

## **Information and Public Relations Strategy of the Assembly of Kosovo**

The information and public relations strategy of the Assembly of Kosovo is based on the principle that information sharing is an important component of strengthening the Assembly by better connecting the legislative branch to the people they represent, enhancing trust, and empowering the institution.

The objective of the strategy is to **increase the amount and quality of information available to the public** regarding the work of the Assembly, to enhance the input of the public into the legislative and oversight processes and, thereby, improve the Assembly's reputation.

The strategy to build bridges of communication has five components: a core message; increased information flow; improved public outreach and public access; improved media relations; and building the capacity of the Office for Media and Public Relations (OMPR) and other Assembly staff.

This strategy forms an integral part of the Strategic Action Plan of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo for 2011-2018, and is in line with both the overarching strategic objectives of the Assembly. The Strategy develops actions under objective 8.1 of the Strategic Plan which delineates the work of the Office for Media and Public Relations.

Planning and action on the information and public relations objectives can begin immediately, and covers the period from 2012-2014.

### **A) Core message**

*Recommendation: Develop a core message for the Assembly to highlight its role, purpose and commitment to the public.*

The Assembly of Kosovo must develop a core message on which to base all Assembly communications and outreach. Without a unifying message, neither the Members of the Assembly nor the general public will have a clear picture of what role the Assembly plays in political life.

The core message serves as the basis for Assembly publications, press releases, website, community outreach, speeches, interviews, and articles. The message becomes the brand for the Assembly, and informs the membership about how they think of themselves and their work.

The core message should resonate, reflecting a guarantee to the public, that the Assembly is protecting the interests of all people, giving stress to the Assembly's role in enhancing democracy and enforcing laws, that it is an institution striving to meet all requirements of society.

A basic media and public outreach campaign, rooted in this core message should be launched by the Assembly to educate the public on the role of the Assembly, its importance and concrete contributions to Kosovo.

## **B) Increase information flow**

The quantity, quality, and timeliness of information from the Assembly available to the public must be improved.

The easiest, and most efficient, method to publish this information is via the Assembly website. Speed is critical as the language of a draft law that has been introduced – as well as associated working documents (a Government memo, budgetary/financial implications, compatibility with EU legislation, committee report with amendments) – is important to the public, media, or civil society who may want to provide input on the draft legislation.

*Revamp, improve and rationalize the Assembly website*

The Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, offer a number of good ideas on information to include on a website. There is no one perfect solution for all websites. Following are a number of areas to consider that aim to enhance information on the website, to make it easier to obtain copies of proposed legislation, agendas, summaries of committee action, text of committee documents, and learning what Members of the Assembly have said and how they voted, as well as history and facts of the institution.

For implementation of the below measures, the Office for Media and Public Relations needs to work closely with the Division of Information Technology.

- 1. Detail on the agenda** – While the agendas of each plenary session and committees are posted on the website prior to each session, the documents being discussed need to be easily found. Consider creating links to the documents from the on-line agenda. Documents, when available, should be posted on the electronic agenda to enhance public transparency of legislation and other items before the Assembly.
- 2. Work of the Committees** – Committees are the driving force in the legislative process. To give a greater profile to the committee, the website should include on each committee page:
  - **Mandate** – the role of the committee
  - **News** – summary of committee discussion and activities; make information more than purpose and content and add more on discussion

and quotes from MPs. This information, presently only posted under the “News” section of the main Assembly page, should be cross-posted or linked to the committee page.

