



Parliamentary Technical Cooperation  
CH-3003 Bern

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## **Summary of completed projects as part of the 2015-2019 pilot project in parliamentary technical cooperation**

### **1. Introduction**

During the 2015-2019 legislative period, the Swiss Parliamentary Services (SPS), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Human Security Division (HSD) at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)'s conducted a pilot project in parliamentary technical cooperation. The aim of the pilot project was to make available the expertise of SPS staff for the projects led by the SDC and the HSD to support parliaments in developing countries or countries in democratic transition.

From March 2016 to December 2019, the SPS supported projects led by the SDC and the HSD in the following countries: Cambodia, North Macedonia, Mongolia, Albania, Kosovo and Tunisia.

### **2. Summary of activities and projects carried out**

#### **2.1. Project in support of the Cambodian parliament**

The SDC supported the Cambodian Parliament from 2014 to 2018 through the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia (PIC). As an independent institution, the PIC provides services to both chambers of the Cambodian parliament primarily with regards to research and relations with citizens.

In September 2015 the parliamentary administration of Cambodia expressed the hope that it might benefit from SPS support in providing information to the public. Following a needs assessment mission in June 2016, the SPS suggested carrying out, with the support of the PIC, a communication project that would enhance the visibility of the Cambodian parliament among citizens and boost public confidence in the institution. Of the ideas put forward by the SPS, the secretaries general of the two parliamentary chambers chose to organise a joint open day at the Cambodian parliament.

From February 2017 to October 2017, two SPS staff members from the public relations and information department cooperated closely with two working groups within the Cambodian administration on organising the open day event. There was close contact via email and video conferences. In addition to the remote communication, two SPS staff members travelled to Phnom Penh in February 2017, and the Cambodian working groups travelled to Bern in October 2017. The SPS staff members were able to share with their Cambodian counterparts how they



organise such events for the Federal Assembly (e.g. Museum Night and open day on 1 August). They were able to give a lot of advice on the content of the activities (quizzes, games, guided tours, meetings with MPs) and on the educational materials (brochures) planned for the Cambodian Open Day.

In November 2017, Cambodia's Supreme Court banned the country's main opposition party from participating in politics following charges filed by the governing party. This ban imposed on the opposition party meant that it was excluded from parliament. In this context the SPS considered that, because of the risk of the open day being instrumentalised by the ruling party, it was no longer able to continue to support the organization of the event. With the SDC's agreement, the SPS therefore immediately decided to suspend cooperation with the Cambodian parliamentary administration and informed the secretaries general of the two chambers of the Cambodian parliament of their decision. According to the information received by the SPS, the secretaries general subsequently decided to postpone the open day indefinitely.

Despite the project being abandoned, the work accomplished was highly valuable in terms of skills acquisition for both Cambodian parliamentary officials and the SPS staff members involved.

## **2.2. Projects in support of the North Macedonian parliament**

The SDC supported the North Macedonian Parliamentary Assembly from 2010 to 2019 by financing the activities of a parliamentary institute tasked with conducting analyses on behalf of parliamentarians and informing citizens about the role and functioning of the Macedonian parliament.

In November 2016, during a study visit to Switzerland, a delegation from the North Macedonian Parliamentary Institute expressed interest in receiving support from the SPS in the field of civic education and guided tours of parliament. In response to their request, a small SPS delegation visited Skopje in May 2017 to carry out an evaluation of the institute's activities. At the end of this visit, the SPS delegation submitted a number of recommendations aimed at optimising the activities. The institute took on board the majority of the recommendations, taking into account, of course, the specific context of Macedonia. Taking the system developed in Switzerland as an example, the institute set up an online booking system for visits to the Macedonian parliament. It also now offers Macedonian citizens the opportunity to take a virtual tour of the parliament building, not unlike the [virtual tour](#) of the Swiss Parliament Building. Furthermore, building on the role-playing game [My point of view](#) developed by the SPS, the parliamentary institute developed a new civic education game, which was launched in March 2019. A SPS delegation attended this launch in order to provide critical feedback. Finally, the institute made a [film](#) about its work with the SPS in developing the civic education game.

