OUTREACH, PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY
IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Disclaimer: This report is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the East-West Management Institute and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Contract No 169-C-00-08-00102-00
OUTREACH, PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY
IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS .................................................................................................................. 7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ................................................................................................. 8
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................... 10
  1.1. Background ............................................................................................................. 10
  1.2. Scope .................................................................................................................... 10
SECTION II: PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATIONS ................................................. 12
  2.1. Organization of Parliamentary Communications .................................................. 12
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 12
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 14
  2.2. Parliament’s Visual Identity .................................................................................. 16
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 16
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 16
  2.3. Media Reporting and Live Broadcasts ................................................................. 17
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 17
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 19
  2.4. Press Room and Equipment ............................................................................... 20
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 20
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 20
  2.5. MPs’ Statements and Press Conferences ............................................................. 20
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 20
  Recommendations: ..................................................................................................... 21
  2.6. Media Advisor to the Speaker of Parliament ....................................................... 22
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 22
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 22
  2.7. Visits and Educational Activities ....................................................................... 22
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 22
  Recommendations: ..................................................................................................... 23
  2.8. Publications ......................................................................................................... 24
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 24
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 24
  2.9. Relations with Civil Society ............................................................................... 24
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 24
  Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 25
  2.10. Internal Communications ................................................................................. 25
  Observation ................................................................................................................ 25
SECTION V: ACCESS TO INFORMATION

5.1. Parliament and Law on Free Access to Public Information

Observation ........................................................................................................... 43
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 44

5.2. Commissioner for Public Information

Observation ........................................................................................................... 44
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 46

5.3. Public Interest Test and Exceptions

Observation ........................................................................................................... 46
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 47

5.4. Parliament Information Booklet

Observation ........................................................................................................... 47
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 48

5.5. Parliamentary Website and Access to Public Information

Observation ........................................................................................................... 49
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 49

SECTION VI: INFORMATION SYSTEM – ePARLAMENT

6.1. Introduction of Information System

Observation ........................................................................................................... 51
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 51

6.2. Technical Needs

Observation ........................................................................................................... 52
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 53

6.3. Architecture of eParliament

Observation ........................................................................................................... 53
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 53

6.4. Open Source and Free Software

Observation ........................................................................................................... 55
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 55

6.5. Strategy for Introduction of Information System

Observation ........................................................................................................... 56
Recommendations ................................................................................................ 56
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES ................................................................. 57
APPENDIX 2: MEETING AGENDA ....................................................................... 58
APPENDIX 3: JOB DESCRIPTIONS, WEBSITE TEAM .................................... 60
APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLES OF PARLIAMENTARY SYMBOL, LOGO AND APPLICATIONS............................................................................................................. 62
APPENDIX 5: SWEDISH PARLIAMENT’S COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION POLICY ........................................................................................................... 63
BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................. 69
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACRONYMS</th>
<th>FULL FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMCHAM</td>
<td>American Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>Closed-circuit television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Content management system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska stranka Srbije)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Free Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPU</td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Information system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARS</td>
<td>National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDI</td>
<td>National Democratic Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUNS</td>
<td>Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia (Nezavisno udruženje novinara Srbije)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organizations for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTS</td>
<td>Radio Television Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPP</td>
<td>Separation of Powers Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STA</td>
<td>Slovenian Press Agency (Slovenska tiskovna agencija)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UZZPRO</td>
<td>Office for Common Affairs of the Republic's Bodies (Uprava za zajedničke poslove republičkih organa)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a baseline assessment of the transparency, outreach and the accessibility of the National Assembly of Republic of Serbia (NARS).

Its purpose was to 1) provide a preliminary assessment of the existing capacity of the NARS to inform the public adequately about the NARS and its operations, and to engage in effective outreach that would make it more open and transparent 2) provide a description of international good practice in development of parliamentary communications and 3) recommend models that would enhance policies and plans for the NARS outreach and transparency.

To accomplish these goals, SPP engaged three consultants: Nebojša Radić, a communications expert, Dejan Milenković, a legal expert, and Dejan Restak, an IT expert. In the period of 10-21 August, they met with more than 30 stakeholders: MPs, key parliamentary staff, representatives of media, journalists’ association, the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Protection of Personal Data, unions and NGOs.

The assessment is laid out in six sections. Section I introduces the project’s background, context, scope of work and methodology. Section II looks into the organization of communications in the NARS. This includes the reporting of media correspondents from plenary and committee meetings, live broadcasts of plenary sessions, press room and equipment, MP’s statements and press conferences, the role of the media advisor to the Speaker, citizens’ visits and educational activities, publications, relations with civil society, and the Assembly’s visual identity.

Besides providing a number of recommendations specific to each of these communications components, Section II describes international good practice in managing communications in a coordinated and decentralized manner. It also outlines recommendations on how to reorganize communications in the NARS.

The assessment recommends combining the existing Office of Public Relations, which currently has 7 staffers, and the Office of Citizens’ Visits, which currently has two staffers, into a single Office of Parliamentary Communications, which would have 10 staff and 4 organizational units: Website Section, Information Section, Internal Communications Section and Public Relations Section.

Section III examines public access to the NARS. This includes the access of citizens and civil society to plenary and committee meetings, their participation in parliamentary hearings, their ability to initiate legislative proposals, and their entry into the parliamentary procedure. Although the NARS has a very developed program for educational and tourist visits to its premises, it has not yet developed policies and procedures to enable citizens’ free access to the gallery and participation in committee meetings. Both the Constitution and Rules and Procedures give citizens the right to propose legislative changes, but the NARS has not followed up on these initiatives.

Section IV reviews the existing NARS website, and outlines recommendations concerning its content, management, editing, technology, user groups, interactivity, accessibility and usability, which take the latest recommendations by the Inter Parliamentary Union on parliamentary websites into consideration.

The Law on Free Access to Public Information was passed by the NA in late 2004. It spells out obligations of Serbian public institutions to provide access to information to citizens.
Section V explores how the NARS fulfills the obligations contained in this legislation. Its good record in this area leads to technical recommendations, such as how to improve the Parliamentary Information Booklet, and provide more information on the website rather than in the Booklet. More substantially, changes were recommended in the internal procedures defining the work of the Parliamentary Contact for Public Information.

Section VI looks into the needs to introduce an information system (e-Parliament). The NARS continued employment of paper-based communications greatly reduces the efficiency, accessibility and timely provision of communications within the NARS. The report gives specific technical recommendations for establishing e-Parliament in the NARS, its architecture and about the international trend to use open source and free software. More significantly, it recommends elements of a strategy for introducing e-Parliament into the NARS that anticipates potential problems in implementation and outlines an effective approach to resolving these difficulties.
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The fundamental principles of Serbia’s 2006 constitution include the rule of law, separation of powers among the three branches of government, and judicial independence. Gaps in these areas have been identified as obstacles to Serbia’s accession to the European Union and as reform priorities by the Serbian government.

The Separation of Powers Program (SPP) is a USAID program designed to help Serbia move closer to EU accession by strengthening the judicial and parliamentary branches of government.

Part of SPP’s work with the courts develops the judiciary's capacity to plan for, allocate, acquire and manage the judiciary's resources, through the establishment of a budget and finance office. SPP will also assist the judicial branch in making its administration of justice more efficient, transparent and responsive to the needs of its users by helping to establish a career track and training program for court administrators, helping the judiciary learn to manage courts effectively and openly, and reducing backlogs and improving case processing times in selected courts.

Work with parliamentary branch of the government focuses primarily on assisting Serbia's National Assembly’s staff and leaders to plan for, acquire, allocate and manage its own institutional resources in both the short and long term. The project also helps Assembly operations become more transparent and improve outreach to publics.

This report presents the needs assessment called for in Activity 3.4.2 of SPP’s workplan in an effort to enhance the NARS capacity for transparency and outreach. It is based on interviews conducted by: Nebojša Radić, communications expert, Dejan Milenković, legal expert, and Dejan Restak, IT expert. The interviews were conducted in Belgrade between August 10 and August 21, 2009. A complete list is available in Appendix 1 and includes NARS Secretary General, selected deputies, parliamentary staff, media representatives, as well as representatives of advocacy organizations and unions.

In addition, SPP Task Three Manager Aleksandra Tekijaski sent a written questionnaire to several European parliaments in August-September 2009 for information on best practice in transparency and outreach, with responses from the Estonian, Swedish and Portuguese parliaments.

The assessment focused on:

- Parliamentary outreach to selected audiences, online and offline
- Transparency and publics’ access to information
- Access to sessions by media, NGOs and citizens
- Citizens’ participation in legislative process
- Internal communications in NARS

1.2. Scope

The scope was high-level and based primarily on interviews. To gain the broadest possible insight into the existing staff, policies and practices that govern outreach, transparency, access and participation in NARS, the assessment was organized around five key areas:

Parliamentary Communications, including:
Organization of Parliamentary Communications
Parliament’s Visual Identity
Media Reporting and Live Broadcasts
Press Room and Equipment
Statements and Press Conferences
Media Advisor to the Speaker of Parliament
Visits and Educational Activities
Publications
Relations with Civil Society
Internal Communications

Access and Participation, including:
  Citizens’ Access to Plenary and Committee sessions
  CSO’s Access to Plenary and Committee Sessions
  Parliamentary Hearings
  Participation in Legislative Process

Website, including:
  Management and Editing
  Technology
  User Groups
  Content and Structure
  Interactivity and Accessibility
  Usability

Access to Information, including:
  Parliament and Public Information Act
  Commissioner for Public Information
  Public Interest Test and Exceptions
  Parliament Information Booklet
  Parliamentary Website and Access to Public Information

Information System – eParliament, including:
  Introduction of Information System
  Technical Needs
  e-Parliament Architecture
  Open Source and Free Software
  Strategy for Introduction of IS

Each subsection of these five key areas is presented in two parts:

- **Observation**, that lists the current situation, international best practice, and the impact;
- **Recommendations**, that proposes best solution under the given conditions and by taking into consideration international best practice.
SECTION II: PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATIONS

This section examines how parliamentary outreach is organized in the NARS and compares it with best practice and latest recommendations by the IPU, UK Parliament and other other assemblies around the world.

It is organized in the following sub-sections:

- Organization of Parliamentary Communications
- Parliament’s Visual Identity
- Media Reporting and Live Broadcasts
- Press Room and Equipment
- Statements and Press Conferences
- Media Advisor to the Speaker of Parliament
- Visits and Educational Activities
- Publications
- Relations with Civil Society
- Internal Communications

2.1. Organization of Parliamentary Communications

Observation

The NA’s external communications are currently managed through two offices: Office of Public Relations and Office for Visits to Parliament. No organizational unit is engaged in internal communications.

The Office of Public Relations manages the NA’s media relations. Its seven staff members are engaged in providing media access, including issuing annual, daily and session credentials to journalists, servicing the press room, organizing press conferences, facilitating statements to the media by MPs and the Speaker and issuing daily press clipping review.

The Office edits the NA website and posts bills, laws and reports from plenary and committee meetings. The rather brief reports (usually listing number of participants, chair and agenda, without no summary of discussion or conclusions), allows the committee debates out of the public eye. Some interviewees reported that this incomplete reporting contributes to misunderstandings on the NA role and work.

Office of Visits to Parliament works with citizens, schools and civil society, by organizing visits, seminars, conferences, publishing brochures and producing TV spots and video films about the NARS. (See more about this office in sub-sections 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9.)

The NARS has difficulty communicating with the public: “Media reports focus on scandals, details of adversarial proceedings and travel expenses, while the big picture is missed out. In-depth media analysis of important legislative work and its impact on citizens’ lives is rare,” reported one MP.

Problems in communications lead to problem in perception, as well as to poor understanding and low esteem in which the citizens hold this institution. Public opinion polls by Strategic Marketing and CESID show consistently low public approval of the NARS. There were positive views of the parliament in the period between 2004 and 2009 ranged from 3 per cent to 17 per cent. Positive views in 2009 ranged between 5 per cent and 8 per cent. Negative approval was in 2004 - 2009 ranged between 40 per cent and 77 per cent, and in 2009 between 67 per cent and 77 per cent. In the period February-May 2009 the NARS suffered from the highest negative approvals in the last five years: between 75 per cent and 77 per
Citizens are unfamiliar with the quality of debate and legislative work in the NARS. At a seminar on parliament and media, which was jointly sponsored by the NARS and UNDP in 2009, a participant noted that: “Parliament must regain the dignity it deserves as an important democratic institution.”

British MP Jack Straw dramatically characterized the broader and global dimension of these problems in communication: ‘representative politics is in trouble.” Turnout in general elections and membership in political parties are declining, and this decline is most pronounced among young people. Across all social groups, politic and political engagement are viewed with cynicism.

In the parliaments of new and old democracies, there is a growing sense for the parliament’s need for better communications with the citizens of a country. Our respondents were near unanimous in this view. The past decade has seen much discussion on the issue of parliamentary communications: “So far we have been concerned to identify the ways in which parliaments are becoming more open to citizens through improving public access, and removing barriers to media reporting within a regulatory context that encourages pluralism and non-discriminatory content. Equally important are the strategies adopted by parliaments themselves for informing the public about their work, and seeking to engage their interest and involvement. The inherent difficulty of this should not be underestimated, since it is not just a question of communicating information, but of making it intelligible to the vast majority of people who are not familiar with the workings of a parliament.”

The IPU further defines the role of parliamentary media relations. It is essential to move beyond providing access to focus on outcomes and on building bridges and understanding between the media, institution and citizens. “In a busy media world where competition for news stories is intense, it is no longer enough for parliamentarians simply to provide information or access, but must themselves take the initiative in identifying items that are newsworthy for journalists to pick up on.”

But how can information be provided in a non-partisan way? In its recent report, Commission on the Communication of Parliamentary Democracy in the UK claims that “Media organizations are much leaner than they used to be, and can no longer spare journalists to spend their time in the gallery or a committee room in the hope of coming across a story... While some committees already receive good coverage for their work by virtue of controversial subjects, media-savvy chairs or inherent public interest, this is now being complemented by the work of select committee media officers. They are now choosing particular reports to push to media outlets and explaining why the findings are of particular news interest... MPs need to accept that communication of this sort is not inherently partisan.”

---

1 Public Debate on Parliament Act, Report on Work of the Section on Role of Media in Development of Parliamentary Practice (Извештај о раду секције о Улози Медија У Развоју парламентарне праксе), UNDP, 2009


3 Ibid.

4 “Parliament and Democracy in the 21st Century”, a report convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, 7-9 September, 2005

5 Ibid.

The practice of improving communications capacities in selected committees is already accepted in numerous parliaments. In the Parliament of the Czech Republic, committee staff issue summary reports from committee meetings. In the US Congress, committees have their own websites and communication staff, who facilitate active relationships with media, citizens’ inquiries and website editing. In the Estonian Riigikogu, every structural unit (standing and select committees, but also departments of the Secretariat) has an official in charge of editing and entry of the information concerning the relevant structural unit in the Riigikogu home page.