- **Draft laws** – When draft laws are proposed, include the legislation and proposed amendments the committee is considering; draft laws are posted on a separate section of the website. The Department for Legal and Procedure Issues, with support from the OMPR, should post these documents.
  - **Minutes** – Wherever possible, minutes from committee meetings should be posted on the website.
  - **Summary of public hearings** – Special news items should be written, posted and sent out whenever public hearings are held.
3. **Parliamentary questions and interpellations** – Post questions from MPs and responses from the Government, as well as transcripts from interpellations whether at the Plenary or a later date, separately from the minutes. This would be of value to journalists, researchers, civil society and other interested parties.
  4. **The Assembly Explained** – Add a new tab to the basic introduction into roles, function, and history of the Assembly. Possible topics include: Members, Leadership, Committees, a Member’s schedule, rules of procedure, Assembly history.
  5. **Rules of Procedure** - The processes by which the Assembly runs its business should be publicly and easily accessible.
  6. **Search function** – The website search function needs to be enhanced to make it easier for media, civil society, and the general public to find information about the Assembly.
  7. **Photo database** – The Assembly takes its own photos and posts them on the website connected to the story, but these should be available for download by outside parties – particularly media. It would also provide a nice photographic archive for use in Assembly publications and other materials created.
  8. **Media information** – Parliaments depend on journalists for informing the public about their work. The website should have a page with information for journalists including accreditation, work conditions, access areas, etc.
  9. **Visiting the Assembly** – Add a new tab informing the public on how to make requests to visit and tour the Assembly, including contact information for OMPR. The virtual tour can be placed here.

### **C) Improve public outreach, public access**

Public outreach activities should be initiated to help the general public better understand the work of the Assembly. This would include different and better quality publications, creating educational programming and developing community outreach programs.

Public access to the Assembly should also be improved, with a new public information center and making live web/telecasting available.

## **Publications**

*Recast the Assembly bulletin to make it timelier and create "info sheets" to help explain the work of the Assembly to the public.*

While there are some older publications available on the Assembly website, few documents are regularly produced and updated with the intent of educating and informing the public.

These proposed publications – bi-monthly newsletters and info sheets – will be posted on the Assembly website, distributed to the media, and provided as educational tools. The publications aim to help define the priorities, image, and message of the Assembly. All publications will be posted on the Assembly website.

### **1) Bi-Monthly Newsletter**

*Recast the Assembly bulletin to provide a brief and concise summary of Assembly action over the past two months*

The bi-monthly will be a mix between a specific theme (in-depth coverage of one topic per issue) and current issues before the Assembly (bills introduced, resolutions passed, bills signed into law, committee reports, community visits by the Presidency and MPs, and important visits to the Assembly). The publication will be approximately 12 pages.

### **2) Info Sheets**

*Create "info sheets" about the Assembly.*

The new "info sheets" will explain how the Assembly operates, and cover such topics as "the Assembly President and Presidency", one for each standing, functional and ad-hoc committee, "the work of an MP", how draft laws are made and passed, etc. These new Info sheets will add more information and help explain the Assembly workings to the general public. Each will be one page, double-sided, easy to read, with photographs and graphics.

## **Educational Programming**

*Continue with and develop new educational programming.*

1. **Public tours** for school students and the general public are an essential component of being an open and accessible institution. Finding ways to bring the public into the Assembly on a regular basis should be continued and enhanced with an "Open Day at the Assembly" program to further open the Assembly workings to students. The Assembly should also reach out to and invite groups on a regular basis.

2. Develop a **virtual tour of the Assembly** as an educational tour for visitors to the Assembly or for community outreach activities. This should be posted on the Assembly website.
3. Develop a **youth guide** to explain the roles and functions of the Assembly in an easy-to-read language for a younger population. The guide would be used as an educational tool for students who visit the Assembly and for events hosted by Members in schools and communities.
4. Develop a series of **videos** to explain to roles and functions of the Assembly. Possible topics include: A work-day for a Member, Leadership, Committees, how a law is made, and Assembly history. The videos can be placed on the Assembly website, in the Visitor's Information Center, and used for community outreach activities.
5. Look into the possibility of producing a **weekly television magazine** focusing on parliamentary activity summarizing events from the past week, new laws, interviews with Presidency members, committee chairpersons, caucus leaders and individual MP-s, highlighting messages the Assembly wants to pass on to the public. The magazine would serve as a vehicle to stress and reiterate its messages.

### **Community Outreach**

*The Assembly should develop a community outreach program that would educate community groups, civic groups, and neighborhoods about the Assembly and how its work relates to families and communities.*

The community outreach program would dispatch Assembly staff to explain how the Assembly works through trainings of civil society groups, or short seminars with the general public in their neighborhoods.