Furthermore, two staff members from the Finance Committee secretariat (FC) worked with the Macedonian institute in the area of public finances. In 2017, they gave a presentation at a regional conference on how the Swiss parliament examines the federal budget and accounts.



They also wrote a research paper on public debt and the debt brake in early 2018. The paper was presented to an audience of MPs and staff at the Macedonian parliament. In addition, in June 2018, the deputy secretary of the Political Institutions Committee participated in a conference organised by the Macedonian Parliamentary Institute on citizen participation to explain the mechanisms of direct democracy and the role of the Federal Assembly in this context.

### **2.3. Project in support of the Mongolian parliament**

The SDC has run a four-year project in Mongolia (2017-2020) aimed at strengthening the national parliament in its legislative and oversight roles.

In late November 2017, a small SPS delegation composed of staff from the committee secretariats and the Parliamentary Control of the Administration (PCA) travelled to Ulaanbaatar to exchange views with their counterparts from the Mongolian parliament on how the two parliaments exercise their legislative and oversight powers and how they conduct evaluation. The aim was also to identify specific areas for future collaboration with the secretariat of the Mongolian parliament. At the end of the workshop, the Mongolian parliamentary administration expressed its interest in working with the SPS on evaluation, since the Mongolian secretariat had been given a mandate, via legislation, to develop this activity, which was new to the secretariat. The expertise of the SPS' evaluation body (PCA) might therefore be of use to the Mongolian parliament.

In March 2018, the SPS agreed to support their Mongolian colleagues in conducting a concrete evaluation (of the Mongolian Land Allocation Law). The support work was conducted remotely via email exchange and video conference. In June 2018, two PCA staff members travelled to Mongolia to support their colleagues in defining the *evaluation design*. In October 2018, the Mongolian working group came to Bern to discuss the best empirical methods for evaluating the Mongolian land act. The SPS continued their support with regard to data collection and analysis as well as the drafting of the evaluation report, and a mission to Ulaanbaatar was organised in April 2019 for this purpose. Discussions also focussed on knowledge management and on knowledge transfer to other staff in the Mongolian parliament with a view to future evaluations. In this regard, the representatives of the SPS presented the PCA's procedures and instruments. At the request of the Mongolian parliament's secretariat, a workshop on reporting was also held during this mission, which was attended both by the members of the Mongolian working group and by other staff of the Mongolian parliament's secretariat.

In August 2019, the Mongolian working group submitted a draft of its evaluation report. However, the report still had a number of shortcomings, which the SPS pointed out in detailed feedback.

A second study visit to Bern took place in December 2019. The delegation was composed of two members of the working group, the secretary general of the Mongolian parliament and the deputy secretary general. The study visit had three focuses. The first focus was on the completion of the evaluation report on the Mongolian Land Allocation Law. The second focus



was on knowledge management for future evaluations and knowledge transfer to other staff members of the Mongolian parliament. Based on the presentations on work and knowledge management tools given by the SPS in April 2019 in Ulaanbaatar, the delegation prepared a draft resolution on conducting evaluations, which SPS commented. The third focus was on the political use of evaluation results by Parliament. It was explained how the Federal Assembly's control committees draw political conclusions from a PCA evaluation, make recommendations to the Swiss executive and monitor their implementation. In this context, a possible institutionalisation of the evaluation work and the strengthening of parliamentary supervision by the Mongolian parliament was also discussed.

The visit helped to convince the secretary general of the Mongolian parliament that evaluation should play a substantial part in the oversight role of parliament. Following the visit, she decided to provide the relevant unit in the Mongolian parliamentary administration with additional staff and strengthen its position institutionally: a new unit was created (Oversight and Evaluation Department), and two new members of staff were recruited. The SPS provided feedback on the job descriptions for the staff of this new unit.

At the beginning of 2020, the working group completed work on the draft resolution discussed in the course of the last visit to Bern, which defines the work of the evaluation unit, and presented it to the secretary general. It sets out the range of topics for the evaluation, defines which bodies handle the evaluation results, and the procedural steps to be followed by the evaluation unit. The resolution is expected to enter into force with the new legislature (July 2020).