The communications and information policy of the Swedish Riksdag holds that “everybody is responsible for information provision... External information and communication must form an integral part of all the activities of the Riksdag Administration. This means that those with operational responsibilities within the Administration also have their own responsibility in relation to the provision of information, namely that they must:

- Be aware of information needs and problems;
- Provide external and/or internal information; and
- Consult with the Information Department on information matters.”

While communications responsibilities are broadened to include committee and administrative staff, it is generally the case that a central office coordinates the different aspects of information services and communications within parliaments. In Estonia, the Press and Information Department coordinates the work of editors in departments and committees⁷, and in Sweden, it is the Information Department that coordinates the work.⁸

Recently established parliaments and those who have recently reviewed their communications arrangements, tend to adopt a comprehensive information and education strategy under a single communications officer or department. This strategy integrates all communication media – broadcasting, internet, publications, information centers and educational initiatives.⁹

The advantage of multiple dimensions and coordinated communication is the capacity to stay on institutional message through the coordination of media relations, public relations, citizens’ visits, website and publications can easily coordinate through a one-stop shop entry for external users. Communications products can be exchanged and recycled between hard and digital copies. The department of communications develops and coordinates communications and information policy and develops an annual communications strategy. As an example of communications and information policy see the Swedish Parliament policy in the Appendix 5. The final result is savings in staff, equipment and time, and more consistent communications message.

**Recommendations**

2.1.1 These recommendations are consistent with contemporary good practice in parliamentary communications. We recommend creation of an Office (Odelenje) of Parliamentary Communications. Its tasks will be to: manage the NARS external and internal communications, draft an open, inclusive and interactive active communications strategy for the NARS; edit the website; manage media relations, citizens visits and educational activities, publications and the like. It will be responsible for developing and maintaining the NARS’

---

⁷ Helin Noor, Rigikoku Adviser, in the written survey conducted by SPP-Serbia in the course of the current project
⁸ Olof Eklund, Riksdag Researcher, in the written survey conducted by SPP-Serbia in the course of the current project
⁹ Parliament and Democracy in 21st Century, IPU
visual identity and style (logo, colors, fonts, etc) for publications, website and other NARS presentations. It will provide media and communications support to MPs and work to strengthen a better public understanding and approval of the NARS. Its staff needs: 10 (Director, Admin Assistants and 8 Officers, itemized in 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6). It will combine and replace the current 9-staff Office of Public Relations and Office of Visits to parliament.

2.1.2 The Office of Parliamentary Communications should have four Sections (Odsek): Website Section (Odsek za veb prezentaciju), Information Section (Odsek informativne službe, Informativna služba), Internal Communications Section (Odsek za unutrašnje komunikacije) and Public Relations Section (Odsek za odnose sa javnošću).

2.1.3 The current Office of Public Relations should be transformed into a new Information Section that would consist of staff currently in the Office of Public Relations. The Information Section will deal exclusively with media access to the NARS. Its staff will no longer write reports from committee or plenary meetings any more. It will no longer upload those reports, bills or laws to the website. They will no longer prepare press clipping reports.

Staff needs: 2

2.1.4 The current Office of Visits to Parliament be transformed into a Public Relations Section (Odsek za odnose sa javnošću) as part of the Office of Parliamentary Communications. It will organize citizens’ visits, school programs, develop institutional visual identity, publications, movies, and facilitate relationship with civil society.

Staff needs: start with 2, expand to 4 in mid-term.

2.1.5 A new Website Section (Odsek za internet prezentaciju) should be created to edit, maintain and update the website. It will focus not only on news reporting, but also on in-depth analysis and on making information intelligible to ordinary people, who are not familiar with NARS activities. More details are available in Section 4, and descriptions of staff jobs are available in Appendix 3.

Staff needs: 3, to expand to 4 in mid-term and 6 in the long term.

2.1.6 A new Internal Communications Section (Odsek za unutrašnje komunikaciju) should be created. It will issue internal bulletin, update daily and weekly agenda and annual calendar; collaborate with Human Resources to create staff and MP Orientation Manuals and maintain staff info-boards; in the future it will be edit the Intranet.

Staff needs: 1, to expand to 3 in long-term, with development of intranet.

2.1.7 Training should be provided for selected key committee chairs in media relations and presentations.

2.1.8 Either a Committee Adviser or a Department Advisers (Savetnici u odeljenjima) in selected key committees should be trained to write Summary Reports from committee meetings. Summary Reports should include discussion highlights and conclusions-recommendations.
2.1.9 Some especially important committees should have their own sections on the website.\textsuperscript{10}

**2.2. Parliament’s Visual Identity**

**Observation**

NARS currently does not have a symbol, logo or institutional visual identity policy. This is unusual. It is common for parliaments to create a visual identity that includes symbol, logo, typography and colors that can be used in all communications materials. Symbols and logos are an easily recallable visual, institutional representation. A standardized image for symbols and logos can be employed by parliamentary offices in house or externally to build an image for the parliament in an integrated and recognizable way. For examples of symbol, logo and logo applications see Appendix 4.

Visual identity consists of a graphic solution (symbol, logo, topography and its various applications) and a written policy paper which gives rules and procedures for using graphic solutions. Logo applications can be done for different languages - Serbian, Hungarian, Albanian, Slovakian, English, and French; for different color techniques – color and black-and-white; and applications - horizontal and vertical, etc.

The rules outlined in the policy paper are compulsory to all institutional brochures, publications, websites, backdrops, etc.\textsuperscript{11} Experts agree that a new visual identity should be used as part of an integrated approach when repositioning an organization.\textsuperscript{12}

**Recommendations**

2.2.1 The NARS should develop its visual identity, including symbol, logo and applications and engage graphic designers for this transformation. It should draft a Visual Identity Policy internally to be enforced by the Secretary General.

2.2.2 The visual identity should be developed, overseen and enforced by the Public Relations Section (see recommendations 2.1.2. and 2.1.4)

2.2.3 The development and introduction of a visual identity should be transparent and inclusive, and properly announced so to avoid media critique.

2.2.4 The new visual identity should be introduced as part of an integrated repositioning of NARS that could take place with the passage of the new Law on NARS in 2009-2010.

2.2.5 Once introduced, the policy on visual identity should be enforced and its rules followed on all publications, website, institutional backdrop in committee meeting rooms, on the floor, on statement/press conference podium, etc.

\textsuperscript{10} For recommendations 2.1.7, 2.1.8, and 2.1.9 four-five key committees that enjoy broadest public interest could be selected to start with, such as Committee for European Integrations, Financial Committee, Administrative Committee, etc.

\textsuperscript{11} A good example of visual identity policy is available on the website of Cornell University: [http://cornelllogo.cornell.edu/](http://cornelllogo.cornell.edu/).

\textsuperscript{12} **Visual identity: trappings or substance?** MJ Baker, JMT Balmer - European Journal of Marketing, 1997
2.3. Media Reporting and Live Broadcasts

Observation

There is no defined policy about conditions for work of representatives of media, although Parliamentary Rules and Procedures spell out that such policy should be formulated. The NA Office of Public Relations currently issues annual, daily and session credentials to media representatives. Following the electoral defeat of the Socialist Party of Serbia and political transition in 2000, key state institutions, including the NA, completely opened up towards permitting journalists access. In 2009 the NA issued approximately around 500 annual credentials, many daily passes, and passes for particular sessions. These were issued with no strings attached and few conditions beyond a letter/request from EiC and filled-out accreditation form. Nonetheless, we found near consensus among interviewees for this assessment that relations between the media and the NA could be improved.

MPs complain that reporters chase them in corridors, and that their reporting focus on scandals instead of policies. Experienced reporters report that young colleagues do not understand the work of the Parliament and ask irrelevant questions at press conferences, which helps to diminish still further the trust between the NA and mass media. Our respondents from the media trade unions (NUNS) agreed about these problems, and those from CSOs said that media reporting does not present an accurate portrayal of the NA’s work.

It is common to claim that parliamentary correspondents are young and inexperienced. Print journalists know little about the NA, its operations, the legislative process, the role of committees and the like. This ignorance both reflects trends in Serbia and global trends in the media: media outlets are forced to downsize and reorganize due to increasing marketization of the media, the penetration of electronic media and the decline of print media. While similar problems exist elsewhere, it is usually the case that journalists covering parliaments have attained high status and professional expertise. This is achieved, in part, by limiting the number of permanent accreditations, as well as by journalists’ organizations, which adopt and enforce a code of conduct among members. In some places, forums are created for dialogue among journalists and parliamentary staff and MPs with the objective to improve work conditions and quality of reporting. Courses are sometimes organized for young colleagues who do not have experience in reporting from parliament.

Some parliaments (e.g., Slovenia) issue permanent accreditation for the length of the assembly mandate (4 years) and temporary accreditation for one year. The number of credentials per media outlet is always limited. In Slovenia, a few national media houses can send up to 5 reporters and 5 camerapersons/photographers to the parliament: STA, TV Slovenija, TV Slovenija 3, Radio Slovenija, POP TV, Kanal A, Info TV and national dailies. Weekly publications receive credential for up to two reporters and two photographers, and all other legitimate media outlets receive only one credential.

Channel 2 of the Serbian Public Broadcasting Service (RTS), provides live broadcasts of all NARS plenary meetings. In addition, the NARS has its own CCTV system with footage captured by two cameras fixed on the side-walls of the plenary hall, that use the voice-sensors to move towards the speaker.

A number of monitors are placed throughout the NA, with CCTV and RTS footage: four in the central entrance hall (2 with CCTV and 2 with RTS program); 2 in the restaurant, 2 in the press room (1 CCTV and 1 RTS), etc.
There have recently been problems in connection with RTS broadcasts of the NARS. Although established as public service, and with programatic responsibilities according to the law, RTS de facto functions as a commercial station. Many viewers recently complained when coverage of high-profile sports events was postponed or cancelled because of late evening broadcasts of the NARS. However the RTS proposal to broadcast summaries of NARS debate instead of live broadcasts of integral NARS plenary sessions led opposition parliamentary groups to threaten to walk out from the floor in that event. As a result, NARS plenary sessions have been rescheduled several times, when their timing conflicted with significant sporting events.

There is no Internet streaming of the plenary sessions at the moment to provide an alternative to TV broadcasts, although there are technical possibilities for that (see the Section IV). In international good practice, there are specialized parliamentary channels (such as C-Span in the US) and live internet streaming from plenary sessions, e.g., in Estonia. It has been proposed that a parliamentary channel and internet streams of plenary sessions should be introduced in the near future in order to free the highly commercial RTS 2 channel from this task.

Reporters from most media outlets are not allowed entry to the gallery. RTS is the only media with access to the floor - they are issued over 100 annual credentials for the staff facilitating the live broadcasts. Other media are allowed to enter the floor only during the 5-minues long photo opportunity before the beginning of the session, at 10 am, when MPs are sitting in their seats and chatting with colleagues. The static footage that is captured this way not only is inadequate to cover reports of the often heated debate, but is potentially damaging for the institution by providing an image of MPs smiling and chatting in a relaxed atmosphere.

There are other difficulties with media coverage and monitoring:

- Media that do not have cameras available at 10 am will not have any of their own footage of the NA that day. They can obtain RTS footage from satellite links free of charge ina lengthy process. The NA does not provide an alternative form of video press-release.

- Voting is electronic, and results of the vote are shown as summary on the screens in the plenary room. However, media representatives and advocacy groups report that individual votes of MPs are not shown.

- Plenary discussion is recorded in stenograms, video and audio files. However, unlike the common practice in European parliaments, they are only stored in the NARS Library and

---

13 The Role of Media in Parliamentary Practice, Dejan Milenkovic, Faculty of Politic Sciences, University of Belgrade, June 2009
are not posted online. The NA does not have voice-verbatim software, which is standard in parliaments worldwide. This leads to long delays in transferring voice to word documents. These delays mean that reporters almost never use these untimely produced stenograms.

- The Office of Public Relations monitors media reporting and issues a daily press clipping report. Its staffers begin the day by searching through the pages of national dailies and weeklies, cutting relevant articles, photocopying them and stapling. This bulletin is then printed and distributed to 18 recipients. In the course of this assessment, MPs and staff complained about the format (print rather than digital) and limited distribution of the report.

- For several years, daily press clipping had been provided in electronic format by Ebart Consulting. It included daily review of coverage and access to database of historical coverage. At the beginning of 2009, the NA did not extend the contract for lack of funds. Ebart continued to send media monitoring reports for free, but the Office of Public Relations decided not to distribute them and revert to technology that had been abandoned years ago. It appears that an electronic bulletin would bring cost savings, enhance timely delivery, increase the number of recipients, and make archiving and future searching easier.

**Recommendations**

2.3.1 Parliamentary TV Channel should be established, which would broadcast live plenary sessions instead of RTS 2. It could also broadcasts selected committee meetings.

2.3.2 Audio and video Internet webcasting of plenary and some committee sessions should be introduced.

2.3.3 Voice-verbatim software should be purchased and installed in the plenary chamber. It would dramatically improve the speed and decrease the cost with which transcripts are obtained from the floor.

2.3.4 Accreditation Policy should be transparent and posted on the future media section of the website. Accreditation form should be downloadable and credentials possible to request by email. The policy should outline number of credentials different media can get.

2.3.5 The issuing of permanent credentials for the entire length of the assembly mandate should be explored. It would decrease workload in connection with credentials.

2.3.6 Seminar/training for newly accredited reporters should be held when annual credentials are issued. Its objectives would be to: 1) provide an orientation in Parliament; 2) provide professional insight by experienced, senior correspondants; 3) help to raise the dignity to the institution of parliamentary correspondent; and 4) establish up key rules of conduct. For the initial two years, an international donor (e.g., SPP) can facilitate the seminar. It could be prepared and delivered jointly by 1) parliamentary staff (HR could adopt for reporters orientation curricula they have for staff and MPs); and 2) one to two experienced, senior parliamentary correspondents would provide nuts and bolts on professional, ethical and effective reporting from NARS.

2.3.7 Annual Seminars on Media and Parliament should be organized for interested journalists with the objectives to 1) Initiate dialogue between the NARS and correspondents; 2) to assist in facilitating professional self-organization of the journalists. The seminar could schedule one day for media only with an agenda on professional media self-organization and parliamentary access. On the second day, the seminar would bring together media, MPs, the SG, Information Section, foreign media guests, etc. These seminars would be off the record, and presenters and topics would be prepared well in advance.
2.3.8 The first annual Seminar on the Media and Parliament would address the conditions for media reporting from plenary sessions, such as access to gallery, increased number of photo opportunities and video press-releases.

2.3.9 Written policy on the conditions of work for the representatives of media in NARS should be developed, enforced and publicized.