One successful project is the "Assembly Week" whereby the Assembly President or any other MP goes to a certain municipality to meet with the public. This activity should be continued.

The Assembly should fully utilize the **regional constituency offices**, once established, as the focal point for outreach activities to the public. OMPR should offer it support to ensure that the offices are equipped with printed material and for a dedicated workstation connected to the Assembly website, while supporting Assembly Members to meet constituents, hold debates, organize events, etc.

A further idea to consider would be the implementation of an "Assembly outreach" program that brings the Assembly to the people by hosting sessions explaining the work of the Assembly, to demonstrate the Assembly's relevance (attention to local issues) to their area, and working with local civil society groups to help Committees arrange visits.

## **Civil Society Cooperation**

*Institutionalize cooperation between the Assembly and civil society.*

As civil society matures, the sector is beginning to exert pressure and influence on Kosovo's governing institutions. As dialogue is important, the Assembly should strive to ensure civil society involvement in the legislative and oversight processes and help to raise public awareness about Assembly activities. This calls for both continuous dialogue at the political level and the creation of adequate institutional infrastructure.

In 2012, the Assembly has set up a Co-ordination Office, which is tasked to support with the Office of Media and Public Relations in working with civil society

To build bridges of communication with civil society, the Assembly should:

1. Form a Joint Assembly-Civil Society Working Group including members of the the Assembly of Kosovo Presidency, which will engage in a political dialogue with the representatives of civil society. The working group should meet regularly with representatives of civil society to negotiate a parliamentary resolution, on principles of co-operation – taking into account the provision of the co-operation strategy between the government and civil society.
2. Discuss the draft resolution, declaration or MoU at an inclusive Assembly of Kosovo – civil society conference in 2013. The civil society relations officer at the Co-ordination Office will lead these activities.
3. Create a **civil society database** to enlist civil society expertise in the work of the Assembly and its Committees and begin using it to keep this sector informed about Plenary and committee meetings, as well as which organization could help the Assembly in educational and outreach activities. The civil society database will be administered by staff at the Office for Media and Public Relations.

## **Visitor Information Center**

*A visitor information center will be established in the Assembly.*

The Visitor Information Center will organize public tours, answer constituent questions, and provide information about the Assembly and its workings. Physical access to the Assembly sends an important message to the public that it operates in full transparency, is available to all, and fundamentally exists for the public interest.

## **Telecasting**

*Enhance telecasting by adding live web-casting of Plenary, Presidency, and Committee meetings.*

Plenary sessions of the Assembly of Kosovo are aired live up to 1700 hrs for a session; committees are not covered. The Strategic Action Plan of the Assembly of Kosovo calls for a new parliamentary TV channel. This long-term goal has major staffing and budgetary implications.

The Assembly would benefit in the short- to medium term by **prioritizing web-streaming** of plenary and committee meetings. Links to webcasts and the daily program automatically appear on the Assembly's homepage. There would still be initial cost for purchase and set-up of equipment but a system covering all meeting rooms could be set up faster and more cost-effective to maintain.

## **D) Improve Media Relations**

Media relations are a fundamental aspect of any communications office. Media outlets allow the Assembly to reach a large audience, in a timely fashion, with specific messages.

For the Assembly, the OMPR, should be aggressive (determined in reaching out), and seek to provide basic non-partisan information about Assembly proceedings and the activities of the leadership.

The OMPR already performs the basic functions of a legislative press office. It should utilize a number of other tools to provide information about all Assembly activities.

### **Press conferences**

Assembly activities should be highlighted by OMPR through well-organized and well-publicized press conferences. This would include announcing improvements or changes to the Assembly website; announcing new public access opportunities such as a new public information center, or announcing new publications.

The Assembly should establish a practice whereby after each presidency or committee meeting the chair or a designee would provide a statement. Media can attend, OMPR staff can make press releases to convey the actual essence of the agenda and decisions taken.

