



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



Executive summary

Global Parliamentary Report 2022

Public engagement in the work of parliament

The third *Global Parliamentary Report* examines public engagement in the work of parliament. It recognizes that parliaments have a vital role to play in addressing the challenges of today's rapidly changing world, by enabling people to connect with and participate in the law-making, policy formulation and oversight processes that impact their lives now and into the future.

This report takes a detailed look at why public engagement matters and how parliaments across the world are engaging with the communities they represent. It outlines trends and strategic priorities for public engagement. It also considers key focal points for ensuring better and deeper engagement into the future, in support of the fundamental principles of effective institutions and inclusive decision-making embedded within the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The information, findings and recommendations in this report set out a road map for enhanced public engagement by parliaments and parliamentarians, working collaboratively with the community to achieve participatory, inclusive and responsive parliaments.

Public engagement has many benefits

There are many reasons why public engagement is mutually beneficial for parliaments, parliamentarians and the community. Above all, it supports parliament's main functions by giving access to the breadth and depth of information and ideas that are needed for representation, law-making, public policy formulation and oversight that meet people's expectations and aspirations.

It is the means through which a fundamental tenet of democracy – participation in public affairs – can be practised by all. Effective engagement can help avoid a disconnect between elected representatives and the public they serve. It can show the community it is being listened to and heard, countering rising public distrust and negativity.

Through engagement, civic space for public debate can be promoted and protected, evidence and opinions that assist decision-making can be brought to parliament, and barriers to participation can be tackled so that no one is left behind. Parliament can present itself as a genuine forum for debate, and as an institution that is responsive to people's views and needs.

Public engagement has many dimensions: information, education, communication, consultation and participation.

Experience from parliaments around the world shows that taking action in each of these areas will help to build better and deeper engagement with the community. Through comprehensive, creative and collaborative engagement approaches, parliaments have the opportunity to boost public interest and participation in their work.

Commitment to engagement is essential

Leadership from parliamentarians and the parliamentary administration's senior management team can activate broader and deeper engagement involving people throughout parliament. An engagement strategy can help to ensure that objectives are clear, and that effort and resources are appropriately targeted to maximize impact. Investing in skills will help to foster more professional engagement practices.

A diverse engagement mix, using a variety of channels and approaches to communicate with and consult the community, encourages broader interaction with the work of parliament. Memorable and inspiring visitor experiences at the parliament building motivate people to connect with parliament further.

Being strategic helps deliver results

An action or implementation plan for public engagement is an important part of shifting to more strategic thinking as it maps out the specific things that need to be accomplished in order to meet the objectives that have been identified and agreed. Since parliaments are devoting more resources to engagement projects and activities, evaluation has become a top-order priority. Robust evaluation processes will help parliaments ensure that their investment is well placed and is contributing to the desired outcomes.

Genuine dialogue builds trust

Amid today's information overload, parliaments need to make every effort to be visible. By offering genuine opportunities for dialogue between people and their elected representatives, parliaments can help to build trust and reinforce their relevance. There should be an emphasis on interacting with and listening to the community, and not just on informing.

Across the world, people are mobilizing through a variety of advocacy campaigns and initiatives. By giving people a voice in setting the agenda and providing regular feedback on the outcomes of their input, parliaments can help to ensure they remain relevant to the community.

Collaboration and co-design can open parliaments up to new and innovative ways of engagement. Enabling community members to influence the matters that parliament debates, investigates and researches gives the public a direct say in what parliament does and demonstrates parliament's willingness to make engagement with the community more participatory.

Inclusive engagement leads to broader participation

Without a special effort to reach all communities, structural barriers are likely to reduce opportunities for some groups to engage. By working in collaboration with people who are disadvantaged or underrepresented, parliaments can address the impediments to participation that people face.

Taking parliament out to communities removes some of the barriers to participation that people experience. Measuring engagement through the lens of an inclusion checklist will ensure accessibility for all. Prioritizing gender-sensitive engagement supports progress towards equal participation of women and men.





Parliaments need to be future-focused

In a rapidly changing world, parliaments need to be responsive, adapting and revitalizing their practices and processes to meet the challenges of the present and the future. Only by moving with the times can parliaments remain relevant to the communities they represent.

This report serves as a clarion call for parliaments to be future-focused in their engagement. It outlines some key initiatives for parliaments to think about and act on:

Take youth seriously

Young people are a growing proportion of the world's population. In order to remain relevant to this expanding group, parliaments need to connect and interact meaningfully with them. Parliaments can enliven their youth engagement by working with young people to co-design a charter for youth participation.

Leave no one behind

Parliaments have a special responsibility to ensure that groups that are underrepresented, face disadvantage or are newly arrived in a country can participate in democratic processes. In order to elevate inclusion to a top priority, parliaments can develop an inclusion action plan, working in collaboration with groups currently facing barriers to participation.

Transform through technology

New ways of communicating, learning and working are transforming society. In order to keep up with the rapid pace of technological change, parliaments need to prioritize their own digital transformation, particularly in their approaches to public engagement. Across all facets of engagement, parliaments would benefit from developing a portfolio of digital tools to boost interaction with the community.

Encourage innovation

Effective engagement relies on parliament being open to the public and welcoming people's participation. Openness also drives innovation by allowing for new ways of thinking, planning and working. It demonstrates a willingness to collaborate and co-create with civil society. One way to bring about a transformative cultural shift in public engagement by parliament is to establish an innovation task force. By embracing innovation in their own processes and leading public debate about the future, parliaments have an opportunity to present themselves as forward-thinking and forward-looking institutions.

Work together

Worldwide challenges, transient populations and digital technologies that penetrate national borders all point to a future in which the global community will be increasingly interconnected. This presents an opportunity for parliaments to cooperate and draw on each other's experiences, methods and solutions. Fostering a community of practice among parliaments will stimulate effective approaches to engagement across the world.

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Recommendations



Download full report at www.ipu.org/public-engagement

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