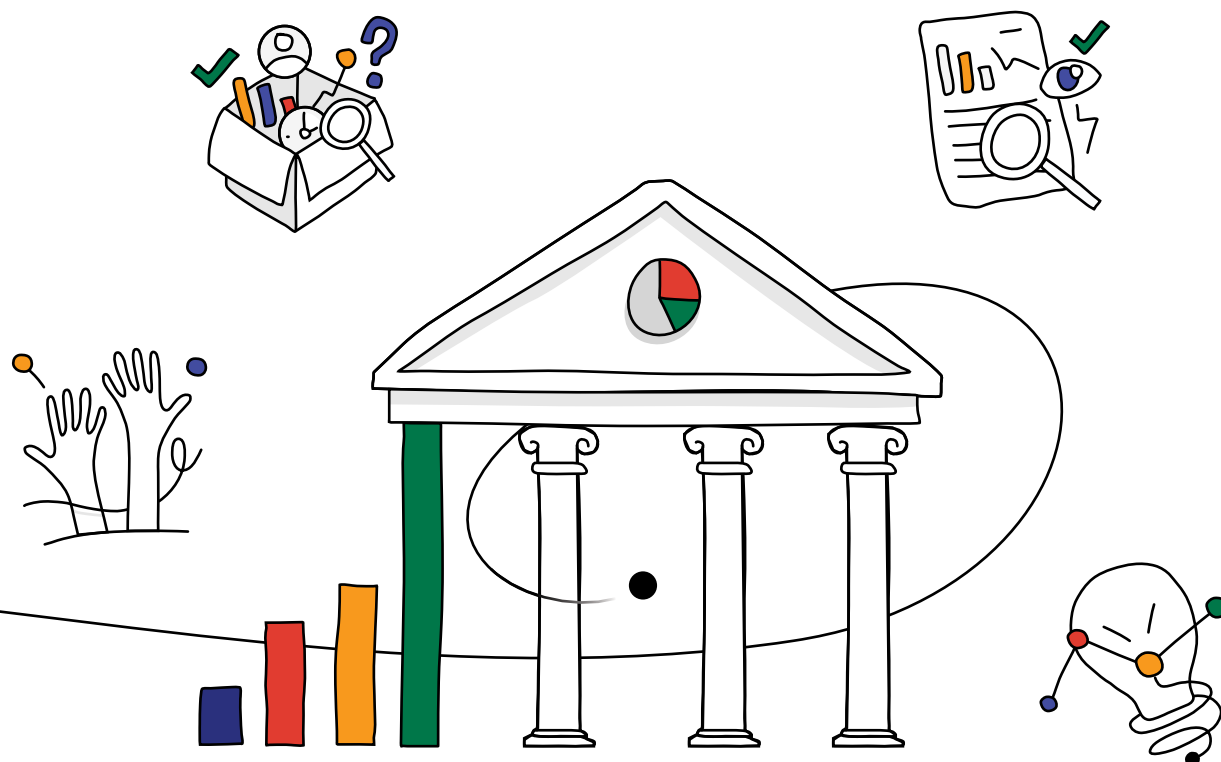




EU Parliamentary Report

Assessing the South African Parliament:
Using the assessment Criteria of the
Indicators for Democratic Parliament

Target 3: Transparent Parliament



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1. Acronyms

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDP	Indicators For Democratic Parliaments
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MPs	Members of Parliament
NA	National Assembly
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
OUTA	Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
Q&A	Question and answers
SA	South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nation
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

2. Executive summary

This report presents an in-depth assessment of the South African parliament's transparency in legislative processes, communications, and accessibility using the Indicators for Democratic Parliaments (IDP) framework. The framework is aligned with the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which provides a structured evaluation of parliamentary practices against global standards for democratic governance. This report focuses specifically on [Target 3](#), which evaluates the transparency of parliamentary functions.

Key findings of the report include:

- While SA's parliament has formal [rules and digital infrastructure](#) supporting transparency, inconsistencies in implementation and accessibility remain. Parliamentary records, amendments, and committee proceedings are not always published promptly or in user-friendly formats.
- [Bills](#) and debates are generally accessible, but the timeliness and simplicity of information – especially for non-expert audiences which requires improvement. Real-time updates are limited, and some content remains too technical.
- [Budget information](#) is published in accordance with legal frameworks, but detailed breakdowns and accessible explanations are lacking. Public understanding of budget implications is limited by the technical and complex nature of documents.
- Parliament has a communication strategy and active [social media presence](#), but rural outreach, engagement with youth, and inclusive media strategies are underdeveloped. Interaction with the public remains largely one-way.
- The parliamentary website hosts a wide range of documents, but navigation, [searchability](#), and compliance with global accessibility standards need improvement to support broader and more inclusive access.
- Physical access to the [parliamentary offices](#) has improved, but digital content and procedural inclusivity for persons with disabilities are uneven. Some formats (e.g., Braille, audio) are underutilised.
- Legal provisions support media access, yet practical constraints such as limited infrastructure, ad hoc restrictions, and uneven support for smaller media outlets hinder equitable reporting.

The following recommendations aim to address these challenges:

- Strengthen oversight mechanisms to ensure consistent application of transparency policies and rules in practice.
- Publish legislative and budget documents in plain language and multiple formats (audio, visual, machine-readable) and provide real-time updates on proceedings.
- Allocate more resources for outreach, especially in rural areas. Develop youth-targeted content and diversify the use of media platforms, including video explainers and podcasts.
- Streamline credentialing, expand media infrastructure, and provide additional resources to support small or community-based media outlets.
- Expand accessible document formats, train staff in disability-sensitive practices, and consult regularly with organisations representing persons with disabilities.
- Ensure all stages of the parliamentary and national budget are clearly communicated, including mid-term reviews and line-item changes, using infographics and simplified summaries.

The report further identifies that while SA's parliament has made strides in ensuring accessibility, both physically and digitally, challenges remain, especially for individuals with disabilities and citizens in remote areas. The recommendations provided aim to address these gaps, including enhancing real-time publication of legislative content, improving website accessibility, and expanding outreach efforts to underrepresented groups.

In conclusion, the SA parliament demonstrates a commitment to transparency, but the report highlights the need for continuous efforts to improve public access to information, foster greater [public participation](#), and ensure equitable access to parliamentary processes. The recommendations set out in this report are intended to guide reforms that will enhance the democratic functioning of parliament and strengthen public trust in its operations.

3. Introduction

The [Indicators for Democratic Parliaments](#) (IDPs) framework serves as a vital tool for assessing and enhancing the democratic functionality of national parliaments worldwide, with a particular focus on fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. The framework aims to align parliamentary practices with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), especially SDG [targets 16.6 and 16.7](#), which advocate for the development of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions and for ensuring responsive and inclusive decision-making processes.

In this report, the SA parliament's performance is assessed using the IDP's criteria, focusing specifically on the dimension of [transparency](#). Through a detailed analysis, this report explores how well the SA parliament adheres to the principles of openness in its processes, its communication with the public, and its ability to ensure accessibility to parliamentary proceedings. By highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement, the report aims to provide actionable insights into how the SA parliament can enhance its democratic function and increase public trust in its operations.

The assessment utilises a comprehensive methodology, which includes a review of parliamentary procedures, public communication strategies, and legislative transparency mechanisms. This methodology serves not only as a benchmark for the current state of parliamentary operations but also as a guide for ongoing reforms aimed at improving the accessibility, responsiveness, and inclusivity of the SA parliament.

The report's sections provide a thorough analysis of parliament's performance in key areas such as legislative autonomy, budgetary management, oversight practices, and the support available to MPs. It also offers recommendations for improving parliamentary procedures and structures, with a focus on enhancing inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. Through this assessment, OUTA aims to offer a comprehensive evaluation of the SA parliament's current state and provide guidance for its continued development in line with IDPs and within the framework of the co-funded EU project on Enhancing Accountability and Transparency in SA.

4. Background to and methodology used for the assessment of the IDP framework

The IDP framework provides a tool to help national parliaments assess and enhance their effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. This multi-partner initiative aims to align parliamentary practices with the UN SDGs, [targets: 16.6](#) [*Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels*] and [16.7](#) [*Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels*], which aim to develop transparent and accountable institutions and ensure inclusive, participatory decision-making.

The indicators cover various dimensions of parliamentary function, from autonomy and legislative procedures to oversight and public participation, supporting self-assessment to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The framework is designed to assist parliaments, regardless of their political system or size, in fostering reforms that enhance democratic governance and strengthen public trust.

The framework not only serves as a [self-assessment tool](#) for parliaments but also helps guide them through processes of modifying, reform, and greater public accountability. By utilising this tool, parliaments can improve their responsiveness to public concerns, better serve their constituencies, and contribute meaningfully to achieving the broader SDGs of peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Grading	Rate 0-5	Description
	0	The object of the assessment criterion simply does not exist in parliament.
	1	The object of the assessment criterion exists but in a rudimentary form. It is not an established part of parliament's capacity and practice.
	2	The object of the assessment criterion exists in a basic form. It is part of parliament's capacity and practice but is not well-developed.
	3	The object of the assessment criterion is an established part of parliament's capacity and practice and is somewhat developed.

Very Good	4	The object of the assessment criterion is a well-established part of parliament's capacity and practice.
Excellent	5	The object of the assessment criterion is a highly developed part of parliament's capacity and practice, with little obvious room for improvement.

