



BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS OF OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA - BASED ON THE DECLARATION OF PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS



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Introduction

The transparency, accessibility, openness and citizen engagement in parliamentary activities is the cornerstone of democratic governance and development of democracy. In a democratic society, citizens and other civil society representatives are entitled to expect the highest standards of behavior and efficiency from elected parliamentary representatives. The legislature should in turn comply with strict principles of conduct and maintain a continuous commitment to transparency of their legislative work. As such, the openness, transparency and accessibility of parliamentary data and activities are a crucial milestone for engaging citizens in the legislative process and fostering the democratic credentials of the state.

To facilitate for an international consensus on standards for democratic parliaments, the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness was officially launched at the World e-Parliament Conference 2012 in Rome, Italy, on the International Day of Democracy, September 15, 2012. The Declaration is a result of a global meeting of parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) hosted by the National Democratic Institute, Sunlight Foundation, and Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency.

The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness is a call to national parliaments by civil society parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) for an increased commitment to openness and to citizen engagement in parliamentary work.¹ Today it is supported by more than 130 PMOs in 75 countries, as well as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) - the first international institution to have endorsed the Declaration.

We believe that the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness is a stepping stone for CSOs and the Parliament to jointly assess legislative information management practices and other important parliamentary practices crucial for fostering a culture of openness. The Parliament of Georgia has become one of the first countries to sign the Declaration on April 30, 2015. Moreover, the Parliament of Georgia has created a inter-faction working group, which was composed of several non-governmental organizations, including the active involvement of Transparency International Georgia. As part of these efforts, the 2015-2016 Open Parliament Action Plan was drafted and approved by the Parliamentary Bureau. The Action Plan includes 18 commitments aimed at boosting parliamentary practices in the realm of transparency, accountability and citizen engagement.

In October 2015 the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit held in Mexico City hosted 1,500 participants from various countries, including representatives from legislative and executive branches of government, civil society organizations, and business. The official opening ceremony of the Mexico global summit was preceded by the announcement of the winner of the OGP Government Champions Award. Three semi-finalists (Georgia, Costa Rica and Sierra Leone) were selected from 65 OGP member countries and an award winner was determined by a public vote. On October 27, Georgia became the winner of the OGP Government Champions Award. The Open Government Partnership announced the competition for the award on September 19. The award was intended to showcase the ideal co-creation dynamic between the government and civil society while elaborating the National Action Plan. More specifically, the contest aimed at awarding a team that managed to incorporate civil society initiatives and recommendations in the action plan, and evenly distribute responsibility and authority during the complex co-creation process.

Transparency International Georgia welcomes the Parliament's adoption of the Open Parliament Action Plan as a gesture of political will aimed at boosting parliamentary openness. The adoption of the values of the Declaration of Parliamentary Openness will provide the basis for civil society organizations and the state legislature to jointly improve on information management and issues of openness. The adoption of those values requires analysis of the current situation and ways of solving the existing issues.

This is exactly the objective of Transparency International Georgia's initiative. Through a new, unique score-based methodology, we hope to deliver a critical assessment showing how in line are the practices of the Georgian state legislature towards the best practices outlined in the Declaration of Parliamentary Openness. The assessment methodology has been devised with a global outlook in mind; the methodology is adoptable towards any

¹ <http://www.openingparliament.org/declaration>

other state legislature in the world. The methodology has been produced based on Transparency International Georgia's experiences with its other researches, as well as with active consultations with the Washington Office of the National Democratic Institute. Moreover, the Provision Commentary of the Declaration of Parliamentary Openness have been used as additional guidelines for the methodology.

The purpose of the assessment is thus to benchmark the Declaration's principles and best practices towards the practices of the Georgian state legislature and offer evaluations and recommendations. The assessment will be done on periodic basis, as to reveal signs of progress or regress in the practices of the state legislature. The reporting period spans the assessment of existing parliamentary activities as of April 2016.

The Benchmarking Analysis addresses **four** different "blocks" of the Declaration, which are essentially thematically grouped principles on **openness, transparency and accessibility of parliamentary work and information**.

Methodology

The Benchmarking Analysis is a qualitative research tool based on a combination of desk research, external validation with key stakeholders and first-hand observations.

Monitoring of the Parliament's activities is important direction of work of the Transparency International Georgia. TIG performs permanent monitoring of Parliament's activities and participates in every public meeting conducted by, at and in the Parliament. The findings of the current Open Parliament Benchmarking Analysis are largely based on the monitoring efforts of the parliamentary team, their analysis and first-hand observations.

The methodology in the Analysis draws partly from the National Integrity System (NIS) assessment toolkit, developed by Transparency International Secretariat and successfully utilized by multiple TI chapters across the world. The basis for several of our recommendations on open data standards can be found in the Ten Open Data Guidelines, adopted by Transparency International Georgia and affirmed by the Sunlight Foundation in 2012. The document serves to outline best standards in the use of open data in a way the maximizes public engagement and makes public information more accessible, transparent and freely usable, at the time of the creation, but also over-time.

The document utilizes every Article in the Declaration as a standalone indicator in its own right and benchmarks them against the practices of the Georgian state legislature. The "evaluation chart" for each Article is broken down into components and further into guiding questions, score and analytical commentary explaining the score. The guiding questions serve the purpose of breaking down Articles into several key components that are graded separately, as opposed to assigning a single score without a breakdown of which component of the Article scored better or worse. Moreover, every component is individually scored by average of its guiding questions. Every block of the assessment is also scored, based on the average of all its consisting articles. This methodological approach enables for better tracking of progress over time as well as gives each Article a more in-depth score evaluation.

Scoring Methodology

An Evaluation Chart is created per each Declaration article, which allows to process each article individually and make the assumptions based on clear guidelines.

Thus numerical scores are assigned based on the responses to every Guiding Questions, which are designed in the way to take into account all important aspects/components of the article. Thus first, the components of each article are singled out and guiding questions are created based on those components. In this way the guiding questions fully grasp the idea and essence behind the article. The questions are devised in a way to have an equal score weight.

Scoring Guidelines	
Minimum score (1)	The practice is completely out of line from the article in the Declaration or does not exist at all.
2	The bare minimum is met with the standards identified in the Declaration with huge space for improvement.
3	The parliamentary practice partially meets the standards identified in the Declaration but a number of steps are required to bring the evaluation to a higher score.
4	The practice is nearly completely in line with the standard outlined in the Declaration and a single or few steps are required for attaining the ideal score.
Maximum score (5)	The practice has no visible flaws barring it from being completely in line with the standards of the Declaration.
* Does not apply	Does not apply given Georgia's existing laws or practices.

Structure

The assessment consists of four thematically grouped blocks and each of them is benchmarked against the principles stated in the articles of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness.²

The first block is **Promoting a Culture of Openness**. A culture of parliamentary openness ensures inclusive citizen participation and a free civil society, enable effective parliamentary monitoring, and vigorously protects these rights through its oversight role.

The second block is **Making Parliamentary Information Transparent**. Parliamentary information includes information about parliament's roles and functions, and information generated throughout the legislative process, including the text of introduced legislation and amendments.

The third block is **Easing Access to Parliamentary Information**. Ease of access implies that citizens, media and civil society actors have access to parliamentary information on a non-discriminatory basis through multiple channels, including first-person observation, print media, radio, and live and on-demand broadcasts and streaming.

The fourth block is **Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information**. This implies that parliamentary information shall be released online in open and structured formats that allow citizens to analyze and reuse this information using the full range of technology tools.

Block 1. Promoting a Culture of Openness

Block Score: **3.8**

There has been a certain track of progress in the direction of parliamentary openness in the course of the last couple of years. The state legislature cooperates with the civil society representatives. There have been instances when the Parliament created working groups to discuss and draft laws. In spite of this progress, there are a number of important issues that should be solved for the Georgian state legislature to measure up to the principles of the Declaration:

- Drafting of the Code of Ethics for MPs and an effective monitoring mechanism
- Active involvement of citizens and civil society in legislative processes (implementing electronic system for presenting legislative initiatives, active use of working groups, etc.)
- Improving of content and establishing uniform standards for explanatory notes to draft bills

² <http://openingparliament.s3.amazonaws.com/docs/declaration/1.0/english.pdf>

▶ Article 1. Recognizing Public Ownership of Parliamentary Information

Parliamentary information belongs to the public; citizens should be allowed to reuse and republish parliamentary information, in whole or in part. Any exceptions or restrictions to this principle shall be narrowly defined by law.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Terms of use of parliamentary information are available and public ownership is recognized</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Are the rules and terms for use of parliamentary information narrowly defined by law?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>The terms of use of parliamentary information is determined by the third chapter of the General Administrative Code of Georgia, which states that information regarding the legislative process is open. Also open is the information are activities of the Parliament such as events, committee and plenary sittings, public meetings, etc.</p> <p>The law doesn't define authorship of information related to facts and events. The same authorship rights do not apply to official documents, texts of normative acts or any other product produced by the Parliament (law, resolution, audio-video material, overviews, statistics, etc.) is open and it is allowed to use them without the consent of the Parliament. Due to this we can state that the terms of use of parliamentary information are well regulated by law.</p>	

Article 2. Advancing a Culture of Openness through Legislation

Parliament has a duty to enact legislation, as well as internal rules of procedure and codes of conduct, that foster an enabling environment guaranteeing the public's right to government³ and parliamentary information, promoting a culture of open government, providing for transparency of political finance, safeguards freedoms of expression and assembly, and ensuring engagement by civil society and citizens in the legislative process.

Components	Guiding Questions
Culture of openness is advanced through legislation Component average score: 5	1. Is there a law enacted by Parliament that contains provisions supporting public access to government and parliamentary information, transparency of political finances, freedom of expression and engagement by civil society and citizens in the legislative process? Score: 5
Issues related to accessibility of information are advanced through legislation Component average score: 5	1. Does the internal rules of procedure, code of conduct and legislation enacted by Parliament contain provisions that support public access to government and parliamentary information, transparency of political finances, freedom of expression and engagement by civil society and citizens in the legislative process? Score: 5
The Parliament's code of conduct and internal rules promotes a culture of openness. Component average score: 1	1. Does the Parliament have a code of conduct that promotes access to parliamentary and government information, transparency of political finances, freedom of expression and citizen involvement in the legislative process? Score: 1

³ Government information are normative acts drafted by the government and public information created through the work of the government

⁴ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The Constitution of Georgia secures basic human rights, including ones that directly strengthen the culture of openness. Several laws in Georgia regulate public access to government and parliamentary information (e.g. the General Administrative Code of Georgia), transparency of political finances (e.g. Election Code of Georgia, Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens), freedom of expression (Law of Georgia on Freedom of Speech and Expression), as well citizen involvement in the legislative process, which gives the right to 30000 citizens to submit a legislative initiative to the Parliament (Constitution of Georgia).</p>	
<p>The Rules and Procedure of the Parliament contain norms that, within the scope of normative acts, regulate the openness of parliamentary information and citizen involvement in the legislative process.</p>	
<p>The last code of conduct adopted by Parliament dates back to 2004 and was effective only for the 6th convocation. Therefore today there is no code of conduct in the Parliament.</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Parliament adopt its own Code of Ethics equipped with an effective enforcement mechanism.⁴</p>

► Article 3. Protecting a Culture of Openness through Oversight

In fulfilling its oversight function, parliament shall guarantee that laws ensuring government openness are implemented effectively, that the government acts in a fully transparent manner, and that government also works to promote a culture of openness.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Culture of openness is protected through parliamentary oversight</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. To what extent does the legislation guarantee freedom of information?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Are there legislative norms that guarantee parliamentary oversight over the activities of the government related to the openness of public information?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	
<p>The Parliament effectively exercises parliamentary oversight over the openness of the executive branch of government</p> <p>Component average score: 2.5</p>	<p>1. How effective is parliamentary oversight over the executive branch of government?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	
	<p>2. Does the Parliament effectively control the issuing of public information by the executive government as defined by law and are there effective response mechanisms?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>	

