

PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS INDEX

SERBIA & REGION

January 2016



British Embassy
Belgrade

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1. INTRODUCTION

*Democracy is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs; it therefore requires the existence of representative institutions at all levels and, in particular, a parliament in which all components of society are represented and which has the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action“.*¹ (the Universal Declaration on Democracy, Article 11)

Institutional openness is one of crucial democratic values. It is founded on the citizens' rights to together with all interested parties be informed about the work and all process of institutions, and also to actively participate in decision-making processes and creation of policies which affect the quality of life in a society.

A parliament, one of the three pillars of a functional democracy, is the supreme representative body. As the central institution of a democracy, parliament expresses the will of the people and searches for answers to their needs. As a representative institution, parliament has a unique responsibility to mediate all confronted interests and expectations of different groups and communities through a democratic dialogue and compromise. As the main legislative body, parliament is tasked with adjusting laws to the needs of society and circumstances, which are changing rapidly.

It is why parliamentary openness is one of important prerequisites in establishing a strong and stable democracy as it guarantees inclusive civic participation and a free civil society.

Democratic parliaments should ensure adequate representation, they should be transparent, efficient and accountable to citizens. The possibility for citizens to monitor and oversee parliamentary work represents a strong accountability mechanism and encouragement for producing better results².

Survey titled “***Parliamentary Openness Index in Serbia and region***” aims to determine parliamentary openness index in Serbia and the countries in the region. The study, conducted for a second straight year, also aims to help the parliaments in Serbia and the region to improve their work and to open up their parliaments by providing concrete recommendations.

¹ The Universal Declaration on Democracy, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Article 11, <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/161-dem.htm>, accessed November 25, 2015.

² *Parliamentary openness enables citizens to be informed about parliamentary work, fosters civic engagement in legislative processes, empowers citizens to influence the work of MPs, for to make them discharge their duties with greater accountability and represent citizen interests*, preamble of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, <http://otvoreniparlament.rs/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Deklaracija-o-otvorenosti-parlamenta.pdf>, accessed on November 25, 2015.

The research surveyed the application of parliamentary openness criteria, stipulated under the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*.³ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness is a call to national parliaments, and sub-national and transnational legislative bodies, by civil society parliamentary monitoring organizations, for an increased commitment to openness and to citizen engagement in parliamentary work. The Declaration is intended not only as a call to action, but also as a basis for dialogue between parliaments and civil society organizations to advance government and parliamentary openness and to ensure that this openness leads to greater citizen engagement, more responsive representative institutions, and ultimately, a more democratic society.⁴

For to establish whether parliaments have achieved progress in the domain of their work transparency and openness, the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA), within Open Parliament initiative, conducted a survey on parliamentary openness index in the region for a second straight year. The study, carried out in October 2015, covered the parliaments of *Serbia, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia*.

2. OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP & DECLARATION ON PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS

The research surveyed the parliaments of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania. All the mentioned countries have joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP), a multilateral initiative seeking to provide support to governments to promote transparency and cooperation with civil society organizations, fight corruption and harness new technologies. By accessing the initiative, the participating countries committed to honoring the principles of transparency, openness and accountability.

Also, the parliaments of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania are active within a special Open Government Partnership working group, called Legislative Openness Working Group.

While some countries have made OGP action plan commitments to improve public consultation in legislative or regulatory action, legislative engagement has been underemphasized in the action plans of many OGP member countries. It is why the objectives of this Working Group is to provide sharing of best practices and experiences between governments, parliaments, civil societies and international institutions for to advance legislative openness.

One of the basic documents the Working Group relies on is the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness. In September 2012, a network of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations (PMOs) adopted the Declaration, which is now supported by more than 160 organizations from 82 countries. The Declaration has contributed to an improved quality of debate between the civil society and parliaments on opening up

³ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, <http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/deklaracija-o-otvorenosti-parlamenta/>, accessed on November 20, 2015.

⁴ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, <http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/deklaracija-o-otvorenosti-parlamenta/>

parliamentary information and an enhanced cooperation between the civil society and parliaments in a large number of countries.

Parliaments across the globe have been adopting the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness thereby univocally expressing their commitment to the principles of institutional transparency and openness.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first research "[Parliamentary Openness in Serbia and region](#)" was carried out in October 2014. The report was composed after analyzing three sets of criteria divided into 58 indicators corresponding to the principles stipulated under the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*.⁵ According to the 2014 study, the Parliament of Montenegro had greatest openness index in the region - it fulfilled the largest number of indicators, 44, of a total of 58, or 76% openness criteria fulfillment. The second ranked was the Serbian parliament with 42 fulfilled indicators, or 72%. The Croatian Parliament and the Parliament of Albania fulfilled 40 openness indicators, or 69%, followed by the parliaments of Macedonia and Slovenia, which both met 36 indicators, or 62%. The poorest result by openness indicators fulfillment was registered with the Bosnia and Herzegovina parliament, with 35 indicators met, or 60%.

Compared with the previous research, three sets of categories were additionally upgraded and further divided for to ensure a considerably more detailed review of parliamentary openness index. Considering this, it is not methodologically correct to compare the level of fulfillment of indicators for 2015 in relation to 2014.

In 2015, parliamentary openness index in the region was surveyed by 123 indicators split into three categories:

- ✓ *Transparency of parliamentary information*
- ✓ *Promoting a culture of parliamentary openness*
- ✓ *Access to parliamentary information*

Parliamentary openness was measured based on the existence, that is, non-existence of indicators on parliaments' official websites and was not accounted for under the qualitative part of the existence of indicators.

