



Inter-Parliamentary Union

Technical Cooperation Programme

EXPLORATORY MISSION: ESTONIA



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At the request of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia, the Inter-Parliamentary Union sent a technical mission to Tallinn from 25 February to 2 March 1992 to identify assistance needs of the Supreme Council.

The mission was composed of Mr Claude Des Rosiers, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Dr. Stephen Ash, Principal Secretary to the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons and Ms. Elise Holt, Head of the Information and Documentation Department of the Danish Parliament.



During the course of the visit, the mission reviewed the functioning of the Supreme Council and made specific recommendations for its improvement. These recommendations focused on the organizational structure and the legislative procedures of the Supreme Council. The mission also looked at ways in which to improve the administrative policies and practices of the parliamentary secretariat and the methods employed to provide information services to the members of the parliament.

The following is a brief summary of the mission's findings and recommendations.

The mission notably recommended that:

- A parliamentary procedure section is created under the Secretary General to provide procedural support to the Speaker and the deputies. This staff should be non-political in nature.
- The Supreme Council should undertake to publish its debates in order to provide a record of what was said in Parliament.
- Training should be provided to legal drafters. There was a general shortage of lawyers working for government and virtually no help was provided to deputies to prepare bills.
- The Supreme Council should recruit and train a small in-house security staff, particularly to man

positions within the parliamentary buildings. At the time of the mission key security positions in close proximity to the Chamber doors were not secure.

- The Supreme Council should establish its own financial planning and accounting unit which would be accountable directly to the Secretary General and the Speaker. This unit should prepare regular financial statements summarizing the cumulative expenditures of the Supreme Council during the financial period.
- A Public Accounts Committee should be established to review expenditures and to report its findings to the Supreme Council.
- Staff recruitment should be placed on a more systematic basis. The Supreme Council should review current staff salaries to reduce or eliminate the competitive disadvantage it faces relative to the private sector.
- An agreement between the National Library and the Supreme Council should be worked out. This agreement should outline the demands on staff, services and collection. Parliamentary Information Services should exist as an independent department and should have a budget of its own.
- There should be adequate premises within the precincts of Parliament to house experienced staff, reference books, newspapers, reading-room facilities and technical facilities.



The Estonian Parliament thus received a detailed analysis of its premises and working procedures along with recommendations to improve its legislative capacities. A number of the recommended changes have since been implemented and the Parliament has been a crucial factor for Estonia's successful transition towards democracy and market economy.