



Indicators for Democratic Parliaments

Indicator 1.7: Oversight

About this indicator

Parliamentary oversight is one of the core functions of parliament. Its aims are to promote people's freedoms and well-being, and to improve accountability and transparency in government.

Oversight processes assess the impact of government action on society, help ensure that appropriate resources are provided to implement government programmes, identify unintended or negative effects of government policy and actions, and monitor the meeting of national and international commitments.

Parliamentary oversight should be rigorous, systematic, constructive, transparent and evidence-based, and carried out with the participation of relevant bodies, organizations and the wider public.

This indicator comprises the following dimensions:

- Dimension 1.7.1: Election and dismissal of the executive
- Dimension 1.7.2: Access to information from the executive
- Dimension 1.7.3: Summoning the executive in committee
- Dimension 1.7.4: Summoning the executive in plenary
- Dimension 1.7.5: Questions
- Dimension 1.7.6: Hearings
- Dimension 1.7.7: Parliamentary committees of inquiry

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 1.7.1: Election and dismissal of the executive

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns three key parliamentary powers relating to the election and dismissal of the executive, namely:

- to elect a Head of State/Government
- to hold a vote of confidence in the executive
- to censure or impeach a Head of State/Government and/or ministers.

Various political systems provide for different mandates for parliaments with regard to these powers. The mandate of parliament is typically defined in the constitution and further developed in laws and in parliament's rules of procedure.

In some countries, parliament may play a direct role in electing the Heads of State/Government, while in others parliament has a limited or no role in the process. The meaning of "vote of confidence in the executive" also varies across political systems, for the purposes of this dimension, it refers to parliament's power to withdraw confidence if it considers that the executive as a whole, or some of its members, are failing to carry out their duties.

In parliamentary systems, the executive's tenure usually depends on the continued support of parliament, which therefore has the power to bring down the executive by a vote of no confidence where necessary. In such systems, there should be clear criteria and rules on the nomination of candidates for Head of State/Government and members of cabinet, proceedings for the debate of a proposed government programme and the composition of the cabinet, related deadlines, and the minimum quorum necessary for gaining parliamentary confidence in the executive.

In presidential systems, the directly elected Head of State/Government is still accountable to citizens between elections. Parliament usually has the power to approve ministers and cabinet members individually, and there should be clear rules for the submission of candidates for approval, hearing procedures and a minimal quorum for final decision. Parliament typically also has mechanisms to impeach the Head of State/Government and/or ministers for breaches of their constitutional duty or for unlawful conduct.

Regardless of the specifics of each country, it is important that parliamentary powers in these areas be clearly set out in the legal framework, and that procedures are clearly defined and consistently applied in practice.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "election and dismissal of the executive" is as follows:

The constitution clearly establishes the mandate of parliament concerning its powers:

- to elect the Head of State/Government
- to hold a vote of confidence in the executive
- to censure or impeach the Head of State/Government and/or ministers

The procedure for applying these powers is clearly established in law and in practice.

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 of the constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework relating to the procedures for electing the Head of State/Government, for holding a vote of confidence in the executive, and for censuring or impeaching the Head of State/Government and/or ministers
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure relating to the procedures for electing the Head of State/Government, for holding a vote of confidence in the executive, and for censuring or impeaching the Head of State/Government and/or ministers
- Examples of decisions by parliament or its committees relating to confidence or no confidence in the executive, and to the censure or impeachment of the Head of State/Government and/or ministers

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

Assessment criterion 1: Election of the Head of State/Government

The constitution lays down clear criteria and rules for the election of the Head of State/Government and, where relevant, the role that parliament plays in this election.

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

Assessment criterion 2: Votes of confidence in the executive

In systems where the executive requires parliamentary confidence in order to govern, the legal framework lays down clear rules and criteria for the establishment of such confidence. In systems not based on parliamentary confidence, parliament approves ministers and cabinet members individually.

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

Assessment criterion 3: Censure or impeachment of the executive

Parliament has the power to remove the Head of State/Government and/or ministers for breaches of their constitutional duty or for unlawful conduct through processes of censure or impeachment. The rules and criteria for such processes are clearly set out in the legal framework and in parliament's rules of procedure.