⁵ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>Article 3 of the General Administrative Code of Georgia relates to freedom of information, access to public information and terms. The norms for freedom of information are in full compliance with the Constitution of Georgia.</p>	
	<p>The Parliament annually listens to reports by public bodies on issues such as providing public information, terms for denying FOI requests, processing of personal information, violations of the General Administrative Code of Georgia, etc.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there is no specific format for discussions by the Parliament for such reports. In most cases the discussions are a mere formality.</p>	<p>The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament should stipulate the discussion format and effective response mechanisms for reports on providing public information</p>
	<p>In addition to the reports on freedom of information not being discussed at plenary sessions, the Parliament has not adequately fulfilled its function to monitor the work of the Government. For example, one of the forms of exercising parliamentary control is an MP's right to submit an inquiry to a body accountable to Parliament, including the Government of Georgia, members of the Government of Georgia, Head of an Executive Body of a territorial unit at any level, and obtain and evaluate their responses. The inquiry can be made only in written form. Each body or public official that was addressed with an inquiry should submit a written response to Parliament within 15 days after the receipt of such inquiry. However, the statistics (information about the number of inquiries and received responses) on the MPs' inquiries and received responses is not published on the parliamentary website. This information, however, can be requested through FOI from the Parliament.</p>	<p>For the purpose of increasing culture of openness and transparency of parliamentary oversight, the Parliament should publish deputy questions and answers, as well as annual statistics on the amount of questions and answers.⁵</p>
	<p>Parliamentary oversight over the issuing of public information by the executive government is ineffective. Since the discussion of reports by public bodies is mostly a formality, there are no clearly defined response mechanisms.</p>	<p>Discussion of reports on freedom of information should be heard at committee sessions and effective response mechanisms should be created.</p>

▶ Article 4. Promoting Civic Education

Parliament has a responsibility to actively promote civic education of the public, particularly youth, by promoting understanding of parliament's rules and procedures, parliament's work, and the role of parliament and its members.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Civic education is effectively promoted by the Parliament</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>Does the Parliament promote civic education, especially of youth through study tours, excursions, visiting educational institutions, etc?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The parliament conducts group tours for visitors. Information and schedules for such visits is available on the parliamentary webpage. Majority of the requests for tours are initiated by schools and universities. The first quarter of 2015 the number of visitors averaged 500 in both Tbilisi and Kutaisi. However, students and pupils from the regions are less likely to be visitors to the Parliament due to travel expenses. Moreover, there is no practice of deputy MPs conducting lectures in the Parliament for boosting civic education.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is desirable that respective staff from the Parliament systematically conduct lectures and presentations on parliamentary work in public schools, universities and other venues where such information would be desirable for boosting civic education. 2. Education tours should be conducted not only on the request of educational institutions, but by the Parliament's own initiative towards the financially disadvantaged segment of the society.

► Article 5. Engaging Citizens and Civil Society

Parliament has a duty to actively engage citizens and civil society, without discrimination, in parliamentary processes and decision-making in order to effectively represent citizen interests and to give effect to the right of citizens to petition their government.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Engagement of citizens, without discrimination, is guaranteed in parliamentary processes and decision-making.</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>To what extent does the legislation guarantee the engagement of citizens in parliamentary processes and decision-making?</p> <p>Score: 4</p> <p>2. To what extent does the legislation guarantee the involvement of members of the civil society, without discrimination, in parliamentary processes and decision-making?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>The Parliament includes citizens and civil society representatives in the drafting and improving of draft laws.</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Do parliamentary committees create working groups, composed of civil society representatives and experts, when working on legislation that are of high public interest?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>2. How thoroughly does the Parliament discuss legislative proposals?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>3. How possible is it in practice for citizens to engage, without discrimination, in the law-making process?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>

⁶ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Georgian legislation secures the right of citizen engagement in the legislative process. According to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, citizens have the right to present a legislative initiative, which the committee will discuss at a session. According to the Constitution of Georgia, 30000 voters can address the Parliament with a legislative initiative. However, in practice, it is difficult to collect the aforementioned amount of votes. The legislation doesn't make it possible for the amount of votes to be collected for a legislative initiative, nor does it give the possibility of presenting the initiative through electronic means.</p>	<p>It is recommended that there exist an electronic form for collecting and submitting legislative initiatives.⁶</p>
<p>According to legislation, civic engagement in the parliamentary activities is not restricted and is open to everyone.</p>	
<p>Civil society engagement is largely restricted to attendance to committee sessions and written opinions to the Parliament. Committees rarely create working groups for drafting or improving draft laws. For example, in 2015 there were 20 working groups.</p>	<p>The committees should create working groups for important draft laws, especially on state reforms, in order to bolster civil society and expert engagement in the process.</p>
<p>The Georgian Parliament discusses legislative initiatives based on the rules defined in the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament. Authors of the legislative initiatives participate in the committee sessions. The issues with citizen legislative initiatives are that they are not published on the parliamentary webpage, which hinders the civil society's ability to be included in the process.</p>	<p>Legislative initiatives should be published on the parliamentary webpage.⁷</p>
<p>Even though the legislation guarantees citizens' right to engage, without discrimination, in the law-making process, there are circumstances which deny the ability of persons with disability to have access to parliamentary information and be fully engaged in the process.</p>	<p>There is a need to create a platform which will ensure an easy access to the parliamentary information for persons with disabilities.⁸</p>

Article 6. Protecting an Independent Civil Society

Parliament has a duty to support measures to ensure that civil society organizations are able to operate freely and without restriction.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Georgian legislation supports the right of civil society organizations to operate freely and without restriction</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. To what extent does the legislation enacted by the Parliament guarantee the right of civil society organizations to operate freely and without restriction?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. To what extent is the law enacted by the Parliament guaranteeing the right of civil society organization to operate freely and without restriction implemented in practice?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>The Parliament closely and effectively cooperates with civil society and fosters their engagement in parliamentary activities</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. To what extent does the Parliament cooperate with civil society organizations?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. To what extent is the cooperation with civil society organizations reflected in the Parliament's decisions?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Georgian legislation guarantees the right of civil society organizations to operate freely and without restriction</p>	
<p>The right of civil society organizations to operate freely and without restriction is duly implemented in practice.</p>	
<p>The Georgian Parliament actively cooperates with civil society. Amongst the three branches of the government, the state legislature has the most successful track record of cooperation with non-governmental organizations. Notably, the Parliament has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with civil society organizations.</p>	
<p>One of the most effective forms of civil society engagement in parliamentary activities is participation in working groups, as well as sessions of committees. Sometimes the creation of working groups and civil society organizations is a formality. On the example of Georgia, there have both successful and failed attempts at duly engaging civil society organizations at working groups.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to bolster and promote more effective civic engagement in the legislative process, it is recommended that committees actively create more working groups 2. Consultative councils should be created alongside committees, which should bear in mind the council's' opinions during the law-making process.

► Article 7. Enabling Effective Parliamentary Monitoring

Parliament shall recognize the right and duty of civil society, media, and the general public to monitor parliament and parliamentarians. Parliament shall engage in consultations with the general public and civil society organizations that monitor parliament to encourage effective monitoring and reduce barriers in accessing parliamentary information.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>The state legislature is open to civil society organizations in their monitoring of the state legislature's activities</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. Does the Parliament support the civil society and media in their monitoring of the state legislature?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Is parliamentary information timely and without discrimination made available to all interested stakeholders?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>
<p>Parliamentary monitoring is strengthened through consultations with civil society</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1 Does the state legislature, through their own or the non-governmental sector's initiative, seek to strengthen parliamentary monitoring by holding consultations with the civil society?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>

⁹ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

¹⁰ Ibid

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Georgian legislation guarantees the right of attendance of civil society representatives and citizens to committee sessions. The existing Media Centre in the Parliament fosters the media's ability to cover news on the parliamentary activities. Plenary and committee sessions are broadcast live on the Second Channel TV, which plays a significant role in monitoring of parliamentary activities.</p>	
<p>It is important that media and civil society are aware beforehand of any activities planned by the Parliament. Such information is not timely and completely published on the parliamentary webpage. Moreover, there are cases when new issues are added to the committee agenda without any notice. This denies the ability of interested stakeholders to prepare or even be aware of issues interesting for them.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Records of proceedings and agenda of committee sessions should be timely and completely published on the parliamentary webpage.⁹ 2. There should be an obligation to justify changes to the agenda during committee meetings.¹⁰
<p>The Parliament is open to consultations with civil society representatives to strengthen parliamentary monitoring. The Parliament has allocated office space for several NGOs, including Transparency International Georgia, in both the Tbilisi and Kutaisi building of the state legislature. Moreover, the Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia has been drafted with active collaboration with the civil society representatives.</p>	

► Article 8. Sharing Good Practice

Parliament shall actively participate in international and regional exchanges of good practice with other parliaments and with civil society organizations to increase the openness and transparency of parliamentary information, improve the use of information and communication technologies, and strengthen adherence to democratic principles.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Parliament is active in sharing best practices with local and international partners and the outcome of the partnerships are accessible to the public</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>1. Has the Parliament participated in international and local exchanges of good practice?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is the information on the process of exchanges of good practice and its outcomes available to the public?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>	

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>During 2013-2014 the Parliament hosted 13 visits and exchanges of good practice from representatives of other state legislatures and civil society organizations. Notably, Georgia hosted the OGP Global Legislative Openness Week conference in Tbilisi on September 14-15, 2015.</p>	
	<p>Information on the parliament's international and regional visits can be found on the parliamentary webpage. However, it is difficult to find relevant information after time since systematized information on the visits is not presented on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<p>It is recommended that information is systematically published on international and regional visits related to sharing of best practices on the parliamentary webpage.</p>

Article 9. Ensuring Legal Recourse

Parliament shall enact legislation to ensure that citizens have effective access to legal or judicial recourse in instances where citizens' access to government or parliamentary information is in dispute.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Legislation is in place to guarantee an effective legal recourse where access to information is in dispute</p> <p>Component average score: 2.7</p>	<p>1. Is there legislation in place that provides for an effective access to legal or judicial recourse in instances where citizens' access to government or parliamentary information is in dispute?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. How well are legal or judicial recourses related to disputes on issuing of public information handled?</p> <p>Score: 2</p> <p>3. Is there an independent body that monitors the accessibility of public information?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>
<p>Dispute settlement mechanisms in cases related to parliamentary or government information are effective in practice</p> <p>Component Average Score: 2</p>	<p>1. To what extent are legal or judicial recourses related to disputes on issuing of public information effective?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The General Administrative Code contains regulations on freedom of information and the publication of information, as well as legal recourses to administrative organs and courts in case of disputes.</p>	
<p>Legislation defines the rules of settling disputes through legal recourse. However, the process is ineffective since the information is a perishable product and the court may take months before reaching a verdict. Moreover, state fees on disputes related to freedom of information negatively affect the process of the legal recourse.</p> <p>Notably, the legislation does not stipulate any fines for violations in the release of public information. The discretion of the Administrative Court to force the release of public information is not a sufficient mechanism for a due legal recourse.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An effective and swift mechanism for disputes on release of public information should be created through legislation. 2. Fines for violation of rules on release of public information should be stipulated by legislation 3. State fee for disputes on release of public information should be abolished
<p>The Georgian legislation does not provide for an independent body that monitors the accessibility of public information and provides due response mechanisms during violations.</p>	<p>To provide an effective oversight over the accessibility of public information and response mechanisms, an independent organ should be created or the aforementioned functions should be added to an already existing body.</p>
<p>There are a number of issues with a non-uniform interpretation by courts and administrative organs of norms related to freedom of information. The definition of an immediate release of information could be one of the examples where there are differing interpretations. Moreover, the lack of an independent oversight agency negatively affects the settling of disputes related to access to information.</p>	<p>The Parliament should adopt a law that would regulate in detail the issues related to freedom of information and establish an independent oversight body.</p>

Article 10. Disseminating Complete Information

Parliamentary information available to the public shall be as complete as possible, reflecting the entirety of parliamentary action, subject only to narrowly and precisely defined exceptions.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>List and types of parliamentary information that is public are defined by Georgian legislation and internal rules of the Parliament</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>1. Does Georgian legislation include norms on accessibility of parliamentary information and types of accessible information?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Has the Parliament adopted any regulations that specifically concern access to parliamentary information?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>
<p>Complete parliamentary information is publically accessible</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>Is parliamentary information accessible through requests from the state legislature?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Is complete information on legislative activities available in electronic form on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 2</p> <p>3. Is there complete information on parliamentary activities not related to legislative process available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

¹¹ http://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/parlament_action_plan_geo.pdf

