Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments

Andy Williamson

VERSION 1.0

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION


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Created in 1889, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organization that brings together the representatives of parliaments of States. IPU is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples with a view to strengthening representative institutions.

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Foreword

One lesson that parliaments have learned from their efforts to engage citizens is the following: you cannot wait for the people to come to parliament; you need to go where the people are. In 2013, the people are on social media. More than one billion to date and the number continues to grow exponentially.

Data from the *World e-Parliament Report 2012* shows that one-third of parliaments are already present on social media and another third are planning to join them. These parliaments have recognized the need to keep pace with changes in society; they also see the potential for revitalizing public engagement in political discussion and decision-making.

But we should not fool ourselves. Parliaments are still exploring how to use social media effectively. Finding an engaging, non-partisan manner to use interactive online tools is a major challenge for all institutions, but perhaps particularly for parliaments.

These are the reasons why IPU has decided to prepare this first-ever set of *Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments*. The Guidelines draw on lessons learned by parliaments so far and on good practice in the social media sphere. The objective is to encourage more widespread, more efficient and more effective use of social media by parliaments. I believe that this can strengthen links between parliaments and citizens and thereby contribute to better parliaments and stronger democracies.

The nature of social media means that these Guidelines will need updating before I have finished writing this sentence. New examples emerge every day, and today's good practice may be out of date by next week. However, while the Guidelines will need to be revised regularly, I believe that the principles identified here are enduring and will be adaptable to future situations.

The Guidelines are a collaborative effort. They would not exist without the engagement of the members and leadership of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament, the IFLA Section on Libraries and Research Services for Parliaments and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. I am also indebted to the many parliamentary staff who have willingly shared their experience and the lessons learned and to Dr. Andy Williamson who authored these Guidelines.

I encourage all parliaments to make use of the Guidelines and all social media users to hold parliaments to account for the way in which they use the Internet to include citizens in parliamentary work.

Anders B. Johnsson

Secretary General
Inter-Parliamentary Union

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The Guidelines were written by Dr. Andy Williamson.

The expert working group that helped to shape the Guidelines was composed of:

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The Guidelines benefitted from input from parliaments and parliamentary staff in many countries, as well as from participants at the *World e-Parliament Conference 2012* (Rome, Italy) and the IPU-ASGP conference on *Parliamentary representation and communication, and the role of social media* (Québec City, Canada).

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1. Scope and purpose of the guide

Social media, a range of online tools for creating and sharing content, have created new opportunities for legislatures and members of parliament. They provide new ways to communicate and engage with the public, consult on legislation, deliver educational resources and promote transparency. At the end of 2012, one third of parliaments already used social media and a further third were planning to.[1] However, traditional communication strategies can struggle to be effective over social media and it is important to develop new strategies and policies to support these new channels of communication. Parliamentary protocol, too, can appear restrictive, even constraining, when trying to fully exploit media that need a quick, more open and conversational approach.

The public's relationship to their parliament has changed. Where traditionally the work of parliament might have been reported through media commentary, today members are tweeting and posting comments to social networks from the chamber and committee rooms as events unfold. The public can directly follow multiple points of view and different political perspectives on a debate and, in some cases, directly contribute, communicating with members in real time. The public increasingly expects these much more instant forms of communication and this extends the role of parliaments to provide information about and access to parliament across a range of digital channels. Digital media make parliament and its members more transparent and accessible and can bring democracy closer to the public, but they also multiply the channels and can increase the complexity of parliamentary communication, outreach and engagement.

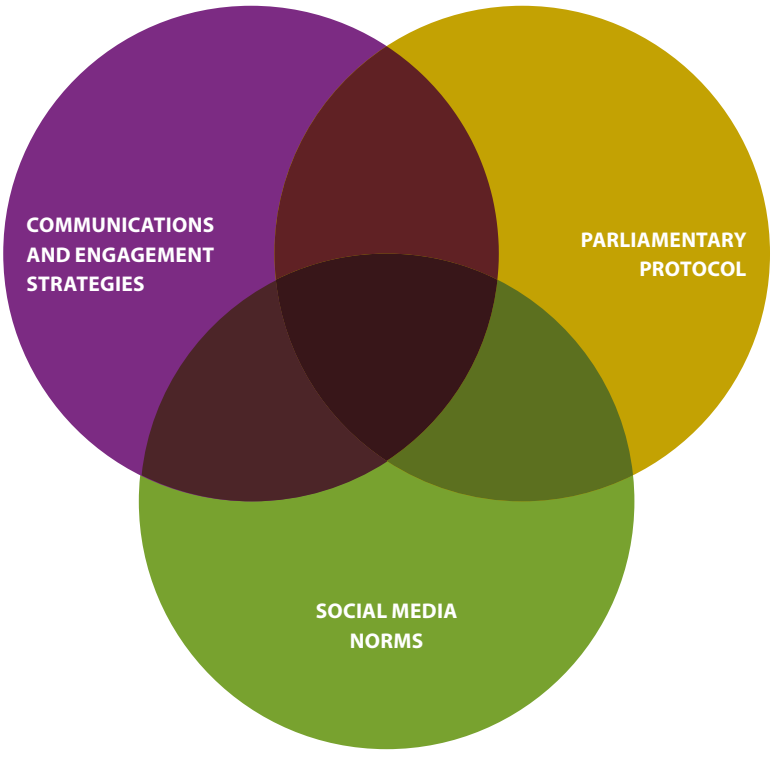
Social media use in parliaments has to be appropriate and finding the balance between this and traditional methods takes practice and fine-tuning. This document provides guidelines and advice for members and parliamentary staff who want to use social media to publish information, share views and engage with the public. It is not intended to be prescriptive and recognizes that:

- Social media are a new and effective way for parliaments (institutionally and for members) to connect with the public, particularly young people;
- Social media do not exist in a vacuum and their use is subject to existing codes of practice for communication and the appropriate use of digital media; and
- There is no right answer; how you use social media will be influenced by a wide variety of on- and offline variables.

The guide aims to define the scope, purpose and value of social media for parliaments and to provide guidance for officials managing social media channels within parliament, such that:

- Parliaments are able to take advantage of new opportunities for communication and engagement that social media provide; and

Figure 1 Intersection of social media norms with traditional communications, engagement and protocol



- The importance of good governance, planning and management of social media within the overall context of the parliament is understood.

It also highlights a number of peripheral areas that are related to or can be integrated with social media, including text messaging, online gaming and open data.

1.1 Target audience for this guide

This guide is intended for parliamentary staff who play a role in the institutional use of social media or who are considering using social media in the future. This could include Secretaries General, communications and web teams, information technology as well as committee staff, library and research staff. Whilst this guide is not written for Members, the Guidelines are likely to be of interest to them and, with this in mind, references are made to this in the document.

Whilst this guide can provide a starting point, it is generic. Regional groups or national parliaments are encouraged to modify and adapt these Guidelines to meet the norms and practices of their own institutions, political systems and environments.

2. What are social media?

Social media (also known as Web 2.0) are a varied set of Internet-based tools that allow individuals to access, engage and interact with others (individuals, businesses, public sector entities) as and when they choose. Social media are characterized by:

- The platform being hosted online (in the cloud); and
- The ability to consume, create and add to existing content.

Social media are platform-agnostic, which means that they can generally be accessed through any Internet-enabled device, including personal computers and (increasingly) smartphone and tablet devices but also via gaming consoles and new generation televisions. They are ideal places to connect and engage with people who would not traditionally think about talking to their parliament or making submissions on legislation. Social media provide an interactive and bidirectional experience. They are not another broadcast channel, although they are often still used as a one-directional channel by many parliaments around the world. What the public engages with is interaction, conversation, stories, entertainment and, above all, the personal: how you interact with others affects the way they will perceive you, your popularity and how you are trusted.

