

USAID RADA Newsletter: June 2016

Work of Verkhovna Rada Comes under Scrutiny at Monthly IPTAC Meeting

Wednesday, May 25, 2016 - 20:30



The overall effectiveness of parliamentary committees and work of MPs of the current convocation were the subject of detailed analysis and discussion at USAID RADA's traditional meeting of International Parliamentary Technical Assistance Coordination held on May 25.

The meeting, titled "Monitoring of transparency and effectiveness. Results of one and a half years work of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine," brought together about 30 people representing international donor organizations/projects, embassies, the VR Secretariat, CSOs, media and other organizations.

There were three rapporteurs, all from the Civil Network OPORA, one of USAID RADA's partners, who presented the results of their research, which was compiled from their own efforts and open sources.

Olena Ayvazovska, OPORA Chairwoman of the Board, spoke about the general indicators on lawmaking activity of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in the said period. She said that the VR could pass laws to make its work more open and transparent and then focused on existing tools that help to make the VR more open and transparent. She noted the <https://rada4you.org/> resource, which OPORA unveiled in the spring of this year. The site enables voters to see the work of their MP. The vast array of data shows, amongst other many indicators, voting behavior and patterns and those MPs who vote against the faction line. In fact, OPORA has developed instruments enabling joint voting by MPs to be tracked, as well as their speeches in Parliament. Ms. Ayvazovska also pointed out the <http://data.rada.gov.ua/open> portal, which contains six groups of data about the Ukrainian Parliament, but noted that "resources are needed to ensure the intellectual part of law-making. Funds need to be raised to pay VR staff higher salaries."

OPORA analyst Anatoliy Bondarchuk looked at indicators on the effectiveness and transparency of parliamentary committees. He said that progress was made under the previous VR Chairman Volodymyr Groisman as more committees began to post information about their meetings. Mr. Bondarchuk noted that there are 34 established indicators but that some committees work better than others do. "MPs often submit draft bills to committees of which they are not a member. This is testimony of the political component of how committees are structured," he said.

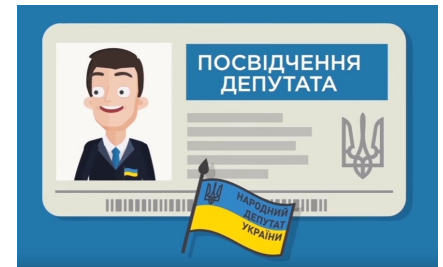
Olena Rybiy, head of the OPORA project under USAID RADA, presented results of monitoring of activities of 105 MPs elected in single-member electoral districts. Performance indicators included the number of visits to local council meetings and frequency of meetings with voters. The conclusion was drawn that almost half of all MPs elected in single-mandate electoral districts do not visit their district at all. She also gave data by oblast on the reception offices of political parties where voters can go to raise issues or concerns with their MP.

Ihor Kohut, USAID RADA CoP and moderator of the event, summed up the strong presentations by saying that "this work is important as earlier the number of draft bills introduced by a lawmaker was an indicator of work."

After a discussion regarding the indicators, participants heard a report by the Open Parliament Initiative from MP Svitlana Zalishchuk. Broadly speaking, its main goal is to assist people in taking part in the legislative process, learn more about the work of MPs and committees and to analyze spending on MPs and the VR itself. Ms. Zalishchuk said progress has been made in the last two years regarding openness of data and that proposals are pending. She noted that modernization in the form of "digitization and wifization" was clear to see and that Q1 of 2016 had seen progress on publication of MPs inquiries and information on the passage of draft bills through the VR.

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- ◆ Youth Gets an Impulse of Change in Kharkiv
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- ◆ VR Hosts High-Ranking Discussion on Legislative/Executive Cooperation Co-Organized by USAID RADA
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- ◆ Forum co-organized by TIU and USAID RADA focuses on progress in Open Government
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- ◆ USAID RADA holds constitutional seminar dedicated to 20th anniversary of Ukrainian Constitution



OPORA Makes Clip on MP's Duties to Voters

Wednesday, May 25, 2016 - 13:30

Every Member of Parliament has an array of duties and a set of levers. Performing the former and working the latter may have a significant effect on the lives of his or her voters. To help citizens figure out actual powers that come with the MP mandate, the Civil Network OPORA has produced, under the USAID RADA Program, a short video clip:

<https://youtu.be/B210DmvsG6k>

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On the negative side, she noted that on May 11 MPs failed to adopt bill #1591 on openness and access to information on the activities of Parliament, its committees and members. The bill also provides for open information on funds spent on MPs in the course of their activities. "Declarations spoken by MPs are one thing, but voting is a completely different thing," she said, commenting on the bill, and added that further progress depends in part on the goodwill of Speaker Andriy Parubiy.

