World e-Parliament Conference 2018

Parliaments, technology and innovation

3-5 December 2018

Geneva, Switzerland

#eParliament

CONCEPT NOTE

9 October 2018

World e-Parliament Conference 2018

The eighth World e-Parliament Conference, entitled 'Parliaments, technology and innovation', will take place on 3-5 December 2018 in Geneva at the Centre international de confèrences de Genève (CICG). The World e-Parliament Conference is hosted by the IPU. Information about the Conference can be viewed at www.ipu.org/wepr2018.

What we call an e-Parliament has come a long way in the ten years since the first World e-Parliament Report in 2008 found a significant gap between the potential of ICT and what parliaments had actually accomplished with it. The World e-Parliament Report 2018, which will be launched at the conference, finds that the gap is finally closing: parliaments are using ICT more effectively, in all aspects of their work.

Digital technologies are now firmly embedded with clearly identified governance and technology practices in most parliaments. Digital broadcasting and video streaming have overtaken traditional broadcasting. The use of instant messaging has seen a significant increase, while social media use also continues to rise. Challenges remain, of course: barriers to greater use of ICT include training and skill deficits among staff and members and growing concerns over security and reliability. Parliaments report that public knowledge of how parliaments work as the biggest barrier to greater citizen engagement.

Against this background, it is time to raise the question of how technology supports innovation in the transformation of parliamentary processes; how it can act as a catalyst for modernisation, culture change and for increasing transparency and enhancing representation.

"Innovation" will therefore be the theme running through the 2018 World e-Parliament Conference. The policy track will examine the impact of new tools on the job of a parliamentarian and on the institution of parliament. Meanwhile, the technical track will go into the details of the innovative approaches that parliaments are developing to support parliamentarians and to carry out the institution's core functions.

Structure

The conference will feature the following highlights:

1. Launch of the World e-Parliament Report 2018;
2. Launch of the Centre for Innovation in Parliament;
3. Keynote on innovation and its meaning in the parliamentary context;
4. Thematic ´blocks´ to enable in-depth discussion of policy and technical issues.
5. ´Unconference´ sessions whose themes will be defined by conference participants, based on their interests and priorities. Special consideration will be given to how innovation happens in different contexts (for example, small parliaments; parliaments with limited ICT infrastructure, new parliaments, etc).
6. A "Parliamentary showcase" where parliaments can demonstrate their innovations, and tell the stories of how these were realised.

Parallel to the on-site proceedings, a dedicated Conference website will provide continuous updates and information. On the social media front there will be a Twitter hashtag #eParliament to allow participants (and non-participants) to join the conversation, before, during and after the Conference.

Vision and objectives

The 2018 Conference aims to highlight and promote the role that technology plays in innovation in parliament. The key ideas underpinning of innovation in parliament are 1/ making parliament more open and transparent, so all citizens can know and understand what parliament is doing; 2/ making parliament more representative and inclusive, by creating more opportunities for citizens to engage with parliamentary work.

Society is changing and, with it, so too are societal expectations. Public expects ready access to parliament, just as it has to commercial brands and, increasingly, other public services. Parliaments must innovate or be left behind.

To succeed in adopting a more innovative and open culture, parliaments must themselves adapt to new ways of working, including partnering with third-parties. The good news is that there are an increasing number of real-life examples of the use of collective intelligence to modernise parliaments and strengthen their connection with citizens.

Parliamentarians, meanwhile, operate in an environment that is increasingly characterized by instant exchange of information on social networks, picked up on equally as quickly by mainstream and specialized media. Innovations in technology and society provide a range of opportunities for parliamentarians to engage with a greater number of citizens, to listen to their concerns and to bring their concerns into the work of parliament. Yet the same innovations create new challenges, for example with regard to "fake news" and public confidence in their political representatives.

Participants will have an opportunity to learn about, and discuss, how parliaments can promote an innovative culture within the institution, how the job of a parliamentarian is changing, how to develop the technology infrastructure to support innovation, how to share innovation between parliaments and much more.

The Conference will be mindful of the fact that parliaments operate in vastly different contexts, and will create space to consider how innovation happens in different contexts.

