Indicator 1.4 – Parliamentary organization

Parliament is a natural place for confronting ideas and even inter-party conflicts, as well as a unique setting that has no hierarchical bodies but rather gathers together equals representing diverse opinions. Therefore, organizing the work of the parliament requires a collective decision-making system and a complex structure, which allows members of parliament to implement their duties in a meaningful way.

The parliamentary plenary is the most visible part of the legislature’s work and represents the culmination of the work done in committees and in the political groups. The bureau/presidium, as a collective governing body, ensures that political issues are submitted before the parliament, while the speaker/presiding officer is responsible for managing the operation of parliament fairly and impartially, and for ensuring evidence-based debates and a constructive atmosphere.

Parliamentary committees are groups of parliamentarians who are appointed, on either a temporary or a permanent basis, to examine matters more closely in order to better organize parliamentary work. The political structure of the parliament is mainly guided by parliamentary (party) groups, which bring together MPs elected under the same political party with the aim of coordinating their activities and achieving shared political goals. Parliamentarians also cooperate across the parties, which is necessary to achieve joint outcomes despite the political differences that political parties may have.

The assessment of the indicator on parliamentary organization comprises the following dimensions:

- 1.4.1 Plenary
- 1.4.2 Speaker/presiding officer
- 1.4.3 Bureau/presidium
- 1.4.4 Committees (powers, composition, governing bodies, procedures)
- 1.4.5 Parliamentary (party) groups
- 1.4.6 Cross-party groups
**Dimension 1.4.1 Plenary**

Indicator: 1.4 Parliamentary organization  
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament  
Target 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension concerns arrangements that define a parliament’s plenary sessions as the most visible aspect of the parliament’s work. A plenary represents the culmination of the work done in committees and in the political groups. The parliament’s most important tasks, such as enacting legislation, performing the most visible oversight actions, including question time, interpellation, impeachment and other important debates, are carried out in the plenary. It is usually where the highest-ranking state officials, such as presidents and prime ministers, are heard. A plenary session is an arena for holding timely political debates and for voting on legislation previously discussed in the committees. All major decisions made on behalf of the parliament - including those regarding parliamentary rules and procedures - should be voted and approved by the plenary.

In unicameral systems, plenaries bring together all elected members of parliament, while in bicameral systems, plenaries take place separately in different chambers.

The dates and even the duration of plenaries are often fixed in the constitution or law. However, there can also be special sessions, the grounds for which must be defined by law. Standing orders should set clear rules on organizing plenary sessions, including on setting the agenda, organizing debates, ensuring transparency of the process, defining the duties and responsibilities of the presiding officer, and allocating speaking times at the plenary session. The rules for holding a plenary should ensure proper and effective participation of political groups, as the main actors in the work of the plenary.

The law usually sets the quorum for holding plenary sessions. In many countries, the constitution itself prescribes the quorum required for deliberation. The minimum number of members required to be present varies across countries. Standing orders usually define the practical arrangements of the debate and how speaking times are to be calculated. It is an obligation for a presiding officer to verify the quorum and to secure adherence to the procedures for holding a plenary session.

A plenary should be held only in the parliament building in the respective chambers. Changes of venue of plenary sessions or changes to their procedures are normally restricted to a state of emergency (see 1.3.3) or other exigent circumstances also prescribed in law. In contrast with committee hearings, in which the public and various stakeholders can take part, participation in a plenary is strictly limited to members of parliament, although in most plenaries there are galleries for the public to attend sessions. However, transparency of plenary sessions through broadcasting/live-streaming and attendance by the media should be ensured by law.¹

The agenda of a plenary session should be approved by the plenary itself on the proposal of the bureau in advance, and should be widely accessible to the public and media. In the case of special sessions, agendas are usually set in advance and cannot be changed during the session. Also, in some cases, agendas can be set by the executive branch, for example, for extraordinary sessions held outside the legally established period of ordinary sessions.