In the meantime, the evaluation report on the Mongolian land allocation law has been completed and presented to the secretary general of the Mongolian parliament. The findings from the evaluation were due to be presented in the relevant parliamentary committee, but as of the last contact between the SPS and the working group from Mongolian parliament (May 2020), this had not been able to take place due to the COVID-19 situation.

According to information from UNDP, the Mongolian parliament's strategic plan for the 2020-2024 legislature period includes a strengthening of the oversight activities.

#### **2.4. Project in support of the Albanian parliament**

In Albania, the SDC is supporting the parliament over a four-year period, from 2018 to 2022; this may be extended for a further four years. The SDC project, entitled *Support to Parliament and Civic Education*, aims to boost the Albanian parliamentary administration's capabilities and to support the parliament in its legislative, representative and control functions. Making the public aware of their responsibility as citizens and of the part they can play in politics are further aims of the project.

To implement the project, the SDC is working with two partner organisations operating in Albania: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).



In this project, the SPS are providing support in the fields of civic education/public relations and of parliamentary control.

*Support in the areas of civic education and public relations*

In April 2019, the SPS spent two days with their Albanian counterparts discussing the topics of civic education and public relations. The members of the SPS delegation and representatives of the Albanian parliamentary administration presented the way in which they conduct outreach and the role of media services in their respective parliaments. The various presentations were followed by lively discussion in which the participants were able to explore the issues in greater detail.

Besides the discussions, the main aim of the SPS mission was to identify specific projects that could be developed in a future cooperation with their Albanian colleagues. As the mission came to an end, the latter expressed their desire to work with the SPS on three projects and activities, namely: developing a civic educational game similar to that developed by the SPS, *My point of view*; a new concept for guided tours of the Albanian parliament; and lastly, a 3D virtual guide of the Albanian parliament similar to the existing one of the Swiss Parliament. To realise these projects, a working group was set up within each parliamentary administration.

Following this first meeting, a SPS delegation travelled to Tirana in June 2019 to begin work on the selected projects with the Albanian working group. The visit included a guided tour which allowed the SPS representatives to give initial critical feedback. The mission was organised primarily to establish the next key steps to be taken by the Albanian secretariat; a detailed working plan was drawn up.

In October 2019, the Albanian working group came to Bern on a study visit. During two intensive days of discussion and activity, the Albanian delegation took part in the *My point of view* game and enjoyed a guided tour of the Swiss parliament, while discussions focused on the status of their projects supported by the SPS. It became clear in the course of these in-depth discussions that there are specific difficulties in implementing the projects in the Albanian political context, which is so different from that of Switzerland. The members of the working group enquired in particular about the way in which the game *My point of view* is organised, the human resources it requires and the best way in which Albanian teachers can get information about it. For the guided tours, the Albanian delegation presented a new draft script, which was duly commented on by the PS members.

Exchanges have continued over the course of 2020, albeit at a distance. The SPS gave its feedback on the documents and drafts sent by the working group. These three new instruments are expected to be launched in the autumn. The SPS will also support its Albanian colleagues with their campaign to promote these new PR instruments among the public. The SPS will also travel to Tirana to provide its final feedback once the instruments have been put in place.



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### *Support in the area of parliamentary control*

The partnership over parliamentary control began with a three-day seminar in Tirana in May 2019. The representatives of the Swiss parliamentary control committees secretariat and their Albanian counterparts explained the way in which oversight is exercised in their respective parliaments. Oversight in the Albanian parliament is not exercised by a separate committee, as in Switzerland, but instead by the different legislative committees and by Parliament, whereby legislative activity appears to take precedence over oversight activities. During the visit, the delegation from the CC secretariat presented the control committees' manual. This handbook, drawn up by a specialist team from the secretariat, is primarily aimed at new members of the control committees so that they can familiarise themselves with the tasks and particularities of parliamentary oversight.

Following this visit, the secretary general of the Albanian parliament decided to draw up a similar handbook on parliamentary oversight, based on the Swiss manual.

In October 2019, a working group set up by the secretary general of the Albanian parliament came to Bern on a study visit. Members of the CC secretariat led a range of workshops on parliamentary oversight. Presentations were given explaining how the manual is used in the control committees, and on the secretariat's work processes and procedures. In three workshops the delegation addressed the aims and philosophy, the possible structure and the content of their handbook. In just a short time, the delegation drafted two sample chapters, one on field monitoring visits and one on parliamentary committee hearings. It also drew up the structure and the table of contents upon which the new handbook will be based.

