



Indicators for Democratic Parliaments

Indicator 3.3: Access to parliament

About this indicator

This indicator concerns physical access for the public, persons with disabilities and the media to the proceedings of parliament, wherever they take place. It covers access to all parliamentary venues, such as the parliamentary building, the plenary chamber(s) and committee meeting rooms, including for persons with disabilities, as well as to events organized on or off the parliamentary premises.

Physical access to parliament is an important democratic principle. Nevertheless, parliament sometimes has to carefully balance the principle of access with other legitimate concerns, such as security and public health.

This indicator comprises the following dimensions:

- Dimension 3.3.1: Physical access to parliament
- Dimension 3.3.2: Access for persons with disabilities
- Dimension 3.3.3: Media access to parliament

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 3.3.1: Physical access to parliament

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 3.3: Access to parliament
- Target 3: Transparent parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns the possibility for members of the public to have access to the parliamentary premises and to observe parliamentary proceedings. The openness of parliament to the public is of both symbolic and practical importance. It shapes the way in which citizens think of their parliament and interact with it.

Members of the public should be allowed and encouraged to access all parliamentary venues, including the parliamentary building, the plenary chamber(s) and committee meeting rooms, as well as events organized on or off the parliamentary premises.

It is important for parliament to carefully balance the principle of access with other legitimate concerns. Any restrictions on physical access should be limited, proportional and imposed on reasonable grounds, such as security and public health.

Parliamentary staff should have clear guidelines on managing all aspects of public access, covering the entire process from visitor registration to the point at which visitors leave the premises. Parliament should dedicate sufficient resources to informing the public about opportunities to visit parliament, and about practical arrangements for visitors. Some parliaments have dedicated visitor centres or visitor services to encourage and facilitate public access.

Aspiring goal

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

The legal framework provides for public access to all venues where parliamentary proceedings take place, and to all parliamentary activities that are not explicitly closed to the public.

Any restrictions on public access to parliament are established in the legal framework, and are limited, proportional and imposed on reasonable grounds.

Clear guidelines for parliamentary staff outline the management of all aspects of public access, and are applied consistently.

In practice, parliament encourages people to visit parliament and dedicates sufficient resources to welcoming visitors to parliament.

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 physical access to the parliamentary building and all other venues where parliamentary proceedings take place
- Guidelines for parliamentary staff on physical access to parliament
- Statistics on visitor numbers
- Reports from parliament's visitor centre or services

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

Assessment criterion 1: Legal framework

The legal framework provides for public access to all venues where parliamentary proceedings take place.

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: Restrictions on access

Any restrictions on public access to parliament are established in the legal framework, and are limited, proportional and imposed on reasonable grounds. Information about any such restrictions is made widely available.

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: Guidelines for parliamentary staff

Parliament has clear guidelines for parliamentary staff outlining the management of all aspects of public access. These guidelines are applied consistently.

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: Resources

Parliament dedicates sufficient resources to informing the public about visiting opportunities and arrangements.

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

- David Beetham, [*Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*](#) (2006).
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), [*Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislators*](#), revised edition (2018).

Dimension 3.3.2: Access for persons with disabilities

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 3.3: Access to parliament
- Target 3: Transparent parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to access both the parliamentary premises and information about parliament. Parliament needs to ensure that it is accessible to all groups in society.

The physical structure of a building – especially an older or heritage building – can create barriers for persons with disabilities, making it difficult for them to access the parliamentary chamber(s) and/or committee rooms. The parliamentary building may need to be retrofitted to meet accessibility standards, such as by removing all physical barriers to entering and moving around the premises, installing accessible bathrooms, or installing signage for persons with hearing and visual impairments.

The same principle applies to access to information about parliament. Parliamentary proceedings may be accompanied by sign-language interpretation, or be made available on the parliamentary website in formats that are compatible with assistive technologies. Publications may, for example, be produced in Braille or in other ways that enhance accessibility.

Parliament should consult regularly with civil society organizations representing the interests of persons with disabilities, and should solicit their input and assistance in ensuring that parliament is accessible to all.