The first category relates to ensuring **transparency of parliamentary information**. Transparency of parliamentary information means the adoption of policies ensuring proactive publication of parliamentary information and periodical reviews of these policies to take advantage of evolving good practices.⁶ In the study, this category contains **72 indicators**, relating to publication of information about parliament's roles

⁵ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness aims to establish a framework for a dialogue between parliaments and civil society organizations on advancing parliamentary and government openness, and also to ensure that this openness leads to greater citizen engagement, more responsive representative institutions and a more democratic society.

⁶ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, <http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/deklaracija-otvorenosti-parlamenta/>, accessed on November 20, 2015.

and functions, internal administrative rules and procedures, document defining these relations, basic budget data, detailed MPs' data, their assets, information on plenary sessions, committee sessions, and documents generated from their work.

The second category focuses on **promoting a culture of parliamentary openness**. Parliamentary openness means that parliamentary information belongs to the public.⁷ To enable a culture of parliamentary openness, parliament must enact measures to ensure inclusive participation of citizens and civil society organizations. Also, parliament shall work collaboratively with the civil society and citizens to ensure that parliamentary information is complete, accurate and timely. In the report, this category contains **30 indicators** referring to parliamentary information openness, offices for public relations, civic education, and cooperation with the civil sector, the existence of Constituency offices, and parliamentary activities on social networks to foster direct communication with citizens.

The third category in the study is **access to parliamentary information, containing 21 indicators**. Access to information means that parliament shall ensure that information is broadly accessible to all citizens on a non-discriminatory basis through multiple channels, including first-person observation, print media, radio and live and on-demand broadcasts and streaming. Physical access to parliament shall be provided to all citizens, subject to space and security limitations, with clearly defined and publically available policies for ensuring access by media and observers. Parliamentary information must also be available free of charge, in multiple national and working languages, and through tools, such as plain language summaries, that help ensure that parliamentary information is understandable to a broad range of citizens.⁸

Sources of data obtained

The study was conducted by visiting official websites of the parliaments ([the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia](#), [the Croatian Parliament](#), [the Parliament of Montenegro](#), [the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia](#), [the Parliament of Albania](#)), as well as by analyzing documents (Rules of Procedure, Information Booklet, budget, etc.).

Applied research methodology measured the degree of openness of parliaments based on the existence of certain regulations, procedures and mechanisms. Methodology did not include a qualitative measurement such as measurement of the effectiveness of those regulations, procedures and mechanisms.

Considering the work methodology, researchers remain open to work collaboratively and individually with parliaments to upgrade the study by inspecting additional documentation. Recommendations generated based on the survey results should serve to all parliaments to take concrete steps to advance their work transparency and openness.

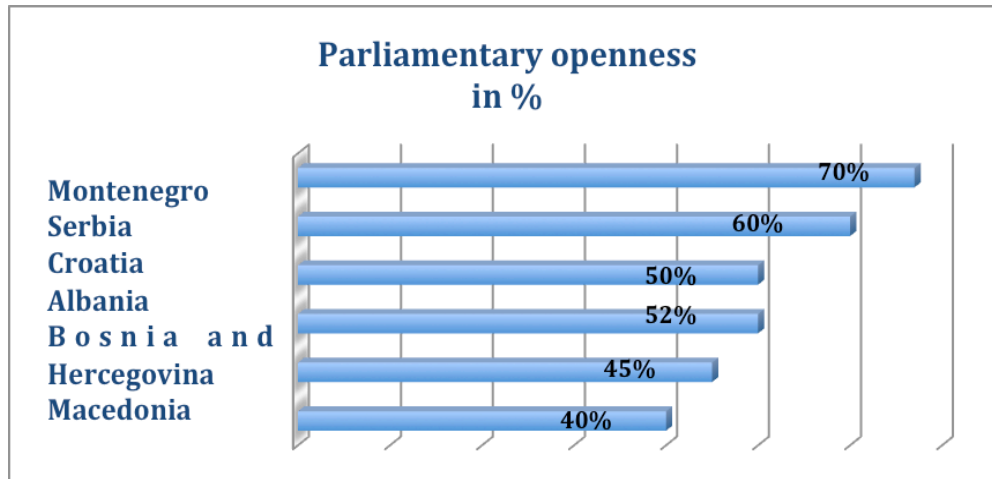
⁷ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, <http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/deklaracija-otvorenosti-parlamenta/>, accessed on November 20, 2015.

