



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny

**A toolkit for
parliamentarians**

Acknowledgments

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Foreword

Parliaments worldwide have consistently shown a firm commitment to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including through the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This journey began with the 2015 Hanoi Declaration, *The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action*, and has continued through the recent 2024 resolution, *Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity*. Alongside this political dedication, parliaments have voiced the need for practical tools to help them integrate the SDGs effectively into their legislative efforts.

In response to this need, the IPU launched its first online parliamentary knowledge exchange in 2022, entitled the Learning journey on SDG-compliant legislation. It was designed to assist parliaments in reviewing national legislation through an SDG-focused lens. Throughout this exercise, we observed numerous effective strategies that parliaments are using to bring the SDGs to life for their countries and people.

However, we also identified significant challenges. How can we ensure job opportunities while transitioning to a green economy? How can we meet the health needs of women and girls amid the harsh effects of poverty? While the SDGs offer a framework for addressing these issues, translating them into impactful parliamentary action requires practical solutions.

Drawing from the insights and experiences of parliaments, we have now designed this toolkit for parliaments, their members, their staff and other stakeholders. It provides step-by-step guidelines for aligning legislation with the SDGs, setting monitoring goals, and enhancing communication within and beyond the walls of parliament. It includes checklists for SDG-based legislative scrutiny, both before and after laws are enacted, as well as case studies illustrating how legislation on issues like poverty or climate action can connect with broader SDG targets to address diverse needs.

I hope this toolkit serves as a valuable resource, empowering parliaments to deliver on the SDGs for everyone.



Martin Chungong
IPU Secretary General

Introduction

Background

Parliaments have a key role to play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by adopting solid legislative frameworks that duly take into account the interdisciplinary nature of the goals. They can achieve this by drafting legislation that contributes to the achievement of the SDGs by 2030, by evaluating whether existing legislation is aligned with the SDGs, by proposing and advocating for legislative reforms or amendments if necessary, by reviewing legislation to ensure that it considers the needs of underrepresented, marginalized or vulnerable groups and that it is in compliance with international human rights standards, by examining government policies, strategies and plans, and by advocating for the inclusion of SDG frameworks if needed.

In 2022, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) launched a project entitled “Learning journey on SDG-compliant legislation” for parliamentary staff from different regions of the world, in order to support parliaments in this crucial task. The initiative consisted of a cycle of four online workshops, various resources and a dedicated online platform aimed at strengthening capacities on legislative scrutiny as a tool for SDG-compliant legislation, promoting peer-to-peer learning and providing on-the-job support to help participants identify practical ways to enhance SDG-informed legislative scrutiny¹ in their parliament. The resulting summary report, which includes input from participants, outlines key steps and recommendations on possible ways to conduct proper SDG-informed scrutiny throughout the legislative cycle.

The success of the initiative, coupled with the need for comprehensive but practical material to help parliaments conduct context-appropriate legislative scrutiny through an SDG lens, prompted the IPU to develop this toolkit. It is based on the findings and recommendations discussed during the above-mentioned “learning journey”, and it also builds and follows up on the IPU and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publication *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A self-assessment toolkit* by helping parliaments mainstream the SDGs and monitor their implementation in a proper and effective way.

1 The term “scrutiny” refers to the careful and detailed examination, review and assessment of legislation.

What this toolkit is for

The main purpose of this toolkit is to motivate, encourage and assist parliaments in:

- making the SDGs central to their work and engaging with them in their legislative and oversight work
- scrutinizing legislation across its life cycle through an SDG lens
- identifying ways to best promote the SDGs through legislation
- learning from others, identifying allies, and enhancing ties and communication with other parliaments with similar experiences

The toolkit is designed to support and enhance the capacity of parliaments, parliamentary committees and their members to conduct SDG-informed scrutiny. It offers practical guidance and advice on how to conduct scrutiny using the SDGs as a lens.

What this toolkit offers

This toolkit addresses the key concept of legislative scrutiny and explains how scrutiny can be used to ensure that legislation is aligned with the SDGs and positively promotes them. It also offers practical, step-by-step guidance for conducting SDG-informed scrutiny, as well as lessons from comparative practice, and practical examples and case studies.

Who this toolkit is for

The toolkit is primarily intended for parliamentary audiences involved in the implementation of the SDGs, and in particular for:

- MPs
- committee chairs and deputy chairs
- committee members
- parliamentary staff working in committees or research services
- parliamentary caucuses and other formations conducting scrutiny work

The toolkit can also be a useful resource for governments and other State institutions involved in policy and legislation design and the implementation of the SDGs, as well as for civil society, media and stakeholder organizations that focus on sustainable development and interact with parliaments by providing insights and input in decision-making.

The SDGs and their importance



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development² is the blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet agreed by United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs represent the international community's collective road map towards a safer, fairer, more prosperous and sustainable world. They provide an internationally agreed framework to advance progress in a coherent manner while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The 2030 Agenda is articulated around 17 SDGs. These are broken down into targets and indicators designed to help track progress towards them. This system of goals, targets and indicators encapsulates all three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – and offers a comprehensive policy framework that is relevant to both developed and developing countries.

In order to localize the SDGs, each country develops a national plan of country-specific goals and targets, supported by locally relevant progress indicators. This offers a national blueprint that mainstreams the SDGs in national policies and in the work of national governments.

² [United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* \(2015\).](#)

Why are the SDGs crucial to improving legislation and its impact on society and the environment?

The SDGs cover a broad range of areas from poverty eradication and climate change, to gender equality, inclusivity, and changing consumption and production patterns. They do not prescribe what countries should do but instead set out the common goals to be achieved.

From an international perspective, the SDGs are important because they focus and coordinate national policies towards a common vision that goes beyond States, regions or continents and focuses on humanity. They serve as the overarching goals that “connect” national policies and legislation and ensure that everyone is contributing their bit to the achievement of a joint global vision.

The SDGs are not legally binding, meaning that there is no legal obligation on governments to implement them. However, governments have assumed a moral commitment to implement them to the best of their capacities and in accordance with national priorities. Under the auspices of the IPU, parliaments have also committed to doing their utmost to strengthen national ownership of the SDGs and to support efforts to achieve them in a context-appropriate manner. Most notably, parliaments have pledged to translate the SDGs into enforceable domestic law, to hold governments to account for the implementation of the SDGs, and to align budgets with national sustainable development plans.³

From a national perspective, the SDGs are important because they provide the overarching goals towards which national policies and laws should be directed. The SDG indicators offer parliaments and MPs the opportunity to track progress against national baselines and targets, allowing for more systematic and consistent oversight of the SDGs.

The SDGs are closely linked to legally binding international commitments. As such, there is a close relationship between adhering to the SDGs and complying with international agreements that individual countries have signed and ratified. *Parliaments and Human Rights: A self-assessment toolkit*,⁴ a joint publication by the IPU and the Office

3 [Hanoi Declaration. The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action. Adopted by the 132nd IPU Assembly, Hanoi, 1 April 2015.](#)

4 [IPU and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\), *Parliaments and Human Rights: A self-assessment toolkit* \(2023\).](#)

of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, provides practical information on how human rights instruments are linked to the SDGs.⁵

Conducting scrutiny through an SDG lens can help to accelerate progress towards the 2030 deadline. SDG-informed scrutiny is, in fact, a powerful tool that parliaments can use to ensure that new and existing legislation positively promotes the SDGs. Examples of action that parliaments can take are shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: How parliaments can accelerate progress towards the SDGs

Monitor legislation linked with the SDGs	Monitoring legislation helps to ensure full implementation, measure progress and maximize results.
Review existing legislation	By reviewing legislation, parliaments can measure results and impact, identify success stories and address shortcomings in the achievement of the SDGs in a timely manner.
Initiate legislation for the implementation of the SDGs	By initiating legislation on the SDGs, parliaments can take an active role in stepping up national commitments.
Raise awareness of the importance of the SDGs	The impact of SDG-informed scrutiny can be maximized through a whole-of-parliament approach. SDG-informed scrutiny is relevant to all MPs and parliamentary staff, and needs to be mainstreamed in their work to the fullest extent.
Set an example and inspire	Through SDG-informed scrutiny, parliaments can lead by example, push governments to take action and inspire trust in citizens.
Build coalitions inside parliament	Synergies and coalitions can make scrutiny more holistic and all-encompassing, allowing for the exploration of issues in a more rounded way.
Build coalitions outside parliament	Synergies with the government, independent authorities, national statistical institutes, international organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations and civil society can make a difference.

5 [OHCHR, Summary Table on the Linkages between the SDGs and Relevant International Human Rights Instruments.](#)

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny: a step-by-step approach

What is SDG-informed legislative scrutiny?



Legislation that positively contributes to the SDGs does not come about through good intentions and political will alone. While political will is necessary and important, legislation that complies with and promotes the SDGs is the result of a systematic process through which SDG-related concerns are mainstreamed in legislative decision-making.

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny is the process of examining draft and existing legislation through an SDG lens in order to identify desired and undesirable impacts. It is a method for integrating SDG-related concerns in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislative and regulatory measures. This holistic and systemic approach ensures that SDG-related concerns are taken into account in decision-making, and that the decisions made are those that achieve the best possible results. Positive impacts are maximized and, to the extent possible, negative impacts are prevented.

This means that when MPs are proposing new legislation or, considering legislation or amendments proposed by the government, they should consider whether, how and to what extent these are aligned with the

SDGs, whether and how they will positively contribute to them, and what potential barriers may arise. For example, many countries are now adopting new legislation on climate change, or are amending existing legislation. In this respect, it is important for parliaments to consider the ways in which these laws will contribute to the achievement not only of SDG 13 (“Climate action”), but also of related goals such as SDG 6 (“Clean water and sanitation”), SDG 7 (“Affordable and clean energy”), SDG 12 (“Responsible consumption and production”), SDG 14 (“Life below water”) and SDG 15 (“Life on land”), as well as of the Paris Agreement.⁶

Why is SDG-informed legislative scrutiny important?

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny is important for a number of reasons:

- **It allows parliaments to take an active stance and to initiate legislation related to the SDGs.**
- **It allows parliaments to analyse legislation through an SDG lens** in order to anticipate its capacity to be effective, to promote the SDGs, to foster equality and inclusivity, and more. It is essentially a discursive process – one that is evidence-informed and participatory in nature – that can help to project and anticipate positive and potential negative results and impacts.
- **It enables parliaments to exercise monitoring and oversight** in order to track progress towards the SDGs, as well as against national baselines and targets.
- **It can help parliaments track progress in the implementation of human rights commitments.** The SDGs are firmly anchored in human rights principles and standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷ and related international human rights treaties.
- **It can help to identify synergies and trade-offs between SDGs.** The challenges and solutions involved in transitioning towards more sustainable and resilient societies are not one-dimensional. Instead, they are interrelated, interlinked and often cross-cutting.⁸ Synergies are positive interactions or interlinkages between goals and targets, while trade-offs – or negative interactions – occur when improvements in one dimension can hinder progress in another. For example, measures to address climate change might have a positive (e.g. emissions reduction) and negative (e.g. increase in costs for industries relying on fossil fuels)

6 [United Nations Climate Change, The Paris Agreement.](#)

7 [United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.](#)

8 [United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018, The interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals.](#)

impact on industry, infrastructure, but also employment (e.g. job losses in certain sectors) and education (e.g. need for training programmes to help workers transition to green jobs). They might also affect in positive (e.g. reduction of industrial emissions and consequent improvement of air quality in areas where low-income communities live) and negative (e.g. increase in costs for small businesses that are unable to compete with big industries; lack of access to affordable housing for groups in vulnerable situations) ways different population groups.

