

**OPEN  
PARLIAMENT OF  
BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA**

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF  
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## PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Since May 2005, the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina has offered citizens the opportunity to visit the political heart of BiH as part of a program that provides our guests insight into the Parliamentary Assembly's day-to-day operations as well as a tour that highlights the parliamentary premises. Moreover, participants meet with Members of Parliament and can engage them in discussions on Parliament's many roles and responsibilities. We have found support to bring this project to light from outside sources, especially the OSCE Mission to BiH who helped fund this project, as well as the Youth Information Agency who provided additional support in identifying interested citizens.

The first visit took place on 25 May 2005 with students from the "Vaso Pelagić" high school in Brčko. They were soon followed by their peers from Istočno Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Zenica, Ljubuški, Sanski Most, Tomislavgrad and other cities and towns from all over the country. By September 2006 around 2,000 guests from across Bosnia and Herzegovina had visited Parliament through this **Open Parliament** initiative. In addition to high school and university students, we also received a wide variety

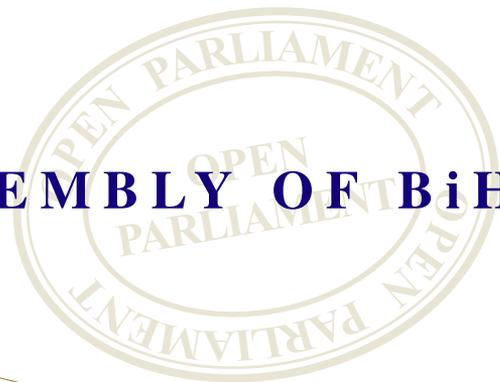
of guests including workers, farmers and NGOs. With growing public interest for the "Open Parliament" project, BHTV and Radio Free Europe joined the project. They designed one hour talk shows in which students could address their elected Representatives and ask questions on issues most important to them and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Media involvement in the project did not end there, as the original idea was to create 'Open Doors to an **Open Parliament**'. However, these TV shows increased public awareness of the initiative and thus the number of citizens who were interested in meeting and addressing their Representatives - on and off camera.

This booklet was written for all those interested in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and to welcome all citizens to visit the Parliament by saying:

***Welcome to Your Open Parliament!***

# PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF BiH



The Parliamentary Assembly is the highest legislative body of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of two houses: The House of Peoples and the House of Representatives.

**THE HOUSE OF PEOPLES** has 15 members (Delegates), two thirds of whom are from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (five Bosniak and five Croat), while one third are from the Republic of Srpska (five Serb Delegates).

The House of Peoples elects one Bosniak, one Croat and one Serb from among its Delegates, to serve as the Speaker and the First and Second Deputy to the Speaker. Once every eight months the position of the Speaker rotates among those three.

In the House of Peoples, any proposed decision can be declared contrary to the vital national interest of Bosniaks, Croats or Serbs. The Representatives of the House of Peoples establish clubs according to the constituent peoples (a Bosniak club, a Croat club and Serb Club).

# THE HOUSE OF PEOPLES



**THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES** of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina has 42 members (Representatives), two thirds of whom are elected from the territory of the Federation BiH, while one third are elected from the territory of the Republic of Srpska.

The House of Representatives (House) also elects one Bosniak, one Croat and one Serb from among its members to serve as the Speaker as well as the First and Second Deputy to the Speaker. Once every eight months the Speaker's position rotates among the three, who together form the Collegium of the House.

Members of the House form caucuses with others from their respective political parties, but can also form caucuses with Representatives from different political parties.

# THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



# WHAT DOES THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF BiH DO AND HOW DO THEY ACCOMPLISH THEIR TASKS?

The Parliamentary Assembly of BiH passes laws, approves the budget and decides on the sources of financing for the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Parliamentary Assembly of BiH also ratifies international treaties and decides on other issues within its constitutional competencies as well as in those areas that were transferred to it through agreements with the entities.

The Houses of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH perform legislative, informative and control activities. They both decide on their internal organization and operation while the House of Representatives alone confirms the nomination of the BiH Council of Ministers' Chair and its Ministers.