Table 1 Rating Criteria

There are three phases of the assessment:

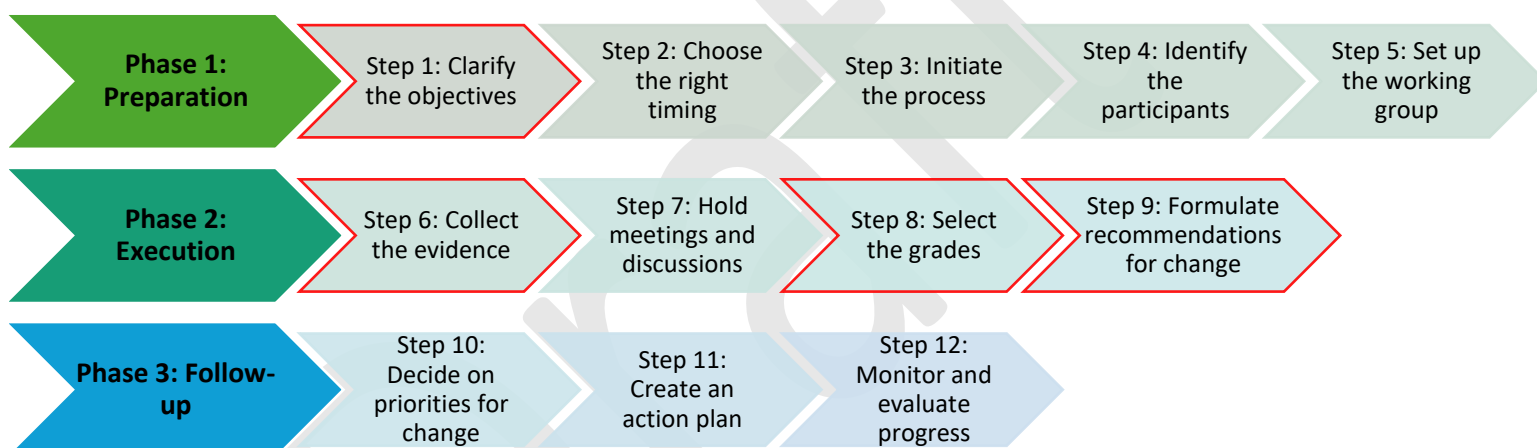


Figure 1 Phases and steps of assessment

Figure 1 indicates the phases of the assessment, and specifically in this report the following phases are covered: Step 1, 6, 8, and 9. It is recommended that the steps not initiated should be completed by parliament internally. The aim of this report is to provide recommendations on how to increase parliament's ratings based on the external assessment ratings we have assigned for each assessment criteria.

The IDPs provide an assessment checklist to guide parliaments through the preparation and execution of the assessment process. This checklist includes ten key items:

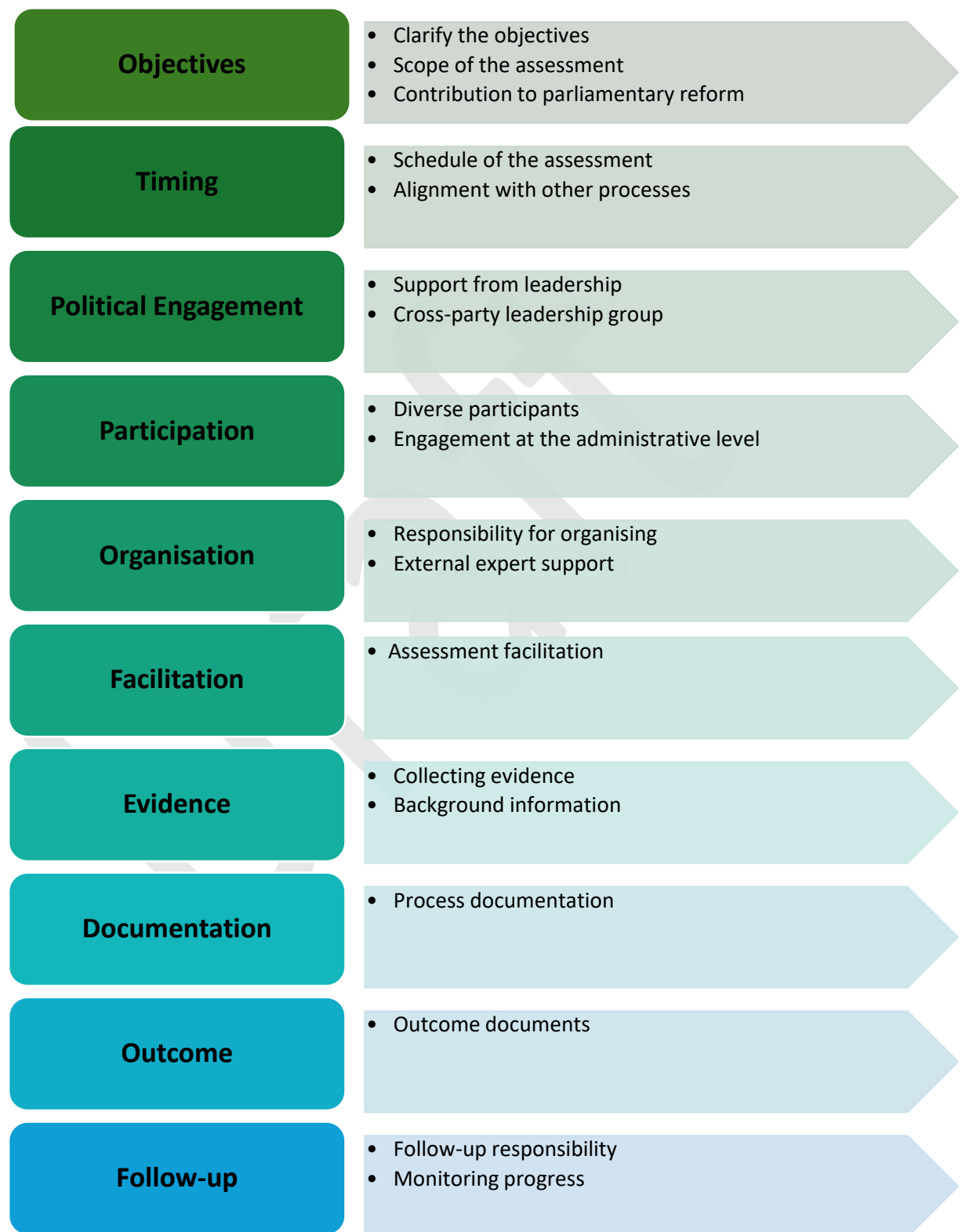


Figure 2 Assessment Checklist

Methodology used:

In order to conduct the assessment of Target 3, three research methods have been implemented.

1. **Document Analysis:** This method was used to search, find and gather qualitative data on parliamentary procedures, laws, and practices. Thereafter a systematic review was conducted to search through and find material from various documents such as constitutional documents, legal manuals, public reports, parliamentary proceedings, budget and financial reports, international and local civil society reports and IDP publications and articles.
2. **Case Studies:** This method was used to analyse existing material for both the local and international levels on the IDPs. Academic articles and journals were also scrutinised to examine what information related to IDPs, and the assessment criteria that have been previously documented and applied.
3. **Benchmarking:** This technique was used to analyse what has already been done in SA as well as other countries, who have submitted their assessments to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Furthermore, this technique aided in the recommendations provided.

The sources used for this report include the following websites: SA parliament's [website](#), Indicators for Democratic Parliaments [website](#) and [case studies](#), South African Legal Information Institute's ([SAFLII](#)) website, reports and publications from the Inter-Parliamentary Union ([IPU](#)), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — International [website](#) and South African [website](#), Auditor-General of South Africa's ([AGSA](#)) website, Public Protector South Africa's [website](#), South African Human Rights Commission ([SAHRC](#)), National Treasury South Africa's [website](#), and UN Sustainable Development Goal ([SDG](#)) publications. The portals include: the South African Government's [portal](#), South African Institute of International Affairs ([SAIIA](#)) and African Peer Review Mechanism ([APRM](#)). The CSO publications include various reports from: Corruption Watch South Africa's [website](#), Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse ([OUTA](#)), [My Vote Counts](#), and Parliamentary Monitoring Group ([PMG](#)). The academic databases include: [JSTOR](#), [Sabinet](#), and Google Scholar for relevant and reliable international governance reports and articles.

By applying these three research methods to collect information, it enables one to thoroughly research and conduct an external assessment of Target 3 (and the subsequent targets). Thus, using a wide range of legal, procedural, government, parliamentary, CSO publications and academic sources, the report provides a balanced and evidence-based evaluation of the application of this assessment criterion.