"Social media are online platforms where people can connect, discuss and share."

Whilst the way in which social media are used might be different, they are ideally suited to promoting and enhancing traditional events and campaigns, allowing a closer, more intimate experience for the user.

Pros	Cons
• Create space for dialogue • Push you closer to the public • Can build credibility and trust • Support greater transparency • Offer opportunities for third-party syndication and support • Viral distribution • Cost-effective • Better understanding of public opinion • Real-time monitoring • Time to get information out is greatly reduced • Can become a core part of your communications strategy and central hub for engagement and dissemination	• Etiquette and protocols are different from other media • Reputational risks if not authentic, honest and transparent • Need to be perceived as relevant to audience, not self • Require carefully tailored content • Potential to move rapidly and beyond your control • Recruitment is hard to predict and there is no guarantee productive dialogue will occur • Social media are not short cuts to efficacy; principles of good communication still apply

Social media incorporate a wide range of genres, applications and tools, including (but not limited to):

Type of social media	Description	Examples
Social networking sites	Individuals and organizations can create profiles, share information (such as status), images and video. Others can 'like' posts, share content, make comments and engage in discussions	Badoo, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Orkut
Micro-blogging	Short public messages; can be focused using hashtags[2]	Twitter, Branch
Video- and photo-sharing websites	Photographs and videos can be uploaded and shared	Flickr, Vimeo, YouTube
Blogs (including personal and corporate blogs and podcasts)	Blogs are like an online diary; they tend to be written in an informal style and updated frequently. Blogs can be individual or collective[3]	Blogger, Tumblr, Wordpress

Type of social media	Description	Examples
Blogs hosted by media outlets	Less formal than a traditional newspaper article but more structured and formal than a blog	CommentIsFree (*The Guardian* newspaper)
Wikis and online collaborative spaces	Online user-generated, collaboratively developed texts and documents	Wikipedia
Forums, discussion boards and groups	Topical web or e-mail based lists for discussions; can be public or private	Google Groups, Yahoo Groups
Online multiplayer gaming platforms	Games that are played with others over the Internet	Second life, World of Warcraft
Instant messaging	Short text messaging on mobile phones	SMS (text messaging)
Geo-spatial tagging	Post your location (plus comments and pictures) to an online social network	Facebook, Foursquare

"Social networks are less formal, less controlled, less rigid and more open. They are less respectful of position and tradition and conversations evolve much more quickly than in the traditional media. This can be challenging for formal institutions like parliaments."

Social media can be used for:

Information	The provision of resources, background information, media partnerships and general information for the public. This includes sharing and promoting information about parliamentary activities, such as bills and motions being debated in the legislature, committee meetings, special events, visiting delegations and the tabling of reports
Education	Activities, training materials and other resources for students and teachers. This includes providing easy, timely access to research and other parliamentary publications
Outreach	Links to and partnerships with civil society, business communities and other groups, facilitating public access to parliament
Engagement	Active channels to inform and connect with citizens, to solicit submissions and build interest in legislative business. This includes direct consultation with the public on legislation and policy and strategies to engage citizens directly in the work of the legislature

2.1 Social media norms

The networks that form within social media are not neutral; they reflect the wider opinions, moods and sensibilities of their members. They reflect power and counter-power within society as a whole and are more likely to be disruptive and uncoordinated.

When you publish or engage via a traditional website, you are in charge; you define the terms of engagement and can control who takes part and how. With social media, you are not in charge. There are already rules (formal and informal), norms or mores that control how the network operates and how members behave.

Social networks are less formal, less controlled, less rigid and more open. They are less respectful of position and tradition and conversations evolve much more quickly than in the traditional media. This can be challenging for formal institutions like parliaments.

It can be difficult for institutions to find their voice in this space: how formal do you need to be? Too much formality will not engage, but being too casual can appear insincere and implausible. Parliaments have a certain status and formality, so it can be challenging to carry this gravitas through to your communication via social media in a way that is also warm, friendly and engaging. The European Parliament has undertaken a strategy to engage the public in the places where they are and to use social media tools to promote public understanding and interest in the parliament. It has developed custom applications inside Facebook to run live chats with members, to find their local MEP and connect to his/her Facebook page.[4]

There is often an inherent tension between being helpful and informative and maintaining political neutrality.

Figure 2 The European Parliament's Facebook applications

Mistakes happen with social media because it is instant and perceived as a casual environment. Yet, communication protocols and parliamentary regulations apply here too and staff using social media must take care to follow these. Of course, these rules only apply to parliamentary staff and not to members when using social media to present their own political positions and views and exercising their representative function. In some instances, however, limitations could also apply to members (see 3.4). The best rule – for all – is 'if you're not supposed to say it, don't say it' and to think before you publish.

If a discussion is becoming heated and it is difficult to respond appropriately and clearly in the limited space available, consider writing a blog or longer post elsewhere and providing a link to it. Only do this to inform or educate, not in a way that might escalate any conflict.

"Good social media practice means listening, responding, asking and sharing; it's about being an active participant in the network."

2.2 Modes of use

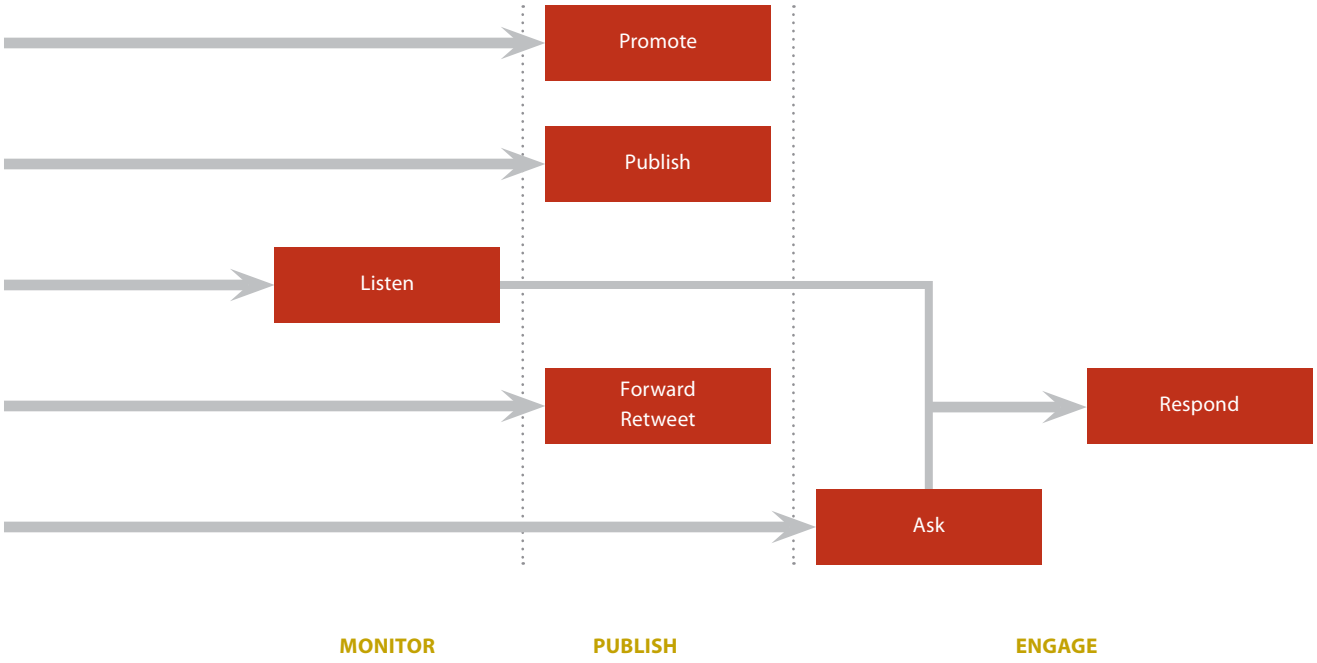
Whilst often defined through their capabilities to publish, share and connect, it is important to recognize that social media are also valuable for listening and monitoring wider conversations, trends and sentiment. Where first generation websites are about publishing, social media are about conversations and networks. They work most effectively when they are treated as an active medium, where you connect and engage, responding to comments and answering questions in real-time.