Ihor Kohut remarked that in his view "there is progress on government-parliament work and MPs ethics." He noted the contribution made by the USAID RADA Program, underlying "the successful filming of parliamentary committees, like the recent one in Uzhhorod" on May 21 [that is available here](#) and was streamed online.

Ms. Zalishchuk then fielded questions and the session ended with an update on donor events in coming weeks.

The current convocation of the VR was elected in the fall of 2014.

Youth Gets an Impulse of Change in Kharkiv

Sunday, May 29, 2016 - 19:30



Over 150 young and active people from various regions of Ukraine, mostly from the city and oblast of Kharkiv, came to the former Ukrainian capital for the "Impulse of Change" forum organized by USAID RADA under its Model District project. Judging by

how few people were seen sitting with their head bowed over smartphone, the impulse was duly delivered.

A total of 14 speakers addressed the audience within the forum's three sections: "What is Ukraine? The code of the nation," "The state, Parliament and leadership," and "A person in management of city, country and the world."

The forum was welcomed by MP Olena Sotnyk, who as a Model District participant is "in charge" of Kharkiv's region, and USAID RADA Chief of Party Ihor Kohut. Ms. Sotnyk expressed her hope that the event would become real "motivation and inspiration" for all those present and turn them into a "confident activist, even probably a self-confident citizen of Ukraine."

"So that when you go out of here, you will really have the understanding that it's just you who create the future of this country," said the MP.

She also thanked the USAID RADA Program for its assistance, adding that Ukraine has many friends.

Mr. Kohut briefly presented USAID RADA "on behalf of Ukraine's friends." He said the Program is happy to support such initiatives of lawmakers. He described the Program as being "about responsibility, accountability and parliamentary representation." "You see, the Program is working with the Verkhovna Rada and for the Verkhovna Rada, but through the prism of the Verkhovna Rada we are working for each of you," Mr. Kohut explained.

As a lead-in, artist, film director and civil society activist Ganka Tretyak and the director of the Museum of Ukrainian Revolution 1917-1921, Oleksandr Kucheruk, spoke about the statehood and Ukraine's European past before its was occupied by the Soviets. Their presentation included showing a documentary on the signing of the February 1918 peace treaty in Brest-Litovsk between the Central Powers and the Ukrainian Republic.

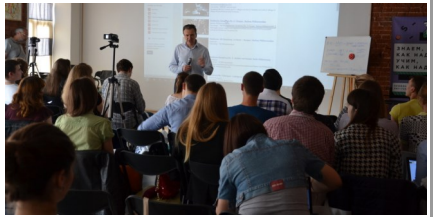
The next speaker was Lesya Drashkaba, an artist and creative director and a strategist of the [Ukraine Crisis Media Center](#), with a very bright, positive and optimistic presentation on "Inspiration as a currency of the future."

The exciting optimism of Lesya's presentation was somewhat abated by Yuriy Romanenko, a political expert and the chief editor of the analytical portal [Khvylya](#), who spoke of the crisis of present Ukraine and scenarios of future developments.

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"Impulse of Change" Hackathon Participants Presented Eight Projects. Three Named Winners

Tuesday, May 31, 2016 - 19:45



The two-day hackathon within the "Impulse of Change" youth forum in Kharkiv was crowned with presentation of eight projects, of which three – "Ole Lukoe", "BOTAN" and "Urban Transport Timetable" – were named winners and will receive media and mentor support. These projects aim at making access to children infrastructure easier for young families (Ole Lukoe), eliminating certain problems in school education (BOTAN) and putting the organization of urban transport traffic in order.

Sixty young people from various regions of Ukraine participated in the hackathon organized by USAID RADA. Besides the abovementioned, the project themes dealt with issues of condominiums, labor market, gender-motivated violence, culture and medical services.

At the beginning of the event, Founding Director of the School of Public Management at the Ukrainian Catholic University and Advisory Board Chair of the Lviv Business School Pavlo Sheremeta told the participants how to develop and implement a project: what to pay attention to, how to select a team, where to look for funds, etc. "I want to give you tools. I'm afraid of inspiration without tools because it will pass soon," Mr. Sheremeta said.