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 4: Practice

In practice, the procedures for electing the Head of State/Government, for holding a vote of confidence in the executive, and for censuring or impeaching the Head of State/Government and/or ministers are applied consistently and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the constitution and other aspects of the legal 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"/>
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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 1.7.2: Access to information from the executive

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the legal authority of parliament, parliamentary committees and individuals MPs to obtain information from the executive as part of parliament's oversight duties.

The legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure should establish clear and effective procedures and specific timelines for obtaining information from the executive, including through mechanisms such as:

- question time in the plenary,
- the provision of information to parliamentary committees or of written responses to individual MPs
- the submission of questions or letters to the executive
- fact-finding visits to government institutions and other sites for oversight purposes.

In some cases, the legal framework may prescribe rules that limit access to classified information, such as state secrets from the military, security and intelligence services. In these cases, requests for classified information may be limited to a special committee or to individual MPs who have the necessary security clearances or authority to oversee these areas. Any such limitations should be precisely defined by law.

In some systems, the failure of a minister to provide information when requested by parliament may constitute grounds for censure or impeachment, or be considered a breach of privilege.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of "access to information from the executive" is as follows:

The legal framework authorizes parliament, parliamentary committees and individual MPs to obtain information, including classified information, from the executive. Ministers are legally obliged to provide such information in full and in a timely manner.

There are clear and effective procedures and specific timelines for obtaining information from the executive. These procedures are applied rigorously and systematically in practice.

Parliament has a designated committee or other body tasked with monitoring the executive's compliance with these legal requirements and procedures and for keeping track of matters such as delays, failures to submit information and justifications for delays.

Where a minister or other representative of the executive systematically fails to provide information when requested by parliament, this may constitute grounds for censure or impeachment, or lead to other forms of parliamentary action.

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 of the constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework relating to parliamentary access to information from the executive
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure laying down the procedures for the submission of information requests to the executive, as well as timelines and procedures by which government agencies should respond to such requests
- Provisions of the legal framework relating to the legal or political action that may be taken against a representative of the executive for systematically failing to provide information to parliament
- Parliamentary or committee reports on parliamentary access to information from the executive, possibly including the number of requests submitted, the number of timely and full responses, and the number of delayed responses and justifications for delays.

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework authorize parliament, its committees and individual MPs to obtain information from the executive and establish the obligation for ministers to provide such information in full and in a timely manner.

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: Procedures

Parliament's rules of procedure establish clear and effective procedures and specific timelines for obtaining information from the executive. These procedures are applied rigorously and systematically in practice.

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: Classified information

Special procedures are in place regarding access to classified information. Any limitations on access to classified information, such as State secrets from the military, security and intelligence services, are precisely defined by law.

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: Executive compliance with requests for information

Parliament has a designated committee or other body tasked with monitoring the executive's compliance with these legal requirements and procedures and for keeping track of matters such as delays, failures to submit information and justifications for delays.

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 5: Failure to provide information

The constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework establish that ministers or other government representatives are to be held to account for systematically failing to provide information to parliament or to MPs. Such a failure may constitute grounds for censure or impeachment, or lead to other forms of parliamentary action.

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 1.7.3: Summoning the executive in committee

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns parliament's authority to summon representatives of the executive to appear before parliamentary committees. This power is important for parliament's role in scrutinizing the effectiveness and efficiency of the executive, as well as in verifying the compliance of its actions with relevant policies and laws.

Parliament should have the authority to summon ministers, as well as senior officials of the administration, and of the military, law enforcement and intelligence services. When ministers are summoned, they should be obliged to appear in person rather than to send staff members in their place.

The procedures for summoning representatives of the executive are normally laid down in parliament's rules of procedure. These procedures should provide for specific rights for the opposition.

It is important that committees have sufficient resources and expert staff to assist with the process of summoning representatives of the executive. This includes gathering evidence and information from a wide range of sources in order to enhance the effectiveness of oversight and questioning of representatives of the executive.

See also *Dimension 1.7.4: Summoning the executive in plenary*.

Aspiring goal

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

The legal framework establishes the authority of parliament and its committees to summon representatives of the executive to appear before committees. This includes the power to summon ministers, as well as senior officials of the administration, and of the military, law enforcement and intelligence services.