¹² The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Georgian legislation regulates access to public information (which includes parliamentary information). The proactive disclosure of information is also regulated by 26 August 2013 Resolution #219 of the Georgian government “Request of Public Information through Electronic Forms and Proactive Disclosure”</p>	
<p>Order #123/3/ “About the Form of the Electronic Request of Information and Proactive Disclosure of Public Information” of the Chairperson of the Parliament regulates the publishing of parliamentary information on the parliamentary webpage and rules of request through the electronic forms. Notably the list does not include statistics on deputy questions (information on amount of questions sent and answers received). Deputy question statistics are not published on the parliamentary webpage.¹¹</p>	<p>Based on the Chairperson of the Parliament’s order the Parliament should publish MPs’ questions, responses, and annual reports of Parliamentary delegations and Friendship Groups on the parliamentary website in an open format.¹²</p>
<p>Information on parliamentary activities can be requested from the state legislature through an employee responsible for processing these requests</p>	
<p>Information on legislative activities, including supporting documents to draft laws, is available on the parliamentary webpage, however it is incomplete. For example, all committee findings on draft laws and legislative initiatives can not be found on the parliamentary webpage. Moreover, explanatory notes do not reflect the purpose, main amendments and aims of the draft laws.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of committee sessions on the parliamentary webpage should include opinions and remarks voiced by civil society representatives, which have not been accepted by the committee or the initiator of the draft law. 2. Opinions and remarks on draft laws sent to the Parliament by the civil society representatives should be available on the parliamentary webpage. 3. The Parliament should facilitate the adoption of instructions to improve the content of explanatory note and establish uniform standards
<p>Complete information on parliamentary activities not related to the legislative process is not provided on the parliamentary webpage (for example: MPs’ work trips and outcomes, information on parliamentary oversight, statistics on amount of absences of MPs from committee and plenary sessions).</p>	<p>Information on parliamentary activities not related to the legislative process should be available on the parliamentary webpage, for example: information on work visits and expenses for each MP, deputy questions and answers, justified leave of absences of MPs.</p>

► Article 11. Providing Timely Information

Parliamentary information shall be provided to the public in a timely manner. As a general rule, information shall be provided in real time. To the extent that doing so is impossible, parliamentary information shall be released publicly as quickly as it is available internally.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Parliamentary information is disseminated in a timely manner</p> <p>Component average score: 3.5</p>	<p>1. How timely does the Parliament publish information on the events taking place in the state legislature?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	
	<p>2. How timely does the Parliament publish information on the activities taking place in the state legislature?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>	

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>As a rule, schedules of all official meetings are provided in the calendar available at the parliament's official webpage. A short summary of the plenary sittings and committee proceedings is published on the same day or during the committee session, which hinders the ability of civil society to engage in the process.</p>	<p>Agenda information on committee sessions and other events should be available several days before they take place on the parliamentary webpage.</p>
<p>Summaries of plenary and committee sessions are published on the same day or the day after, however there are problems with timely publications of records of proceedings and voting results.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Records of proceedings of the sessions should be timely compiled and published on the parliamentary webpage. 2. Voting records and draft laws approved in the second or third hearing should be available on the same day or the day after on the parliamentary webpage.

▶ Article 12. Ensuring Accurate Information

Parliament shall ensure a process to retain authoritative records and guarantee that the information it releases to the public is accurate.

Article average score: **3.5**

Components	Guiding Questions	Evaluation	Recommendations
Parliament ensures a process to retain authoritative records and guarantee that the information it releases to the public is accurate. Component average score: 3.5	1. Does the Parliament produce and store accurate information? Score: 5	Information on the state legislature’s daily activities is produced and stored. The parliament also stores documents from the first convocation of the Parliament.	
	2. Does the Parliament take all actions possible to ensure the authenticity of the records kept? Score: 2	Information on the activities of the Parliament, including historic information, is not fully digitized.	It is recommended that a single electronic base be created, which will include digital copies of all normative acts produced since the first convocation of the Parliament.

Block 2. Making Parliamentary Information Transparent

Block Score: **3.8**

Transparency of parliamentary information saw a significant improvement since 2016. For example, summaries and press releases of committees and plenary sessions are duly published on the parliamentary webpage, an event archive has become available, and a live-streaming function was added for plenary and committee sessions. Nevertheless, there are a number of issues in the transparency of parliamentary information. To improve on the shortcomings, the following principle issues should be addressed:

- Information on justified leave of absences should be published on the parliamentary webpage
- Temporary replacements during committee sessions should be possible only during cases of justified leave of absence
- Transparency of parliamentary expenses should increase. Information on MPs' work-related trip expenses and salary bonuses of parliamentary staff should be published on the parliamentary webpage.
- Records, action plans and annual reports of committees should be timely published on the parliamentary webpage
- The following information should be completely and timely published on the parliamentary webpage: draft law findings of all committees, expert opinions and findings, reports by state bodies accountable to the legislative body and results of discussions.

Article 13. Adopting Policies on Parliamentary Transparency

Parliament shall adopt policies that ensure the proactive dissemination of parliamentary information, including policies regarding the formats in which this information will be published. Parliamentary transparency policies shall be publicly available and shall specify terms for their periodic review to take advantage of technological innovations and evolving good practices. Where parliament may not have the immediate capacity to publish comprehensive parliamentary information, parliament should develop partnerships with civil society to ensure broad public access to parliamentary information.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament has a transparency policy that guarantees the proactive dissemination of information</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Has the Parliament adopted a transparency policy document?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Does the transparency policy document ensure the proactive dissemination of parliamentary information?:</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>3. Are there periodic reviews of transparency policies?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>
<p>Transparency policy document is public and accessible.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Is the transparency policy document publicly available?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>Parliament partners with civil society to improve broad public access to parliamentary information</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. Does the Parliament cooperate with civil society to improve broad public access to parliamentary information?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Order #123/3/ "About the Form of the Electronic Request of Information and Proactive Disclosure of Public Information" of the Chairperson of the Parliament represents the transparency policy document of the Parliament.</p>	
<p>The Order of the Chairperson of the Parliament does not completely guarantee the proactive disclosure of all important parliamentary information. For example, deputy questions, information on justified leave of absences and work-related trip expenses are not amongst the list of documents to be proactively published.</p>	<p>The transparency policy document should provide formats and dates for release and dissemination of parliamentary, as to give a reasonable expectation for interested stakeholders to obtain information in due time.</p>
<p>The periodic review of the Order of the Chairperson of the Parliament is not envisaged.</p>	<p>Periodic review of transparency policies should be conducted as to promote the inclusion of higher standards and best practices.</p>
<p>Order #123/3/ "About the Form of the Electronic Request of Information and Proactive Disclosure of Public Information" of the Chairperson of the Parliament is available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	
<p>The Parliament cooperates with civil society organizations in bolstering accessibility to information. For example, NDI and the Parliament cooperated to create www.majoritarian.ge, where information on majoritarian MPs was to be available. However, once the project for creating the website was completed, the information on the websites, in majority of cases, was no longer updated and thus citizens are no longer able to receive information from this source.</p>	<p>The Parliament should cooperate with civil society organizations in bolstering accessibility to information. The partnership should be intensive and long-term.</p>

► Article 14. Providing Information on Parliament’s Roles and Functions

Parliament shall make available information about its constitutional role, structure, functions, internal rules, administrative procedures and workflow, as well as the same information for its committees.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Information on the role and structure of the Parliament is accessible.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Is information on the role and structure of the parliament accessible?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is information on the functions, internal rules and structure of the Parliament available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>3. Is public information on the administrative procedures and workflows related to processing of legislative proposals public petitions and appeals available on its website?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>Information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions is accessible.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Is information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions publicly accessible?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>3. Is there sufficient public information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions</p> <p>Score: 5</p>

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	Information on the role and structure of the parliament is available on the parliamentary webpage.	
	Information on the functions, internal rules and structure of the Parliament is available on the parliamentary webpage	
	Information on the administrative procedures and work-flows of the Parliament is available on the parliamentary webpage.	
	Information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions is available on the parliamentary webpage or upon request.	
	Information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions is available on the parliamentary webpage.	
	Information on the roles and functions of the committees and factions, temporary and permanent commissions is sufficient for interested stakeholders.	

► Article 15. Providing Information on Members of Parliament

Parliament shall provide sufficient and regularly updated information for citizens to understand a member's credentials, party affiliation, electoral mandate, roles in parliament, attendance, identities of personal staff, and any other information members wish to divulge about themselves and their credentials. Working contact information for the parliamentary and constituency offices of members shall also be available to the public.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament provides citizens with sufficient and regularly updated information on MPs.</p> <p>Component average score: 4.2</p>	<p>1. Are MP biographies being published on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Is information on MP credentials, party affiliation, and electoral mandate being published on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>3. Is information on committee and faction affiliation of MPs available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>4. Is information on MP attendance of plenary sessions and committee hearings, their official trips, and other parliamentary activities available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>5. Is information and contact details on MPs being updated regularly on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>
<p>Contact information of parliamentary and MPs offices is provided in a duly updated manner.</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Is information on majoritarian bureaus public?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Is information on majoritarian bureaus available online?</p> <p>Score: 2</p> <p>3. Is the contact information of MPs and majoritarian bureaus regularly updated?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
The Parliamentary webpage has biographical entries on all MPs.	
The individual MP pages include working contact information, date of birth, educational background, specialization, party affiliation and work history.	
Information on the MPs membership in committees, factions and parliamentary activities is available on the parliamentary webpage.	
Information on justified leave of absences for plenary and committee sittings is not available on the parliamentary webpage. It is worth mentioning that there were 1927 instances of justified absences in 2014, while in 2015 there were 2199 instances. Moreover, there are cases when information on work-related trip expenses is not published on the parliamentary webpage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information on justified leave of absences for plenary and committee sittings should be available on the parliamentary webpage, including the reason for absence. 2. Information on work-related trip expenses and a short summary/purpose of the trip should be available on the parliamentary webpage.
Information on MPs available on the parliamentary webpage is frequently outdated. For example, information on activities and work-related trip expenses are not duly updated. Moreover, the official @parliament.ge mailboxes are, as a rule, unresponsive to due to being overfilled.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information on MPs should be updated duly. 2. Start proper maintenance of @parliament.ge mailboxes
Information related to majoritarian bureaus are public, and the information is provided upon request.	
Information on majoritarian bureaus provided on the parliamentary webpage is incomplete and outdated. For example, parliament Moreover, information on the majoritarian MPs' activities is not provided. For example, there are no records of public meetings, issues discussed, etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Majoritarian MPs should begin proper maintenance of their individual pages. 2. The parliamentary webpage should provide information necessary information such as contact details of Majoritarian MP staff, statistics on the amount of citizen inquiries received/responded, etc.)
Contact information for MPs and majoritarian bureaus is frequently incomplete.	Contact details for MPs and majoritarian bureaus should be updated on the parliamentary webpage.

► Article 16. Providing Information on Parliamentary Staff and Administration

Parliament shall make available information about its administrative functioning and the structure of parliamentary staff that manage and administer parliamentary processes. Contact information for staff responsible for providing information to the public should be publicly available.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Information on staff and administrative functioning is provided by the Parliament</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. Is complete and regularly updated information on parliamentary staff publicly available?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Is complete and regularly updated information about parliamentary staff available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>
<p>The contact information of the parliamentary employees responsible for providing information on parliamentary staff and administrative functioning is publicly available.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Is the contact information of Parliament employees responsible for providing information to the public publicly available and regularly updated?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Information on the administrative staff and functions is public and is available upon request, with restrictions as defined by the Law on Personal Data Protection.</p>	
<p>Information on the administrative staff and functions is available on the parliamentary webpage, however information on parliamentary staff and administration, especially contact information, is not complete and requires an update.</p>	<p>Full and updated contact information for administrative staff should be available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>
<p>The Parliament has an employee responsible for providing information to the public. The contact details for this person is available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	

► Article 17. Informing Citizens regarding the Parliamentary Agenda

Documentation relating to the scheduling of parliamentary business shall be provided to the public, including the session calendar, information regarding scheduled votes, the order of business and the schedule of committee hearings. Except in rare instances involving urgent legislation, parliament shall provide sufficient advance notice to allow the public and civil society to provide input to members regarding items under consideration.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament provides information on the scheduling of parliamentary activities</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Does the Parliament publish a calendar of planned activities and events in advance?</p> <p>Score : 4</p> <p>2. Do committee follow the agenda when discussing draft laws and how is the agenda amended?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

¹³ http://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/parlament_action_plan_geo.pdf

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Information on parliamentary activity is published on the parliamentary webpage, mostly a day before the event is due to take place. In some case, such as information on committee sittings, the agenda is made available only several hours prior to the sitting. This approach minimizes possibility for interested stakeholders to be aware of the agenda as well as denies them the ability to attend the sitting.</p>	<p>The parliamentary webpage should be timely updated with the agenda and schedule of committee sittings</p>
<p>Additional issues are sometimes added during the committee sittings without any justification thus hindering engagement of the civil society members in the discussion process. Moreover, draft laws are frequently discussed in an accelerated procedure, which hinders the ability of the society to timely engage in the discussion of the draft law.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impose obligations to develop justifications for changes to the agenda during committee sittings.¹³ 2. Accelerate procedure for draft laws should be justified. Information on draft laws to be heard in an accelerated procedure should be visible published on the parliamentary webpage.