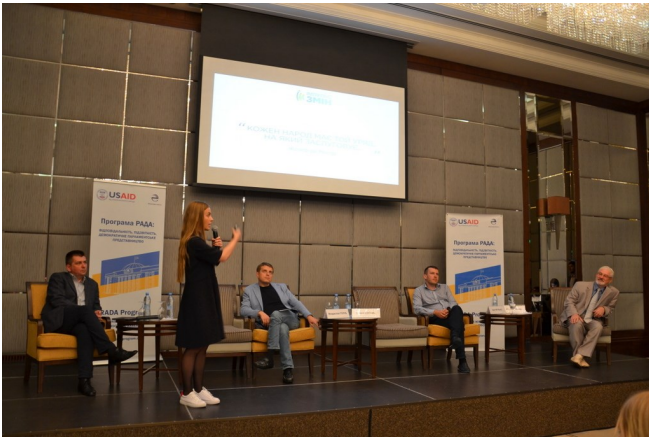
USAID RADA Chief of Party Ihor Kohut also welcomed the participants.

The hackathon included master classes, at which experts who provided some hints on project implementation, such as PR, crowdfunding, work with grants, and other.

After that, the participants split into eight teams and began working on their projects. In this they were helped by mentors from the [Interns' League](#), which is USAID RADA's partner – with its support administers the [Parliamentary Internship Program](#).

Videos: https://youtu.be/kF_b6UvR_Zw;
<https://youtu.be/5b1dehOESB0>

("Youth Gets an Impulse of Change in Kharkiv" – continued from p. 2)



Venture investor Anatoliy Amelin was the final speaker before lunch. His presentation was dedicated to future trends for Ukraine and the role of the youth in their creation.

The second section gathered "heavy hitters," namely the first Prosecutor General of Ukraine and retired judge of the Constitutional Court, Viktor Shyshkin, and a trio of MPs: Ivan Krulko, Olena Sotnyk and Vladyslav Holub.

Mr. Shyshkin spoke of Ukrainian parliamentarianism in comparison with the world's canons; Mr. Krulko discussed values in Parliament; Ms. Sotnyk focused on parliamentary ethics; and Mr. Holub described the path of a young politician.

The final section was most practical, as it dealt with specific projects and was delivered by people who have personally conceived, developed and successfully implemented a number of projects. The section's speakers included Ilyia Keninshsteyn, Advisor to the Lviv Mayor, Arseniy Finberg, who works for [DreamKyiv](#) and the [Volunteer Center](#), and Olha Rudneva, Executive Director of [Elena Pinchuk's ANTI/AIDS Foundation](#). The section was closed with final remarks by ex-Minister of Economic Development and Trade Pavlo Sheremeta, Supervisory Board Member of Raiffeisen Bank Aval, Founding Director of the [School of Public Management](#) at the Ukrainian Catholic University and Advisory Board Chair of the [Lviv Business School](#).

The flood of questions directed at the speakers during the event showed that the audience had a genuine interest in the discussion topics.

Over the next two days, some of the participants will be able to begin using in practice their newly-acquired knowledge at a hackathon, which will include master classes and joint work on their own social projects.

Video: <https://youtu.be/kszuE1XMESA>

USAID RADA Raises Gender Awareness among Aides of MPs Group

Friday, May 27, 2016 - 15:15



opportunities, especially in staffing policy. Participants also developed proposals for the action plan of the Equal Opportunities inter-faction association.

USAID RADA gender expert Olena Suslova conducted the training sessions.

USAID RADA Chief of Party Ihor Kohut also attended the event. "The Verkhovna Rada has committees where there are no women. But how can important issues, such as, for example, the state budget, be considered without their participation?" asked Mr. Kohut rhetorically. "I hope this workshop will help in future to better take into account the principle of equal rights and opportunities of men and women in lawmaking work."

USAID RADA Teaches Members of Local Councils in "Model District"

Thursday, May 26, 2016 - 20:30



USAID RADA held a workshop for members of local councils in the Brovary and Baryshevka raions – the "Model District" of MP Pavlo Rizanenko. A total of 45 persons participated in the event, including aides to the lawmaker, who gave an introduction.

More on USAID RADA site:

<http://radaprogram.org/en/content/usa-id-rada-teaches-members-local-councils-model-district-how-work-voters-and-local-executive>

Gender Focal Points Evaluate VR Gender Sensitivity, Certify Parliamentary Interns

Thursday, June 16, 2016 - 18:00



USAID RADA held a meeting of Gender Focal Points representing VR Committees' Secretariats and other structural units of the Verkhovna Rada. The meeting participants evaluated the VR annual gender sensitivity. The focal points have made such evaluation for the third running year.