Parliament's rules of procedure lay down the procedures for summoning representatives of the executive, and provide specific rights for the opposition.

Committees have sufficient resources and expert staff to assist with the process of summoning representatives of the executive. Committees gather evidence and information from a wide range of sources in order to enhance the effectiveness of oversight and questioning.

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 of the legal framework establishing the authority of parliament to summon representatives of the executive, including members of cabinet, and senior officials of the military, law enforcement and intelligence services, to appear before committees
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure laying down the procedures for summoning representatives of the executive
- Committee records/reports on the summoning of representatives of the executive
- Committee records on information and evidence gathered prior to the summoning of representatives of the executive
- The percentage of committee meetings addressing the summoning of officials per year

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework clearly establishes the authority of parliament to summon representatives of the executive to appear before committees. This includes members of cabinet, as well as senior officials of the administration, and of the military, law enforcement and intelligence services.

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: Procedures

Parliament's rules of procedure lay down the procedures for summoning representatives of the executive, and provide specific rights for the opposition.

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: Resources

Committees have sufficient resources and expert staff to assist with the process of summoning representatives of the executive. Committees gather evidence and information from a wide range of sources in order to enhance the effectiveness of oversight and questioning.

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: Practice

In practice, parliament consistently summons representatives of the executive, who appear before committees when invited and provide full and timely information to the committee.

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

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

Sources and further reading

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), [Global Parliamentary Report 2017 – Parliamentary oversight: Parliament’s power to hold government to account](#) (2017).

Dimension 1.7.4: Summoning the executive in plenary

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the authority of parliament to summon representatives of the executive, including the prime minister, ministers and other representatives of the executive, to appear in the plenary. This process is often known as “interpellation” and can involve deliberation on their possible dismissal from the government.

Interpellation is a powerful tool that enables parliament and MPs to publicly express their opinions and conduct effective oversight. Interpellations are usually written requests for information from the executive by a group of MPs or a political group, with the intention of launching a debate. After a motion on interpellation has been submitted, representatives of the executive are required to respond to the request or question in person in the plenary. Interpellations almost always address matters of national importance.

The legal framework should establish clear procedures for summoning representatives of the executive in plenary, including the initiation of interpellations, the associated time frame, and guaranteed speaking time for the opposition. The number of MPs required to launch an interpellation procedure varies from one country to another.

Following an interpellation, parliament may take actions such as a censure motion, or a resolution expressing parliament’s opinion on the subject of the debate. Such debates may even result in a no-confidence motion seeking a political sanction.

See also *Dimension 1.7.3: Summoning the executive in committee*

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of “summoning the executive in plenary” is as follows:

The legal framework authorizes parliament to summon representatives of the executive to appear in the plenary. Representatives of the executive are legally required to respond to an interpellation in person in the plenary.

Parliament’s rules of procedures establish the procedure for interpellations, including the number of MPs required to launch an interpellation and the possible results of the process.

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 of the constitution and/or other aspects of the legal framework on the summoning of representatives of the executive to appear in the plenary
- The percentage of plenary time that parliament devotes to interpellations versus other activities

- Examples of motions on the initiation of interpellations
- The number of times cabinet members appear in the plenary during the year for interpellation or summons

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework authorizes parliament to summon representatives of the executive to appear in the plenary. Representatives of the executive are legally required to respond to an interpellation in person in the plenary.

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: Procedures

Parliament's rules of procedure establish the procedure for interpellations, including the number of MPs required to launch an interpellation and the possible results of the process.

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 makes use of the interpellation procedure and representatives of the executive appear in the plenary when requested to do so.

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.

Sources and further reading

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), [*Global Parliamentary Report 2017 – Parliamentary oversight: Parliament’s power to hold government to account*](#) (2017).
- Hironori Yamamoto, [*Tools for parliamentary oversight: A comparative study of 88 national parliaments*](#) (2007).

Dimension 1.7.5: Questions

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the authority of MPs to submit oral and written questions to the prime minister, ministers and other representatives of the executive, and to receive answers to those questions.

