

Parliaments have made significant progress in engaging a wider range of citizens. Yet many initiatives lack inclusivity, relevance, relatability, continuity and impact. Nor do they collectively explore possible futures.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
MUST BE EMBEDDED
ACROSS PARLIAMENTS'
STRUCTURES, PROCESSES
AND ACTIVITIES.**

REIMAGINING ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN CITIZENS AND PARLIAMENT



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Parliaments across the world are under pressure to develop **public engagement** initiatives due to **declining trust** in politics and growing scepticism.

However, their efforts are often **tokenistic, superficial, or limited** to few and **infrequent** activities.

We need to think of public engagement beyond 'participation' or 'understanding'. It is a broader spectrum of connections between citizens and parliament. It requires dialogue and two-way relationships.

Such engagement:

- has an enduring effect on citizens
- makes parliamentary decisions more meaningful to them
- enhances the quality of these decisions

We should recognise that parliaments have inherent characteristics that create tension with effective public engagement, such as being:

Collective institutions which makes them difficult to relate to

Hierarchical which makes it harder for them to be welcoming, inclusive and relatable

Dependent on electoral cycles which makes them ill-equipped to address long-term problems and to engage meaningfully

Aggregative of interests which makes it challenging to appear relevant to everyone and to focus on specific issues and needs – a key vehicle for engagement

Subject to the fast pace of politics which means there's not always enough time to consult with everyone

SIX PRINCIPLES

for a reimagined engagement between citizens and parliament

Continuous

Engagement should be ongoing, taking place throughout a parliamentary term through permanent, embedded practices rather than ad-hoc arrangements

Relevant

Using many, varied engagement mechanisms, co-created with citizens when possible, and which meet the needs of diverse people and groups

Welcoming and inclusive

Parliaments' physical and symbolic spaces should feel approachable, be accessible, include every community and communicate using clear language

Relatable

Focusing on stories, issues and people, and treating citizens' inputs like other 'expert' evidence

Consequential

Impacting decisions in parliament and enabling people to feel involved in and to learn about democracy

Future generations aware

Thinking beyond the short-term, reflecting on the effects of current decisions on future generations, those already born and those yet to be born