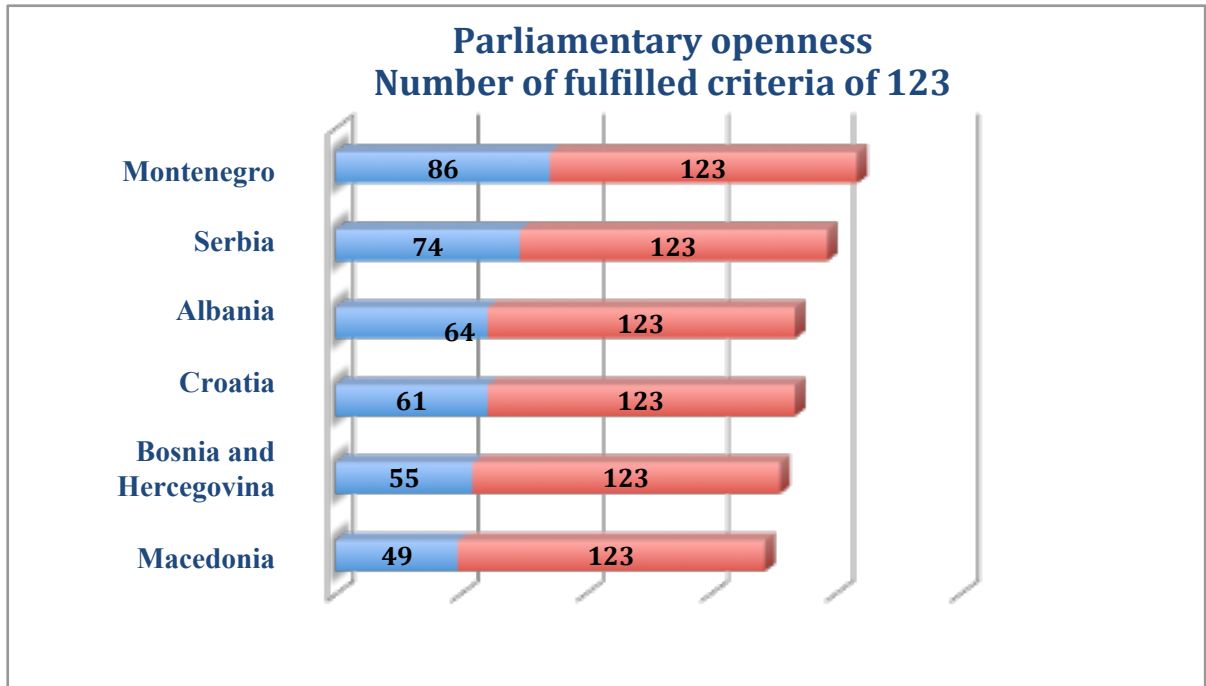
⁸ The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, <http://www.otvoreniparlament.rs/deklaracija-otvorenosti-parlamenta/>, accessed on November 20, 2015.

4. PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS IN REGION

4.1. MAIN FINDINGS

- ✓ The study results, like last year, show that **the Parliament of Montenegro** fulfills the largest number of criteria, with positively assessed **86 indicators** of a total of 123, or 70% openness criteria fulfillment. The second ranked is **the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia** with **74 indicators** met, or 60%, followed by **the Parliament of Albania** with **64 fulfilled indicators, or 52%**. **The Croatian Parliament** met **61 indicators, or 50%**, **the Parliamentary Assembly of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina** has **55 positively assessed indicators, or 45%**, while **the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia** fulfilled **49 indicators, or 40%**.
- ✓ While most of parliaments have considerably improved transparency in terms of access to plenary sessions information, most of data and documents from committee sessions are not available;
- ✓ Documents available on parliaments' official websites which were the subject of the study were not published in machine-readable formats, which is why they cannot be reused or reprocessed. Machine-readable formats are formats that can be processed directly by computers, such as XML, CSV, JSON or Excel.





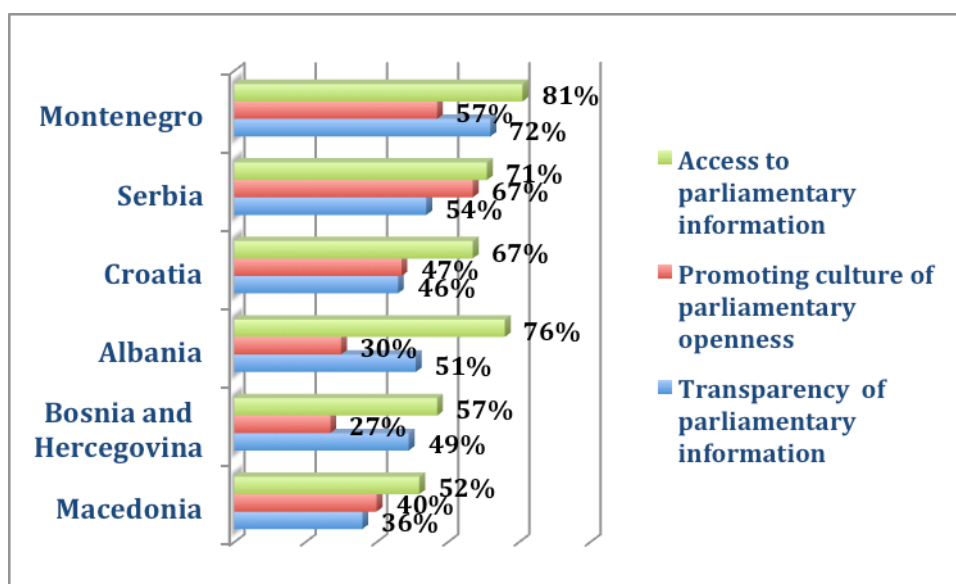
4.2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS IN REGION

Over the past few years, parliaments in the region made considerable steps forward in terms of their work openness and transparency. Certain indicators are met by all parliaments surveyed. Information about parliaments' roles and functions, internal rules and procedures, as well as Rules of Procedure are published by all parliaments. Also, all parliaments publish biographies of MPs and their roles in parliaments, texts of draft legislation as well as texts of adopted laws.

All parliaments have adopted the principle of transparency as one of the most important principles and have also precisely defined when it is possible to exclude the public. Public relations departments and civic education offices have been set up in all parliaments reviewed. Parliaments have enabled media coverage, physical presence of citizens and access to information published on parliaments' websites free of charge. Most of parliaments' websites contain contact forms which citizens can use to contact their representatives. However, in terms of parliamentary openness, what **lacks** is greater transparency of committee sessions data, detailed information about MPs – information about their professional qualifications, professions, formal education and employment record, their assets, as well as more budget transparency. In addition, major shortcomings include the lack of an annual legislative activities agenda with most of parliaments surveyed and non-adoption by most countries of a Lobbying act, which would precisely define rules and procedures for meetings between public officials and interest groups and registered lobbyists. What also lacks is direct communication between MPs and citizens, primarily through the mechanism of Constituency offices. Furthermore, parliaments are not active and do not communicate with citizens via social networks (Facebook and Twitter). None of the parliaments reviewed publishes information in machine-readable formats, that is,

formats which people can see and read, but which machines (computers) cannot reprocess.⁹

