



Parliament of Montenegro

**Second Quarterly Report on Implementation of the
Action Plan for Strengthening Legislative and Oversight Role
of the Parliament of Montenegro**

1 March to 1 June 2011

June 2011

Introduction

At the meeting held on 9 December 2010 the Collegium of the President of the Parliament of Montenegro adopted the Action Plan for strengthening the legislative and oversight role of the Parliament of Montenegro for the period November 2010 to November 2011. The adoption of this document followed the Opinion of the European Commission specifying that negotiations should be opened with Montenegro with regard to the accession to the European Union once the state has achieved the required level of compliance with the membership criteria, and particularly political criteria from Copenhagen where one of the key seven priorities is directly related to the Parliament of Montenegro, i.e. enhancement of the legislative framework for elections in line with the recommendations of the OSCE – ODIHR and Venice Commission and strengthening legislative and oversight role of the Parliament. The Action Plan is also the reflection of the need to enhance the administrative capacities of the Parliament of Montenegro required to assume the role that the Parliament is to have in the coming phases of the integration process in the European Union.

The Action Plan stipulates over 30 measures and activities, including explanations, responsible subjects and deadlines aimed at strengthening the legislative and oversight role of the Parliament, and the same are related to adoption of laws and other acts, improvement of the efficiency of the Parliament and working bodies, strengthening the administrative capacities and further enhancement of openness and transparency of work. Strengthening the capacities of the Parliament to oversee and monitor the harmonisation of the national legislation with the European Union *acquis* is one of the key priorities which numerous activities and measures stipulated by the Action Plan are directly or indirectly aimed at.

The last measure from the Action Plan of the Parliament defines that the Administration of the Parliament will prepare quarterly Reports on implementation of the Action Plan for strengthening the legislative and oversight role of the Parliament of Montenegro and submits it to the Collegium of the President of the Parliament for consideration. In accordance with this, the first quarterly report was prepared, which was deliberated on and adopted by the Collegium of the President of the Parliament at the 99th meeting held on 7 March 2011. This – second quarterly report for the period from 1 March to 1 June 2011 provides the review of the implementation of the measures and activities in relation to the plan and based on it the conclusion may be drawn that by the end of May 2011 all activities were completed within the planned deadlines with the exception of the adoption of the Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament. The report has a descriptive part, with short description of activities implemented in the reporting period, as well as a tabular part, with indicators and status, i.e. level of completion.

We recall that on 17 December 2010 the Government of Montenegro adopted the Draft Action Plan for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations from the Opinion of the

European Commission, and after the public debate and the consultative meeting with the representatives of the European Commission - Directorate General for Enlargement held on 8 and the 9 February in Podgorica, the Government adopted the Action Plan for Monitoring Implementation of Recommendations Given in the European Commission's Opinion on 17 February 2011. The Action Plan of the Parliament of Montenegro, i.e. tabular review of activities from the Action Plan has also been integrated into a single document.

Since the European Commission is to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan on regular basis, it has been agreed with the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro that both the Parliament and the Government should submit monthly reviews of implemented activities that will be submitted to Brussels as an integrated document. In order to facilitate the monitoring of implementation of the Action Plan for strengthening the legislative and oversight role the Administration of the Parliament committed to a uniform tabular reporting model that includes indicators and status, i.e. the level of completion. After the consideration and adoption of the Report by the Collegium of the President of the Parliament of Montenegro the Report will be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration as well as the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro.

Review of activities stipulated by the Action Plan for strengthening the legislative and oversight role of the Parliament of Montenegro:

Activity 1: Passing of the Law on Election of Councillors and Members of the Parliament, in accordance with the recommendations of the OSCE – ODIHR and the Venice Commission

At the eighth sitting of the first ordinary (spring) session in 2011 held on 31 May, the Proposal Law on Amendments to the Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament was not supported by the required two-third majority, after which the deadline for agreement was extended to 31 July 2011 through adoption of the Proposal Constitutional Law on Amendments to the Constitutional Law for the Enforcement of the Constitution of Montenegro.