## DECISION MAKING

All legislative decisions have to be adopted by both houses. Decisions are made by the majority of those Members of Parliament present and voting. However, this majority needs to include at least one third of votes of Delegates or Representatives from each entity.

If the majority does not include at least one third of votes from either entity, the Speaker and his/her deputies will attempt to reach a consensus within three days. If this attempt fails, a decision will be made by the majority of present and voting Members of Parliament, provided that not more than two thirds of the Delegates or Representatives from each entity oppose this decision.



A proposed decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH can be declared destructive to the vital interests of Bosniak, Croat, or Serb peoples by a majority of votes by Bosniak, Croat or Serb Delegates of the House of Peoples. When the vital interest rule is invoked, a majority of Bosniak, Croat or Serb delegates can require the Speaker of the House of Peoples to immediately convene a joint commission consisting of three members from the three constituent people, aiming to resolve the issue. If this commission fails to resolve the issue within five days, the case is transferred to the Constitutional Court of BiH, which will review the matter under emergency procedure.



# LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE

**D**raft laws can be submitted by any Delegate, Representative, Committee, Joint Committee, as well as the Presidency and the BiH Council of Ministers.

The Constitutional-Legal Committee reviews draft laws and other acts, verifying their compliance with the Constitution and the legal system of BiH.

The assigned Committee reviews the draft laws and may convene public hearings to give interested organizations, experts and citizens the opportunity to state their opinion on the content and effect of the draft law under consideration. The Committee then reports to the House, presenting a general statement on the necessity for the adoption of the draft law and the principles it is based on, as well as the amendments adopted by the Committee. An assigned rapporteur presents the Committees' views in a plenary session of the House.





## LEGISLATIVE



## PROCEDURE

Representatives, Delegates and Caucuses can propose changes to amendments that were adopted by the Committee, or re-submit amendments that were rejected by the Committee no later than 24 hours prior to the beginning of the plenary session.

### FIRST READING

The deliberation of draft laws in the plenary session of the House starts with a first reading regarding a draft law's necessity in principle and whether it is in compliance with the Constitution and the overall legal system. This first debate is based on the opinions of the Constitutional-Legal Committee and the assigned Committee who prepare a general assessment of the draft law before the plenary session.

### SECOND READING

The second reading takes place in a plenary session and is a more detailed discussion of the draft law and proposed amendments to the draft. Following the debate, Members of the House vote on the proposed amendments

# WORK OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES - HOUSE OF PEOPLES COMMITTEES

## THE HOUSE OF PEOPLES

Committees of the House of Peoples prepare opinions, submit proposals and reports as well as conduct public consultations and other duties stipulated by the Rules of Procedure. Although the competence to adopt laws has to remain with the House of Peoples, it may transfer competence for other issues to the Committees.

A Committee of the House of Peoples consists of no more than six members. The allocation of seats in the Committees must reflect the relative size of the clubs in the House of Peoples. Two-thirds of the Committee Members must be from the Federation of BiH and one-third from the Republika Srpska.

The Committees will elect their Committee Chairperson as well as the First and Second Deputy Chairpersons from amongst their members. They will be elected from the three constituent peoples.

*The House of Peoples has  
the following Committees:*

***Constitutional-Legal Committee;  
Foreign Affairs and Trade Policy, Customs, Transport and Communications Committee;  
Finance and Budget Committee***

The House of Peoples Committees take decisions by a simple majority on the condition that a quorum exists in which all three constituent peoples are represented.



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEES

Committees of the House of Representatives prepare opinions, submit proposals and reports as well as conduct public consultations and other duties stipulated by the Rules of Procedure. Although the competence to adopt laws has to remain with the House, it may transfer competence for other issues to the Committees.

A Committee of the House of Representatives consists of no more than nine members. The allocation of seats in the Committees must reflect the relative size of the caucuses in the House of Representatives. Two-thirds of the Committee Members must be from the Federation of BiH and one-third from the Republika Srpska. The only exception to this rule is made for the Committee for the Preparation of the Election of the BiH Council of Ministers as this Committee consists of one representative from each political party, coalition or independent candidate elected to the House of Representatives. The Committees will elect their Committee Chairperson and the First and Second Deputy Chairpersons from amongst their members. They will be elected from the three constituent peoples.