Good social media practice means listening, responding, asking and sharing; it's about being an active participant in the network.

It can be helpful to consider engagement as a set of sequential stages. These stages can cover the entire exercise or, for larger engagement projects, there might be numerous smaller iterations of them:[5]

- Conception and ideas;
- Preparing information and educational resources to support the engagement;
- Engaging in deliberation with the public and generating recommendations;
- Deciding on a course of action (which can include extending the deliberation stage);
- Implementation and follow-up; and
- Evaluation and analysis.

Figure 3 Modes of use



3. Governance and oversight

Responsibility for the coordination of social media needs to be incorporated into parliament's overall management structure and associated with traditional communication and engagement strategies. When social media usage is delegated to departments, it is helpful if a point of responsibility exists in each department as well as an overall coordinator (most likely within the communication function).

Internal use of social media needs to be clearly defined and well communicated so that all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and understand how social media are used and managed. Integrating the management of social media within existing structures helps to ensure consistency, avoid duplication and encourage good auditing and archival procedures. Social media are inherently two-way and a usage policy would reflect this by ensuring that there are clear guidelines for response and for getting the most benefit from communities of practice and communities of interest.

Social media exist within the context of and their use is subject to:

- Legislative obligations;
- Governance structures; and
- Operational and risk requirements.

"The nature of social media means that it's easy to start quickly and then incrementally develop your presence. This works well when you take a light-handed approach."

3.1 Authorizing the use of social media

Whilst those using social media must engage in a more informal manner than traditional parliamentary communication, their official use would generally still be restricted to those who are authorized to comment and engage. In this light:

- Before officials engage in public social media they need to be appropriately authorized to disseminate content and to comment and respond;
- Staff must be given appropriate network access to the social media tools parliament is using; and
- Existing codes of conduct or codes of ethics would be expected to inform the use of social media (and might need to be revised in the light of this).

It is also important to consider how requests to create new and innovative channels or products that use social media will be managed, recognizing that social media is often less formal, more iterative and experimental. Its design and deployment is not suited to the application of traditional information technology methodologies. It is important not to over-complicate social media usage and to ensure that it stays light, responsive and not overly bureaucratic; otherwise you will lose the ability to be responsive and engaging.

3.2 Authorized to disclose

Only staff who are authorized to disclose information would post it on social media. Therefore, the same or similar sign-off processes as traditional media would normally apply. However, the speed and informal nature of social media generate a higher risk of accidental or inappropriate disclosure, which must be guarded against by ensuring that clear practices and procedures are developed and that all staff are aware of these and adhere to them. Above all, staff should resist the temptation to rush to respond and ensure that the implications of any information that is posted have been considered first.

"Practically, the same rules apply to staff on social media as in other social situations but with two crucial differences: on social media you cannot control who hears what you say and there is a record of what you have said."

3.3 Personal use of social media

One of the challenges presented by social media is the overlap between personal and professional. It is entirely to be expected that an increasing number of parliamentary staff will have their own personal social media accounts. Whilst it is clear that an institutional account must not be used in a personal capacity, the situation needs to be envisaged where parliamentary staff might use their personal account to comment on institutional matters. Clear guidelines can support anyone commenting on parliamentary-related activity on social media.

For example, in their personal use, parliamentary staff might be expected not to:

- Engage in online activities that could be construed as bringing parliament into disrepute;
- Use social media to attack or abuse colleagues or parliament;
- Post derogatory or offensive comments in any forum in any context;
- Advocate or express views for or against a particular political party or an issue of current public controversy or debate; or
- Express views for or against a bill or subject in parliament.

3.4 Use of social media in the chamber

This is both a procedural and a technical issue for parliaments. Members themselves decide whether and where within parliament it is acceptable to use electronic devices and, if so, what the limitations are on what can be broadcast. Many parliaments now accept that members will post to social networks when they are in the chamber or in committees and that this can be a successful strategy for them as individuals and also a benefit to wider democratic discourse and engagement. However, there are also limits to consider: for example text-based comment might be appropriate, whereas videos or photographs might not be.

"A broad range of members commenting on a debate through social media can widen the perspective that the public gets about parliamentary procedure or the topic under discussion."

A broad range of members commenting on a debate through social media can widen the perspective that the public gets about parliamentary procedure or the topic under discussion.

Although there are no consistent or global standards on the use of technology by members in the chamber, 75 per cent of parliaments allow tablets in plenary sessions and 65 per cent allow smartphones. Just over half of parliaments provide members with smartphones or tablets.[6] Where most EU member parliaments allow their use, subject to some restrictions (such as during questions to ministers in France), the UK Parliament allows members to use tablets and smartphones for text-based communication (stating that, despite there being good arguments against, allowing them is pragmatic and realistic given their ubiquity[7]) but does not allow laptop computers in the chamber. Ireland and Greece allow no technology at all and Canada allows laptops but not mobile phones, as does New Zealand (at the Speaker's discretion). The National Assembly for Wales provides computers for all members within the chamber which, though not provided for the purpose, can be used to access social media (whilst smartphones or tablets cannot).

From a technical perspective, parliaments need to consider issues of bandwidth and network capacity for members if a significant number are to use social media in the chamber. Social media is, of course, just one use for smartphones and tablet devices, and they are increasingly used to provide access to parliamentary material relevant to debates. In this context, sufficient secure wireless networking capacity is required.

Social media usage within parliament needs to be considered in the context of:

- Communications and engagement strategies;
- Security policy;
- ICT usage policies; and

- Parliamentary protocol, guidelines for courtesy and conventions. For example, whilst speeches by members in the chamber are generally protected by parliamentary privilege, it would seem unlikely that this would apply to comments posted publicly on social media simply because they were made from the chamber. It will surely only be a matter of time before this assumption is tested in parliament, however.

3.5 Supporting members' use of social media

Parliaments might also wish to consider whether and how they can provide training and support to members who wish to start using social media to engage with the public. Whilst there can be boundaries related to ensuring impartiality, parliamentary staff can often be the best people to support a move to social media. Such tools are not simply useful to members for campaigning and political engagement, but also serve as conduits to increase democratic interaction, make members more accessible to the public (and vice versa) and as tools to increase participation in the work of parliament. For example, the National Assembly of Afghanistan has been supporting members to create and use Facebook and Twitter accounts. Even though the Assembly does not use them itself, it has recognized the significant growth in social media (and of Facebook in particular) in the country. Members cite the benefits as maintaining better connections with their electorates and that social media is particularly useful in engaging young people.[8]

Parliaments can provide resources to make it easy for the public to identify and use social media to follow or connect with their representatives. This could include creating lists of members using Twitter. The fact that the list is managed by parliament can give the public a level of confidence that the accounts are genuine. Other examples include the European Parliament's Facebook application (shown earlier) and a webpage created by the Mexican Senate providing direct links to the Facebook, Twitter and YouTube pages of senators by party affiliation[9]:

Figure 4 Social media links to members provided on the website of the Mexican Senate

4. Compliance and legal issues

It is important to consider issues of compliance in terms of how social media is to be used and the way content is to be shared. In particular, copyright and ownership of intellectual property can present challenges within third-party social media sites and internally hosted environments need to take account of privacy and data-protection legislation.

