



**Parliament of Montenegro
Parliamentary Institute
Research Centre**

Research paper:

MONTENEGRO - Parliaments role in engaging the citizens in its work

Podgorica, May 2018. godine

No: 04/2018

Classification no: 00-52-4/18-42/1

Date: May 2018

Prepared by: Sandra Brajušković, Research Analyst
Milena Vujović, Research Associate

** The contents of this document do not reflect the official views of the Parliament of Montenegro.*

*** All expressions used in this paper for natural persons shall refer equally to both men and women.*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
I LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	5
II MODES FOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PARLIAMENT AND THE CITIZENS ...	8
III TOOLS TO INFORM THE PUBLIC.....	10
IV RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHERS FOR ENGAGEMENT OF CITIZENS IN THE WORK OF PARLIAMENT	11
V ROLE OF THE RESEARCH SERVICE IN ENGAGING THE CITIZENS IN THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT.....	13
REFERENCES	14

INTRODUCTION

A representative democracy is a system founded on the will of the citizens which have the right to choose their representatives in direct, free and fair elections. In a democracy, interaction between citizens and decision-makers is of vital importance, bearing in mind the significant role of citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

In the context of democracy, "citizen participation may be defined as a process in which ordinary people take part, whether on a voluntary or obligatory basis and whether acting alone or as part of a group, with the goal of influencing a decision involving significant choices that will affect their community. Such participation may or may not take place within an institutional framework, and it may be organized either by members of civil society (for example, through demonstrations citizens' committees, etc.) or by decision-makers (for example, through referendums, parliamentary commissions and mediation, etc.)."¹

Participation of citizens in decision-making process provides an opportunity and creates conditions necessary for citizens to engage in political life regularly, not only during elections, creates a framework for citizens to advocate for their legitimate interests, makes the work of public authorities more transparent and closer to public, as well as contributes to the quality of adopted public policy and its smooth implementation.²

The importance of citizen participation in decision-making processes has been recognized not only at the national, but also at the international level. For example, the OECD in its document *Citizens as Partners: Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*, states that relations between decision-makers and citizens exist in a wide range of areas from policy-making to delivering and consuming public services. „In practical terms, there are three main types of interaction between decision-makers and citizens:

- Information (*one-way relationship*) - citizens access information upon their demand,
- Consultation (*two-way relationship*) - citizens give feedback on policy-making, and
- Active participation (*advanced two-way relationship*) - citizens actively engage in decision-making and policy-making by proposing policy-options.“³

*"Citizens' rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent authorities for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights."*⁴

Furthermore, the Treaty of Lisbon provides that every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. On the other hand, the institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.⁵

¹ André, P. with the collaboration of P. Martin and G. Lanmafankpotin "Citizen Participation," in L. Côté and J.-F. Savard (eds.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Public Administration*, [online], 2012. www.dictionnaire.enap.ca

² Dr. Golubović D, *Citizen Participation in Legislative Processes: A Short Excursion through European Best Practices*, the European Center for Non-Profit Law, 2008

³ OECD, *Citizens as Partners: Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*, France, 2001, p. 15-16

⁴ *Ibid*, page 84

⁵ Treaty of Lisbon, 2007/C 306/01 in Official Journal of the European Union 17.12.2007, Article 8A, paragraph 3, Article 8B, paragraph 1

In a representative democracy, primary duty of an elected member is to represent citizens, their views and interests. At the same time, a parliament as the expression of people's will and the highest representative body must allow active participation of citizens in parliamentary life. This principle imposes a requirement that the parliamentary work shall be public, as well as that special attention should be paid to strengthening the culture of openness and accessibility of the institution to the citizens. A number of activities have been introduced over the years in the Parliament of Montenegro with the aim of increasing the institution's transparency, as well as opening the institution towards the citizens.

The aim of this research paper is to present information on citizens' engagement and their role in the legislative process in the Parliament of Montenegro.

I LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Parliament of Montenegro doesn't have legally binding procedure regarding consultations with citizens and stakeholders in the law-making process, **unless if falls under their right to propose laws, access information and submit applications**⁶. Apart from this, representatives of scientific and professional institutions, other legal entities and non-governmental organisations, as well as individual professionals and scientific workers have **right to participate in committee work through consultative hearings**.