The House of Peoples Committees take decisions by a simple majority on the condition that a quorum exists in which all three constituent peoples are represented.



*The House of Representatives has the following Committees:*

- Constitutional-Legal Committee;*
- Foreign Affairs Committee;*
- Foreign Trade and Customs Committee;*
- Finance and Budget Committee;*
- Transport and Communications Committee;*
- Gender Equality Committee*
- Committee for the Preparation of Election of the BiH Council of Ministers*



## JOINT COMMITTEES:

Joint Committees prepare opinions, submit proposals and reports to both Houses as well as conduct public consultations and other duties as stipulated by both Houses' Rules of Procedure. Although the competence to adopt laws has to remain with the Houses, they may transfer other competences to the Committees.

A Joint Committee has twelve Members of whom six Members are elected from the House of Peoples and six Members from the House of Representatives. Additionally, two-thirds of the Joint Committee Members need to be from the Federation of BiH and one-third from the Republika Srpska. The Joint Committees elect their Joint Committee Chairperson and the First and Second Deputy Chairpersons from amongst their members. They are elected from the three constituent peoples.

A Joint Committee takes decisions by simple majority under the condition that at least one-third of its members are Members of each House and at least one Member from each constituent people is present.

### *The Joint Committees are:*

***Joint Committee on Defence and Security of BiH;***

***Joint Security and Intelligence Committee on Supervision of the work of Intelligence and Security Agency of BiH;***

***Joint Committee on Economic Reform and Development;***

***Joint Committee on European Integration;***

***Joint Committee on Administrative Affairs;***

***Joint Committee on Human Rights, Rights of Children, Youth, Immigration, Refugees, Asylum and Ethics.***

# THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF BiH - THE BUILDING ITSELF

The building that originally housed the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was designed from 1975 to 1977. The designer was Professor Juraj Najthart and during the design and implementation phases the project was managed by Professor Hamdija Salihović and his associates.

The building, with a total office space of approximately 25,000 m<sup>2</sup>, was finished in 1980, when it began its life as the house for the Assembly and Ministries of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the time of its completion, the lower of the two newly built buildings at Marijn dvor was regarded as one of the most modern buildings of state administration. Apart from numerous offices, the Assembly building also housed the Grand Hall with 524 seats as well as smaller conference halls on the second and fourth floors.

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina the building suffered significant damage. Restoration work took place almost continually between 1996 and 2006, funded mainly by the EU and other foreign donors.

Apart from the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, the Joint Institutions Building of Bosnia and Herzegovina houses Ministries, Directorates and other administrative organisations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# PARLIAMENTARY HALLS

The Grand Hall and the White Hall are probably the best-known rooms of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. During the war, the two halls were largely damaged but, thanks to the assistance of the European Union and the Kingdom of Norway, they are again in use today.

## WHITE HALL

After 12 years, on 22 March 2004, the White Hall was reopened for a joint plenary session of both Houses of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. Since then, Members of Parliament have had access to improved facilities and current technology, especially the electronic voting system, which enables a more reliable and quicker voting/decision-making process.

The White Hall has a total of 180 seats. Apart from active participants, sessions can be attended by guests such as journalists, pupils, students, representatives of non-governmental organisations and other interested individuals. With the reopening of the White Hall, conditions were created for the implementation of the *Open Parliament* project and for high-quality television recording.



# GRAND HALL



# WHITE HALL



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## GRAND HALL

Thanks to a donation by the Kingdom of Norway, the Grand Hall of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH was reconstructed in 2005. Today, it has a capacity of 659 seats for Members of Parliament and guests and is the second largest Assembly Hall in South-East Europe.

During this first phase of reconstruction, the Grand Hall was adjusted to the requirements of a contemporary multimedia parliamentary and congress centre and is now prepared for the installation of electronic equipment needed for subsequent phases of reconstruction.

Those future reconstruction efforts foresee editing premises being made available to electronic media reporters.

## BiH PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY



## RESEARCH CENTRE

The Research Centre of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH opened in October 2004. It is tasked with offering high-quality, objective, independent, non-partisan and professional research services, analyses and advice to Committees, Speakers and Secretaries of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH.