"Social media can increase reach and engagement but restrictive licensing or excessive control could be counter-productive. Creative Commons licensing and Open Government Licensing are ways of achieving some balance."

4.1 Ensuring non-partisanship

Parliamentary staff have a duty to remain neutral about members' politics and at all times be seen as non-partisan, acting in ways that can never be judged to favour one political viewpoint or another. It is equally important that this non-partisan role is maintained when using social media. All staff using social media need to take this into account and carefully review and consider what they are posting to ensure that it does not favour one political position over another.

4.2 Copyright, intellectual property and licensing

Issues of copyright and the protection of intellectual property need to be considered from two sides. Anything that is published, posted or re-posted, whether by an individual or through a parliamentary account and is not produced by parliament could be subject to licence or control. This needs to be verified and appropriately managed through, if necessary, obtaining permission for use from the rights holder. This is particularly true in the case of video and open data repositories.

A more likely issue is ownership of your own material and how you control the re-use of this, particularly if parliamentary material has been protected by local copyright law to prevent unauthorized duplication. In a social media world the logic of copyright evaporates somewhat – a key tenet of social networking is the sharing of information and content. Trying to prevent replication is not only likely to be futile, it can often be seen in a negative light by users of social media.

Many legislatures and public sector bodies are now moving away from traditional copyright, promoting instead the use of Creative Commons licensing.[10] Whilst the UK Government maintains Crown Copyright on publications (including online) this is now supported within an Open Government Licensing framework that in effect achieves the same outcome as Creative Commons licensing.[11] Both models are designed to promote the free and easy re-use of material, to recognize the non-commercial nature of the content but also to retain an acknowledgement of the originator and to prevent misuse. The New Zealand Government Open Access Guidelines go further, suggesting that, where appropriate, publications can be ascribed as having no known rights associated with them.[12]

Both Australia and New Zealand promote the use of Creative Commons licensing for parliamentary publications and content. The Australian Parliament publishes all bills, committee reports and the Hansard transcript of parliamentary sittings under such a licence.[13]

The Danish Parliament approaches licensing of video content by using a Creative Commons licence to allow the public to create and share their own clips. This possibility is subject to a usage licence that protects the rights of parliament against offensive or malicious misuse of the content and does not allow the public to change or re-purpose the content.[14]

4.3 Privacy and confidentiality

Parliaments must protect personal information provided by citizens, particularly when it is subject to privacy or data-protection laws. Personal information generally means anything that can be used to personally identify an individual and can include name, address, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and other personal data, medical information or biographical information that could lead to the disclosure of an individual's identity.

Where information is being made public it is always good practice to ask permission to disclose it in advance. It is also important to consider whether anonymous posts (or those made under a pseudonym) will be allowed and if so whether some form of identification is required in private (there can be good reasons to allow anonymous posts to discussions, such as in the case of discussions around abuse or domestic violence).

Be aware of any issues relating to information held regarding individual visitors to any of your digital assets including the use of cookies[15] (for example, the European Union now requires websites to explicitly seek permission to save cookies on a user's computer).[16]

You are not responsible for third-party social networks but it is good practice to understand their privacy regulations, policy on ownership of any content posted on them and their conflict-resolution and abuse reporting systems and protocols.

"It is generally safe to assume that anything published on a social network is considered to be in the public domain. This does not absolve the poster (or anyone who forwards or reposts information) from any legal liability that might arise from posting content that is, for example, in contempt of court, is defamatory or in breach of copyright."

4.4 Public access to information

Information access or freedom of information legislation must be considered when using social media. In particular, it is advisable to consider how content that is removed after posting will be archived and how it could be made available if it is subject to a legitimate legal request.

4.5 Offensive, obscene or defamatory content

Offensive, obscene or defamatory content is never acceptable and might also be illegal. It is advisable to create a policy for managing this effectively. Consider the worst and plan for it rather than react in an unplanned way when problems occur.

5. Planning

Social media use occurs in two ways: ongoing (the everyday, business as usual use of social media) and campaign or events-based (one-off). It is important to consider that, whilst social media might be a more informal channel, planning is still critical to success.

"Social media might appear fast, random and chaotic but to use them well takes planning: think about how, where, what, when and why."

- Ensure that there is a communications plan to:
  - Understand the expected nature of the interactions;
  - Moderate and manage responses, particularly those that are critical, political, off-topic or abusive, to ensure that effective discussions can occur and all those who wish it can be heard; and
  - Assess and manage risk;
- Ensure that the nature and purpose of the engagement exercise is clearly defined and communicated to all involved:
  - Define the goal(s) for using social media;
  - What is the message and how do you want to communicate (how formal)?
  - Who is the target audience?
  - What do you expect the audience to do with the information (call to action)?
- Define project ownership and ensure that project resources (people, technology and budget) are clearly defined and allocated;
- Define how social media will align with the project objectives and ensure that it is aligned with overall outcomes;
- Define measures of success before the project starts and ensure that evaluation metrics are included in the plan;
- Understand how social media will interact with and support other online and offline activities and ensure that its use will comply with communications and engagement guidelines;
- Consider the audience, including any issues of language/literacy, access, prior knowledge and how the target group uses the Internet; and
- Decide on the project life cycle and manage closure and evaluation as part of the project.

6. Strategies for engagement

Planning active strategies for engagement in order to maximize opportunities for public contribution to discussions supports better outcomes. This process works at two levels. In the short term, extended public discussion and consultation can improve the quality and relevance of legislation and policy. In the long term, being consultative with and responsive to public comments helps build trust in the political process and in parliament itself.

Every situation is different. The examples in this guide show how different parliaments have created both ongoing communication channels and time-bound engagement tools to suit a range of purposes. The tools and techniques that you choose will be different depending on what it is you are trying to do.

Twitter is good for publicizing publications, events and current opportunities for the public to get involved. Social networks such as Facebook or Orkut take parliament closer to the public and can work well to guide people to engagement platforms, learn more about parliament and, ultimately, get involved. The European Parliament's Facebook applications keep the engagement close to where people are. Chile and Brazil, have built separate platforms for engagement. Both of these approaches are valid, but engaging directly within a mainstream social network might be better suited to short and more generic debates whereas bespoke tools can be more effective for more in-depth engagement, such as soliciting public comment on legislation.

To engage effectively:

- Define strategic objectives for your use of social media:
  - With whom do you want to engage?
  - Be clear about what it is you want people to do;
  - How you intend to use contributions; and
  - How you will respond.
- Understand the terms of use of each social media space before you start engaging in it;
- Choose to communicate where the target public audience is: even if you provide a unique hosted space for engagement and discussion, use social media to link to it, to promote public participation and to reflect back what has been said and how you are acting on it;
- Always remember that social media is one channel and that it is important to build and maintain relationships with citizens offline as well as online: see social media as a conduit or channel to wider public engagement with parliament;
- Do not start to use a social media channel if you aren't prepared for it and cannot resource it; and
- Ensure that all material is available in all official languages and that it does not exclude anyone.