5. Observations

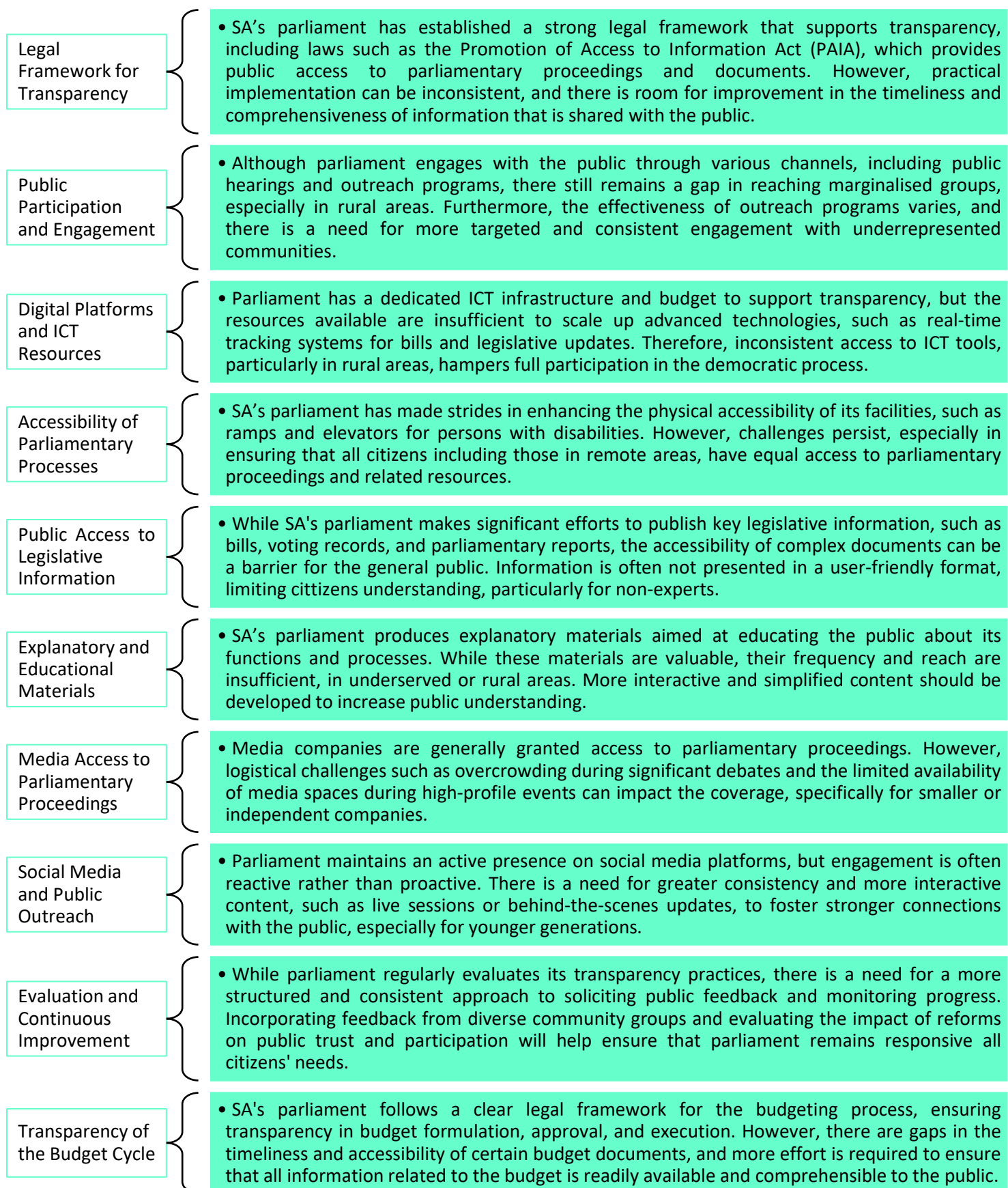


Figure 3 Observations from analysis

6. Assessment of Target Three for the South African Parliament

For this section the Target, indicators and sub-indicators will be discussed.

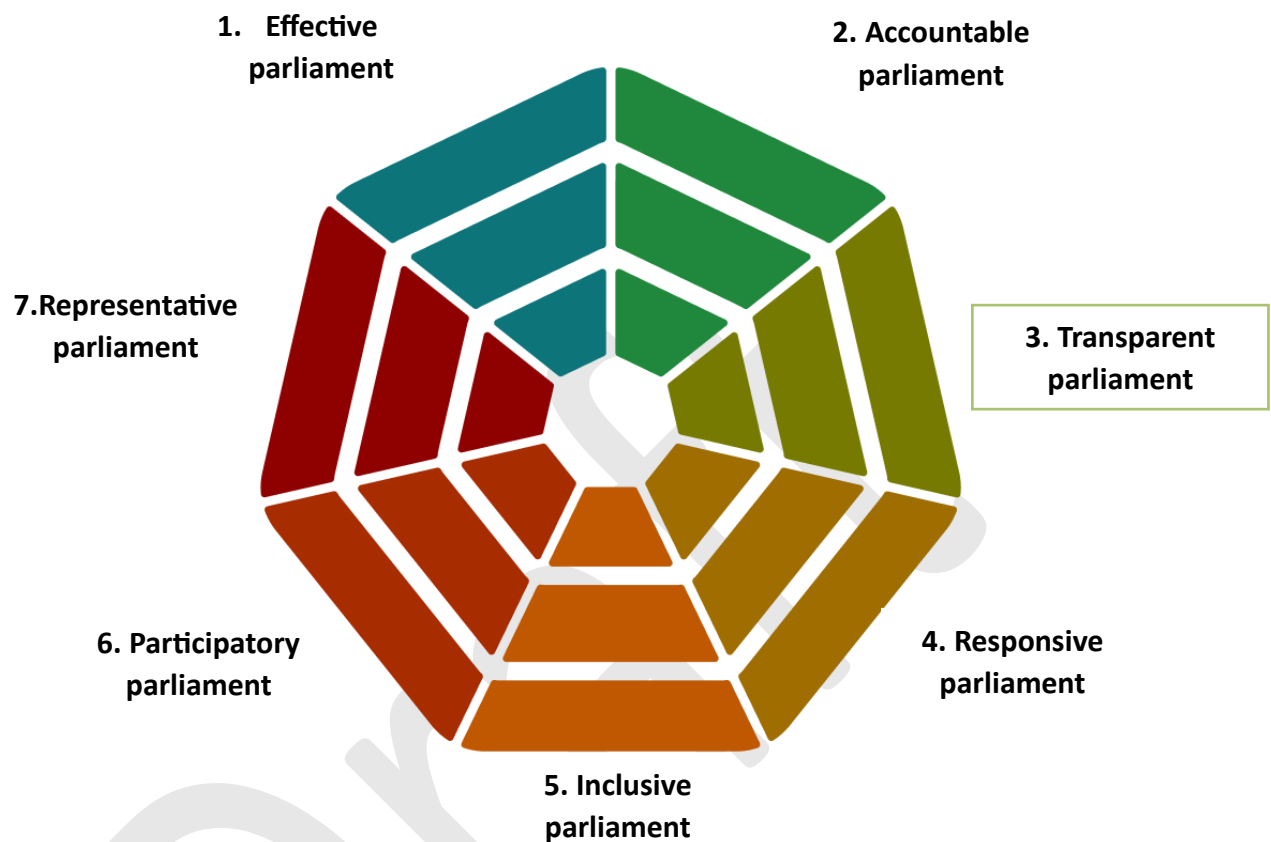


Figure 4 Indicators for Democratic Parliaments

Target 3² focuses on fostering public trust and democratic accountability. A transparent parliament ensures that its processes, decisions, and operations are open to the public, with accessible information regarding law-making, budgeting, and policy implementation. This openness helps maintain public confidence and allows citizens to follow and engage with parliamentary proceedings.

- Indicator 3.1: Transparency of Parliamentary Processes
- Indicator 3.2: Parliamentary Communication and Outreach
- Indicator 3.3: Access to Parliament

² Parliamentary Indicators. 2023. *Parliamentary Indicators*. [online] Available at: <https://www.parliamentaryindicators.org/> [Accessed 15 July 2024].

6.1 Indicator 3.1 Transparency of parliamentary processes

[Transparency](#) in parliamentary processes is crucial for ensuring public trust and accountability. This indicator evaluates the clarity and openness of parliamentary procedures, including the legislative process and the budget cycle. It ensures that parliamentary work, such as lawmaking and decision-making, is conducted in an open manner, with relevant information made accessible to the public. A transparent parliament allows citizens to understand how decisions are made, the motivations behind them, and how they can influence the process.

6.1.1 Transparency of parliamentary work

This dimension focuses on the transparency of the daily operations of parliament. It ensures that the processes and activities of parliament, including debates, decision-making, and interactions between MPs, are open and accessible to the public. Transparency in parliamentary work allows citizens to understand how decisions are made and to hold parliament accountable for its actions.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Principles, policies, and practices	Parliament's rules of procedure establish principles and policies on transparency in all aspects of parliamentary work. The rules of procedure also set out how these principles and policies	SA's parliament has established principles of transparency within its rules of procedure, emphasising openness and public access to information. The framework provides guidelines on how parliamentary processes, debates, and decisions should be conducted transparently. The clear rules on transparency are embedded in	4	• Strengthen the monitoring of transparency practices to ensure that parliamentary procedures are consistently followed in practice. • Regularly review and update the rules to adapt to new technologies and best practices in transparency. • Improve communication about transparency rules thus ensuring that all

		are translated into practice.	parliamentary procedures, ensuring that public access to information is central to parliamentary operations. These rules cover key areas such as voting, debates, and access to documents. While the rules exist, practical implementation of these principles can sometimes be inconsistent. For example, the level of detail provided in some parliamentary documents, or the accessibility of certain processes could be improved. Example of the accessibility to information provided includes the Parliament TV and the YouTube channel .		stakeholders, including the public and parliamentary staff are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.
2	Information about parliamentary work	Comprehensive information about all aspects of parliamentary work is made available in a timely manner, and in formats that can be easily accessed and	SA parliament provides a wide range of information about parliamentary work , including parliamentary agendas, reports, bills, and voting records, through various channels such as the parliament website and public broadcasts. The availability of parliamentary information (daily	3	• Simplify and summarise complex documents or bills to make them more accessible to a wider audience, including those without legal or political expertise. • Increase efforts to reach diverse groups, including those with disabilities by providing information in various formats

		understood by all groups in society.	agendas, Hansard transcripts, committee reports, bill trackers) through the official website and other media platforms promotes accessibility. Currently much of this information, such as detailed meeting minutes and bill tracking, is performed by PMG. Information is typically updated regularly, allowing the public to stay informed about parliamentary activities. While the information is available, there is room for improvement in terms of making it more accessible to a wider audience. Complex legislative documents or detailed reports may not always be presented in user-friendly formats.		such as audio, video, and accessible documents. Enhance real-time updates and notifications to keep the public informed about key parliamentary decisions and developments.
3	Explanatory and educational materials	Parliament regularly publishes explanatory and educational materials on the role of parliament, committees, and MPs,	SA's parliament publishes materials aimed at educating the public (as such Schools Democracy Month) about the role of parliament, its committees, MPs, and the legislative process. These include brochures, websites, and	3	Increase the frequency and visibility of explanatory materials, ensuring they are available across multiple channels, including social media and in-person outreach programs.

		and on parliamentary processes, procedures, and activities.	workshops that explain parliamentary activities. Educational materials provide valuable insight into how parliament operates, fostering greater understanding and engagement with the democratic process. Public education programs and school outreach initiatives also help improve the understanding of parliamentary functions. There could be more frequent publication and broader distribution of these educational resources. Some citizens, especially those in remote areas, may have limited access to such materials or be unaware of their existence.		• Tailor educational content to different audiences, including younger citizens, those with limited educational backgrounds, and rural communities. • Incorporate interactive learning tools or video content to explain parliamentary processes in an engaging way.
4	Resources	Parliament has a sufficient number of staff, digital systems, and other resources to fulfil its transparency responsibilities.	SA's parliament has established digital systems and infrastructure to support its transparency efforts, including a maintained website that hosts a variety of parliamentary documents. Furthermore, there are dedicated staff members who manage these resources	4	• Invest in upgrading digital systems to handle increased demand and ensure information is delivered without delays. • Provide additional training to staff on utilising new technologies and platforms to improve efficiency in disseminating information.

