



Indicators for Democratic Parliaments

Indicator 1.1: Parliamentary autonomy

About this indicator

This indicator concerns parliament's autonomy in all aspects of its operations. In democratic systems, parliament, as the supreme representative body, exercises legislative power, sets overall policy priorities and scrutinizes the activities of the executive. It does so within the scope established by the legal framework. It has the constitutional and/or legal powers to adopt and amend its own rules of procedure, to set its own structure, to determine the terms of reference and membership of its committees, to determine its own agenda and timetable, to set and control its own budget, to make its own administrative and staffing arrangements, and to ensure it has the necessary resources to carry out its mandate.

This indicator comprises the following dimensions:

- Dimension 1.1.1: Institutional autonomy
- Dimension 1.1.2: Procedural autonomy
- Dimension 1.1.3: Budgetary autonomy
- Dimension 1.1.4: Administrative autonomy

The Indicators for Democratic Parliaments are a multi-partner initiative coordinated by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in partnership with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), Directorio Legislativo Foundation, Inter Pares / International IDEA, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

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Dimension 1.1.1: Institutional autonomy

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.1: Parliamentary autonomy
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension focuses on the legal provisions establishing parliament's institutional autonomy over its administrative and operational affairs. This institutional autonomy is the foundation that allows parliament to represent the interests of the people.

Institutional autonomy includes having authority in matters such as:

- calling regular or extraordinary sessions
- electing its own bodies, determining its committees and organizing its business
- drafting, proposing, debating and approving legislation
- overseeing the work of the executive
- deciding on its rules

Institutional autonomy is usually established in the constitution. Depending on the context of each country, it may be further developed in laws and/or parliamentary rules of procedure.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "institutional autonomy" is as follows:

The legal framework establishes parliament as an autonomous body whose mandate is to represent the interests of the people.

Parliament has autonomy in electing its own bodies, determining its committees, organizing its business and deciding on its rules.

Parliament has the authority to call regular or extraordinary sessions, to draft, propose, debate and approve legislation, and to oversee the work of the executive.

Parliament's practices are aligned with the relevant provisions of the legal framework.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- Provisions from the legal framework establishing an independent legislative branch
- Rules of procedure adopted by parliament alone
- Laws and rules under which parliament has autonomy in determining its own organization and procedures, in electing its own bodies and leadership, in setting its committees and in organizing its business
- Evidence that these laws and rules are routinely followed and respected

- Established committees/bodies within parliament through which MPs alone have the authority to amend or change procedures, rules and conduct within committees

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Constitutional authority

An independent and autonomous parliament is established in the legal framework and/or by legal precedent.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion 2: Legal framework

The legal framework establishes parliament's autonomy in all areas of its functioning, including in determining its own rules, organization and procedures, in electing its own bodies, in establishing its committees, in calling plenary or debate sessions, and in setting its agenda.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion 3: Practice

In practice, the provisions of the legal framework for institutional autonomy are recognized and followed by all parties, including the executive.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.

Dimension 1.1.2: Procedural autonomy

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.1: Parliamentary autonomy
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the provisions giving parliament autonomy over its procedures. Having procedural autonomy allows parliament to fulfil its core functions. These procedures can cover matters including:

- the conduct and behaviour of MPs, including their right to resign
- MPs' rights, mandates and immunities
- the proposal, debating, amendment and passing of legislation
- parliament's autonomy in agenda-setting, plenary and committee affairs
- the election and actions of the Speaker(s)
- the procedures available to those in the majority and minority
- the monitoring of the effective passage, implementation and consequences of legislation
- the tools available to parliament to hold the executive to account
- the rights of the opposition and its access to parliamentary resources, including infrastructure, staff, funding for political groups and research services.

Parliament needs to have a robust framework for developing and amending these procedures.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "procedural autonomy" is as follows:

Parliament has full authority to determine its rules of procedure, which are not subject to approval by the executive.

Parliament has a robust framework for creating, reviewing, modifying and endorsing its own procedures.

Parliament's rules of procedure are implemented consistently and in a non-partisan manner.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- Provisions from the legal framework establishing parliament's authority and autonomy in determining its own procedures
- Practices by which rules of procedure are debated and adopted by parliament alone
- Information on the involvement of MPs in all aspects of parliament's proceedings
- Rulings by the Speaker(s)

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework provides parliament with the authority to exercise complete control over determining its own procedures, including the power to establish and amend procedures enabling it to carry out its core functions.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 2: Rules of procedure

Rules of procedure support the authority granted to parliament under the legal framework to determine its own procedures. Parliament has a robust framework for creating, reviewing, modifying and endorsing its own procedures. Parliament's rules of procedure do not require approval by the executive.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 3: Practice

In practice, parliament has autonomy over determining and implementing its procedures. Rules of procedure are developed and modified in accordance with the established framework.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 4: Non-partisan implementation

Parliamentary procedures are implemented in a non-partisan manner. The Speaker upholds compliance with those procedures. MPs from different parliamentary parties, factions and other affiliations are treated equally and impartially.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.

