

## Open Parliament

Parliamentary activity will be submitted to a constant [democratic supervision](#) by society. Control and monitoring of the job and representational practice of our members of Congress, as well as their status and retributions, will be part of an unstoppable current of observance. A demanding dynamic that oscillates between the stereotypical distrust and the severe criticism, articulating a powerful current against the nature of politics, even though it may also lead to an anti-political or apolitical foundation.

There is an undercurrent of turbulence that, during this economic, financial, and institutional crisis frame in which we are submerged, raises questions about the human quality of our own representatives. [Inflammatory e-mails](#) circulate about the ethical and moral stature of the European members of Parliament. Texts and all sorts of information show the lack of personal coherence between what they say and what they do delegitimizing them.

Background movements, rooted in the anger and disgust, are used—unscrupulously—by all kinds of maximalist radicalisms to question from the usefulness and necessity of the Senate to the “costs” of our democracy.

The late submission of audit of political parties represented in parliament by the Court of Auditors ([which the Court itself has justified](#)), and failure on anonymous donations, prohibited in July 2007 with the Law on Financing of Political Parties, [does not contribute](#) at all, to a climate of trust. [Three political formations add up to more than 90%](#) of the anonymous donations.

That is why, may be, from this type of practices flourish initiatives such as [Public Salaries](#) which carry the objective of turning itself into a transparency and freedom service in the network available for all citizens. *“Now that our politicians are not able to publish their salaries, we intend to be aware of what they earn and spend”*. Motivations that are also shared, in part by [“What do members of Parliament do?”](#), a blog that presents itself as a

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“parliament of people who follow closely the work of governments, especially in Congress”, with great activity in [Social Media](#).

In the United States, [Citizen Cosponsor Project](#), allows the citizens to know who (with name and last name) supports certain laws or parliamentary initiatives, thanks to a deep and irreversible process of legislative open data. These dynamics associate and link better, making parliamentary activity more transparent and understandable to the electorate to whom they must be accountable for. We can also know, [through open applications](#), on what do they spend the money received by the Parliamentary Secretariat, the type of consultants they hire, or where the donations come from.

Issues and challenges that parliamentary democracy must attend and solve are unpostponable. Today, the General Courts, host in Madrid the annual meeting of the [ECPRD](#) (*European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation*), which, since 1996 promotes a series of seminars under the general title of “[Parliaments on the Net](#)” in order to serve the exchange of experiences and good practices in spreading the content related to parliamentary activity in the net. This year’s seminar has as central theme the “[Mobility, transparency and open parliament: good practices in web sites of parliaments](#)”.

The goal, to help enrich the debate and know, at the hands of those responsible for ITC in Parliament, specific examples of good practices regarding the use of Information Technology and Communication being carried out in each one of them. But the transparency needed is not given alone by technology, it must also come from political will.

It is interesting to know, for example, if members of parliament are extremely overweight, if this raises good media coverage and generates debate on such an important issue of public health. In this sense, [the awareness day](#) organized by the Spanish Society for the Study of Obesity ([SEEDO](#)) in the Catalan Parliament, has allowed us to see that the physical condition of our elected is far from satisfactory and that a sedentary

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lifestyle, not careful diet and political stress, [do not contribute](#) to carrying a healthy lifestyle. But, besides knowing their [Body Mass Index](#), citizens want to know more. We want to know, follow and participate on our destinies.

Parliamentary activity is interesting. A clue in this matter is a simple citizen application, [the Congress and Senate widget](#), that since its first appearance (December 2011) has gotten over 100.000 hits... just so we know something as basic and easy as the e-mail, Twitter and Facebook accounts of our members of Parliament, to contact or [know](#) their public and political activity. Open Parliament is not only a right but should be an obligation of our representatives.

We have friendly and powerful technology for transparent parliamentary activity, the release of public interest data, and the creation of legislative [co creation](#) spaces, the permanent consultation of public opinion, and the incorporation of a new representation culture. We are only missing the political will. It would be convenient -from the head start- that the articles of the Transparency Act, pending in Parliament, include the Royal House as well as the judicial and legislative powers. [Let's start there](#). And continue with Open Parliament. There is no time to lose.

([Parlamento Abierto](#). Antoni Gutiérrez-Rubí, blog de EL PAÍS Micropolítica, 31.05.2012)

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