Citizens' right to propose a law

According to the Constitution of Montenegro, the right to propose laws and other acts shall be granted to the Government, the Member of the Parliament, **as well as six thousand voters, through the Member of the Parliament they authorized**.⁷

*The Rules of Procedure (Article 130) stipulates that a law adoption procedure shall be initiated by submission of a bill. The bill shall be submitted in the form in which the law is adopted, must be reasoned in writing, and delivered in the required number of copies and in electronic form. **If six thousand voters are the proposer of the law, they shall, along with the bill, designate an authorised representative (MP) to submit the bill.** (Article 131)*

Citizens' participation in committee work

The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro provides basis for participation of public and stipulates that representatives of the Government, representatives of scientific and professional institutions, other legal entities and non-governmental organisations, as well as individual professionals and scientific workers shall take part in the work of the committee, if invited, having no right to decide.⁸

Furthermore, for the purpose of performing tasks under its competence (consideration of proposal acts, preparing proposal acts or study of specific issues) and obtaining required information and professional opinions, particularly on proposal solutions and other issues of special interest for citizens and the public, a Committee may, if needed or for a specific period, engage scientific and professional workers for specific areas representatives of state authorities and non-governmental organizations, having no right to decide (**consultative hearing**). The decision on engagement of scientific and professional consultants shall be

⁶ Everyone shall have the right to submit an application, individually or collectively with others, to the state authority or the organization exercising public powers and to receive a response. No one shall be held responsible, or suffer other harmful consequences due to the views expressed in the application, unless having committed a crime in doing so. (Article 57 of the Constitution of Montenegro)

⁷ Constitution of Montenegro (*Official Gazette of Montenegro, no.001/07, 038/13*), Article 93

⁸ Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro (*Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 051/06, 066/06, 088/09, 080/10, 039/11, 025/12, 049/13, 032/14, 042/15*), Article 73

adopted by the Committee. For the purpose of executing tasks under its scope of work, a Committee may establish special working groups and engage scientific and professional consultants as their members. For the purpose of preparing Members of the Parliament to decide in respect of motions for election of individual officials, the Committee responsible for the area for which election is carried out may summon the authorized mover as well as nominated candidates to consultative hearing.

Upon completion of consultation procedure, the committee prepares a short report and minutes stating names and titles of the participants, delivered suggestions and observations.⁹

Rulebook on Internal Order in the Building of the Parliament of Montenegro stipulates the following: *A citizen who wishes to attend a sitting of the Parliament is obliged to submit a request to the Department for Public Relations, International Affairs and Protocol two days prior to the scheduled sitting.*

*The Secretary General shall provide an approval of requests for attending a sitting submitted by individual persons or groups, in written form, upon the approval of the President of the Parliament. The list of the citizens who have been granted the right to attend a sitting of the Parliament is submitted by the official employee from the Protocol to the Security Office, no later than one day prior to the scheduled sitting.*¹⁰

Citizens' right to access information

One of the significant legal tools available to citizens is the right to free access to information. As *Article 51 of the Constitution* stipulates, everyone shall have the right of free access to information, in possession of both the state administration authorities and the organisations exercising public functions. The right may be exercised by submitting a request that shall be responded by decision, conclusion or notification in accordance with the *Law on Free Access to Information*.¹¹

Hence, the *Law on Free Access to Information* stipulates that access to information in possession of state authorities shall be based on the following principles: free access to information, transparency, the public's right to know and equality. Any domestic or foreign individual or legal entity is entitled to access to information without having to state the reason or explain the interest of the request.¹²

According to the Law, the public authority shall make a decision on the request for access to information and deliver it to the request submitter within 15 working days following the adequate request has been submitted. If access to information is requested for the purpose of protecting the life or freedom of an individual, the public authority shall make a decision and deliver it to the applicant within 48 hours as of the hour of submission of the request.¹³

Furthermore, this Law provides that the applicant, or another individual having an interest, may make a complaint against the decision of the public authority on the request for access to information to an independent supervisory authority responsible for protection of

⁹ Ibid, Article 73

¹⁰ Article 23

¹¹ Law on Free Access to Information_ (*Official Gazette of Montenegro no. 044/12*)

¹² Ibid, Article 2 and Article 3

¹³ The time limit may be extended for eight days, provided that: 1) the request refers to exceptionally voluminous information; 2) the request for access to information refers to classified information; 3) tracking the requested information entails search through a large volume of information and therefore disturbs performance of regular activities of the public authority. In that case, the public authority shall, within five days after the request has been submitted, inform the applicant in writing of an extension of the time limit in which a decision on the request is to be made.

personal data and access to information, Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information protection, and through the authority that has decided upon request in first instance. Complaint may not be filed against decision denying access to information containing data marked as classified, but it is possible to initiate administrative dispute against adopted decision.