¹ See also dimension 3.1.1 Transparency of parliamentary work, dimension 3.2.1 Parliamentary website, and indicator 3.3 Access to parliament.
Please see also indicator 1.3 on parliamentary procedures and sub-target 3 on transparent parliament.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of plenary setting would encompass the following:

There are constitutional or legal provisions outlining the regulatory framework for holding plenary sessions. All major decisions made on behalf of the parliament, including the enactment of legislation and the implementation of the most visible oversight actions, such as question time, interpellation and impeachment, are debated, voted and approved or rejected in a plenary.

All aspects related to parliamentary procedures in the plenary, including the quorum for holding plenary sessions, dates, the duration of ordinary plenary sessions, as well as the grounds and procedures for calling special or extraordinary sessions, are outlined in the law.\(^2\)

Plenaries are held only in the parliament building in the respective chambers. Changes of venue of plenary sessions or changes to their procedures restricted to a state of emergency or other exigent circumstances.

The plenary sessions of the parliament are public. Cases of secret or closed plenary sessions are exceptional and prescribed by law. Publicity of the plenary sessions through broadcasting/live-streaming is ensured by law. Mass media representatives accredited in accordance with the established rules are authorized to participate in plenary sessions, and attendance by the public is usually provided for.

Agendas of plenary sessions are approved by the plenary itself, with the possible exception of extraordinary sessions, and are widely accessible to the public and media in advance of the meeting.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution, laws or parliamentary resolutions/decrees outlining the regulatory framework for the holding of plenary sessions, including the required quorum, timing, duration of ordinary plenary sessions, as well as the grounds and procedures for calling special sessions
- Specific articles of the constitution or laws establishing that plenaries are held only in the parliament building in the respective chambers
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure establishing that the plenary sessions of the parliament are public unless specified as closed

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Constitutional framework**

There is evidence of constitutional or legal provisions outlining the regulatory framework for the holding of plenary sessions, including the required quorum, calendar and duration of ordinary plenary sessions, as well as the

\(^2\) See also the indicator 1.3 Parliamentary procedures.
grounds and procedures for calling special or extraordinary sessions. There is also evidence that all major decisions made on behalf of the parliament – including the enactment of legislation and the implementation of the most visible oversight actions, such as question time, interpellation and impeachment – are debated, voted and approved or rejected in the plenary.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Venues for holding plenaries

There is evidence of constitutional or legal provisions establishing that plenaries are held only in the parliament building in the respective chambers. Changes of venue or changes to the procedures of plenary sessions are restricted to a state of emergency or other exigent circumstances.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Transparency of the plenary

There is evidence of constitutional or legal provisions establishing that plenary sessions of the parliament are public except for secret or closed plenary sessions in exceptional cases specified by law. Publicity of the plenary sessions through broadcasting/live streaming is ensured by law. Mass media representatives accredited in accordance with the established rules are authorized to attend public sessions, as is the general public.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
Indicator 1.4 – Parliamentary organization

Dimension 1.4.2 Speaker/presiding officer

Indicator: 1.4 Parliamentary organization
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the provisions that define the mandate, role and duties of a speaker of a parliament or a presiding officer.

The essential role of a speaker is to facilitate orderly and meaningful discussions in an institution, which is the natural place for confronting ideas and often a venue of inter-party conflicts. A speaker has to exercise authority in a unique setting, as parliaments are not hierarchical bodies, but rather assemblies of equals. There is no justification for distinguishing between a nation's representatives.3

A speaker is usually a member of parliament elected at the beginning of each convocation by fellow MPs to preside over the parliamentary chamber or, in a unicameral system, to preside over the parliament. The speaker, being the first among equals, is equipped with the necessary mandate, powers and resources to fulfil the role delegated by peers.

A speaker's official role is to represent a parliament or chamber at official functions, including in the international arena, and to preside over debates and votes, supervise administrative matters, be responsible for the organization of the parliament’s work, and rule on questions of parliamentary procedure and parliamentary privilege. It is an obligation for a speaker to impartially and neutrally manage the floor, allocate speaking times and rule fairly, and maintain an ethical, constructive and issue-based atmosphere during debates. In some political systems, the speaker might have a casting vote to resolve a deadlock.