2.3.10 Electronic press clipping should be introduced. Depending on the available financing, this can be done either by free subscription to automatic email reports on coverage on the Internet (i.e. Google) and managed by Website Section Staff or by renewing subscription to Ebart Consulting news services.

2.4. Press Room and Equipment

Observation

Two pressrooms are currently available to representatives of the media: one in the current assembly, other in the old building in Kralja Milana st. Unfortunately, the current assembly building, constructed in 1907, has a limited number of supporting office rooms, which are occupied by parliamentary groups and committees. MPs, staff and media equally suffer from the lack of office space.

The pressroom, situated on the first floor, is a former corridor that has been turned into an office. Two TV monitors are placed in opposite corners, one featuring RTS and the other CCTV program. There are 16 desks with 12 computers, printer and telephones available to reporters. Kralja Milana building features one press room with 8 desks, all with computers, and an agency room with 6 desks and 4 computers. For this assessment, journalists expressed general satisfaction with the number of computers but they encounter other problems:

- Lack of communication between the pressrooms and the “Statements Point” (see 2.5 below) in the grand entry hall (see the section 2.5 with recommendations to address this problem);
- Working stations have internet access, but the connection is unreliable;
- The pressroom does is not air-conditioned;
- The shape of the room (long and narrow) is inadequate, when workstations are occupied it is impossible to move around;

The NA staff is aware that work conditions for the reporters are not ideal, but also say that the conditions are as good as can be provided in the current building and with current number of parliamentary groups and committees.

Recommendations

2.4.1 The working conditions for media representatives should be on the agenda of the first Annual Seminar on Media and Parliament (see recommendation 2.3.7)

2.5. MPs’ Statements and Press Conferences

Observation

According to Parliamentary Rules and Procedures, each MP has the right to call a press conference or give statements to media. There is a space reserved for such statements and press conferences in the central grand hall of NARS (“Statements Point”). During sessions, microphones and lights there are always turned on, and there is always a number of cameras on hold, in case an MP leaves the plenary room in order to give a statement.
Currently, there is no institutional backdrop behind the person giving statement. Instead, the camera can catch in the background the parliamentary restaurant, its doors opening behind the back of the person giving statement.

In the 2007/2008 assembly there used to be such a backdrop. Both MPs and media thought its positioning (it was placed in the restaurant) was not appropriate, but media agreed it provided dynamic and recognizable visual background.

The poor quality and low volume of the sound system at the Statements Point force radio correspondents to stand next to the speakers in order to record the statements. It makes it nearly impossible for these correspondents to ask questions.

There is no efficient way to announce statements/press conferences to reporters who are in one of the pressrooms. Once in a pressroom, journalists do not know what goes on at the Statements Point. Both TV monitors in the pressroom show the plenary session live.

**Recommendations:**

2.5.1 The parliamentary backdrop should be made in line with the new logo and visual identity (see recommendation 2.2.1). Sites for its positioning should be further researched, but possible solutions are end-corners of the grand central entry hall, on the side of the current Statements Point, or side loggia, under the stairs leading to the first floor.

2.5.2 Inexpensive solutions are available for the digital recording of statements, which given at the Statements Point, and their timely uploading on the website, so to solve the current problem with tone and radio reporters recording at the loudspeakers.

2.5.3 One NA camera should capture the Statements Point and its footage should be shown in “real time” on one of the pressroom TV monitors. This possibility should be reviewed at the first annual Seminar on Media and Parliament (see recommendation 2.3.7)
2.6. Media Advisor to the Speaker of Parliament

Observation

One advisor to the Speaker serves as her media advisor: to facilitate the Speaker’s media relations, including scheduling media interviews, enabling media access to protocol events, and offering journalists materials that highlight particular activities or opinions of the Speaker. The advisor has neither media nor communications background or experience, and would appreciate training on the basis of good practices in media relations.

Recommendations

2.6.1 A brief but comprehensive training can be delivered to Media Advisor, which highlights media relations basics, but also includes media management, highlighting policies and activities that are high on the Speaker’s agenda. The training could include visits to centers of good practice.

2.6.2 Speaker of Parliament should schedule regular meetings with Editors in Chief of the key national electronic and print media that have permanent parliamentary correspondents. The meeting should be well prepared, held in an open and friendly atmosphere, and result in better understanding, improved work conditions for media and improved coverage of the NA.

2.7. Visits and Educational Activities

Observation

The low and decreasing participation of citizens in public life, and particularly elections, together with the decline of trust in politicians, political parties and, above all, democratic elections, requires a new definition of the essence of democracy with regard to new challenges of the twenty-first century.14

Legislative bodies around the world face similar challenges: it is not enough to explain the essence of laws to the citizens. It is important that citizens understand the legislative process, as well as possible avenues for exerting influence on the legislative process. Much progress has been made in this area. In some cases, online resources are created for educational use. The Library of Congress has devoted one section of its THOMAS site to education15 and the Icelandic Parliament has a special website for schoolchildren aged 13-15. Other parliaments have created curricula to for use in off-line teaching. The South African Parliament is developing a civic education training program for young adults to show “how Parliament functions, how laws are made and how the public can engage with the law-making process. It is envisaged that this programme will eventually constitute part of the school curriculum.”16

Finally, almost most parliaments have programs for citizens’ visits and guided tours that combine multimedia, personal experience and professional guide tours for an introduction to the national legislative process.

The NARS has developed several such programs, which can be used as international good practice benchmarks.

- Established in 2004 through an OSCE-funded project, the Office of Visits to the Assembly was initially placed in Public Relations and subsequently relocated to Protocol. It organizes group visits to the NARS through the “Open Door” and “Bringing Institutions Closer to Citizens” programs which both combine information about the

---

14 Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Resolution 1353 (2003), Future of democracy: strengthening democratic institutions

15 See http://thomas.loc.gov/teachers/

16 Parliament and Democracy in 21st Century, IPU, 2005
political process and role of parliament in democracy, history of the institution and architectural values of the building and art work in it.

- The Open Door is co-organized in collaboration with the Belgrade Tourist Board. Visits take place daily and are free of charge. The guests are shown a movie about the role and work of parliament and are given a tour of the building and parliamentary offices. Some groups are greeted by MPs. At the end of the visit, guests are given institutional publications.

- Bringing Institutions Closer to Citizens combines visits to the NARS, Government and President of Serbia and is organized every fourth Saturday in month. This excellent program, which is co-organized with OSCE and with financial support from the US and German governments, enables interested citizens to visit all three institutions in one day.

- Both programs are promoted with TV spots that are posted online, which are currently the only multimedia/video material available on the NA’s website.

- Another good international practice is for parliaments to go out to meet people - either to remote regions or the places where young people spend time. In Hungary the presence of members of Parliament and other public institutions is arranged at Sziget Festival (Island Festival), the largest youth music festival in Central Europe. Here ‘students can listen to political lectures and can discuss their problems with politicians.17/ The NA’s Office of Visits to Parliament organized a similar program, called “Mobile Parliament”, through which MPs and NA staff travel throughout the country to meet the public.

- “Parliament Simulation,” a computer program produced by the Office, teaches high school students in an engaging and playful way how laws are made. The Ministry of Education included the simulation in an extra-curriculum package for the high school civic education classes.

The Office is further expanding its work. Noting an ever-increasing number of high school student visitors, and quality of their questions and interest, they are currently developing special programs customized for this audience.

Over 30,000 citizens that visited parliament in the last five years, extensive media coverage and popularity that their programs enjoy, make the NARS Office of Visits to Parliament its most effective communicators.

Recommendations:

2.7.1. Because the Office of Visits is effectively engaged in public relations, it should be transferred from Protocol to the Office of Parliamentary Communications, as a separate Section for Public Relations (see recommendations 2.1.1, 2.1.2. and 2.1.4).

2.7.2. Alternative ways to engage with young people should be explored, such as organizing NARS events at Exit Festival, establishing an NARS account on Facebook.

2.7.3. To enable the growth of the activities of the Office, additional staff should be added.

17 Ibid.
2.8. Publications

Observation

The only publications that have been published by the NARS for external use in the last five years are The Parliament Information Booklet (produced by Parliamentary Correspondent to the Commissioner for Public Access to Information), and several color brochures and poster, produced in the framework of the Open Door and Bringing Institutions Closer to Citizens programs by the Office of Visits to Parliament.

In addition, Office of Visits to Parliament produced two documentaries on the role of parliament in democracy and work of the NARS.

There is no publications stylebook, nor logo and other elements of visual identity of the NARS.

Recommendations

2.8.1 The future Public Relations Section of the Office of Parliamentary Communications (see recommendations 2.1.1., 2.1.2. and 2.1.4.) should have editing and publishing parliamentary publications for educational, civic society relations and other PR purposes in its work plan.

2.8.2 Once a Visual Identity Policy (see recommendation 2.2.2) is developed, the Public Relations Section should implement it in all future publications, and promote its use in other NARS publications.

2.8.3 The Public Relations Section should develop general NARS publications templates for various types of publications (leaflets, A4 brochures, A5 brochures, etc).

2.9. Relations with Civil Society

Observation

A rich and engaging relationship between civil society and parliament might be an important stimulus to reviving political life and dialogue in Serbian society. Recent initiatives by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly recognize such potential and recommend closer ties between parliaments and NGOs.

There are different ways in which the process of citizens’ involvement with the legislative process can be organized. More about access to committee sessions, hearings, or proposing legislative initiatives is available in the Section III of this report. However, there is growing evidence that in the current information society, it is not enough for parliaments to provide access to information and process. It is necessary to explain the process itself and access to it in language and means people understand.

Some parliaments have opened civil society liaison offices with mandate to build bridges between civil society and the parliament, to explain role and work of CSO to MPs and legislative process, access to it, to representatives of NGOs. The Hungarian Parliament recently established a Civic Office. The office provides many services:

- It facilitates services that CSOs provide to parliament,
- It serves as an entry point for CSOs willing to engage in legislative process,
- It serves as an institutional memory on collaborative work with civil society, and
- It distributes information about legislative process targeting CSOs.

These tasks are accomplished through joint conferences, workshops, visits, info-service to NGOs and by issuing a regular electronic bulletin on parliamentary life targeting NGOs. In
some cases where there are no conditions for a separate office, role of the CS Liaison is given to one employee in Office of Public Relations.

**Recommendations**

2.9.1 The scope of work for the new Section for Public Relations (see recommendations 2.1.2 and 2.1.4) should include liaison with civil society.

2.9.2 One staff member in the Section for Public Relations should be appointed Parliamentary CS Liaison.

2.9.3 The Liaison should initiate consultative process among Assembly staff and CSO representatives to collect input for developing strategy for strengthening the NARS-CS relationship.

2.9.4 The Liaison should facilitate issuing permanent NARS accreditations to NGOs (see 3.2.3 and 3.2.4)

**2.10. Internal Communications**

**Observation**

There is currently no organizational unit in the NA responsible for enabling and improving internal communications. As a result, communication is poor, there are no improvements and in some cases there is even deterioration. For example, in 2005 and 2006 there was an internal printed staff bulletin with contributions written by staff and edited by the Office of Public Relations. Although it left much to be desired in design, content and style, it was widely read by staff. It ceased to exist in 2007. Currently there is no print or electronic staff newsletter.

In 2004 and 2007 a Manual for MPs (Priručnik za narodne poslanike) was distributed to the new assembly. Prepared in collaboration with OSCE, the manual contained policy papers, rules, procedures, information about library, archives, access to minutes and other documents, information about international relations, restaurants, parking, floor plans of NARS, phone numbers, lists of all MPs and head of departments, etc.

- Although MPs considered the manual to be very useful, a new edition for the current NARS session has not yet been issued.

- The existing departments have no means to inform MPs about the type of work and services they perform. One MP we interviewed did not know about the existence of the NARS Research Office and he is in his second NARS term.

- There is one information board available at the staff entrance where Human Resources post information about professional development opportunities, stipends, policy papers, meeting invitations, etc.

- NARS staffers do not receive personal email accounts when joining the NARS service, although there are technical possibilities for that (see 6.2). It is necessary to send a written request to the Secretary General for an email account, but tech-savvy staffers complain about the “resistance to technology” among older colleagues. Some employees use their private email accounts.

- There is no updated NARS internal telephone directory. After the merging of staff from the former Federal and Republic assemblies and due to ongoing NA relocation to the new (former Federal) building, there is confusion with phone numbers. The website lists incorrect numbers for the few services that are advertised, e.g., to book a visit to the NARS. Extension numbers are assigned to rooms and offices as opposed to departments.
HR must await for additional changes in offices to develop a new directory. Although telecommunications are not subject of this report they obviously impair efficient internal and external communications.

- Neither MPs nor staff are aware of or invited to the numerous programs and activities are organized with CSOs and other guests (see 2.7. and 2.9.).

- The agenda of the ongoing plenary session is posted on the NARS website\[^{18}\] by the Office of Public Relations. There is no NARS daily or weekly agenda (except for the weekly agenda issued by Protocol which lists only protocolar events), which would combine information about plenary and committee meetings, international visits, and NGO events.

- The NARS has no internal announcement board in a visible and frequented place – e.g. in the main entrance lobby - all the ongoing or upcoming daily and/or weekly sessions and events, their timing, agenda and room numbers. Instead, a small (1.8 m by 1.2 m) white board sits a side corridor, where paper sheets with agendas, invitations and announcements can be fixed by Cellux tape.

- There is no annual calendar that would publish, in advance, working and free days, or assign days for committee and plenary meetings, voting, constituency visits, etc. This leads to significant logistical problems, including cancellation of MPs’ international visits and study tours at the last moment for a re-scheduled plenary, or sending private jets to cut short MPs visits abroad to participate in voting that was scheduled at the last moment. That results in financial waste and increased media scrutiny, and reflects poorly on the NARS image and dignity. Good international practice is development and maintenance of an annual parliamentary calendar. Examples of such calendars can be found online.\[^{19}\]

- Through intraparliamentary collaboration and donations of the international bilateral and multilateral donors, staff and MPs have participated in numerous international study visits, tours, workshops and conferences. Such activities are of the upmost importance in any country’s transition period. Participants are obliged to write reports from those visits. In principle, these are available in the NA’s archives, but in practice, these reports are almost impossible to trace. There is no database which lists them or other documents collected at the events. In the absence of intranet or an internal staff bulletin, highlights and lessons learned from such visits cannot be shared in a timely manner. The absence of a resource center to store reports also means that there is little institutional memory.

International good practice gives significant importance to developing internal communications. Internal communications are placed in an integrated parliamentary information, press and communication office. The goals for the Parliament’s internal information service are designed to ensure that MPs, their staff, and the staff of the Parliament can perform their duties effectively.\[^{20}\]

For all these reasons establishment of an Internal Communications Section (odsek) was recommended earlier in this report (see 2.1.6), to be part of an integrated Office of Parliamentary Communications. Below are recommendations for the structure of its activities. The Section will initially have one staff member but will with the introduction of the Intranet expand to edit the Intranet.

