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**MONTENEGRO**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Internships Spark Interest in Parliament

### Students learn about their legislature's inner workings



Photo: CDT

Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro, Ranko Krivokapic, congratulates graduating interns at the Parliament building in Podgorica.

***Internships are designed to maximize benefits for both students and parliament.***

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To become eligible for European Union membership and continue on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration, Montenegro's Parliament must consider much legislation in the coming years. Yet the parliament has limited personnel and resources, and although the University of Montenegro's law school is growing, graduates are hesitant to work in the legislature. This is partly because they are unfamiliar with the body, there is considerable political polarization in parliament, and salaries are low.

To stimulate interest in public service, USAID launched an internship program through the local Center for Democratic Transition. The program selects outstanding students from the law, economics, and electrotechnical departments of the University of Montenegro to work with parliamentary staff to better understand the legislature's roles and responsibilities.

Students help parliamentary staff in research, analysis, drafting legislation, and other work critical to policy-making. Interns are assigned to the committees or departments that will best utilize and develop their skills, maximizing the benefits for both participants and parliament. In the program's third year, an intern working in the parliament's information technology department designed a program to record plenary sessions in MP3 format. The program led to quicker responses to requests for archived data and released overburdened parliamentary staff to work on other projects. Other interns conducted research on capital markets, international trade, courts, and minority rights.

The benefits have extended beyond parliament. Montenegro University's Professor Bozo Mihailovic asked a former intern, Drazen Vlahovic, to coordinate a project in his political marketing course. Vlahovic helped fellow students find useful resources, including some he used during his internship. Mihailovic was so impressed with the results that he is now working to publish the students' essays in a textbook.

The internship program is generating interest. A record number of candidates applied for internships in 2005, with eight applications per opening. Heightened interest has produced a candidate class with impressive research experience and outstanding professional skills, ensuring that these students will be well equipped to successfully face Montenegro's development challenges.