A speaker is responsible for maintaining discipline and order within the house, therefore is granted the power to apply the rules and to call to order and discipline any MP who breaches those rules. This power usually gives the speaker the authority to sanction members for violating rules of procedure or codes of conduct.

A speaker is usually responsible for preparing and supervising the implementation of the institution’s budget, and has overall responsibility for the administrative functions of the parliament, as well as for the appointment or recommendation of a secretary-general to the parliament. A speaker enjoys a privileged material status, including higher remuneration, personal equipment and sufficient members of staff, who are appointed for the term of the speaker's tenure.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of speaker/presiding officer of parliament or a chamber would encompass the following:

There is a constitutional or legal provision defining the mandate, role, functions and duties of a speaker of the parliament or a presiding officer.

There is a constitutional or legal provision setting the rule for electing a speaker/presiding officer and defining the term of office.

A speaker/presiding officer is mandated to coordinate and manage the work of the parliamentary bodies, manage the overall functioning of the respective chamber or a parliament, preside over sessions, and exercise full administrative powers within the parliament or chamber.

A speaker implements their functions impartially and neutrally, manages the floor fairly, contributes to constructive and issue/evidence-based discussions, provides equal opportunities for all political groups and members to engage in debates, and distributes parliamentary resources fairly.

A speaker/presiding officer is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the code of ethics and rules of procedure. In case of grave violation of a code of conduct and rules of procedure, the speaker is mandated to apply sanctions.

A speaker enjoys a privileged material status, including higher remuneration, and, personal apparatus, with sufficient members of staff.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution and laws that regulate the mandate, functions and duties of a speaker of parliament or a presiding officer
- Specific articles of law or rules of procedure that regulate a speaker’s mandate to coordinate and manage the work of the parliamentary bodies, manage the overall functioning of a chamber or parliament, preside over sessions and exercise full administrative powers within a parliament or chamber
- Specific articles of law or rules of procedure establishing that a speaker is obliged to implement functions impartially and neutrally
- Specific articles of law or rules of procedure establishing that a speaker is responsible for ensuring the implementation of a code of ethics and rules of procedure
- Information about resources and staff at the disposal of a speaker or presiding officer
- Copies of asset declarations submitted by a speaker or presiding officer

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Constitutional framework

There is evidence of a constitutional provision defining the general mandate, functions and duties of a speaker of a parliament or a presiding officer. There is a constitutional provision that sets the rule for electing a speaker or presiding officer, and defines the terms of office.
Indicator 1.4 – Parliamentary organization

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Legal framework on the mandate of a speaker

There is evidence of legal provisions mandating the speaker or presiding officer to coordinate and manage the work of parliamentary bodies, manage the overall functioning of the chamber or parliament, preside over the sessions, and exercise full administrative powers within a parliament or chamber.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Impartiality and neutrality

There is evidence of legal provisions establishing that a speaker is obliged to implement functions impartially and neutrally, manage the floor fairly, contribute to constructive and issue-based discussions, provide equal opportunities for all political groups and members to engage in debates, and to distribute parliamentary resources fairly.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Compliance with standing orders and codes of conduct

There is evidence of legal provisions establishing that a speaker is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the code of ethics and rules of procedure. In the case of grave violation of a code of conduct and rules of procedure, a speaker is mandated to apply sanctions, which, in some cases, have to be approved by the plenary.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7

Assessment criterion No. 5: Resources

There is evidence of sufficient resources available to a speaker or presiding officer for implementing mandates, including through the availability of personal apparatus with sufficient members of staff.

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Assessment criterion No. 6: Practice

There is evidence of a speaker or presiding officer ensuring the implementation of the code of ethics and rules of procedure in practice, implementing functions impartially and neutrally, managing the floor and distributing parliamentary resources fairly.