Parliamentary openness index by 3 categories



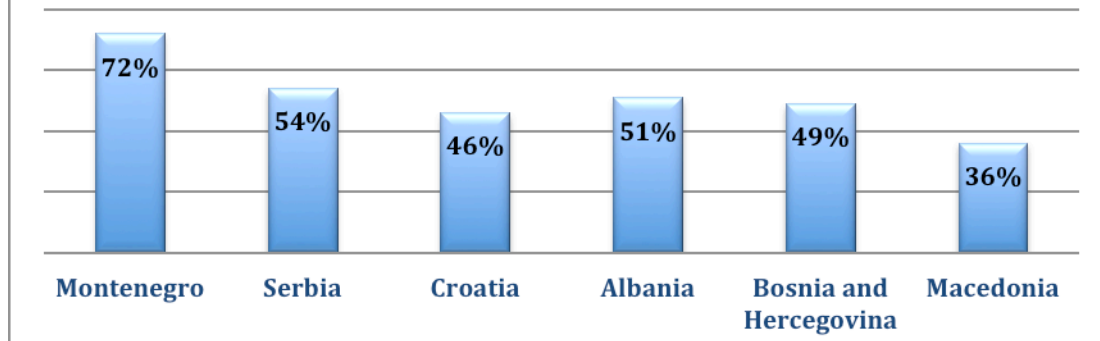
4.3 TRANSPARENCY OF PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

The first category of indicators includes the issue of transparency of parliamentary information and contains **72 indicators** relating to publishing information about parliaments' functions, MPs, parliamentary procedures and rules, all businesses and documents about plenary and committee sessions, and detailed budget and historical information.

The criteria fulfillment rate ranges from **36% to 72%**. This category is topped by **the Parliament of Montenegro with 72% met indicators**, or 52 fulfilled indicators of a total of 72. Second ranked is **the National Assembly of Serbia with 54% positively assessed indicators**, ahead of the **Parliament of Albania with 51% positively assessed indicators** and the **Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina with 49% met indicators**. **The Croatian Parliament meets 46% indicators**, while **the Parliament of Macedonia fulfills 36% indicators** in this category.

⁹ Machine-readable formats are formats that computers can directly process, such as xml, csv, json or excel format.

Fulfillment index in transparency of parliamentary information category



All parliaments publish information about their roles and functions, documents governing internal rules and procedures, Rules of Procedure and basic MPs' biographic data. Also, there is a high criteria fulfillment rate for publishing minutes of plenary sessions, transcripts, video recordings and voting results.

However, on most official websites, it is **not possible** to find detailed budget data - budgets for previous two years, as well as current budget displayed in tabular or textual form. Also, it is not possible to find MPs' attendance records or the number of their addresses at plenary sessions.

Additionally, the study shows that parliaments considerably **lag behind** in terms of publishing information about activities of MPs in parliament committees and documents generated in their work. Furthermore, most of the parliaments surveyed, do not publish texts of amendments to draft legislation nor have the so-called "birth of a law" (a map showing the path a law has to pass to its adoption). Most of the parliaments have not passed a Lobbying act.

TRANSPARENCY OF PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

	Serbia	Montenegro	Croatia	B-H	Macedonia	Albania
Documents on parliament's roles/functions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parliament's organizational chart	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Structure of parliamentary staff	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Documents on internal rules & procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Documents on administrative rules & procedures	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Information Booklet	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Updating Information Booklet	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Parliament's Rules of Procedure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislative work agenda for 2015	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Legislative work report for 2014	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Code of Conduct for MPs	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Code of Conduct availability on parliament's website	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Parliament's 2015 budget	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Parliament's budgets for 2014 & 2013	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
Detailed budget (tabular & textual)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Biannual expenditure report	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Annual expenditure report	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Public procurement plan for 2015	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Invitations and decisions in public procurement procedures	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
Agreements and annexes in public procurement procedures	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
MPs' biographies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MPs' employment records	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
MPs' professional qualifications	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
MPs' formal education	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MPs' professions	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
MPs' roles in parliament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Political party affiliation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Caucus affiliation	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Seats on committees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Membership in informal caucuses	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
MPs' contact number	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
MPs' e-mail	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
MPs' profile on social networks	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
MPs' websites	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Draft legislation proposed by MPs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Amendments	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
MPs' attendance at plenary sessions	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Number of MPs' addresses at plenary sessions	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
MPs' attendance at committee sessions	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Number of MPs' addresses at committee sessions	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Information on Parliament Service staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact numbers of Parliament Service staff	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Expenditures of Parliament Service staff	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
MPs' Asset Declarations	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Updating Asset Declarations	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Data on MPs' income in parliament	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Data on MPs' income in other state institutions	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
MPs' travel expenses	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

Monthly calendar of parliamentary activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advance notice about scheduling plenary sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transcripts of plenary sessions	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Standardized minutes of plenary sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Video recordings of plenary sessions	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Audio recordings of plenary sessions	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Voting results	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Invitations to committee sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transcripts of committee sessions	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Standardized minutes of committee sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Documents deliberated by committees	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Video recordings of committee sessions	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Audio recordings of committee sessions	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Texts of draft legislation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Documents accompanying draft legislation	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Texts of adopted laws	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Amendments	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Documents adopted at plenary sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comments on draft legislation	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Birth of law	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Adopted Lobbying act	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Agenda of meetings of lobbyists and MPs	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