"I would note that the gender sensitivity index of the Ukrainian Parliament over the year has grown by 7%, which is due to the active operation of the inter-faction group of MPs 'Equal Opportunities' in the first place, as well as the better understanding of the matter by lawmakers in general," said Olena Suslova, USAID RADA expert.

During the meeting, certificates were given to participants in the Parliamentary Internship Program who had successfully completed the course of gender policy analysis and written a research paper on the matter.

Round Table on Institutionalization of Opposition and Coalition Held under USAID RADA Aegis

Wednesday, June 1, 2016 - 18:45



The Agency for Legislative Initiatives, a partner of USAID RADA, held a lively round table on June 1, called "Institutionalization of the coalition and opposition," to discuss draft bills currently registered in the Verkhovna Rada, which relate to the work of the coalition and the opposition in Parliament.

The round table brought together over 20 experts and MPs. Among the eight MPs present there were two authors of bills on this topic. The forum was held in unison with the VR Rules Committee and USAID RADA, whose CoP Ihor Kohut was present.

MP Pavlo Pynzenyk, Acting Chairman of the Rules Committee, opened the proceedings, after which Mr. Kohut expressed the hope that such forum "forms dialog regarding change... We need to get to the point of concrete proposals and reach understanding in society."

The first rapporteur was Opposition Bloc faction MP Yuriy Miroshnychenko. In November 2014, after the fall election of that year, he had registered bill #1066 on making changes to the VR Rules to ensure the rights of the opposition. Mr. Miroshnychenko spoke about his bill, whose focus

is to get guarantees of rights for the opposition to undertake certain activities. He described specific rights outlined in articles of the draft, like the power to call extraordinary sittings and to chair certain VR committees.

MP Valeriy Pysarenko spoke about bill #1066-1 registered by him in December 2014. (He also registered bill #3066-1 on the same topic last September.) Mr. Pysarenko noted that the opposition's status, or institutionalization, could be carried out via specific laws and/or changes to the Rules of Procedure. He added that "the opposition should have an oversight function, but this should be institutionalized" and that the Rules Committee should belong to the opposition. Another option is to return to using an earlier version of the Constitution of Ukraine which contained a section on the ruling coalition and the opposition.

Mr. Kohut noted that it was up to the committee if it wants to turn over a new leaf, and that "an open process by the committee is required. We are ready to provide expert-analytical support."

USAID RADA Consultants Volodymyr Kryzhanivskiy and Borys Bespalyi also gave presentations. Mr. Kryzhanivskiy noted that the proposals of the European Parliament's Needs Assessment Mission say that the opposition in the VR should be institutionalized as soon as possible.

Borys Bespalyi noted the "gray area" of such discussions, as all those MPs who are

not part of the coalition are, by implication, in opposition even though their rights and duties have still to be institutionalized. He entertained the issue of the opposition having the right to include a certain number of bills on the agenda.

Andriy Ryshelyuk, deputy head of the Main Expert Directorate of the VR Secretariat, warned of the dangers of over-regulating rights and powers and said it was crucial to add clarity as to "when there is a coalition and when there is not a coalition."

Petro Poroshenko Bloc MP Dmytro Lubinets and Opposition Bloc MP Mykhaylo Papiyev also contributed to the debate. Mr. Lubinets asked whether all factions in opposition should be given status and noted that the lack of discipline in some MPs was problematic. Mr. Papiyev said that, in his view, de-politicization of VR committees was necessary and supported the idea of the opposition being able to put a certain number of bills on the agenda.

Pavlo Pynzenyk summed up the round table by saying that the latest initiatives to change the VR Rules of Procedure have a chance of success but this should be done with minimum effort and with tradition and legal culture playing a role too. Mr. Papiyev noted that the committee should take the recommendations by Pat Cox, who had led the EP Mission, and process them, to which Mr. Kohut put forward the idea of holding a seminar on the recommendations. The general consensus at the end of the meeting was that the Rules Committee should form a working group to work on the topic of institutionalization of the opposition in the Ukrainian Parliament.

