise and training as essentially expensive proceedings are considered one of the major areas in which the work of committees should be improved, then why is the lack of monetary means not considered very influential factor in parliament's work (see answers to question 1)? There could be several explanations - lack of motivation and unwillingness to participate in training by MP-s along with the reluctance to arrange additional training to committee service personnel could be one reason. The other question here might be the question about the distribution of the existing resources like setting the budget priorities of Riigikogu.

One of the answers to the existing controversy are proposals by MP-s to increase the number of service personnel rather than train the existing personnel or undergo training themselves.

In reading the expertise proposals both from the CS and MP-s side a certain 'mutual blaming' of the two groups for the lack of expertise in committees work is noticeable. The proposals made by CS (see also answers to questions 1 and 9) are oriented towards the need to improve the work of MP-s and simultaneously the MP-s see the solution to the problem by increasing the number of service personnel along with training the committee staff.

Management proposals made arise the question of a need for some sort of alternative central co-ordination mechanisms beside the Board of Riigikogu in managing the committees and enhancing their co-operation the reasons of which are among others the overlapping jurisdictions of several committees (e.g. the Constitutional Committee and Legal Committee) as well as more procedural reasons like setting up the procedures for arranging open committee meetings etc. The plenary proceedings and amendment proposals to the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure Act (see also answers to the question 7) also support this argument.

Proposals that concern the relations with the public emphasize, among other factors the need to take into account the opinions of more diverse interest groups and hints to the existing influence of a few dominant and powerful interest groups in the current policy-making. This argument is supported by the public opinion poll "State and Nation" conducted by Saar Poll in 1996-2000 results of which bring out the tendency of several electoral groups being ignored in policy-making and legislative process (see [http://www.saarpoll.ee/raud1.htm](http://www.saarpoll.ee/raud1.htm) 20.11.00).

One of the many means to remedy the situation is indeed making the committees meetings more open to the public mainly by information and communication technology and through the electronic media.
Summary

The MP-s and staff evaluate the factors influencing the work of Riigikogu differently, each proceeding from its own position. When the daily work of staff is influenced and directed by the members of committee and especially the committee chairperson, then MP-s depend on the rules of procedure as a directing and constraining factor. Opposition is naturally occupied with observing the activities of coalition and inevitably, with pointing out the shortcomings in their work. In evaluating the functions of Riigikogu all three target groups gave their rather strong preference to the legislative function of parliament, as the legislative activity was ranked highest among all target groups of committee chairpersons, faction chairpersons and committee chief-secretaries while describing the most important functions of Riigikogu. The supervising function of the legislature over the government, exercised through the use of investigation committees and summoning government officials to the committee meetings as well as the representative function of parliament exercised through keeping open and regular contacts with the electorate seemed to be relatively less important for the MP-s and committee staff.

Simultaneously, MP-s tend to be content with themselves in terms of discussing the drafts with the interest groups involved, whereas there is no consent among the chief-secretaries whether interest groups are involved exhaustively in parliamentary discussions. This could in part be explained by the different working cultures of different committees, especially in terms of inviting the representatives of different interest groups to committee meetings.

There is a rather common understanding of the functions of committees in all target groups. Perhaps the chief-secretaries and committee chairpersons see the functions of committees in a more complete and integral manner, by considering co-operation with other committees and achieving political compromises also important functions in committee management, beside preparing legislative drafts for the plenary. Moreover, committee chairpersons consider supervision over the executive and communicating with the public the work spheres of committees needing most attention while planning committees work in the future.

The competence and qualifications needed to successfully exercise committees functions is perceived differently by MP-s and staff. The committee staff considers the qualifications and competence of committee members not sufficient to ensure the high quality of drafts and note that MP-s are not willing to improve their knowledge in the committees working area, thus creating a potential obstacle to effective functioning of committees. The committee chairpersons and the faction chairpersons see the lack of time and scarcity of administrative staff as the main obstacles to exercise expertise and ensure the quality of legislative drafts, prepared by committees.

While the committees are considered rather strong in influencing the outcome of proceeding the bills, the staffing is not considered generous enough by MP-s to match the strengths and authorities of committees both at the plenary and in the whole parliamentary proceeding.

Simultaneously, it is understood by the committee chairs and chief-secretaries that cooperation between committees is essential, considering the scarcity of staff and the increasing complexity of legislation that crosses single committee jurisdictions.

The co-operation between factions and committees is considered more important by committee chairpersons than by faction chairpersons. One of the reasons to this is the quite strong polarization of party groups in Riigikogu, including the polarization within coalition
itself. This polarization inevitably leaves a trace to committee discussions and affects the atmosphere at the plenary.

There is no consent among the committee chairpersons if the information and decisions made in factions reaches committees in regular manner, whereas most of the faction chairpersons supposed the information about decisions made in factions reaches committees exhaustively.