- **It supports an integrated and systemic approach that addresses the interrelated nature of the SDGs** and can help to ensure that progress in one area is not achieved at the expense of another.⁹

- **It can help parliaments ensure that no one is left behind.**

The SDGs are universal and integrated, and relevant to all people everywhere. SDG targets concern societies and the planet, but their achievement may look different for people who are at risk of being discriminated against or marginalized because of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. While conducting scrutiny, parliaments should systematically pay attention to the needs of all people, since positive achievements for one group might be negative for others.¹⁰ This is especially important as strong and democratic parliaments are required to reflect the will, concerns and interests of all of society.

The goals on gender equality (SDG 5) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10) are cross-cutting in nature and correlate extensively with other goals. For this reason, it is important to ensure that these concerns are mainstreamed in SDG-informed legislative scrutiny, especially in order to prevent negative correlations and to realize the call of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. In practice, this means that scrutiny should always examine gender and inclusivity issues in order to capture potential effects on population groups that are underrepresented, marginalized and/or in vulnerable situations.



Consider, for example, a draft law on employment that aims to reduce youth unemployment. This is relevant not only to SDG 8 and the related national targets, but also to gender equality and inclusivity (i.e. SDGs 5 and 10). Scrutiny of this legislative proposal through an SDG lens will identify and predict potential SDG-related impacts and prevent adverse effects.

9 [Eurostat, Archive: SDG cross-cutting issues - interlinkages.](#)

10 [OECD, "How far are OECD countries from achieving SDG targets for women and girls? Applying a gender lens to measuring distance to SDG targets".](#)

When is the right time for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny?

The SDGs are not a one-off concern. They need to be considered at all stages of the legislative life cycle, from the conceptualization and design of a law through to its implementation and post-legislative evaluation. SDG-informed legislative scrutiny should therefore take place:

- **when a law or policy is designed and drafted** (pre-legislative scrutiny), in order to ensure that key elements are in place for the legislation to be effective
- **after the law or policy has been enacted and implemented** for some time (post-legislative scrutiny), in order to determine how the law works and whether it has achieved its objectives

These two types of scrutiny (pre- and post-legislative) are complementary. In both cases, the exercises revisit key issues for a piece of legislation, such as its objectives, the ways of achieving these objectives, anticipated versus real impacts, cost, and benefits.

Figure 2: **SDG-informed legislative scrutiny throughout the legislative life cycle**

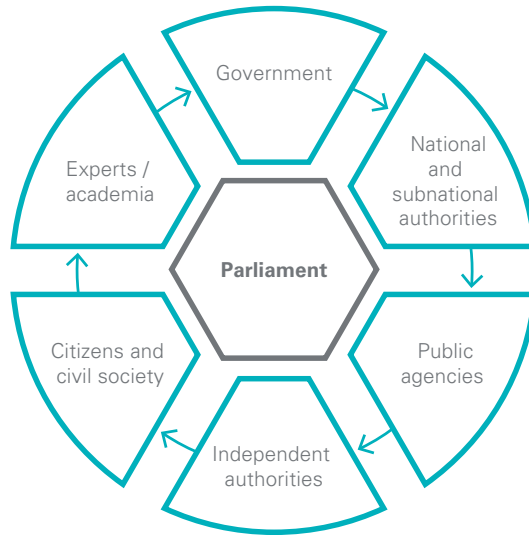


Who should participate in SDG-informed legislative scrutiny?

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny is not a “one-institution” show.

The implementation of the SDGs is a collective effort and many institutions and stakeholders have a role to play in this process.

Figure 3: **Institutions with a role in SDG-informed legislative scrutiny**



Governments are key stakeholders in the effort to implement the SDGs. In many countries around the world, the majority of legislative proposals originate from the government. In their role as proponents of legislation, governments need to ensure that legislative proposals can achieve the desired results (i.e. be effective) in relation to both their primary objectives and the SDGs.

Subnational authorities such as regional or local governments can localize the SDGs and can inform scrutiny with regional and local insights.

Public agencies (implementing agencies) can collect data on the implementation of legislation, monitor its impacts, and ensure that the SDGs are mainstreamed in budgeting and programming. This information will inform the scrutiny process, making it evidence-based.

Independent authorities (such as statistical authorities, equality bodies, ombudspersons and national human rights institutions) can contribute to SDG-informed legislative scrutiny through their mandate to monitor and review legislation in key areas like equality, fundamental rights and children's rights, as well as through their expertise, objectivity and independence. State audit institutions can play an important role either by initiating or by contributing to SDG-informed legislative scrutiny.

Citizens and civil society organizations can contribute insights on the results and impact of legislation. Moreover, civil society organizations can exercise independent monitoring and oversight, and contribute quantitative and qualitative data and information.

Experts and academics can provide invaluable insights for legislative scrutiny through their experience and expertise. This group can include legal experts, experts in the subject matter of legislation, the scientific community or judges with expertise in the specific area of law. In addition, experts in key areas such as gender, inclusivity, the environment or climate change can offer specialized insights on horizontal aspects that cut across the SDGs and legislation.

How to do SDG-informed legislative scrutiny

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny is a discursive process that aims to stimulate discussion around legislative choices and their effectiveness from an SDG perspective. It takes place within the work of parliaments – in committees, in the plenary, or in specialized bodies established for this purpose. Scrutiny involves three key stages, as summarized in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: **SDG-informed legislative scrutiny: an overview of stages**



Stage 1: Identify (direct and indirect) links between legislation and the SDGs

The starting point for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny is to establish the link between the legislation to be scrutinized and the related SDGs: both those that are directly linked to the subject matter of the (draft or existing) law, and those that are indirectly linked but also horizontal or cross-cutting in nature. This is an important step because it will determine the issues to be scrutinized and the data that will be needed.

It is important for committees to know which SDGs are related to their mandate. Likewise, these links need to be identified specifically for each legislative proposal.

Stage 2: Assess alignment and impact through an SDG lens

Scrutiny aims to establish whether legislation can effectively contribute to the SDGs (pre-legislative) or how a law has actually contributed to the SDGs (post-legislative). It also allows parliaments to identify synergies and trade-offs between different goals or cross-cutting impacts.

This assessment is evidence-based, relying on solid data collected from different sources, including statistics and consultations with stakeholders. Scrutiny can identify the potential (pre-legislative) or real (post-legislative) positive and negative impact of legislation on the SDGs, as well as identify ways to maintain, maximize or address these impacts and prevent unwanted effects.

Stage 3: Propose solutions that best promote effective alignment with the SDGs

Using the SDGs as a scrutiny lens, parliaments can play a more pronounced and active role in the achievement of national goals and the SDGs overall. Having conducted scrutiny, parliaments can propose solutions to address shortcomings or maximize impact.



SDG-informed legislative scrutiny can show that the eligibility criteria introduced in legislation aiming to reduce youth unemployment might have a disparate impact on young people with disabilities within specific age groups. Therefore, while this law might overall contribute positively to employment promotion, the reduction of unemployment (SDG 8) and gender equality (SDG 5), it might have a negative impact in terms of equality (SDG 10) for some population groups. If this issue is identified in pre-legislative scrutiny, MPs, the proposing ministry and the government can explore options to prevent this adverse impact, as well as ensure that all target groups benefit in a balanced way, that related goals are positively promoted, and that no one is left behind. Once scrutiny shows the potential of draft legislation, or its real impact, the focus turns to options or solutions to either sustain and maximize positive impacts, or reverse adverse effects.

Ways in which parliaments can support SDG-informed legislative scrutiny



National Assembly of Ecuador: verification checklist for legislation

The National Assembly of Ecuador, through the Parliamentary Group for the Eradication of Poverty and the Realization of the SDGs, has developed a **verification checklist** to identify how bills align with and support the implementation of the SDGs. The Organic Law of the National Assembly (its standing orders) was modified to require that each bill include a completed checklist.

National Assembly of Nicaragua: information system to advance SDG alignment and inform equity-focused and rights-based laws and budgets¹¹

The National Assembly of Nicaragua has formed a monitoring group to oversee compliance with the SDGs. The group prepares evaluation reports and develops other knowledge products to support MPs' work. Close work with the General Directorate of Legislative Affairs and the parliamentary committee in charge of technical affairs allows for systematic inclusion of the SDGs in the legislative process, and for proper and timely advice and guidance to MPs in the adoption of, or amendments to, draft laws.

An innovative reference tool called the **Institutional Policies Information System** provides detailed information on each approved regulation. In addition to the SDGs, the tool includes references to cross-cutting and intersectional data on, among other aspects, the people targeted; expected social benefits; issues related to interculturality, climate change and gender equality; and intergenerational issues. It also allows MPs and committees to verify which SDG is being incorporated into each draft law before its enactment.

The General Directorate for Budgetary and Economic Analysis and Monitoring ensures that the proposed policies are aligned with the SDG framework. To ensure accountability and transparency in the public spending of the General Budget of Nicaragua, strong focus has been placed on projects that promote the fight against, and reduction of, poverty. Given limited financial resources, several loan agreements have been approved through legislative decrees with international finance institutions.

11 [IPU case study "Nicaragua's innovative, rights-based approach to ensure no one is left behind"](#).

National Assembly of Thailand: strengthening the enabling legal environment and budget alignment procedures to accelerate progress on national development priorities and the SDGs¹²

After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the National Assembly of Thailand established the **Parliamentary Subcommittee on Follow-up and Review of SDGs Implementation and International Obligations**, which is responsible for monitoring national compliance and progress in that area. Over the course of several years, the National Assembly consolidated an integrated approach to strengthen an SDG-enabling legal environment. It promotes mechanisms that align and scrutinize budget allocations for SDG priority areas.

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate established standing committees to systematically oversee national budget allocations to ensure that they meet national development priorities.

The Parliamentary Budget Office also plays an important role in examining fiscal evidence and its relevance for achievement of the SDGs. The Office's mandate is to provide academic and statistical support to the Budget Committee and MPs on annual budget appropriation and expenditure. All budget allocations are measured and assessed against the country's 20-year National Strategic Plan (2018–2037) and the National Economic and Social Development Plan, two policy instruments that integrate SDG priority targets.