USAID RADA Partner OPORA Held National Forum on How VR has Changed over Last 1.5 Years

Monday, June 13, 2016 - 16:45



On June 13, USAID RADA partner Civil Network OPORA held a National Forum on how the Ukrainian Parliament has changed over the last 18 months since the current 8th convocation was elected in the fall of 2014. OPORA presented, within the framework of the USAID RADA Program, basic indicators of the Verkhovna Rada's work over that period and analyzed the effectiveness of lawmakers' work. There were

more than 100 representatives of civil society, media, MPs aides and state institutions present at the forum, whose focus was the level of communication between constituents and MPs and the path being taken by the VR towards its goal of becoming an open and transparent legislative body.

More on USAID RADA site:
<http://radaprogram.org/en/content/usaaid-rada-partner-opora-held-national-forum-how-vr-has-changed-over-last-15-years>

MPs, Mayors, Experts Discuss Legislative Aspects of Capable Community Formation

Tuesday, June 21, 2016 - 18:45

A group of MPs from the "For Development of Local Self-Government" caucus and about 40 mayors of Ukrainian cities together with representatives from the Parliamentary Committee on State Building



and Local Government and experts attended a round table to discuss legislative aspects of encouraging the formation of capable territorial communities, the decentralization process in Ukraine and the progress of local government reform. The event was organized by USAID RADA in Odesa within the traditional 12th Ukrainian Municipal Forum.

More on USAID RADA site:
<http://radaprogram.org/en/content/mps-mayors-experts-discuss-legislative-aspects-capable-community-formation>

Participants of USAID RADA-Supported Meeting Confirmed that Reforms in Ukraine are Women's Business

Tuesday, June 14, 2016 - 19:15



The question, "Is it women's business to conduct reforms in Ukraine?" or "women in politics and politics made by women," was discussed and answered in the affirmative during a section within a training/consulting meeting on "Women in Times of Conflicts: Actions and Hopes."

The event was organized by the Women's Information Consultative Center, an NGO, and the Social Policy Ministry of Ukraine with support from the Dutch Foreign Ministry's Matra Program and USAID RADA. About 60 representatives of CSOs and the MinSocPolicy's local units responsible for gender policy attended the meeting, which was moderated by USAID RADA expert Olena Suslova. The panel of speakers also included three MPs: Maria Ionova and Iryna Lutsenko of the Petro Poroshenko's Bloc parliamentary faction and Svitlana Voytsekhovska of the People's Front.

Besides "women in politics and politics made by women," both the speakers and the audience also discussed many other issues, including the war and participation of women in it, release of POWs, problems of mass information and gender education, international politics, parliamentary and civil society oversight over law compliance, and troubles with approval of state budget.

Summing up, Ms. Suslova pointed out that "now we witness the rise of gender activity and the gender maturity." "Women do make politics and it's a women's business to conduct reforms in Ukraine," she concluded.

Video: <https://youtu.be/iTpenUWNgUg>



USAID RADA's Peer-to-Peer competition winners make presentations on their study tours

Thursday, June 23, 2016 - 16:45

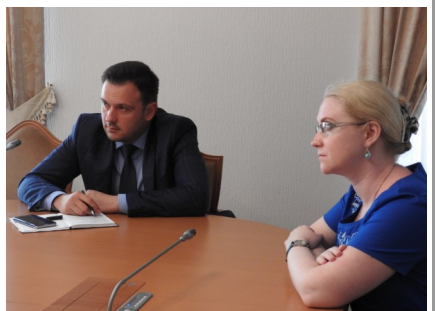


Four staffers of the Verkhovna Rada presented reports on their study tours to foreign parliaments at an event held by USAID RADA Program and attended by 20 workers of the VR Secretariat, secretariats of VR committees and the European Information & Research Center, as well as parliamentary interns.

Three of the four, Kateryna Vyshnevskaya of the VR Anti-Corruption Committee and Pavlo Frolov of the VR Special Commission on Privatization, who had visited Estonia, and Oleksandr Makovskyi, who visited Poland, won their trips in USAID RADA's Peer-to-Peer competition. The fourth presenter, Maria Muravska of the VR Secretariat Scientific & Expert Department, who had also competed but failed to win, went to study in the Spanish parliament on her own. The reports included recommendations for the VR on changes that would improve its functioning from the presenters' point of view based on their knowledge acquired abroad.

USAID RADA Program Director Elina Shyshkina facilitated the session. VR Secretariat Deputy Head Volodymyr Bondarenko also attended the event.