---

\[^{18}\] [www.parlament sr.gov.vu](http://www.parlament sr.gov.vu)


\[^{20}\] The Parliament’s Information Strategy, Research note by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre, June 1999
Recommendations

2.10.1 The Internal Communications Section should coordinate with the office of the Secretary General in the production of daily and weekly agendas that include protocol activities, plenary and committee sessions and NGO activities. It should be responsibility of the Internal Communications Section and Public Relations Section, respectively, to update and disseminate this material inside and outside the NARS.

2.10.2 A new wide screen should be placed in the central entry hall close to the Statements Point, which would electronically announce the Daily Agenda, including time, room number and items on the agenda. The daily agenda should be also provided on one of the monitors in the Pressrooms. One cost-effective solution could be for monitors to provide a link to the internet site with the Agenda updated in real time.

2.10.3 Protocol, Office of Secretary General and the Internal Communications Section should coordinate development and dissemination of an Annual Calendar.

2.10.4 Each staff member should get an email account and IT training, similar to the one proposed for MPs (see the recommendation 6.2.3), including 1) training for use of personal computers; 2) training to use Microsoft Office applications, internet browsers and email 3) orientation on the new NARS website and training for e-Parliament use.

2.10.5 The Internal Communications Section should initiate an electronic Staff Bulletin, which will be distributed by email, open for staff contribution, and publish summaries from study visits, comparative studies, outstanding press coverage, various announcements, etc.

2.10.6 The Internal Communications Section should work closely with HR to produce policies and procedures for orientation and socialization of new staff members (such policy has already been drafted by the HR but has not been reviewed and/or enforced). They should work together to produce in a timely manner a new MP Manual for each new NARS session.

2.10.7 A Resource Center should be established in the Library with travel reports from study visits, materials from international conferences and seminars, etc. It could also contain information about the events organized in-house by the Public Relations Section. The Center should be well-connected with all communications structures, and information about new reports and materials should be regularly sent to the staff bulletin editor for publication. The most interesting reports can be sent to website editors for publication on the news page, etc.

2.10.8 The Internal Communications Section should have a mandate to coordinate internal dissemination of information about Research Center, Resource Center, Library, activities of NGO liaison, and make them in a proactive and creative way available to MPs and staff.

2.10.9 With the introduction an intranet, the Internal Communications Section will be responsible for its content development and editing.
SECTION III: PUBLIC ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

One of the main principles of the work of state bodies in all contemporary democracies is the principle of transparency. In a contemporary democratic society, the principle of transparency is not realized only through the right of journalists to report and attend sessions of the National Assembly, or through direct broadcasting of sessions of the National Assembly. One of the basic democratic principles present in many countries of the world is the possibility for citizens to directly attend sessions of the National Assembly as well as sessions of the National Assembly’s committees.

In countries in transition, non-governmental organizations are extremely important. The capacity for representatives of non-governmental organizations to directly follow the sessions of the National Assembly is of enormous importance over a range of important legislation at all stages of legislative formulation.

According to Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, citizens are the bearers of sovereignty which they realize, among other ways, through citizens’ initiatives, i.e., through the possibility for citizens to appear as initiators of laws for review and adoption by the National Assembly.

This part of the study includes the portion of the principle of transparency of the work of the NA that pertains to:

- The possibility for citizens to attend NA plenary and committee sessions;
- The possibility for representatives of NGOs to attend the NA plenary and committee sessions;
- Parliamentary hearings; and
- Participation of citizens in the legislative process.

3.1. Citizens’ Access to Plenary and Committee sessions

Observation

Parliamentary democracy includes routine visits of citizens at sessions of the National Assembly as well as sessions of the committees as its permanent working bodies. In Austria, for example, one of the balconies in the hall of the Assembly, with 180 seats and space for 60 people to stand, is reserved for citizens who wish to attend plenary sessions. There are no special limitations except for security measures. In France, the situation is similar. The French Parliament has a two-level gallery for visitors. The total number of seats in the gallery is 500, of which a portion is often reserved for representatives of the Government, guests of the Senate, diplomats, and other visitors. Citizens have the opportunity to attend plenary sessions of the Parliament as well, and obtaining a pass to a session is relatively easy. In Germany, Finland, and many other countries there is a similar situation. 21

The possibility to directly attend sessions of the National Assembly based on a citizen's request should be treated differently from other possibilities included in this study, such as the “Open Door Day” or organized study visits to the National Assembly which do not necessarily offer the possibility for organized groups of citizens who are “visiting” the National Assembly to simultaneously attend its sessions.

The state of affairs at the National Assembly of Serbia is significantly different than in the cases cited above. Citizens are not permitted to attend sessions of the Assembly. First, there

are no laws that provide for this possibility. The second, frequently stated reason is of technical and security nature. The gallery in the old NARS hall had a very low ceiling. But the real reason may have been that deputies and MPs, certain permanent working bodies and the National Assembly Secretariat did not fully understand the need to allow citizens to attend sessions.

Since the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia moved to the former Federal Assembly building during the first half of 2009, this frequently quoted reason ceased to exist. This building has several separate balconies with approximately 100 seats from which the citizens could observe the work of the National Assembly. There are other architectural traits as well that ensure that citizens – from the moment they enter the building until the moment they leave it – do not come in direct contact with deputies. On the other hand, deputies and staff in the NA are aware that regulations providing for citizens’ direct attendance at sessions of the National Assembly will have to be adopted relatively soon.

During the consideration and adoption of the Law on the National Assembly, attention should be paid that it contain a separate Article that would regulate the issue of transparency of the work of the National Assembly and relate, in part, to this issue as well. Such an Article was included in an earlier draft version of the Law on the National Assembly, but this Draft was withdrawn from procedure.

Among other things, Article 2 of the Draft provided that the work of the National Assembly was transparent, and that transparency was ensured through directly televised sessions and their transmission by the media; press conferences; press releases; monitoring of the work of the National Assembly by domestic and foreign non-government organizations, monitors, interested citizens and the like.

The same article of the Draft provided for special seats at the National Assembly for monitors, interested citizens, and representatives of the media. The manner in which they would enter the National Assembly and spend time in it was supposed to have been regulated by the act of the National Assembly, that is, its competent working body.

The current Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia contain a separate chapter on the transparency of its work, but they do not determine the possibility for citizens to directly attend sessions of the Assembly or sessions of the committees, which leaves an impression that the term “public” includes only representatives of the media and, to some extent, scientific workers who, in certain cases, may participate in the work of committees.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, citizens could be introduced into one of their provisions as “visitors” who could attend sessions of the National Assembly, but only by invitation from the Speaker of the National Assembly.

The Rules of Procedure foresee the public nature of sessions of the National Assembly and its committees, but they also provide the possibility that the sessions might be closed to the public in cases when it is determined by law, or upon the proposal of the Government, committees and at least twenty deputies. The proposal must be explained. The National Assembly takes a vote on the proposal, without a debate.

---

22 Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“ No. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09.
23 Compare: Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“ No. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09, Article 78, Articles 175-179.
24 Compare: Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“ No. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09, Article 87.
The biggest difficulty in ensuring citizens’ right of attendance at NARS sessions has been the absence of a normative act of the NA Service that would regulate such attendance at plenary and committee sessions. However, deputies and staff in the NA Secretariat are increasingly aware of the urgent necessity to adopt such a regulation.

One possible difficulty of citizens’ attendance at sessions of committees may be that they are frequently scheduled without an announcement and without a previous announcement of their agendas. This requires detailed normative regulation with regard to timely scheduling of committee sessions and acquainting of the public with the agenda.

Further, contrary to directives in the NARS Rules of Procedure that requires the distribution of information about the date, venue, and draft agenda of the session to all the deputies, deputy groups, and the Government at least five days before a session, this practice is frequently neglected. The Rules of Procedure do not include the obligation of the committee to inform the citizens about the date, venue, and draft agenda of the session.25

In other cases, sessions of certain committees, such as the Security Committee are frequently closed to the public due to the sensitivity of the issues treated at meetings.

**Recommendations**

3.1.1 The National Assembly Secretariat or the Administrative Committee should begin the process of creation and adoption of special regulations that would regulate citizens’ attendance at the NARS plenary and committee sessions.

3.1.2 The new Draft Law on the National Assembly should contain articles stating that the principle of transparency is realized through the ability and right of citizens to attend NARS plenary and committee sessions.

3.1.3 During future changes and amendments to the National Assembly’s Rules of Procedure, provisions on transparency of work should be supplemented with the right of and possibility for citizens to attend plenary and committee sessions.

3.1.4 Rules of Procedure should determine mandatory deadlines for informing of the public in advance about the agendas of NARS plenary and committee sessions.

**3.2. CSO’s Access to Plenary and Committee Sessions**

**Observation**

A direct relationship between the National Assembly and the citizens also influences strengthening of the principle of transparency and openness. It deepens the connections between the Parliament and the civil society, while the legislative body acquires another permanent form of public control – that of the civil society.

Statements that pertain to the presence of citizens at sessions of the National Assembly and its committees most definitely apply to civil society organizations as well. Still, there is a noticeable difference between the possibility of citizens and civil society organizations to attend sessions of the National Assembly and its committees. In several cases over the last few years, representatives of civil society organizations were given an *ad hoc* opportunity (usually by invitation of a Committee Chair or NARS Speaker) to attend sessions. For

---

25 Compare: *Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“ No. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09, Article 77.*
example, during the adoption of the Law on Free Access to Public Information in 2004, many members of the association that initiated the Law was given the opportunity to watch the sessions of the National Assembly from the gallery.

From time to time, representatives of civil society organizations are presented with the opportunity to attend, and even actively participate at sessions of certain committees of the National Assembly, particularly in cases when associations are the formal proposers of legislative initiatives or when their representatives have actively participated in work groups of various Ministries during the creation of a certain law. This possibility stems from the National Assembly’s Rules of Procedure which do not mention representatives of organizations, but states that initiators of draft laws and amendments or their authorised representatives, including members of organizations, are to be invited to sessions of committees at which such draft laws and amendments are reviewed. Professional and scientific workers can, by invitation, participate in the work of the committees; members of civil society organizations can be listed under this formulation.

There were several such cases in the last few years: for example, when the Information Committee reviewed the Draft Law on Free Access to Public Information in 2004, when the Committee for the Reduction of Poverty discussed the Draft Law on Civil Society Organizations in 2007, or in 2009, when the Information Committee reviewed the Draft Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Free Access to Public Information proposed by civil society organizations in the form of legislative initiative.

Several non-governmental organizations have established permanent cooperation with particular committees. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, which we visited during the preparation of this report, has a memorandum of understanding with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia which provides for its regular participation at sessions of the Committee for Local Self-Government.

There are, however, different examples. During our preparations for this report, we visited AMCHAM as well. For various reasons, AMCHAM works with the Government almost 95% of the time, yet has very little cooperation with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. In the opinion of their representatives, access to committees is not systemically regulated or well communicated.

The attendance of NGO representatives at NA plenary and committee sessions has not yet been systemically regulated. There is no doubt that representatives of NGOs are also citizens; therefore, adoption of regulation that would provide for the presence of citizens at sessions of the Assembly and its committees would simultaneously provide for the presence of representatives of non-governmental organizations.

On the other hand, there also exists the necessity to determine – as put in the NARS Rules of Procedure relating to transparency - when NGO representatives are required to be present at sessions, particularly when they cooperated with ministries and contributed to legislation proposed by Government. Not only should they be given the opportunity to attend sessions, but they should be able to directly participate in their work on certain issues.

It seems that representatives of associations that monitor the work of the National Assembly could be issued a yearly ID card that would enable them to attend NA sessions, or a card that would be good for one regular session, including sessions of committees. If representatives of NGOs are constantly present at war crime or organized crime trials conducted before the Special Department of the District Court in Belgrade, it seems logical that representatives of NGOs who monitor the work of the National Assembly be able to do the same thing.
Recommendations

3.2.1 The portion of the future Law on the National Assembly that relates to the transparency of work should include, within the term of monitoring, civil society organizations.

3.2.2 The future Law on the National Assembly should foresee the obligation of the National Assembly and its committees to invite representatives of the civil society to their sessions in cases defined by the law.

3.2.3 In cooperation with CSOs, a list of organizations that monitor the NARS work as as a part of their goals as determined by their Statutes should be determined.

3.2.4 The Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly should determine in more detail under which conditions representatives of NGOs may acquire annual ID cards or cards that would enable them to attend regular sessions of the National Assembly and its committees.

3.2.5 Portions of the Rules of Procedure, as well as other acts that pertain to the access of NGOs to sessions of the National Assembly should be promoted in a visible and clear manner on the National Assembly’s web presentation.

3.3. Parliamentary Hearings

Observation

Public parliamentary hearing represent another important novelty in the work of the National Assembly. The rules of procedure do not create an obligation to conduct regular, public hearings, so the NARS has no special obligation to conduct them. In certain situations, these public hearings are, in part, identified with the possibility to form ad hoc bodies of the National Assembly, such as commissions and committees of inquiry. Above all, these parliamentary hearings provide an opportunity for a wider circle of persons beyond deputies to consider certain issues, the ability to regulate certain areas, provide for transparency of the NARS work, and the like. A public hearing provides interaction between the deputies and various segments of the public. It encourages the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and information, and results in the more effective work of deputies.

On several occasions, certain NGOs and international organizations organized, in cooperation with the National Assembly, various forms of discussions with deputies regarding important social issues. The NGO, European Movement, for example, organized an entire string of round tables, with deputies as participants, that resembled „parliamentary hearings“ . In June 2009, UNDP organized a parliamentary hearing that was attended by the professional public, representatives of non-government and international organizations, independent bodies, and other persons interested in the relationship between the media and the Parliament.

Because these hearings are important in the development of deliberative democracy, the NARS Rules of Procedure should regulate them in more detail, and special regulations can further elaborate on the operations of public hearings. Some deputies stress that „parliamentary hearings“ should be introduced as mandatory in the NARS work, particularly on new systemic laws that regulate areas about which deputies are not well-informed in advance. Some opposition deputies hold that „parliamentary hearings“ could strengthen their own active participation at NA plenary and committee sessions, since the exchange of knowledge, opinions, and information with experts as well as representatives of non-government and international organizations at „public hearings“ would help with the creation of amendments to draft laws proposed by MPs themselves, most of all in cases of draft laws proposed by the Government as the authorized proposer.
Recommendations

3.3.1 The Rules of Procedure should specify conditions under which public, parliamentary hearings are conducted.

3.3.2 Special internal regulations should specify the conditions under which public, parliamentary hearings are initiated and conducted.

3.3.3 Determine the possibility for MPs to submit the initiative for a parliamentary hearing session to the Speaker of the National Assembly.