Once you have started the conversation:

- Ensure that all submissions can be made electronically (including audio and video) without the need to print or mail copies, and make it clear that electronic submissions are treated in the same way as those in hard copy;
- Ensure that submissions can be made in any officially recognized language;
- Recognize that there might be a time when a conversation is best taken offline and facilitate this. For example, when it is about a personal or confidential issue but still relevant to the discussion; and
- Never engage with contributors who are aggressive or abusive; always enforce standards of conduct and moderation impartially and equally.

After the engagement has finished:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the exercise against the criteria that were defined at the planning stage; and
- Always publish the outcome and a summary of contributions (consider sending feedback directly to participants as well).

6.1 Language, accessibility and balance

"Providing clear, open feedback is critically important and an integral part of your engagement strategy; it lets the public see that their involvement has had a real impact on the legislative process, builds trust and encourages others to engage."

Where two or more official languages are in use, parliaments need to consider how social media content can be made available in each one. Parliament must also avoid discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, culture, nationality or any other kind and strive to be culturally- and gender-sensitive. The concept of gender-sensitive parliaments is discussed in detail in a 2011 publication from IPU.[17] In addition, parliaments need to consider access for people with disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive and neurological disabilities. Examples include providing content in large print, Braille or sign language and producing easy-to-read versions of documents.[18]

Gender balance	Do men and women use social media to contact parliament in equal numbers? Is there a greater proportion of one or the other gender? Why is that? Do certain themes attract a higher proportion of interaction from men or women? Which themes are they?
Hard to reach	Is there an opportunity for parliament to use social media to seek input on themes that may be of particular interest to groups such as women or minorities where parliament has difficulty in getting input through traditional channels?
Members	Are men and women MPs equally active on social media? Is their experience of interacting with constituents online different in any way? Is there a difference between men and women MPs in the way they interact online and face-to-face?
Abusive comments	Are the instances of abusive comments directed at men and women equally? Is there a greater proportion aimed at one or other gender or cultural/religious group, for example?
Accessibility	Has your social media presence been assessed for usability? Are you using clear, accessible language? Does anything you are doing prevent some citizens from taking part? Is content and engagement available in all official languages?

6.2 Moderation

If you are using any kind of forum that permits users to comment (either your own or that of a third party) then you have to consider the balance between convenience and control, between what is and what is not acceptable. If you can control this, consider whether users must register before they can make comments. If so, try and require the absolute minimum: a name and an e-mail address (which you do not make public). The more you ask for, the greater the barrier to engagement and the more likely people are to 'click away'. This, of course, changes with platforms such as Facebook where users are already signed up and hence the barriers to engage remain relatively low.

When it comes to individual comments posted there are two approaches:

- Pre-moderation: comments are approved by an administrator before they appear on the site; and
- Post-moderation: offending comments are removed once identified (including through the provision of a user-referral option).

Both approaches are valid. Whilst a pre-moderation policy is stronger, a post-moderation policy requires fewer resources and is likely to be the only option open to you on a commercial social network. In both cases, when a user complains about a post, consider removing that post only if it breaks the

rules of the site (which clearly state what is and what is not acceptable). Disagreement is not a reason to remove a comment.

You are trying to stimulate debate and conversation so moderate quickly (and make it clear how and how often you moderate). Block comments only as a last resort and consider asking the contributor to amend the offending content him or herself. You might also be surprised how the online community itself, once allowed to grow and develop, will self-manage and self-censor content.

"Develop a clear moderation policy, display it clearly on the site and (where possible) have new users accept the terms and conditions when they register."

6.2.1 Managing dissent

It is not only acceptable for people to disagree with you, it is to be expected. Social media lowers the traditional barriers of authority and hierarchy. Never block or delete comments simply because someone disagrees with you.

This does not mean you have to engage with such comments. One of the most challenging environments for a parliament using social media is that the nature of comments will often be political, particularly when featuring a controversial piece of legislation or investigation. If this is the case you would not expect parliamentary staff to directly engage in responding to the material comments that are made; responses are best limited to dealing directly with questions or issues relating to the process of the discussion rather than to personal views promoted by others (more advice on how to respond to comments on social media is provided below).

Members are advised to consider the further political implications of dissent and engagement, and be aware that they can be more susceptible to negative, politically motivated comments than others.

6.2.2 Managing abuse

Abuse is different from dissent. So long as you have a clear terms-of-use policy in place (or the social media tool you are using does) then this is simply a case of evaluating comments and posts against that policy.

Where possible explain to the commenter why his or her comments are unacceptable, particularly if the commenter might simply not have understood or has just got carried away in a discussion.

The exception here is someone who is simply out to 'troll' you. This means the person is being intentionally rude, challenging and disrespectful. It is never advisable to engage a troll and much better simply to block it by whatever means are available. But remember that dissent is not trolling and simply blocking or banning people who disagree with you will attract negative publicity and give you a poor online reputation.

"Don't assume people understand the difference between parliament, its members and the government. Instead consider that social media are an excellent way to make educational and background information more easily accessible to the public."

6.3 Response strategy

Because social media are about engagement and conversation, it is important to decide how often, when and under what circumstances you will respond. Never acknowledging or responding to comments or posts suggests to the public that you aren't listening and is likely to be perceived negatively. Conversely, responding to everything that is said will take a lot of time and resources and is unrealistic.

Consider the following response checklist:

Post type	Questions to ask	Action to take
Positive feedback	Is the comment useful to others?	Forward/retweet
	Otherwise	Respond
Disagreement	Is the comment useful to others?	Forward/retweet
	Otherwise	Ignore

Post type	Questions to ask	Action to take
Asking a question	Do you have the answer?	Respond with details
	Can you find the answer?	Source answer and respond with details
	Otherwise	Respond to say you don't know
Humorous	Is the comment positive and potentially fun/interesting/clever?	Forward/retweet
	Is the comment negative?	Ignore
Misguided/incorrect	Do you have the correct information or links to resources?	Respond with details
	Can you find the correct information or links to resources?	Source answer and respond with details
	Otherwise	Ignore
Negative/Flaming	Is it a one-off post?	Ignore
	Is the poster persistently negative?	Ignore
	Does it breach the moderation or fair-use guidelines?	Consider reporting and blocking
	Have others complained about the post or user?	Consider reporting and blocking
Abusive		Report and block
Spam		Report and block

6.4 Crisis strategy

When things go wrong or controversies arise, the public expects a response. The rise of social media means that the public expect that response immediately. You need to ensure that any crisis-management strategy that you have as part of your wider communications strategy incorporates responding appropriately across social media.

How to respond? How is the response managed? Who can respond? This will not be a passive environment and it is best to attempt to deal with questions or comments in a managed and measured way. Ignoring the problem is likely to compound it, whereas handling it quickly and appropriately can go a long way towards creating a positive public perception.

Near-real-time social media can be used to keep people informed, to manage expectations and answer questions. If you leave a vacuum, others will fill it for you, thereby taking away your ability to manage the message.

Points to consider include:

- Social media, particularly sites like Twitter, are highly effective tools for crisis communication, allowing for a fast, rolling response and engagement with stakeholders;
- Engage with people authentically and you will build confidence;
- Share information as soon as you get it; if you have no information, say so;
- Apologize or correct misinformation quickly and appropriately;
- Social media acts as an amplifier; the audience might be small but it can be influential: television and radio might be the primary sources of news but journalists often source their stories from social media;
- Use social media to direct people towards more detailed information;
- Use and monitor keywords (hashtags); listen as well as talk; and

- Failure to respond quickly and effectively increases the risk of a negative reaction to the event and allows others to control the message.