The Parliament of Montenegro has an employee in the Parliamentary Service dealing with requests for the free access to information. Data on requests for free access to information are published in annual reports on the work of the Parliament, and all submitted requests as well as responses to those are available on the Parliament's website.

Additionally, the applicant and third interested person shall be entitled to court protection, in accordance with the law governing administrative dispute proceedings. A court shall assess if the public authority properly marked data in requested information as classified, in accordance with the law governing the area of data secrecy. Procedure of adjudicating a legal action in relation to access to information shall be urgent.¹⁴

STATISTICAL REVIEW OF REQUESTS FOR FREE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Parliament receives a great number of requests, responding to each. NGOs are most frequently the submitters of the requests. In 2017, 94 requests were submitted. The requested were replied as follows:

- 38 requests were granted access;
- 41 requests were denied access because the Parliament did not possess the requested information;
- 9 requests were replied to with a notification that the information was already available on the website of the Parliament of Montenegro;
- 4 requests were partially granted access;
- 1 request was denied access due to performance of official duties.

Preparation of response to one request is ongoing.

Tabular overview of requests for free access to information 2013-2017

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of requests	60	161	46	88	94

Different kind of information are required through requests, mostly legal regulations, information related to financial operations, and various information from the domain of the legislative and supervisory role of the Parliament of Montenegro.

The Parliament regularly publishes on its website: requests, decisions and other individual acts significant for rights, obligations, and interests of third persons, as well as information for which access was granted upon request.

The said requests with follow-up documentation, as well as a detailed tabular overview with data such as: submitters of requests, reception date and answer date, number of items and type of response are available on the Parliament's website. Also, annual performance reports of the Parliament contain summarized data on the number of submitted requests with the number of items/sub-requests, as well as responses to the requests.

¹⁴ Ibid, Article 31, Article 34, Article 44

Citizen's right to submit an application¹⁵

According to the *Rules of Procedure*, the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms shall consider and take positions on applications and complaints of citizens and legal entities related to the exercise of rights of citizens. Also, Anti-Corruption Committee shall monitor and analyse the work of state authorities, institutions, organizations and bodies in fighting against organized crime and corruption and consider applications and complaints, and address them to the competent authorities.

Note: The Parliament of Montenegro has adopted changes to the current Rules of Procedure in regards to submitting applications, such that the Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms considers applications and takes positions on applications of citizens and legal entities related to exercising the rights of citizens. This change came into force on 31 July 2012. Furthermore, according to the changes to the Rules of Procedure, the newly formed Anti-corruption Committee considers applications and forwards them to relevant authorities in charge of fight against corruption and organized crime. **Previously, the Parliament has been receiving various applications and those were handled on case by case basis. Depending on the issue, the applications were forwarded to relevant organizational units/committees within the Parliament or relevant institutions in Montenegro.*

The Parliament of Montenegro does not have special unit dealing with the applications and proposals. This is responsibility of the above mentioned committee staff.

According to the *Conclusion of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedom with regard to the Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro*¹⁶ all citizens' applications addressed to the Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms shall be forwarded to the institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedom in order to act upon them, in accordance with the Law on Protector of Human Rights and Freedom of Montenegro. In case that the citizens complain about the actions of the Protector, the Committee shall act in accordance with its control and oversight role. Also, Anti-Corruption Committee consider applications and complaints, and address them to the competent authorities.

Moreover, there is no possibility of submitting e-applications/petitions online.

II MODES FOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PARLIAMENT AND THE CITIZENS

The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro do not include provisions related to a possibility for MPs to arrange meetings with citizens in the parliament building. However, in practice, MPs are available to meet citizens at the premises of the Parliamentary Group. Regular procedure in terms of entering the parliamentary building is observed in these cases as well.

Citizens have the possibility to **pose questions** to their elected representatives – members of the parliament, as well as to the Service of the Parliament of Montenegro. It can be done either by letter or via a web form on the Internet. For example, in the period from January to December 2017, 4 such requests were addressed to the Department for Public Relations and Protocol.

¹⁵ Application refers to petitions, requests and citizen inquiries and it may also include complaints.

¹⁶ Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro - Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 25/12, (Item 3 of the Minutes of the 72nd meeting of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedom, 30 May, 2012).

Furthermore, some MPs and Committees have Twitter and Facebook profiles through which they communicate to public.