(Presentations available on USAID RADA site: <http://radaprogram.org/en/content/usa-id-radas-peer-peer-competition-winners-make-presentations-their-study-tours>)



VR Hosts High-Ranking Discussion on Legislative/Executive Cooperation Co-Organized by USAID RADA

Thursday, June 16, 2016 - 18:45



The Verkhovna Rada hosted the "Inter-Institutional Cooperation between the Legislature and the Executive: European Lessons Learnt and the Model for Ukraine" strategic discussion, which was co-organized by USAID RADA.

The event, moderated by Chair of the EP Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee Andrej Plenković, gathered nearly 70 participants, including VR Chairman Parubiy, the head of the European Parliament's Needs Assessment Mission, EP ex-President Pat Cox, Ukrainian First Vice Prime Minister Stepan Kubiv, and EU Ambassador to Ukraine Jan Tombiński. The audience represented international organizations, such as USAID, UNDP, EU Delegation and GIZ, civil society organizations, VR Secretariat and media. A number of MPs and governmental officials were also present and spoke.

The VR Chairman was first to address the audience. He thanked the "European colleagues," namely EP Needs Assessment Mission led by Pat Cox, for their help in reforming the Verkhovna Rada and making it more efficient. "The efforts you exert are really extraordinary," said Mr. Parubiy.

One of the key points of the discussion was a draft Memorandum on principles of cooperation between the Verkhovna Rada and the Cabinet of Ministers. The draft was presented by VR Secretariat Acting Head Volodymyr Slyshynskiy and Ukraine's Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources Ostap Semerak.

"We aim to attain a new quality of interaction between the Government and Parliament. That is why experts have drafted the Memorandum of cooperation," Mr. Parubiy explained.

Stepan Kubiv noted that unity of Parliament, President and Government is a pledge of changes in Ukraine. "The Gov-

ernment and MPs should review their approaches to joint law-drafting work during the passage of bills through parliamentary committees, strengthen their coordination in the framework of budget process, conduct joint quality expert examination of draft laws," the First Vice Premier said.

He also said the Government shares the idea of launching the mechanism for preparation of white papers on key and systemic bills.

According to Mr. Plenković, there is a margin for improvement of the level of cooperation between the VR and the Cabinet. He said, however, that it is not about "putting aside respective prerogatives and obligations defined in the Constitution of Ukraine nor about aligning political orientations. Under no circumstances improved interinstitutional cooperation implies or leads to blurring of lines between the legislative and the executive, to the merging of these two distinct institutions into an unidentifiable and vague political institutional entity."

"On the contrary, the topic of our seminar today is about framing more clearly, more precisely what the cooperation between the legislative and the executive should look like," Andrej Plenković stressed.

Pat Cox, who is in Kyiv for the 45th time in recent years, said he is pleased to be back in the Verkhovna Rada to continue the work, which "we've been doing together over many months," and pleased to see "so many partners in the same room" and representatives of "Ukraine's very active and vigilant nongovernmental organizations and civil society." In this context he paid a "particular tribute to [USAID RADA CoP] Ihor Kohut and his colleagues in USAID, particularly on the topic we are dealing with and for the work they have done to advance this."

"For the international partners, ... please be assured that we are prepared in every way to accompany this journey of reforms. But it is not to interfere – it is based on respect, respect for the integrity of Ukraine, respect for the sovereignty of Ukraine and respect for the dignity of its institutions," Mr. Cox emphasized.

Very practical relevant European experience was shared by Member of the European Parliament Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs and former EU Commissioner, and Sir Evan Paul Silk, former clerk in the British House of Commons.

USAID RADA CoP Ihor Kohut, who opened the debate, highlighted several things where the Program has advanced in terms of interinstitutional cooperation, in particular the idea of white papers. MPs and representatives from CSOs also participated in the debate.



Parliament Speakers of Ukraine and Poland attend Local Development Forum co-organized by USAID RADA in Truskavets

Sunday, June 26, 2016 - 17:15



Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Speaker Andriy Parubiy and his Polish counterpart, Marshal of the Sejm Marek Kuchciński, took part in the second day of the two-day Local Development Forum in the city of Truskavets, the famous spa in the Lviv Oblast, co-organized by the Lviv Oblast Rada and the USAID RADA Program.

A total of over 150 representatives from Ukrainian and Polish Parliaments, local governments, the executive branch, civil society and the media participated in a series of discussions.

Day 1 of the forum included a discussion on decentralization as a driver of local development, which was moderated by USAID RADA Program Coordinator Ihor Parasyuk. The afternoon sessions focused on cross-border cooperation and on cooperation between Parliament and local governments. Day 2 comprised a presentation

of and a discussion on best practices by several Ukrainian and Polish local governments.

