



**NATIONAL
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INSTITUTE**
FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

MACEDONIA

Working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide

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Signs of change

Welcome to the debut issue of NDI Macedonia, a quarterly newsletter about NDI activities with parliament, political parties and civil society.

Since the elections in September much has changed in parliament. Of the 120 MPs elected, 92, or approximately 85 per cent are first time members of parliament. That's a high turnover rate in any country. Of the thirteen parties that won seats in parliament, six of them -- SDSM, LDP, DUI, VMRO-DPMNE, LP and DPA -- met the requirement of electing five members to form an official caucus. Eighteen standing committees have been established which meet regularly to review legislation and propose amendments. Furthermore, the Rules of Procedure allow MPs to use the Albanian language in parliament.

After his election as President of Parliament in October, Nikola Popovski announced that his goal was to strengthen parliament as the supreme institution in a democratic system of government. Under a new law passed last year, MPs for the first time are now required to be full time representatives in parliament. The introduction in January of a monthly Question Period where MPs from all parties can hold government ministers to account is another innovation implemented by the president to strengthen parliament's role. The last Thursday of each month is now routinely devoted to MPs questions to ministers on behalf of their constituents.

Things are also changing outside the parliament building. Early in the new year,

New MPs attend parliamentary orientation

Newly elected MPs had the opportunity to find out just what's in store for them at a parliamentary orientation held December 9 co-sponsored by the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and NDI. Fifty MPs, including representatives from all the political parties in parliament, attended the one-day session which highlighted the role of MPs as legislators, representatives and caucus members. [Continued on Page 2](#)



President Nikola Popovski with NDI Director, Sheila Fruman and Parliamentary Program Director, Elvis Zutic

four MPs from two of the governing coalition parties joined efforts to open the first constituency office in the country. Citizens from Kisela Voda can now raise questions and concerns directly with their elected representatives. The line up to meet MPs has been steady since the doors of the new office opened in January.

Many challenges still must be overcome for parliament to become the strong institution set out in the Constitution. MPs don't have their own offices or computers in parliament or in their electoral districts. Parliamentary caucuses have no staff. Qualified translators and interpreters are scarce. In the short time since the election, nonetheless, significant changes have been made.

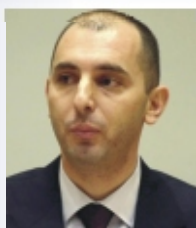
NDI, working in cooperation with parliament, has tried to help facilitate a smooth transition from being a candidate to becoming an MP and to build up parliamentary resources and technical capacity. This issue features the various ways we've supported parliament's new efforts to become stronger and open up more to citizens.

Director,

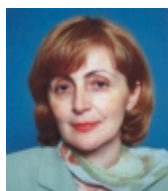
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President
Nikola Popovski



Vice-President
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Parliamentary Groups



Jani Makraduli
SDSM Coordinator



Marjan Gjorcev
VMRO-DPMNE
Coordinator



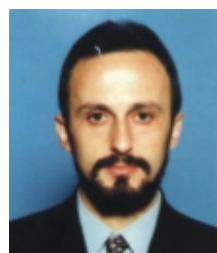
Hysni Shaqiri
DUI Coordinator



Stojan Andov
LP Coordinator



Andrej Zernovski
LDP Coordinator



Zamir Dika
DPA Coordinator

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New MPs attend parliamentary orientation



MPs at the orientation session co-sponsored by Parliament and NDI

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Michael Farnworth, former cabinet minister in the government of British Columbia, Canada, gave the keynote address. Other speakers included Elvis Zutic, NDI's director of parliamentary programs, on the role of MPs and the role of committees. Deputy Secretary General Roksa Georgievska conducted a presentation on the legislative process while Deputy Secretary General Felek Kasami spoke about the parliamentary resources available to MPs.

“As a new MP, all of the topics covered by the training were interesting, especially the law making process and the role of the committees.”

Nevzat Bejta, DUI MP

NDI distributed a manual and resource kit for all 120 new MPs which features techniques and tools for being effective parliamentarians, tips on time management, speech writing, public speaking, meeting management, and problem-solving skills. The kit also includes information on how to work with constituents and provides MPs with practical case study examples and sample letters from MPs to constituents.

Almost all of the MPs attending the session were elected to parliament for the first time in September making this orientation their first formal opportunity to learn about their new roles and responsibilities as legislators and representatives.

MPs about the parliamentary orientation session

“Take me for example, I graduated from the Faculty of Physical Training and had no clue about my role and about laws. At least now I have an idea what lies in front of me and how to deal with it.”



MPs follow a presentation during the Parliamentary orientation seminar

“The whole orientation seminar was interesting because it was a unique opportunity to educate the new members of the Macedonian Assembly on how to increase the level of their work efficiency.”

Tasim Sulejmanovski, SDSM MP

Blagoj Golomeov, LDP MP

Parliamentary delegation visits Belgium and Finland

NDI's language program, established with the support of the Government of Belgium, assists parliament with the implementation of the language provisions of the Constitution and the revised Rules of Procedure.

