



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA



Parlamentsdienste
Services du Parlement
Servizi del Parlamento
Servetschs dal parlament
Parliamentary Services

Information sheet: parliamentary technical expertise

Introduction

The purpose of this information sheet is to set out the possibilities for the various units within the FDFA, in this case the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Human Security Division (HSD) of the Directorate of Political Affairs, to request expertise from the Parliamentary Services (PS) within the context of projects to support national parliaments.

This expertise is made available on the basis of the *Declaration of Intent of 1 February 2016 concerning the procedures for cooperation between the Parliamentary Services and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs on parliamentary technical cooperation*. The declaration of intent has been issued in response to the Swiss Federal Parliament's wish to step up its technical cooperation activities within the framework of a pilot project in operation during the 2015–19 legislature. It enables these activities to be combined with those already deployed by the SDC and the HSD, in particular in response to the needs of countries in the process of democratic transition.

As a pilot project, it does not bring with it any additional human or financial resources either to the PS or the FDFA. The activities must therefore be integrated into existing HSD geographical programmes on conflict prevention and transformation or in the SDC's development projects. The availability of PS expertise is limited by the availability of its staff members when the request is made and will be allocated in line with priorities set out in this information sheet.

1. General principles

The PS makes its staff members available, depending on their availability, for projects supported by the SDC or the HSD within foreign parliaments. PS support is principally available in the form of advisory services and training. The PS are also available to provide advice during the development and assessment phases of projects.

PS expertise is primarily provided:

- for supporting a specific parliament as an institution and/or for processes of legislative and constitutional reform in the recipient country;
- when it is especially relevant for addressing specific challenges at the parliament of a partner country;
- for long-term projects;
- when an SDC programme is implemented by its local office or in contexts where the HSD has developed a range of activities in conflict prevention and promoting democracy that are managed (in general) by a human security adviser;
- where the budget of a geographical programme permits.

2. Areas of PS expertise

The PS possesses expertise in particular in the following fields:

Parliamentary legislative work: method of legislative work, procedure within the chambers, drafting legislation (drafting committee)

Participation of civil society and search for consensus; consultation procedure, hearings, communication channels (petitions, requests, etc.);

Governmental control activities: the work of the control committees (control and finance committees, delegations) and parliamentary as well as administrative control (impact reports);

Budgeting: finance committees, budgetary cycle, financial monitoring;

Committee work: composition, assignment of responsibilities, competency of the chairpersons, work methods, organisation of work, etc.;

Parliamentary law: powers of the parliamentary bodies, status of members (immunity), members' rights to information, prerogatives of the parliamentary speakers, etc.;

Participation in parliamentary foreign policy and diplomacy: powers of the foreign policy committees, delegations and friendship groups;

Parliamentary library: work methods, databases, documentary research;

Communication and public relations: media relations, public relations;

Information technology: parliamentary databases, e-parliament, website;

Minutes of meetings: drafting technique, records system;

Role of parliamentary staff: neutrality, job description;

Parliament building security policy: public access and security requirements;

Multilingualism and minorities legislation: translation, interpretation, status of minorities in parliament.

***N.B.:** A number of questions that arise in many parliaments, e.g. the role of the opposition, occur in Switzerland in very different terms owing to the particularities of the Swiss political system. This can render Switzerland's parliamentary experience less pertinent in other contexts.*

3. Types of PS activity

Missions by PS staff abroad

Short-term missions: generally of one week to a maximum of four weeks in length, and should be planned, if possible, at least six weeks in advance. The PS staff member is paid by the PS for the work done on mission. The costs of the mission (flight, hotel, meals) are covered by the unit within the FDFA responsible for the project.

Long-term missions: missions lasting more than four weeks are considered to be long term and should be planned, in principle, at least three months in advance. The staff member on a long-term mission temporarily suspends their employment with the PS, in the form of unpaid leave, and is employed by the FDFA for the duration of the mission. The costs of the mission (salary, flight, meals, accommodation) are fully covered by the FDFA.

Hosting foreign delegations on study visits

Study visits by foreign delegations may also be considered as a PS activity. However, they should as a rule be part of a longer-term cooperation project. Study delegations of this kind mostly comprise members of parliamentary administrative staff active in that area on which the assistance project is focused. A clear distinction is to be made between study delegations in the field of parliamentary technical cooperation and visits by foreign parliamentary delegations devoted to developing bilateral contact and exchanges with the Swiss Parliament¹. These activities are also to be distinguished from study visits by delegations of ministers or mixed groups from, e.g. civil society, government, academia and parliaments).

Given their nature, study visits organised as part of parliamentary technical cooperation do not have, or only to a limited degree, a protocolar aspect.

Study visits by foreign delegations organised by the HSD and the SDC are planned in close consultation with the PS in order to ensure the latter's availability and that of the Federal Assembly to receive the delegation.

The costs of study visits (travel, hotel, meals, fees of third parties, visits by the authorities, etc.) are fully covered by the unit within the SDC or HSD responsible for the project with the exception of meals hosted by the Federal Assembly or PS.

Hosting staff members of a foreign parliament

In exceptional cases, the PS may host, as part of an ongoing technical cooperation project, an employee of a foreign parliament for an internship lasting some weeks. The PS work closely on the definition of the required profile of the employee to complete the internship. In particular, a good command of one of the Swiss official languages is required.

The PS provide support and guidance for an intern free of charge. All other costs are fully covered by the SDC or HSD unit responsible for the project.

4. Procedure for launching an FDFA-PS joint project

FDFA units that are considering requesting support from the PS are invited to contact the contact persons within the HSD (MOI) and SDC (HCO) in order to confirm the availability of resources. When appropriate, the unit requiring PS support provides a concept note containing:

- information on the current (or planned) project
- information on partners and contact persons
- the aim of PS support
- a schedule of the proposed activities and stages

5. Contact persons

Units planning to collaborate with the PS are asked to contact the contact persons within their division:

Human Security Division: Tatiana Monney, tatiana.monney@eda.admin.ch

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation: Corinne Huser, corinne.huser@eda.admin.ch

The PS are available for any further information or clarification concerning the available expertise:

Alexandre Fuzessery, officer in charge of parliamentary technical cooperation, alexandre.fuezessery@parl.admin.ch

Daniel Zehnder, deputy head of International Affairs & Multilingualism, daniel.zehnder@parl.admin.ch

¹ For visits by parliamentary delegations that are primarily bilateral, political and protocolar in nature, the head of the Parliamentary Services' international relations, Ambassador Claudio Fischer, is responsible.