### **Background Briefings**

Upon request of Committees, the OMPR could promote Committee work through organized background briefings. These off-the-record meetings between committees, media, and civil society would help to highlight the issues facing the committee as it is considering a law or oversight report.

### **Media Filing Room**

*Improve the space use by media and increase the ability for media to access the room*

Media access to the Assembly of Kosovo is generally good. Journalists have access the Assembly chambers, the committee rooms, and the MPs themselves. The media work room is sufficient but can be improved by:

1. Increasing access to the Media Filing room on all working days.

2. Rehabilitating a corner with the Assembly logo or other official backdrop for media to perform stand-up interviews with MPs.
3. Add shelving to place Assembly publications.
4. Opening the back entrance of the Assembly to media representatives

The Assembly and OMPR should also consider **opening up more spaces** where media can interview MPs, such as one of the side alcoves in the lobby area. This space can also be fixed up with an official Assembly backdrop to highlight the location as a spot for interviews. In the medium-term this would include creating a new space for Members to hold press conferences/briefings.

### **Introduction to parliamentary practices for Journalists**

*Host introductory courses for new journalists who cover the Assembly and legislative issues, on how the Assembly works.*

Offering an introduction to journalists on parliamentary practices will help guide new reporters on how to cover the Assembly, as well as familiarize them with the procedures of the Assembly. The sessions should focus on practical issues such as how draft law is introduced, the role of the committee, how to access information about and from the Assembly, protocol issues, the oversight role of the Assembly, etc. These courses are to be offered quarterly.

### **E) Capacity Building**

*Provide training to OMPR staff in professional/effective writing, hire a permanent webmaster, and produce a list of services for MPs.*

The communications capacity of Assembly of Kosovo is limited, but has a strong foundation for improvement.

1. All OMPR staff should benefit from on-site **skills training in effective writing** to ensure that work is clean, compelling, and perfectly structured.
  - The training should be an on-site mentoring exercise. A trainer should be retained for three iterations for continual professional growth.
  - This effort should include Committee coordinators as they should also support the Assembly and OMPR as information on their committees is sent to media and placed in the public sphere.
2. All OMPR should benefit from on-site **photography skills** coaching.
3. As the Assembly takes on the task to improve the website, **hire a webmaster/graphic designer**, placed in OMPR, to be the lead in posting and driving the process to make the website more user-friendly. With a dual role as a graphic designer, this new staff would also be involved in Assembly publications.
4. Ensure that all public information is **translated in a timely manner** in the official languages of the Assembly. If in-house translation services are not available the contracting of outside professional translation services should be considered.

5. OMPR should **create a list of its services for MPs**, providing also information on the OMPR's role, on organization of press conferences and other public events, on how to contact the media, tips on public speaking, etc.

## II. Actions Prioritized

While all the elements of the information and public outreach plan are critical for success, some aspects may not be possible due to funding restraints or capacity limitations. The below improvements are listed in order of importance.

### Critical Actions:

*These actions are critical and should be executed prior to all other improvements.*

1. **Adopt a core message** – A core message is essential for unifying the Assembly of Kosovo around a common theme, and serve as the foundation for all communication products.
2. **Increase information flow** – The quantity, quality and timeliness of information from the Assembly available to the public must be improved. Improve and rationalize the website.
3. **Improve media relations** – Disseminate regular press releases on the agenda and operations of the Assembly. Highlight the good work of the Assembly, from passing laws to work of the committees. Organize regular press conferences and background briefings.

### Recommended Actions:

*These actions are significant, and should be implemented to strengthen the external communications capacity of the Assembly. They require resource investments and coordination with other offices in the Assembly.*

1. **Improve public outreach** – Improve public outreach by initiating a weekly bulletin, starting a series of information sheets, and making the Assembly magazine a bi-monthly thematic publication. Develop videos on roles and functions of the Assembly
2. **Improve public access** – Closely work with civil society to promote and ensure dialogue. Open a visitor's information center and implement a regular guided tour program. Create a community outreach program focusing on how the Assembly works, and works in the public's interest.
3. **Translation** – Ensure that all public information is translated in a timely manner in the official languages of the Assembly.
4. **OMPR capacity-building** – OMPR staff boost skills in effective and photography. Hire a webmaster/graphic designer.