In January NDI organized a study tour to the parliaments of Belgium and Finland in order to acquaint MPs with parliaments that function in two languages. The delegation included MPs from SDSM, DUI, VMRO-DPMNE, and DPA, along with the Secretary-General of parliament and two parliamentary staff.

Belgium and Finland were chosen because of the very different solutions they have found for the use of language. Belgium has turned into a federal state in



NDI and Parliamentary delegation in Finland

which the two main entities - Dutch-speaking Flanders in the North and French-speaking Wallonia in the South - each have one official language while the central region of Brussels and institutions at the federal level such as the army, parliament, and government agencies, are bilingual. In Belgium, roughly 60 per cent are Dutch-speakers while 40 percent speak French. Finland, on the other hand, remained a centralized, unified state in which people, at all levels, are bilingual even though fewer than six per cent are Swedish-speakers.

Delegation members saw first-hand how the use of two languages is being put into practice in these countries as well as state-of-the-art techniques for translation and reporting in parliament.



Vice president of Parliament, Secretary General and MPs in the European Parliament in Brussels

SDSM and LDP MP's open first constituency office in Skopje



Blagorodna Mingova - Krepieva meets with citizens in the constituency office in Kisela Voda, Skopje

SDSM MPs Blagorodna Mingova Krepieva, Igor Ivanovski, Karolina Ristova Asterud and LDP MP Zoran Sapuric opened a joint constituency office in the Kisela Voda municipal hall to provide a place where citizens with questions, problems and concerns can come and be heard by their MP. The office is open every Monday from 12.00 to 17.00. Citizens can phone ahead and book an appointment during the week with one of the volunteers who are assisting the MPs in running the office. The Mayor of Kisela Voda, Zoran Dimov has donated an office in the municipal hall so MPs can meet with citizens once a week.

The idea of opening such an office, and how to set it up, was presented at NDI's parliamentary orientation session where one of the key topics was the importance of communication between MP's and citizens. Presentations were given on specific techniques to establish and maintain open lines of communication between MP's and voters. The idea of opening a constituency office was strongly encouraged and materials to help operate the office were distributed including casework forms, survey questionnaires and other sample materials to help run an active, effective constituency office. NDI also stressed the importance of publicizing such an office in order to ensure citizens know about its existence and how to make an appointment to meet with their MP.

The office, from the first day it opened, has been a huge success. Between January and April approximately 200 citizens of Kisela Voda have had an opportunity to meet their MP at the constituency office.

“The opening of an office like this is for acclamation, because the citizens have a place where they can turn to with problems.”

Goran Milenkovski - citizen during his first visit to the constituent's office



MPs at a Press Conference announcing the opening of the constituency office

“I got the idea about opening an office from the (NDI) orientation seminar. Everything we heard at the orientation seminar, we are implementing.”

Blagorodna Mingova-Krepieva at the opening of a constituency office by four MPs in Kisela Voda

about any topic, and you will have correct and accurate information at your disposal. If we cannot give you an appropriate answer, we will direct you to the appropriate institution.

Call us at: 779-069 or 779-073, write to us or come to our office in barrack 8, Municipality of Kisela Voda every Monday from 12pm to 5pm.

Give us a chance to justify the trust we received from you, our fellow citizens.

Translation equipment installed in committee rooms

“For the stability of a country, it is important for all the citizens to feel that they belong to the mainstream and that their voice be heard in political life”.

**Canadian Ambassador
Raphael Gerard**



Canadian and Belgian Ambassadors unveil a plaque

“Language is meant to build bridges among the people and this equipment serves at constructing such a bridge”.

**Belgian Ambassador
Edmond De Wilde**



An inauguration ceremony held March 21 marked the installation of simultaneous translation equipment in the committee rooms of the Macedonian parliament. President Nikola Popovski expressed his gratitude, at the gathering of MPs and diplomats, to the governments and to the citizens of Canada and Belgium. The decision to purchase and install the equipment was based on discussions with President Popovski and Secretary General Novakoski who indicated that simultaneous translation equipment was an urgent need for parliament.

With the help of two experts from the

“I would like to express my gratitude for the donations of these two governments who gathered the means from their own citizens.”

**President of
Parliament
Nikola Popovski**

Belgian Senate, an assessment was made of the technical needs for the equipment, a tender put out and a company selected based on three bids. Braehler, a German-based company, was chosen, in part, because it had previously installed similar equipment in Parliament's plenary hall. The project was a joint effort between parliament, NDI and the governments of Canada (which paid for most of the equipment) and Belgium (which is funding the entire NDI language project).



DUI MPs attending constituency outreach seminar organized by NDI

Constituency Outreach Seminar with DUI Parliamentary Group

How to reach out to constituents was the subject of a one day seminar NDI held March 3rd for DUI caucus members at the DUI premises in Tetovo. The seminar focused primarily on opening constituency offices, solving constituents' problems and communications. Twelve of DUI's 16 MPs participated in the session.