Activity 2: Defining the roles and responsibilities of the Parliament in the following stages of the process of integration into the EU

Based on the data collected through ECPRD network (European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation), the Section for Research, Analysis, Documentation and Library completed the research on the role of national parliaments in the accession negotiations with the EU, which is to contribute to and assist the decision makers in the process of defining the role and responsibilities of the Parliament of Montenegro in the coming phases of integration into the EU. The research was submitted to the members of the Collegium of the President of the Parliament of Montenegro in December 2010. After defining the positions of the Parliamentary Clubs (MP Groups) with regard to this issue, the role and responsibilities of the Parliament in the coming stages of the process of integration into the EU will be considered by the Collegium.

Activity 3: Drafting and adoption of the Law on Parliamentary Oversight in the Field of Security and Defence

The Law on Parliamentary Oversight in the Field of Security and Defence, which was prepared by the Multi-Party Working Group established by the Committee, was unanimously adopted on 22 December 2010. This Law, which has been adopted to facilitate the Parliamentary oversight in the specific field of security and defence in addition to the oversight mechanisms stipulated by the Rules of Procedure, provides the precise definition of the obligations of all actors and ensures the protection of rights and freedom of citizens against any potential misuse.

In line with Article 12 paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Law on Parliamentary Oversight in the Field of Security and Defence, which stipulates that Parliamentary oversight should be conducted regularly according to the annual plan adopted by the Committee and at extraordinary occasions if required, the Security and Defence Committee established the Plan for conduct of the oversight role for 2011 on the 31st meeting held on 13 April 2011. In addition, the Committee, as well as any other working body of the Parliament, adopted the performance report of the Committee for 2010 and the Work Plan of the Committee for 2011.

Activity 4: Introduction of the practice for the Secretary of each Committee to prepare a opinion in the form of an informative review (*briefing*) for each proposed law

With the view of providing qualitative professional support to Members of the Parliament in performing their legislative and oversight functions, the practice has been introduced for the Secretary of each Committee to prepare an informative review (*briefing*) for each item of the Agenda of the Committee's meeting. With regard to this, guidelines for preparing and the contents of an informative review have been adopted, which define the procedure of preparation and submission of informative reviews by secretaries of Parliamentary Committees. Also, in February, training was organised for secretaries with regard to preparation of informative reviews (in cooperation with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and the UK House of Commons). From the introduction of this practice in February 2011 to the end of May there were 88 informative reviews completed by the Secretaries of the Committees.

In cooperation with the EU Delegation in Podgorica, the Parliament applied for 8-month expert assistance divided into several missions in the area of harmonisation of legislation and impact assessment of legislation. The goal is to strengthen the capabilities of the Parliament to oversee the proposed laws and their compliance with the EU acquis, as well as to gain capacities, through overseeing the regulatory impact assessments prepared by the Government and producing assessments for comprehensive amendments and specific regulations, to assume the role defined by the Inter-Institutional Common Approach to Impact Assessment of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council. The applying procedure of

experts has been completed, which eventually failed since none of the applying candidates met the criteria defined by the Terms of Reference. The process of applying will be repeated with criteria amended to a certain degree, which is being worked on in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Podgorica, for the purpose of ensuring the required technical assistance.

In the previous months, special attention has been paid to the harmonisation of the legislation with the EU *acquis* through the consideration of all proposed laws that are to be harmonised with the EU *acquis* by the Committee on International Relations and European Integration and detailed check-up of compliance tables submitted by the Government that is carried out by Committees, which has been subject to record keeping since January of the current year. Having viewed the submitted documentation that accompanied the proposed laws until the end of May (inclusive) (the total of 64 proposed laws), there were 24 substance amendments and 12 technical amendments to the documentation confirming the compliance to the European legislation made at the initiative of the Committee Service.

Activity 5: Preparation of a timetable (calendar) of the Parliament and Working Bodies

In February 2011 the Calendar of the Parliament of Montenegro was adopted for the first time for the period through the end of the spring session, i.e. the end of July for the purpose of enhancing the planning of work of the Parliament. The Parliamentary Calendar specifies the days in a month intended for sittings of the Plenum, meetings of working bodies, as well as Parliamentary days intended for the work of Members of the Parliament in Parliamentary Clubs and with citizens.