In terms of challenges and lessons learned, the National Assembly has had to deal with low awareness and limited ownership of the SDGs among many MPs, who perceive the goals as irrelevant and of little added value to their legislative or constituency work. The lack of institutional bodies or dedicated focal points to systematically integrate the SDGs into parliamentary and legislative procedures, as well as the lack of meaningful oversight and budgetary mandates, have also been major issues. It is therefore necessary to mainstream the SDGs into existing parliamentary work processes and avoid them being isolated in parliamentary committee silos with no cross-cutting mechanisms.

12 [IPU case study "Thailand accelerates SDGs progress"](#).

Success factors and challenges for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny

Integrating SDG-informed legislative scrutiny into parliamentary work has many benefits.

Enabling factors for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny in parliament include:

- commitment from parliamentary and political-party leadership on working towards the SDGs
- capacity and expertise within parliament
- specialized units and procedures within parliament
- availability of guidance and knowledge tools, such as manuals or checklists
- data on the SDGs (provided by national statistical institutes, academic institutions or civil society organizations, for example)

The **challenges** for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny in parliament include:

- limited political appetite and awareness around the SDGs
- time pressure and lack of time for in-depth scrutiny
- committee portfolios and lack of synergies between committees: the SDGs are interlinked and interrelated and it is often impossible to assess the full impact of a measure by looking at only one aspect; committees are therefore encouraged to forge synergies in order to identify and scrutinize cross-cutting issues like gender and inclusivity in a systemic way
- limited data and information
- lack of resources or institutionalised procedures

Parliamentary staff are critical in ensuring success and helping to overcome challenges. They can:

- assist MPs in raising SDG-related concerns in legislative scrutiny and oversight
- collect data and information on SDG-related topics and make this available to MPs
- support MPs in engaging with stakeholders on the SDGs

- assist MPs in raising awareness of the SDGs among their peers and committees
- integrate SDG-related information in draft committee reports
- raise awareness of the importance of SDG-informed scrutiny in legislative and oversight work as part of their role in committees on international relations, foreign affairs, etc.

SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny

Pre-legislative scrutiny is the evaluation of draft legislation *before* it is adopted. The primary aim of this exercise is to determine whether a draft law is of good quality and whether it can produce the desired results. It looks at matters such as the soundness of regulatory goals, the appropriateness of regulatory choices, the anticipated results, the identification of key audiences, and the structure and quality of the legislative text. But pre-legislative scrutiny can also explore the extent to which legislation is compliant with, and can positively contribute to, the SDGs.

Pre-legislative scrutiny can ask key questions about the purpose and the relevance of the law in relation to the SDGs:

- What does the draft law aim to achieve?
- What problem does the draft law aim to address or solve?
- Which SDGs, targets and indicators is the draft law linked to, directly or indirectly?
- What mechanisms does the draft law use to address the problem?
- How are these mechanisms likely to affect the related SDGs?
- What results are expected?
- Who will the draft law affect, and how?
- How does the draft law affect women, girls and vulnerable and marginalized groups?

The role of parliamentary committees in pre-legislative scrutiny

Parliamentary committees hold a key role in pre-legislative scrutiny. When a draft law is tabled, they have the opportunity to scrutinize its various aspects, assess potential adverse impacts and propose improvements.

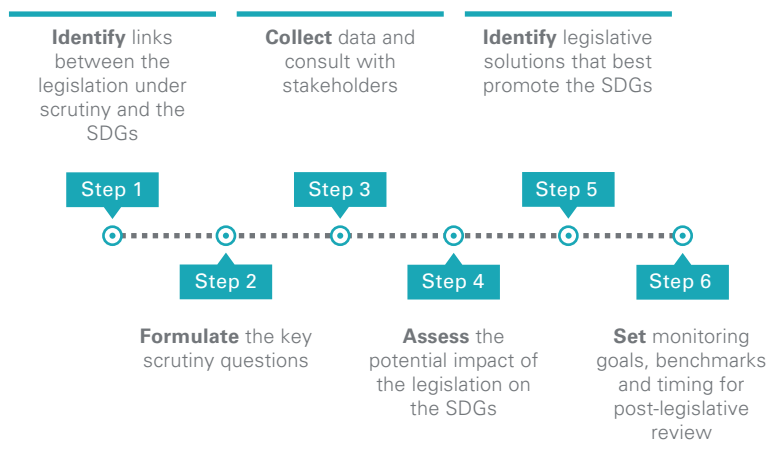
In some countries, a draft law will be accompanied by an analysis or impact assessment that might examine potential impacts on the SDGs, among other issues. Parliamentary committees can scrutinize this analysis, prepared by the government, to determine whether the evidence is solid

and/or request further data or input. Parliaments can also conduct their own analysis to assess the potential impact of legislation.

Given the importance of pre-legislative scrutiny for SDG-compliant legislation, it is important for committees to have a clear understanding of how this scrutiny should be conducted.

Key steps for SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny

Figure 5: **The SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny process**



Step 1: Identify links between the legislation under scrutiny and the SDGs

Every day, parliaments adopt legislation dealing with different issues, aiming to address specific social problems and achieve several goals. Some laws are directly linked to the SDGs and make a direct contribution to them, while others might be indirectly linked to one or more of the goals. For example, a draft law on poverty would be directly linked to SDG 1 (“No poverty”), while a draft law on youth employment would be directly linked to SDG 8 (“Decent work and economic growth”). Yet both of these draft laws, depending on their content, would likely also have direct or indirect links to gender equality (SDG 5), inequalities (SDG 10), education (SDG 4) or decent work (SDG 8), among other issues.

In reality, all legislation is linked to the SDGs in one way or another and will most likely have an impact on them. Identifying the links between the legislation under scrutiny and the SDGs is critical in order for committees to plan their scrutiny work effectively, to collect the right data and information, to forge synergies with other committees or stakeholders (e.g. independent authorities), and to effectively mainstream the SDGs in their work. This can enhance legislative and policy coherence from an SDG perspective.

Knowing which SDG targets fall under each committee can lead to better overall oversight of SDG implementation.

A first important step for SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny is to identify the SDGs that are directly and indirectly linked to the legislation under scrutiny. This will allow the body scrutinizing the draft law to formulate the key questions that will need to be addressed.

- Which SDGs are relevant to the draft law under consideration?
- Which goals listed in national development plans are relevant?
- Which ones are directly relevant?
- Which ones are relevant to parts of the draft law?
- Which ones are relevant in a cross-cutting manner (gender, equality, poverty, etc.)?



For example, a law on employment would be directly related to SDGs 8, 1, 5 and 10. Depending on its content, it might also be indirectly linked to goals 2, 3 or 9.

Step 2: Formulate the key scrutiny questions

Based on the previous step, the content of the law or policy, and its direct or indirect links to different SDGs, the body conducting the SDG-informed legislative scrutiny should be in a position to formulate a list of questions that the scrutiny should address. These will include both general and SDG-specific questions.



For example, the scrutiny questions for the draft law on employment will include the following:

General questions:

- ▶ What does the draft law aim to achieve? What problem does it aim to address or solve?
- ▶ How is this linked, directly, indirectly or in a cross-cutting manner, to the SDGs?
- ▶ What is the mechanism that the draft law uses to address the problem?
- ▶ Who is affected and how?
- ▶ What results are expected?

SDG-informed legislative scrutiny questions:

- ▶ How is the draft law expected to contribute to economic growth (8.1)? What percentage per-capita growth can be expected?
- ▶ How is the draft law expected to contribute to higher levels of economic productivity, diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including high-value added and labour-intensive sectors (8.2)? What specific and measurable results can be expected?
- ▶ How will the draft law support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, and creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services (8.3)?
- ▶ How will the draft law contribute to the progressive improvement of global resource efficiency in consumption and production, and decouple economic growth from environmental degradation (8.4)?
- ▶ How will the draft law contribute to full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value by 2030 (8.5)?
- ▶ How will the draft law reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (8.6)? To what extent?
- ▶ How will the draft law impact forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and end child labour in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, by 2025 (8.7)?

- ▶ How will the draft law protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment (8.8)?
- ▶ How will the draft law impact job creation through sustainable tourism by 2030 (8.9)?
- ▶ How will the draft law affect the capacity of financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all (8.10)?
- ▶ How will the draft law affect the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (4.4)?

Step 3: Collect data and consult with stakeholders

Once the scrutiny questions have been identified, the next important step is to collect the information and data needed to answer these questions.

Every piece of legislation generates or is expected to generate data. For example, a law that introduces specific measures to reduce youth unemployment will generate different types of quantitative and qualitative data, such as on the number of beneficiaries, on their features (e.g. age, gender, geographical distribution, ethnic origin), on the money spent, and on the impact of these measures on the income of beneficiaries, their employment status and their risk of poverty, as well as on the economy, poverty levels, disability, gender equality and more.

Data is the only way to make SDG-informed legislative scrutiny evidence-based. Without reliable, timely, disaggregated data, any effort to assess the potential or real impact of a piece of legislation is mere speculation. Data needs to be solid and robust.

As a starting point, before embarking on hearings or consultations, it is important to know what data is available and what data will need to be collected or generated. In the example mentioned above, it is important to collect statistical data and reliable research data on the specific target groups, as well as research data or comparative data on how unemployment measures have worked in other countries. This data provides an overview of the environment within which the law is situated and what it can realistically change.

Challenges in collecting SDG-related data

- Lack of data in a number of areas
- Poor quality of data
- Need for disaggregated data
- Need to strengthen the capacities of national statistical institutes in terms of data collection, production, etc.
- Use of non-harmonized data-collection methods
- Need for data in non-traditional domains, e.g. vulnerability of populations to climate change
- Need to collect and take into account data generated by citizens to track SDG progress

Information and data can be both quantitative and qualitative, and can originate from a number of sources including national statistical institutes, academic or expert reports, government, administrations and citizens. Key ways to collect data include:

- submitting requests for information to institutions
- inviting experts to offer opinions
- organizing consultations with stakeholders, including citizens
- conducting surveys or research

The committee or team conducting the scrutiny can source the latest statistical information on employment, youth employment, employment per gender or the employment of people with disabilities from statistical offices. Research can also identify relevant data that covers gaps in official information, such as the employment of people with disabilities and/or members of minority groups in the public and private sectors. In addition to the above, experts in employment and finance can be invited to give their opinions or assessments on the potential impact of the law and on whether there are different or better ways to ensure improved impacts. Likewise, gender equality and diversity experts can be asked for their input on how specific aspects of the law might affect different population groups, positively or negatively. Open consultations can also gather qualitative data from a number of interested stakeholders, which in turn can illuminate further aspects of the scrutiny process.