Oral questions allow MPs to publicly address representatives of the executive with regard to politically acute topics. Dedicated sessions for oral questions, known as “question time”, “prime minister’s hour” or “ministers’ hour”, regularly take place in many parliaments. During these sessions, MPs should also be allowed to ask supplementary questions where the initial response is incomplete or in order to seek clarification.

The Speaker plays a significant role during oral questions, by maintaining the balance among political parties, managing the floor and setting a constructive tone of debate. Parliament’s rules of procedure should provide the Speaker with the necessary powers to exercise this responsibility.

Written questions, meanwhile, are a useful tool for gathering detailed information that may not otherwise be available. Parliament’s rules of procedure should provide guidance on submitting written questions, as well as deadlines for providing answers and possible sanctions for breaching the obligation to respond.

The meaning of the term “written question” varies across countries. It usually refers to questions submitted in writing that require written answers, though some parliaments allow the authors of written questions to request either written or oral answers. MPs can also ask the executive to provide oral answers to written questions that remain unanswered. In some cases, unanswered questions become the subject of interpellations

See also *Dimension 1.4.2: Speaker* and *Dimension 1.7.4: Summoning the executive in plenary*.

Aspiring goal

Based on a global comparative analysis, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the area of “questions” is as follows:

The legal framework authorizes MPs to submit both oral and written questions to the executive and its representatives, which are required to respond to these questions in a full and timely manner or face sanctions.

Parliament’s rules of procedure provide for dedicated sessions for oral questions. MPs can ask supplementary questions where the initial response is incomplete or in order to seek clarification.

Parliament’s rules of procedure provide the Speaker with the necessary powers to maintain the balance among political parties during oral questions, to manage the floor and to set a constructive tone of debate.

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 of the legal framework authorizing MPs to submit oral and written questions to the executive and requiring the executive to respond to such questions
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure providing for dedicated sessions for oral questions, establishing the timeline for responding to written questions, and laying down sanctions for breaching the obligation to respond
- The percentage of time that parliament devotes to oral questions versus other oversight activities
- Reports on the percentage of full and timely responses to MPs' questions by representatives of the executive
- Evidence from the parliamentary records

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework authorizes MPs to submit both oral and written questions to the executive and its representatives, which are required to respond to these questions in a full and timely manner or face sanctions.

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: Procedures

Parliament's rules of procedure set out detailed procedures for the submission of both oral and written questions to representatives of the executive, authorize MPs to ask supplementary questions, and provide the Speaker with the necessary powers to manage the floor effectively during oral questions.

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, the submission of both oral and written questions to representatives of the executive is a permanent part of parliamentary life. The procedures are applied consistently and effectively. Representatives of the executive respond in full and in a timely manner to both written and oral questions.

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.

Sources and further reading

- Hironori Yamamoto, [*Tools for parliamentary oversight: A comparative study of 88 national parliaments*](#) (2007).

Dimension 1.7.6: Hearings

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the provisions and practices relating to the holding of committee hearings. Hearings are a very important way for parliamentary committees to gather information on a topic, to obtain data and opinions, to seek evidence from a wide range of individuals and, therefore, to inform the legislative process and exercise oversight of the executive's policies and actions.

Hearings are one of the most common forms of public engagement in the work of parliament. They provide an opportunity for individuals and groups of citizens to contribute written and oral evidence.

Committee hearings are typically held on the parliamentary premises, and in many parliaments can also be held outside parliament. In principle, hearings should be open to the public, and any exceptions to this rule – such as a valid need to hear confidential evidence – should be clearly defined in parliament's rules of procedure. Committee hearings are increasingly being broadcast, for example through the parliamentary website.

There should be clear rules and procedures on the planning and organization of hearings, covering matters such as notice of hearings, the preparation, approval and distribution of the agenda, quorum, chairing, recording and voting. It is also important that the results of committee hearings are properly documented – ideally published as a transcript – and that the committee's decisions, findings, recommendations and other conclusions resulting from the hearing are made public.

Parliamentary staff should support the organization of committee hearings, including by seeking evidence from a wide range of sources.

Aspiring goal

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

The legal framework establishes the mandate of parliamentary committees to conduct hearings, both on the parliamentary premises and outside parliament.

There are clear rules and procedures on the planning and organization of committee hearings. Committee hearings are prepared with the assistance of parliamentary staff and take evidence from a wide range of sources.