The result of the three-day visit and intensive discussions exceeded the expectations of all those involved. The delegation wanted to make the most of its visit to Bern and benefit from the time at its disposal for internal discussions and work. The fact that the members of the group were able to set aside their daily obligations and focus on this project was much appreciated by them all. They explained that such a focused and efficient approach would not have been possible in Tirana. The team comprised staff from various departments of the Albanian parliamentary administration. In their everyday work they rarely have the opportunity to work so closely together.

The working group subsequently completed the sample chapters started in Bern and presented it to the SPS for feedback. The full feedback on these chapters, as well as on the general structure of the manual was broadly accepted and implemented by the working group in its follow-up work.

Exchanges have continued in 2020, again albeit at a distance. A mission to Albania planned for the first half of 2020 and a return visit to Bern had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 situation. Despite this, the working group was still able to complete a further chapter of the manual. The completed chapters are also supposed to be presented to the president of the committees responsible for oversight. This too has had to be postponed due to the current public health situation.



Although the original timetable has had to be adapted slightly, the manual on questions relating to parliamentary oversight matters is still expected to be completed by the end of October. A mission to Tirana to complete work on the manual is scheduled for the autumn 2020.

## **2.5. Project in support of the Kosovar parliament**

From 2016 to 2018, the HSD provided support to the *Kosova Democratic Institute* (KDI). The aim of this support was to strengthen the Kosovar parliament's role in respect to that of the government, particularly in the context of the 'Brussels talks' between the Kosovar and Serb governments. The Kosovar parliament issued several resolutions requesting the government to keep it informed of progress on the Brussels Agreement, but these were ignored. The process gave rise to criticism about the Kosovar government's lack of transparency and was met with resistance among the opposition parties. Kosovo faced an institutional crisis, which found expression in protests and an extraordinary blocking of parliamentary activities. In order to facilitate the continuation of dialogue, the KDI launched a project entitled *Strengthening parliamentary oversight of the executive and increasing citizens' participation in the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue*.

Against this background, a small SPS delegation composed of members of the secretariats of the Foreign Affairs Committees (FACs), the control committees (CCs) and the Parliamentary Control of the Administration (PCA) went to Pristina in February 2018 to run a workshop for members and employees of the Kosovar parliament. The many profitable discussions held focused on two main issues: the role played by the parliament in foreign policy, and on parliamentary control and evaluation. The work of the FACs, the CCs and the PCA was presented. The members of the Kosovar parliament and its secretariat staff showed a particular interest in the rights of the FACs with regard to consultation over negotiating mandates of the Swiss executive. Oversight by the CCs of the recommendations made to the Swiss executive also drew the attention of the Kosovar parliamentarians. The question of oversight of independent institutions (e.g. central banks or courts) and the work of the PCA for the CCs was also closely discussed. The exchanges enabled the SPS to present to the Kosovar MPs various procedural options which may act as an inspiration to them when the procedural rules of their parliament are reformed at some point in the future.

## **2.6. Project in support of the Tunisian parliament**

As part of the HSD's support for democratic change in Tunisia, a delegation including the speaker of the Tunisian parliament visited Switzerland in September 2016 to exchange views on the procedures and working instruments of the Federal Assembly. In this context, the Tunisian delegation expressed its interest in the system used by the SPS for transcribing debates; the Tunisian parliament suffers structurally from a delay in the publication of its proceedings as its system is inefficient. A feasibility study was carried out into adapting the Swiss system to transcribe debates into Arabic. Despite the positive results of this study, further collaboration was abandoned as the Tunisian parliamentary administration failed to confirm its



interest in the project. According to information received by the SPS on the fringes of the March 2018 meetings of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, the Tunisian parliament is interested in a solution developed by the Moroccan parliament, which uses a voice recognition system to transcribe debates.

However, the feasibility study was not conducted in vain: its results can still be used in relation to other Arabic-speaking countries. The HSD and the SDC will be alert to opportunities which could arise in other contexts.