► Article 18. Engaging Citizens on Draft Legislation

Draft legislation shall be made public and published upon its introduction. Recognizing the need for citizens to be fully informed about and provide input into items under consideration, parliament shall seek to provide public access to preparatory analysis and background information to encourage broad understanding of policy discussions about the proposed legislation.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Draft laws are immediately published upon its introduction</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>Does the Parliament publish draft legislation promptly upon its introduction?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>
<p>Public access to supporting documents of draft laws is guaranteed to raise civic awareness and get feedback</p> <p>Component average score: 1.7</p>	<p>1. Are draft law conclusions made by relevant parliamentary committees at various stages of consideration made publicly available and posted on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 2</p> <p>2. Are committee session records and opinion notes from various stages of consideration made publicly available and posted on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score : 2</p> <p>3. Are conclusions made by experts and non-governmental organizations related to draft laws made publicly available and posted on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Draft laws are published on the parliamentary webpage, however not upon its introduction to the Parliament.</p>	<p>Legislative initiatives should be uploaded onto the parliamentary webpage upon their registration.</p>
<p>Parliamentary committee conclusions are not timely available on the parliamentary webpage. Moreover, findings of the compulsory committees are not available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<p>The findings of both the leading and compulsory committees should be uploaded on the parliamentary webpage.</p>
<p>Records and opinion notes of committee sessions are not timely available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<p>Committee session records and opinion notes from various stages of consideration should be available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>
<p>Conclusions made by experts and non-governmental organization related to the draft laws are not available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<p>Conclusions made by experts and non-governmental organizations related to draft laws at various stages of its consideration should be publicly available.</p>

► Article 19. Publishing Records of Committee Proceedings

Reports of committee proceedings, including documents created and received, testimony of witnesses at public hearings, transcripts, and records of committee actions, shall promptly be made public.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>There is timely public access to committee records, created and received documents and reports</p> <p>Component average score: 3.5</p>	<p>1. Are documents received by committees posted on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 4</p> <p>2. To what extent is information on committee activities made available promptly and fully on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Documents created by committees, minutes of proceedings and remarks are published on the parliamentary webpage. However, only several committee annual reports and action plans are published on the website.</p>	<p>Committee annual reports and action plans should be published on the parliamentary webpage</p>
<p>A short summary of the committee proceedings is published on the same day of the sitting or the day after. The parliamentary website provides live video streaming of all committee and plenary meetings. The video archive, however, is not tagged and therefore it is difficult to find earlier recordings. This potentially hampers the civil society's full access to the parliament's work since the short summaries cannot necessarily reflect the full spectrum of debates occurring during committee sittings. Moreover, transcripts of proceedings are not published on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a tagged online video archive and verbatim report of proceedings for committee sittings on the parliamentary website. 2. Information on committee proceedings should have a link to the video of the proceeding. 3. The minutes of the proceedings should be timely published on the parliamentary webpage.

Article 20. Recording Parliamentary Votes

To ensure members' accountability to their constituents for their voting behavior, parliament shall minimize the use of voice voting in plenary and shall use roll call or electronic voting in most cases, maintaining and making available to the public a record of the voting behavior of individual members in plenary and in committees. Similarly, parliament shall minimize the use of proxy voting and ensure that it does not undermine norms of transparency and democratic accountability.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament uses roll call or electronic voting, in order to ensure MP accountability to their constituents</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Are voting records publicly available?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. Does the Parliament make use of the electronic voting system?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>Plenary voting records are publically available</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>Does the Parliament keep voting records of its plenary sessions?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. Are voting records of plenary sessions available online?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>The Parliament makes limited use of temporary replacements in order to avoid undermining the norms of transparency and democratic accountability</p> <p>Component average score: 2.5</p>	<p>Are the rules for proxy voting during committee hearings defined by law, and are they in line with the principle of democratic accountability?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <hr/> <p>2. To what extent is the use of temporary replacement of absent MPs justified?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>According to Article 141 (1) (2) of the Rules of Procedure of the Georgian Parliament, the voting process is public except for cases defined by the Georgian Constitution and Georgian law.</p>	
<p>Voting on the plenary is conducted through electronic voting panels. Hand-voting is practiced in rare cases, for example when the agenda is approved.</p>	
<p>The Parliament stores and keeps voting records of plenary sessions.</p>	
<p>The voting records of plenary sessions are available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	
<p>According to Article 49 of the Rules of Procedure of the Georgian Parliament, if a member of the committee is temporarily unable to take part in the work of the committee, then the faction is allowed to appoint a temporary replacement. The temporary replacement may take place five times during one session of the parliament per MP, regardless whether the absence is justified or not.</p>	<p>1. The faction should have the right to appoint a temporary replacement only if the absent MP has a justified leave of absence.</p>
<p>It is difficult to find an MP that has not used a temporary replacement during an absence. The Parliament gives an overreaching right to MPs to use temporary replacements, which may undermine the system of democratic accountability.</p>	

► Article 21. Publishing Records of Plenary Proceedings

Parliament shall create, maintain and publish readily accessible records of its plenary proceedings, preferably in the form of audio or video recordings, hosted online in a permanent location, as well as in the form of a written transcript or Hansard.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament' creates and maintains audio and video recording archives, as well as written transcripts of its plenary proceedings.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Does the Parliament create and keep audio and video recordings of its plenary proceedings?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. Does the Parliament create and keep written transcripts of its plenary sessions?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>Audio and video recordings as well as written transcripts of its plenary proceedings are publicly available on the parliamentary webpage</p> <p>Component average score: 2.5</p>	<p>Are audio and video recordings of plenary sessions available online?</p> <p>Score: 4</p> <hr/> <p>2. Are written transcripts of plenary sessions available online?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The Parliament conducts video recording of plenary sessions, which is later on saved in a digital format. Interested persons may request and receive the recordings.</p>	
<p>The Parliament creates transcripts of plenary sessions, which can be requested by interested persons from the Parliament.</p>	
<p>Video recordings of plenary sessions are available on the parliamentary webpage but are not thematically categorized. Moreover, there is no link to the recordings if a session isn't ongoing.</p>	<p>The Parliament should create an online video archive for plenary proceedings.</p>
<p>There is no practice of providing any form of written transcripts for plenary proceedings on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<p>The Parliament should publish transcripts of plenary proceedings on the parliamentary webpage.</p>

► Article 22. Publishing Reports Created by or Provided to Parliament

All reports created by parliament or that are requested or required to be submitted to parliament, its offices, or committees, shall be made public in their entirety, except in narrowly defined circumstances identified by law.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Public access to reports created by the Parliament are made public</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. To what extent does the law ensure that documents created by the Parliament (committees, temporary investigatory commissions, etc.) are made public?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Are reports created by the Parliament available online?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>
<p>Parliament guarantees public access to reports created by state bodies accountable to the legislative body.</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>1. Does the law ensure that reports created by state bodies accountable to the Parliament are made public?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Are reports created by state bodies accountable to the Parliament available online?:</p> <p>Score: 4</p>

¹⁴ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The Georgian legislation and Order #123/3/ "About the Form of the Electronic Request of Information and Proactive Disclosure of Public Information" of the Chairperson of the Parliament stipulate that reports, findings and statements of the Parliament are public documents.</p>	
<p>Reports, conclusions and statements created by individual Parliamentary committees are available and easy accessible on the official parliamentary webpage. However, yearly reports by parliamentary committees are either not published or published late on the web-page.</p>	<p>Timely publish annual reports of the committees on the parliamentary website.¹⁴</p>
<p>Reports created by state bodies accountable to the Parliament are public documents by law.</p>	
<p>Upon its registration in the Parliament, reports created by state bodies are published on the parliamentary webpage. However, findings these documents proves to be difficult at times, since they are not systematically published.</p>	<p>The parliamentary webpage should have a special page where all reports by state bodies will be published, as well as all documents related to its discussion (findings of the committee, recordings of the plenary and committee sittings, transcripts, etc.)</p>

► Article 23. Providing Information on the Budget and Expenditures

Parliament has a responsibility to make public comprehensive, detailed, and easily understandable information about the national budget and public expenditures, including past, current, and projected revenues and expenditures. Similarly, parliament has a duty to publish information regarding the parliament's own budget, including information about its own budget execution and bids and contracts. This information shall be made public in its entirety, using a consistent taxonomy, along with plain language summaries, explanations or reports that help promote citizen understanding.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>The Parliament fosters public access to information on state budget.</p> <p>Component average score: 4.3</p>	<p>Is information on the state budget public?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <hr/> <p>2. To what extent does the Parliament ensure that budget information is available online?</p> <p>Score: 4</p> <hr/> <p>3. To what extent are reports on the state budget and public expenditures understandable (plain language summaries, explanations) to the public?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>The Parliament provides public access to information related to the parliamentary budget.</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. Is information on the Parliament's budget, expenditures, tenders, and contracts made available on its website?</p> <p>Score: 4</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is information on MP and parliamentary staff salaries, bonuses, salary supplements, official trips, and other expenditures made available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Draft state budget, its committee and plenary proceedings, minutes of proceedings, opinion notes and other documentation related to the process are available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	
<p>Most of the information on the state budget is published on the parliamentary webpage., but the supporting documents (draft laws, committee conclusions) are not provided systematically on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The committee conclusions for the state budget implementation reports should be available on the parliamentary webpage. 2. The parliamentary webpage should be systematically updated with any information related to the state budget.
<p>Public information on state budget and expenses written in the reports are provided in understandable language for the public.</p>	
<p>Information on the Parliament's budget, expenditures, tenders, and contracts is available on the parliamentary webpage. However, some information is not available in detail, for example work-related travel expenses are not provided individually for MPs.</p>	<p>Work-related travel expenses should be provided individually for all MPs on the parliamentary webpage.</p>
<p>The official parliamentary webpage has an array of public documents related to the legislature's budget, salaries of parliamentary staff, travel expenses, grants from foreign governments and tenders. However, there is no information on salary bonuses for the staff of the Parliament.</p>	<p>Information on salary bonuses for the staff of the Parliament should be available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>

► Article 24. Disclosing Assets and Ensuring the Integrity of Members

Parliament shall make available sufficient information to allow citizens to make informed judgments regarding the integrity and probity of individual members, including information on members' asset disclosures, their parliamentary expenses, and their non-parliamentary income, including interest, dividends, lease payments or other in-kind benefits.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Public access is provided on information on MP assets, their parliamentary expenses, and non-parliamentary income.</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>1. Is information on MP assets, their parliamentary expenses, and non-parliamentary income public?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Is information on MP assets, their parliamentary expenses, and non-parliamentary income available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>
<p>Information on MP assets is accurate</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. Is information on MP assets accurate and verifiable?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>According to Georgian legislation, information on MP assets, their parliamentary expenses, and non-parliamentary income is public information.</p>	
<p>Annual public asset declarations and information on family income is not available on the parliamentary webpage, but it can be accessed at the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) website. The CSB collects public asset declarations online and guarantees public access to the documents. As far as parliamentary expenses are concerned, they are available by group total and not by individual MPs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is recommended that the parliamentary webpage be interlinked with the information on MP assets, their parliamentary expenses, and non-parliamentary income available on the website of the Civil Service Bureau. 2. Information on parliamentary expenses should be available separately for each MP, rather than a grouped total.
<p>Information on assets is provided in the electronic asset declaration. However, this system lacks the mechanism for validating whether the submitted declarations are complete and correct. Georgia is introducing a new law from January 2017 which will introduce a new monitoring mechanism for validating submitted asset declarations.</p>	<p>Mechanism for checking the validity of asset declarations should be timely implemented.</p>