Committee hearings are open to the public in principle, and any exceptions to this rule are clearly defined. Where possible, committee hearings are broadcast through the parliamentary website.

The results of committee hearings are properly documented and the committee's conclusions resulting from such hearings are made public.

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 of the legal framework relating to the holding of committee hearings
- Provisions of parliament's rules of procedure relating to the planning and organization of committee hearings, covering matters such as notice of hearings, the preparation, approval and distribution of the agenda, quorum, chairing, recording and voting
- Committee reports on hearings

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework establishes the mandate of parliamentary committees to conduct hearings, both on the parliamentary premises and outside 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 2: Procedures

Parliament has clear rules and procedures on the planning and organization of committee hearings, and on the production of committee reports.

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: Openness

Committee hearings are open to the public in principle, and any exceptions to this rule are clearly defined. Where possible, committee hearings are broadcast through the parliamentary website.

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: Practice

In practice, parliament rigorously and systematically conducts committee hearings and takes evidence from a wide range of sources. These hearings are open to the public unless there is a legitimate reason to close the meeting. The conclusions and results of committee hearings are documented and published.

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 1.7.7: Parliamentary committees of inquiry

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 1.7: Oversight
- Target 1: Effective parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns a parliament's powers to inquire into an issue independently by setting up a parliamentary committee of inquiry (PCI) – a specific fact-finding process that typically aims to investigate possible maladministration, misconduct or policy failure by the executive.

The rules governing PCIs vary considerably across parliaments. They are typically conducted by permanent committees, or by ad hoc committees specifically mandated to conduct a particular investigation within a predefined scope. PCIs may conduct fairly intense investigations over a relatively short period of time. They can potentially reveal facts that may be uncomfortable for the executive, hold senior representatives of the executive, including cabinet ministers, accountable for their actions, and even lead to impeachment. A PCI usually ceases to function upon submission of its final report.

PCIs should be able to summon officials and/or private individuals, as well as obtain written and oral evidence, and information and documentation, from governmental, judicial, administrative and private institutions.

The legal framework should not contain excessive barriers to the launching of an inquiry. Political participation in such PCIs should be proportional to political representation in parliament, and the role of the opposition should be guaranteed by law.

Parliamentary staff should support PCIs in carrying out their inquiry.

Aspiring goal

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

The legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure contain clear provisions on the establishment of PCIs, and on the related procedures.

PCIs have the power to summon officials and/or private individuals, to obtain written and oral evidence, as well as information and documentation, from governmental, judicial, administrative and private institutions, to conduct hearings, and to issue findings and recommendations.

Political participation in PCIs is proportional to political representation in parliament, and the role of the opposition is guaranteed by law.

PCIs have the trained personnel and administrative and financial resources necessary to support the process.

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 of the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure relating to the establishment of PCIs
- Provisions of the legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure guaranteeing the proportional participation of political groups in PCIs
- Provisions of the legal framework establishing a legal responsibility to appear before a PCI, as well as sanctions for the unlawful refusal to appear before a PCI and to provide information
- PCI reports and recommendations
- Details of the trained personnel and administrative and financial resources available to support the conduct of PCIs

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure contain clear provisions on the establishment of PCIs.

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: Powers

PCIs have the power to summon officials and/or private individuals, to obtain written and oral evidence, as well as information and documentation, from governmental, judicial, administrative and private institutions, to conduct hearings, and to issue findings and recommendations.

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: Participation

Political participation in PCIs is proportional to political representation in parliament, and the role of the opposition is guaranteed by law. PCIs are open to the public, except in clearly defined exceptional circumstances.

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: Resources

PCIs have the trained personnel and administrative and financial resources necessary to support the process.

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 5: Practice

In practice, parliament sets up PCIs to investigate possible maladministration, misconduct or policy failure by the executive. PCIs are able to carry out their inquiry with the full cooperation of the relevant authorities. The findings of PCIs result in representatives of the executive being held to account.

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.

Sources and further reading

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [Evaluating Parliament: A self-assessment toolkit for parliaments](#) (2008).
- Eva-Maria Poptcheva, [Parliament's committees of inquiry and special committees](#), European Parliamentary Research Service (2016).