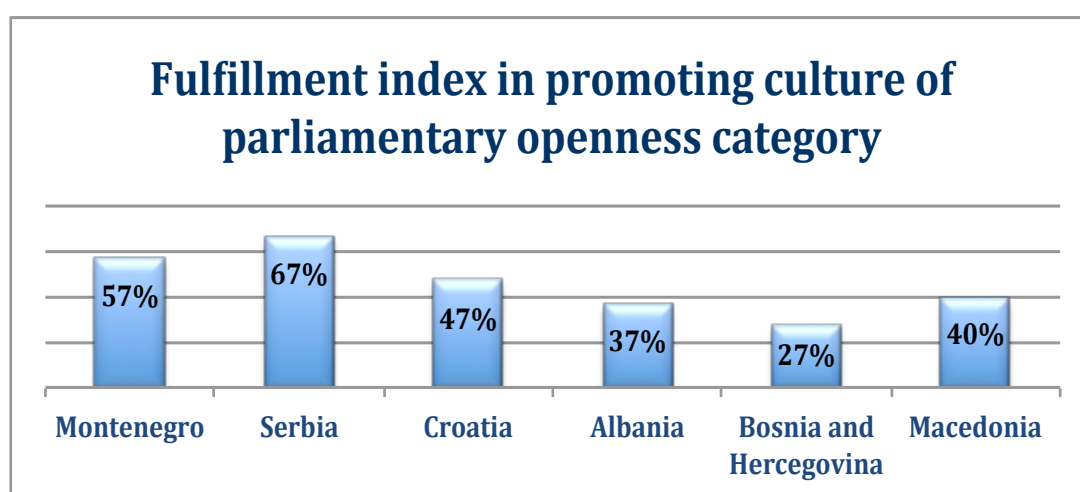
Minutes of meetings of lobbyists and MPs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Documents received from lobbyists aimed at influencing decision-making processes	X	X	X	X	X	X

4.4. PROMOTING A CULTURE OF OPENNESS

The category of promoting a culture of parliamentary openness contains **30 indicators** relating to a degree of public and citizens engagement in parliamentary activities, existence of units for cooperation with the civil sector and civic education, and also to mechanisms of communication between citizens and MPs through Constituency offices and social networks.

Compared with 2014, progress is reported in respect to establishing institutional mechanisms of cooperation between parliament and the civil society. The study shows that the parliaments of Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Albania have developed mechanisms of cooperation with civil society organizations.

This category is topped by **the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia** which fulfills the largest number of indicators, 20 of 30, or **67%**. **The Parliament of Montenegro comes second, with 57%**, with **the Croatian Parliament ranking third, with 47%**. **The Parliament of Macedonia is number four, with 40%**, ahead of **the Albanian Parliament, 37%**, while the **Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina ranks last with 27%**.



All parliaments have endorsed the principle of document openness and have precisely defined rules and procedures when it is possible to exclude the public from

parliamentary activities. All parliaments have in-house units for public relations and civic education.

Aside from the fact that none of the parliaments reviewed adopted the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*, they also **lack** closer cooperation with civil sector representatives through mechanisms of institutional cooperation, in cases where they already exist.

Parliaments with established institutional mechanisms of cooperation with the civil sector should precisely set out rules and procedures for engaging the civil society in their work. Also, apart from the National Assembly of Serbia, only the Parliament of Albania has Constituency offices, which significantly strengthens communication between citizens and their representatives. In the National Assembly of Serbia, Constituency offices are set up at the initiative of MPs and are not financed from the parliament's budget.

In addition, most parliaments **do not** regularly update the civic education section or publish all material used by this unit. Availability of attendance records and the lack of two-way communication on social networks are the common shortcomings of all parliaments in the region.

PROMOTING CULTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS						
	Serbia	Monte negro	Croatia	B-H	Macedo nia	Albani a
Adopted Declaration on Parliamentary Openness	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parliamentary group/committee responsible for openness issues	✓	X	X	X	X	X
Adopted principle of information openness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rules & procedures defining cases when it is possible to exclude public	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MPs' contact form	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
E-petitions	X	X	X	X	X	X

Public relations office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parliament Service contacts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Civic education unit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Civic education unit staff contacts	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Updating information on civic education unit work	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Education unit material	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Explanation on how to use education unit programs	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
Statistics about number of citizens engaged in education unit programs	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Cooperation with civil society section	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Form for achieving this kind of cooperation	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Institutionalized mechanism of cooperation with civil society organizations (CSOs)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Ways in which CSOs can engage	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Cooperation with parliamentary monitoring organizations	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Constituency offices	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Information on Constituency offices in current composition	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Are offices financed from parliament's budget	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

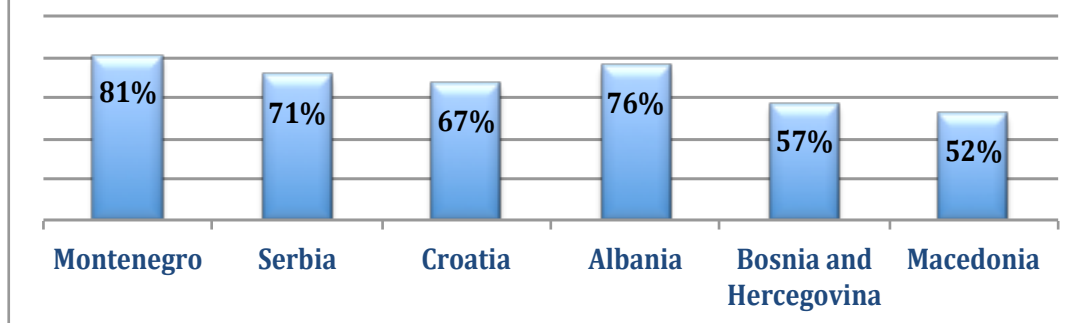
Offices' expenditures	X	X	X	X	X	X
Presentation of parliamentary work on social networks						
Facebook	X	X	✓	X	✓	X
Is it updated regularly	X	X	X	X	✓	X
Twitter	✓	X	X	X	✓	X
Is it updated regularly	X	X	X	X	✓	X
Youtube	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Is it updated regularly	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Terms of use of data published	X	X	X	X	X	X