► Article 25. Disclosing Information on Unethical Conduct and Potential Conflicts of Interest

Parliament shall enact clearly defined rules to ensure disclosure of information necessary to protect against actual or perceived conflicts of interest and ethical violations, including relevant information about members' interactions with lobbyists and pressure groups. Parliament shall also make public information on the final results of any judicial or parliamentary investigations into charges of unethical behavior, conflicts of interest or corruption.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament publicly discloses rules related to actual conflicts of interest and ethical violations</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Has the Parliament enacted legislation to effectively deal with issues of conflicts of interest of its members?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. Has the Parliament developed a mechanism to effectively deal with issues of conflicts of interest and ethical violations committed by its members?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>
<p>Parliament publicly discloses information on any judicial or parliamentary investigation into charges of unethical behavior, conflicts of interest or corruption</p> <p>Component average score: 1</p>	<p>1. Is information on investigations into ethical and other violations committed by MPs made available on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>

¹⁵ http://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/parlament_action_plan_geo.pdf

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Article 12 (1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia states that as per the Law of Georgia on “Conflict of Interests and Corruption in Civil Service” an MP shall fill out the declaration on his/her property or/and financial conditions and submit it to the Information Bureau on Property and Financial Conditions of Public Officials.</p>	
<p>The Parliament adopted a code of conduct in 2004, which is not in use today. The Parliament does not have a mechanism for reacting to MPs violations of ethic codes.</p>	<p>The Parliament should create a working group and conduct public consultations to draft and approve the code of ethics.¹⁵</p>
<p>The Parliament doesn’t systematically publish information on investigations and violations of ethnic norms by MPs. The parliament does not have an obligation by law to publish this information.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information on violations of ethical norms and response mechanisms should be publicly available. 2. Information on conflict of interests and violation of norms of ethics should be permanently available on the parliamentary webpage, for all convocations.

Article 26. Providing Access to Historical Information

Parliamentary information for prior sessions shall be digitized and made available to citizens in perpetuity for reuse free of legal restrictions or fees. To the extent a parliament cannot digitize and make available its own information, it shall work with outside organizations to facilitate public dissemination of parliamentary information without restriction. Parliament shall provide the public access to a parliamentary library in order to allow members and the public the ability to access historical parliamentary information.

Article average score:

4.3

Components	Guiding Questions	Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Information is publicly available on the Parliament's lawmaking process since its very first session free of any fees.</p> <p>Component average score:</p> <p>3.5</p>	<p>1. Is information on the Parliament's lawmaking process since its very first session publicly available free of any fees?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	<p>The law regulates the request of parliamentary information and it is free of any fees.</p>	
	<p>2. Is parliamentary information for all prior sessions digitized and published on the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>	<p>Access to historical information and prior sessions is only partly available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	<p>1. The parliamentary webpage should reflect the entire work of the prior convocations of the Parliament.</p> <p>2. Information available at the office of the Parliament should be digitized.</p>
<p>Parliament cooperates with the public library, in order to ensure public access to the parliamentary library</p> <p>Component average score:</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Does the Parliament ensure public access to the parliamentary library containing historic parliamentary information?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	<p>The Parliament maintains the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia with extensive records on parliamentary history, e-journals and academic articles related to parliamentary work. The National Parliamentary Library is accessible for all interested persons.</p>	

Block 3. Easing Access to Parliamentary Information

Block Score: 4.2

Civil society and media do not experience serious hurdles to parliamentary information, however the incomplete nature of information on the parliamentary webpage is a barrier to obtaining parliamentary information for regular citizens. The following principal issues should be resolved to meet the standards of access to parliamentary information as defined by the Declaration:

- Easing of physical access to the Parliament building
- Creation of a thematically categorized video archive for plenary and committee sittings
- Translation of fundamental documents into languages spoken by ethnic groups with substantive demographic population in Georgia

► Article 27. Providing Multiple Channels for Accessing Information

Parliament shall provide access to information about its work through multiple channels; including first-person observation, print media, radio and television broadcasts, and Internet and mobile device technology.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Parliament uses traditional channels (printed media, TV and radio broadcasts) to disseminate information about its activities to the public</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. How actively does the Parliament make use of TV radio broadcasts and printed media to disseminate information.?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>Parliament uses internet and mobile device technologies to disseminate information about its activities to the public</p> <p>Component average score: 2</p>	<p>1. How actively does the Parliament make use of internet technologies to disseminate information?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>2. How actively does the Parliament make use of mobile technologies to disseminate information?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The parliament actively uses the media to disseminate information on its activities. The plenary and committee sittings are broadcast live on the second channel. The parliamentary webpage also provides live broadcast of plenary and committee sittings.</p>	
<p>Information on parliamentary activities is provided on the parliamentary webpage. The parliamentary webpage does not charge any fee nor does it require registration for use. The pages for Majoritarian MPs do not have information on their activities.</p> <p>The parliament's use of social networks is lackluster. As a rule, the MPs rarely update their Facebook pages with information.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is recommended for the Parliament to make more active use of social networks, especially for receiving public opinions and starting discussions. 2. Information on Majoritarian MPs pages should be updated to reflect their activities and work.
<p>The parliament does not use mobile technologies. For example, there is no service to subscribe to parliamentary activity updates through SMS notifications.</p>	<p>It is recommended for the Parliament to offer SMS subscription services to the public.</p>

► Article 28. Ensuring Physical Access

Parliament and its plenary sessions shall be physically accessible and open to all citizens, subject only to demonstrable public safety and space limitations.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Right of attendance of plenary and committee sittings by citizens is defined by law or a document with legal force.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. Is a citizen's right to attend plenary sessions and committee hearings of the Parliament guaranteed by law?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>The rules for physical access to the Parliament building are publicly available.</p> <p>Component average score: 2.5</p>	<p>1. To what extent is the Parliament building physically accessible?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>2. Are the rules for attending plenary sessions and committee hearings publicly available?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

¹⁶ http://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/parlament_action_plan_geo.pdf

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Article 9 (1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia stipulates that plenary proceedings are open to citizens to attend.</p>	
<p>To enter the Parliament building a special pass is required, which may be issued only by the MPs and a small handful of employees of the Office of the Parliament of Georgia.</p>	<p>The only barrier for physical access to the Parliament building should be a security check. If at the current moment the Parliament does not have the organizational or technical capacity to satisfy this high standard of physical access, the Parliament can appoint a Liaison Officer responsible for communication with the non-governmental organizations and other members of society, who would also issue permits for attending committee hearings.</p>
<p>Information on how to attend plenary and committee sittings are available on the parliamentary webpage, but it is not easily found on the parliamentary website. Thus interested persons are not able to receive information on how to attend plenary and committee sittings.</p>	<p>The Parliament should publish detailed instructions on the parliamentary webpage on the procedure to attend the plenary sittings and committee meetings. Contact details should be available for the person responsible for processing requests for permits. The information should be available in a visible spot on the parliamentary webpage.¹⁶</p>

► Article 29. Guaranteeing Access by the Media

Parliament shall ensure that the media and independent observers are given full access to parliamentary proceedings; the criteria and process for providing media access shall be clearly defined and publicly available.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Access to parliamentary proceedings and open events for the media and parliamentary observers is guaranteed by law.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>To what extent does the law regulate accessibility to parliamentary proceedings and open events?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
<p>The right to access to parliamentary proceedings and open events for the media and parliamentary observers is carried out effectively.</p> <p>Component average score: 5</p>	<p>1. How effectively is this law on attendance to parliamentary proceedings executed?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
	<p>2. Are the rules for attending parliamentary proceedings and open events publicly available to the media?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>

► Article 30. Providing Live and On-Demand Broadcasts and Streaming

Efforts shall be made to provide citizens with real-time and on-demand archival access to parliamentary proceedings through radio, television and the Internet.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Live and on-demand broadcasting of parliamentary information is available</p> <p>Component average score: 3.5</p>	<p>1. To what extent is the live broadcasting of plenary and committee hearings of the Parliament available through radio, television and the internet?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>
	<p>2. Is there an online archive of video and audio recordings of plenary and committee hearings?</p> <p>Score: 2</p>

Article average score:

5

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>Article 138 of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia stipulated that the parliamentary proceedings are open to accredited representatives of the mass media. Article 49 (12) also states that accredited mass media representatives can be invited to attend committee sittings and publish the information on the results of the sitting in the press.</p>	
	<p>The law on attendance to parliamentary proceedings is carried out without any discrimination.</p>	
	<p>Information on attendance for media is open and public.</p>	

Article average score:

3.5

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>Plenary and committee sittings are broadcast live on the second channel. In 2014, the parliamentary webpage was upgraded with the ability to watch committee and plenary sitting online.</p>	
	<p>The video archive for plenary and committee sittings is not thematically categorized and therefore it is difficult to find earlier recordings. If no current sessions are taking place, the archive is not accessible.</p>	<p>1. The parliamentary webpage should have a thematically categorized video archive.</p>

► Article 31. Facilitating Access throughout the Country

To the extent possible, access to parliamentary information shall not be restricted by geographic barriers. Although the use of parliamentary websites facilitates access to parliamentary information without geographic restriction, in countries where Internet access and usage is limited, parliament shall seek other means of ensuring public access to parliamentary information throughout the country.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Access to information by the Parliament throughout the country without any restrictions by geographic barriers is facilitated by the Parliament</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>1. To what extent does the Parliament make use of its website in order to disseminate parliamentary information?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	
	<p>2. Apart from the internet, does the Parliament use other means for disseminating information?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>	

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Information on parliamentary activities is easily accessible through the official parliamentary website and the plenary proceedings are broadcast live on the second channel.</p>	
<p>Internet coverage in Georgia, especially in its regions, is not high. Therefore, access to parliamentary information through the parliamentary webpage is not possible for a certain segment of the society. Most of the plenary and committee sitting are broadcast live on the second channel and radio.</p> <p>The Parliament does not have a special printed publication that would provide news on parliamentary activities to the public. The Parliament also does not have SMS notification services.</p>	<p>The Parliament should set up an SMS notification subscription service for people interested in parliamentary activities.</p>

► Article 32. Using Plain Language

Parliament shall ensure that legal or technical language does not serve as a barrier to citizens seeking to access parliamentary information. While recognizing the necessity of using precise language in writing laws, parliament has a duty to develop plain language summaries and similar tools to make parliamentary information readily available and understandable to members and citizens with diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>The Parliament uses simple and understandable language in writing descriptions to laws and in other documents.</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. To what extent is parliamentary information (draft law conclusions, short news summaries, etc.) written using understandable language?</p> <p>Score: 5</p> <p>2. To what extent is the language of legislation understandable?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>

► Article 33. Using Multiple National or Working Languages

Where the constitution or parliamentary rules provide for the use of multiple national or working languages in parliament, parliament shall make every reasonable effort to provide for the simultaneous interpretation of proceedings and rapid translation of the parliamentary record.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>The Parliament follows a nondiscriminatory use of multiple national or working languages for the purpose of increasing public engagement in countries where such legal commitment exists.</p>	<p>To what extent is parliamentary information available in the languages understandable to all ethnic groups living in the country?</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The language used for creating parliamentary information is easy to understand and does not contain difficult technical terms.</p>	
<p>There are a number of issues with legislative terms that are not identical in legislation.</p>	<p>The uniformity of legislative terms should be protected. An analysis of the existing legislative database should be conducted in this regard.</p>

Score: Does not apply given Georgia's existing laws or practices.

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Georgian is the only official state language (Abkhazian in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia) and the working language of the legislature. The information on the parliamentary website is partially provided in English. Even though the law doesn't require this, but it is recommended to provide translations of fundamental documents, such as the Constitution and the Parliament regulatory documents, in languages of ethnic minorities with a substantive presence in Georgia.</p>	

Article 34. Granting Free Access

Parliamentary information shall be available to citizens for unrestricted access, reuse and sharing free of charge.