The Parliament of Montenegro organizes **guided tours** providing an opportunity for the citizens (either individually or in organized groups) to get informed on the history and work of the Parliament, its working bodies, MP groups and other relevant information related to parliamentary work. Visits include a tour of the Great Hall, committee meeting rooms and the foyer for visitors and journalists. Visitors are also given the opportunity to meet and speak with elected members, as well as to watch parliamentary debates for a limited period of time. In addition, the visitors can see the photographs of previous presidents of the Parliament, a unique collection of coats of arms of Montenegrin Dynasties, as well as the first state flag raised on the flagpole in front of the Parliament of Montenegro following the independence referendum in 2006.

In order to visit the Parliament of Montenegro, it is necessary to send a request seven days at the earliest and two days at the latest before the date of the visit. Requests may be sent by post, by email or fax.

Additionally, on the occasion of 20 November, the day of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, each year the Parliament of Montenegro organizes the **Children's Parliament** in cooperation with the Children's Right Center of Montenegro and with the support of international organizations dealing with children's rights. The project is dedicated to the promotion of children's rights to participate and have a dialogue with decision makers, as a significant social need and value. Students of primary and secondary schools from various municipalities, MPs, ministers and/or their assistants, representatives of international organizations in Montenegro participate in the work of the Children's Parliament. Representatives of diplomatic corps, local self-government and others are also present at the session

Children's Parliament - Eighth Session, November 2017

During the Session, members of local children's parliaments had the opportunity to hear the same presentation that the children's Montenegrin delegation presented in Geneva on October 3 this year in front of the members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as the presentation made by representatives of the Children's Parliament. The concept of this year's Session was different from previous ones, because there were no questions posed directly to representatives of the Government, so children spoke about personal experiences and their perspectives of certain problems in society, school, local community, family and other areas of importance of unimpeded growth and development of children in Montenegro, pointing out expectations for the next period.

In addition to 50 representatives of local children's parliaments from 21 municipalities, i.e. two representatives coming from each primary and secondary school, including representatives of vulnerable groups of children from all municipalities of Montenegro, the Session was also attended by representatives of MP groups in the Parliament of Montenegro, the Government of Montenegro, domestic institutions and international organisations dealing with issues of the rights of the child, as well as members of the diplomatic corps.

Another way of engaging citizens in the work of the Parliament is the **Women's Parliament** which is, on the occasion of 8 March, International Women's Day, organized by the Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro with the aim of promoting women's rights in Montenegro. During the session, members of the Montenegrin Government answer questions posed by the representatives of women's associations, parliamentary parties and civil society organizations. The event is organized within the framework for improving

women's rights, particularly in the light of the European integration process, as well as establishment of critical relation toward achieved results in this field, elimination of all forms of discrimination and increase of the degree of commitment to promotion and protection of women's human rights and gender equality, necessary for democratic development of society. The Women's Parliament session is attended by representatives of resident international organizations', diplomatic corps, political parties, MPs and other state officials.

Furthermore, **Democracy Workshops** are a special civic education programme of the Parliament of Montenegro aimed at teaching children about democracy, democratic processes and institutions of Montenegro. It enables primary school students from all Montenegrin municipalities to get educated on topics such as "Democracy and Parliament",

In 2017, 3,184 students from 51 primary schools across Montenegro participated in 144 Democracy Workshops to learn about democracy, parliament, and human rights.

"European Union" and "Human Rights", within a four-hour long workshop.

Through an age-appropriate interactive program, children from eight to fifteen years of age learn how democracy functions through play, with the help of qualified trainers. The workshops are free of charge and open to all children from third to ninth grade of Montenegrin primary schools. In addition, the Parliament provides for participants a free transportation from school to the place where the workshops take place as well as refreshments during a four-hour long work. The students write about their acquired knowledge and experience in a journalistic essay or present it in the form of a radio or video clip, which is later published on the democracy workshops website.

Through an age-appropriate interactive program, children from

In addition, the Parliament signed a new **Memorandum of Understanding with 57 non-governmental organisations** on 29 July 2016, with „the aim to create a sustainable partnership based on principles of transparency, openness and mutual respect". This Memorandum encourages strengthening of institutional dialogue between the Parliament and non-governmental organisations through improved mechanisms for information exchange and favourable conditions for the effective and efficient participation of non-governmental organisations in creating public policies and the consequent legislative solutions.

Cooperation with civic society and citizens is not dealt with by a single unit in parliament. Depending on the nature of cooperation, several units deal with these tasks.