House of Representatives of Indonesia: SDG monitoring portal¹³

The House of Representatives of Indonesia is one of the main players involved in strengthening an enabling environment and monitoring the national achievement of the SDGs. The legislature has developed an **SDG monitoring portal**¹⁴ in cooperation with the Ministry of National Development Planning and Statistics. The portal is a publicly accessible digital platform that supports parliamentary committees, MPs and citizens in general in regularly monitoring SDG implementation in different electoral districts. The portal is supported by permanent parliamentary staff, who also assess the SDG indicators using data sources from two partner institutions.

The SDG monitoring portal provides MPs with comprehensive, accessible and disaggregated district-level data to oversee progress towards each goal. The data can be used as a foundation to formulate or amend legislation, allocate budgets, consider expenditure improvements, and generate evidence to develop government programmes for critical priority areas or populations that have been left behind. The portal also gives communities an invaluable opportunity to voice their concerns, provide input and feedback, and collaborate with MPs to achieve people-centred and inclusive SDG policies that reflect and respond to the specific needs and priorities of constituents.

Consultation as a scrutiny tool: who to consult, what to ask and how to do it

Consultation is a formal process for collecting input and views from stakeholders about policies and legislation. Its aim is to facilitate dialogue and the exchange of views, while its overall objective is to collect information or formulate conclusions that will be taken into account in decision-making.

Consultation is a process of structured dialogue with different stakeholder groups. But who should be consulted? Which stakeholders can positively inform the legislative scrutiny process? Different groups of people can contribute insights on different aspects of legislation. For example, government officials can provide information about the implementation of the law, as well as about resources and implementing agencies, while academics can give a more objective assessment of the design of the law in light of scientific evidence and comparative

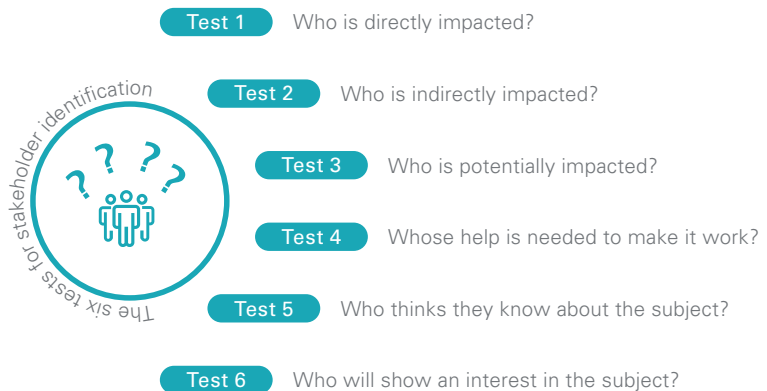
13 [IPU case study "Indonesia experiments with open-access SDG portals"](#).

14 [House of Representatives of Indonesia and Ministry of National Development Planning and Statistics, SDG monitoring portal](#).

practice. Legal experts can analyse legal issues related to a specific piece of legislation, including interpretation issues and its compatibility with international conventions and commitments, while citizens or civil society organizations can offer valuable information about the (positive or negative) impact of the specific law on their lives. Pulling together and analysing all of this complementary information can lead to a more holistic assessment of the impact of legislation.

Consultations for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny should involve a wide range of stakeholders. Comprehensive stakeholder mapping is a good starting point. This can be done using the process shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: **The six tests for stakeholder identification**¹⁵



15 [European Commission, *Better Regulation Toolbox* \(2023\).](#)



Example: stakeholder mapping for the law on employment

Group 1, 2 & 3 (beneficiaries)

- ▶ Employees and their professional organizations
- ▶ Employers and their professional organizations

Group 4 (public agencies, implementing agencies)

- ▶ Labour ministry, related government agencies (e.g. employment promotion, unemployment, etc.) and other relevant ministries (e.g. economy or finance ministry)
- ▶ Labour-market inspectorates
- ▶ Equality bodies (with responsibility for equality in the workplace)

Group 5 (experts)

- ▶ Academics specialized in labour law, labour economics, labour relations, etc. (depending on the content of the law)
- ▶ Gender experts/gender equality institutions (public or private)
- ▶ Judges/legal experts serving in specialized labour courts or tribunals

Group 6 (others)

- ▶ Labour-relations partners
- ▶ Civil society organizations working with migrants, minorities or underrepresented groups, including those from minority language groups
- ▶ Organizations providing services to people with disabilities

Effective consultation focuses on the key issues on which the views of stakeholders are needed. It is good practice to address stakeholders with pertinent pre-identified questions that are designed to provide useful information to lawmakers. Determining the consultation questions is important for the success of the consultation process. The questions can be designed with the audiences and the added value that they can bring to the lawmaking process in mind.



Example: consultation questions for the law on employment

- ▶ Is the draft law likely to address the problem that it attempts to regulate?
- ▶ Is the draft law likely to affect you/the group you represent? If so, how?
- ▶ Is the draft law likely to make a positive contribution to national targets and to the SDGs?
- ▶ Will men and women, younger and older people, or other population groups be affected in different ways?
- ▶ Is the solution provided likely to be effective? Are there alternatives that could lead to better results?
- ▶ Will people/businesses comply? Is the draft law likely to be fully implemented?
- ▶ Can the draft law be improved?

Tools that parliaments can use for consultation

Parliamentary rules of procedure or standing orders typically offer a number of ways that committees can gather evidence and expertise from external stakeholders. Depending on the jurisdiction, these might include calls for written or oral evidence, public hearings, informal communication with constituents and stakeholders, and expert meetings or round tables. These consultation methods, among others, are discussed at length in the *Global Parliamentary Report 2022*,¹⁶ a joint IPU and UNDP publication that examines public engagement in the work of parliaments. AI tools can also be used to help process consultation data.

16 [IPU, *Global Parliamentary Report* \(2022\)](#).



Senate of Mexico: engagement strategy for improved dialogue¹⁷

The Senate of Mexico has established a Special Commission, comprised of 18 senators from all political parties and across different states. The Special Commission's duties include:

- ▶ issuing technical opinions, observations or non-binding recommendations on 2030 Agenda matters
- ▶ sending recommendations or observations about SDG implementation and monitoring to federal agencies
- ▶ organizing consultations with Mexican government agency leaders involved in SDG implementation and monitoring

The Special Commission has prioritized SDG localization and has implemented an engagement strategy for improved dialogue to maintain direct and collaborative relationships with local state congresses, and to ensure that the different subnational territories advance towards achieving their own specific SDG priorities. This two-way approach enables Special Commission members to reflect on local communities' most pressing needs, foster a fairer distribution of public resources, and ensure that all citizens are more included in proposed legislation.

Recently, the Chamber of Deputies established a broad-based SDG working group consisting of members from different parties and committees. The group's mandate is to encourage consensus on future priorities, accelerate implementation of prioritized interventions, ensure that budget allocations deliver on the nationally defined outcomes of the SDG framework, enhance MPs' capacities and knowledge on the 2030 Agenda, and promote inclusivity by directly engaging the public in the work of the different committees and promoting better outreach to vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Using the results of consultation to improve the alignment of legislation with the SDGs

Consultation is important because it provides the evidence and validated information needed for effective lawmaking. It also enhances transparency, brings legitimacy and acceptance to the lawmaking process, allows access to specialized information and expertise, and helps ensure that legislative proposals are feasible and workable.

17 [IPU case study "Mexico promotes public participation in climate change laws"](#).

Apart from its generic benefits, consultation can also help to identify potential negative or positive impacts in specific areas, such as the SDGs, gender equality or inclusivity.

Step 4: Assess the potential impact of the legislation on the SDGs

The data and information collected in the previous step are then analysed and processed to show the extent to which the legislation is expected to have positive, negative or neutral impacts on the SDGs. Potential questions include the following:

- How is the draft law expected to contribute to SDG targets?
- What kind of measurable results can the draft law be expected to achieve? When?
- How is the draft law going to affect different population groups?
- How does the draft law work against horizontal goals (gender equality, inclusivity, etc.)?



For example, for the draft law on employment, the results of the consultation exercise could show that the selected eligibility criteria might negatively affect beneficiaries within specific age groups or of a particular gender. As such, the expected impact on the SDGs might be positive overall, but there could be undesirable negative impacts in the area of gender equality or inequalities (SDGs 5 and 10).

Translating information into findings and conclusions is an important step in the pre-legislative scrutiny process. The information collected should be used to answer the key scrutiny questions, such as those given below:

- Will the draft law have an overall positive impact on national targets and the SDGs?
- What positive impacts might be expected? How can these be quantified?
- What negative impacts might be expected? How can these be quantified?

By considering these questions, parliament will be able to identify the stronger and weaker aspects of the legislation from an SDG perspective.

Step 5: Identify legislative solutions that best promote the SDGs

The next step focuses on areas that are problematic or where there is potential for improvement. Here, the question is whether there are alternatives that can best promote the achievement of the SDGs and the goals of the legislation. Potential questions include the following:

- Are there alternative options to achieve the desired results?
- Are there options that might better align with the SDGs or lead to better results?
- Are there more inclusive options?



For example, if some aspects of the draft law on employment are likely to generate unwanted impact on specific population groups, these would need to be redesigned in a way that would bring balanced results for all beneficiaries, for example by eliminating gender or age-specific requirements.

Ideally, to ensure effective follow-up, the recommended solutions should be specific, measurable (where possible), achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

Step 6: Set monitoring goals, benchmarks and timing for post-legislative review

Another very important contribution of parliamentary scrutiny is to set a clear framework for monitoring, benchmarking and post-legislative review. The scrutiny work can result in specific proposals for monitoring and review, or even sunset clauses, determining when, by whom and on what basis the results of the legislation will be reviewed:

- **Monitoring clauses** introduce obligations related to the collection of data on the implementation of legislation.¹⁹ This can be done through reporting obligations on an annual/biannual basis, based on statistical or other types of data. Such obligations often rest with implementing agencies, or with specific governmental entities involved in the implementation of a particular law.

18 Maria Mousmouti, *Designing Effective Legislation* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019).

- **Review clauses** require a body to review the operation of a law and to publish its findings.¹⁹ The review can focus on the law as a whole or on specific aspects. On average, reviews usually take place every three to five years, but a different timing can be determined in the legislation. The obligation to review legislation might rest with a governmental body, an implementing agency, independent bodies or reviewers. Review reports are often published or submitted to parliament.
- **Sunset clauses** set an expiry date for legislation.²⁰ They are often combined with review clauses and often link the expiry to a review. The review, which can be conducted by parliament or the government, determines whether the law should be allowed to expire or whether a postponement is necessary.