Article average score:

5

Components	Guiding Questions	Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Unrestricted and free access to parliamentary information is guaranteed by law.</p> <p>Component average score:</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Is the unrestricted and free of charge access to parliamentary information guaranteed by law?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	<p>According to the General Administrative Code of Georgia, everyone may have access to public information available at the administrative body, as well as receive copies unless the information contains state, professional, or commercial secrets or personal data. Notably, the Freedom of Information law states that charging any fees for issuing public information other than the cost of making copies shall not be permitted.</p>	
<p>Parliamentary information is available free of charge and without restrictions.</p> <p>Component average score:</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Do citizens receive public parliamentary information free of charge?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	<p>There are no restrictions for citizens to access or reuse parliamentary information.</p>	

Block 4. Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information

Block Score: 2.9

The functionality of the parliamentary webpage has dramatically improved over the years. However, there are still gaps in citizen outreach and engagement in the legislative process through the use of electronic communications. To meet the general principles of the Declaration, the Georgian parliament should make the following principal changes to its practice:

- Citizens should be able to leave comments and opinions on draft laws available on the parliamentary webpage
- Draft normative acts should be published in open and structured formats on the parliamentary webpage
- Draft laws should be given a unique identifier and be interlinked with the existing law and expert opinions
- SMS messaging alerts and email newsletter services should become available for people with interest in parliamentary activities
- Updated contact information for parliamentary staff and majoritarian MPs' bureaus should be available on the parliamentary webpage. MPs should use their official emails and majoritarian MPs should maintain and update information on their individual pages.
- The parliamentary webpage should be accommodated to the needs of persons with disabilities

► Article 35. Providing Information in Open and Structured Formats

Parliamentary information shall be compiled and released in an open and structured format, such as structured XML, that can be read and processed by computers, so that parliamentary information can be easily reused and analyzed by citizens, civil society, the private sector and government.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Parliamentary information is published in open, structured, and machine-readable formats.</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Is parliamentary information presented in an open and structured format?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is parliamentary information available in a machine-readable format?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	

¹⁷ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The official Parliamentary website provides initiated legislation, voting records, resolutions, declarations and statements, and most of these documents are either in scanned format or in a pdf format. There is also a section of plenary hearing attendance records. These documents are not provided in open formats. However, other type of parliamentary information, such as news and press releases, are available in open formats.</p>	<p>All parliamentary information should be published in open and structured formats.</p>
<p>The documents provided in scanned PDFs format are easily readable for the eye but are not practical for other purposes, such as data parsing. Such practice complicates the practical use of published documents, especially for data parsing, in order to show the parsed information on third-party website: parsing PDFs hinders the accuracy of the information one tries to get out of them. For example, it would be practical if the data were provided in JSON or CSV files, which are much more machine-readable, or if the PDF files were converted into Word documents.¹⁷</p>	<p>Stop the use of scanned PDFs as they are difficult or impossible to parse.</p>

► Article 36. Ensuring Technological Usability

Parliament shall ensure technological usability of parliamentary information by providing clear instructions for the use of any online databases or tools that enable citizens to retrieve parliamentary information from the parliamentary website. To the extent parliament provides a user interface, it shall use best practices to improve its usability.

Components	Guiding Questions
Parliamentary information and databases on the parliamentary webpage is retrievable and usable Component average score: 2.5	1. How easy is it to retrieve and use digitized parliamentary information? Score: 3
	2. Does the Parliament provide clear instructions for the use of databases or tools available on its website? Score: 2

► Article 37. Protecting Citizen Privacy

Parliamentary websites shall have a clear and concise privacy policy to let citizens know how their personal information is being used. Parliament shall not employ membership or registration requirements that restrict public access to information on parliamentary websites or permit the tracking of personally identifiable information without explicit consent.

Components	Guiding Questions
Parliamentary information is accessible without any requirement to reveal identity or any other relevant restriction. Component average score: 3	1. Is it possible to access parliamentary information without registration on the parliamentary webpage? Score: 5
	2. Has the Parliament enacted a privacy protection document and published it on its website? Score: 1

¹⁸ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

Article average score:

2.5

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The current parliamentary webpage does not accommodate to the needs of persons with disabilities. For example, there is no option for contract colouring to accommodate to the needs of the visually impaired.</p>	<p>It is desirable that the Parliamentary website be available in alternate formats to accommodate for the needs of the persons with disabilities.¹⁸</p>
<p>The search tool is available is on the parliamentary webpage is easy to use, however there are no instructions for how to use the search tool for legislation.</p>	<p>Instructions on the use of the legislation search tool should be available on the parliamentary webpage.</p>

Article average score:

3

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>No registration is required to access parliamentary information without registration on the parliamentary webpage.</p>	
<p>The Parliament's personal data protection is carried out based on Georgian legislation. There is no internal document, which would explain how recorded personal data may be used.</p>	<p>Devise a clear and concise privacy policy for the parliamentary website, including information on how frequently personal data is erased.</p>

► Article 38. Using Non-Proprietary Formats and Open-Source Software

Parliament shall give preference to the release of digital information in non-proprietary and open formats, and the use of free and open-source software applications.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Parliamentary information is accessible in non-proprietary and open formats.</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>Does the Parliament publish information in easy-to-use and open formats?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>	

► Article 39. Allowing Downloadability for Reuse

Parliamentary information shall be easily downloadable, in bulk and in well-documented formats to allow for easy reuse of the information.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>Parliamentary information is easily downloadable in bulk.</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. Is it possible to download information available on the parliamentary webpage in bulk?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is it possible to reuse published information?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	

Article average score:

4

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>The official Parliamentary website provides scanned versions of initiated legislation, voting records, resolutions, declarations and statements. The documents provided in scanned PDFs format are easily readable for the eye but are not practical for other purposes, such as data parsing.</p>	<p>Stop the use of scanned PDFs as they are impossible to parse. Such practice complicates the practical use of published documents, especially for data parsing. Parsing PDFs hinders the accuracy of the information one tries to get out of them. For example, it would be practical if the data were provided in JSON or CSV files, which are much more machine-readable.</p>

Article average score:

3

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>It is possible to download information from the parliamentary webpage, however there is no easy way to download information in bulk.</p>	<p>1. It should be possible for parliamentary information to be downloadable in bulk.</p>
	<p>Parliamentary information on the parliamentary webpage is reusable, but in most cases this information is not in open and structured formats.</p>	<p>1. Information on the parliamentary webpage should be available in open and structured format.</p>

► Article 40. Maintaining Parliamentary Websites

Even in countries with limited Internet usage, the maintenance and regular updating of a comprehensive parliamentary website is a vital aspect of parliamentary openness in the modern, interconnected world. Parliament shall ensure that parliamentary information is available in electronic format and shall regard online dissemination as an essential means of communication.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>parliamentary webpage is maintained and regularly updated</p> <p>Component average score: 3</p>	<p>1. How regularly is the parliamentary webpage maintained and regularly updated?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>
<p>Parliamentary information is accessible through electronic means.</p> <p>Component average score: 3.5</p>	<p>1. Is complete information on the Parliament available on the webpage?</p> <p>Score: 3</p> <p>2. Is the dissemination of parliamentary information through electronic means an effective means of communication for the Parliament?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>The Parliamentary webpage is easily accessible and updated on a regular working basis. Nevertheless, there are instances where certain components are neglected. For example, individual webpages for 75 majoritarian deputies listed on the Majoritarian Index on the parliamentary webpage are accessible but have no published information. These pages were created to allow individual majoritarian deputies to publish information relevant to their respective constituencies, such as their working hours, staff contact information, field work, floor statements, list of initiated legislation and records of public meetings.</p>	<p>Majoritarian MPs should begin proper maintenance of their individual pages. Also, the parliamentary webpage should provide information necessary information such as contact details of Majoritarian MP staff, statistics on the amount of citizen inquiries received/responded, etc.) See Article 15 of this assessment for more details.</p>
<p>Information on parliamentary activities is accessible on the parliamentary webpage, however information on the activities of MPs is not fully provided.</p>	<p>Information on activities of MPs should be regularly updated, e.g. activities of Majoritarian MPs in their districts, information on their work trips, etc.</p>
<p>Dissemination of parliamentary information through electronic means is an essential tool for the Parliament to communicate information. However, the Parliament does not make full use of its potential; information is not published in complete form or updated on a regular basis. The Majoritarian MPs do not use their individual webpages to publish information on their activities.</p>	<p>MPs and their staff should more actively make use of electronic means to spread information, e.g. email, social networks, etc.</p>

► Article 41. Using Easy and Stable Search Mechanisms

Parliament shall make it as easy as possible for citizens to quickly find desired parliamentary information by creating databases enabling both simple and complex searches through the use of appropriate metadata. Information shall be available in a location that remains constant over time, for instance, on a webpage with a persistent URL.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>The Parliament provides easy and stable search mechanisms</p> <p>Component average score: 4.5</p>	<p>Does the search tool on the parliamentary webpage function properly?</p> <p>Score: 4</p>	
	<p>Is parliamentary information placed on persistent URLs?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	

► Article 42. Linking Related Information

Parliament shall seek to improve the ability of citizens to find relevant parliamentary information by linking parliamentary information to other related information, for example, by linking references in a bill history to earlier versions of the legislation, to relevant committee reports, to expert testimony, to sponsored amendments and to the portions of the Hansard that contain the record of parliamentary debate on the relevant piece of legislation.

Components	Guiding Questions	
<p>The Parliament provides citizens with relevant parliamentary information by linking parliamentary information to other related information.</p> <p>Component average score: 4</p>	<p>1. Is parliamentary information (news, current and upcoming events) interlinked in a structured manner?</p> <p>Score: 5</p>	
	<p>2. To what extent are initiated amendments, draft law amendments, enacted laws, expert testimonies and other documents related to the lawmaking process interlinked?</p> <p>Score: 3</p>	

Article average score:

4.5

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>The parliamentary webpage provides a search tool that allows for users to search articles and legislative documents through keywords. There exists also an advanced search tool for draft laws. This search tool, however, has a number of issues; it frequently fails to display relevant search results when searching through keywords, registration numbers and draft titles.</p>	<p>1. The existing issues with the search tool should be fixed. A complete electronic legislation database should be created.</p>
	<p>Parliamentary information on the parliamentary webpage is provided on persistent URLs.</p>	

Article average score:

4

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>As a rule of thumb, information provided on the parliamentary webpage such as summaries of plenary and committee sittings are hyperlinked to the legislation or other sources they are referring to.</p>	<p>1. It should be possible for parliamentary information to be downloadable in bulk.</p>
	<p>Information on the legislative process is not fully interlinked with each other, e.g. initiated amendments, current law, expert opinions and other information related to the legislative process are not interlinked.</p>	<p>1. The draft law should be linked with the law published on the matsne.gov.ge webpage, expert opinions and other information related to the draft law.</p>

► Article 43. Enabling Use of Alert Services

Where possible, parliament shall provide citizens the ability to subscribe to services to alert them to certain categories of parliamentary actions through the use of email, SMS text messaging, or other technologies.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>Subscription options to alerts related to parliamentary activities are available</p> <p>Component average score: 1</p>	<p>1. Is it possible to subscribe to email notification to parliamentary information?</p> <p>Score: 1</p> <hr/> <p>2. Is it possible to subscribe to SMS text messages to parliamentary information?</p> <p>Score: 1</p> <hr/> <p>3. Does the Parliament use any other notification technologies?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>

	Evaluation	Recommendations
	<p>There is no email newsletter subscription service that would allow interested stakeholders to receive updates on new legislative initiatives or other updates from the Parliament.</p>	<p>1. Devise a newsletter service to enable e-mail notifications on new developments, laws and updates from the state legislature.</p>
	<p>There is no SMS subscription service that would allow interested stakeholders to receive updates on new legislative initiatives or other updates from the Parliament.</p>	<p>1. The Parliament should provide SMS subscription service</p>
	<p>Apart from the aforementioned notification technologies, the Parliament does not use other other notification technologies.</p>	<p>1. The Parliament should use various notification technologies to further boost the reach of parliamentary information.</p>

► Article 44. Facilitating Two-Way Communication

Parliament shall endeavor to use interactive technology tools to foster the ability of citizens to provide meaningful input on legislation and parliamentary activity and to facilitate communication with members or parliamentary staff.