4.5 ACCESS TO PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

The category on access to parliamentary information contains **21 indicators**, relating to facilitating media coverage of parliamentary activities, physical presence of citizens and their attendance at plenary sessions, access to information, easily searchable and regularly updated websites and possibilities to monitor parliamentary work using new technologies. The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness stipulates that parliaments shall ensure that information is broadly accessible to all citizens on a non-discriminatory basis through multiple channels, including first-person observation, print media, radio and live and on-demand broadcasts and streaming.

Indicators fulfillment rate ranges from 52% to 81%. The leader in this category is **the Parliament of Montenegro** - 17 positively assessed indicators of a total of 21, or **81%**. **The Parliament of Albania** ranks second with **76%**, followed by **the National Assembly of Serbia, 71%**, and **the Croatian Parliament, 67%**. The lowest results were reported by **the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 57%**, and **the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 52%**.

Fulfillment index in access to parliamentary information category



All parliaments surveyed have enabled media coverage of parliamentary activities and have precisely defined procedures when it is possible to exclude media. Also, all parliaments facilitated physical presence of citizens and publish detailed visit guidelines. All information published on parliaments' websites is accessible and available for further use and are published in open formats. Open formats are documents that can be copied and searched, excluding documents such as closed pdf formats and all scanned forms of documents, such as jpg, jpeg and similar. Websites of all parliaments in the region feature easily searchable tools and are available in several languages.

On the other hand, most of parliaments' website **lack** precise guidelines for citizen presence at plenary and committee sessions, that is, instructions on whom and how to apply. Most of parliaments do not have a publically available guidebook for free access to information, or an online database and statistics of applications for free access to information of public importance. Documents which parliaments publish on their official websites are not in machine-readable formats.¹⁰

ACCESS TO PARLIAMENTARY INFORMATION

	Serbia	Monte negro	Croatia	B-H	Macedo nia	Albani a
Media presence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rules & procedures defining cases when it is possible to exclude media	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

¹⁰ Machine-readable formats are formats that computers can directly process, such as xml, csv, json and excel.

Media accreditation procedures	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Citizen visits to parliament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizen visits guidelines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Citizen presence at plenary sessions	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Instructions for citizen presence at plenary sessions	X	X	✓	X	X	✓
Presence at committee sessions (citizens, civil society organizations)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Instructions for presence at committee sessions	X	X	X	X	X	✓
Free access to information published on parliament's website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free access to information guidelines	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓
Documents in parliament's possession	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓
Contacts of staff responsible for free access to information	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Online database of requests and replies regarding free access to information	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Statistics of requests for free access to information	X	✓	X	X	X	X
Publication of documents in open formats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publication of documents in machine-readable formats	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parliament's website available in several languages	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Easily searchable tools	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing regular information to citizens about parliamentary activities	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X
Web content accessible to persons with disabilities	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X

4.6 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- ✓ [Parliaments of Serbia](#), [Montenegro](#), [Croatia](#) and [Albania](#) have developed mechanisms of cooperation with civil society organizations;
- ✓ The Parliament of Montenegro publishes a [legislative activities agenda](#) for the ongoing year;
- ✓ The parliaments of [Montenegro](#), [Croatia](#), and [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) have adopted a Code of Conduct for MPs;
- ✓ The Parliamentary Assembly of [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) publishes detailed biographies of MPs;
- ✓ The Parliament of [Montenegro publishes Asset Declarations](#) of MPs;
- ✓ The Parliament of Montenegro publishes [amendments](#) to draft legislation, as well as “birth of a law”;
- ✓ The parliaments of [Montenegro](#) and [Macedonia](#) have adopted a Lobbying Act;
- ✓ The Parliament of Macedonia is [active on social networks](#);
- ✓ The National Assembly of Serbia on its official website publishes information on [Constituency offices](#), which facilitate direct contacts between citizens and MPs. Constituency offices are set up at initiatives of MPs and are not funded from the parliament’s budget. The Parliament of Albania also has Constituency offices;
- ✓ The Parliament of Albania publishes [detailed guidelines for attending committee sessions for all interested parties](#);

4.7 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS

With the adoption of the **Declaration on Parliamentary Openness**, parliaments in the region would confirm their strategic commitment to honoring the standards and principles set out in the declaration – greater work openness and transparency and citizen engagement in decision-making processes.

In addition, parliaments should:

- *Considering that they are participating countries of the Open Government Partnership Working Group for legislative openness, they should develop action plans for advancing parliamentary transparency and openness and enhance public consultations during legislative procedures. That way, by sharing good practices and experiences between governments, parliaments, civil societies and international institutions, possibilities would be increased for opening up legislative processes.*
- *Publish documents generated during legislative processes in structured formats (xml, xhtml) to upgrade their machine readability and enable remote access and bulk downloading. By ensuring that information is provided in*

machine-readable formats, that is, in formats which machines can reprocess and re-publish, these data will be more accessible to citizens.