The novelty in the work is also that all Committees, in line with the Action Plan, adopted their work plans for 2011, which include the plan of oversight activities as well. Also for the first time, the Committees prepared and adopted their annual performance reports for 2010. All these documents are available on the website of the Parliament.

Since the beginning of the year there have been 11 consultative hearings and one control hearing:

- The Committee for Political System, Justice and Administration held one consultative hearing with the topic “Reform of Judicial System in Montenegro, in the context of Recommendations from the Opinion of the European Commission“;
- The Committee on International Relations and European Integration held seven consultative hearings with regard to the Performance Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 2010, 21st and 22nd quarterly reports on the overall activities in the process of the stabilisation and association to the EU, the first and second monthly reports on realization of commitments from the Action Plan for monitoring implementation of recommendations given in the European Commission's Opinion, the Report on implementation of obligations from the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the Quarterly Reporting Table, as well as with regard to issuing an opinion on the candidate

for ambassador of Montenegro to the Council of Europe and the candidate for ambassador of Montenegro to the Republic of Poland;

- The Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget held two consultative hearings with the topics: “The current situation in the area of telecommunications with the view on implementation of the Law on Electronic Communications” and “Draft Law on Investment Funds with the a view on effects of application of the current law”;
- The Administrative Committee held a consultative hearing of the candidate for the president of the Council of the Insurance Supervision Agency and established the Proposal Decision;
- The Commission for Monitoring and Control of the Privatisation Procedure deliberated on the privatisation procedure of the Aluminium Plant (Kombinat Aluminijuma) Podgorica and held a control hearing under this deliberation.

In addition to the consultative hearings, the Committees also organise thematic sessions and sessions outside the Parliament of Montenegro, public fora and round tables on current topics, as well as other similar activities. Follows a short review of these activities in the reporting period:

- The Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning held a thematic session with regard to the petition of the MANS concerning the Brief on Destruction of Excess Military Ammunition on the temporary polygon “Prage“ in the vicinity of Nikšić on 9 February.
- The Security and Defence Committee held a session on 9 May to consider the Brief on actions undertaken by the Supreme State Prosecution of Montenegro in the case “Balkan Warrior”. In addition to the members of the Committee, the session was also attended by the Supreme State Prosecutor.
- The Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning held a thematic session on 6 April where the Draft Law on Communal Activities was presented.
- The Committee on Human Rights in cooperation with the OSCE Mission organised on 28 February in Cetinje a public forum with the topic:”Rights of a child – implementation of the Law on Preschool Education and the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence”. On 11 March 2011 the Committee considered the Brief of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights concerning the position of LGBT population in Montenegro at the session which was attended, upon invitation, by the Minister of Human and Minority Rights, Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms and representative of the NGO Juventas - Youth Cultural Centre. Also, the members of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms met the representatives of the Association of parents of children and youth with development disorders “Naša Inicijativa” on 21 April in the premises of the Parliament of Montenegro.
- The Gender Equality Committee in cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Montenegro and UNDP Office in Montenegro organised the presentation of the publication “Research

on the knowledge and application of the Law on Gender Equality in the institutions of Montenegro” on 27 May.

- The Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare held a session on 25 March at the occasion of marking the World Tuberculosis Day, while on 15 April in cooperation with the German Foundation Konrad Adenauer, it held a round table with the topic “Parliament and social policy – current challenges of social policy in Montenegro and Germany”. Also, the Committee held a session on 30 May in cooperation with the National Committee for Control of Smoking of the Ministry of Health and the Institute for Public Health of Montenegro in the premises of the Institute in Podgorica to mark the World No Tobacco Day.
- The Administrative Committee held a public debate on 31 May on the topic “How to determine the representatives from NGO sector in the procedure of election and appointment”, where seven non-governmental organisations took part.

The number of Parliamentary questions has been increasing this year. In 2010 there were 246 Parliamentary questions in total, out of which 18 for the Prime Minister, while the total number of 148 questions for the Government and 14 questions for the Prime Minister have been asked so far at two sessions dedicated to Premier’s Hour and Parliamentary questions during this year.