For example, in the case of the draft law on employment, the following proposals could result from the scrutiny work:

- ▶ Introduce a monitoring clause obliging a specific body to collect and publish, on an annual basis, data on the number and features of beneficiaries of the scheme.
- ▶ Include a review clause that requires a review of the legislation five years after its enactment, as well as a review of the following specific elements:
 - Full implementation of the scheme
 - Costs
 - Benefits for the beneficiaries
 - Undesired impacts
 - Points for improvement

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

Case study: SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny of the Poverty Alleviation Bill

01

A piece of draft legislation entitled “Poverty Alleviation Bill” is tabled in a parliamentary committee.

Title I of the draft law introduces a Poverty Alleviation Programme aimed at enabling poor families to meet their basic needs in terms of minimum income, health, food and nutrition, education, housing and mental health. The draft law does not define who is considered “poor”; what services are offered, or the conditions for qualifying for assistance under the programme.

Title II of the draft law establishes a National Anti-Poverty Commission with a mandate to coordinate implementation of the Poverty Alleviation Programme with national and local authorities, to monitor its implementation, and to evaluate its results.

Title III of the draft law establishes a Microfinance Programme providing microcredit to the poor. The Credit and Finance Corporation, an existing government-controlled corporation, will deliver microfinance to eligible beneficiaries.

02

The committee acknowledges the direct link between this draft law and SDG 1 on poverty reduction and adopts a motion for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny. The committee also acknowledges that the draft law in question might have specific implications for SDGs 5, 6, 7 and 10. It has identified the following questions as a suitable lens for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny:

- What percentage of the country’s population is living in extreme poverty? How is the draft law expected to affect that? What measurable targets can be defined (1.1)?
- How is poverty distributed by gender and age? How is the draft law going to affect different groups of people (1.2)?
- Does the draft law affect coverage by social protection systems? If so, how? Who will be impacted? How can this be quantified (1.3)?
- How does the draft law affect access to economic resources (1.4)?
- How is the draft law expected to reduce exposure to climate-related events (for the homeless and other groups) (1.5)?
- Does the draft law contribute to the elimination of discrimination against women and girls? Does it include directly or indirectly discriminatory provisions? Does it reproduce gender stereotypes (5.1)?

- Does the draft law offer equal access to economic resources for women (5.a)?
- How does the draft law contribute to gender equality in the specific area it addresses (5.c)?
- How is the draft law expected to contribute to income growth of the bottom 40% of the population (10.1)?
- Is the draft law expected to contribute to social, economic and political inclusion, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status? Is the draft law likely to reduce the proportion of people living below 50% of median income, by sex, age and disability (10.2)?
- Is the draft law expected to reduce inequalities of outcome (10.3)?
- Is the draft law expected to contribute to greater equality (10.4)?
- Is the draft law expected to improve access to safe and affordable drinking water, and to sanitation and hygiene? How and to what extent? Will this benefit all target groups (6.1 and 6.2)?
- Is the draft law expected to improve access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services? How and to what extent? Will this benefit all target groups (7.1)?

03

The committee collects information through:

- requests for statistical data
- requests for information and administrative data from the government, including the amounts to be disbursed over the next few years through the programme
- analysis and reports from international organizations
- hearings of experts and academics
- hearings of gender and inclusivity experts

04

The committee reaches the following conclusions and makes the following recommendations to the government:

- The committee concludes that, in its current form, the draft law is too general for its impact on the SDGs to be anticipated in a concrete and measurable way. While it is a welcome initiative overall, more information and detail are required to ensure that the draft law makes a positive contribution to poverty reduction and to determine its contribution to the achievement of the national goals for SDG 1.

- The committee asks the government to define, in the draft law, the key beneficiaries, eligibility criteria and key assistance measures. If that is not possible, the committee proposes introducing an obligation for these to be subject to parliamentary scrutiny before their adoption.
- The committee invites the government to provide quantified estimates of how the draft law and the Poverty Alleviation Programme are expected to affect the current poverty situation and the State budget, and proposes to use these estimates as benchmarks for future scrutiny.
- The committee acknowledges that poverty is distributed in different ways according to gender, age, race and social status. The draft law, in its current form, is too generic to allow an assessment of positive or negative impacts on specific populations and marginalized groups. It invites the government to provide quantified estimates of how the most vulnerable population groups are likely to be impacted.
- The committee proposes to introduce an obligation to publish annual reports with quantified data on the progress of the programme, as well as on its beneficiaries and impact, and on the resources spent.
- The committee proposes a review clause and an evaluation of the programme five years following its enactment.

05

The committee formulates a monitoring plan and includes, in its agenda, follow-up actions (on the annual reports) and the five-year review.

SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny

Post-legislative scrutiny is the systematic and structured process through which parliaments review the implementation and impact of legislation.²¹ It is a tool that gives parliament a holistic view of the operation and impact of a law, allowing it to understand what worked well and what did not, and to identify the best way forward to ensure that the legislation has the intended impact.

Post-legislative scrutiny offers the advantage of hindsight, as well as the possibility of looking at cross-cutting impacts, and identifying positive and negative change on a larger scale. Coming after the law has produced results, it can capture horizontal or sectoral results and impacts, such as the real impact of a piece of legislation on women and men, inclusivity, sustainable development, and the environment and climate change, or on several of these themes at the same time.



WFD Westminster Foundation for Democracy

11 steps for post-legislative scrutiny

Planning phase

1. Define objectives & scope
2. Data collection plan
3. Consultation plan
4. Review implementing agencies and secondary legislation

Implementation phase

5. Consultation
6. Analysis of findings
7. Reporting

Follow-up phase

8. Disseminate
9. Invite a response
10. Follow-up
11. Evaluate PLS process

Franklin De Vrieze & Maria Mousmouti, *Parliamentary innovation through post-legislative scrutiny*, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2023

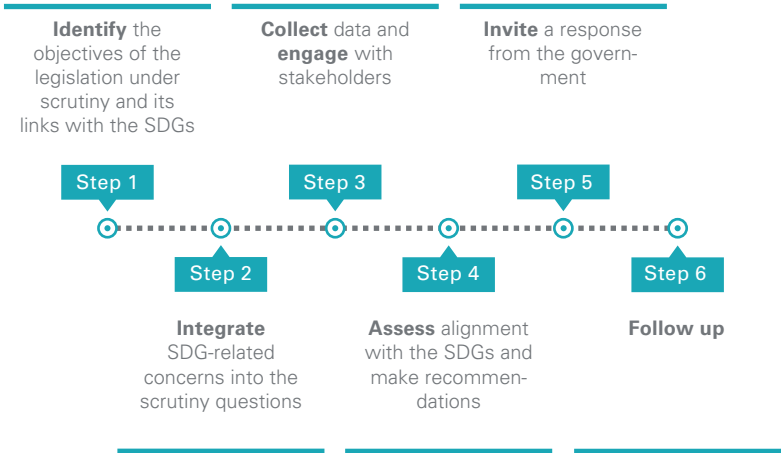
SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny lies at the intersection of the legislative and oversight functions. It examines whether a piece of legislation works and whether it positively contributes to the achievement of national targets and the SDGs. It can offer insights in the following areas:

²¹ For a complete guide to post-legislative scrutiny and how to implement it, see: [De Vrieze, Franklin, and Mousmouti, Maria, *Parliamentary innovation through post-legislative scrutiny. Manual for parliaments. The PLS Series 4*, July 2023.](#)

- How the law is working and what has been achieved
- Whether and how it has contributed to the SDGs - quantitatively and qualitatively
- Good practice
- Where gaps or problems lie
- What needs to be improved to achieve the goals

Key steps for SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny

Figure 7: The SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny process



Step 1: Identify the objectives of the legislation under scrutiny and its links with the SDGs

As mentioned earlier, it is important to know which SDGs are related and relevant to the legislation under scrutiny. Potential questions could include the following:

- Which SDGs are relevant to the legislation being scrutinized (directly, indirectly or in a cross-cutting manner)?
- What questions do the SDGs raise in relation to this legislation?
- How did the legislation contribute to the SDGs?

Step 2: Integrate SDG-related concerns into the scrutiny questions

The next step is to ensure that the scrutiny has an SDG lens. This can be done by integrating SDG-related concerns into the scrutiny questions. Table 1 below shows how “SDG-neutral” scrutiny questions can become SDG-informed.

Table 1: **SDG-neutral vs SDG-informed scrutiny questions**

SDG-neutral scrutiny questions	SDG-informed scrutiny questions
Is the law achieving its aims? If not, why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the law achieving its aims? If not, why?• How are the law and its aims connected to the SDGs?• Is the law positively or negatively contributing to related SDGs as evidenced by data? If so, how?• Does the law affect men, women and other population groups differently?• Is this potential differential impact intentional (i.e. to address existing inequalities) or unintentional?

SDG-neutral scrutiny questions	SDG-informed scrutiny questions
How well has the law been implemented and how well is it working in practice, including any unintended consequences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has implementation of the law affected the achievement of the SDGs? • Has implementation had any desired or undesirable impacts? Has it affected particular population groups? Are these impacts intentional or unintentional? How can they be corrected or improved?
How has the law contributed to directly and indirectly related SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the law contributed to SDGs and targets directly linked to it? • Has the impact been neutral, positive or negative? • What has worked well, and why? • What has not worked, and why?
How has the law contributed to cross-cutting SDGs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the law contributed to cross-cutting goals like gender equality and leaving no one behind? • Who has benefited, and how? • Do achievements differ for people at risk of being discriminated against and/or marginalized because of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status?

Step 3: Collect data and engage with stakeholders

A balanced body of data is needed in order to make an evidence-based assessment of whether the objectives of a piece of legislation were achieved, what worked or did not work (and why), and whether people were affected in a positive or negative way. The following questions can serve as a useful starting point:

- What do we need to know to assess whether and how the law in question has contributed to the SDG targets?
- Which groups have been affected (including marginalized and/or vulnerable groups)?
- How can we involve these groups in the process and learn from them?

It is good practice to combine data from different sources – for instance from consultation, research and statistics.

During post-legislative scrutiny, it is particularly important to engage with stakeholders in order to detect potential adverse or undesirable impacts of a piece of legislation. It is also important to enhance internal coordination within parliament, among parliamentary committees and beyond in order to ensure more effective use of resources and better results.

The participation of a wide spectrum of stakeholders is essential for effective post-legislative scrutiny, just as it is for pre-legislative scrutiny. Parliamentary committees rely on evidence they collect from a wide range of witnesses, experts and others – and it is important to engage with stakeholders who represent different interests and groups and can contribute varied insights and perspectives, including those that are not often heard. In principle, this should lead to a long list of stakeholders, including:

- citizens/beneficiaries of a specific piece of legislation
- businesses
- professional associations
- service providers
- governmental agencies and institutions
- business organizations
- non-governmental organizations
- academic and research bodies
- organizations representing regional, local and municipal authorities
- national and international public authorities

All available means for consultation and engagement should be used in this effort.