3.4. Participation in Legislative Process

Observation

In this section of the report we discuss the right of citizens to a people’s initiative, that is, the right of citizens to formally appear – in accordance with the Constitution – as bearers of the peoples’ sovereignty, that is, as submitters of draft laws. In Article 2, the Constitution stipulates that sovereignty comes from citizens who exercise it by use of the people’s initiative, among other things. Article 107 stipulates that draft laws can be proposed by each deputy, the Government, the Assembly of the Autonomous Province, and a minimum of 30,000 voters.

The possibility for citizens to submit people’s initiatives is the most direct form of participatory democracy, of utmost importance for the creation of an open and democratic society. It results in the mutual connecting of citizens and their associations, in a proactive approach, in efforts and direct participation of citizens. In any case the influence of a popular initiative is enormous because it clearly shows the wish of citizens to see certain issues or areas legally regulated in a direct manner.

The Law on Referendum and the People’s initiative foresees very strict rules for the collection of signatures with regard to people’s initiatives. The Law allows only seven days to collect 30,000 signatures, and includes other formal duties as well, such as the submission of the report about the time and venue of collection of signatures, signature of the authorized person, etc.

Among other things, the NARS Rules of Procedure determine when draft laws and amendments to draft laws are debated at sessions, and when submitters of such laws and amendments are invited to sessions. This means that citizens may participate at committee sessions when they, themselves, are the proposers of the people’s initiative. The same applies to sessions of the National Assembly. According to the Rules of Procedure, along with deputies, authorised representatives of other proposers of laws - in this case, citizens - can attend sessions.26

The Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly include numerous rules with regard to the proposing of draft laws. Among other things, authorised proposers (citizens as well) must submit a draft law in the form in which laws are adopted, along with an explanation, where the Rules of Procedure do not state what the explanation should contain.

A draft law, prepared in accordance with provisions of the Rules of Procedure, may become a part of the daily agenda of a session of the National Assembly no sooner than fifteen days and no later than sixty days from the day of submission. In exceptional cases, the sixty day

26 Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“ No. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09, Articles 78, 87
deadline may be extended but no longer than by thirty days, where the Speaker of the National Assembly is obligated to inform the deputies about the reason for the violation of the deadline. Rules of Procedure, however, do not foresee sanctions for violations of said deadlines.27

It is the case that a people’s initiative has never been introduced, debated or adopted at a session of the NA. This is because people’s initiatives are treated inadequately by the National Assembly in comparison with other authorised proposers of draft laws, especially the Government. Also, despite the constitutional provisions in support of peoples’ initiatives the NA or its officials have no legal responsibility to act upon a people’s initiative. In the past, there were several cases in which individual committees debated some people’s initiatives, inviting representatives of citizens, as proposers, to committee sessions at which such proposals were debated.

**Recommendations**

3.4.1 Change the NARS Rules of Procedure to include the general principle of acting upon people’s initiatives from the moment of their submission to the NA until the debate;

3.4.2 Change the NARS Rules of Procedure to determine sanctions for failure to act upon people’s initiatives within deadlines determined by the Rules of Procedure;

3.4.3 Make changes and amendments to the Law on Referendum and the People’s Initiative in order to make it easier for citizens to submit people’s initiatives. This pertains primarily to the extension of deadlines for the collection of citizens' signatures.

---

27 *Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia*, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“ No. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09, Article 138
SECTION IV: WEBSITE

Citizens and other interested parties must be able to realize their right to oversee and participate in the work of the National Assembly by use of the internet service. Over the past two decades, the internet became the most efficient and economic form of communication, and has changed the principles of communication for NGOs internationally. The growth of the internet enables increasingly interactive communication with governing institutions and provides users with much closer and more direct contact with the institutions of government. The internet has become a standard instrument for open, interactive, two-way communication between institutions and citizens.

One objective of this assessment was to determine the existing capacities of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia to create a website, consulting best practices and recommendations from the world and the neighboring countries. Recommendations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Guidlines for Parliamentary Websites, March 2009) served as basic guidelines.

This section addresses the following issues:

- Management and Editing
- Technology
- User Groups
- Content and Structure
- Interactivity and Accessibility
- Usability

4.1. Management and Editing

Observation

The Office of Public Relations is in charge of updating the NARS website through the IT Department, which is located within the Sector for Organizational and Administrative Operations of the National Assembly. All documents to be published on the website must pass through this department.

From the Office of Public relations, documents are forwarded to employees of the IT Department who publish them at previously identified website locations. The IT Department employs technical staff and are also in charge of the maintenance of hardware as well as other components of the Assembly's IT system.

Although the Office of Public Relations is treated in detail in section 2.1, it is important to observe here that activities necessary for the editing and maintenance of the website of the National Assembly are not well defined. Instead, they are understood exclusively as activities involved in public information, but this segment represents only one type of website activity. Other than the simple forwarding of documents for publishing on the website, the Office of Public Relations performs no other functions that involve website management or content.

It is international good practice to pay great attention to the content of the web presentation. For example, the European parliament has a very extensive press service whose articles take center stage on the Parliament’s home page. This was a purposeful decision implemented in the fall of 2005 to enable the home page to be more citizen-oriented and understandable. The press center is currently expanding further so that articles can be available in more language. A press service that is given primacy of place can become a target of many different political
factions and it is testimony to management of this service is that it appears not only to have survived but to be prospering and adding value. It does this in part by publishing stories that strive for objectivity, and that present a variety of political viewpoints that are grounded in the official words or publications of the Parliament’s political parties.  

**Recommendations**

4.1.1 Establish a separate unit for management and content of the website. See recommendations 2.1.1, 2.1.2, i 2.1.6.

4.1.2 The staffing for the website unit should, at minimum, be comprised of:

- **Website Director** – Manager and Chief Editor of the website, and performs all management functions and – in the area of content – definition of content policy, content control, and the work of the unit. The Website Director will present politically neutral activities and functioning of the NARS.

- **Journalist-Editor 1** – Writes texts, edits the home page; publishes, creates, organizes, and updates the content.

- **Journalist-Editor 2** – Helps with all tasks performed by Journalist-Editor 1; spends remaining time moderating comments of the website's visitors.

4.1.3 The website editing office should be a point of crossing for all documents destined for the website.

4.1.4 Procedures related to provision of information to the Website Unit about the news and changes to the portion of the content which pertains to other structures of the National Assembly should also include Communications and Information Policy (see 2.1.1).

**4.2. Technology**

**Observation**

We found no shortcomings in the existing network capacities and number of workstations in the building of the National Assembly in Kralja Milana Street. Data flow capacities are at a level satisfactory for the maintenance and management of the website.

There are problems in the domain of hosting of the website, where these services are currently provided by the private company Infosky, under control and management of the Office for Common Affairs of the Republic's Bodies (UZZPRO). UZZPRO representatives reported an initiative to move the server of the NARS and other institutions from Infosky to UZZPRO offices, where administration and maintenance would be taken over by Telekom Srbija. Under this agreement, Telekom is obligated to send a team and fix any problem within thirty minutes.

UZZPRO will host the Assembly's website as well as websites of many other state institutions for no cost to the institutions. In the event of dissatisfaction with these arrangements, institutions can use other providers on a fee for service basis.

---

29 Work is organized on the basis of a five-day working week and the assumption that key committees will train advisors in charge of forwarding synopses from sessions to the web unit.
30 See a more detailed job description in Appendix No. 3
Recommendations

4.2.1 Continue cooperation with UZZPRO; it is a good and economic solution. Maintenance of the server by Telekom Srbija is another good solution. They have many competent experts, and this guarantees quality service.

4.2.1 Develop new and contemporary Content Management System (CMS) software. The CMS to support the Assembly's website is a moderately complex system and it could take between 5-12 months to build such a system, depending on the detailed list of requirements.

4.3. User Groups

The main groups of users of the National Assembly's web pages are deputies, staff, citizens, the media, Government, lobbying groups, minorities, political parties, the NGO sector, the business sector, and foreign institutions. In this section, we will address solutions directed at the fulfillment of needs of the staff, deputies, citizens, and the media.

MPs and Staff

Observation

Deputies reported that the website is not a regular source of information on the NA’s work, and that it does not make their work more efficient. There is little electronic communication among staff members or among deputies. With regard to the content of the website, deputies chiefly use archives of adopted laws and lists of laws that are currently in procedure. Comparative practice shows that websites provide the fastest and most reliable means of gathering information about the work of other bodies of the Assembly, on topics and agendas of sessions, content of draft laws, and that it provides access to archives as well as research sections.

Recommendations

4.3.1 Because most NA documents are public in nature, the website could, for a certain period of time, perform the role and function of the National Assembly's intranet;

4.3.2 The portion of the website targeted at MPs and staff members of the National Assembly should be „under lock“, i.e., users should be made to register. Different groups of users with access to different sections and types of content can be formed;

4.3.3 MPs who wish to keep website blogs should be provided with the opportunity to do so;

4.3.4 Contacts, including MPs' email addresses, should be listed on MPs' pages.

Citizens

Observation

The majority of citizens of Serbia can read the website since it is published in Latinic, Cyrilic, as well as, in part, in English language. However, the website does not accommodate citizens with special needs as is increasingly the case internationally.31

The current web site has no interactive segments and it is not possible to establish an online contact with anyone. Contact is possible only by one phone number, which is published on the contact page. There had been a Forum that was discontinued at the beginning of 2008 for

31 For example, the Croatian Sabor has an option to increase font size on the website: http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx
security reasons. It represented a target of attack for hackers whose activities jeopardized the functioning of the entire system.

The same thing happened to pages through which it was possible to get in contact with deputies. They, too, were removed for security reasons. While the service existed, email messages were sent to the sorting service. This means that there was a mediator between the public and the deputies, and this is never a good solution.

There are no items on the Menu, or another direct link to the page through which the citizens could realize their right to request access to information about the work of the Assembly. This information becomes available to them only after they download the Information Booklet from the website, a document which – in zip format – has 134 pages, while instructions on the submitting requests for information are covered in fourteen pages.

Out of the total of 94 requests for access to information submitted in 2008, twenty were submitted by citizens. We have no information that any of them were submitted through the internet, but we know that no replies were sent via electronic mail.

Citizens can schedule a visit to the National Assembly only by telephone. The department which organizes visits used to move frequently; therefore, the telephone number on the website is often incorrect (as was the case when we tried to verify it).

It is accepted international practice for citizens to connect directly with their representatives via email and it is even possible to create public petitions directly on the website of the Parliament. 

**Recommendations**

4.3.5 The website must be constructed so that it can be used by all who have access to Internet, regardless of the type of connection, device, web browser, operative system, etc;

4.3.6 The website must accommodate citizens with special needs;

4.3.7 Instructions with regard to access to public information must be clearly visible on the home page. Requests for information should be available through the website, and replies should be sent by electronic mail;

4.3.8 The link to the contact page through which citizens can communicate with MPs and NARS bodies should be clearly visible on the home page;

4.3.9 Citizens should be able to establish direct contact with NA deputies without any filter between citizen and the deputies’ offices;

4.3.10 Users should be able to post comments and questions with regard to the content of the website;

4.3.11 Citizens should be able to schedule visits to the Parliament by use of website forms;

4.3.12 The website should enable virtual visits to the Parliament by use of online applications for users with wide-band Internet access;

---

32 Some examples: Croatia, Slovenia, EU, UK, Czech Republic.
4.3.13 Citizens should be able to apply for NARS positions through forms available on the website.

**Media**

**Observation**

The NARS website does not have special sections directed at the media, such as a „press room.“ In the information section, there is a segment entitled „Information for the Public,“ which gives inadequately presented announcements of sessions and other parliamentary activities, as well as statements from sessions.

Announcements and statements do not have web access such as document links. When sessions are announced, accompanying documents such as draft laws to be debated at sessions should be linked.

Conditions for, and means of, obtaining press accreditations, transcripts of speeches, photographs, and video-releases are not present on the web page.

**Recommendations**

4.3.14 Create a section for the media accessible by use of logging in with a user name and password;

4.3.15 Logging in is recommended in order to avoid unnecessary traffic expenses, that is, in order to avoid access of users not targeted by the multi-media high quality content such as photographs, video and audio clips, etc;

4.3.16 Along with text documents, the media section should contain multi-media content, such as written and audio transcriptions from an NA session, that would be considered important by the Public Relations Office;

4.3.17 Journalists should be able to schedule interviews and talks with MPs online;

4.3.18 Organize a segment for the scheduling press conferences with accompanying content for the preparation of journalists. Create an email or SMS alert system to inform journalists automatically about important events at the Assembly.

**4.4. Content**

**Observation**

It is possible to find the majority of the NARS regulations on the website, but their visibility and use are hindered by complicated navigation, unclear presentation, and the format of documents. Only the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia are presented in HTML format (accessible through the web browser and organized in a web manner); everything else is presented in either PDF or MS Doc format, without a synopsis of the document content.

The website offers laws that are currently in procedure, adopted laws, decisions, reports, resolutions, declarations, etc. Research from the Information Research Office is also present, but it is located in the section titled „Acts“. It is possible to download them only from ZIP archives, which represents a limiting factor for many users.

The home page contains segments that have not been updated for years, or segments that do not function anymore, yet remain present at the website. For example, the segment titled
„Speaker“ (no contact), under From the Media, or Announcements, contains no documents that were downloaded after 2006 and 2007.

The essential thing missing from the segment titled Composition of the Assembly, as well as from other parts of the website, is the direct contact with deputies as well as any other possibility for users to interact with someone from the NARS through the website.

**Recommendations**

4.4.1 The website maintenance system should have a separate segment for the editing of the home page, organized in accordance with the principle of discretionary creation, setting, and editing of boxes (elements) of the home page;

4.4.2 The new web presentation should contain the following content units:

- *Access to the Assembly* – Visits to the Parliament and access to activities of the Parliament. Cross-link this section with the section titled „Access to Information“;
- *The role of the Assembly* – Educational segment; a general view of the work of the National Assembly and other state institutions;
- *Composition of the Assembly* – A detailed description of the composition and role of NARS bodies of the national Assembly. Attention should be paid to cross-linking pages on the NARS web site, for example, between a committee chair’s personal page and the page of the committee;
- *The National Assembly Secretariat* – Describes the role of the Secretariat as well as the organizational chart, and presents individual sectors. This part of the website should contain a section titled „Vacant Job Positions“;
- *Budget of the National Assembly* – Information most often requested by the public in 2007 and 2008 involved the budget in its source format, salaries and other expenses of MPs, expenses related to the work of the National Assembly, the Secretariat (employees and their salaries), information about public procurement, etc;
- *Activities of the Assembly* – News, announcements of events (daily and weekly work plan, the annual calender and announcements of future activities), most recent activities, the archive (database of all previous activities of the National Assembly), the annual report of the NARS, statistics, etc. An alert system should be introduced so that all interested parties can be informed by email or SMS about the upcoming activities or changes to the agenda;
- *Press Center* – see 4.3.14;
- *The Electoral system* – Educational segment about the current electoral system. It should be linked to the Electoral Commission’s website; it should contain results from last elections, an archive of all previous elections, current status of political parties, and the composition of current coalitions;
- *Research* – Activities of the Information Research Office of the National Assembly, information about access to the Assembly’s library as well as all Assembly’s publications, etc;
- *Links* – The President of the Republic, the Government, the Constitutional Court, Ministries, links to other national parliaments.