Aspiring goal

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

The legal framework requires parliament to ensure access for persons with disabilities to the parliamentary premises and to parliamentary proceedings.

Parliament ensures that, in practice, there are no barriers to access the parliamentary premises for persons with disabilities.

Parliament makes information about parliamentary proceedings, as well as parliamentary publications, available in formats that facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

Parliament consults regularly with civil society organizations to seek input and advice about ensuring that parliament is accessible to all people, regardless of disability.

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 access for persons with disabilities to the parliamentary building, to parliament’s processes and proceedings, and to information about the work of parliament
- Statistics on access by persons with disabilities to the parliamentary building, to parliament’s processes and proceedings, and to information about the work of parliament

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 require parliament to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities to the parliamentary building, to parliament’s processes and proceedings, and to information about the work of 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: Physical access to parliament

In practice, there are no obstacles to equal access for persons with disabilities to the parliamentary premises and to its proceedings.

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: Access to information about parliament

Parliament makes information about parliamentary proceedings, as well as parliamentary publications, available in formats that facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

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: Consultation

Parliament consults regularly with civil society organizations to seek input and advice about ensuring that parliament is accessible to all people, regardless of disability.

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

- David Beetham, [Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice](#) (2006).
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), [Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislators](#), revised edition (2018).
- National Democratic Institute (NDI), [Toward the Development of International Standards for Democratic Legislatures](#) (2007).

Dimension 3.3.3: Media access to parliament

This dimension is part of:

- Indicator 3.3: Access to parliament
- Target 3: Transparent parliament

About this dimension

This dimension concerns provisions and arrangements for media access to the parliamentary premises. The media has a special role in democratic societies in reporting on parliament's activities. Parliament needs to guarantee free and unfettered access to its proceedings to the media, and to provide adequate space and conditions for journalists and technicians to work.

Where parliament applies a media credentialling system, it should provide for permanent registration of media outlets and facilitate access to parliament. Credentialling should not be used to limit the diversity of media outlets reporting on parliament, or to exercise political control.

It is also important that media outlets have reasonable space, infrastructure and technical support to carry out their work, including Wi-Fi, cables, plugs, monitors and microphones.

Relations between parliament and the media may be facilitated by parliament's media relations unit, or by dedicated staff tasked with liaising with the media. Such units and/or staff should work in a non-partisan manner. Parliaments sometimes provide training or informational material to journalists to familiarize them with parliamentary procedures.

Aspiring goal

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

Parliament's rules of procedure guarantee access for the media to the parliamentary building and to all venues where parliamentary proceedings take place, regardless of media type, ownership, political leaning or similar. Any restrictions on media access are limited, proportional and imposed on reasonable grounds.

Parliament has a credentialling system in place to facilitate media access to parliament.

Parliament provides media outlets with appropriate space, infrastructure and technical support to carry out their work.

In practice, media outlets have access to the parliamentary premises, and can report freely on parliamentary activities.

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 parliament's rules of procedure relating to the relationship between parliament and the media

- Statistics on media credentialling and access to parliament for media representatives

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

Assessment criterion 1: Rules of procedure

Parliament's rules of procedure guarantee access for the media to the parliamentary building and to all venues where parliamentary proceedings take place.

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: Restrictions on access

Any restrictions on media access are limited, proportional and imposed on reasonable grounds. There are no unwarranted obstacles preventing the media from reporting on plenary sessions or committee meetings.

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: Credentialling system

Parliament's credentialling system allows a wide diversity of media outlets to access parliament and report freely on parliamentary activities.

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: Space, infrastructure and technical support

Parliament provides media outlets with appropriate space, infrastructure and technical support to carry out their work.

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:					

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Assessment criterion 5: Practice

In practice, diverse media outlets have equal access to the parliamentary building and to all venues where parliamentary proceedings take place, and are able to report freely on parliamentary activities.

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:

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Recommendations for change

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

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Sources and further reading

- David Beetham, [Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice](#) (2006).
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), [Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislators](#), revised edition (2018).
- National Democratic Institute (NDI), [Towards the Development of International Standards for Democratic Legislatures](#) (2007).