Step 4: Assess alignment with the SDGs and make recommendations

The data and information collected in the previous step can now be used to assess how the piece of legislation in question positively or negatively promotes the achievement of SDGs. Leading questions for this analysis include the following:

- Do the results and impact of the law under scrutiny contribute to the SDGs? If so, how and why? If not, why?

- What has worked, what has not worked well, and why? What can be improved?
- Are there more inclusive options? How have vulnerable and/or marginalized groups been affected?
- What needs to be done from now on?

The scrutiny findings should be summarized and presented in a report that offers an overview of the whole process, and that identifies and documents findings. The report should also make recommendations in response to the initial questions raised, focusing on how to maximize achievements and address failures in relation to the law. These recommendations can propose changes²² in policy or practice, further research and/or review, implementation, initiatives by other bodies than parliament, requirements for cooperation, needs for funding and resources, or public information campaigns and guidance.

As with pre-legislative scrutiny, these recommendations should be “SMART” in order to facilitate further monitoring and follow-up. They should answer the following questions:

- What are the recommended changes?
- Who can take these changes forward?
- When, or within what time frame, do these changes need to be implemented?
- Why are these changes suggested over possible alternative changes?
- How do these changes need to be implemented? What is needed in order to support their implementation?

Step 5: Invite a response from the government

SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny is an action-oriented effort and a process of dialogue between parliament and the government around one or more legislative initiatives related to the implementation of one or more of the SDGs. In this spirit, following the completion of the post-legislative scrutiny report, the committee should invite the government to respond to its recommendations. The government can agree or

22 Tom Caygill, “A Tale of Two Houses?”, *European Journal of Law Reform*, 21(2) (2019); Tom Caygill, “Legislation Under Review: An Assessment of Post-Legislative Scrutiny Recommendations in the UK Parliament”, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 25(2) (2019), 295–313.

disagree with the committee's findings but, ultimately, it must make a firm decision: either comply or explain why it is necessary not to do so.

Step 6: Follow up

SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny aims to promote the achievement of the SDGs and is therefore only the first step in this process. Once the committee has disseminated its report and findings, and initiated a dialogue with the government by inviting it to respond, it should conduct consistent follow-up. Follow-up actions can include the following:

- Referring to the findings of the post-legislative scrutiny during plenary sessions in parliament
- Seeking a debate in the plenary on the report
- Holding follow-up debates
- Holding follow-up evidence sessions
- Holding additional scrutiny sessions
- Holding public hearings

Case study: Scrutiny of climate change legislation through an SDG lens

Climate change legislation is the foundation for action on climate change. Laws are the main instruments to enforce the nationally determined contributions (NDCs)²³ to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 2015 Paris Agreement, and to introduce horizontal or sectoral actions for climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster-risk management, as well as to determine national climate change policy and national, long-term and/or medium-term targets (framework laws).

Climate change legislation can intervene in different ways:

- Introduce standards and norms and prescribe acceptable or prohibited behaviours, such as obligations to disclose greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, or moratoriums and bans on fossil-fuel production or use.
- Introduce economic incentives to shift demand to sustainable solutions, such as through subsidies or carbon pricing, or through climate finance tools.
- Introduce direct investment by the State in nature-based solutions, ecosystem restoration and/or early warning systems in order to reduce disaster risk.
- Introduce education, awareness-raising and other climate change-related information initiatives, as well as research and development on renewable energy.
- Introduce governance measures, such as new institutions, plans, strategies, monitoring processes, and reporting and verification clauses.

The following scenario shows how pre- and post-legislative scrutiny can support efforts to translate the SDGs into national policies and legislation and ensure their effective implementation.

Country A tables a draft Climate Resilience Act. The Act introduces the following:

- Policy objectives and commitments
- GHG emissions-reduction targets

The draft Act introduces obligations to produce the following policies on climate change:

- A National Climate Change Policy
- Sectoral strategies and plans to address climate change

²³ An NDC is a country's climate action plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate impacts. Each party to the [Paris Agreement](#) is required to establish an NDC and update it every five years. See: [United Nations, Climate Change, All About the NDCs](#).

The draft Act introduces the following economic mechanisms:

- A Climate Change and Disaster Survival Fund
- A Climate Change and Disaster Levy

The draft Act introduces the following offences and penalties:

- A ban on the exploration, mining and extraction of fossil fuels
- An offence of supplying false information
- A penalty for carrying out any activity or project without approval
- A requirement for certain activities to cease
- Offences by corporations

For the purpose of implementation, the draft Act introduces the following administrative arrangements:

- The functions and powers of the minister
- A new Department of Climate Change and Disaster
- The functions of the new department in building resilience to climate change
- The functions of the new department relating to climate change-related conventions

The draft Act establishes the following advisory bodies:

- A National Climate Change Resilience Forum
- A National Advisory Council on Climate Change

The draft is tabled before the Environment and Sustainable Development Committee for consideration. The committee plans its pre-legislative scrutiny as follows:

01 The committee adopts a motion for SDG-informed scrutiny. It identifies SDG 13 (“Climate action”) and the NDCs as appropriate scrutiny lenses.

02 The committee agrees on the following pre-legislative scrutiny questions:

Question 1: Does the draft Climate Resilience Act strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change-related hazards and disasters? Is it measurable? Is it feasible? Is it specific and relevant? Is it time-bound (13.1)?

Question 2: How is the draft Climate Resilience Act expected to contribute to the NDCs and, specifically, to the commitments outlined in the country's NDC on:

- reducing GHG emissions from the electricity (power) sector by 100% by 2030?
- increasing energy efficiency by 30%?
- reducing total GHG emissions from the entire energy sector to 60% below 2010 levels by 2030?
- transitioning to a zero-carbon development pathway by 2050?

Question 3: Does the Climate Resilience Act effectively integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning (13.2)?

Question 4: Does the Climate Resilience Act improve education, awareness-raising, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (13.4)?

Question 5: Will the Climate Resilience Act impact all segments of the population in a balanced way? Could there be any undesirable impact on men, women, children or people at risk of being discriminated against/marginalized because of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status?

03

The committee plans to collect information as follows:

- Gather statistical data on the current state of play in climate change and resilience, and data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, international organizations, research, academia, etc.
- Submit requests to government departments and agencies involved in environmental protection, disaster management and climate-related activities for official information on existing initiatives and measures in the field of GHG emissions, early warning systems, energy efficiency, carbon reliance, and related budgets and resources mobilized.
- Invite academics and climate change and environmental experts/researchers to advise on the feasibility and appropriateness of the law to contribute to resilience and adaptive capacity and to the NDCs, as well as on the scientific basis of the proposed emissions-reduction targets and the potential of the measures to be effective.
- Invite legal experts and lawyers to advise on whether the legislation is legally sound, especially in terms of human rights considerations and compliance with existing national/international laws.

- Invite experts to advise on potential adverse impacts from the perspective of gender and intersectionality.²⁴
- Collect information from the proposing ministry on the plans and resources for implementing the law.
- Organize a consultation with industry representatives and businesses in order to collect their insights on the impact of the law on their activity, to assess the effectiveness and feasibility of economic mechanisms, including with labour representatives, and to identify alternative employment options for people employed in sectors that will be impacted, such as the fossil-fuel sector, in order to ensure a just transition to a green economy.
- Organize a consultation with civil society organizations active in the field of the environment and climate change in order to hear their views on the feasibility and appropriateness of the law.

04

The committee processes the data and information collected and answers the scrutiny questions as follows:

Question 1: The contribution of the draft Climate Resilience Act to Target 13.1 is limited because no measurable objectives are identified and the measures are not specified in sufficient detail. As such, the ability of the proposed draft law to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to specific hazards and natural disasters is unclear.

Question 2: The potential contribution of the draft Climate Resilience Act to the NDCs is not measurable, since the policies and related measures are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Question 3: The draft Climate Resilience Act positively contributes to Target 13.2 by introducing a specific obligation for State bodies to adopt climate change policies, strategies and plans. However, the content of these measures is not prescribed, even at a general level, and no process is foreseen to ensure that parliament will have the opportunity to approve or scrutinize these measures.

Question 4: The draft Climate Resilience Act does not directly contribute to Target 13.4, although it might do so through the policies adopted.

Question 5: The draft Climate Resilience Act might have unwanted gender or inequality impacts, since no consideration is given to gender equality, inequality or discrimination, the draft has not been scrutinized from a gender and inequality perspective, and no data is presented.

24 “Intersectionality” or “intersectional discrimination” refers to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities of individuals, and how these intersections contribute to multiple and unique experiences of discrimination. See: [European Institute for Gender Equality, Intersectionality](#).

05

The committee identifies the following points of concern following the SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny:

- The draft Climate Resilience Act does not introduce measurable objectives and commitments – even reduction targets are adopted by regulation, meaning they are outside the scope of parliamentary scrutiny.
- The draft Climate Resilience Act only introduces an obligation for specific bodies to produce policies, and does not determine their content or any process for parliament to approve or consent to them.
- There is very limited information on the action and interventions of the Climate Change and Disaster Survival Fund and the Climate Change and Disaster Levy.
- There is limited provision for the enforcement of the prescribed offences, which might lead to them being ineffective.
- There is limited information on how the proposed actions will be inclusive and will benefit all segments of the society in a balanced way.

06

The committee makes the following recommendations to enhance the compatibility of the law with the SDGs:

- Introduce an objectives clause for the law, with specific, measurable and time-bound objectives, in order to serve as a benchmark for the future, enhance accountability, and compel the government to work towards clear and binding targets. The proposed objectives clause reads as follows:

Objectives

The objective of the Act is to put in place the policy tools and administrative mechanisms that shall ensure alignment with the country's NDC under the Paris Agreement; specifically:

- (a) the transition to a zero-carbon development pathway by 2050
 - (b) the reduction of GHG emissions from the electricity (power) sector by 100% by 2030
 - (c) an increase in energy efficiency of 30%
 - (d) the reduction of total GHG emissions from the entire energy sector to 60% below 2010 levels by 2030
- Include a review clause in the draft Climate Resilience Act, introducing a mechanism for reassessment of the law, at regular intervals, so that its effectiveness is appraised, and that achievements and delays are identified

and addressed in an appropriate and timely manner. The proposed review clause reads as follows:

Review of the Act

- (1) An independent review of the effectiveness and operation of this Act shall be carried out on a four-yearly basis.
 - (2) The review shall address:
 - (a) the extent to which the Act is implemented
 - (b) the extent to which the objectives of the Act are achieved
 - (c) the cost of implementation
 - (d) the contribution of the Act to the implementation of the SDGs and the NDCs
 - (e) the potential impact of the Act on the population and groups in vulnerable and/or marginalized situations
 - (f) the extent to which additional legislative measures are necessary to achieve the targets set by this Act, and
 - (g) any other matters as the minister may consider relevant to a review of this Act
 - (3) The minister shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the review is carried out in consultation with relevant business, industry, scientific, environmental and community bodies, children and young people, local government, relevant unions, trade unions and local communities, including representatives of population groups that are in marginalized and/or vulnerable situations.
 - (4) The persons who carry out the review shall submit to the minister a written report on its findings.
 - (5) A copy of the report shall be tabled before the parliament within 10 days of its submission to the minister.
 - (6) The report shall be made public through the website of the ministry.
- Include in the draft Climate Resilience Act the following monitoring process:
 - The government submits to parliament an annual report on the progress of NDC implementation.
 - Parliament can debate the report and invite ministers to provide information and respond to questions.
 - Parliament prepares a report with recommendations.