Activity 6: Monitoring and control of the implementation of the recommendations from the Opinion of the European Commission on application for EU membership and Analytical Report

A part of planned activities of the Committees is also related to monitoring of the implementation of the EC recommendations, while it is the Committee on International Relations and European Integration that is responsible for coordination of all these activities. This Committee prepared in December 2010 a Report on findings and recommendations of the European Commission from the Opinion on the Application for EU Membership and the Analytical Report. The Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of all Committees held a meeting to consider this document, which will represent the base for future oversight of the implementation of the Government Action Plan for Monitoring Implementation of Recommendations Given in the European Commission’s Opinion.

At the end of March the Committee on International Relations and European Integration considered the first monthly report of the Government of Montenegro on the implementation of the obligations from the Action Plan for Monitoring Implementation of Recommendations Given in the European Commission’s Opinion at a joint meeting with the National Council for European Integration. The second session was held in May when it was agreed that monthly reports of the Government will be considered on regular basis in future.

Activity 7: Adoption of the Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro

The Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro was adopted on 22 December 2010 (EPA 461-XXIV). The Decision amended Article 32, among others, which facilitated for Parliamentary Clubs to be able to engage more expert consultants at expense of the Parliament. The amended Article 32 stipulates that a Parliamentary Club with up to five MPs may engage one expert consultant, a Parliamentary Club with up to 15 MPs may engage 2 expert consultants and a Parliamentary Club with over 15 MPs may engage another expert consultant for each initiated group of 10 MPs.

Under this activity, the consideration of the options for new amendments is in process, which is also aimed at strengthening the legislative and oversight role of the Parliament, particularly from the aspect of the coming accession negotiations with the EU. The Collegium of the President of the Parliament adopted a Conclusion at the 125th meeting held on 9 May to establish a Working Group for drafting the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, which is composed of the representatives of all Parliamentary Clubs. The Working Group will, inter alia, deal with formulating of the model for passing of proposals of the opposition Parliamentary Clubs that fail to gain the required majority in regular consideration by working bodies. The deadline for the Working Group to submit the proposal amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro to the Collegium of the President of the Parliament is 15 June.

Activity 8: Analysis of the requirement for separation of responsibilities of individual committees and establishment of subcommittees

At the 125th meeting held on 9 May the Collegium of the President of the Parliament adopted a Conclusion to establish a Working Group for drafting Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, which is composed of the representatives of Parliamentary Clubs. The Working Group will, inter alia, deal with the need for division of individual working bodies due to the large scope of competences and the elaboration of the rules for establishing sub-committees (composition, decision-making and relation to the line committee). The deadline for the Working Group to submit the Draft Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro to the Collegium of the President of the Parliament is 15 June.

Activity 9: Adoption of Annual Plan for harmonisation of legislation and monitoring its implementation

The adoption of the Annual Plan for harmonisation of legislation is based on the analysis of the National Programme for Integration (NPI), following its adoption by the Government, as well as the monitoring of the implementation of the annual Work Programme of the Government. This activity is planned for the 1st quarter 2011, and the Work Programme of the Government that was adopted in the meanwhile envisages the adoption of the National Programme for Integration for the 2nd quarter. Therefore the adoption of the Plan of the Parliament is in delay too.

However, based on the Work Programme of the Government and Action Plan for Monitoring Implementation of Recommendations Given in the European Commission's Opinion adopted on 17 February, the Administration of the Parliament prepared a brief on the proposal of laws that the Government is planning to establish in 2011, by quarters, which is another measure of improving the planning of legislative activities of the Parliament.

Activity 10: Preparing and reviewing annual reports on the performance of working bodies:

Performance reports for 2010 were adopted by 11 working bodies. In March, the Commission for Monitoring and Control of the Privatisation Procedure held a discussion on the activities undertaken in the previous period and accordingly adopted the conclusions on the future work.

Activity 11: Adoption of rules on document management procedures in the Parliament Administration

Internal Rules on document management procedures in the Parliament were adopted and have been applied since the beginning of 2011. The new rules provide for efficient document management, reduction in the number of bookkeeping journals, precise definition of the procedure of recording of e-mail, recording and archiving of documents according to their subjects rather than the session during which they were in the procedure, as was the case previously. Therefore, the new rules make a solid base for future introduction of the information system for monitoring of legislation.