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Recommendations for change

Sources and further reading

**Dimension 1.4.3 Bureau/presidium**

Indicator: 1.4 Parliamentary organization  
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension outlines the provisions that define the composition and mandate of a bureau/presidium or similar collective governing body of the parliament. In some parliaments, parliamentary governing bodies might include a board with political responsibilities that bring together leaders from the different parliamentary (party) groups. In bicameral systems, each chamber usually has its own governing bodies.

A bureau or similar governing body is an important part of the political structure of the parliament, which is responsible for making decisions on political issues, organizing the work of the parliament, coordinating the work of committees, drafting the agenda for a plenary, and deciding other issues of importance relevant to the operation of the parliament.

A bureau/presidium is usually representative of the political configuration of the parliament, with the majority and minority parties represented. It meets under the chairmanship of the speaker and brings together deputy speakers, chairs of parliamentary committees and leaders of political groups. The secretary-general of the parliament, though not a formal member of the bureau, usually participates in bureau meetings. The number of participants can thus vary greatly and may not even be fixed in a particular assembly, as it depends on the number of political groups and committees.

There are different arrangements for the frequency and timing of bureau meetings, and often they are prescribed in rules of procedure. The frequency of bureau meetings is usually an indicator of the importance of its role.

The law or parliamentary regulations usually define whether bureau/presidium meetings are public and broadcast/live-streamed, or closed to the public. Both practices are observed across the countries.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal in the domain of bureau/presidium of parliament would encompass the following:

- There is a constitutional, legal or statutory provision defining the composition and mandate of a bureau/presidium as a collective governing body of parliament.
- The bureau/presidium is representative of the political configuration of the parliament, is chaired by the speaker and brings together deputy speakers, chairs of parliamentary committees and leaders of political groups.
- The bureau is responsible for taking decisions on political issues before the parliament, coordinating the work of committees, drafting the agenda for a plenary and deciding other issues of importance for the operation of the parliament.
- The frequency and timing of bureau meetings, as well as the openness of its meetings are fixed in the rules of procedure of the parliament.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution, laws or other regulations defining the functioning of the parliament, which regulate the composition and mandate of a bureau/presidium of parliament
- Specific articles of law or the rules of procedure that regulate the representative nature of a bureau/presidium
- Specific articles of law or the rules of procedure establishing that a bureau/presidium is responsible for organizing the work of the parliament, coordinating the work of committees, drafting the agenda for a plenary and deciding other issues of importance for the operation of parliament
- Evidence of the frequency and openness of bureau meetings

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Constitutional framework**

There is evidence of a constitutional, legal or statutory provision defining the composition and the mandate of a bureau/presidium as a collective governing body of parliament, or chamber in bicameral systems. Some parliaments also have different governing bodies according to their functions.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Composition of bureau/presidium**

There is evidence of legal or statutory provisions establishing that a bureau/presidium or similar collective body is representative of a political configuration of the parliament, is chaired by the speaker and brings together deputy speakers, chairs of parliamentary committees and leaders of all the political groups.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Powers of a bureau/presidium**

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Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
There is evidence of legal provisions establishing that a bureau is responsible for organizing the work of parliament, coordinating the work of committees, drafting the agenda for a plenary and deciding other issues of importance to parliamentary operations. These responsibilities can be also assigned to different governing bodies.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Frequency and openness of bureau/presidium meetings**

There are legal provisions defining the frequency and the timing of the bureau meetings. Information about bureau meetings and its conclusions is made publicly available.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Practice**

There is evidence of the systematic and consistent implementation of legal provisions on the bureau/presidium in practice, and of full compliance with the requirements of law/standing orders.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**
Dimension 1.4.4. Committees

Indicator: 1.4 Parliamentary organization
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the provisions concerning the powers, composition, governing bodies and procedures of the parliamentary committees which serve as the main tool for all democratic legislatures in the conduct of their business.

A committee is a group of parliamentarians who are appointed, on either a temporary or a permanent basis, to examine matters more closely in order to better organize parliamentary work. Usually, a composition of a committee reflects that of the whole parliament, though “special consideration can be given to smaller groups to ensure their representation in committees, either as full members or as observers”. 5

Committees perform a number of important functions in the parliament, including the review of draft legislation, oversight of government activities and interaction with the public.