Components	Guiding Questions
<p>The Parliament uses interactive technologies</p> <p>Component average score: 1</p>	<p>1. Does the Parliament enable an environment which maximizes interaction between citizens and their representatives?</p> <p>Score: 1</p> <hr/> <p>2. Do citizens have the ability to participate in the lawmaking process (e.g. provide their input on specific laws) through the parliamentary webpage?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>
<p>The Parliament facilitates citizen communication with MPs and parliamentary staff.</p> <p>Component average score: 1</p>	<p>1. To what extent do MPs make use of the parliamentary webpage to communicate with the constituency?</p> <p>Score: 1</p>

¹⁹ The following recommendation is one of the commitments included in the The Action Plan of The Open Parliament of Georgia

Evaluation	Recommendations
<p>Georgian legislation, including the Constitution, guarantee the right of citizens to engage in the legislative process. Nevertheless, the parliamentary webpage is not adopted to maximally provide for such engagement. The parliamentary webpage fails to provide all information that could boost citizen engagement in the parliamentary process. For example, information on attending committee sitting are not easily accessible through the webpage.</p>	<p>The parliamentary webpage should visibly display information on how to attend committee sittings, as well as relevant contact information.</p>
<p>Anyone can voice their comments and concerns on draft laws on the web-site of the Legislative Herald (www.matsne.gov.ge) through an online comment system. Nevertheless, there is no system in place that would send this comments over to the Parliament and put it up for further discussion.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It should be possible to leave comments and opinions on draft laws on the parliamentary webpage.¹⁹ 2. A system should be created which would allow the status of legislative proposals or other documents submitted by citizens to be tracked and accessible through the webpage.
<p>The MPs do not make use of the parliamentary webpage to communicate with the constituency during the legislative process.</p>	<p>The committee staff should ensure that comments and concerns made by the constituency on draft laws are sent to the initiator and author of the legislative proposal. Comments and concerns that have been accepted should be registered in the notice paper.</p>

Public Opinion Poll

Transparency International Georgia tried to find out how interested Georgian citizens are in receiving parliamentary information and how aware they are of parliamentary activities. Nearly 90% do not know that it's possible to participate in tours of the Parliament building. Moreover, only 16% are aware that everyone has the right to attend plenary and committee sittings.

Transparency International Georgia got interested in the level of citizen engagement in the legislative process. Our polls have found that an absolute majority (97%) have never attended plenary and committee sittings, while only 1% have addressed the Parliament with a request of public information or with opinions on draft laws. Notably, 64% of the 1% that has addressed the Parliament for public information, state that they have received the information timely.

Diagram 1

Did you know that educational tours are conducted in the parliament?

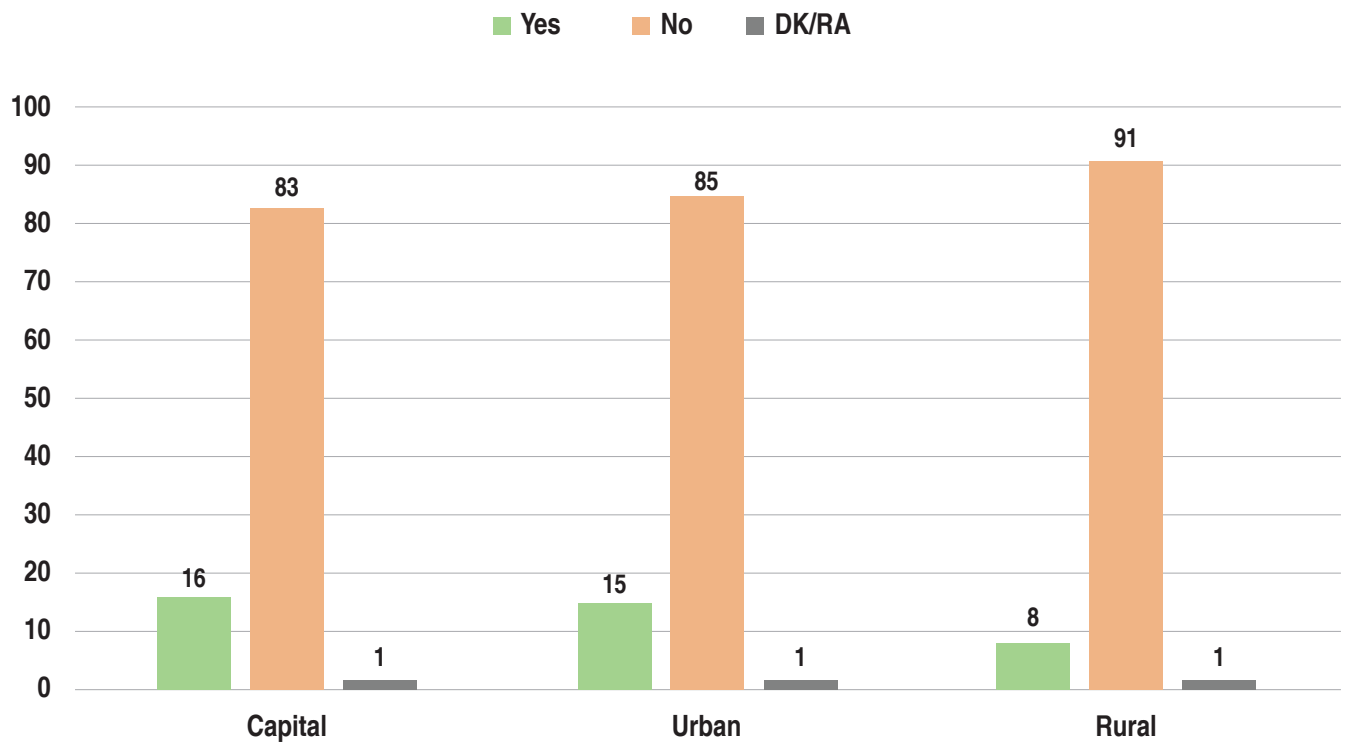


Diagram 2

By which means would you like to get information about parliamentary activities?

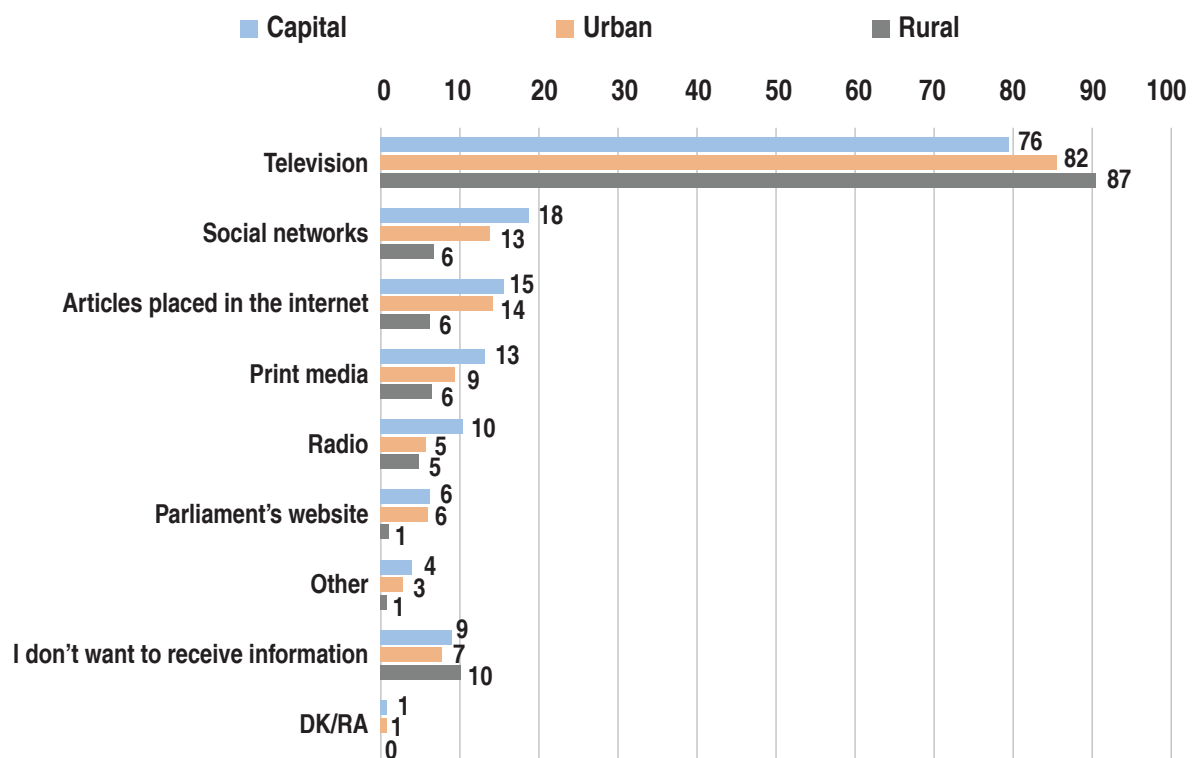


Diagram 3

Did you know, that everyone can attend the plenary sessions and committee hearings in the parliament?

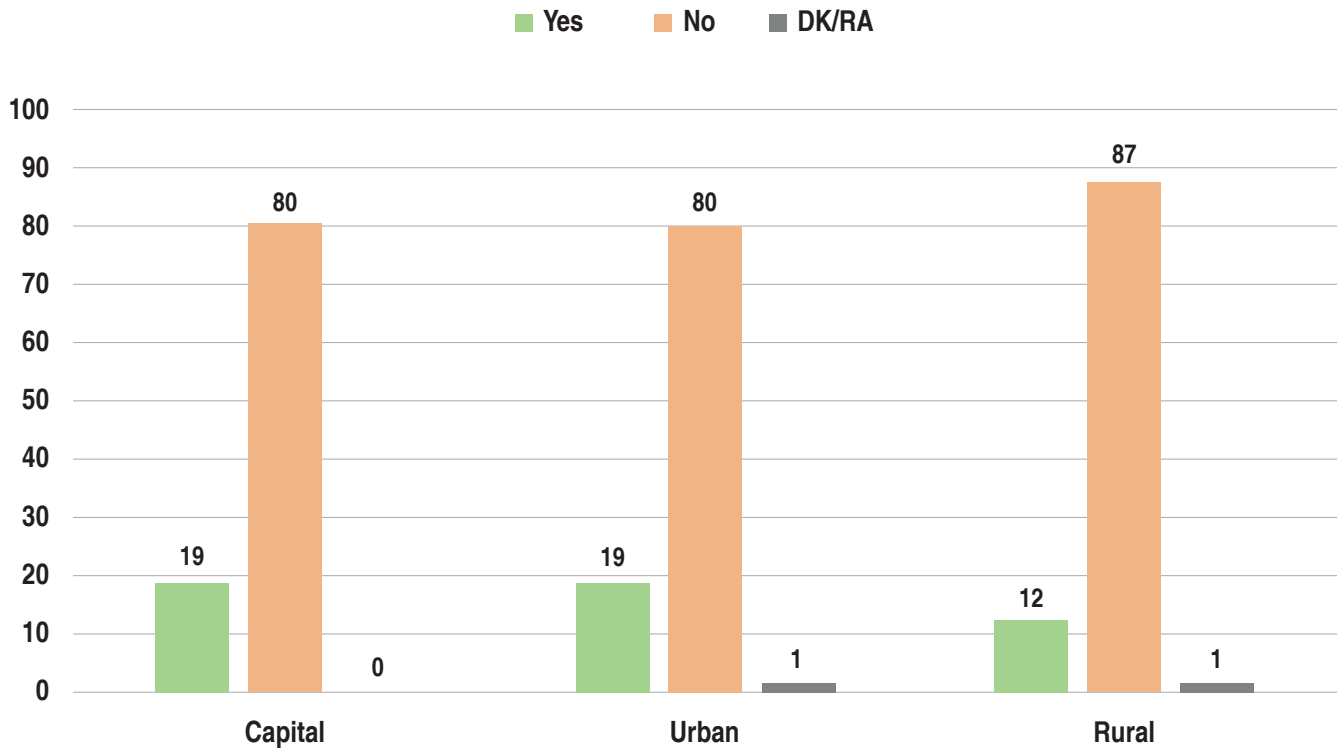


Diagram 4

Did you know that educational tours are conducted in the parliament? - of the 84% who didn't know that everyone can attend the plenary sessions and committee hearings in the parliament