6.5 Measuring effectiveness

Measurement and evaluation are vital components of social media but they are in many ways problematic and can appear confusing. At the simplest level, it is common to monitor traditional quantitative variables such as number of followers (Twitter) or 'likes' (Facebook) but these only tell a limited part of the story. Evaluation can include both an internal assessment of whether the objectives were achieved and a sufficient quality of submissions or comments were received and an external evaluation of whether all the stakeholders in the process felt that it was worthwhile taking part and that they felt listened to.

When defining what to measure, consider the following:

Engagement	How diverse is the group that communicates with you?
	What is the ratio of publishing to online participation and engagement? Is the channel seen to be two-way rarely, sometimes or often?
Amplification	How likely are you to be re-tweeted or shared?
	Does this come from a lot of different people or is it always the same few followers/fans?
Reach	Is there a pattern between the type of content, increase in communications and new followers?
	How far does your content spread across the social network?
	Are you being added to lists and are those lists being followed?
Churn	How many new followers in the period?
	How many lost followers in the period?
Sentiment Analysis	Sentiment analysis is about identifying what is being said and the positivity or negativity in a debate: are people agreeing or disagreeing, supporting or opposing what you have said?
User surveys, interviews and internal reviews	Consider using a brief survey to understand how well the exercise worked for the stakeholders. Ask questions about the experience, the level of engagement and feedback and whether people felt that what they said was listened to and acted upon. You can also conduct internal reviews with the key staff involved.

7. Examples of using social media

There are many different social media platforms, tools and applications available. Popularity and choice of available networks differ by country and the choice of which ones to use must be made locally. As Figure 5 shows, Facebook is by far the most prominent social network globally with Twitter, LinkedIn or Badoo often taking second place in terms of membership:[19]

The choice of platform can be complicated but two simple rules can help to guide the decision: choose a platform that is suitable for your needs; and go where the people with whom you are trying to communicate are already. This means mainstream commercial social networks such as Facebook, Orkut or Twitter.

Consider also that social networks are not always going to be the final destination for your engagement. Building portal sites that can link with social media as well as providing a central, user-friendly hub for both citizens and journalists can work effectively, as can using social media to direct citizens to current activities and new publications on your existing website(s). An important aspect of this multi-channel use is ensuring that they are cross-linked and as inter-connected as possible, ensuring that other digital assets are both visible and easy to access. Though independent of the French Senate, the 'Publicsenat' media portal is a good example of how to share content and use social media to generate interest in what is happening in parliament (Figure 7)

Increasingly, the platform people use to access digital content is not a personal computer. Smartphones are becoming standard for Internet access for many and this means that it is important to understand that market before developing content and applications. The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, a country with some of the highest levels of smartphone penetration, has developed mobile applications to provide citizens with access to information on the Assembly (Figure 8).

Figure 5 World map of principal social networks, June 2012

Figure 6 The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago's Twitter account

Figure 7 The Publicsenat.fr gateway page

7.1 Friends and followers

Whilst building up a strong following is important, it is as much about quality as quantity. Proactively manage spam-generating followers and resist the temptation to build numbers for the sake of it. The value of your followers lies in their influence and network. They can magnify anything that you say by forwarding (sharing or re-tweeting) and promoting (both positively and negatively). It is often seen as a good measure of social media effectiveness that you follow a range of important accounts and commentators, although strategically you may wish to do this through other means such as monitoring keywords (including hashtags) and using feed aggregators and sentiment-analysis tools, rather than simply by following back people who follow you (care is needed when following other accounts to ensure that political neutrality is maintained).

It's about reach: the greater the diversity of your followers, the wider the reach of your social media presence.

Figure 8 Mobile applications give users in the Republic of Korea access to parliamentary proceedings and information on members

Figure 9 Effective integration of Facebook, Twitter, pictures, video and internal content from the Mexican Senate

Figure 10 The US House of Representative's embedded video player

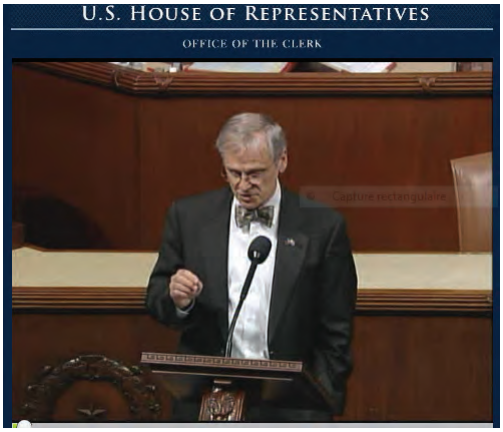


Figure 11 The UK Parliament's YouTube channel

7.2 Cross-pollination of networks

Social media does not exist in a vacuum, what is said in one space can quickly be picked up and commented on in another. Users of one social network can be drawn to content on others and to content or engagement tools that are located on your own or third-party websites. However, there is also the risk that, if channels are not linked to other content, they can become stale and followers in one place do not venture any further. Consider how to take advantage of the network effect of social media by making it easy for people to cross-link, re-post and share your material. The Mexican Senate provides a good example of integrating social media links and content directly onto the front page of a parliamentary website, where it is mixed with internal content and information.

The US House of Representatives lets visitors download video and audio from their own parliamentary video channel or embed direct links to clips. Parliaments can also use mainstream social network sites to achieve this: the UK Parliament makes extensive use of YouTube, where it has its own customized channel that is cross-linked to other web and social media assets.

Taking the idea of user-accessible video a step further, the Danish Parliament's website[20] has a comprehensive tool that not only allows the public to share video clips via popular social media sites but also to edit the clips down into shorter segments so that they can then share only the part of the debate or committee that is of particular interest to them. This empowers citizens to become curators of their own news and stories (Figure 12).

"It's about reach: the greater the diversity of your followers, the wider the reach of your social media presence."

Needless to say, these same tools are valuable for journalists as well as for members and their offices to generate clips for the members' personal websites and other social media channels.

7.3 Mainstream social media tools

"Make it easy for people to connect: look for opportunities to share your content so others can link, comment, share and even 'mash-up' (that is, combine with other text, video, images and sound). Provide easy links to your (and members') other digital channels."

Mainstream social media can be used in novel ways to solicit direct contributions to parliamentary committees or inquiries. It is also becoming increasingly common to integrate mainstream social networks with proprietary websites and content. Websites like that of the *Huffington Post*[21] allow users to login with Facebook and then have access to a number of tools for sharing and commenting on content. Going further, *The Guardian* newspaper[22] has an application that makes all its content available directly inside Facebook. Examples of the European Parliament's custom Facebook applications were given earlier in the guide (see Figure 2 above). The Finnish Parliament's (*Eduskunta*) Committee for the Future also uses Facebook[23] directly as a platform to 'crowdsource' public input on the future of parliament, including the role of technology:

As part of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea's e-Parliament strategy, designed to create an open and accessible parliament, new social media services have been introduced, managed by the media team of the Secretariat. The team is responsible for the day-to-day review of postings and replies from citizens but does not directly intervene in debates or delete postings unless they are seriously abusive or spam. Another aspect of the service is for the Secretariat to support members in the better use of social media for themselves through technical and practical advice. This aspect of the service directly addresses the risk of a public perception of a lack of accountability for parliament and parliamentarians when individual social media accounts lapse or are updated infrequently.