Chief-secretaries suppose the information about factions activities and opinions does not reach committees in a sound and regular manner, explained in part perhaps by the fact that the committee members and committee chairperson are reluctant to provide them with the information they obtain in faction meetings.

The opposition seems to work in committees in a quite active manner, therefore the level and volume of involvement in committees work tends to be dependent on personal traits, rather than political orientation. Although the opposition's active involvement in committees work assumes a potentially nurturing environment for supervising the executive, the opposition members complain they have little information about government activities. The information channel between government and parliament seems to function well for coalition members, but also depending on concrete personal contacts of individual MP-s.

Therefore, it is perhaps not so surprising that the functions of investigation committees are not considered essentially important among the overall load of functions, prescribed for Riigikogu. Similarly, the relations between legislature and executive are not considered a particularly influential factor, influencing the work of Riigikogu. The amendment proposals to the Rules of Procedure Act concerning the management of Riigikogu were ranked higher than those concerning the parliamentary supervision over the executive.

There is a common understanding about the role of internal procedure in helping to found a common ground between political priorities and effective functioning of parliament as all the target groups want to limit the opportunities to block the work of the plenary by Riigikogu Rules of Procedure Act. However, the actual parliamentary practice so far indicates, that the problem lies not so much in the possibilities the Rules of Procedure Act of Riigikogu provides to block the work of the plenary, but rather the frequency of the usage of those possibilities. This tendency is well captured in an individual amendment proposal to change the habit, not the law, offered by a chief-secretary one of the biggest committees in Riigikogu.

When putting committees role and work into perspective, by looking at the proposals target groups have made to improve the functioning of committees in Riigikogu, then most of the proposals made concern the expertise in committees. These proposals include training and increasing the number of committee staff, enhancing the co-operation of different committees, finding means to carry out expertise in committees, training the members of committees in the committees working sphere and some more.

In reading the expertise proposals of staff and committee chairpersons, a certain 'mutual blaming' of the two groups for the lack of expertise in committees work is noticeable. The proposals made by staff are oriented towards the need to improve the work committee members and committee chairs see the solution to the expertise problem by training and increasing the number of service personnel.

Management proposals made arise the question of a need for some sort of alternative central co-ordination mechanisms beside the Board of Riigikogu in managing the committees and enhancing their co-operation, as well as to balance the management of committees between coalition and opposition.

Proposals that concern the relations with the public emphasize, among other factors the need to take into account the opinions of more diverse interest groups and hint to the existing influence of a few dominant and powerful interest groups in the current policy-
The proposal to arrange public committee meetings by a committee chairperson also indicates the need to make committee work more visible to the electorate. The additional comments made by committee staff mostly emphasize the need to draw more attention to discussing contextual issues thoroughly before the plenary as well as to concentrate the committees work towards improving the quality of legislation. The proposals made are in most part of constructive nature and reflect the current situation on one hand and indicate there are certain work traditions and experience already in place.

The author believes that the aim of majority of the MP-s and committee staff is indeed improving and rooting the parliamentary democracy through both the formal procedure and contacts with the electorate and diverse interest groups. According to the answers to the questionnaire the MP-s seem to have a rather common understanding about the work of Riigikogu and how it should be organized better. However, in practice and while observing the actual discussion in parliament about the rules of procedure, this common understanding and aim is not seen very often. Perhaps the actual practical politics sometimes shadows the common sense most MP-s have in matters outside their political endeavors and ambitions.

Chief-secretaries answers reflect the different working cultures of committees by some of them being informed about the activities of government well and some badly as well as by seeing the interest groups being involved in committee discussions at a different volume. In their proposals to improve committees work, chief-secretaries emphasized the need to specify the internal procedure concerning committees work as well as the need to train the committee members in the committee working area.

Committee chairpersons answers were the most concurrent, compared to the answers of chief-secretaries and faction chairpersons. The differences in working cultures and management styles of committees were most pronounced by evaluating the factions role in committees work as well as the availability of information about factions decisions in committee meetings. In their proposals to improve committees work, committee chairpersons emphasized the need to train and increase the number of committee staff as well as the need to make committees work more accessible and visible to public.

Faction chairpersons drew relatively more attention than the other two target groups to maintaining and strengthening the contacts with interest groups and the electorate in committees work. Like committee chairpersons, they did not have a consensus about the factions role in committees work, thus in part reflecting also the different working cultures in factions. In their answers, the division between coalition and opposition was also more evident by evaluating the availability of information about government activities as well as seeing the reluctance of coalition members to concentrate on problems in committee meetings as one of the main weaknesses in committees work. In their proposals to improve committees work, faction chairpersons emphasized different areas of committees work, especially the need to train committees staff, the need to balance committees management between coalition and opposition as well as the role of political culture in committees work and at the plenary.