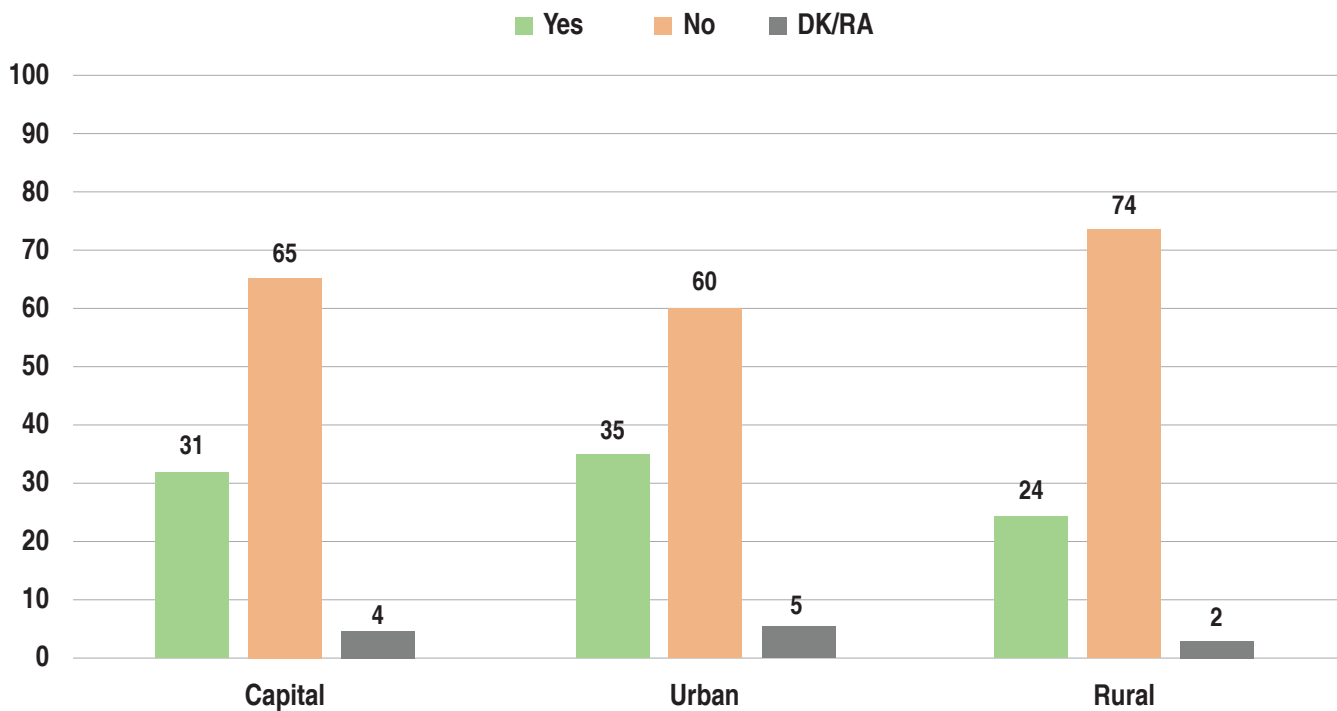


Diagram 5

Have you attended the plenary sessions or committee hearings?

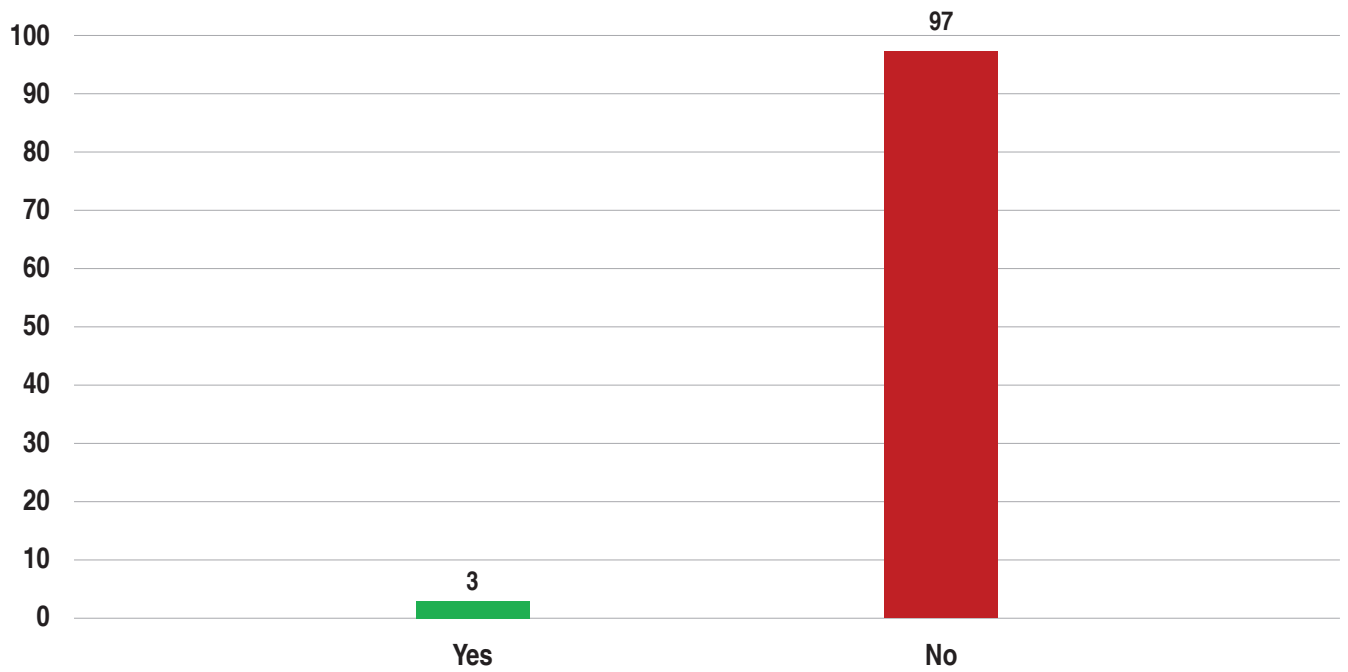


Diagram 6

Have you approached the parliament in order to request public information?

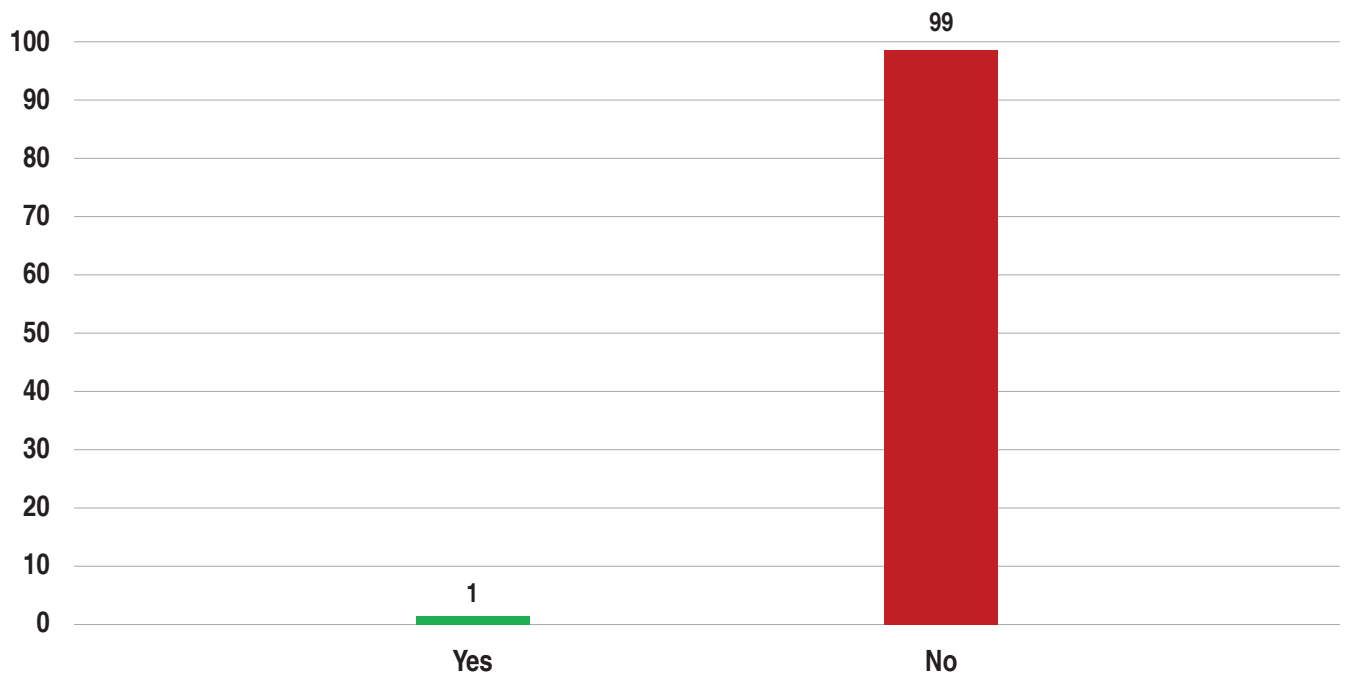


Diagram 7

Did you receive the information in time?
- of the 1% who approached the parliament in order to request public information

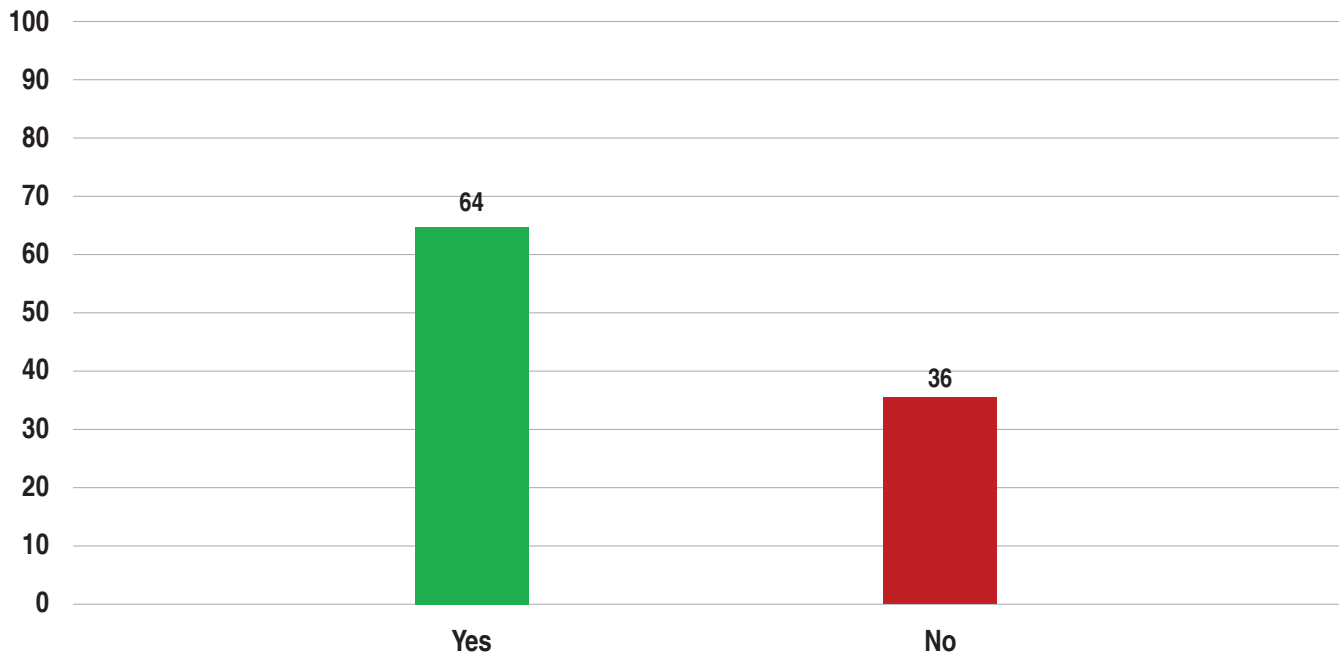


Diagram 8

During the past 5 years, have you approached the parliament or a member of parliament to introduce an amendment or adopt a new law?