			and ensure that transparency is maintained. The use of digital systems, such as the online parliamentary portal which allows for efficient sharing of information. Staff dedicated to managing these resources ensure that updates are made and accessible. The resources available to support transparency may be stretched, particularly during periods of high parliamentary activity or when there are challenges with outdated technologies. Ensuring that all parliamentary data is consistently available and up to date can be a challenge.		Assess the adequacy of resources periodically to ensure that parliament can continue to meet its transparency obligations effectively.
5	Continual improvement	Parliament regularly evaluates its level of transparency, solicits feedback from the public and looks for	SA's parliament periodically evaluates its transparency efforts, conducting surveys and seeking public input on how it can improve access to information and public participation. The commitment to continual improvement is evidenced by	3	- Improve the mechanisms for soliciting and acting on public feedback, ensuring that citizens are aware of the impact of their input. - Establish regular reviews of transparency practices to identify areas for improvement

		ways to further improve transparency.	periodic reviews of transparency practices and public consultations. Feedback mechanisms, such as public surveys and outreach programs, help parliament gauge its effectiveness in promoting transparency. The feedback process can sometimes be slow and there may be limited follow-through on the changes suggested by the public. Thus, reaching all segments of society and ensuring their feedback is adequately considered can be difficult.		and implement necessary changes more swiftly. • Foster greater public involvement in transparency initiatives by creating more accessible channels for feedback, including online surveys and community forums.
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While information is available, it could be made more user-friendly and accessible to the public. Simplifying complex materials and ensuring that information is available in diverse formats (e.g., video, audio, and large text) will improve engagement with a wider audience. Parliament should increase its outreach efforts, including more frequent publications of educational materials and greater availability in various formats. Tailored content for specific groups, such as young people or marginalised communities, will enhance understanding of parliamentary processes. Parliament should focus on improving the process of collecting and acting on public feedback regarding transparency. This will foster a more inclusive, responsive and accountable parliamentary system. Investing in and upgrading digital systems and resources will help maintain parliament's transparency obligations, particularly as demands for accessible and real-time information increase. Staff training on new systems should also be prioritised to ensure efficient use of resources.



6.1.2 Transparency of the legislative process

The legislative process should be transparent, enabling the public to follow the progression of laws from their introduction to enactment. This dimension evaluates how accessible information about legislative proposals, debates, amendments, and votes is to the public. Transparency in the legislative process ensures that citizens can track and understand how laws are developed, discussed, and approved by parliament.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Information about proposals for laws	Parliament publishes information about all proposals for laws in a timely manner, including the full text and status of proposals for laws or revisions to existing legislation.	SA's parliament publishes information about proposed laws (bills) on its website. This includes the full text of the bills, their status, and summaries of the key provisions. Furthermore, the public is informed of the stages the bills go through in the legislative process, such as committee reviews and parliamentary debates. The availability of full texts of bills and updates on their status allows citizens to track proposed laws and stay informed about the legislative process. This is a positive step toward increasing public engagement with the legislative process. While the information is generally made available, the timeliness	3	• Ensure that information about proposals for laws is published immediately after a bill is introduced and regularly updated to reflect any changes in its status. • Simplify the language of summaries and background information to make them more accessible to the general public, including non-experts. • Introduce a notification system for citizens to track bills, including updates on debates, amendments, and voting outcomes.

			of publication can sometimes be inconsistent, especially in cases where bills move through parliament quickly. Moreover, there could be better clarity on the process and stages that bills go through.		
2	Information generated during the legislative process	Parliament publishes all information generated during the legislative process in a timely manner. This includes the parliamentary agenda and schedules, the texts of all amendments, records of plenary and committee discussions and votes, and all other reports and background information created for	SA's parliament publishes a range of documents related to legislative processes, including records of plenary and committee debates, voting results, reports and proposed amendments. However, the availability of certain documents, such as committee discussions or reports from expert opinions, can sometimes be delayed or not fully comprehensive. The publication of plenary and committee discussions, voting records and reports ensures that the legislative process is open and transparent. These documents provide valuable insight into the decision-making process and allow the public to	3	• Streamline the publication process for documents related to the legislative process, ensuring that all records, including expert opinions, amendments, and committee discussions, are made available promptly. • Increase the frequency and accessibility of reports from parliamentary committees, especially during the early stages of legislation development. • Ensure that records of plenary and committee sessions are published in full and made accessible without delays.

		or by parliament that form part of the record on a given piece of legislation, including public and expert opinions submitted to or prepared for parliament.	understand how laws are developed. While many documents are published, some parts of the legislative process are less transparent, such as detailed records of closed-door committee discussions or expert opinions that may not be readily accessible. The time lag in publishing certain documents can also undermine real-time transparency.		
3	Accessibility of information	Information generated during the legislative process is made available on the parliamentary website in real time or as soon as it is available internally, in formats that can be easily accessed and understood by all groups in society.	SA's parliament publishes legislative information, including bills, amendments, and debate records. The site is regularly updated, but the accessibility of information can vary in terms of format and ease of navigation. While some documents are available in PDF format, others may not be easily searchable or user-friendly, as some are scanned PDFs. The information is made publicly available online, ensuring transparency and public access. Efforts have been made to ensure that updates	3	• Improve the user interface and accessibility of the parliamentary website to ensure that all documents are easily searchable and available in accessible formats (e.g., HTML or machine-readable formats). • Introduce real-time publishing of information, ensuring that updates to bills, amendments, and committee discussions are made immediately available to the public. • Enhance mobile accessibility of the website, allowing users to easily access

			are published regularly, and the website serves as a central hub for legislative data. While the information is published online, accessibility can be hindered by the use of PDF formats which are not always easily searchable or accessible for individuals with disabilities. The website's structure could also be improved to enhance ease of navigation for the public.		information on their smartphones and tablets.
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Parliament should prioritise publishing information about bills, amendments, and legislative processes in a timely manner, ensuring that the public can stay up to date on developments in real-time. It must ensure that legislative documents are made available in accessible formats that are easy to navigate and search. Implement machine-readable formats and improve the website's user interface to make it more user-friendly and accessible to diverse audiences. Create a more efficient process for publishing all records generated during the legislative process, including amendments, expert opinions, and committee discussions. Reducing delays in publishing these materials will foster greater transparency and allow the public to participate more actively in the legislative process. Parliament should continue to focus on educating the public about the legislative process by simplifying complex documents and providing more frequent updates about key legislative developments. Public outreach and educational programs can help clarify the legislative process for a broader audience.



6.1.3 Transparency of the budget cycle and the parliamentary budget

This dimension addresses the transparency of how parliament's budget is formulated, discussed, and approved, as well as how the overall budget cycle is managed. It ensures that the budgeting process is clear and open to scrutiny, with relevant information available to MPs and the public. Transparency in the budget cycle ensures that public funds allocated to parliament are used responsibly, with decisions clearly communicated to citizens and stakeholders.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Legal framework	The legal framework provides for the transparency of the budget cycle, including the development, consideration, approval, and execution of the national budget, as well as ex-post review.	SA's parliament has a robust legal framework governing the budget process , including the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and the National Treasury's regulations . These laws require transparency in all stages of the budget cycle, from the development and approval of the budget to its execution and review. The legal framework includes detailed provisions on budget transparency , including mandatory reporting requirements and guidelines for budget execution and review. This helps ensure that all aspects of the budget process are open to public scrutiny. While the legal framework	3	• Strengthen the legal framework to ensure that all budgetary allocations, even small-scale expenditures, are consistently published in a timely and accessible manner. • Provide clearer guidelines for the post-budget review process, ensuring that all stages of the budget cycle, including ex post reviews, are effectively communicated. • Ensure that any changes made to the budget during the execution phase are publicly reported.

			ensures transparency, there are instances where the timely publication of information or details about certain budget allocations could be improved. For example, some smaller-scale budgetary allocations or executive spending may not be as readily available to the public. When it is made available, it lacks detailed line items, which makes analysis of spending difficult.		
2	Information about parliamentary actions	Information is made available about parliamentary actions at all stages of the budget cycle, in a timely manner and in formats that can be easily accessed and understood by all groups in society.	SA's parliament provides information about parliamentary actions during the budget cycle, such as budget debates, committee reviews, and voting records. Much of this information is available through parliament's website and other channels such as the Parliamentary Budget Office. Parliamentary actions, including the scheduling of debates, reports on the budget, and voting results, are generally accessible. The parliament website serves as a central	3	• Ensure that all information about parliamentary actions during the budget cycle is updated promptly and made easily accessible through the website and other platforms. • Simplify the presentation of complex budget documents to make them more accessible and understandable to the broader public. • Use more visual tools, such as infographics or simplified summaries, to help explain

			hub for budget-related documents and activities. While much of the information is available, there can be delays in updating or publishing some documents, particularly in the case of mid-cycle reviews or amendments. Furthermore, some technical budget documents can be challenging for the general public to interpret.		budget debates, decisions, and amendments.
3	Explanatory materials	Parliament makes available explanatory materials outlining the parliamentary process related to budget consideration and approval, oversight of budget execution, and ex-post review.	SA's parliament provides explanatory materials related to the budget process, including guides to understanding the budgetary procedures, reports on budget execution, and the findings from the ex-post review of the national budget. Explanatory materials help clarify the complex budgetary process for the public. These materials are available on the parliament website and include details about how the budget is reviewed, approved, and monitored. While materials are available, they are	3	• Increase the frequency and breadth of explanatory materials, including more comprehensive guides on the budget process and how it affects citizens. • Ensure that materials are simplified and targeted to various audience groups, including schoolchildren, journalists, and the general public. • Use diverse formats such as videos, interactive content, and webinars to explain the budget process and the role of parliament in oversight.

			sometimes insufficient in providing a detailed and accessible breakdown of the budget process. More targeted educational content could be developed to enhance understanding for different segments of society, such as students, the general public, or non-experts.		
4	Parliamentary budget	The legal framework and/or parliament's rules of procedure require the publication of comprehensive information about all aspects of the parliamentary budget, including on the parliamentary website.	SA's parliament publishes detailed information about its budget on its website, including allocations for operations, staff, and other expenses. These disclosures are in line with national transparency standards. The parliament budget is publicly available and includes detailed breakdowns of expenditures. This allows for transparency in how public funds are allocated within parliament. While the budget is published, the level of detail provided can vary. More detailed breakdowns of individual programs or departments could enhance	3	• Provide more detailed and granular breakdowns of the parliamentary budget, making it easier to understand how funds are allocated across various departments or activities. • Publish the parliament's budget in interactive formats, allowing users to explore specific areas or line items of interest. • Regularly update the budget report to reflect any mid-term adjustments or changes.

			understanding. Therefore, some parts of the budget might not be as easily accessible or comprehensible to the general public.		
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While much information is available, efforts should be made to ensure that it is easily accessible and understandable for all segments of society. Simplifying complex documents and using interactive formats will help engage a wider audience. Timeliness is crucial in ensuring that the public is informed throughout the budget cycle. Information about parliamentary actions and budgetary updates should be published in real-time, especially during key stages such as debates, committee reviews, and voting. Increase efforts to explain the budget and related processes through diverse formats, such as videos, infographics, and social media posts. This will improve public understanding and encourage greater citizen engagement with the legislative process. More detailed, accessible, and targeted explanatory materials should be developed to help different audience groups understand the parliamentary budget and its implications for public life. Educational outreach programs can also be expanded to raise awareness about the [budget process](#).