-The government is obliged to respond to the recommendations and take them into account in its activities.

- Have all policies tabled before, and approved by, parliament prior to their implementation.
- Have parliament conduct prior scrutiny of reduction targets introduced by the regulation.
- Introduce an obligation on all bodies established by the draft Climate Resilience Act to report on their activities on an annual basis (to ensure timely implementation and enforcement of the Act).

07

Four years later, the independent review is carried out and the report is submitted to the committee. The committee decides to conduct post-legislative scrutiny in order to examine in detail the findings and the actual contributions of the Climate Resilience Act to the national effort to mitigate climate change. The committee adopts a motion for post-legislative scrutiny and agrees to examine the following:

- The extent to which the Climate Resilience Act has achieved the objectives determined during pre-legislative scrutiny:
 - The transition to a zero-carbon development pathway by 2050
 - The reduction of GHG emissions from the electricity (power) sector by 100% by 2030
 - An increase in energy efficiency of 30%
 - The reduction of total GHG emissions from the entire energy sector to 60% below 2010 levels by 2030
- The effective implementation of national climate change policies, strategies and plans, as well as the accompanying administrative mechanism and advisory bodies
- The degree of awareness, education and capacity
- The effectiveness of the offences and penalties
- The extent to which the Climate Resilience Act has strengthened resilience and adaptive capacity to climate change hazards and disasters against the targets identified in the pre-legislative scrutiny
- Progress in the achievement of the NDCs
- Whether the Climate Resilience Act has impacted specific population groups in a disproportionate way

08

The committee collects information from the following sources:

- Statistical data on the current state of play in climate change and resilience
- Research and studies conducted on the topic
- Government and administrative data on the implementation of existing policies and strategies
- Budgets allocated and initiatives taken to achieve the targets
- Expert advice on the progress achieved, as well as barriers and current needs to achieve the targets and NDCs and to enhance resilience and adaptive capacity
- Expert advice from gender and inequality experts and non-governmental organizations on adverse impacts of the law from a gender, inequality and intersectionality perspective
- Insights from businesses on the impact of the law and potential barriers, as well as from labour representatives on the impact on employees, including alternative employment opportunities for those employed in sectors such as the fossil-fuels industry
- Consultation with civil society organizations on the progress achieved and the extent of achievement of the targets and potential barriers

09

The committee analyses the data and information and identifies the following issues:

- The Climate Resilience Act has partially achieved the quantified objectives determined during the pre-legislative scrutiny. Further and more intense action is required in order to meet them by the agreed deadlines.
- Policies and strategies are in place but several delays in their implementation are noted. The administrative mechanism is established and fully operational.
- The population's awareness, education and capacity have only marginally improved. Offences and penalties have been enforced to a limited extent and measures do not seem to have had a significant impact in terms of changing people's behaviours in relation to consumption and climate change. Awareness and information campaigns targeting the population might be more effective ways of achieving this goal.
- The interventions of the Climate Change and Disaster Survival Fund and the Climate Change and Disaster Levy are limited. Limited funds have been disbursed and their impact has not been assessed.
- Steps to enhance local resilience and adaptive capacity to disasters are stalled owing to a lack of resources.

- Variable progress is noted in the achievement of the NDCs, and specifically as follows:
 - The reduction of GHG emissions from electricity is well under way and the achievement of the target by 2030 is feasible.
 - Energy efficiency has increased by an estimated 10%, falling short of the desired target of 30%. Targeted action is required to ensure that the target is met within the agreed deadline.
 - Total GHG emissions from the entire energy sector are currently 40% below 2010 levels – well on track towards the target of 60% by 2030.
 - Insufficient data is available to measure progress in relation to the zero-carbon development pathway. The committee recommends conducting studies and data collection to determine whether the target set for 2050 is feasible.
- Evidence suggests that measures to address climate change and disaster resilience have led to increasing climate displacement and human security challenges, which have particularly affected coastal communities.

10

The committee issues the following recommendations:

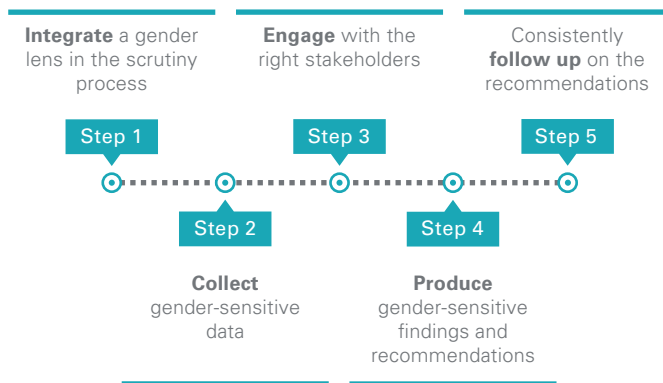
- The ministry needs to propose a robust action plan for the further implementation of the Climate Resilience Act, policies and related targets. It is requested to report to parliament on progress on an annual basis.
- Advisory bodies are invited to keep a close eye on progress and to closely monitor the implementation process.
- The work and impact of the Climate Change and Disaster Survival Fund and the Climate Change and Disaster Levy need to be closely monitored. Parliament invites the minister to commission a study to assess the impact of the Fund's measures.
- The ministry is invited to organize large-scale campaigns targeting the population and industry in order to raise awareness, improve education and speed up the implementation of climate-related measures.
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission is invited to closely monitor the impact of climate change mitigation measures on equality, and on vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

Case study: Gender-sensitive legislative scrutiny and the SDGs

Gender equality is a horizontal SDG. Target 5.1 refers to ending all forms of discrimination against women and men everywhere. Discrimination is often created or reproduced by legislation, whether directly or indirectly. It is therefore increasingly important to ensure that all legislation promotes gender equality, eliminates overt or covert discrimination, and does not reproduce gendered stereotypes.

Gender-sensitive legislative scrutiny can reveal the potential or actual impact of legislation on men, women and gender inequality, and make visible biases, stereotypes and assumptions relating to gender and other characteristics, as well as access and participation barriers and data gaps, thereby improving the effectiveness of legislative initiatives. It applies a gender lens to pre- and post-legislative scrutiny in order to show how the law works for women and men, whether it produces differential results and outcomes, whether there are achievements and undesirable impacts from a gender equality perspective, and possible ways to “correct” these impacts.²⁵

Figure 8: Gender-sensitive scrutiny at a glance²⁶



25 Maria Mousmouti, “Gender-sensitive law-making: concept and process”, *Theory and Practice of Legislation*, 10(3) (2022), 223–233; Maria Mousmouti (ed.), *Gender Sensitive Lawmaking in Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2023).

26 Source: Maria Mousmouti, “Gender-sensitive post-legislative scrutiny in theory and practice”, in Maria Mousmouti (ed.), *Gender Sensitive Lawmaking in Theory and Practice*, p. 109.

Gender-sensitive questions for legislative scrutiny:

- How has a (draft or existing) piece of legislation affected the existing situation of men and women?
- How has a (draft or existing) piece of legislation influenced men and women in terms of rights and obligations?
- How has a (draft or existing) piece of legislation influenced men and women in terms of access to, or distribution of, resources?
- How has a (draft or existing) piece of legislation influenced men and women in terms of access to power and representation?
- How has a (draft or existing) piece of legislation affected men and women in relation to their age, race, ethnic origin, disability or other characteristics?
- How has a (draft or existing) piece of legislation affected people at risk of being discriminated against/marginalized because of their race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, and because of the intersection of these characteristics?



Example: inequality in education

Inequality in education is expressed through different gender-based choices across study fields, the feminization of the teaching profession versus the masculinization of teaching in tertiary education, gender stereotypes, gender and low achievement in school, gender and early school leaving, gender and training, and gender-based violence at school. Depending on the legislation in question, scrutiny of education-related legislation would need to assess the legislative interventions against this reality. Relevant questions for gender-sensitive scrutiny of a higher-education law could be as follows:

- ▶ Has education legislation promoted the equal participation of male and female candidates in higher education? In scholarships?
- ▶ How has education legislation affected gender-based segregation in the choice of study areas?
- ▶ How has education legislation affected the existing gap between male and female students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or in humanities subjects?
- ▶ How has education legislation affected different groups of men and women in relation to their age, race, ethnic origin, disability or other characteristics?



Example: law on skilled migration

A law on skilled migration introduces requirements for skilled migrants to enter country B. The law does not specifically address men or women, but rather anyone who is interested in benefiting from its provisions. The law sets the following requirements for skilled migrants to enter and work in country B:

- ▶ “Recent work experience”, which cannot be part-time and must be gained immediately prior to applying under the scheme
- ▶ “Specific work experience” in at least three of the last four years immediately prior to application in a defined area or skill
- ▶ Proficiency in English, as tested by the International English Language Testing System
- ▶ An age limit of 45 years
- ▶ Skills to be assessed by professional assessment organizations, with points depending on qualifications in certain industries and professions included on a predetermined list
- ▶ Family links, with additional points available for having relatives who are permanent residents in country B, and five points for the basic skills of the applicant’s accompanying spouse

A gender-sensitive analysis of this law highlights the following issues:

- ▶ The requirement for “recent” work experience might disadvantage individuals who have taken breaks in their careers. Given the current situation, these might be primarily women or men who have exercised their right to parental leave.
- ▶ If work experience does not include unpaid domestic work or childcare, it might disadvantage women, who perform a greater share of this type of work.
- ▶ High levels of language proficiency combined with the age limit could pose disproportionate challenges for women who had children early in life and who may take longer to complete education and training (including the acquisition of a second language), as well as for men/women from different ethnic origins and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- ▶ The requirement for skills and listed professions might exclude professions taken up predominantly by women (e.g. nurses).
- ▶ Qualifications linked to listed professions might exclude women if they are mainly “male” professions.

- ▶ The exclusion of part-time work might disadvantage women, who make up a higher proportion of the part-time workforce.
- ▶ The time limit on qualifying experience might exclude women who have taken breaks in their careers.

