



Service of the Parliament of Montenegro

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Working Bodies of Parliament

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CONTENTS

I Foreword..... 4

II Key findings 5

 2.1 Legal basis for establishment of working bodies 5

 2.2 Structure of working bodies 6

 2.3. Membership in working bodies..... 11

 2.4 Competence of working bodies..... 22

 2.5 Sub-committees..... 38

Bibliography 41

Foreword

Almost all parliaments organize a part of their activities within parliamentary working bodies. Working bodies can be defined as smaller working groups of MPs charged with considering certain issues under the competence of parliament. Whether established on a temporary or a permanent basis, working bodies provide for a more focused and comprehensive discussion as opposed to plenary sittings. The document *Committees in Legislature* states that “Committees (sometimes called commissions) are small groups of legislators who are assigned, on either a temporary or a permanent basis, to examine matters more closely than could the full chamber”¹. *Parliamentary Rules of Procedure – An Overview* states that “the structure of committee systems and their relative strength vary enormously. The United States Congress, for instance, has a longstanding tradition of powerful committees. The UK House of Commons, on the other hand, refers the consideration of government bills usually to ad hoc committees for each bill (generically referred to as Public Bill Committees, each named after the bill it considers). In addition there are Select Committees for parliamentary scrutiny of the activities of the different government ministries”². Generally, there are various similarities, but also differences when it comes to the structure and other issues related to parliamentary working bodies of different countries.

This document deals with issues involving parliamentary working bodies of few EU member states and Western Balkan countries. The Parliamentary Service collected data and information from legal documents dealing with this issue, while consulting other relevant material, which fully or partly addresses this issue. The research subject involves the following comparative variables:

1) **Legal basis for establishment of working bodies (constitutions and rules of procedure of parliaments)**

2) **Structure of working bodies**

- Types of working bodies (mandatory, temporary or standing),
- Structure and permanence of working bodies,
- Rules on establishment of a committee,
- Fixed versus temporary structure of a committee,
- Structure and competence of committees with respect to relevant ministries;

3) **Membership in working bodies**

- Allocation of seats in committees,
- Management in committees,
- Exclusion from membership,
- Number of members in committees out of the total number of MPs,

¹ National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), 1996, *Committees in Legislatures/A Division of Labor*, p. 3

² European Parliament, Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy, 2010, *Parliamentary Rules of Procedure – An Overview*, p. 52

- Possibility of having a substitute member in case of absence of full member;

4) **Competence of working bodies**

- Role of working bodies in legislative procedure,
- Oversight of government's work and the right of committees in relation to government,
- Special committees with a specific role within parliament;

5) **Sub-committees**

- Legal basis for their establishment,
- Decisions on establishment of sub-committees,
- Membership in sub-committees and decision-making,
- Determining the Agenda.

It should be noted that constitutions and rules of procedure of countries included in the research were translated from English, with the exception of documents provided by Croatia and Serbia. The term *radna tijela* is used in the document and it is the translation of the English word committee, generic form for all types of working bodies. When referring to a specific working body, but also in other cases depending on the context, Montenegrin word *odbori* was used, while the word commission was in most cases translated as *komisija*.

The complete document in Montenegrin language can be found at:

<http://www.skupstina.me/images/dokumenti/biblioteka-i-istrazivanje/2%20%20%202011.pdf>