6.2 Indicator 3.2 Parliamentary communication and outreach

Effective communication and outreach strategies are vital for keeping the public informed and engaged in parliamentary activities. This indicator examines how parliament communicates with the public, including the use of institutional communication channels and the accessibility of the parliamentary website. It also assesses the outreach activities aimed at increasing awareness of parliamentary work and encouraging public participation. A [transparent](#) parliament ensures that the public is well-informed about its actions and can easily access information regarding legislative developments.

6.2.1 Institutional communication

Institutional communication refers to how parliament communicates its activities, decisions, and policies to the public. This dimension ensures that parliament has clear, effective communication strategies in place to engage with citizens, stakeholders, and the media. Transparent and consistent communication strengthens public trust and keeps citizens informed about parliamentary work.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Communication policy or strategy	Parliament has adopted an institutional communication policy or strategy that sets out how parliament aims to inform all groups in society about its work using a range of means of communication.	SA's parliament has a communication strategy aimed at enhancing public access to parliamentary information. This strategy includes various communication methods, including traditional media, digital platforms, and public outreach programs. The communication strategy is inclusive, aiming to reach a wide range of audiences through multiple platforms. It recognises the importance of informing the public and encouraging participation in parliamentary processes. While the strategy exists, its implementation can sometimes be inconsistent, especially when addressing hard-to-reach	3	• Regularly evaluate and update the communication strategy to ensure it aligns with emerging technologies and trends in public engagement. • Increase efforts to target underrepresented groups, including rural communities and non-English speakers, through tailored outreach initiatives. • Expand the use of diverse formats (e.g., audio, video, interactive tools) to ensure the strategy reaches a broader and more diverse audience. • Provide additional human and financial resource support to the communications and public education functions to

			communities or non-English speakers. Thus, the effectiveness of outreach programs can vary depending on available resources and the channels used.		adequately communicate and educate the public.
2	Resources	Parliament has sufficient human and financial resources to support effective communication and to enable all groups in society to access parliamentary information.	SA's parliament allocates resources to support communication, including staff dedicated to media relations, digital platforms, and public engagement. However, there are occasional resource constraints, particularly in reaching all citizens effectively. Parliament has a dedicated communication team and significant digital resources, including a website and multimedia platforms, to disseminate information. The parliamentary communications office plays an active role in public relations and media outreach. Budget limitations and resource constraints can sometimes hinder the full implementation of	3	• Increase the budget allocation for communication efforts, particularly for expanding outreach programs and improving digital infrastructure. • Invest in training and expanding the communications team to enhance capacity for consistent, timely, and effective public engagement. • Strengthen partnerships with community organisations to extend the reach of communication efforts to marginalised or underserved groups.

			communication strategies. There may also be gaps in human resources needed to maintain constant engagement and outreach, particularly in multilingual or rural areas.		
3	Broadcasting	Parliamentary proceedings, particularly plenary sessions, are broadcast live other than in exceptional cases, which are limited and clearly defined. Live and archived broadcasts are widely accessible at no extra cost to the public.	SA's parliament proceedings, including plenary sessions, are regularly broadcast live on various platforms such as the national broadcaster (South African Broadcasting Corporation -SABC) and online streaming services. These broadcasts are freely accessible to the public, ensuring that the legislative process is open and transparent. The live broadcasting of parliamentary sessions ensures that citizens can witness the decision-making process in real time. This increases transparency and public trust in the democratic process. While plenary sessions are broadcast, some committee meetings, especially those that are more technical	4	• Expand broadcasting to include more committee meetings and other parliamentary activities to give a fuller picture of the legislative process. • Ensure that all broadcasts, including archived content, are easily accessible on multiple platforms, including mobile devices and the internet. • Improve access to parliamentary broadcasts in remote or underserved regions through community radio or satellite services.

			or less controversial, may not receive the same level of coverage. Therefore, there may be issues with ensuring consistent access to broadcasts in rural or underserved areas.		
4	Social media	Parliament has accounts on the main social media channels, and actively posts content and interacts with the public on these channels.	SA's parliament has active social media accounts on platforms like X , Facebook , and Instagram . These accounts are used to post updates, share news, and interact with the public, particularly during key parliamentary events or debates. There is also a public participation WhatsApp group where updates on parliamentary proceedings are communicated. Parliament's social media presence is strong and helps keep the public informed in real time. It allows citizens to engage directly with parliamentary activities, ask questions, and participate in discussions. While parliament is active on social media,	3	• Increase social media engagement by posting more interactive content, such as live Q&A sessions, polls, and behind-the-scenes updates. • Ensure that social media posts are inclusive, reflecting the diversity of SA's population and addressing issues relevant to various communities. • Foster better engagement with younger generations by using platforms like TikTok, YouTube, or podcasts to explain parliamentary processes and key legislative developments.

			there are occasional gaps in engagement, and not all demographics may be equally represented or reached through these platforms. Social media engagement can also sometimes be reactive rather than proactive.		
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Parliament should allocate more resources to communication, especially for outreach to underserved communities. This includes expanding digital infrastructure, increasing staff capacity, and ensuring diverse communication channels are utilised. Parliament should engage more proactively with the public on social media by posting interactive content and responding to public inquiries. A targeted strategy to reach younger audiences can help foster greater civic participation. Increase the breadth of broadcasted parliamentary proceedings, including committee sessions and key legislative debates. Ensuring that broadcasts are accessible across various platforms, including mobile and [radio](#), will improve public access to parliamentary activities. Develop more detailed and varied educational content to explain parliamentary procedures and activities. Use a mix of formats (videos, infographics, articles) to reach different demographics and ensure that the public is well-informed.



6.2.2 Parliamentary website

This dimension assesses the role of the parliamentary website in providing accessible and up-to-date information about parliamentary proceedings, legislation, and other activities. A well-functioning, user-friendly website allows the public to easily access records, reports, and details about debates and votes. It ensures transparency and fosters public engagement by making parliamentary information readily available.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Website governance	Governance structures exist that set the goals for the parliamentary website, allocate sufficient human and technical resources, and periodically evaluate progress towards these goals.	SA's parliament has an established governance structure for the management of its website. This includes dedicated staff and departments responsible for content management, technical support, and periodic evaluation of the website's performance . The existence of governance structures ensures that the website is regularly updated and aligned with strategic goals. Staff resources are allocated to manage and improve the website, ensuring it remains functional and effective in meeting its goals. There can be resource constraints, which may affect the speed at which updates are made or the development of new features on the website. Thus, a formal process for evaluating the website's	4	• Strengthen the periodic evaluation process by including feedback from users (e.g., MPs, public, staff) to identify areas for improvement. • Allocate additional technical and human resources to support continuous improvements to the website, ensuring it can handle increased traffic and new features. • Improve the integration of website governance with broader communication and engagement strategies to ensure the website effectively supports parliament's goals.

			impact and user feedback could be more consistent.		
2	Website content	The parliamentary website provides comprehensive, timely and accurate information about parliament and parliamentary proceedings.	SA's parliamentary website offers a wide range of content, including bills, session records, parliamentary debates , committee reports, and official publications. Information is generally updated regularly, although the timeliness of updates can vary. The website provides a wealth of information on parliamentary proceedings, including legislative developments, and committee reports . This transparency helps keep citizens informed about the work of parliament. Although the website provides comprehensive information, the timeliness of updates on some key documents, such as voting records or amendments, can sometimes be lacking. In some cases, information may not be	3	• Improve the timeliness of updates, especially regarding key parliamentary actions such as votes, amendments, and committee hearings. • Create a central hub on the website for real-time updates on parliamentary proceedings, making it easy for the public to find the latest information. • Increase the visibility and accessibility of key documents, ensuring that the public can quickly find and understand information relevant to ongoing legislative processes.

			as readily accessible or immediately visible.		
3	Usability	Information on the parliamentary website is well-organised, including for non-expert users, and is written in plain language. Datasets are available in open, machine-readable formats.	SA's parliamentary website is well-organised in many sections, providing easy access to parliamentary documents and legislative processes. However, some sections could be simplified for all users, and not all data is available in machine-readable formats. The website is structured in a way that generally makes it easy to navigate, especially for those familiar with parliamentary processes. Key legislative information is clearly categorised, helping users locate the documents they need. Some sections of the website could benefit from simplification and clearer explanations for users who are not familiar with parliamentary or legal terminology. Therefore, not all datasets are available in open formats that are easy to use for data analysis or research.	3	• Simplify the language used on the website, particularly for key documents and sections that may be challenging for non-experts. • Provide better organisation of content to make it more intuitive for casual users and those unfamiliar with parliamentary terminology. • Ensure that datasets, such as voting records and budgetary information, are available in open, machine-readable formats to enhance accessibility and usability.