Activity 12: Adoption of the Classification Plan

The Classification Plan was adopted at the beginning of 2011 when it commenced to be applied. The Classification Plan provides for classification of legislation according to negotiation chapters and more efficient tracking of amendments to laws and their compatibility with the European Union *acquis*. According to the Plan, the classification codes are allocated to all acts received in the Registry Office. All proposed laws submitted by the Government (total 74) are classified according to their subjects by negotiation chapters they belong to. This procedure will facilitate efficient preparation of Members of the Parliament during the negotiation process with the EU, for the reason that all proposed laws that by their subjects belong to one negotiation chapter will be kept at one place rather than according to sessions at which they are adopted as was the case previously.

Activity 13: Introduction of abbreviations for parliamentary documents

Draft Decision on abbreviations for parliamentary documents has been produced. The Working Group that is established to determine the abbreviations for laws published in the Official Gazette of Montenegro, since its first edition after the adoption of the new Constitution in

October 2007, completed the work and produced the abbreviations within the envisaged timeframe, and regular determination of abbreviations takes place on regular basis.

Activity 14: Introduction of the Record of Parliamentary Acts (RPA)

The RPA register has been established and RPA Records have been applied in the Administration of the Parliament since the beginning of 2011. In accordance with this, each act accepted by the Register Office of the Parliament is allocated an RPA reference code which consists of the combination of Arabic and Roman numerals. The Arabic numeral represents the ordinal number of the parliamentary act accepted by the Register Office in a single Parliamentary Convocation, while the Roman numeral represents the number of the term. For example, from the beginning of the 24th Parliamentary Convocation to 31 May 2011 the Register Office accepted 589 parliamentary documents, i.e. the last parliamentary document registered under this date has the RPA reference code 589 XXIV.

Activity 15: Introduction of Eurovoc descriptors

In 2010, a multi-disciplinary Expert Group was formed to deal with the translation of Eurovoc descriptors to Montenegrin. The Expert Group completed its work within the envisaged timeframe. Translated descriptors were submitted to the Office of the European Union responsible for publications. In meantime, the Government passed the Decree on legal-information system which stipulates that this system should contain Eurovoc descriptors, and the competent state administration authority is obliged to provide selected descriptors along with the proposed or adopted act under its responsibility to the Official Gazette. Thus, it will be ensured that the overall legislation is indexed by the same descriptors used by EU institutions and EU countries.

Activity 16: Adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the Section for Analysis, Documentation, Research and Library, with supporting documents

The Rules of Procedure of the Section for Analysis, Documentation, Research and Library were adopted and they commenced to be applied. Also, the Rules were adopted for submission of applications and development of parliamentary research papers, along with the Application Form. The Section has already completed three research papers on parliamentary autonomy, the role of the parliament in negotiations and spatial facilities of the parliament. Also, the Section prepares Weekly news from the EU institutions and delivers the same to MPs and employees every Friday.

Activity 17: Preparation of the Preliminary Design for the information system that would enable IT tracking of the entire legislative process

Recording and analysis of individual processes are in progress. The deadline for this activity is the 3rd quarter 2011.

Activity 18: Adoption of the Human Resources Strategy in the Parliament of Montenegro for the period from January 2011 to December 2013, including a Training Plan

The Human Resources Strategy has been adopted, and the document stipulates the vision and mission, principles and values and strategic objectives of the development of human resources, including indicators and activities. In addition to the Strategy, the Strategic Plan with the schedule of activities has also been adopted. The Training Plan has also been prepared, which identifies the training needs that are supported by the development of operating monthly training plans. This document enables strategic planning of human resources development in the Parliament of Montenegro.