Based on these findings, the committee conducting the scrutiny proposes the reformulation of the entry requirements to take into account the gender-sensitive analysis. The proposal is as follows:

- ▶ Recent work experience should be calculated with reference to a longer period, for example 5 or even 10 years. When formulated in this way, the requirement does not disadvantage individuals who have taken breaks in their careers and allows those with the most relevant skills to be selected.
- ▶ Experience should include part-time work so as not to exclude women (who make up a higher proportion of the part-time workforce) or individuals who have taken breaks in their careers.
- ▶ The list of skills and occupations should take into account current gender disparities and offer equal opportunities to both men and women, including positive measures if necessary to ensure a balanced migrant workforce.

Checklists for SDG-informed legislative scrutiny

MPs and parliamentary staff can use this checklist to support SDG-informed pre- and post-legislative scrutiny.



Checklist for effective SDG-informed pre-legislative scrutiny

When draft legislation is tabled, a parliamentary committee should do as follows:

- Identify links between the proposed legislation and the SDGs, including direct, indirect and cross-cutting links (gender, inclusivity, etc.).
- Identify the aspects that fall within the mandate of the committee and, where possible, build coalitions with other committees/caucuses/parliamentary stakeholders to ensure more holistic approaches.
- Agree on the concrete scrutiny questions that the committee(s) will be focusing on.
- Identify the data and information that are required for the scrutiny (statistics, research, quantitative, qualitative, other data).
- Identify and collect existing and new data, and identify the right methods for collecting this data (e.g. calls for written or oral evidence, hearings, expert interviews, round tables, open consultations).
- Identify all relevant stakeholders (government, independent authorities, academia, experts, civil society, citizens, marginalized groups) and the ways in which they can inform the scrutiny.
- Involve stakeholders/experts to advise/inform on cross-cutting issues.
- Conduct meaningful consultation with all stakeholders, using targeted questions and inclusive and accessible processes.
- Analyse the data collected in an objective way to demonstrate the potential of legislation to contribute to the SDGs, and let the data guide the analysis.
- Identify alternative solutions that can better contribute to the SDGs.
- Produce an evidence-based report with clear and actionable recommendations.
- Propose a concrete monitoring and follow-up plan.

- Adopt the report and share it with all stakeholders.
- Follow up on the commitments and their implementation.



Sample pre-legislative scrutiny questions

- What problem does the draft law under scrutiny aim to address or solve? How does the issue relate to the SDGs? Which SDGs are directly or indirectly linked? Which are affected in a cross-cutting way?
- How is the draft law under scrutiny expected to contribute to the SDG targets and the NDCs?
- How does the draft law work against horizontal goals (gender equality, inclusivity, etc.)?
- Is the draft law likely to address the problem that it attempts to regulate?
- Is the draft law likely to make a positive contribution to the national targets and the SDGs? What kind of measurable results can the law be expected to achieve? When?
- Who is affected by the draft law and how? Will men and women, younger and older people, or other population groups in marginalized or vulnerable situations be affected in different ways?
- Are there alternatives that can lead to better results and align better with the SDGs?
- Are there more inclusive options?
- How will the implementation, results and impact of the draft law be monitored after its enactment? When? By whom?



Checklist for effective SDG-informed post-legislative scrutiny

A parliamentary committee that decides to scrutinize existing legislation through an SDG lens should do as follows:

- Identify the law(s) that will be scrutinized, their objectives, their SDG links (direct, indirect and cross-cutting) and the key points of pre-legislative scrutiny (if this was conducted).
- Identify the SDG aspects that fall within the mandate of the committee and, where possible, build coalitions with other committees/caucuses/parliamentary stakeholders to ensure more holistic approaches.
- Formulate the concrete post-legislative scrutiny questions.

- Identify the data and information required for the scrutiny, including existing and new data, and the most appropriate methods for collecting this data.
- Identify relevant stakeholders and the ways in which they can inform the scrutiny, including stakeholders or experts to advise/inform on cross-cutting issues.
- Consult with stakeholders, using targeted questions.
- Analyse the data collected in such a way as to demonstrate the measurable results and impact of the legislation in relation to the SDGs.
- Identify success stories and barriers, and explore solutions that can better contribute to the SDGs.
- Produce an evidence-based report with clear and actionable recommendations.
- Propose a concrete follow-up plan.
- Adopt the report and share it with all stakeholders.
- Invite a response from the relevant authorities, with specific commitments.
- Follow up on the commitments and their implementation.



Sample post-legislative scrutiny questions

- Has the law under scrutiny been fully implemented? Has the law achieved its objectives? How has it contributed (directly and indirectly) to related SDG targets and NDCs?
- How has the law under scrutiny worked against horizontal goals (gender equality, inclusivity, etc.)? Has the law produced undesirable results or impact?
- What has worked well, what has not worked well, and why?
- Who has been affected by the law under scrutiny, and how? Has there been any disparate or undesirable impact on men and women, younger and older people, people with disabilities, or other population groups in marginalized or vulnerable situations?
- What needs to change in order to achieve better results and better alignment with the SDGs? How can positive impact be maximized? How can adverse impact be minimized?
- How will the recommendations and changes be monitored? When? By whom?

Annex

Key actions that parliaments can take to implement the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs serve as a source of inspiration for addressing existing challenges in a structured and coherent manner. However, they need to be translated into actionable national policies and legislation, and implemented effectively both nationally and locally. This means that:

- governments need to propose policies and legislation that are aligned with the SDGs and actively promote them
- parliaments need to ensure that legislation proposed by governments or MPs promotes the SDGs

UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,²⁷ adopted on 25 September 2015, highlights the specific role that parliaments have to play in implementing the SDGs:

45. We acknowledge also the **essential role of national parliaments** through their **enactment of legislation** and **adoption of budgets** and their **role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments**. Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, subregional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others.

Moreover, UN General Assembly resolution 77/159 *Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*,²⁸ adopted in December 2022, emphasizes the essential role of national parliaments in bringing the SDGs to life through their powers, encouraging them to:

- assess the contribution of existing national legal frameworks to the achievement of the SDGs and targets
- participate in the follow-up and review processes of the achievement of the SDGs
- put in place a strong and constructive relationship with independent oversight bodies, as well as effective oversight mechanisms

27 [United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* \(2015\).](#)

28 [United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/159, *Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals* \(2022\).](#)

- raise awareness of opportunities for public engagement in monitoring the 2030 Agenda
- provide support to parliamentarians on the scrutiny of budget proposals to enable effective financing for the SDGs
- place gender equality, and the empowerment of women and persons with disabilities, at the centre of efforts to accelerate progress towards the SDGs

Last but not least, the resolution acknowledges that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible and that policy coherence is key in achieving the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

The IPU has on several occasions referred to the need for parliamentary leadership in relation to the SDGs²⁹ and has addressed the issue in the outcomes of its World Conferences of Speakers of Parliament³⁰, as well as other declarations³¹ and resolutions³².

Adopting legislation to implement the SDGs and scrutinizing legislation through an SDG lens

Legislative frameworks are often needed for effective implementation of the SDGs. These frameworks, whether new or existing, need to be in compliance with the SDGs and introduce measures that positively contribute to their advancement. The SDGs offer a lens for scrutiny of legislation that can allow parliaments to establish whether laws are aligned with the SDGs and what changes or improvements need to be made to ensure that legislation is advancing the achievement of the goals.

Adopting budgets

Few things can happen without budgets, and the achievement of the SDGs is no exception. Resources are necessary and parliaments have an important role to play in ensuring that the SDGs are mainstreamed in budgetary processes to enable implementation.

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- 29 See indicatively [Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world the people want](#) of the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (UN Headquarters in New York, 31 August – 1 September 2015); [First Global Parliamentary Meeting on Achieving the SDGs “Turning the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic into opportunities for parliaments to achieve the SDGs”](#).
- 30 See the [outcomes of the IPU’s World Conferences of Speakers of Parliament](#) since 2015.
- 31 IPU, [Hanoi Declaration](#) *The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action* adopted by the 132nd IPU Assembly, Hanoi, 1 April 2015; [Kigali Declaration](#) *Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world* adopted by the 145th IPU Assembly, Kigali, 15 October 2022.
- 32 See indicatively, [Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity](#); [Parliamentary efforts in achieving negative carbon emission balances of forests](#); [Mainstreaming digitalization and the circular economy to achieve the SDGs, particularly responsible consumption and production](#); [Engaging the private sector in implementing the SDGs, especially on renewable energy](#); [Addressing climate change](#).

Exercising oversight and monitoring the implementation of commitments

Oversight is a key function of parliaments – and one that is particularly relevant for the SDGs. Oversight allows parliament to monitor progress in the implementation of commitments, collect evidence, hold the government and other implementing bodies to account, and ensure that things are on track.

Engaging with the public

The 2030 Agenda places people at the centre of the development process and calls on governments, parliaments and other stakeholders to leave no one behind. This means that citizens must be closely involved in the process of adopting, monitoring, implementing and reviewing the SDGs. This also means that governments, parliaments and relevant stakeholders should systematically take into consideration the needs of all, including those who are underrepresented, marginalized and/or in vulnerable situations.

Parliaments have a unique role to play in engaging with citizens and stakeholders, and especially in listening to voices that have not been heard, and in highlighting the real or potential impacts of different solutions.

Assigning bodies to work on or follow up on the SDGs

In order to meet their obligations and positively contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, parliaments around the world have adopted a variety of different, context-specific approaches to mainstreaming the SDGs. For example, some parliaments have set up multiparty task forces (e.g. Indonesia³³ and Pakistan³⁴). Others have opted for joint bicameral parliamentary committees (e.g. Spain³⁵ and Uzbekistan³⁶), or SDG parliamentary forums or caucuses (e.g. Kenya and Uganda³⁷). Others still have mainstreamed the SDGs into the work of the existing standing committees (e.g. China³⁸ and Fiji³⁹).

33 [IPU case study "Indonesia experiments with open-access SDG portals"](#).

34 [IPU case study "Pakistan improves access to healthcare for vulnerable and marginalized communities"](#).

35 [IPU case study "Spain's specialized parliamentary committee on SDG implementation"](#).

36 [IPU case study "Uzbekistan's Oliy Majlis SDGs commission targets policy reform"](#).

37 [IPU case study "Parliamentary engagement in national development plans in Uganda"](#).

38 [IPU case study "China: balancing economic growth, well-being, and environmental protection"](#).

39 [IPU case study "Fiji Parliament works with government and civil society on climate change"](#).

References and resources

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[Mousmouti, Maria, “Case study 3: Data and gender-sensitive post-legislative scrutiny”, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, July 2020.](#)

Inter-Parliamentary Union resources

[IPU, *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A self-assessment toolkit* \(2016\).](#)

[IPU, *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* \(2014\).](#)

[IPU, *Global Parliamentary Report 2017—Parliamentary oversight: Parliament’s power to hold government to account* \(2017\).](#)

[IPU, *Putting parliamentary self-development into practice* \(2020\).](#)

[IPU, *Gender-responsive law-making* \(2021\).](#)

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Other resources

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