4	Accessibility	The parliamentary website meets recognised accessibility standards, including for persons with disabilities.	The SA parliamentary website follows some basic accessibility guidelines to ensure it is accessible to people with disabilities, including providing alternative text for images and ensuring compatibility with screen readers. However, full compliance with global web accessibility standards may not yet be achieved. The website includes some accessibility features such as text descriptions and a responsive design, which supports mobile devices and adjusts content for different screen sizes. Full accessibility, including compatibility with all assistive technologies and compliance with global accessibility standards (e.g., WCAG), may still need improvement. There could be more effort in ensuring that all content, including videos and interactive tools, is fully accessible to individuals with various disabilities.	3	• Perform a full audit of the website's accessibility to ensure compliance with recognised accessibility standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines - WCAG) and address any gaps. • Implement additional accessibility features such as captions for videos, text-to-speech tools, and full compatibility with a wider range of assistive technologies. • Regularly update accessibility features in line with global best practices to ensure inclusivity for all citizens.
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5	Dialogue with the public	The parliamentary website provides a range of means for the public to participate in the work of parliament, and to contact MPs, committees, and parliamentary officials.	SA's parliamentary website offers a variety of ways for the public to engage with MPs and committees. This includes contact details for MPs , guideline on submissions for public input on legislation, and information about parliamentary outreach events. However, the extent of public interaction could be expanded further. This allows citizens to directly contribute to legislative discussions. There is also room for more opportunities for real-time dialogue between the public and MPs.	2	• Enhance interactive features on the website to encourage more real-time engagement, such as live chats, Q&A sessions, online submissions and petitions or public forums with MPs. • Promote the participation tools more prominently on the website to increase visibility and encourage greater public involvement in the legislative process. • Expand opportunities for online consultation and feedback on key legislative issues to ensure more robust public involvement.
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Ensure that all relevant parliamentary documents, including votes, amendments, and committee reports, are made available promptly and in easily understandable formats for the general public. Simplify the language on the website to ensure that non-experts can easily understand parliamentary content. Thus, improve the organisation of content to enhance user experience, especially for casual users. Increase the availability of interactive features and real-time communication channels to facilitate dialogue between the public and MPs. This will help increase citizen participation in the legislative process and foster a greater sense of engagement with parliament. Conduct a comprehensive review of the website's accessibility features to ensure that it meets global accessibility standards, ensuring that all citizens, including those with disabilities, can fully access parliamentary content.



6.2.3 Outreach activities

Outreach activities focus on parliament's efforts to engage directly with citizens and communities, beyond traditional communication methods. This dimension ensures that parliament actively works to inform, educate, and involve the public in its processes through various platforms, events, and initiatives. Outreach activities strengthen parliament's connection with the people it represents and enhance civic participation.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Outreach policy or strategy	Parliament has an outreach policy or strategy, as either a stand-alone document or a part of an overall communication strategy. Parliamentary staff create and implement an annual plan of activities based on this policy or strategy.	SA's parliament has an outreach strategy that forms part of its broader communication efforts. The strategy includes various initiatives aimed at improving public understanding of parliament's work, including school visits, public consultations, and community outreach programs. The outreach strategy is integrated into parliament's broader communication framework, ensuring coherence across all engagement efforts. Parliament has a clear focus on engaging with diverse communities through educational programs and public outreach activities . While the strategy exists, there may be	3	• Regularly review and update the outreach strategy to ensure it aligns with evolving public engagement trends and the needs of various communities. • Ensure that outreach activities are distributed more evenly across different regions, including underserved and rural areas, to improve access to information. • Expand collaboration with community and civil society organisations to enhance the impact and reach of outreach efforts.

			challenges in ensuring that outreach activities are fully inclusive and reach all segments of society. The execution of outreach activities may also be constrained by limited resources or staff capacity.		
2	Outreach activities	Parliament organises various outreach activities on and off the parliamentary premises, with the participation of the Speaker(s), MPs and a wide range of members of the public.	SA's parliament regularly organises outreach activities , such as public hearings, workshops, and community events, where MPs and the Speaker participate in direct discussions with citizens. These events help demystify parliamentary functions and encourage citizen participation. Outreach activities are diverse and include events on parliamentary premises as well as in communities. The involvement of MPs and the Speaker in these activities fosters a sense of accessibility and transparency. While outreach activities are organised, there may be gaps in	3	• Expand the reach of outreach activities to include more rural and underserved areas, ensuring that citizens in all regions have access to engagement opportunities. • Increase the frequency of outreach events and offer more flexible formats (e.g., virtual town halls) to accommodate people with different needs and schedules. • Provide clear communication about upcoming outreach events to ensure public awareness and participation. • Regularly publish outcomes and reports of outreach visits for greater visibility and public engagement.

			ensuring that the events reach marginalised communities or those without easy access to parliamentary premises. The scope of outreach could be more inclusive, especially in rural and underserved areas. Outcomes of outreach activities are also not regularly and visibly published.		
3	Explanatory and educational materials	Parliament produces explanatory and educational materials that support its outreach strategy.	SA's parliament produces various explanatory and educational materials, including pamphlets, videos, and online resources that explain parliamentary functions, the legislative process, and the roles of MPs. These materials are often distributed during outreach events or made available on the parliament website. Educational materials are accessible in the official languages, and multiple formats, including print and digital, helping to reach a broad audience. These materials provide valuable insights into parliamentary	3	• Develop more targeted educational materials for diverse audience groups, such as children, non-experts, and marginalised communities. • Regularly update the materials to ensure they reflect the latest legislative processes and parliamentary developments. • Use more visual and interactive formats (e.g., infographics, video explainers) to simplify complex parliamentary topics for a wider audience.

			procedures and encourage public participation in the legislative process. While materials are produced, there could be a wider variety of content aimed at different levels of understanding. Some materials may be too technical or difficult for non-expert citizens to engage with effectively.		
4	Resources	Parliament has sufficient human and financial resources to support effective outreach to all groups in society.	SA's parliament allocates resources to support its outreach efforts, including funding for events, staff to organise and manage programs, and digital tools for communication. However, outreach activities can be limited by budget constraints and staffing capacity. The existence of dedicated staff and a budget for outreach efforts is an important foundation for parliament's public engagement. Parliament also uses digital platforms to extend its reach, particularly during events like public hearings or live broadcasts. There are	3	• Increase budget allocation for outreach activities, especially in underserved areas, to ensure more inclusive public engagement. • Invest in training and expanding the outreach team to enhance capacity and ensure a high level of engagement. • Leverage partnerships with civil society organisations and other stakeholders to amplify the reach of outreach programs.

			constraints on both human and financial resources, which can impact the scale and reach of outreach efforts. Therefore, some activities may not be sufficiently funded or may be limited in scope due to resource limitations.		
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Expand the geographical reach of outreach activities, ensuring that all communities, especially rural and underserved ones, have access to parliamentary engagement opportunities. More frequent and diverse events, including virtual sessions, will help increase participation. Develop more tailored educational materials for different demographic groups, including young people, non-experts, and marginalised communities. Thereby, improving the accessibility and simplicity of the materials, focusing on making them more engaging and easier to understand. Allocate additional financial and human resources to outreach programs to expand their scope and effectiveness. This includes funding for events in remote areas and enhancing digital platforms to reach a wider audience. Ensure that the outreach policy or strategy is regularly evaluated to assess its effectiveness and adapt to new challenges and opportunities. This includes using feedback from the public to improve future outreach activities and materials.



6.3 Indicator 3.3 Access to parliament

This indicator focuses on [physical and digital access](#) to parliament. It assesses how easy it is for citizens to physically attend parliamentary sessions and participate in the democratic process. It also includes considerations for persons with disabilities, ensuring that parliament is accessible to all. Furthermore, it evaluates media access to parliamentary proceedings, allowing for a broader audience to follow and engage with the work of parliament. Ensuring that parliament is accessible to all citizens is a key element of transparency and public involvement in governance.

6.3.1 Physical access to parliament

This dimension addresses the physical accessibility of parliament for citizens, ensuring that individuals can attend sessions, watch debates, or participate in public hearings. It ensures that the parliamentary building and its facilities are accessible to the public, providing an open space for democratic participation and scrutiny.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
1	Legal framework	The legal framework provides for public access to all venues where parliamentary proceedings take place.	SA's parliament has a legal framework that provides public access to parliament, including access to sessions, committees, and public hearings. The Constitution of SA and other legislative acts, such as the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), ensure transparency and facilitate public participation in parliamentary processes. The legal framework is robust, ensuring that citizens have the right to attend parliamentary proceedings, which aligns with the principles of transparency and accountability. The framework also supports the broader democratic ideals of participation and public oversight.	4	• Enhance the physical infrastructure of parliament to ensure that more citizens can access parliamentary proceedings without overcrowding or other logistical issues. • Increase remote access options for citizens, such as live streaming or virtual participation, to ensure broader access, especially for those who cannot attend in person. • Regularly review the legal framework to adapt to emerging needs, such as digital engagement tools.

			While public access is granted, logistical challenges can sometimes limit access, such as overcrowding during important debates or limited space in committee hearings. There may also be barriers for marginalised groups to attend sessions in person, especially those living in remote areas.		
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.	SA's parliament legal framework establishes some restrictions on public access to certain parliamentary venues or sessions . For example, sessions dealing with classified information (such as meetings of the Joint Committee on Ethics and Members' Interest), security matters, or national interests may not be open to the public. These restrictions are defined under the law, and there is an attempt to ensure that they are reasonable and necessary. Restrictions are legally defined and are meant to protect national security, privacy, and	3	• Ensure that any restrictions on access are clearly communicated to the public, with detailed explanations for why certain proceedings are closed. • Make all efforts to minimise restrictions and ensure that the public has access to as much of the parliamentary process as possible. • Regularly review the necessity and proportionality of existing restrictions to ensure they are still justifiable under current circumstances.

			other sensitive matters. The legal framework ensures that any limitations on access are transparent and justifiable. While the restrictions are meant to be proportional, there may be concerns about transparency, particularly in cases where public access is limited due to political or sensitive reasons. The public may sometimes be unaware of the specific reasons for restrictions, leading to confusion.		
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.	SA's parliament has established clear guidelines for staff regarding the management of public access to parliamentary proceedings. These guidelines cover aspects such as security, registration, and the availability of spaces for visitors. Staff are trained to handle public access requests in a consistent manner. The presence of clear guidelines helps ensure that public access is managed efficiently, ensuring fairness	3	• Regularly review and update guidelines to ensure they are responsive to the changing needs of the public and any new security or logistical challenges. • Provide more training and resources for staff to ensure consistent implementation of guidelines and better visitor management during peak times. • Introduce more efficient visitor registration and management systems to reduce delays and enhance public experience.