Particularly important are the services related to Parliament's legislative activities. The Research Centre maintains a database where different legal approaches can be compared and harmonised with European and international standards.

Upon request from Committees, members of the Research Centre also participate in conferences, roundtables, presentations as well as public debates and actively co-operate with domestic and international organisations and institutions.

The library offers resources not only to Members of Parliament and the parliamentary staff, but also to interested guests of the Parliamentary Assembly. The library offers relevant books, reference literature, periodicals, magazines, records and archived documents to the interested reader and researcher. The facilities also include a reading room where the requested literature can be studied and where seven computer units allow for additional internet research and access to professional databases.

A special section of the library covers official publications, reference publications of other parliaments as well as records and archived documents from the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH.



## SECRETARIAT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF BiH

The Secretariat performs professional, administrative, technical and other assignments for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. It monitors the implementation of the Rules of Procedure of both Houses and initiates amendments to these Rules. It prepares and reviews working plans and agendas for both Houses as well as the Committees through the length of the entire parliamentary process.

Another activity of the Secretariat is to prepare, convene and monitor the sessions of both Houses and working bodies and to provide advice regarding the consideration of draft laws submitted to the Parliament when determining compliance with the Constitution and the overall legal system.

The work of the Secretariat is co-ordinated by the Collegium of the Secretariat which consists of the Secretary of the Common Services, the Secretary of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the House of Peoples.

*The Secretariat of the  
Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia  
and Herzegovina is comprised of:*

*Expert Service of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH  
Expert Service of the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH  
Common Services of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH*



## TRANSPARENCY

The work of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina is made transparent by way of regular, direct and thorough information disclosure regarding the functioning of both Houses of the Parliamentary Assembly.

[www.parlament.ba](http://www.parlament.ba)

You can find detailed information about the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina on our website: [www.parlament.ba](http://www.parlament.ba). This website is one of the most comprehensive internet presentations in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the content is available in the official three languages and the two scripts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The permanent content is also available in English.

## Freedom of Access to Information in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH

The Parliamentary Assembly of BiH values any and all information that increases the accountability of public authorities. Under the Law on Freedom of Access to Information in BiH, everyone is entitled to access information to the greatest extent possible and the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH is obliged to make that requested information available to the public.

The Parliamentary Assembly of BiH responds fully and in a timely fashion to all requests received and notifies the Office of the Ombudsman in BiH thereof on a regular basis.

For questions regarding access to information of the BiH PA, please contact the Public Relations Sector of the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, or find information and guidelines on our website: [www.parlament.ba](http://www.parlament.ba).



## OPEN PARLIAMENT

The *Open Parliament* is a project initiated by the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and is financially supported by the OSCE. The *Open Parliament* team has been joined by the Youth Information Agency which helps to prepare and arrange visits to the Parliament through its BiH-wide network.



*Open Parliament* is the first project in Bosnia and Herzegovina that introduced the work of a state institution to the general public through organised group visits. The program has been designed to provide information to visitors about legislative and parliamentary procedures as well as arrange for meetings and discussions with Members of the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. With Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Radio Free Europe joining the project, visitors have the opportunity to question their representatives and to receive first-hand answers in front of the TV camera and the BiH public. Undoubtedly, such communication has contributed largely to bringing the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH closer to the citizens. It hopes to remove prejudices and to create a more complete picture of the highest legislative authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Also statistically, the **Open Parliament** project proved to be very popular. In the first fifteen months of its implementation (May 2005 - September 2006), the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH was visited by around 2,000 guests, mostly students but also other citizens from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the number of those who still wish to come and be introduced to the Parliament and its work is much larger.

Within the project, 26 television shows have been recorded where citizens and politicians discussed the economic development of BiH, the visa regime, problems of the labour market, health insurance, education, divided cities, living standards, freedom of movement, youth involvement in elections, the future of agriculture in BiH, national holidays and symbols, BiH's road to Europe, state law on sports and many other topics.



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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## PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



**YOU WISH TO VISIT  
THE PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSEMBLY OF BIH?**

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