III TOOLS TO INFORM THE PUBLIC

One of the most important forms of the publicity of work is the TV broadcast of the plenary sittings. The **TV broadcasting** began in 2010, with Parliament's own technical and administrative capacities. The TV signal was made available to interested broadcasters and cable operators for further distribution. In 2017, 142 hours and 33 minutes of the programme were realised. As of 17 June 2010, sittings of the Parliament of Montenegro can also be broadcasted Live over the Website.

Furthermore, the **website** of the Parliament (www.skupstina.me) has made the legislative process and other activities more transparent and closer to the citizens. Recently redesigned and significantly improved in content, the parliamentary website provides information related to legislative procedure, such as proposals for laws, amendments and texts of adopted laws. Regularly published on the website are also listings of electronic voting,

announcements of the sittings and committee meetings with their agendas, reports and minutes, as well as other information related to legislative, oversight and international activities of the Parliament and its working bodies. The Parliament's website also provides information on the Parliament's budget, the Parliamentary Service, historical data and numerous other information. The Parliamentary Service prepares **annual performance reports**, which contains information related to legislative and oversight activities of the Parliament and its working bodies, international cooperation, cooperation with the civil society, transparency and development of administrative capacities, also available on the Parliament's website.

Newsletter "Open Parliament" is a monthly electronic publication on the work of the Parliament of Montenegro, which provides information on legislative and oversight activities of the Parliament and its working bodies, as well as news on other relevant events. In addition, the newsletter contains a parliament-related history section, information on the Parliament's arts gallery, as well as definitions of political science and parliamentary terms.

The newsletter is published on the Parliament's website in both Montenegrin and English language.

When it comes to EU accession negotiations, it is worth noting that the Committee on European Integration in cooperation with other committees, organizes **thematic forums** on negotiation chapters. These forums serve as a tool to instigate public debate, with professionals and other interested members of the public having the opportunity to state their opinion and give suggestions prior to determining negotiating positions by the Committee.

For example, on April 18 Delegation of the Committee on European Integration visited Budva and discussed the importance of the EU and possibilities of using IPA funds with students of the secondary school and the municipal leadership. Organization of public debates with secondary school students and meetings with representatives of the local self-governments is one of the ways, used by the Committee on European Integration in order to bring the negotiation process closer to the citizens. Since the beginning of the 26th Parliament of Montenegro, this is the fourth visit to a Montenegrin municipality. While presenting advantages of the European integration process for youth, Committee members also talked about the possibilities for studying in the EU, and educational exchange programmes offered by the EU, but also about the advantages of the single labor market, as well as honoring of the European values, such as tolerance and multiculturalism.

IV RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHERS FOR ENGAGEMENT OF CITIZENS IN THE WORK OF PARLIAMENT

European Commission's *Montenegro 2018 Report* states that at administrative level, the Parliament of Montenegro maintained a high level of transparency.¹⁷

Apart from this, according to the results of the study "*Parliamentary Openness Index - Serbia and Region*"¹⁸ which was conducted by the Centre for Research, Transparency and

¹⁷ Montenegro 2018 Report, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-montenegro-report.pdf>

¹⁸ Parliamentary Openness Index, Serbia & Region, August 2016, <http://crt.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Indeks-otvorenosti-parlamenta-2016.pdf>

Accountability (CRTA) in June 2016, for a third year in a row, the Parliament of Montenegro fulfilled the largest number of criteria, with positively assessed 89 indicators of a total of 123¹⁹, or 72% openness criteria fulfilment.

The study results show that the Parliament of Montenegro retained the top spot by the number of met indicators, which were applied to measure parliamentary transparency. The Montenegrin parliament made a step forward in this category, primarily owing to the publishing of documents deliberated in committee proceedings, as well as detailed information about the Parliament Service staff. Also, the parliament advanced its budget transparency, not only by publishing budgets for the past two years, but by doing so in tabular and textual forms. However, several recommendations were proposed, as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, we have developed recommendations for the Parliament of Montenegro, which refer to key segments: transparency of parliamentary information, parliamentary openness and access to parliamentary information.

By adopting the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, the Parliament of Montenegro would confirm its strategic commitment to honoring standards and principles set out in the declaration - greater openness, transparency and citizen participation in decision-making.

TRANSPARENCY OF PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

In this category, the Parliament of Montenegro should:

- » Improve the transparency of information on the work of committees by publishing:
 - stenographic records from committee meetings;
 - machine-readable video records, and
 - machine-readable audio records.
- » On MPs' official profiles, regularly publish information on their:
 - attendance, and
 - activities at committee meetings in machine-readable formats (tabular display of data).
- » On MPs' official profiles regularly update information on their activities at plenary proceedings, including:
 - records of attendance at plenary sessions, and
 - number of addresses at plenary sessions.
- » Publish agenda and standardized minutes of meetings when MPs meet the lobby groups representatives.

