



PROJECT FACTSHEET

Western Balkans May 2015

STRENGTHENING THE OVERSIGHT FUNCTION AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE SERBIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



Switzerland is supporting the Serbian National Assembly in its oversight function and in its efforts to ensure transparency. © Rea Mucovic

The SDC, together with the United Nations Development Programme, is helping the Serbian National Assembly to exercise greater scrutiny over public expenditure and to improve the institution's outreach to citizens. Additional consultation mechanisms are urgently needed to better represent citizen's interests in the National Assembly.

The wave of reforms in recent years driven by the EU accession process has produced a large amount of legislation whose quality has not always been satisfactory. The process has been too rapid and not sufficiently transparent or inclusive. Owing to the speed of the reform and because the Serbian electoral system gives more weight to the large cities, too little has been heard from the regions and municipalities. At the same time, institutions have come under increasing public pressure to be more transparent and exercise more scrutiny over public expenditure through the National Assembly. The economic crisis in Serbia has shown that the country's public finances need to be more efficiently managed and monitored. The National Assembly plays a decisive role in overseeing the budget and public expenditure.

MORE TRANSPARENCY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Switzerland is helping to improve the quality of the legislative process and to ensure that citizens' interests are taken into account. The project also promotes the National Assembly's powers of scrutiny over public finances.

INVOLVING THE PUBLIC AND ENSURING SCRUTINY

As part of the project, public hearings have been set up to debate and analyse government policy developments. Peripheral regions can put their concerns and demands to parliamentarians during these regional events.

National Assembly mobile committee sessions have been organised at municipal level. This platform for direct communication allows specialists and the general public to take part in debates on items on the National Assembly's agenda to improve its effectiveness.

The project supports more efficient administration of public finances through the introduction of electronic tools for the scrutiny of government spending. Thanks to e-governance the National Assembly can directly monitor the financial flows of the public budget and the management of fiscal affairs.

ENHANCED REPRESENTATIVE POWERS

The programme has already borne fruit, including the introduction of a public consultation procedure for new laws (act on gender equality, electoral act, act on the funding of political groups). Surveys indicate that citizens consider the quality of the discussions in the public hearings to be 60% higher than

those broadcast during televised debates. The public hearings process has furthermore had a positive effect on public participation.

The mobile committee sessions, too, have shown significant results. For example, for years overpriced land tenure leases have prevented farmers from generating secure incomes from agricultural activities. The agricultural minister was asked during a mobile committee meeting to adopt a position regarding this state of affairs. Following the public meeting the minister swiftly undertook to reduce the lease prices. Committee meetings represent communities' concerns and increase citizens' trust in the National Assembly.

The project has helped establish a women's parliamentary network. The network is made up of representatives from municipalities and businesswomen alongside MPs. It has already managed to bring a number of gender-related issues into the "Budget System Law".



The National Assembly is designed to represent the interests of the people. © Samir Delic

THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

NAME

Strengthening the oversight function and transparency of the Serbian National Assembly

DEPARTMENT

SDC – Cooperation with Eastern Europe

THEME

Governance

COUNTRY/REGION

Serbia

PARTNERS

UNDP

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The EU entered into accession negotiations with Serbia in January 2014. To meet EU requirements Serbia has to carry out a number of reforms to its state structures, including the adoption of new laws and the monitoring of good governance within the National Assembly.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Strengthening the oversight function of the National Assembly and supporting transparency in public finances.

TARGET GROUP

National Assembly (supervisory body and parliamentary committees)
Five municipal assemblies

PHASE DURATION

August 2012 – August 2015

PHASE BUDGET

CHF 1,051,004

FURTHER INFORMATION

SDC activities in Serbia (en):
www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/laender/serbien.html

CONTACT

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Western Balkans
Division
Freiburgstrasse 130
3003 Bern
phone: +41 (0)58 462 22 12
E-Mail: deza-oza@eda.admin.ch
www.sdc.admin.ch