All the sessions at the forum took in ministers, high-ranking officials and MPs from the Ukrainian and Polish sides. The two Parliament Speakers also hold talks to “exchange opinions and

have a discussion on historical issues between Ukraine and Poland on the eve of similar discussion in the Polish Parliament,” as Mr. Parubiy announced at a media briefing, which kicked off the second day’s work.

The Ukrainian Speaker said that the forum’s objectives were to develop more mechanisms of cooperation between near-border regions of Poland and Ukraine, as well as to study problems of the decentralization and local self-government reform and find solutions to these problems.

“Poland for Ukraine is a special example in this one of the largest-scale reforms we are carrying out, the decentralization reform,” Mr. Parubiy said. “It is just the reform of local self-government [in Poland] that gave an opportunity to develop reforms in other areas,” the Speaker added.

He pointed out that the experience gained

in “lively direct communication” during the forum is utterly important for Ukrainian MPs, “many of whom came to this forum,” as well as for members of the Lviv Oblast Rada and local councils.

USAID RADA had also drafted a Declaration, which was adopted by the forum participants, without amendments. The Declaration *inter alia* calls on the President, Prime Minister, Government and Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to “pay priority attention to the necessity of urgently implementing in Ukraine a state regional policy based on solidarity of regions and speeding up reforms of the administrative and territorial organization of power at the local level, which are based on the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the European principles of NUTS [Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics], strictly comply with the principle of subsidiarity and aim to ensure sustainable development.”



Forum co-organized by TIU and USAID RADA focuses on progress in Open Government

Wednesday, June 22, 2016 - 18:15



On June 22 USAID RADA and Transparency International Ukraine held a forum called “Does Ukraine fulfill its obligations in the Open Government Partnership?” on Ukraine’s fulfillment of its action plan on Open Government. The aim of the event, which brought together around 40 experts, NGO representatives and officials, was to gauge the extent to which Ukraine has been able to fulfill its obligations and to improve three-way dialog between the Cabinet of Ministers, Supreme Council and civil society.

Opening proceedings, Ihor Kohut, CoP of

USAID RADA, who also moderated, noted the importance of oversight and so-called “shadow reports” that are prepared by sections of civil society. These unofficial reports are able to give a broader assessment than that provided by the authorities. Mr. Kohut said that “oversight on the part of civil society is very important for us. An extremely important point. What is also important, and I want to emphasize this separately, are so-called shadow reports. This is widespread practice. There is lots of discussion in Parliament at the present time on internal reform and the parliamentary-executive branches of power. Last week very important talks were held with the participation of the Verkhovna Rada’s leadership and vice prime ministers. The issue was the introduction of new communications... To create a system of government accountability and for it to really have a rational nature to it.”

Nataliya Oksha from the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers spoke about what the Cabinet had actually done in practice in the field of Open Government. She said that

“the Open Government Initiative gives the Government, partner organizations and citizens a chance to change the trajectory of public administration.” The Ukrainian Cabinet has undertaken to make progress in five areas, and an interim report it is currently preparing will be issued in July. The areas take in fighting corruption, providing improved administrative services, giving better access to open data, fostering e-governance and e-democracy and promoting the role of civil society. She noted that the Cabinet of Ministers has made progress in the last two years in these five areas. Experience of reform was a two-way street, she added, as countries can share foreign experience. ProZorro, a transparent system used in tender processes in Ukraine, is now being used in Mexico.

More on USAID RADA site:

<http://radaprogram.org/en/content/forum-co-organized-tiu-and-usaid-rada-focuses-progress-open-government>

Latest IPTAC indulges in information lacunas of reform process in Ukraine

Wednesday, June 29, 2016 - 16:45



On June 29 the USAID RADA Program held its monthly International Parliamentary Technical Assistance Coordination meeting on "Reform Processes in Ukraine: Information and Communication Lacunas" to present the results of an opinion poll ordered by USAID RADA's partner Internews Ukraine within the framework of the Program. Kostyantyn Kvurt, IU Chairman of the Board and manager of IU project on USAID RADA implementation, as well as Iryna Bekeshkina, Director of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, and Mariya Zolkina, IKDIF Political Analyst, presented and discussed the poll's findings.

The IPTAC audience included representatives of international donor organizations and civil society.

Opening the meeting, Ihor Kohut, CoP of USAID RADA, who moderated proceedings, said that the "formation of information policy was a very important area in reform of the state."