Activity 19: Providing intensive training for the staff of parliamentary committees and clubs

This activity is implemented on continuous basis, which is stipulated by the Action Plan. Several trainings were organised in the previous period. Training was organised for the staff of the Section for Research when two employees spent two weeks in the Slovakian Parliament. In cooperation with the EU Delegation in Podgorica, the Parliament applied for 8-month expert assistance, divided into several missions, in the area of harmonisation of legislation and impact assessment of legislation. The applying procedure of experts has been completed, which eventually failed since none of the applying candidates met the criteria defined by the Terms of Reference. The process of applying will be repeated with criteria amended to a certain degree, which is being worked on in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Podgorica, for the purpose of ensuring the required technical assistance. The goal of the assistance is to strengthen the capabilities of the Parliament to oversee the proposed laws and their compliance with the EU law, as well as to gain capacities, through overseeing the regulatory impact assessments prepared by the Government and producing assessments for comprehensive amendments and specific regulations, to assume the role defined by the Inter-Institutional Common Approach to Impact Assessment of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council.

It was envisaged that five trainings for the employees of the Parliament outside the regular programme of the Human Resources Administration were to take place by the end of May. Three trainings were organised, as well as another three which were planned for June.

Since the beginning of the year the employees took part in the total of 42 trainings: six from the training plan, 23 under the organisation of the Human Resources Administration and 13 other trainings.

Activity 20: Filling vacancies in the Parliament Administration, in accordance with the Rulebook on Internal Organisation and Job Descriptions

The vacancies are filled on continuous basis, as stipulated by the Action Plan. As of 31 May 2011 there were 90 employees (and 10 trainees) in the Parliament Administration in comparison to 154 employees that are stipulated by the Rulebook and in comparison to 73 employees (and 12 trainees) as of 31 December 2010.

Activity 21: Defining a plan of short and long-term planning of office space for the purposes of the Parliament

In order to carry out this activity envisaged by the Action Plan, a decision was adopted to rent additional office space for the needs of the Parliament. Tender procedure is under preparation and it is planned that the tender should be published in July.

Activity 22: Improving spatial and personnel requirements for the work of MPs, based on earlier assessments of the needs

Under this measure a comparative review was produced, which includes a brief description of the current situation of the spatial capacities in the Parliament, tabular presentation of the data on the area and spatial facilities of several national parliaments taken over from the ECPRD network (European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation) and collected by a questionnaire that the Parliamentary Administration sent to the addresses of several parliaments in the region.

Activity 23: Providing access to the Parliament building for persons with disabilities

Public invitation to tender for procurement and installation of folding electric stair lifts for the needs of disabled persons for internal installation into the Parliament of Montenegro was published on 1 June 2011, and the deadline for opening of bids is 28 June.

Activity 24: Preparation and publication of the Annual Report of the Parliament of Montenegro

The Annual Report for 2010 has been produced and posted on the website in Montenegrin and English. This annual report was for the first time produced by the Parliamentary Administration on its own, and yet only two months after the expiry of the year. The report contains comprehensive data on the results of legislative and oversight work of the Parliament, information on special activities of the Parliament, its committees and organisation units, including international cooperation as well as the review of the development of administrative capacities.

Also, the Parliamentary Administration has introduced the system of monthly reporting which facilitates better insight into the work of employees and organisational units, and at the same time facilitates the development of semi-annual and annual reports on the level of the Parliament.

Activity 25: Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Parliament of Montenegro and NGOs

Memorandum on cooperation between the Parliament of Montenegro and the Network of organisations of civil sector for democracy and human rights was signed on 30 March of the current year. The Memorandum is the result of the project implemented in cooperation with the Centre for Development of NGO Network and the Parliament, and the draft document was prepared by the working group whose members were MPs and representatives of non-governmental organisations. The Memorandum defines the principles of cooperation between the Parliament of Montenegro and NGO Network in the area of democratisation and human rights, which will be applied to all other NGOs interested in cooperation with the Parliament. In parallel with the signing of the Memorandum, a form was posted on the website of the Parliament that the civil sector representatives and individuals can fill out to submit their opinions, proposals and suggestions to the Parliament which are subsequently forwarded to the body or an organisational unit related to the contents of the completed form.

The cooperation of the Parliament of Montenegro and the civil sector is constantly improving and enhancing, which is particularly confirmed by increased participation of civil sector representatives in the meetings of working bodies, especially in case of consultative hearings and other kinds of participation, which has been subject to accurate record keeping within monthly reports of the secretaries of working bodies since the beginning of the current year. Thus, from the beginning of the year there has been around 35 communications addressed to the working bodies of the Parliament by the civil sector representatives (proposals, applications, proposal amendments, requests for free access to information, comments to draft acts, appeals, petitions and the like), as well as around 35 participations in the meetings of working bodies, including consultative hearings.

