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ALERTA HEMEROGRÁFICA

No. 371

SEPTIEMBRE 2023



Título: *Committee hearings as parliamentary publicengagement: A global perspective.*

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Revista: The Journal of Legislative Studies, Volume 29, Issue 2, august 2023, pp. 1-21.

Editorial: Lord Philip Norton of Louth - University of Hull, UK.

ISSNe: 1743-9337

Versión electrónica: <https://bit.ly/3sOvHn5>

Nota: Disponible para consulta en los servicios las Bases de Datos Institucionales para la Cámara de Diputados.

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Página web: <https://www.tandfonline.com/>

ABSTRACT:

Committees are important units of parliaments around the world, but their use in public engagement has been underexplored. Committees can conduct public hearings, which have been analysed as tools for information processing. Following a conceptual overview, the article analyses data collected for the 2022 Global Parliamentary Report on hearings as a tool for public engagement. Based on the survey responses of 69 parliamentary chambers and interviews with MPs and staff, it explores how, and where hearings are used for engagement. Spotlighting innovations such as committee field hearings and core issues from committee practice, such as digital hearings, and mechanisms for the involvement of CSOs, it becomes clear that the perspective on hearings must be broadened beyond legislation and oversight and their role in public engagement must be taken seriously—both for academic study and political practice.

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