Indicator 3.2 – Parliamentary communication

This indicator outlines the importance of communication between the parliament as an institution and the public, and the use of different channels to reach all public groups.

Only with an informed citizenry can there be effective involvement by citizens in parliamentary work. It is therefore the duty of parliament to ensure that people understand parliamentary roles and processes, and to provide information about its work.

Almost all parliaments across the world use the official parliamentary website as a key way of informing people about parliamentary activities. The parliamentary website should provide timely, accurate and comprehensive information about the legislature and its work, especially law-making and oversight. The information provided should be organized and presented in a way that is easy for all individuals, regardless of language, disability or special needs, to find, understand and use. The website should provide interactive content to enable two-way communication with the public.

Parliament must also use various other channels to inform and communicate with people, and make sure that information is accessible to rural areas, groups without access to the internet and vulnerable groups.

The assessment of parliamentary communication comprises the following dimensions:

- 3.2.1 Parliamentary website
- 3.2.2 Other channels for informing the public
Dimension 3.2.1 Parliamentary website

Indicator: 3.2 Parliamentary communication
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension covers the parliamentary websites and their main elements as a valuable means of communication with citizens, public outreach and engagement. It encompasses the key information that a parliament’s official site should include, as well as the format in which information is available and is easy to use.

Please see also indicators 1.3 Parliamentary procedures, 1.4 Parliamentary organization, 1.5 Administrative capacity, 1.6 Law-making, 1.7 Oversight, 1.8 Budget, 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes, 3.3 Access to parliament and 6.2 Participation in parliamentary process.

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 websites would encompass the following:

The parliamentary website provides comprehensive, timely and accurate information about the parliament, its role, legal responsibilities, composition and organization, as well as information on its daily business executing its constitutional functions.

This includes the documentation and media produced by the plenary and non-plenary bodies, as well as information on all parliamentary activities, including law-making, oversight and budget.

The parliamentary website meets the needs of the intended audiences, is easy to use and understand, and is accessible to all and inclusive of different sectors of society. The content is available in various languages, especially in countries with two or more official languages or languages that are widely used by their citizens.

Parliamentary information and data are available in open and machine-readable formats that can be used/reused.

The parliamentary website offers live streams of all public hearings, including plenary sessions and committee hearings.

The parliament fosters dialogue with the public through interactive content on its website, and tools and mechanisms for contacting MPs, committees and parliament officials.

The parliament provides active leadership with regard to the website, as well as adequate resources and a strong commitment to the accuracy and quality of information. There is evidence of good management of the documentation, information and media available on the website.

1 Committees and commissions.
2 See dimension 3.3.2 Accessibility standards, and dimension 5.2.3 Multilingual service delivery.
3 See dimension 1.5.4 Innovation and digital technologies.
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:
- Links to various sections of the parliamentary website
- Dedicated budget and staff for the website
- Systems security infrastructure and reports
- Strategic vision and planning
- ICT reports on the parliamentary website
- Evidence of periodic evaluation of the website

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: Website content

The parliamentary website provides comprehensive information about parliament’s role, functions and organization, including (but not limited to): the agenda, calendars and records of plenary/committee meetings; the profiles of MPs and their activities and votes; internal rules, administrative procedures and workflows; information on international parliamentary activities; and all other relevant documentation generated in parliamentary processes. The parliamentary website offers live streams of all public proceedings, including plenary sessions and committee hearings.

Non-existent ☐ Poor ☐ Basic ☐ Good ☐ Very good ☐ Excellent ☐

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Usability and inclusivity

Information on the parliamentary website is published in a timely way and is accurate, well-organized and easy to find. The parliamentary website is understandable and easy to operate by both beginner and expert users. Information on the website is written using plain language, making it easy to read and understand. Accessibility standards are implemented to ensure that the website can be used by persons with disabilities. In countries with two or more official languages or languages used by large percentages of citizens, the website is either fully available in these languages, or at least the most relevant information is available.

