

KOSOVO PROGRAM PROFILE



History of Partnership

The House Democracy Assistance Commission approved a legislative strengthening program with the Assembly of Kosovo in 2009. Since then, it has worked with the Assembly in the areas of constituent relations, committee operations, and parliamentary research.

The Commission has encouraged development on these fronts with a congressional delegation and six training seminars, two for visiting Kosovar MPs and four for visiting staff from the National Assembly.

Background

After operating under an interim government backed by the United Nations, Kosovo officially declared its independence in February 2008. A new constitution came into effect in June 2008, establishing Kosovo as a parliamentary republic with three independent branches. The legislature is comprised of the 120-member National Assembly, whose members are elected for four-year terms. More than 20 political parties competed in the Assembly elections held on November 17, 2007. Snap elections in December 2010 gave a plurality of 34 seats to the Democratic Party of Kosovo, with 17 parties winning seats.

Congressional Delegations

Chairman David Dreier led a delegation to Kosovo in April 2012 to meet with their counterparts in the Kosovo Assembly. After meeting with President Atifete Jahjaga to discuss U.S.-Kosovo relations and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, the delegation met with the Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly, Jakup Krasniqi. During its time in the Assembly, the delegation met with Serb and other ethnic minority members of the parliament to discuss minority rights; with the Budget and Finance Committee to discuss budget oversight and fiscal analysis; and with the Public Accounts Committee to discuss oversight of government spending. The Kosovo Assembly's women's caucus met with the delegation to share their experiences, which was followed by sessions on committee hearings and constituent services for committee chairs, deputy chairs, and caucus leaders. HDP staff held concurrent discussions with Kosovar committee staff on public hearing preparations and the role of staff in oversight activities.

The Commission organized a congressional delegation to Kosovo in February 2010, led by Representative Earl Pomeroy. The delegation's trip marked the formal inauguration of the Commission's partnership with the Assembly of Kosovo. The delegation's program began in the Assembly, where they met with the Speaker and the Presidency of the Assembly (a nine-member leadership team representing the major parties). The centerpiece of the two-day program was an afternoon of intensive training sessions on the committee hearing process and constituent services. The delegation also met with the Prime Minister and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which allowed for discussions on bilateral foreign policy issues. Towards the end of the visit, the delegation visited one of the largest Serb enclaves in the country to underscore the importance of minority rights and participation in democratic development.

MP Seminar

In July 2012, four Kosovar MPs came to Washington to participate in a week-long seminar on committee operations. They were joined by colleagues from Macedonia and Liberia. The program covered various aspects of committee operations including the role of leadership, legislative ethics, oversight, and committee hearings. Members of Congress and staff also discussed the importance of non-partisan institutions such as the Congressional Research Service, the Government Accountability Office, and the Congressional Budget Office. More than a dozen current and former representatives were able to participate and share their experiences with the visiting MPs.

In June 2012, HDP invited three female MPs to participate in its inaugural Women's Seminar. The week-long program brought together women MPs from four partner countries (Kosovo, Indonesia, Peru, and Macedonia) to discuss economic and political issues relevant to women. The seminar began with presentations from think tanks and NGOs on topics including advocacy, economic empowerment, and using research to further policy. Later in the week, the MPs met with female Members of Congress, including the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Women's Caucus and a member of the House Leadership Team, to exchange ideas about particular challenges faced by elected female representatives and strategies for furthering women's advancement into leadership positions.

Kosovar MPs were invited to Washington from September 26-October 3, 2009, for a week-long seminar focused on committee operations. The program began with an overview by the Congressional Research Service of the Congress and its committee structure. Committee staff and former members of Congress spoke to participants about various aspects of committee operations, including the role of staff and organizing public hearings. Roughly a dozen Members of Congress spoke to participants in the seminar, offering their personal experience in using committees to advance their own legislative and oversight priorities.

Staff Seminars

In October 2012, one staff member from the Kosovo Assembly participated in a staff institute to strengthen legislative budget analysis. Twenty-three staff from twelve partner countries participated in the program, which included meetings with officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Budget, Appropriations, Agriculture, and Ways and Means Committees. Participants also met with representatives from the Government Accountability Office, the World Bank Institute and the International Budget Partnership.

In January 2012, two staff members participated in a training seminar on legislative research and analysis. They were joined by colleagues from 12 other HDP partner countries. The parliamentary staff institute included presentations and discussions with Members of Congress and top officials from the Congressional Research Service (CRS). Current and former CRS staff provided the participants an overview of basic legislative research and analysis techniques including identifying sources of information, basic policy analysis, developing alternatives for the legislature, and conducting impact analysis.

Staff from Kosovo attended a staff institute on strengthening budget analysis capacity in the legislature from October 18 to 22, 2010. The institute included 21 staff from 11 partner countries. The institute included meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Committees on Budget and Appropriations

and the Joint Committee on Taxation. In addition, budget analysts from the Kenya National Assembly shared their experience in establishing and developing a parliamentary budget office.

The Commission organized a staff institute on committee operations from December 13-17, 2010. The institute included 27 staff from 13 partner countries, including Kosovo. The institute included meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Research Service and staff from several House committees, as well as meetings with Rep. David Price and Rep. David Dreier. In addition, committee staff from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia shared their experience in developing procedures to begin using oversight hearings as part of the work of their parliamentary committees.

In June 2010, staff from the Kosovo Assembly traveled to Warsaw, Poland to attend the 20th anniversary of the Frost-Solomon Commission. They were joined by 22 MPs from 11 partner countries, along with MPs and research staff from former partners of the Frost-Solomon Commission. Current and former staff from the Congressional Research Service worked with them to help develop their own parliamentary research service through workshops, coaching, and open forums.

Staff from the Kosovo Assembly participated in a training program in Mavrovo, Macedonia from November 10-14, 2009. They joined 24 participants from three countries for an intensive program on committee operations. Organized in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute, the program examined how staff can more effectively support committee operations by organizing hearings, soliciting public input on legislation, conducting policy and legal research, and writing committee reports.

A delegation of staff from Kosovo attended a staff institute from December 7-17, 2009, that was organized in conjunction with CRS and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries, who were mostly officials and analysts of their parliament's research service. The program focused on the role of the research service in providing independent information and analysis to members of parliament and their staff.

Staff from Kosovo also attended a seminar that was held from November 2-6, 2009 in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute (NDI). This Institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries and focused on the role of information and technology in the legislature. The centerpiece of the program was participation in the third annual World E-Parliament Conference, which specifically addressed how information and communication technology can help improve representation, transparency, accountability, openness, and effectiveness in parliament.

Self-Initiated Parliamentary Delegations

In June 2012, the commission welcomed the Speaker of the Kosovar Parliament to Washington, D.C. As part of a four-day program, HDP facilitated a meeting between the Kosovar Speaker, the Chairman and Ranking Member of HDP, and the Speaker of the House.