OPENNESS

In this category, the Parliament of Montenegro should:

- » Activate and regularly update profiles on social networks to improve direct communication with citizens.

ACCESS TO PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

In this category, the Parliament of Montenegro should:

- » Publish parliamentary data as raw data in machine-readable format, which would enable remote access and downloading of large amount of data, directly or via Application Programming Interface (API).

Source: *Parliamentary Openness Index, Serbia & Region*, August 2016, pg. 49-50 <http://crtars/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Indeks-otvorenosti-parlamenta-2016.pdf>

¹⁹ 123 indicators used to measure parliamentary openness were divided into three categories: transparency of parliamentary information, promoting a culture of parliamentary openness and access to parliamentary information.

V ROLE OF THE RESEARCH SERVICE IN ENGAGING THE CITIZENS IN THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENT

The Parliamentary Institute of the Parliament of Montenegro is composed of the following units: Research Centre, Library and Documentation Centre and Archive, and Education Centre.

Research Centre prepares research papers in the form of short information notes or analysis papers on a specific topic; then comparative overview on certain issues and manner they are regulated in the region, EU member states and other countries; and also in the form of statistical overviews, aimed at supporting the work of MPs and the Service. In the context of international cooperation, the Centre prepares information and responds to requests of international organisations, national parliaments and institutions within the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), and in cooperation with the Sector for Support to Legislative and Oversight Functions of the Parliament, cooperates with domestic and foreign institutions, libraries, universities, state and other institutions. The Centre also provides professional support to MPs and employees in the Service for their own research, by referring to the available data and search methods.

In terms of specific projects, internship programme is an educational program for the final year undergraduates, which provides them with professional practice i.e. internship for the purpose of acquiring practical experience and developing their skills and knowledge. The programme was launched in 2003 to enable students to learn through practice about the work and procedures in the Montenegrin Parliament. This way, the programme participants had the opportunity to enhance their knowledge on state institutions, but also to provide assistance to MPs and employees of the Parliament in performing their daily activities, including within the research service. The internship program is not being implemented at the moment due to objective limitations. However, it is expected that the project will be continued in the near future, as well as upgraded with new features to provide students with this unique opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and develop their professional skills. At the same time, the parliament can only benefit by harnessing new skills, ideas and energy from young people.

In addition, upon request of interested universities and their student bodies, the Parliament of Montenegro may organize study visits for university students, which are flexible and tailored on a case by case basis to meet the specific needs of the universities in terms of type of visit, field of interest, and duration. These study visits may feature observation or participation in the work of the Parliament and its working bodies.

Prepared by:

Milena Vujović and Sandra Brajušković

REFERENCES

- André, P. with the collaboration of P. Martin and G. Lanmafankpotin “Citizen Participation,” in L. Côté and J.-F. Savard (eds.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Public Administration*, [online], 2012. www.dictionnaire.enap.ca
- Constitution of Montenegro (*Official Gazette of Montenegro, no.001/07, 038/13*)
- Decision on Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro - Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 25/12, (*Item 3 of the Minutes of the 72nd meeting of the Committee on Human Rights and Freedom, 30 May, 2012*)
- Dr. Golubović D, *Citizen Participation in Legislative Processes: A Short Excursion through European Best Practices*, the European Center for Non-Profit Law, 2008
- Law on Free Access to Information_ (*Official Gazette of Montenegro no. 044/12*)
- *Memorandum on Cooperation between the Parliament of Montenegro and Network of Civil Society Organization for Democracy and Human Rights*, <http://www.skupstina.me/images/dokumenti/ostalo/3.pdf>
- Montenegro 2018 Report, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-montenegro-report.pdf>
- OECD, *Citizens as Partners: Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*, France, 2001, p. 15-16
- Parliamentary Openness Index, Serbia & Region, August 2016, <http://cрта.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Indeks-otvorenosti-parlamentna-2016.pdf>
- Parliament of Montenegro – official website <http://www.skupstina.me/index.php/en/>
- Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Montenegro (*Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 051/06, 066/06, 088/09, 080/10, 039/11, 025/12, 049/13, 032/14, 042/15*)
- Rulebook on Internal Order in the Building of the Parliament of Montenegro
- Treaty of Lisbon, 2007/C 306/01 in Official Journal of the European Union 17.12.2007