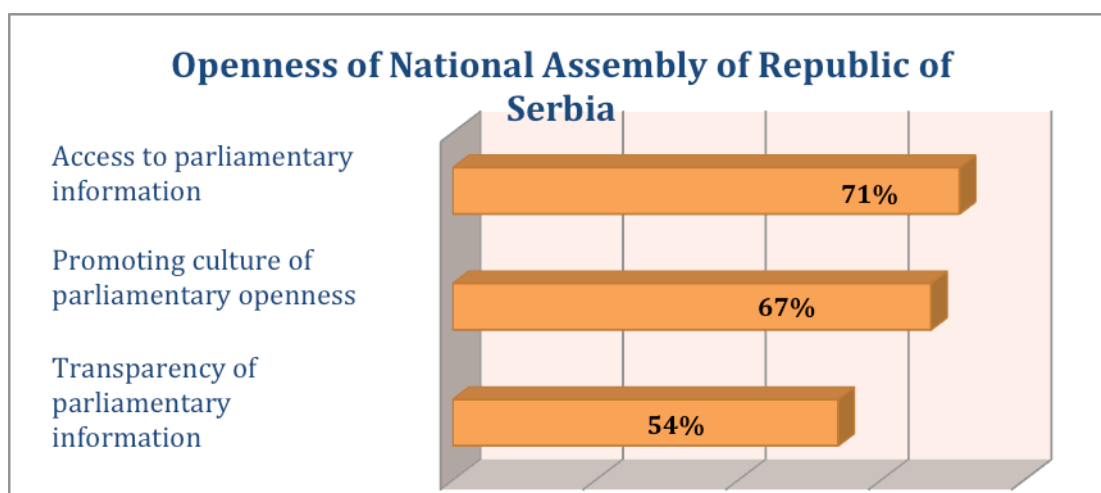
- *Boost collaboration with the civil sector through precisely defined rules and procedures for the engagement of civil society organizations and experts in parliamentary work.*
- *Advance transparency of budget data by publishing detailed data in textual and tabular - machine-readable formats;*
- *Publish detailed MPs' biographies, including data on their professional record and formal education as well as about their other positions in the public sector which could be achieved by fulfilling a standardized questionnaire by MPs upon the formation of every parliament's composition;*
- *On MPs' profiles, publish their parliamentary activities, namely, attendance record and number of addresses at plenary and committee sessions, and also results of voting on documents generated during committee work;*
- *On MPs profile, publish data about their assets and their income in parliament and non-parliamentary income, in machine-readable formats;*
- *Publish data and material generated at committee sessions, in the form of video and audio recordings, complete transcripts and voting results of sessions;*
- *Publish amendments submitted by MPs;*
- *Enable comments on draft legislation via an online mechanism;*
- *Enhance direct communication with citizens by establishing the mechanism of Constituency offices;*
- *Upgrade activities and presence on social networks by opening official profiles and maintaining accounts to foster two-way communication with citizens;*
- *Adopt a Lobbying Act which would define rules for meetings of MPs and representatives of interest groups, which would contribute to improved transparency of decision-making processes.*

5. PARLIAMENTARY OPENNESS IN REGION WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia fulfills 74 of 123 indicators applied, or 60%.

Compared with the research from October 2014, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has significantly improved its openness.¹¹ In the past year, the Serbian parliament set up the important mechanism of cooperation with civil society organizations at the level of an informal parliamentary group, thereby making an important step forward toward establishing an institutionalized model of cooperation. In 2015, two new informal parliamentary groups were established a [Parliamentary Group for Open Parliament](#) and [Parliamentary Energy Policy Forum](#), tasked with advancing increasing civic engagement in parliamentary activities.



In the first category of indicators, **transparency of parliamentary information**, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia fulfills **39 of 72 indicators, or 54%**. Transparency of information about plenary and committee sessions was provided, but not fully.

Available from plenary sessions are minutes of meetings, video recordings, transcripts and voting results. What **lacks** is information about attendance record and activities of MPs at plenary sessions. The parliament does not publish texts of amendments to draft legislation submitted by MPs, or voting results from committee sessions.

¹¹ The report took into account a new methodology applied in the 2015 study. Although the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia fulfilled more criteria expressed in percentage by the 2014 survey, the two methodologies are not comparable as the criteria applied this year were much more detail-oriented than those used in 2014. Nonetheless, the Serbian parliament has achieved considerable progress, particularly in terms of openness.

As regards committee sessions, the Serbian parliament publishes minutes of meetings and video recordings of committee sessions. What **lacks** are transcripts of committee sessions and information about attendance and activities of MPs at those sessions.

These data exist in the internal system of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, e-parliament, which is available to MPs, but not to a broader public.

The Serbian parliament publishes basic data about MPs, their professions, political party affiliation, and posts discharged in the National Assembly, but **does not publish** employment records, information about educational level and formal education of MPs, or contacts and Asset Declarations.

The Serbian parliament is one of very few parliaments in the region to publish data on MPs income in the parliament, which can be viewed in [the Information Booklet](#), and is the only parliament in the region to publish official/business travels expenses of MPs. In addition, the Serbian parliament publishes documents defining its roles/functions, internal and administrative rules and procedures, as well as organizational chart and structure of parliamentary staff.

The Serbian parliament **does not** have in place a legislative activity agenda for the ongoing year, or published budgets for the past two years (the budget can be found under the Law on the budget of the Republic of Serbia, but not in a separate form). Also what lacks is a more comprehensible display of the birth of a law (a map showing the path a law has to pass to its adoption). Furthermore, the Serbian parliament has not yet adopted a Lobbying Act, although its passage has been requested and has been discussed in public for a long time. It has not yet entered the parliament. Also, the Serbian parliament lacks a Code of Conduct for MPs. The working group for composing a Code of Conduct for MPs was set up in mid 2014, but has not yet unveiled a draft document.

In the second category, **promoting a culture of parliamentary openness**, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia fulfills **20 of 30 surveyed indicators, or 60%**.