The types of committees, their duties and powers vary from parliament to parliament. Generally, there are two categories of committees – standing (permanent) and ad hoc (temporary) committees. In some systems, standing committees review proposed legislation and at the same time oversee activities of the executive branch. In other cases, legislative and oversight functions are divided between ad hoc and permanent committees. In some bicameral systems, both standing and ad hoc committees might be composed of members of one or both chambers.

Committee governance and the distribution of committee chairmanship among the parties represented in the parliament can differ. In some systems, the party with the majority of seats has the benefit of chairing all committees, while in others, the committee chairmanship is distributed among the majority and the opposition (the selection of committee chairs and the composition of committees are fully covered under dimension 7.3.2).

The number and size of committees, as well as the frequency of committee meetings, should be clearly regulated by law or by the standing orders of the parliament. Committee decisions are made by a majority of votes when a quorum requirement set by the rules of procedure or a statute is met. Committees are sometimes permitted to establish sub-committees or working groups, with the aim of examining legislative drafts in greater detail before committee meetings. Such meetings of working groups or sub-committees may be closed to public participation.

A comprehensive system of committees provides more accountability and efficiency while ensuring better stakeholder engagement. Committee meetings are to be open and accessible to the public and relevant stakeholders, unless there is sufficient justification to close the meeting.

5 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) *Tools for parliamentary oversight. A comparative study of 88 national parliaments* (IPU, 2008)
In order to fully exercise its powers, a parliamentary committee needs a solid administrative capacity. It should be equipped with qualified staff to support MPs in conducting their legislative and oversight duties.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliament in the domain of committees would encompass the following:

- The parliament has a clear constitutional or legal mandate to establish committees, define their powers, functions, composition, governance and procedures.
- Parliamentary committees are mandated to review draft legislation, obtain information from the executive, summon government officials and report to parliament on their findings, and make recommendations.
- Parity of committee membership and governance across the parliamentary (party) groups represented in the legislature is ensured by the law or parliamentary resolutions.
- The law provides clear rules and procedures with regard to committee meetings, such as the time of a meeting, notice of a meeting, preparation, approval and distribution of the agenda, quorum, chairing, record keeping, voting and reporting.
- Committee meetings are open and accessible to the public and relevant stakeholders, unless there is sufficient justification to close a meeting.
- Committee meetings are held on the basis of a meeting agenda that is duly approved and published.
- Committees are equipped with the administrative capacities necessary for their functioning.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:
- Specific articles of the constitution, laws or parliamentary regulations that regulate the establishment and organization of the parliamentary committees
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure that regulate committee meetings
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure showing that committee meetings are open and accessible to the public, unless there is sufficient justification to close the meeting
- An organizational chart of the committee staff
- Committee reports and recommendations

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework on parliament’s mandate to establish and organize committees**
Indicator 1.4 – Parliamentary organization

There are constitutional, legal or statutory provisions by means of which the parliament establishes committees, defines their powers, functions, composition, governance and procedures, and ensures parity of committee membership and governance across the political parties represented in the legislature.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Legal framework on the conduct of committee meetings

There is evidence of clear rules and procedures with regard to committee meetings, such as the time of a meeting, notice of a meeting, preparation, approval and distribution of the agenda, quorum, chairing, record keeping, voting and reporting.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Openness of committee meetings

Committee meetings are open and accessible to the public and relevant stakeholders, unless there is sufficient justification to close the meeting.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Administrative capacity

Parliamentary committees are supported by adequate human, financial and administrative resources, including regularly trained and skilled staff.