On 5 April, in the Parliament of Montenegro the First conference of the National Convention on European Integration of Montenegro took place. The Project “National Convention on European Integration of Montenegro“ is organised in cooperation with the NGO European Movement in Montenegro and Slovakian Association for Foreign Policy and the Parliament of Montenegro and the Government of Montenegro with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Republic of Slovakia and SLOVAKAID.

Activity 26: Roundtable discussion of Members of the Parliament and representatives of the media

The objective of the roundtable of MPs and media representatives is to exchange opinions and adopt conclusions that will contribute to better understanding and cooperation. Preparation of the roundtable discussion is in progress, in cooperation with the WFD, and tentative period of July is agreed with WFD experts.

Activity 27: Roundtable discussion on the issues of conflict of interest of Members of the Parliament

The roundtable discussion on the issues of conflict of interest of Members of the Parliament, aimed at exchange of opinions and adoption of conclusions to contribute to better understanding of this issue and potential improvement of the legislative framework is planned for 10 June. The representatives of SIGMA, UNDP and OSCE as well as relevant institutions of Montenegro and non-governmental organisations will take part in the roundtable discussion.

Activity 28: Improving internal communication within the Parliamentary Administration

This measure is aimed at improved exchange of information and creation of conditions for good external communication through defining the rules of internal communication and unifying procedures for communication with stakeholders, designing documents, etc. Preparation activities are in progress in cooperation with the WFD and UK House of Commons, and the person for internal communication has been appointed.

Activity 29: Further improving of the transparency of the Parliament and its communication with the public

The transparency of the Parliament and communication with the public are improved on continuous basis. This year, direct broadcasting from the press position in the Parliament building is facilitated via Internet. Also, all relevant information is regularly posted on the website which is partially redesigned so it provides for better visibility of available information.

In January of the current year the publication of the monthly newsletter “Open Parliament” commenced in cooperation of the Parliament of Montenegro and the Centre for Democratic Transition which is supported by the European Commission through the EU Delegation in Podgorica.

Numerous visits to the Parliament (there is a form on the website of the Parliament for citizens to apply to visit the Parliament) were organised in the previous period, as well as exhibitions, and the session of the Children’s Parliament.

In 2011, the number of requests for free access to information significantly increased. In 2010, the Parliament received the total of 104 requests, while in this year, in only five months, the

Parliament received 84 requests (with the total of 195 sub-requests). All requests were responded to within the timeframe stipulated by Law, of which 43 allowed the access, for 20 the Parliament was not in possession of the requested information, and for 21 the response was in the form of notification that the requested information was already published or another authority was responsible for it.

The requests are mostly related to access to information on financial operations, e.g. copies of acts containing the information on the amount spent from the budget of the Parliament of Montenegro for payment of transport costs, accommodation costs, then data on journals for travels of MPs abroad and in Montenegro, information on public procurement, degree of completion of activities from the Action Plan, etc.

Activity 30: Program "Open Parliament"

The first edition of the monthly newsletter "Open Parliament" was published on 4 February in cooperation with the Centre for Democratic Transition, supported by the European Commission through the EU Delegation in Podgorica. Four editions of this electronic newsletter were published on the website of the Parliament and the website of the CDT until the end of May, in Montenegrin and English, and the fifth edition is under preparation.

In 2011, the implementation of the Internship Project has continued in cooperation with the Centre for Democratic Transition. The selection procedure for students was completed and since March five students have been having the opportunity to get on-site knowledge of the work of parliamentary services and take part in their activities.

The preparation of the project "Democratic Workshop" is in progress. The Project is intended for primary school children, and it will be implemented in cooperation with ERSTE Foundation and Austrian Parliament.

Activity 31: Reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan

The Action Plan envisages quarterly reporting to the Collegium of the President of the Parliament. This is the 2nd quarterly report which covers March, April and May. The first quarterly report was adopted on 9 March and it covered December, January and February.

Monthly reports on implementation of the Action Plan are regularly submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration which prepares an integrated report and submits it to the European Commission.