			and consistency. This system also supports security protocols and logistical management during public visits. While the guidelines exist, there can be inconsistencies in their application, particularly during high-traffic events or significant parliamentary debates. Public access may be hindered during peak times, and there could be better coordination in terms of visitor flow and management.		
4	Resources	Parliament dedicates sufficient resources to informing the public about visiting opportunities and arrangements.	SA's parliament allocates resources to inform the public about visiting parliament, including dedicated sections on the parliament website, brochures, and other informational materials. However, there may be gaps in reaching all segments of society, particularly those in rural areas or those without easy access to digital resources. Information about visiting parliament is available in	3	• Increase outreach efforts to rural and underserved communities to ensure they are informed about visiting opportunities, including through community events or radio. • Expand digital outreach through social media, targeted online campaigns, and interactive tools to raise awareness of public access opportunities.

			various formats, including online resources and printed materials, ensuring that citizens are informed about the opportunities to attend parliamentary sessions or participate in public hearings. Some groups, especially in remote areas or those without internet access, may not be fully informed about visiting opportunities. The resources dedicated to public outreach may not always be sufficient to ensure broad and equitable access.		• Allocate additional resources to improve the availability and visibility of informational materials and ensure they reach all citizens.
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Improve communication about visiting opportunities through diverse outreach channels, including social media, community events, and localised resources. Focus on underserved and rural communities to ensure equitable access to information. Streamline and modernise visitor registration and access systems to improve efficiency and consistency in managing public access to parliamentary proceedings. While security and confidentiality are important, ensure that any restrictions on public access are proportional and transparent. Regularly review these restrictions to minimise their impact on public engagement. Allocate more resources to enhancing public outreach programs and managing visitor access to ensure that parliament remains an accessible institution for all citizens.



6.3.2 Access for persons with disabilities

This dimension ensures that parliament is accessible to persons with disabilities, including providing appropriate infrastructure, services, and accommodations. It focuses on ensuring that individuals with physical, sensory, or other disabilities can fully participate in parliamentary proceedings and access parliamentary information and services.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
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.	SA's parliament legal framework, including the Constitution and the PAIA , supports accessibility for persons with disabilities. Thus, parliament has adopted policies that align with international commitments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These frameworks require that parliament take steps to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to parliamentary processes. The legal framework is comprehensive, clearly stating that parliament is responsible for ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities. This includes both physical	4	• Ensure that all parliamentary procedures and processes are fully accessible to persons with disabilities, not just the physical spaces, by continuously updating the legal framework as needed. • Periodically review the implementation of accessibility guidelines to assess their effectiveness in meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. • Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure full compliance with accessibility requirements for parliamentary processes and information.

			access to parliamentary venues and access to information about parliamentary activities. While the legal framework exists, there is a gap in fully implementing these commitments in some areas. For instance, while accessibility to the building is prioritised (following the fire), there may be challenges in ensuring that all information, including complex documents and debates, is fully accessible.		
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.	SA's parliament has made efforts to improve physical accessibility to parliament, including ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. The parliamentary building is designed to accommodate individuals with mobility impairments, and seating in plenary sessions is also available for people with disabilities. The physical accessibility improvements in the parliamentary	3	• Conduct regular accessibility audits to identify any physical barriers that may remain and ensure that all areas of parliament are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. • Improve accessibility features for events and public hearings by ensuring that all venues, both within parliament and for external events, are fully accessible.

			building in general are commendable, providing easy access for persons with mobility impairments. Despite these improvements, there could still be occasional barriers to access, such as limited parking for persons with disabilities or areas of the building that may require further modifications to meet full accessibility standards. Therefore, some events or public hearings may not be as accessible as they could be.		• Increase awareness and accessibility training for parliamentary staff to ensure all visitors with disabilities are assisted effectively and appropriately.
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.	SA's parliament has made efforts to provide accessible formats for key documents, such as large print, Braille, and audio versions. Parliamentary websites also provide some documents in accessible formats, but there is still room for improvement, particularly with regard to the diversity of formats available for all types of content. Efforts have been made to provide information	3	• Expand the range of accessible formats available, particularly for complex documents such as committee reports, bills, and financial statements. • Increase the availability of all parliamentary content in alternative formats such as audio, Braille, and easy-to-read text, ensuring that it is accessible to persons with various disabilities.

			in accessible formats for people with visual impairments, including the availability of audio resources on the parliamentary website. Parliament's commitment to providing accessible information is evident in these efforts. While there are some provisions for accessible formats, not all content is available in these formats, and there are gaps in the types of documents that are made available. For example, some complex legislative documents and committee reports may not be translated into formats that are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities.		• Improve the accessibility of the parliamentary website, ensuring all documents and resources are available in machine-readable formats and compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies.
4	Consultation	Parliament consults regularly with civil society organisations to seek input and advice about ensuring that parliament is	SA's parliament engages with civil society organisations that advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. Parliamentary staff consult these organisations to gather input on how to improve accessibility, both in terms of	3	• Increase the frequency of consultations with disability advocacy groups, ensuring that feedback is gathered on an ongoing basis and fully integrated into decision-making processes.

		accessible to all people, regardless of disability.	physical access and access to information. Parliament's general willingness to engage with CSOs ensures that the perspectives of persons with disabilities are considered when improving accessibility. These consultations help identify gaps in accessibility and inform better practices. The consultation process could be expanded to include more regular and diverse input from various disability advocacy groups. There may be instances where feedback from civil society organisations is not fully implemented or integrated into parliamentary practices.		• Ensure that consultations are inclusive of a broad range of disabilities, including mobility impairments, visual and auditory impairments, and cognitive disabilities. • Publicly report on the outcomes of consultations and the steps parliament is taking to implement feedback from civil society organisations.
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Enhance the availability of parliamentary information in accessible formats, such as audio, Braille, and large text. Ensure all parliamentary documents are made accessible, including complex legislative and committee materials. Conduct regular assessments of parliament's physical accessibility, identifying and addressing any remaining barriers to entry, particularly for persons with mobility impairments. Expand accessible seating, parking, and facilities. Regularly consult with a broad range of civil society organisations to ensure that persons with disabilities have a voice in the parliamentary process. Actively seek and implement feedback to ensure that accessibility remains a priority in parliament. While there are existing efforts, parliament should ensure that all accessibility



initiatives are fully implemented across all aspects of parliamentary work, from the physical building to the digital platforms, ensuring an inclusive experience for all individuals.

6.3.3 Media access to parliament

This dimension focuses on ensuring that the media has unrestricted access to parliament, allowing journalists to report on parliamentary activities freely and accurately. It assesses the extent to which the media can observe, report, and comment on legislative proceedings, helping to foster a transparent and accountable parliamentary process by ensuring that the public is informed through independent reporting.

The assessment:

Criteria	Name	Description	SA Parliament	Grade	Recommendations
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.	SA's parliamentary rules of procedure ensure that the media has access to the parliamentary building and its venues where proceedings occur, including plenary sessions, committee meetings, and public hearings. These procedures align with the constitutional right to access information and facilitate the free flow of information (as per National Assembly Rule 184). The legal framework guarantees media access, supporting transparency in the	4	- Regularly review and update the rules of procedure to address emerging challenges, such as increased media interest during certain sessions or the use of new digital platforms. - Improve communication with media outlets regarding rules and procedures for accessing parliament, ensuring that all journalists are informed about their rights and responsibilities.

			legislative process. This allows journalists to report comprehensively on legislative actions and discussions. While the rules ensure access, challenges may arise during high-profile or sensitive sessions, where logistical issues may limit the space available for media, or security concerns may affect access. Since the commencement of the 7th Administration, Parliament has introduced regular cluster media and stakeholder briefings, which is well-represented by the media. This new initiative provides additional coverage of prominent parliamentary proceedings on a regular basis.		
2	Restrictions on access	Any restrictions on media access are limited, proportional and imposed on reasonable grounds. There are no	SA's parliament allows some restrictions on media access in specific cases , such as national security issues, sensitive government discussions, or confidential committee sessions. These restrictions are legally defined and intended to	4	• Ensure that restrictions on media access are communicated transparently, with clear explanations provided to the public and media organisations about why certain proceedings are closed.

		unwarranted obstacles preventing the media from reporting on plenary sessions or committee meetings.	protect state security or other sensitive matters. Restrictions are clearly defined, ensuring that they are applied only in necessary and reasonable situations. The process for limiting access is outlined and justified in the rules, supporting the principles of proportionality and fairness. Despite these protections, media outlets may face challenges in accessing certain sensitive sessions, and the reasons for restrictions might not always be fully explained to the public, leading to confusion or frustration.		• Regularly review the use of access restrictions to ensure they are justified and proportionate to the circumstances, minimising barriers to media coverage whenever possible. • Introduce an independent review mechanism for media organisations to challenge access restrictions when they believe these restrictions are unwarranted or excessive.
3	Credentialling system	Parliament's credentialling system allows a wide diversity of media outlets to access parliament and report freely on parliamentary activities.	SA's parliament credentialling system is designed to provide access to a wide range of media outlets, including national, international, and community-based organisations. The system allows media representatives to apply for access to parliament and provides accreditation that ensures they can	4	• Streamline the credentialling process to ensure that smaller and independent media outlets can gain timely access to parliamentary proceedings. • Regularly assess the fairness and transparency of the credentialling system, ensuring that all outlets, regardless of size, are treated equally.