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Indicator 1.4 – Parliamentary organization

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Consistency of implementation

There is evidence of consistent work carried out by the committees. The committees regularly conduct meetings with an agenda that has been duly approved and published, and in which relevant stakeholders are engaged, and in which the respective conclusions, including decisions, findings and recommendations, are produced and reported to the legislature.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

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Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7

15
**Dimension 1.4.5 Parliamentary (party) groups**

Indicator: 1.4 Parliamentary organization  
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension outlines the provisions establishing that members of parliament are entitled to form parliamentary (party) groups within the parliament in order to coordinate their activities and achieve shared political goals. The members of a parliamentary (party) group usually belong to one and the same campaigning party. In some jurisdictions, it is also possible for MPs from different political parties to create a parliamentary (party) group or to join a parliamentary (party) group in the form of associate members, which may become the subject of parliamentary approval. In some other jurisdictions, there also exists a specific parliamentary (party) group for MPs who are not part of a parliamentary (party) group. In some cases, MPs may move from one parliamentary group to another during their term.

The detailed criteria for forming parliamentary (party) groups, and the regulations concerning their mandate and responsibilities, should be clearly defined in the rules of procedure of the parliament or in national legislation.

In many legal systems, parliaments grant official recognition to the parliamentary (party) groups and provide certain privileges and facilities that are proportional to the size of their parliamentary representation or membership. In order to exercise their functions efficiently, the parliamentary (party) groups have access to additional financial and administrative resources from the overall budget of the parliament (or the national budget) and are provided with a secretariat and research services. The secretariat/staff of the parliamentary (party) groups are not part of the parliamentary administration. The number of staff and resources allocated to the political party is usually proportional to the representation of the parliamentary (party) group in the parliament. The attribution of privileges and benefits also encompasses the allocation of equitable speaking time in a plenary/debate and the right to be represented in the management structures of the parliament (in the bureau and/or in permanent committees).

Parliamentary (party) groups are key units that have significant responsibility for law-making and oversight. They are entitled, through their MPs, to obtain information from the executive, submit written or oral questions to the government, request the conduct of a hearing, and request the summoning of officials at a group meeting, as well as at a plenary. The parliamentary (party) groups may also have the authority to request the launch of a parliamentary investigation.

In order to avoid an “excessive fragmentation of the legislative organ”, national legislation may require a minimum number of MPs to form a parliamentary (party) group. The required threshold should not be set too high and should not run counter to legislators’ right to form a parliamentary (party) group. In some parliaments, changes within or between parliamentary groups might be restricted.

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6 Parliamentary (party) groups are also known as ‘parliamentary groups’, ‘party groups’ or ‘political groups’.  
On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of parliamentary (party) groups would encompass the following:

There is a clear constitutional or legal mandate for the members of parliament to be able to form parliamentary (party) groups. The formation, rights and responsibilities of parliamentary (party) groups are clearly stated.

The members of the parliamentary (party) group are MPs who have agreed to be part of the same political party and who share political views. This does not prevent different political parties from forming a parliamentary (party) group or MPs from joining a parliamentary (party) group as associate members.

The parliamentary (party) group is officially recognized in national legislation and is granted privileges and benefits through the use of a clear and transparent formula. The parliamentary (party) groups have access to additional financial and administrative resources from the parliamentary (or national) budget, and are provided with secretariat and research services. The parliamentary (party) groups have to account for these resources.

The rules of procedure of the parliament guarantee the equitable allocation of speaking times to the parliamentary (party) groups at a plenary/debate, and ensure their representation in the management structures of the legislative institution (the bureau and/or in permanent committees).

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of the constitution, rules of procedure and/or other laws and statutory provisions that define the formation of a parliamentary (party) group
- Specific legislation or articles of the rules of procedure that guarantee additional financial, administrative and human resources for parliamentary (party) groups
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure that ensure representation of the parliamentary (party) groups in the management structures
- Specific articles of the rules of procedure that secure equitable speaking time for the parliamentary (party) groups at a plenary/parliamentary debate
- Reports by the parliamentary (party) group that might include communication by the group with the government (written questions, requests for information), as well as information on the number of hearings or summons of government representatives requested by a parliamentary (party) group (or its MPs)

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework on the mandate of members of parliament to form parliamentary (party) groups

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8 See dimension 2.1.4 on disclosure of parliamentary income and expenditure
There is evidence of constitutional, legal or statutory provisions that authorize members of parliament to form a parliamentary (party) group and gain formal recognition in a legislative institution. No MP belongs to more than one parliamentary (party) group. MPs who, at the time of elections, belong to the same parliamentary (party) group must remain with that political group.