Due consideration will also be given to ways to address potentially harmful or negative impacts of recent developments, such as disinformation in public debate, cyber-efforts to influence election results, and challenges to the right to privacy.

Participants of the Conference shall hopefully not only return to their parliament with renewed ambitions about what innovations they would like to realize and how, but moreover be inspired and equipped to continue efforts to transform the way their parliament operates and be closer to citizens.

With this view, the prime objectives of the Conference are:

- To take stock of recent global trends in the use of technology in and around parliaments, as well as critical challenges facing parliaments and democracy in general in this information age;
- To define the concept of 'innovation' and its relevance in the parliamentary context;
- To consider how parliaments can develop a culture of innovation within their institution;
- To develop good practices for parliamentarians in the innovative use of technology tools
- To showcase specific examples of how parliaments and parliaments are using technology in innovative ways to support or drive positive transformations;
- To deliberate and find ways to share innovation amongst parliaments, making use of new opportunities for inter-parliamentary networking and collaboration.

The Centre for Innovation in Parliament

The 2018 Conference will see the public launch of the new Centre for Innovation in Parliament – a partnership between the IPU and parliaments to support parliamentary innovation through improved use of digital tools.

Structured around a series of parliamentary hubs, the Centre provides a global platform for parliaments to develop and share good practices in digital implementation strategies, and practical methods for building capacity.

The Centre and its thematic and regional hubs will provide a channel for participants to remain engaged with one another after the Conference and to continue to learn and exchange practical knowledge.

Format

The Conference will be based on the principles of 'participation' and 'interaction'. The opening and closing sessions will take place in plenary. During the rest of the Conference, parallel sessions will be held in two different rooms, with seating for 500 and 215 participants respectively. Interpretation will be available in both rooms in English, French and Spanish, and proceedings in both rooms will be webcast via dedicated social media channels.

Four smaller meeting rooms are available for the unconference sessions, breakouts and informal gatherings, holding between 24 and 40 seats each. These rooms are without interpretation.

The Parliamentary Showcase will be held in the CICG common gathering space, in front of the main rooms, in an area that is visible, open, and accessible.

Summaries of the main points from the Conference will be captured on the Conference website and a more extensive report will be made available after the Conference. Conference proceedings shall be further enhanced by information-sharing and networking opportunities including:

- An online "Innovation Board" on the conference website where parliaments can post innovation stories on the board, in any desired format e.g. a brief text, an uploaded PDF, pictures, a short YouTube movie etc;

- A "virtual brainstorming space" for the unconference sessions will also be available on the Conference website prior to the Conference itself, and shall allow participants to propose topics for discussion during the Unconference sessions on days two and three;

Participants

It is expected that around 350-400 participants will attend the World e-Parliament Conference 2018, representing parliamentary assemblies from around the world.

Delegations will include members of parliament, Secretaries General and parliamentary staff with responsibility for ICT, Communications and other areas. Parliaments are encouraged to send gender-balanced delegations and to include young parliamentarians in their delegation.

Other participants in the conference will include experts from civil society, academia, the private sector and international organizations etc.

Registration

Parliament may register up to five delegates for the Conference.

All registration will be done online at https://www.surveygizmo.eu/s3/90098199/e-Parliament-2018

The deadline for registration is Friday 16 November 2018.

Languages

The working languages of the World e-Parliament Conference 2018 will be English, French and Spanish. Additional interpretation booths may be made available to delegations upon request.

Background

The World e-Parliament Conference is the biennial forum of the parliamentary community on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). It addresses from the policy and technical perspectives how ICT can help improve representation, law-making and oversight, and increase parliament's openness, accessibility, accountability and effectiveness.

Seven World e-Parliament Conferences have been held since 2007, most recently at Chamber of Deputies of Chile in Valparaiso in 2016. Conferences have showcased parliamentary technologies from a range of perspectives and levels, and how these are applied to support and improve parliamentary processes.

Further information

Information about the Conference can be viewed at https://www.ipu.org/event/world-e-parliament-conference-2018

For further information concerning the World e-Parliament Conference 2018, please contact the Inter-Parliamentary Union (E-mails: postbox@ipu.org and wepr@ipu.org; Phone: +41 22 919 41 50)