**4.5. Interactivity and accessibility**

**Observation**

The existing website is not interactive. Content is accessible mostly through archives in PDF and DOC format. Documents can be accessed either by individual browsing through the website (basic navigation) or through search. The main shortcoming of search is inadequate usability. For more detail, see section 4.6 above.
It is not possible to follow the sessions live via Internet, or to access transcripts located in the Assembly’s archives.

**Recommendations**

**Interactivity**

4.5.1 Inform website visitors in detail how they can contact deputies and about other forms of interaction;

4.5.2 Publish simple forms for contacting MPs and other bodies;

4.5.3 MPs and other Assembly bodies should be able to access – simply, directly, and without intermediaries – messages received from citizens. The easiest method is to have the messages sent to email addresses; sender should be obligated to provide his/her contact information;

4.5.4 Provide for online voting and surveys of website users;

4.5.5 Employ new channels of interactive communication according to the expanding possibilities offered by new technologies. For example, it is becoming common practice for parliaments to engage in, communication through social networks such as Twitter or Facebook is very popular.

**Accessibility**

4.5.6 Pay special attention to search on the website; accessibility should be more precise and as simple as possible;

4.5.7 Classify all documents in accordance with the needs of users. Create a detailed list of possible user questions. Classify in accordance with the type of document (law, amendment, report, research, etc), by proposer/author, area to which the document pertains, whether it involves institutions or the private sector, etc;

4.5.8 Record the primary classification by use of categories; record the second classification through forming previously defined topics (tags) that are easy to add if the need arises (if a document on a new topic appears, for example);

4.5.9 Provide access to transcript archives. Access to these archives for citizens in the territory of Serbia would not involve additional expenses related to website traffic;

4.5.10 Provide access by mobile phones and other mobile devices. The website should have a mobile phone version;

4.5.11 Provide authentication – possibility only for certain groups of users to access parts of the website. This aspect of the website could be used as an additional possibility for deputies to use the website as intranet.

**4.6. Usability**

**Observation**

Usability is most often the weakest point of all websites. Quality content is of no use if we don't provide users with a simple interface through which they can use the website and manipulate its contents.

It is easily noticeable that the design of the user interface of the National Assembly website is outdated, that is, that it does not satisfy the current standards. This applies mainly to technology used to create the website’s interface, as well as to the graphic design. Among the
basic shortcomings are: the absence of alt text in icons located above the left menu. This comes as a consequence of the fact that the last version of the website was created in 2003. Many new possibilities have emerged, especially in web interface. The site was not made accessible to citizens with special needs.

**Recommendations**

4.6.1 Before the implementation of the website design, conduct tests of user usability;

4.6.2 As this phase - of exceptional importance to the success of a website - is often neglected, consult professionals from this area;

4.6.3 Establish W3C standards, or other standards that regulate the area of website usability by persons with special needs;

4.6.4 In accordance with the NA’s financial capacity, a portion of the website should be published in minority languages, for example: information about the functioning of the Parliament, how to contact deputies, or the parliament information booklet.

4.6.5 Content of the website (CMS) must be accessible to persons who do not possess technical knowledge. The goal of this requirement is to exclude technical persons from the process of publishing of documents on the website (presently, they are in charge of the process).
SECTION V: ACCESS TO INFORMATION

At the end of 2004 the NARS adopted the Law on Free Access to Public Information.33 This Law determines the procedure involving the realization of rights to free access to information. In accordance with the procedures contained in this law, all public authorities have the obligation to provide access to all information, save for exceptional cases as determined by this Law. After the disintegration of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia adopted a new Constitution in October 2006 as an independent state. Free access to information became a civil right guaranteed by the Constitution, defined as the right to information in Article 50.

In this section, we will discuss citizens’ and organizations’ access to information in the possession of the NARS. It addresses:

- Responsibilities of the National Assembly in accordance with the Law on Free Access to Public Information;
- What constitutes public information, and exceptions from access to information in the possession of the National Assembly;
- The relationship between the National Assembly and the Commissioner for Free Access to Public Information;
- Procedures enabling free access to information in possession of the NARS;
- The NARS obligation to publish an information booklet on its work;
- The NARS website and access to information.

5.1. Parliament and Law on Free Access to Public Information

Observation

The NARS is one of many bodies of public authority that are obligated to provide access to information in its possession to citizens. With certain exceptions, the National Assembly must comply with this law like any other authority. Upon reception of a request for information, The NARS is obliged to conduct proceedings determined in detail by the law.34

Each body of public authority must appoint one or more employees who will be in charge of the implementation of this law. The employee bears the title of „Person Authorized for Public Information.“ In the absence of such an appointment, the Head of the body is the person authorized for public information.35 The NA SG appointed two persons authorized for public information. In accordance with the Act on Internal Organization and Systematization of Job Positions, these individuals have added the tasks in public information to their existing responsibilities in the NA service. They were appointed by decisions from 2007 and 2008.36

In order to better implement the law, the NA SG adopted an internal regulation in early 2009 which elaborates on the law: Instructions on Acting upon Request for Access to Public

33 Law on Free Access to Public Information, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“, No. 120/04, 54/07.
34 Law on Free Access to Public Information, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“, No. 120/04, 54/07, Articles 15-21.
35 Law on Free Access to Public Information, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“, No. 120/04, 54/07, Article 38.
36 Note: By Decision No. 112-4182/07 and Decision No. 9-1849/08, Aleksandra Šašo and Nebojša Pavlović were appointed as persons authorized for access to information.
Information and the Realization of Measures for the Improvement of Transparency of Work.\textsuperscript{37}

In order to provide authorized persons with the opportunity to provide access to information to those who request it without hindrances from other employees of the Service, the Instructions imposed an obligation on all other employees of the National Assembly to provide all information at their disposal in support of the person authorized to act upon requests for public information.\textsuperscript{38}

At the NA Secretariat, it is standard practice (although not a legal obligation) for the authorized person to acquaint the NA SG with each request before taking any action. According to the Instructions, the authorised person must inform the NA SG about a request for information only if it concerns information in confidential documents in accordance with the NA Rules on handling materials with state or military secret.\textsuperscript{39}

It is a fact that the adoption of the Law on Free Access to Public Information in 2004 significantly contributed to the provision of access not only to documents in possession of the National Assembly but to the transparency of the work of the Assembly as well. The NA SG adopted a separate internal regulation. Much information published in the media were verified by journalists using the Law on Free Access to Public Information. However, the number of citizens and NGOs that submit requests for access to public information to the National Assembly is still relatively small: from January 1, 2009 to July 31, 2009, the National Assembly received 81 citizens' requests for access to information. Contrary to the period that immediately followed the adoption of the Law, in 2004 and 2005, the NA now acts upon requests within 15 days from the day of the reception of request, as determined by the Law. During 2008, the National Assembly received 94 requests, and 110 in 2007. Most often, requests relate to salaries of deputies, deputies per diems, additions to deputies' salaries, the number of days that the National Assembly is in session, the number of people employed at the National Assembly Secretariat, etc.\textsuperscript{40}

Recommen
dations

5.1.1 Determine at least one authorized person who would be in charge exclusively of securing the right to free access to information;

5.1.2 Provide a higher level of independence from the Secretary General of the National Assembly of the authorized person when the requests do not involve confidential information.

5.2. Commissioner for Public Information

Observation

The Law on Free Access to Public Information from 2004 introduced a special single-person body, the Commissioner for Public Information, who supervises the realization of rights to free access to information in accordance with this Law. The Commissioner for Public Information is appointed and dismissed by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Instructions on acting upon request for access to public information and the realization of measures for the improvement of transparency of work, No. 9-16/09.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Instructions on acting upon request for access to public information and the realization of measures for the improvement of transparency of work, No. 9-16/09, Article 13 Paragraph 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Instructions on acting upon request for access to public information and the realization of measures for the improvement of transparency of work, No. 9-16/09, Article 19.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Cumulative data about the number of requests and information most frequently requested from the National Assembly are included in the Information Booklet on the work of the National Assembly. The Booklet can be found on the Assembly's website.
\end{itemize}
and his/her mandate lasts seven years. The Law on Protection of Personal Information from 2008 made the Commissioner the competent person for this area.41

The Commissioner for Public Information is a specific Parliamentary body with administrative authority. The Commissioner also performs administrative supervision in proceedings upon complaints related to the area of free access to public information, as a body hierarchically higher that any other body of public authority except for six of the highest, of which one happens to be the National Assembly.42

When the National Assembly denies a request for access to information, the party cannot complain to the Commissioner for Public Information. Instead, the party can initiate special court proceedings against the decision of the National Assembly to deny the request.43 At present, some civil society organizations are seeking to have all bodies, including the National Assembly, «supervised» by the Commissioner with regard to free access to information. This requires changes to the existing Law.44

Legally, the relationship between the National Assembly and the Commissioner is partly a two way street. On one hand, the person authorized for access to the National Assembly's information is obligated, like any other body of public authority, to provide a yearly report to the Commissioner on the activities that the body had taken in order to implement this Law. The Law also determines the contents of such a report, as well as the deadline for its submission. On the other hand, the Commissioner for Public Information, as a body that is accountable to the National Assembly, is obligated to submit a yearly report to the National Assembly three months after the completion of the fiscal year, as well as other reports when the Commissioner determines that there is need for this. Upon initiative of one third of deputies, the NA can submit an initiative for the dismissal of the Commissioner, for reasons listed in the Law.

Certain general acts adopted by the Commissioner are binding to all bodies of public authority, including the National Assembly, such as Instructions for Publishing of the Information Booklet on the Work of a State Body adopted by the Commissioner in 2005, which regulates the content of the Information Booklet as well.45

The Institution of the Commissioner has enjoyed good credibility with both the public and the media. This positively influences the majority of bodies of public authority, particularly those under the direct control of the Commissioner for Public Information in proceedings upon complaints. Although the NA is not subject to direct supervision of the Commissioner, the work of the Commissioner and his/her media exposure indirectly influenced the fulfillment of obligations related to the free access to public information by the National Assembly as well. However, even though the National Assembly has a legal obligation to review the Commissioner's reports, for the time being, his/her reports are reviewed only by the

---

41 Law on Free Access to Public Information, „The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia“, No. 120/04, 54/07. Article 1. Paragraph 1, Articles 22-44.
42 Stevan Lilić, Dejan Milenković, Biljana Kovačević-Vučo, The Ombudsman, Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights, Belgrade, 2002. The other five bodies are: The Constitutional Court of Serbia, Supreme Court of Serbia, Republic Public Prosecutor, Government of Serbia and President of Serbia are exempted from the Commissioner’s jurisdiction.
45 Instructions for Publishing of the Bulletin on the Work of a State Body, „The Official Gazette of the republic of Serbia“, No. 57/05
Information Committee of the National Assembly. The reports are not reviewed by deputies at NA plenary sessions.

**Recommendations**

5.2.1 Initiate a wide public debate about the people's initiative related to the need for supervision of six highest bodies, including the NA, by the Commissioner;

5.2.2 The NA is obligated to review the yearly reports of the Commissioner for Public Information at a plenary session; this requires greater engagement of the National Assembly in implementing recommendations of the Commissioner’s annual report;

5.2.3 The NA should act in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act to consider and act upon the reports of the Commissioner, through various forms of cooperation.

**5.3. Public Interest Test and Exceptions**

**Observation**

The Law on Free Access to Public Information determines the obligation of the body to act upon a request with a test of public interest. This applies to the NA’s authorised person as well.

In accordance with the public interest test, no single piece of information is excepted from the right to access to information. Consequently, Serbian Law does not recognize the category of absolute exceptions. Even when the request for access to public information pertains to information that can be excepted from access in accordance with the law, such as information that can endanger the life, health, safety, or a person's other good; or to information that could jeopardize, prevent, or aggravate prevention or discovery of criminal acts, or weaken the country's defense, jeopardize national security, public safety, and international relations; or to a document determined to be kept as confidential – after the reception of the request, the body, acting in accordance with the law, is obligated to assess which interest is to take precedent: the interest of the public to know, or possible exceptions.

If, for the mentioned reasons, the body of authority fails to allow access after the conducted test of public interest, the party can file a complaint with the Commissioner for Public Information. However, this is not the case with already mentioned six highest bodies, including the NA. If the NA denies a request to access public information, the requester can initiate and administrative dispute before the Supreme Court.

The NA has rarely denied requests while implementing the Law on Free Access to Public Information. In 2009 it happened only once, when the request was too extreme. In accordance with the Law on Free Access to Public Information, this also represents grounds for denial. A case from two years ago, when the National Assembly denied access to information, drew much more attention. The requester asked to be allowed access to information with regard to public procurement involving renovations of the National Assembly building. The National Assembly’s authorised person denied access to this information, and the requester initiated proceedings before the Supreme Court. During the proceedings, the authorised person provided the requested document and the proceedings before the Supreme Court were terminated.

---

The adoption of new laws has recently been employed to limit the test of public interest (test of proportionality) determined by the Law on Free Access to Public Information in cases that involve confidential information. The NA should prevent such attempts: through amendments proposed as plenary sessions, deputies could influence the changes to the government’s inconsistent proposals.47

The test of public interest, introduced by the Law on Public Access to Public Information, represents a serious novelty in the legal system of Serbia which positively influences the provision of free access to information by the NA. It provides one of the basic principles of the European administrative area – the principle of proportionality in activities of bodies of public authority.

Authorized persons at the NA rarely decide to deny the public access to information. The test of public interest with regard to requests for access to information became, in time, an integral part of activities of the NA’s authorized person that involve requests for public information.

Recommendations

5.3.1 In their future activities in accordance with the Law on Free Access to Public Information, authorized persons should continue to honor and conduct the test of public interest;

5.3.2 The NA should prevent attempts to lessen the obligations of any of the bodies through future draft laws, including the NA’s obligation to conduct tests of public interest.

5.4. Parliament Information Booklet

Observation

State bodies, including the NA, have the obligation to produce an information booklet about their work. The Law on Free Access to Public Information outlines what must be contained in the Information Booklet, as well as the obligation of the Commissioner for Public Information to employ instructions to regulate the booklet’s content in greater detail.48

The Instructions of the Commissioner, which were adopted in 2005, hold that the Information Booklet be created in electronic form that allows easy search of documents, copying of portions of the text, and downloading of entire documents or parts thereof. The state body is also obligated to publish the Information Booklet on the Internet on its web presentation, and update it monthly.49

An information booklet can also be published in some other acceptable, physical form (brochure, catalog, folder with changeable content, placement of pages from the booklet in a visible location within the building, etc.) that allows for regular content updating. In accordance with this Law, the person authorized to act upon requests for free access to public information is placed in charge of publishing and regular updating of information contained in the booklet.50

The information booklet about the work of the National Assembly can be found at the National Assembly’s web presentation. It appears to satisfy the standards foreseen by the Law and the Instructions:

- It consists of several parts; its introduction contains general information about access to information, instructions on acting upon requests, decisions on appointment of authorized persons, how to submit a request, NA activities connected to the Law on Free Access to Public Information during the years 2007 and 2008, general information on the NA and NA activities during the period between 2007 and June 2009.