Assessment criterion No. 2: Legal framework on the provision of privileges and facilities to parliamentary (party) groups

There is evidence of legal or statutory provisions by means of which the parliament guarantees additional financial, administrative and human resources to parliamentary (party) groups.

Assessment criterion No. 3: Legal framework on the securing of speaking times and representation

There is evidence of legal provisions by means of which parliamentary (party) groups are guaranteed equitable speaking time at a plenary/parliamentary debate. There are also legal provisions that ensure the representation of parliamentary (party) groups in the management structures of the parliament (the bureau or in the permanent committees).

Assessment criterion No. 4: Rights of parliamentary (party) groups

Parliamentary (party) groups have a right to initiate actions such as proceedings, motions and interpellations, which is stipulated by the rules of procedures.
Assessment criterion No. 5: Practice

Parliamentary (party) groups exercise their powers in parliament systematically and rigorously. All rights prescribed in the law or the standing orders of parliament, including those on equitable speaking time and access to resources are duly implemented in practice.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change
**Dimension 1.4.6. Cross-party groups**

Indicator: 1.4 Parliamentary organization  
Sub-target:  1 Effective parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament  

**About the dimension**

This dimension outlines the provisions concerning the establishment and functioning of cross-party parliamentary groups.

The cross-party groups (all-party parliamentary groups) are informal groups that bring together members of parliament from different parties (from one or both chambers in the case of bicameral legislatures) to pursue and promote a specific cause or an issue. Such groups can vary in their objectives, size and operating rules.

Different terms are used in different parliaments to describe cross-party cooperation. In some countries cross-party groups are called a ‘caucus’, while in others they are called ‘parliamentary friendship groups’ or ‘all-party parliamentary groups’.

Cross-party groups represent an important forum for bringing together legislators representing different political parties or interests in order to share information, discuss policy issues, channel common concerns and engage stakeholders. They allow external organizations and individuals that are interested or active in the field to become involved in discussions and influence decision-making processes. Cross-party groups can also participate in diplomatic and inter-parliamentary activities.

Cross-party groups can assume many functions, including raising awareness on an issue of mutual interest, acting as a watchdog, advocating and influencing the legislative and political processes.

Avoiding the introduction of partisan politics into the work of the group is usually one of the common challenges faced by cross-party parliamentary groups. Having clearly defined objectives can be an effective remedy in such situations.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of cross-party groups would encompass the following:

- Members of parliament are entitled to establish cross-party groups.
- The transparency of the group’s activities and the adherence of its members to the code of conduct for members of parliament are ensured by the parliament’s rules of procedure or the cross-party group’s statute.
- Cross-party groups meet regularly and engage with relevant stakeholders.
- Cross-party groups are provided with the administrative capacities necessary for their operation.

**Assessment**

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Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Specific articles of laws or statutory provisions that regulate the establishment and organization of cross-party parliamentary groups
- Specific articles of the statutes of the cross-party groups that regulate transparency and the ethical conduct of members
- Evidence of the existence of cross-party group(s). Information about their composition, purpose and term
- Meeting records of cross-party groups

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal framework on the establishment of cross-party groups**

There are legal or statutory provisions by means of which members of parliament can establish cross-party groups, or evidence that there is no legal or statutory impediment to the establishment of such groups.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Transparency, ethical conduct and community engagement**

There is evidence of clear rules with regard to transparency of cross-party group activities, adherence of its members to the code of conduct for members of parliament and efforts by the group to engage the community in its activities.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Administrative capacity**

Cross-party groups are provided with basic administrative support, qualified staff, meeting venues and other resources.
**Indicator 1.4 – Parliamentary organization**

### Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Practice**

There is evidence of one or more cross-party group(s) established in the parliament. Term, composition and purpose of the established cross-party groups are defined.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Recommendations for change**

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Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7