The Secretariat found that citizens mostly use Twitter and Facebook and so accounts have been set up on both networks. Whilst the original stated aim of using social media was to increase citizen interaction, in reality it has also become a channel for the distribution of parliamentary information with most of the users being government or public organizations interested in parliamentary proceedings. However, following

Figure 12 An example of the user-created video clipping service from the Danish Parliament

Figure 13 The Finnish Parliament's crowdsourcing Facebook page

Figure 14 The official Facebook page of the National Assembly of Korea

the rise in tensions over a territorial dispute with Japan in August 2012, the parliamentary social media pages came under the wider public spotlight. A surge in discussion about this issue doubled the number of 'likes' for the National Assembly Facebook page to 860 by late August 2012 and Twitter followers rose to almost 3,000. These numbers are relatively small, reflecting the fact that parliament is still in the early stages of its social media strategy. Importantly, most of the new users were young people in their twenties.

As part of the oral evidence session with the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, the UK Parliament's Education Select Committee used Twitter to reflect the publics' main concerns about education in the UK. They asked one question: 'What one education policy question do you think the committee should ask Michael Gove?' and respondents were asked to use the hashtag '#AskGove' in their response (Figure 15).

The committee received 5,081 responses in five days, the majority of which were substantive questions on education policy. The most popular topics included the curriculum, the status and morale of the school workforce, special educational needs and the new schools system. Some educational organizations encouraged their supporters to retweet the same question or to send in questions on a particular issue but these were outnumbered by individuals expressing their own concerns.

Committee staff grouped questions by subject. During the first part of the session, members asked the Secretary of State for Education questions informed by the tweets. In the second part the minister was asked rapid-fire questions, including many direct from the public, with members selecting the tweets from the subject groups or from the full list of questions received. The committee session was posted on YouTube with direct links to specific questions.[24]

In this example, the UK Parliament exploited the capability of Twitter hashtags to broaden input to and engagement with the committee process. Be aware though that this option is prone to risks such as hijacking by interest groups or being flooded with negative comments. It is important to resource such an exercise well and to consider the methods you will use for collecting and collating responses. It is also important that you follow up the exercise by publishing a summary of the submissions received and showing what action was taken as a result, as happened in the example here.

Figure 15 Using Twitter to solicit questions and YouTube to share answers

8. Examples of engagement beyond social media

Mainstream social media platforms can also be connected to or used to channel the public towards other forms of engagement such as those that you host internally (that contain an element of social media) or that are hosted by a third-party. Social media can also support online games, the use of open data and, where access to reliable broadband Internet is limited, technologies such as text messaging (SMS) can be used to build engagement and trust.

8.1 Hosting the engagement internally

As well as using social media you can extend your traditional web presence to include deliberation and engagement tools. There are many tools available, both commercial and open source, that can be customized. To attract a wide range of participants, connect deliberation platforms with social media to promote the exercise and consider using mainstream social media channels to disseminate reports, findings and reviews. Both Brazil and Chile[25] have created bespoke web spaces that allow citizens to engage directly in debates relating to current and proposed legislation (Figure 17).

The Brazilian House of Representatives e-Democracia[26] project uses a combination of social media, internal discussion, video and offline events (such as committee hearings) to engage citizens, parliamentarians, civil servants, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and interest groups. The program, described as 'a kind of crowdsourcing for legislative purposes', provides easier access to the decision-making process for citizens who are not associated with interest groups or businesses that usually lobby for change. It allows the public to:

- Share information about a problem that needs to be addressed by law;
- Identify and discuss possible solutions to the problem; and
- Draft the bill itself.

Figure 16 Chile's Virtual Senate provides space for public discussion and voting on current legislation

The project launched in mid-2009 and has five virtual thematic legislative communities, 23 forums, 106 topics, 624 contributions and 3,151 registered participants. The most successful experiment so far has been the youth statute community. Resulting from ideas and suggestions from young people, policymakers have been able to redraft the bill. Whilst these numbers can appear small in terms of the overall size of an electorate, they reflect both the newness of the platform and the fact that this form of in-depth online engagement is often more effective at accessing what appear to be relatively small groups; quality of engagement can be more significant than quantity.

The project engages by publishing articles about the site, through invitations to thematic blogs and social networking sites and through regular posts to Twitter and Orkut (the most popular social network in Brazil). E-Democracia overcomes the barrier between the public and the expert skills involved in drafting legislation by using legislative consultants, who serve as technical translators before responses are passed to legislators.[27]

In a similar manner, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea[28] has created a preliminary announcement service that displays all legislative bills

submitted by individual members[29] and allows citizens to submit their opinions directly online or offline. In the first four months of operation (May–August 2012), 16,818 public submissions had been received but only against 44 of the 1,152 bills in the system. The pattern of submissions suggests more interest in bills that have a clear target group. For example, the bill to revise the Medical Service Act, which introduces licensing for nursing assistants to improve service quality, attracted more than 9,000 submissions from health professionals.

Figure 17 The Brazilian House of Representatives' e-Democracia project

8.2 Partnering with third parties

For parliaments with limited technical or financial resources, partnerships with parliamentary monitoring organizations or other NGOs to develop and deploy open-source engagement tools can be a good option. Examples of this model include the Botswana Parliament's 'Botswana Speaks' pilot project, which has been developed to give citizens and local civic organizations a place for direct dialogue with their elected representatives.[30]

Another way to reach audiences beyond the usual ones who are comfortable writing parliamentary submissions is to seek out reputable third-party organizations which have already built a significant membership-based following on their own social web spaces.

Working with others builds on their networks and extends parliament's reach. It draws in a new audience, allowing parliaments to hear a wider range of different voices.

Figure 18 The main page of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea's preliminary announcement service

The UK Parliament has used this technique with a range of organizations, including the parenting network, MumsNet, the personal finance website, MoneySavingExpert.com and The Student Room, asking young people about what they do outside school hours.

"Working with others builds on their networks and extends parliament's reach. It draws in a new audience, allowing parliaments to hear a wider range of different voices."

8.3 Engaging young people through online games

Social media can be used not only to engage but they are important tools for building awareness and understanding of parliament, how it works and what it does. This is particularly important for young people, not least as they are often the hardest to engage. Games that link to or are embedded within social networks can support outreach and education activities and are a lighter, more fun way to get young people interested in parliament.

Figure 19 The Botswana Parliament's 'Botswana Speaks' pilot project invites citizens to engage with their representatives

Figure 20 Interactive online games can engage with a younger audience and teach them about how parliaments work

'MP for a week'[31] was launched by the UK Parliament in 2010 and is targeted at 11 to 14 year-olds. The game lets the player take on the persona of a backbench member (either in government or opposition) and explore the different activities, challenges and conflicts that members experience, ranging from presenting petitions, to constituency meetings and committees. The UK Parliament has recorded over 160,000 plays of the game with the average visitor staying in the game for 10 minutes. Whilst not a social platform itself, examples like this can be used to connect and engage with a younger audience and social media is then a good way to maintain and enhance this connection.

Other examples of game-based learning and engagement include, *Van Plan tot Wet* (Plan to Act), in which users guide legislation through the Dutch Parliament.[32]

8.4 Simple messaging via mobile tools

Many social networks are media-rich and designed for personal computers or smartphones. Where there are low levels of Internet connectivity and smartphone adoption, it is possible to consider outreach and engagement via SMS (text messaging) on low-bandwidth (non-Internet), text-based mobile phones. Systems to report parliamentary activities have been developed by NGOs in East Africa and Transparency International has also introduced such a system in Georgia. This uses text messaging to send subscribers information on upcoming parliamentary business[33] using an open source known as RapidSMS.[34] Nokia is also developing low-end two-way applications that use SMS.