Kostyantyn Kvurt spoke about the findings. He noted that "significant distrust domi-

nates in society in the course of reforms. Citizens do not want to suffer financial losses due to reform. Some 22% of citizens see no point because they do not believe in the success of the reforms, and 39% believe the current economic situation in the country is extremely low."

Mariya Zolkina outlined findings on the mood of people and their desires. She said that analyzed qualitative and quantitative indicators had provided a "snapshot." "As of May 2016 the prospects for reform in public opinion were dominated by pessimistic expectations and attitudes of disbelief in the success of reforms. Thus, 37% of people did not believe in the success of reforms, while 28% categorically did not believe in the success of the reform process in Ukraine. In the meantime, 5% of Ukrainians are confident optimists who believe in the possibility of the reforms being successful, and another 24% believe in general, but have certain doubts."

She summed up the priorities of the public. "The priorities for citizens are reform of law-enforcement (courts, prosecutors, police); tax reform; anti-corruption reform; educational reform; deregulation and incentives for business development and investment; army reform, strengthening the country's defense," she noted. However, she said research had shown that the media gave an overly excessive amount of attention and coverage to reform of the police but scant coverage to reform of education.

On the topic of media organizations that,

according to the findings, the public trusted, Ms. Zolkina said that these included *Focus, Den,* and *Ukrayinska Pravda.* The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation is also highly trusted. She added that two of a handful of weaknesses in the media's work are presentation of poor arguments and "being too smart."

Speaking about reforms, Iryna Bekeshkina said "reforms are really taking place, though they are not systemic. But in the minds of representatives of the civil sector the impression dominates that nothing is happening. The vast majority of people take their information from television channels owned by oligarchs who are interested in the failure of reforms. It is necessary to enlist the creation of information policy by representatives of civil society who possess true information," she underlined.

According to her, the public needs to be told of success stories. "Influence over the owners of the mass media is minimal, so instead we need to look for ways in which to tell people about achievements."

She reiterated that reforms are broadcast through the prism of the interests of oligarchs, big magnates who own the majority of TV channels. Since many reforms are attempts to shackle them, so their TV channels, naturally, show reforms in a negative light.

More on USAID RADA site:

<http://radaprogram.org/en/content/latest-iptac-indulges-information-lacunas-reform-process-ukraine>

USAID RADA holds constitutional seminar dedicated to 20th anniversary of Ukrainian Constitution

Wednesday, June 29, 2016 - 17:45



On June 29, 2016, USAID RADA marked the 20th anniversary of the Ukrainian Constitution (June 28) by gathering a group of students, mostly participants in the Parliamentary Internship Program, in the Verkhovna Rada for a seminar to discuss ongoing Constitutional reform.

The event was attended by the Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament in 1996, when the Constitution was adopted, Oleksandr Moroz, as well as three MPs from that convocation, who played an important role in the development and adoption of the Basic Law of Ukraine: Viktor Musiyaka,

Viktor Shyshkin, Volodymyr Stretovych and Ivan Zayets.

Some of the guests plus three other former MPs who are USAID RADA experts, namely Volodymyr Kryzhanivskiy, Borys Bepalyi and Elina Shyshkina, facilitated work in groups which had to find answers from the young people present to one of the following questions each: (1) Which form of government should there be in Ukraine – presidential, parliamentary, parliamentary-presidential or other? (2) What political structure of society and Parliament as well as electoral system should there be in Ukraine? and (3) What is your opinion of the recent reform of the justice system initiated by the President of Ukraine?

The three groups then reunited to present and discuss their answers to the questions. The presentations were given in the last-in-first-out mode by question number.

The students gave judicial reform both positive and negative marks, with the latter prevailing. They pointed out what they saw as its drawbacks, e.g., the quite close and corporatized judicial corps and the contro-

versial solution to have judges appointed for life, not elected. The general public remains debarred from having any real impact on the system of justice, they said. Especially criticized was the provision that only members of the bar association will be allowed to perform the representation function in court, not only in criminal proceedings but also in civil, administrative and economic ones.

The group that explored the issue of political structure and election system called it a "sore point" because "each of us is a participant in the election process." They said the political pattern in Ukraine should be based on ideology, not business interests, and changes for the better in this pattern should be implemented beginning from the bottom, the local level, upward.

More on USAID RADA site: <http://radaprogram.org/en/content/usaaid-rada-holds-constitutional-seminar-dedicated-20th-anniversary-ukrainian-constitution>