- The second section addresses the organization and work of the NA, including information about the National Assembly committees and their activities from 2007 to 2009, proceedings involving the adoption of laws and other acts of the NA, regular and extraordinary sessions, etc.

- The third section describes deputies, their responsibilities, rights, immunity, and the like. The fourth section contains information about the NA Service, the NA Secretariat, Office of the NA Speaker, as well as its other organizational units. The fifth section addresses international cooperation, including parliamentary cooperation.

- The NA information booklet reported that, in 2007-2008, public questions have focused mainly on issues pertaining to the NA’s budget, particularly in funds spent on plenary sessions, planned and realized expenditures, etc.

- The last section is an addendum with internal acts adopted by the NA Secretary and the NA’s Administrative Board.

The NA information booklet is a very extensive 134 pages long. It is not possible for the user of the information booklet to directly “enter” certain parts of it; nor is it possible for a user to search the Booklet using key words. Some pages are not numbered. The addendum contains internal acts adopted by the NA Secretary and the Administrative Board. It may be the case that the internal acts of the Service should be excluded from the Information Booklet and published on a separate page, the link of which should appear on the NA’s web presentation. Contrary to the instructions of the Commissioner for Public Information, the information booklet is not updated once per month but only three times per year.

The NA information booklet considerably improves the principle of transparency, openness, and free access to information about the work of the Assembly.

The Information Booklet contains the form for access to information, names of authorized persons, how prosecutors can access public information including direct viewing of requested documents, etc. Placement of a wide scope of information in the Information Booklet which can be found at the web presentation of the National Assembly most certainly produces a lower number of requests for public information submitted to authorized persons of the National Assembly Secretariat.

**Recommendations**

5.4.1 Make the Bulletin on the work of the NA clearer and more user-friendly;

5.4.2 Provide technical conditions so that certain parts of the Bulletin can be accessed through the Bulletin Content hyper-links;
5.4.3 Update information contained in the Bulletin once per month in accordance with the Instructions of the Commissioner;

5.4.4 Regulations of the NA SG and the Administrative Board that do not pertain to access to public information should regularly appear on the web presentation of the NA instead of the information bulletin on the work of the Assembly.

5.5. Parliamentary Website and Access to Public Information

Observation

The NA web presentation is extremely important for the realization of free access to information. It is partially provided through the aforementioned Information Booklet, but we should note that the „openness“ of the Parliament is also provided through access to debated draft laws, access to transcripts from sessions of the National Assembly and its committees, direct contact between the citizens and deputies, etc.51

The NARS web site does not give information that is standard on the web sites of European parliaments, such as information about public procurement, voting in plenary sessions, transcripts from plenary and committee sessions, and the like. Further, the web site does not have the technical means to upload audio footage of plenary and committee sessions, which is also standard in contemporary parliamentary practice.

The web site does not publish transcripts from sessions of the National Assembly and its committees, video-recordings of debates and of the voting in a manner that is consistent with international standards for web presentations of parliaments. The Information Booklet represents an important tool used to acquaint the public with the work of the National Assembly, but it is not the only one. The publication of a wide range of information on the NARS web site could significantly reduce the number of written requests for access to information.

Content of the web page should appear as a result of joint activity of a string of participants at the National Assembly: for example, the authorized person for access to information, the Office of Parliamentary Communications, the Department for Web Presentation, as well as other internal organizational units of the Secretariat.

Recommendations

5.5.1. Provide for publication of an ever wider scope of information in possession of the National Assembly, particularly transcripts from sessions of the Assembly and its committees at the Assembly's web presentation;52

5.5.2. The person authorized for access to information should become a member of the team of editors of the National Assembly’s web presentation.

52 This section contains only recommendations pertaining to the web presentation and access to public information. More recommendations with regard to the web presentation appear in Section 4.
SECTION VI: INFORMATION SYSTEM – ePARLAMENT

6.1. Introduction of Information System

Observation

One basic precondition for the efficient work of the legislative power in the 21 century takes the form of electronic management of documents, i.e., the introduction of a contemporary information system or e-Parliament. The advantages of such an information system are savings in time, paper, and funds, as well as greater transparency in the NARS work.

A review of different segments of the NA’s work leads to the conclusion that domain of implementation of information-communication technologies remains relatively basic. Document distribution in the NARS continues to be by forwarding printed documents. The Deputies have had little training in the use of computers. At the same time, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has already introduced an information system, “Dokumentum,” which provides the functioning of electronic sessions - insight into the agenda of the session through electronic access, as well as the existence of the electronic version of all accompanying documentation necessary for the work of the session.

All documents are initially composed in electronic form (MS Word) are printed in the NARS in order to be filed at the Registry. For example, draft laws are created by the Government in electronic form. The Government submits draft laws to the Assembly in paper and electronic form. In the NA, draft laws in electronic form are forwarded to the Office of Public Relations to be published on the website, while these in paper form are photocopied and distributed to MPs as material for sessions. Amendments and transcripts from sessions are also first created in Word and then printed, to be used at sessions in paper form. Adopted laws are submitted to the Registry in paper form; the Registry forwards them to „The Official Gazette“ in paper form where they are, again, transformed in electronic form so the law could be published.

In 2008, consultants working with OSCE prepared a detailed assessment for electronic information processing for the National Assembly that can provide a basis for further development of e-government.

Recommendations

6.1.1 Introduction of the information system (e-Parliament) should be one of the priorities of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia;

6.1.2 We recommend a phased approach. In phase 1, services should provide deputies with printed documents. In phase 2, such services should be terminated, with the possibility for deputies to independently copy documents using the Assembly’s printers;

6.1.3 Develop a special strategy for the introduction of the information system (see, 6.5)

6.1.4 When creating the project, pay special attention to experiences of other countries’ e-Parliaments. Engage the National Assembly's Information Research Office to create a comparative analysis on this topic;

6.1.5 Use open source and free software (see 6.4.)

6.1.6 In the planning phase, procurement should be organized. A donor should provide independent experts to assist the work group with the selection of the best solutions.
6.2. Technical Needs

Observation

Interviews in the NA IT Office and with UZZPRO in charge of one part of IT infrastructure led to the conclusion that conditions were good for the implementation of an electronic information system. Both Assembly buildings have optical wide-band connection, as do other government buildings. There are enough computers in the Assembly services. However, MPs without computers will have a more difficult time adapting to a e-Parliament system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Caucus</th>
<th>Computers</th>
<th>Printers</th>
<th>Scanners</th>
<th>Fax machines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>SRS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>ZES</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>G 17 Plus</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>SPS-JS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>PUPS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Minorities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Napred Srbijo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Computers and the accompanying equipment, by deputy groups. 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational unit</th>
<th>Computers</th>
<th>Printers</th>
<th>Scanners</th>
<th>Fax machines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Speaker</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol office</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations office</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR office</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector for preparation and processing of sessions</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector for Working Bodies’ Affairs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector for international relations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance-Material Sector</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector for organizatonal and administrative tasks</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector for strategic and every-day maintenance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOURNALISTS</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECURITY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>238</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Computers and the accompanying equipment, by organizational units.

53 Source: the National Assembly Information Booklet, June 2009
Recommendations

6.2.1 Provide computers for deputies. Compose menus of applicable solutions so that deputies can choose one that suits them most: for example, a laptop or a desktop to be placed in the deputy club. We do not recommend laptops in deputies' homes because of maintenance difficulties;

6.2.2 Purchase of computers and introduction of the information system should be announced to the public adequately and in a timely fashion, at the regular meeting of the Speaker with chief editors of the media, and then, at a press conference. Explain economic effects of the introduction of e-Parliament and comparative experiences, as well as Serbia's lagging behind the world and the neighboring countries. This will help avoid scandal and gossip;

6.2.3 Provide the following IT training for deputies: 1) Training in computer skills; 2) Training in the use of Microsoft Office applications, the internet browser, and email; 3) Training in the use of the NARS new web presentation and e-Parliament's applications.

6.3 Architecture of eParliament

Observation

The Government of the Republic of Serbia already implemented an electronic information system. Documents used in the work of the National Assembly flow in complex directions. To illustrate, we offer a graphic, simplified presentation of the creation of laws (Source: the National Assembly Information Booklet, June 2009). The possible architecture of the system was designed accordingly.

Recommendations

6.3.1 Develop Service-Oriented Architecture;

6.3.2 Users from the Government should access e-Parliament through the web server, by use of XML;

6.3.3 External web server should remain where it is - in the UZZPRO;

6.3.4 Install a security system (Firewall) between the external web server and the internal servers;

6.3.5 Develop and adopt necessary changes to the Rules of Procedure and other rule books and procedures, so that the Registry can begin to file documents in electronic form, and so that the office for the preparation of sessions can begin to use electronic documents for the preparation of the work of deputies at sessions;

6.3.6 Provide deputies with access to the information system outside the National Assembly facilities by use of VPN (Virtual Private Network).

54 Ibid.
Illustration 3: How the Laws are Made (Source: Parliamentray Information Booklet, June 2009)
6.4. Open Source and Free Software

Observation

Comparative practice shows that governments pay much attention to the so-called open standards. This is how the Government of France defines open standards: “An open standard is any communication, interconnection, or protocol, as well as any interoperable data format whose specifications are public and devoid of any restrictions with regard to access or implementation.” (Wikipedia)

Although solutions of private companies (software based on private property) still take precedence during the selection of software solutions for information systems, free software (FS) is being used more and more often. Along with defining the open standard, many governments such as those of Spain, Denmark, Venezuela, and New Zealand, obligate their public sectors to use software based on open standard. This FS approach is based on substantial transparency in work. Such software is developed on a voluntary basis by technical experts. Its use is free and defined by a special type of license. The advantages of this approach are, above all, low initial expenses and constant development and advancement of the system that is practically free of charge. The only expenses involved have to do with programmers who install and adjust the system according to one's needs.

The most frequently raised shortcoming of the Open Standard solution is its vulnerability to abuse, that is, hackers' attacks and other security-related problems. Neither the Government nor the NA of the Republic of Serbia have Rules that recommend the use of Open Standard or free software. On the other hand, no Rules recommend the use of certain brand of paid software either.

Recommendations

6.4.1 With regard to selection of concrete solutions for the implementation of the NA information system, we recommend the use of open standards and free software;

6.4.2 The NA should adopt recommendations and policies for general use of open standards and free software.
6.5. Strategy for Introduction of Information System

Observation

The introduction of an electronic information system into the NA will most definitely represent a radical change and will require thorough preparations. It will be necessary to address the upgrading of technical capacities and taking steps to create an environment conducive for an e-parliament system.

In 2009, the NA attempted to introduce an electronic information system without a clearly defined strategy. It immediately fell under criticism from the media with regard to the purchase of laptops for deputies. This led NA senior management to delay implementation of the project.

Recommendations

6.5.1 The strategy for introducing the Information System should adopt all the standards already established in this area; it should be open to the best practice of other national Parliaments as well as other institutions that achieved positive results in this area (for example, the Government of the Republic of Serbia);

6.5.2 The strategy should also contain a media plan for the implementation of the IS;

6.5.3 It is necessary for the leadership and senior management in the National Assembly to understand the need for introducing an information system. Some key stakeholders in the leadership must become champions of the project for it to succeed;

6.5.4 The strategy for introducing the information system will be more effective to the extent that it is developed in cooperation with all the future users of the system, as well as with consultants familiar with good practices in contemporary information management in European parliaments.
APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES
1. Kenneth Stuart, the SPP Chief of Party
2. Tatjana Aksić, Head of the OIS, NARS
3. Veljko Odalović, Secretary General of the NARS
4. Vesna Marjanović, MP (DS, Belgrade), Chair, Committee on Culture and Information
5. Nikola Lazic, MP (DSS, Belgrade)
6. Gordana Čomić, MP (DS, Novi Sad), NARS Vice-President, Chair, Work Group for Development of Website
7. Nenad Konstantinović, Head of the Administrative Committee
8. Miodrag Šuput, Head of the Department for Preparation of Parliamentary Meetings
9. Olgica Stojković, IT Engineer at the IT Department of the NARS
10. Vjekoslav Bobar, Head of the IT Department, Common Affairs Unit of the Republic Institutions
11. Rodoljub Dinić, Coordinator for Citizens' Visits to the NARS
12. Helena Arsenijević, Senior Adviser for Development of Training Plans, HR Department, NARS
13. Mila Đorđević, Senior Adviser for Development of Training Plans, HR Department, NARS
14. Tanja Ostojić, Head of the Information Research Unit, NARS
15. Aleksandra Šašo, Public Information Officer, NARS
16. Svetlana Vrga, Media Advisor to the NARS Speaker
17. NARS Portocool Department Officer
18. Rodoljub Šabić, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection of the Republic of Serbia
19. Dragana Boljević, President of the Judges Association of Serbia
20. Omer Hadžiomerović, Vice – President of the Judges Association of Serbia
21. Nikola Tarbuk, Head, Advocacy Department of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
22. Bojana Ristić, Executive Director, AMCHAM
23. Amalija Pavić, Regulatory Affairs Advisor, AMCHAM
24. Sonja Licht, President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence
25. Nadežda Gaće, President, Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia
26. Nemanja Nenadić, Program Director, Transparency Serbia
27. Nataša Šakota, Coordinator of Parliamentary Projects, OSCE
28. Jelena Manić, Coordinator of Parliamentary Projects, UNDP
29. Rene Traicova, Deputy Director, NDI
30. Ivan Ćurgus, Executive Director of the EBART Media Documentation
31. Safeta Bisevac, Parliamentary Correspondent, Danas daily
32. Suzana Trninić, Parliamentary Correspondent, Radio TV B92
33. Jelka Jovanović, Director, BETA News Agency
34. Svetlana Logar, Research Director, Strategic Marketing
35. Miodrag Šuput, Head of Department for Preparation of Parliamentary Meetings
APPENDIX 2: MEETING AGENDA

Monday, 10 August
8.45 – 9.30  Meeting with Kenneth Stuart, the SPP Chief of Party N. Radić, D. Restak
10.00 – 11.00 Meeting with Tanja Aksić, Head of the OIS, N.Radić, D.Restak
11.00 – 11.45 Meeting with Vesna Marjanović, Chair, NARS Committee on Culture and Information Nebojša Radić
12.00 – 14.00 Meeting with T.Aksić, Head of the OIS, N.Radić, D. Restak
15.00 – 16.00 Meeting Ivan Ćurgus, ED, EBART Media Documentation N.Radić
16.00 – 18.00 Meeting with Dragana Boljević, President, Judges Association of Serbia, and Omer Hadžiomerović, Vice–President, Judges Association of Serbia N. Radić