Dimension 1.1.3: Budgetary autonomy

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.1: Parliamentary autonomy
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension covers parliament's autonomy over its own budget, finances and resources, including its offices, supplies, assets and staff. This budget could also include funding for a range of other services, such as a non-partisan office responsible for providing expert budget analysis of policy implementation, or security services for parliament and MPs.

Budget autonomy means that only parliament can determine and approve its own budget, and that it has independent financial expertise in order to ensure effective oversight of its funds. Specifically, this implies that the parliamentary budget is not subject to approval or allowance by the executive, and that parliament alone can execute it. It also means that the parliamentary budget is recognized by the government in the annual budget cycle, with allocated resources for parliament in the budget plan

See also *Indicator 1.8: Budget*.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "budgetary autonomy" is as follows:

The budget to fund parliament's activities and operations is clearly separated from the government budget. Parliament has the authority to debate and approve its budget and is solely responsible for its management.

The budget provides parliament with the resources it needs to fund its offices, equipment, staff and security measures.

Management of the parliamentary budget is subject to regular scrutiny through internal or external audits that are independent of the executive.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- Provisions from the legal framework establishing parliament's autonomy over its budget
- Rules of procedure, debated and adopted by parliament alone, establishing parliament's autonomy to manage its budget
- A copy of the annual parliamentary budget
- National budget packages outlining the reserved budget for legislative branch operations
- The existence of an independent audit office or equivalent institution that oversees finances related to parliament alone, including its offices, resources and staff
- Credible reports on the sufficiency of the resources allocated to parliament, potentially including observations by MPs or assessments by independent audit offices or equivalent institutions

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework establishes parliament's autonomy over its own budget, including the authority to approve and manage this budget independently from the executive.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion 2: Resources

The parliamentary budget provides parliament with the financial resources needed to effectively carry out its mandate. This budget is sufficient to allow parliament to pay MPs' compensation, hire staff, develop and finance non-partisan analysis and oversight offices, ensure the security of parliament, invest in technology and infrastructure, procure supplies and equipment, and acquire other assets and resources as necessary for its operations.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion 3: Budget management and scrutiny

Parliament has the expertise and resources to use its funds effectively. Management of the parliamentary budget is subject to regular scrutiny through internal audits and an external, independent supreme audit institution.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.

Dimension 1.1.4: Administrative autonomy

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.1: Parliamentary autonomy
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the extent to which parliament has an independent parliamentary administration that allows MPs, staff and parliamentary offices to function effectively. Administrative autonomy includes independence over the organization of parliamentary services and the recruitment of parliamentary staff. It implies that the relevant parliamentary official or body has the power to:

- define the organizational structure of parliament
- establish or rearrange units necessary for parliament's effective operation of the parliament,
- to manage its own staff

The services managed by the parliamentary administration typically include the parliamentary premises, IT systems, human resources, communications and media, archiving and public records, supplies and equipment, ethics and conduct regulations, and other services as needed by members and staff, such as health care, commissary and food.

In most cases, the parliamentary administration is overseen by a non-partisan Secretary General or by a general services office. This role operates independently of the executive, and is elected or appointed by, and accountable to, parliament.

See also *Indicator 1.5: Administrative capacity and independence*.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "administrative autonomy" is as follows:

An independent parliamentary administration allows parliament to operate as an effective, capable, well-staffed and well-resourced institution.

The parliamentary administration is housed exclusively within, and is directed under the sole authority of, the legislative branch. It manages its apparatus and structural units and staff independently.

Parliament has effective authority and control over the precincts in which its premises are located.

The parliamentary administration is non-partisan. Staff work in accordance with the administrative procedures outlined in the rules of procedure and corresponding regulations, and their services are equally accessible to all MPs and parliamentary party groups. A clear distinction exists between partisan and non-partisan staff.

Assessment

This dimension is assessed against several criteria, each of which should be evaluated separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Rudimentary, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that best reflects the situation in your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which this assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension could include the following:

- Provisions from the legal framework establishing an independent legislative branch

- Provisions from laws or rules of procedure establishing a framework for an independent parliamentary administration
- The existence of non-partisan administrative offices that are independently managed, resourced and staffed by parliament alone

Where relevant, provide additional comments or examples that support the assessment.

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework provides for parliament's administrative autonomy, enabling parliament to organize and staff its administration independently and to exercise effective control over the precincts in which its premises are located.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 2: Management

The parliamentary administration is overseen by a non-partisan, objective individual or office, such as a Secretary General, who is exclusively appointed or elected by, and accountable to, parliament.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Assessment criterion 3: Non-partisan administration

A clear distinction exists between non-partisan staff serving parliament itself, and partisan staff who support individual members and parties.

Non-existent <input type="checkbox"/>	Rudimentary <input type="checkbox"/>	Basic <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Very good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence for this assessment criterion:					

Recommendations for change

Use this space to note down recommendations and ideas for strengthening rules and practice in this area.