Non-existent ☐ Poor ☐ Basic ☐ Good ☐ Very good ☐ Excellent ☐

Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Assessment criterion No. 3: Format of information available on the website

Parliamentary information and data are available in open and machine-readable formats that can be used/reused or, at least, in a format that can be easily searched for, copied and downloaded.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Communication between parliament and the public

The website offers interactive content that promotes and enables two-way communication with the public. It has tools and mechanisms that facilitate public participation in parliamentary processes, including submitting comments and questions. The website also provides options for and recommended ways of contacting MPs, committees and parliament officials, as well as contact details. Opportunities for guided visits, virtual visits and other events are presented on the website, with guidance on how to access the parliamentary building.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Website management

The website has the approval and support of the highest parliamentary and administrative authorities, adequate long-term funding, trained staff and secure technical infrastructure. The needs and goals of the website are defined in writing and a periodic evaluation of the website is conducted.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change
Sources and further reading

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), “Centre for Innovation in Parliament”
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites (Geneva: IPU, 2009)
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), World e-Parliament Report 2018 (France: IPU, 2018)
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), World e-Parliament Report 2020 (IPU, 2021)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Technological Options for Capturing and Reporting Parliamentary Proceedings (UN and IPU, 2014)
Dimension 3.2.2 Other channels for informing the public

Indicator: 3.2 Parliamentary communication
Sub-target: 3 Transparent parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the provisions establishing that parliament uses various channels and forms for informing different groups of the public, including print media, radio and television broadcasters, internet and social media providers, mobile device technology platforms, and that it has direct contact with individual citizens. It is an inherent interest and obligation of parliament, as a representative political institution, to make its activities public and to inform all groups in society about its activities using all available channels. Nevertheless, various surveys show that, in the majority of countries, citizens have a very limited understanding of parliamentary work, which may result in low trust in the institution.

Despite the growing use of digital technologies, in the majority of countries, traditional mass media (particularly broadcast media) is still the primary channel of communication. Therefore, many parliaments use television and radio channels to publicize their work. However, due to the increased complexity and diversification of information sources, many parliaments are employing new technologies, including the internet and social media, in their communication schemes.

Many parliaments around the world broadcast or permit the broadcasting of their proceedings by means of public or private media. Some countries allow only public (state) broadcasters to record and broadcast their sessions, while others are open to private media as well. Many countries have a dedicated television channel for broadcasting and recording their proceedings. While these dedicated channels may only interest a minority of the population, they fit into a more general picture of increasing fragmentation of media audiences. What is important, however, is that such channels should be accessible to the widest population.

Along with radio and television broadcasting, parliamentary information is also conveyed by bulletins, newspapers, journals and other publications that are designed to provide detailed coverage of parliamentary proceedings. In order to facilitate public understanding of complex parliamentary information, many parliaments produce bulletins with more concise official information.

Whatever channels are used, parliaments need to make sure that all groups of the public, including disadvantaged groups, groups without access to the internet, children and young people, are reached. This process requires adequate resources, tools and techniques. Some parliaments have established specialized media or information units to facilitate the provision of information to the public.

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 other channels for informing the public would encompass the following:

There are no legal barriers preventing the media from reporting on parliamentary proceedings. Any exceptions are limited and clearly defined, and are provided for in the rules of procedure of the parliament.

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Parliament has adopted strategies for informing different groups of the public about its work. These strategies embrace diverse channels and means of communication (such as television and radio broadcasting, print media, the internet, written publications and leaflets) and provide all groups of society with access to parliamentary proceedings.

Parliament produces various information materials (bulletins, leaflets) facilitating public access to and understanding of parliamentary work and its products.

Parliament is equipped with adequate material and human resources to ensure effective communication and access of all groups of the public to parliamentary information.

**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 laws that regulate the access of the media to parliamentary proceedings
- Specific articles of the rules of procedures that regulate procedures for the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings
- Strategies, procedures, reports or other documents describing parliamentary communication
- Staff structure, and financial and other documents describing parliamentary resources dedicated to communication

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 media accessibility to parliamentary proceedings**

There is evidence of legal provisions that regulate media accessibility to parliamentary proceedings. These provisions enable the media to record and/or broadcast parliamentary proceedings, with possible exceptions that are limited and clearly defined.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Strategies and practices for informing different groups of the public about parliament’s work**

There is evidence of a systematic process of informing different groups of society about parliamentary work, which embraces the needs of different audiences and uses diverse channels and means of communication.
**Assessment criterion No. 3: Resources**

There is evidence that parliament is equipped with adequate material and human resources to ensure effective communication and access to parliamentary information for all groups of the public.

**Recommendations for change**