

TRANSCRIPTS OF PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS NOW AVAILABLE TO ALL CITIZENS

Five civil society organizations on Wednesday, June 6, launched an Open Parliament Initiative aimed at monitoring the work of members of Parliament and increasing the transparency of the National Assembly. The main mechanism for monitoring the MPs' work is an online platform otvoreniparlament.rs that will post transcripts of all parliamentary sessions. For the first time, citizens have an easily accessible, consolidated archive of more than 67,000 MPs' speeches from all of 98 parliamentary sessions during the past four years.

USAID Mission Director Susan K. Fritz said this initiative makes a significant contribution to the development of democracy in Serbia because it allows citizens to participate in the political life of their community. "Easily accessible information about the work of Parliament will encourage citizens to hold their newly elected representatives accountable. That will result in an increase of public trust in state institutions," Fritz said.

UK Ambassador to Serbia Michael Davenport said that initiatives like this become important especially in the time of crisis, when as taxpayers we want to be sure that the money the government has at its disposal is spent in the best possible way. "In the countries on their way to the EU accession, the Parliaments are facing enormous job, and the citizens are their most important allies. Openness and transparency are not only important for the quality of work but for the increased credibility of the institutions and trust of citizens in them", said ambassador Davenport.

Civil society organizations monitor the government and the availability of stenographic records enables efficient monitoring of important institutions such as Parliament, said the Open Parliament project coordinator Vukosava Crnjanski.

The Open Parliament Initiative is supported by Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection Rodoljub Sabic.

The website otvoreniparlament.rs will make recommendations for improving the transparency of Parliament and improving communication between citizens and their representatives. It will also publish studies and research on the National Assembly's work.

The first study conducted by the Open Parliament Project found that in each parliamentary session since 1990, only one-third the municipalities and cities in Serbia had its representative present. Thirteen municipalities have never had its representative in Parliament. The study "Representation



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of municipalities and cities in the Serbian Parliament since 1990 until 2012” found that there is a correlation between parliamentary representation and demographic trends.

The Open Parliament Project is implemented by a coalition of five civil society organizations: the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), The Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), the Development Initiative Group (SeConS), the National Coalition for Decentralization (NCD), and the Zajecar Initiative (ZI). Implementation of the project is financially supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Institute for Sustainable Communities, the British Embassy in Belgrade, and National Endowment for Democracy.