Presentations at the seminar gave MPs a clear picture of how to set up and operate a constituency office, how to track constituents' cases, sample questionnaires and other useful ideas to encourage and

“We will continue to cooperate with NDI in order to improve the work of the MPs with the voters.”

**Hysni Shaqiri, DUI
Parliamentary Group
Coordinator**

assist them with opening an office in their electoral districts. Another important aspect of the seminar was the introduction of a



NDI's Elvis Zutic in discussion with Gezim Ostreni, DUI Secretary General

constituency newsletter as a powerful communication tool for keeping citizens informed about the work of MPs and parliament and getting their feedback about issues of concern to them.

Talat Xhaferi said that the seminar helped him better define his relations with constituents. Abdylaqim Ademi said he is looking forward to opening a constituency office while Gëzim Ostreni said it helped him realize the importance of implementing outreach techniques such as conducting public meetings.



Intern orientation held in Parliament for first time



Interns follow presentations during orientation in parliament

A two-day seminar co-sponsored by parliament and NDI, held in parliament for the first time since the program's inception in 1999, provided this year's class of 31 new interns with information about the structure and role of parliament and parliamentary committees, a presentation on the role of caucuses in modern parliaments, the rules of procedure, fundamentals of legislative procedures, research techniques and their roles and responsibilities as interns.

Parliamentary staff including Secretary General Aleksandar Novakoski, chief of working bodies sector Sandre Nonkulovski and National Counselor Snezana Guseva provided their expertise from parliament along with NDI's parliamentary program director Elvis Zutic and internship coordinator Emil Atanasovski.

Interns busy with parliamentary caucuses and committees



Jani Makraduli, SDSM parliamentary group coordinator, gives instructions to interns

After detailed consultations with parliament throughout December, the 31 interns received their assignments and began work in parliament in January with six parliamentary caucuses SDSM, LDP, DUI, VMRO-DPMNE, LP and DPA – committees and the IT sector.

During the 20 hours per week they spend in parliament the interns assist with a wide range of functions including legislative drafting, comparative analysis of other jurisdictions, media monitoring and summaries, preparation of reports, MP questions and speaking notes for the Assembly.



Hysni Shaqiri, DUI parliamentary group coordinator, reviews intern activities

Graduation ceremony honors

1999 - 2002

interns

“For those of you who are graduating tonight, I hope that whatever experience and skills you gained from your time as interns in parliament will inspire you to continue your commitment to strengthen our public institutions.



NDI Director Sheila Fruman, USAID Mission Director Dick Goldman and Secretary General of Parliament Aleksander Novakoski present certificates at intern graduation

To the new class of interns, let me welcome you to Parliament and encourage you to take full advantage of the opportunity you have been given. I know that I and my colleagues are looking forward to the benefit of your intellectual capacity, your enthusiasm, and your fresh ideas.”

Agron Buxhaku, Vice-President of Parliament

Fifty-six former interns from 1999 - 2002 were honored at

a graduation ceremony to mark their contribution to the Macedonian Parliament over the past three years. Forty-five former interns attended the graduation ceremony held February 6th at the Skopje Holliday Inn, while relatives and close friends accepted certificates for those who were absent.

Speakers for the evening included Vice President of Parliament Agron Buxhaku who brought greetings from the President of Parliament. USAID Mission Director Dick Goldman presented an overview of USAID in Macedonia and spoke about

some of the current USAID projects in the country.

Aleksandar Novakoski, the Secretary General of Parliament and Mr. Goldman presented graduates with certificates of achievement signed by the Secretary General and Sheila Fruman, NDI Director in Macedonia, to acknowledge their work in parliament.

Lidija Stojkova Zafirovska, NDI's internship coordinator from 1999-2002, was awarded a plaque commemorating her outstanding contribution to the program.

Everything you always wanted to know about the interns

320 applicants for the 2003 internship program

110 interviews conducted during the selection process

60 amendments have been drafted by the interns

56 graduates since 1999

31 interns selected for the current program

25 comparative analyses and research papers prepared this year

21 interns working for 6 parliamentary caucuses

17 interns are male

14 interns are female

11 languages are spoken by the interns

10 interns work in 12 committees and 2 sectors

10 speeches written by the interns for MPs

8 proposal laws drafted by the interns

6 parliamentary caucuses have interns

The enthusiasm, initiative and will of the interns who are working in parliament cannot be expressed in numbers.

Read our next issue

CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN NON- GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND PARLIAMENT



Co-sponsored by NDI and
Citizens Association "MOST"



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For more information on NDI's programs and publications, please visit our website at www.ndi.org or contact us at ndi@ndi.org.mk



Main Office

Dame Gruev 7
1000 Skopje, Macedonia
Tel.: +389 2 131 177
Fax.: +389 2 128 333

Language Program

Dame Gruev 1/2/8
1000 Skopje, Macedonia
Tel.: +389 2 296 578
Fax.: +389 2 120 101

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