Tuesday, 11 August
10.00 – 11.00 Meeting with Veljko Odalović, NARS Secretary General, N.Radić, D.Restak
11.00 – 12.00 Meeting with Olgica Stojković, IT Engineer, NARS IT Department, D.Restak
12.30 – 13.30 Meeting Rodoljub Dinić, NARS Coordinator for Public Visits,N.Radić, D.Restak
13.30 – 16.00 Meeting with Gordana Ćomić, Vice-President of the NARS N.Radić, D.Restak
16.00 – 17.30 Meeting with Nikola Tarbuk, Head of the Advocacy Department of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities N.Radić

Wednesday, 12 August
10.00 – 11.00 Meeting with Vjekoslav Bobar, Head, IT Department, Common Affairs Unit of the Republic’s Institutions Dejan Restak
11.30 – 12.30 Meeting w/ Svetlana Logar, Research Director, Strategic Marketing N.Radić
13.00 – 14.00 Meeting with Bojana Ristić, ED, and Amalija Pavić, Regulatory Affairs Advisor, AMCHAM N.Radić
15.00 – 16.30 Meeting Sonja Licht, President, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence N. Radić

Thursday, 13 August
10.00 – 11.00 Meeting with Helena Arsenijević, Senior Adviser for Development of Training Plans in the HR Department of the NARS Nebojša Radić
11.15 – 12.15 Meeting with Tanja Ostojić, Head, NARS Information Research Unit, N.Radić
12.00 – 13.00 Meeting with Tatjana Aksić, Head of the OIS, D.Restak
15.00 – 16.00 Meeting with Nadežda Gaće, President of Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia, and Jelka Jovanović, Director, BETA News Agency N. Radić

Friday, 14 August
10.00 – 11.00 Rodoljub Šabić, Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection N.Radić, D.Milenković, D.Restak

Monday, 17 August
9.45 – 10.45 Meeting with Suzana Trminić, B92 Correspondent from the NARS N.Radić
11.00 – 12.00 Meeting with Aleksandra Šašo, NARS Public Information Officer N.Radić, D.Milenković, D.Restak
12.30 – 13.30 Meeting with Helena Arsenijević, Senior Adviser, HR Department N.Radić
12.30 – 13.30  Meeting Tanja Ostojić, Head, NARS Information Research Unit D.Restak

Tuesday, 18 August
10.00 – 11.00  Meeting with Nataša Šakota, OSCE Nebojša Radić, Dejan Restak
11.00 – 12.00  Meeting Nemanja Nenadić, Program Director, Transparency Serbia N.Radić

Wednesday, 19 August
10.00 – 11.00  Meeting with Jelena Manić, UNDP Nebojša Radić

Thursday, 20 August
10.00- 11.00  Parliament building tour by Portocol Department Officer, Nebojša Radić
11.00- 12.00  Svetlana Vrga, Speaker’s Media Advisor, Nebojša Radić
15.45-16.30  Debrief, Kenneth Stuart, SPP CoP, Nebojša Radić

Friday, 21 August
9.30- 10.30  Meeting with Rene Traicova, NDI, Nebojša Radić
11.00- 12.00  Meeting with Nikola Lazic, MP, DSS, Nebojša Radić
12.30- 13. 45  Debrief of the consultants’ team
14.00- 15.00  Meeting with Safeta Bisevac, Danas daily, Nebojša Radić

Monday, 14 September
11.00 – 12.00  Meeting with Miodrag Šuput, Head of Department for Preparation of Parliamentary Meetings, Dejan Restak
APPENDIX 3: JOB DESCRIPTIONS, WEBSITE TEAM

**Director**

*Management*
- Creates the strategy of online appearance of the NARS;
- Creates a long-term plan of the realization of online strategy;
- Plans future improvements to the website and defines (proposes) the budget;
- Operative management of the website (monitoring and control of all aspects of the functioning of the website, planning of daily and weekly activities of the website office);
- Communicates with all bodies of the National Assembly in order to ensure more efficient functioning of the website and more efficient work of representatives of the National Assembly (deputies, deputy groups, services);
- Consults internal and external ICT experts, with aim to improve the functioning of the website;
- Permanently researches the best practice from the surrounding countries;
- Coordinates periodic analyses of success of the website (level of innovations, modernization, efficiency of work, satisfaction of all user groups...).

*Editing*
- Defines the workflow of published documents, user groups in relation to publishing rights and rights to access documents, communications platforms and channels of the website;
- Selects people to work on individual segments of the website;
- Defines a non-partisan, objective editorial policy aimed to serve all the citizens;
- Defines the website's structure and website's channels of communication (internet broadcasting, contact forms, blog, news, comments, citizens' questions, etc.);
- Creates and organizes website's rules and procedures (instructions for use, rights to use...);
- Defines special content created by the web department, and editing guidelines which determine the qualitative framework of said content. For example, recommendation to organize public presentation of a newly adopted law.

*Technical maintenance*
- Regularly communicates with the sector in charge of technical maintenance of the website. Requires regular monthly reports with basic parameters of the system's performance, in order to locate bottlenecks on time (for example, deficiency of space on servers at the time when there are plans to publish multi-media content; increase in the number of users/possible blockage of the system in the near future).

**Journalist - Editor 1**

- Creates long-term detailed plans for the realization of segments of the strategy;
- Determines the content of the website's home page; 55
- Linguistically edits reports/synopses from sessions of committees written by committee advisors;

55 In a flexible way, user is presented with the main activities of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Different target groups should be addressed at different intervals. For example, at a time when a law that is of interest to a minority group is in procedure, the home page should provide access not only to this law but to all accompanying content important for said group, because it can be assumed that a greater number of members of the group will be reading the National Assembly web pages.
From time to time, organizes meetings with committee advisors in charge of writing reports;  
Monitors and reports from plenary and committee sessions.

**Journalist - Editor 2**

- Edits interactive segments – reads and reacts to anything that is coming from website users, except for comments directed at other bodies of the National Assembly, deputies for example;
- Updates the content (for example, updates the list of draft laws, contact pages, links, etc. after the expiration of the mandate of the Government);
- Updates the structure of the website – removes segments that are no longer a part of the structure of the website's menu;
- Monitors and reports from plenary sessions and committee meetings;
- Acts as Acting Journalist-Editor 1 in case of his/her absence.
APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLES OF PARLIAMENTARY SYMBOL, LOGO AND APPLICATIONS

Examples of Parliament Logo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Vertical Logo</th>
<th>Horizontal Logo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Vertical Logo" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Horizontal Logo" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Vertical Logo" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Horizontal Logo" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Symbol" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Vertical Logo" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Horizontal Logo" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parliament Symbol vs. Parliament Logo, vertical and horizontal applications, example of Scottish Parliament:

- ![Symbol](image10)
- ![Vertical Logo](image11)
- ![Horizontal Logo](image12)

Parliament of Finland, Visual Identity[^56]:

Parliament Logo: and its applications on various offices and languages, in horizontal and vertical version:

[^56]: Source: August 24, 2009 entry on the blog of Werklig, the design agency that developed visual identity of the Finish Parliament, [http://www.werklig.com/blog](http://www.werklig.com/blog)
APPENDIX 5: SWEDISH PARLIAMENT’S COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION POLICY

Information services at the Riksdag – fundamental objectives

Objectives

To help create openness and access (transparency) in the work of the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament), and to promote greater knowledge of and interest in the Riksdag and its work by implementing an active information policy.

A comprehensive and well developed system of information about society is a fundamental requirement in a democracy. It is a precondition for active dialogue between citizens and their elected representatives.

As the principal representative of the people, the Riksdag has a special responsibility for promoting information about society in general and for providing impartial information without party political bias about the Riksdag and its work.

Knowledge of Parliament and our society is a fundamental prerequisite for citizens in their social and political activities and in exercising influence, and it is a fundamental basis for commitment and responsibility.

Internal information and communications at the Riksdag

Internal information and communications at the Riksdag serve to

• ensure that members and officials of the Riksdag have simple, straightforward access to the information, the briefing materials and the basic documents they need in their work;
• provide effective support for members and officials in their external work in relation to the Riksdag and its activities;
• contribute to the creation of a good working atmosphere for both members and officials.
Target group

The target group for internal information and communications comprises members and officials of the Riksdag.

Information channels

Internal information and communications should form an integral part of all the activities of the Riksdag Administration. This includes the integration of information planning with the planning of other parliamentary activities.

A smooth flow of internal information is a prerequisite for the smooth running of external information activities. All internal information efforts should be planned, executed, followed up and evaluated in relation to goal achievement. The graphics profile of the Riksdag must be complied with in all materials produced by the Riksdag.

Internal information and communications activities need to be in continuous operation to work effectively. In order to obtain optimal results and deliver information to its intended recipients, it is important to make use of oral, printed and electronic channels of internal communication.

Internal information should be available no later than it becomes externally accessible.

External information and communications at the Riksdag

External information and communications at the Riksdag serve to

• meet the needs of the public, the media, agencies, organisations and the business community for rapid and correct information about the Riksdag, both nationally and internationally.

• improve the level of knowledge about the Riksdag and the democratic process among the general public, young people and school students, as well as among information mediators like journalists, teachers, librarians and information officers.

• actively stimulate interest in the Riksdag among the general public, groups with special needs and groups who do not themselves actively seek information.
The right to information

The information activities of the Riksdag must take their starting-point in the fundamental rights relating to freedom of expression and public access to information. These constitute an obligation for the Riksdag to provide and a right for the public, the media, organisations, the education system, agencies, businesses, etc, to obtain information about the role, the work and the decisions of the Riksdag.

The Riksdag Administration must be accessible, transparent and service-minded. The media and other distributors of information are to be actively supported in their task of informing the public about social issues.

Target groups

External information is oriented towards a general public which in various ways is dependent on obtaining knowledge of what the Riksdag is doing. For this reason information is mainly provided in the form of direct communication with various groups in society. It is also spread by way of contact with those who are able to mediate it to a wider audience, including the media, upper secondary schools, adult education providers, libraries, citizens' advice bureaux, public agencies, organisations, county councils and municipal authorities.

Information channels

Information relating to the Riksdag must be easily accessible to all. Since people seek and use information in different ways, it must be provided and actively disseminated through different kinds of channels – oral, printed and electronic. It must also be available through media that make it accessible to people with functional disabilities.

All citizens, irrespective of their geographical location, must have the same opportunities to access information from and about the Riksdag. Those who lack access to the Internet must be able to reach the information in question through other channels.

Information design

Information provided by the Riksdag should be designed to be:

• non-party-political
• correct
• rapid and up-to-date
• easily accessible and comprehensible
• appropriate for its audience

The graphics profile of the Riksdag should be adhered to in all material produced by the Riksdag.

Whenever possible, those designing Riksdag information should collaborate closely with schools, libraries and other organisations providing information about Swedish society.

Responsibility for information provision at the Riksdag

Everybody is responsible for information provision

The responsibility of the Riksdag in relation to information primarily comprises the provision of information about the decisions of the Riksdag and how they are reached. It also has a particular responsibility for the provision of general information about society, in order to give citizens guidance, perspective and coherence.

External information and communication must form an integral part of all the activities of the Riksdag Administration. This means that those with operational responsibilities within the Administration also have their own responsibility in relation to the provision of information, namely:

• be aware of information needs and problems
• provide external and/or internal information
• consult with the Information Department on information matters.

All those in positions of responsibility are thus responsible for the information provided by their fields of operation. Information should be provided as close to source as possible. But information is also the concern of others working within the Riksdag Administration. There is a general responsibility for keeping up-to-date and for informing others, both internally and externally. This shared responsibility for the provision of information is intended to promote an open and transparent working atmosphere within the Riksdag, and an abundant flow of information to the general public, the media, etc. A necessary condition for successful external information is a smoothly functioning system of internal information.
The Riksdag relies on the special expertise of its Information Department to coordinate external and internal information provision. The department is charged with developing, supporting and evaluating information efforts and initiating coordinated activities where joint information measures are called for.

**Who is responsible for what aspect of information provision?**

**The Riksdag Board**

sets general information objectives and determines the resources needed to achieve these objectives.

**The Information Department**

is responsible for coordinating internal and external information about the work of the Riksdag, decisions and regulations in our society, and for promoting information about society in general.

**The Secretariat of the Chamber**

is responsible for information about the order of business in the Riksdag and matters under consideration, primarily in cooperation with other departments within the Riksdag Administration.

**The Research Service**

is responsible for producing studies, analyses, and financial and other estimates, for preparing factual and briefing materials for members of parliament and parliamentary party secretariats, in the first instance, but also for parliamentary committees and for other parliaments.

**The Secretariats of the Parliamentary Committees and the Advisory Committee on EU Affairs**

are responsible for information about the order of business in the various parliamentary committees, primarily in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Chamber and the Information Department.

**The Riksdag Library**

is responsible for the provision of information and knowledge, principally to members of the Riksdag and to officials, by acquiring and making available factual and briefing materials. The Riksdag Library is also responsible for informing the public about this
material and for keeping it accessible to the public.

**The EU Information Centre of the Riksdag**

provides the public with impartial information about the EU and Swedish membership of the EU.

**The Department for Parliamentary Documents**
is responsible for producing, storing, order-processing and distributing the fundamental documents of the Riksdag for internal and external users.

**Från Riksdag & Departement (From the Riksdag and the Ministries)**
This journal is intended to make it easier for central and local government employees, the private sector and other organisations to keep abreast of what is going on in the Riksdag, the Government Offices and the EU.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century, a report convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, 7-9 September, 2005

3. Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites, Inter-Parliamentary Union, UNDESA and Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, 2009
6. Parliamentary Information Booklet, (Skupstinski informator), NSRS, June 2009
11. Ombudsman, Stevan Lilić, Dejan Milenković, Biljana Kovačević-Vučo, Komitet pravnika za ljudska prava, Beograd, 2003,
14. Zakon o slobodnom pristupu informacijama od javnog značaja, „Službeni glasnik RS“, br. 120/04, 54/07.
15. Uputstvo za objavljivanje informatora o radu državnog organa, „Službeni glasnik RS“, br. 57/05.
16. Uputstvo o postupanju po zahtevima za pristup informacijama i ostvravanju mera za unapređenje javnosti radu, br. 916/09. Rešenje br. 112-4182/07 i Rešenje br. 112-4182/07 i Rešenje br. 9-1849/08
17. Predlog zakona o izmenama i dopunama Zakona o slobodnom pristupu informacijama od javnog značaja, Koalicija za pristup informacijama, november 2007.
18. Poslovnik Narodne skupštine Republike Srbije, „Službeni glasnik RS“ br. 56/05, 81/06, 13/09.