The Serbian parliament has made a major step forward in the process of establishing an institutional mechanism for cooperation with civil society organizations, by setting up two more informal parliamentary groups - a [Parliamentary Group for Open Parliament](#) and [Parliamentary Energy Policy Forum](#).

In September 2015, MPs, representatives of all parliamentary groups and the National Assembly Service gathered within [Parliamentary Group for Open Parliament](#) in a joint effort to advance parliamentary information transparency and openness and to ensure greater civic engagement in parliamentary activities. This is definitely the biggest progress achieved by the Serbian parliament over the past year.

[Parliamentary Energy Policy Forum](#) is established June 2015. The objective of the Energy Policy Forum is to gather all the key players in the energy sector and enable them to set up adequate communication and exchange of ideas and views on all energy matters.

The parliament's official website features a clearly posted contact form which citizens can use to contact MPs. The Serbian parliament has a civic education unit and a specially set up [communication channel for cooperation with the civil sector](#). This important channel of communication with the civil society was created following consultations of representatives of the civil sector and the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in 2014. On its official website, in the part devoted to the civil sector, the parliament has called on civil society organizations to submit reports about their activities along with a desired form of cooperation for to be able to create a common register of civil society organizations for cooperation with the Serbian parliament.

The Serbian parliament, along with the Albanian parliament, is the only parliament in the region to have a developed mechanism of Constituency offices, which facilitates direct communication between MPs and citizens.¹² Constituency offices are set up at initiative of MPs and are not financed from the parliament's budget. It is why the parliament's official website **does not contain** Constituency offices expenditures.

The Serbian parliament's Rules of Procedure stipulates the principle of information openness and precisely defines when the public can be excluded. The Serbian parliament also has its official Youtube channel, which is maintained regularly. The parliament, though, is not active on social networks - Facebook and Twitter. The parliament has a Twitter account, which was last updated in 2011.

In this category, the criterion **not met** by the Serbian parliament is non-adoption of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, which would confirm its strategic commitment to the principles of openness and transparency. Also, there is no option for citizens to submit e-petitions.

In the third category of criteria, **access to parliamentary information**, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia fulfills **71% of indicators, of 15 of 21**. The Serbian parliament enables media coverage of plenary sessions, citizen visits to the parliament and attendance at plenary sessions.

The criteria **not fulfilled** in this category relate to the lack of precise instructions on the parliament's official website as to whom and how interested citizens or civil society organizations can apply for attending plenary and committee sessions.

The Serbian parliament enables full and free access to information published on its official website. Documents published by the parliament are in an open format.¹³ The official website is available in several languages, it is easily searchable and its content is accessible to persons with disabilities.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia **does not publish** a guideline for free access to information of public importance. The documents published on the

¹² The parliament and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2009 launched a pilot project for opening offices for communication between MPs and citizens at the local level. The first such office opened in Leskovac in 2009.

¹³ Open formats are documents that can be copied and searched, excluding closed pdf formats and scanned formats, such as jpg, jpeg and similar.

parliament's official website are not in machine-readable formats¹⁴, which considerably restricts their reuse and reprocessing.

5.1.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the past period, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has significantly advanced information openness. However, there is still much space for further improvement. Aside from the adoption of the *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness*, the National Assembly should also:

- ✓ *Considering that it is a participating country of the Open Government Partnership Working group for legislative openness, it should develop an action plan for advancing parliamentary information transparency and openness and upgrade public consultations during legislative procedures. That way, by sharing good practices and experiences with other governments, parliaments, civil societies and international institutions, possibilities would increase for opening up legislative procedures;*
- ✓ *Publish parliamentary information as raw data, in machine-readable formats¹⁵, which would enable remote access and bulk downloading, directly or via an application programming interface (API);*
- ✓ *Publish complete MPs' biographies, including information about their employment record, formal education, and other positions held in the public sector, for the purpose of comparison and increase MPs' integrity.. This could be achieved by fulfilling a standardized questioner by MPs upon the formation of every parliament's composition;*
- ✓ *On official MPs' profiles, publish information about their activities at plenary sessions, namely, attendance record and number of addresses at plenary sessions, and amendments submitted to draft legislation, in machine-readable formats;*
- ✓ *Publish regular monthly, biannual and annual statistics about activities of MPs at plenary sessions, in machine-readable formats (tabular display of data);*
- ✓ *Advance committee information transparency, by publishing transcripts of sessions, MPs' attendance records and results of voting at committee sessions, in machine-readable formats: HTML, XML or JSON;*
- ✓ *On MPs' official profiles, regularly publish statistics on attendance and activities of MPs at committee sessions, in machine-readable formats (tabular display of data);*

¹⁴ Machine-readable formats are formats that computers can directly download and reprocess, such as xml, csv, json and excel;

¹⁵ Machine-readable formats are formats that computers can directly download and reprocess, such as xml, csv, json ili and excel;

- ✓ *Publish MPs' Asset Declarations (incomes in parliament and non-parliamentary income) in machine-readable formats (tabular display of data). Information about MPs' assets are available on the Anti-Corruption Agency's website, which is why the first step in meeting this indicator would be to link each MPs' profile to relevant Asset Declaration on the Agency's website;*
- ✓ *Publish the birth of a law - a map showing the path a law has to pass to its adoption;*
- ✓ *Publish amendments to all laws separately, in machine-readable formats, and make them available for search and analysis;*
- ✓ *Adopt a Code of Conduct for MPs, which would set out rules of conduct for MPs and ethical codes which MPs shall honor while discharging their official duties;*
- ✓ *Activate and update regularly profiles on social networks to foster direct communication with citizens;*
- ✓ *Adopt a Lobbying Act, which would define rules for meetings of MPs and representatives of interest groups, which would contribute to improved transparency of decision-making processes.*