Uganda has introduced an SMS-based system that overcomes low levels of Internet usage (less than 10 per cent) to give citizens the ability to communicate directly with their representatives. Using the Parliamentary Call System (PCS), citizens can send text and voice messages to their members, who in turn can access and follow-up these message through an online tracking system.[35] Indonesia also has an SMS-based system, SMS *Aspirasi*, that allows the public to send in suggestions and complaints via text messaging directly to the House of Representatives.[36]

Figure 21 The Italian Parliament provides streamlined access to publicly available data

The benefits of SMS include:

- High uptake of first generation mobile handsets increases access everywhere;
- Cost to the user can be limited to initial request to join; and
- Highly suited to short, direct communication,

The obvious disadvantage is a lack of interactivity.

8.5 Open data as part of an engagement strategy

Whilst this guide does not deal explicitly with the concept of open data,[37] it is worth noting that this is also an effective way to connect with a wider audience through digital media. By creating open-data repositories that others with expertise can use to build websites and applications, you further increase the reach of parliamentary resources. How you license the content is important. The Italian Chamber of Deputies[38] (Figure 21) provides all data feeds under a Creative

Commons licence. Other institutions recognize that the direct target audience for open data is the development community not the wider public and so require registration. This is a useful strategy for managing updates and changes that could affect content and performance of applications derived from the data.

An important consideration when providing open data is the structure and ensuring that it is readable and meaningful (to both people and machines). *Akoma Ntoso* is an international attempt, originated in the pan-African context, to define a 'machine-readable' set of simple XML-based and technology-neutral representations of parliamentary, legislative and judicial documents and has now been adopted as part of the Oasis open standards project.[39]

Annex: Social media checklist

Before you start	Objectives	What do you hope to use social media for and what is its value to parliament?
	Integration	How will social media integrate with your other activities and communication?
	Value proposition	What can you offer in terms of resources and incentives to encourage the public to connect and participate?
	Calls to action	What do you want people to do when they connect with you through social media?
	Networks	What are the most relevant and popular platforms?
	Select the tools	Select online and offline tools that will best support your objectives, stakeholders and time frame.
	Budget and resources	Ensure that you have allocated the necessary budget and resources (technical and human).
Become familiar	Who else is there?	How are government departments, other public sector agencies, civil society organizations and even political parties using social media? How do they promote themselves? What do they do online?
	Identify influencers	Who are the popular users on social media in related fields? Can you connect with them so that they promote your new presence?
	Find out how things work	Pay attention to how different networks operate; the protocols and expectations (such as formality, interaction, participation).
Start small and grow carefully	Set up accounts and pages	Make them look professional and have enough seed content to be able to create some sense of momentum.
	Look and feel	What branding, text and images do you want to use? Consider photographs of people, buildings, videos, logos and links to existing digital content.
	Accessibility	Does your content have to be bi- or multilingual and, if so, is it best to duplicate pages or integrate content? Have you checked that what you are doing is inclusive in terms of gender, religion, culture and nationality? Has accessibility for people with disabilities been tested?
	Share content	Make it easy for people to connect with you. Set up integration between social networks, such as between Facebook and Twitter, and look to connect social media to your other digital resources.
	Promote and recruit	Use your existing networks and communication channels to promote a new social media presence. Ask those in your network to promote the new presence too.
Be active	Content is perishable	Have a plan for keeping your content fresh, relevant and up-to-date. Strive for continuous improvement and innovation.
	Plan ahead	Look at opportunities in the parliamentary calendar for which you can plan in advance.
	Listen	Be receptive to feedback and listen to people in your network. Use feedback to help improve and select new features or content based on what your network would like to see.

	Networks are viral	Share other people's content (where appropriate and relevant) and they will share yours.
	Encourage participation	Encourage people to comment by actively managing your presence and responding and acknowledging contributions from those in your network.
	Keep talking	Use the tools within the social network to keep people who have connected with you up-to-date and informed about what you are doing.
	Follow up	Once the engagement or event is complete, provide a response to let those who took part or are interested know what happened. It's particularly important to show how their contribution helped to shape the outcome.
Constant improvement	Measure	Use analytical tools to measure activity on your social networks and to help you understand who your communicators are and whether you are meeting your (and their) objectives.
	Refine	Social networks are fast-paced and change quickly, keep looking around for new ideas and ways to improve. Don't be afraid to try new and innovative ideas if they align well with your objectives.

Endnotes

1 United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, *World e-Parliament Report 2012,* prepared by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, Rome: United Nations, 2012.

2 A 'hashtag' is a key word or phrase (without spaces) prefixed by a '#' symbol and used to highlight a conversation, topic or thread on sites like Twitter, for example, '#socmed' for discussions about social media.

3 See: http://www.lordsoftheblog.net for an example of a collective blog written by parliamentarians and used for outreach and engagement.

4 See: http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/09/07/pa.gss050.abstract. Clark, S. (2012, Sep). Innovation: no choice. World e-Parliament Conference. Rome.

5 Derived from: M. Myerhoff Nelson, Danish Agency for Digitalisation. Personal communication 09/12.

6 United Nations, Inter-Parliamentary Union, *World e-Parliament Report 2012,* prepared by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, Rome: United Nations, 2012.

7 See: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmproc/889/88904.htm.

8 Hakimi, A. (2012, May 16). Facebook gains favour among members of Afghanistan's National Assembly. Kabul: Bamdad.

9 See: http://comunicacion.senado.gob.mx/.

10 Creative Commons is a flexible model for sharing content where you can control usage rights, re-use and modification. See: creativecommons.org.

11 See: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/.

12 See: http://ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/information-and-data/nzgoal.

13 See: http://www.aph.gov.au/Help/Disclaimer_Privacy_Copyright.

14 See; http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.5/ for an English-language version of this agreement.

15 A 'cookie' is a small data file that a website creates on the user's local machine to store information relative to that visit, to customize the user experience on subsequent visits or to record activity.

16 See: http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/privacy_and_electronic_communications/the_guide/cookies.aspx.

17 See: http://www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#gsp11.

18 See the Web Accessibility Initiative for more information: www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php.

19 See: http://pctechmag.com/2012/06/world-map-of-social-networks-dominance-2012/.

20 See: http://www.ft.dk/.

21 See: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/

22 See: http://www.guardian.co.uk/info/2010/oct/26/find-guardian-on-facebook.

23 See: https://www.facebook.com/kestavakasvu.

24 See: for example: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKsApHHoyY8#t=1h55m10s.

25 See: http://www.senadorvirtual.cl/.

26 See: http://edemocracia.camara.gov.br/

27 See http://techpresident.com/user-blog/can-people-help-legislators-make-better-laws-brazil-shows-how for more information.

28 See: http://www.assembly.go.kr/main.acl.

29 Under the constitution and National Assembly Act, the government, or an individual member with the consent of 10 other members can submit a legislative bill. The government has a procedure of preliminary announcement before submitting the bill to the National Assembly. The preliminary announcement service mentioned here is on the bill submitted by individual members.

30 See: http://www.botswanaspeaks.org/.

31 See: http://www.parliament.uk/education/online-resources/games/mp-for-a-week/.

32 See: http://www.derdekamer.nl/spelletjes.

33 See: http://www.mobileactive.org/case-studies/georgian-parliament.

34 See: http://www.rapidsms.org/.

35 Inter-Parliamentary Union, United Nations Development Programme, *Global Parliamentary Report: The changing nature of parliamentary representation*, (2012), Geneva: IPU/UNDP.

36 See: http://www.pengaduan.dpr.go.id/kirim/sms.

37 See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_data.

38 See: http://data.camera.it/data/en.

39 See: http://www.akomantoso.org/ and https://www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=legaldocml.