			report on proceedings. The system is inclusive, allowing diverse media outlets, including smaller and independent outlets, to report freely on parliamentary activities. This diversity helps ensure comprehensive media coverage of parliamentary proceedings. Although the system is inclusive, some smaller or community-based outlets may encounter delays or challenges in the accreditation process. There may also be inconsistencies in how accreditation is granted or the resources allocated to support smaller outlets.		• Provide additional support for smaller media outlets by facilitating access to training, resources, and infrastructure needed to cover parliamentary events effectively.
4	Space, infrastructure, and technical support	Parliament provides media outlets with appropriate space, infrastructure, and technical support to carry out their work.	SA's parliament provides media outlets with designated spaces and necessary technical infrastructure, including Wi-Fi , live feeds, and workstations, to facilitate media coverage. These provisions are designed to support the smooth operation of media outlets reporting on	3	• Increase the availability of media space during peak periods, such as during important legislative debates or events, to ensure that all media outlets have sufficient room to operate. • Invest in upgrading technical infrastructure, such as high-speed internet access, mobile-

			parliamentary sessions. Media outlets are provided with the tools they need to report on parliamentary proceedings effectively, including access to technical resources such as live streams, broadcast feeds, and internet connectivity. During high-traffic events, such as major debates or crises, media spaces may become crowded, and there may be insufficient infrastructure to accommodate the growing number of journalists or the diverse digital needs of modern media outlets. The SA Connect programme aims to bridge the digital divide by expanding affordable internet access, particularly in rural and under-served communities. To date, 9829 Wi-Fi hotspots have been deployed, covering over 1.6 million households, with further expansion supported by the Broadband Access Fund and USAASA's initiatives. ICASA has	friendly broadcasting options, and remote access tools for journalists covering sessions from outside parliament. • Expand the infrastructure to accommodate a diverse range of media organisations, from large national outlets to smaller independent or community-focused ones.
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			also mandated spectrum licensees to extend coverage nationally. BBI and Sentech are rolling out infrastructure for SMMEs to lease, while Electronic Communications Service Providers must connect nearly 22,000 public institutions by 2029. Also, NEMISA is implementing a Digital Skills Programme to enhance digital literacy.		
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.	In practice, SA media outlets have relatively equal access to parliamentary proceedings, with opportunities for all accredited journalists to report on plenary sessions, committee meetings, and public hearings. Media outlets are able to report freely, and there is a diverse range of coverage from various media organisations. The practice of media access aligns well with the rules of procedure, providing equal opportunities for a broad spectrum of media outlets to report on	3	• Regularly assess the access provided to all media outlets to ensure that smaller and independent outlets are not disadvantaged by limited space or resources. • Improve logistical coordination during high-traffic events to ensure that media outlets have equal access to reporting opportunities. • Provide additional support for media outlets that may lack the resources or infrastructure to cover parliamentary events effectively.

			parliamentary activities. The media plays an active role in ensuring transparency in parliamentary affairs. There may still be occasional logistical challenges, such as overcrowded media spaces during major sessions, or difficulties in ensuring that all outlets have the same access to resources and infrastructure. Smaller outlets may also face challenges in competing for space and resources.		
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Increase the availability of media spaces, especially during high-profile events, and enhance the technical infrastructure to ensure that all outlets have the tools they need to report effectively. Simplify and expedite the credentialing process, ensuring that all media outlets, regardless of size, have timely and equal access to parliamentary proceedings. Periodically review the restrictions on media access to ensure they remain justified and proportional. Ensure that restrictions do not unnecessarily limit media coverage of important parliamentary activities. Ensure that all media outlets, including smaller or independent organisations, have equal access to cover parliamentary activities. Address logistical and resource challenges to ensure fair competition in accessing space and coverage opportunities.



7. Way forward & Conclusion

The SA parliament has made notable strides towards enhancing transparency and accountability, but continued effort is needed to address the challenges identified in this assessment. To ensure that the principles of transparency and public participation are effectively realised, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Strengthening Transparency Mechanisms:** While SA's parliamentary [rules of procedure](#) have established the principles of transparency, consistent implementation across all parliamentary activities is vital. There should be an ongoing effort to monitor adherence to these transparency rules, with regular updates to the legal frameworks and processes to accommodate new technologies and [best practices](#). Thus, parliament should invest in improving the clarity and [accessibility of legislative documents](#), simplifying complex texts, and ensuring that all bills, amendments, and voting records are published in a timely manner.
2. **Improving Public Engagement:** SA parliament's communication strategy should be continuously evaluated and adapted to emerging trends in public engagement. Efforts should be made to reach underrepresented communities, including rural, [marginalised](#) and non-English-speaking populations. The use of diverse platforms such as [social media, digital tools](#), and in-person outreach events should be expanded. Interactive features, such as live Q&A sessions and virtual town halls, could increase public involvement in parliamentary affairs and improve citizen understanding of legislative processes.
3. **Enhancing Accessibility for All:** Physical and digital access to parliamentary processes should be a priority. It is essential that parliament fully implements accessibility guidelines for both the [built environment and digital platforms](#), ensuring that individuals with disabilities can participate in the democratic process without barriers. Parliament should conduct regular accessibility audits, invest in the improvement of its infrastructure, and ensure that all parliamentary information is available in accessible formats such as Braille, audio, and easy-to-read documents. The provision of more robust digital access, particularly in rural areas, should also be prioritised.
4. **Expanding Media Access and Coverage:** Ensuring that media outlets have unrestricted access to parliamentary proceedings is a cornerstone of democratic transparency. The media plays a critical role in informing the public about parliamentary actions, and there should be a concerted effort to [streamline media access](#), ensuring that smaller and independent outlets are not disadvantaged. Moreover, improving infrastructure and technical support for media coverage will facilitate a more inclusive and comprehensive reporting process.

5. **Periodic Review and Evaluation:** To ensure that reforms are having the desired impact, parliament should periodically review its transparency and communication practices, gathering feedback from citizens, MPs, and media organisations. These [evaluations](#) should inform future strategies, allowing for the continuous improvement of parliamentary accessibility, communication, and public engagement.

To support evidence-based improvements and policy innovation, the following research areas are recommended:

- Explore logistical, technological, linguistic, or financial barriers that prevent full engagement with parliament, especially among rural, youth, and disabled populations.
- Analyse best practices from other parliaments (e.g. e-parliament innovations, open data initiatives, civic tech platforms) and assess feasibility for local adaptation.
- Investigate how different media outlets with regards to community media and engaging with parliament and what challenges they face in covering legislative developments.
- Examine how public submissions, consultations, or petitions are processed and whether they meaningfully influence committee decisions or policy directions.
- Assess the clarity, accessibility, and usefulness of parliament's own budget disclosures, and identify how these can be simplified for non-expert audiences.

In conclusion, the SA parliament has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering transparency and accountability, but it is evident that more work is required to meet the full expectations set by democratic standards. The principles of openness in legislative processes, communication, and public participation must be further strengthened to ensure that parliament not only meets but exceeds these standards. By addressing the identified gaps, improving the accessibility of information and proceedings, and expanding efforts to engage the public, parliament can significantly enhance its democratic legitimacy and public trust.

The way forward outlined in this report provides a clear path towards building a more transparent, responsive, and inclusive parliament, which will help strengthen democratic governance in SA. It is essential for parliament to continue evolving in line with best practices and the needs of its citizens, ensuring that it remains an institution that truly serves the people and upholds the values of democracy, accountability, and transparency.

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9. Glossary

Accessibility	The ease with which citizens can engage with and participate in parliamentary processes, including both physical and digital access.
Accountability	The obligation of institutions to be answerable for their actions, decisions, and policies to the public, ensuring that they are transparent and responsive.
Audit Recommendations	Suggestions made by auditors to improve financial management and compliance within parliamentary operations.
Bureaucracy	The administrative system governing the operations of parliament, including civil servants and their functions in legislative support.
Constitutional Framework	The legal and institutional structures defined by a nation's constitution that guide the functioning of its government and its democratic processes.
Data Privacy	The protection of personal information provided by citizens, ensuring that it is not misused or disclosed without consent.
Digital Transformation	The integration of digital technologies into parliamentary processes, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and public engagement.
Electoral Management Body (EMB)	An organisation or agency responsible for the administration and oversight of elections to ensure they are free, fair, and credible.
Engagement	The active involvement of citizens and stakeholders in the decision-making processes of parliament.
Explanatory Materials	Documents or resources designed to simplify and explain complex parliamentary processes, laws, or bills for the general public.

Freedom of Information (FOI)	The right of citizens to access information held by the government, including parliament, in the interest of transparency.
Governance	The processes and systems through which parliament operates, including leadership, management, and decision-making structures.
Human Resources (HR)	The department responsible for managing parliamentary staff, including recruitment, retention, and development policies.
Inclusion	The practice of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background or ability, have equal access to parliamentary processes.
Legislation	Laws passed by parliament, which are the result of the legislative process and which govern various aspects of society.
Legislative Process	The series of steps through which a proposed law is introduced, debated, amended, and eventually passed by parliament.
Media Access	The ability of journalists and media outlets to observe, report, and comment on parliamentary proceedings freely.
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	The process of assessing the effectiveness, impact, and outcomes of parliamentary policies, programs, and practices.
Outreach Programs	Initiatives by parliament to educate the public, engage citizens, and encourage participation in democratic processes.
Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)	A body that provides parliament with independent, objective analysis on the budget, fiscal policies, and financial matters.
Parliamentary Session	A period during which parliament meets to conduct its business, such as debating and voting on legislation.

Post-Legislative Scrutiny (PLS)	The process of reviewing laws after they have been enacted to assess their impact and effectiveness.
Public Accounts Committee (PAC)	A parliamentary committee responsible for overseeing government expenditures and ensuring public funds are used effectively.
Public Consultation	A process by which parliament seeks input from the public on proposed laws, policies, or decisions.
Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)	A law in SA that ensures accountability and transparency in the management of public funds.
Public Participation	The involvement of the public in the legislative process, including consultation on proposed bills, policies, and other parliamentary actions.
Public Trust	The confidence the public has in the legitimacy, effectiveness, and transparency of parliament.
Social Media	Platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram used by parliament to communicate with the public and engage citizens in dialogue.
Stakeholder	Any individual or group that has an interest in or is affected by the decisions and actions of parliament.
Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA)	A committee of the SA parliament responsible for scrutinising government expenditures and ensuring financial accountability.
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	A set of global goals established by the UN aimed at addressing global challenges, including those related to peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) A process by which the human rights record of every UN member state is reviewed regularly to assess compliance with international standards.

Voting Record: A public record of how each member of parliament voted on specific issues or bills during sessions.

Web Accessibility The practice of making digital content, including parliamentary websites, accessible to people with disabilities.

Whistleblower An individual who exposes unethical or illegal activities within an organisation, including parliamentary bodies.

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