### Optional Actions:

*These interventions are important but can be implemented after the critical and recommended actions are finalized.*

1. Improve media relations through information sessions on parliamentary practices.
2. Improve public outreach by implementing live webcasting of plenary, presidency and committee meetings.
3. Work with public broadcaster to develop a weekly television magazine focusing on parliamentary issues.
4. Retain a public relations firm to help develop and implement public outreach products and community outreach activities.

### III. Implementation Timeline

Critical actions are in **green**

Recommended actions are in **yellow**

Optional actions are in **blue**

<b><i>Develop a core message for the Assembly</i></b>					
Task	Responsibility	Indicators	Timeline	Comments	Budget Implication
Develop a core message to be used as basis for Assembly communication efforts	Presidency and Parliamentary Groups	Working Group formed to discuss core message	September 2013	OMPR, with Assembly Secretariat, to take lead, include Department for Legal and Procedural Issues	No budgetary implication
		New Core message agreed on and put in use in all publications, on the website, in speeches	October 2013		
				Assembly leadership to speak at events	

<b><i>Increase information flow</i></b>					
Task	Responsibility	Indicators	Timeline	Comments	Budget Implication
Improve the Assembly website more comprehensive and user-friendly	Assembly administration OMPR	OMPR forms working group to assess website for information needs	April 2013	OMPR lead, with Assembly Secretariat, Department for Legal and Procedural issues and Table Office. Inputs from across the Assembly administration, Committee Coordinators	No budgetary implications unless a webmaster is hired
		Working group recommends additions and changes based on proposed strategy	May 2013		
		OMPR works with webmaster to make technical changes and create new template	June 2013	Working Group to discuss webmaster post and responsibility of offices (who contributes what and where initiative lies)	
		OMPR drafts changes (together with contracted	July-September 2013		

		company) Assembly launches revamped website	November 2013		
		Update the Assembly webpage	Continual	Press conference to announce updated website. MPs, media, civil society, given on-line tour.	

### ***Improve public outreach, public access***

Task	Responsibility	Indicators	Timeline	Comments	Budget Implication
Develop new "Assembly" bi-monthly newsletter(replacing Assembly Bulletin)	OMPR	Agreement on format and content for "Assembly" newsletter  Begin publication	February 2013  March 2013	At 5,000 copies in three languages, cost appr. €2,500 per edition	€30,000
Develop new publication – Info sheets	OMPR Committee coordinators	Develop list of info sheets to be made  Agreement on format and content for info sheets  Begin publication	December 2012  February 2013  May 2013	After each new info sheet is published, Assembly should notify the public via media, and could host press briefing depending on the topic.  A new info sheet can be released every 2-3 weeks.	€5,000
Develop educational programming – virtual tour		In process.  Virtual tour launched on Assembly website	July 2012  October 2012	Virtual tour made in cooperation with OSCE	No budgetary implications
Develop educational programming – videos on Assembly roles and functions	OMPR Assembly administration	Develop list of videos to be made  Contact public relations firms to assess feasibility and concept	Early 2013	Concept would need to be in 2013 budget proposal	€ 3-5,000 per video
Develop educational programming –	OMPR Office of Secretary	Initiate contact with RTK on weekly 1-hour show	Mid 2013	Begin airing in late 2013	TBD

Parliamentary hour show	negotiate with RTK				
Develop educational programming – youth guide	OMPR	Meet with Youth Caucus and youth-oriented civic organizations to assess need and type of guide	late-2013	Guide could be print publication and/or video	TBD
Community outreach	Presidency Parliamentary Groups OMPR	Opening of municipal Parliamentary offices	Early 2013	In line with Assembly Strategic Plan, objective 8.1	€40,000 (Proposal from 2012 mid-year budget review)
		Brief MPs on benefits of community outreach	Early 2014	Assembly should host public event when each office is opened	€7,000
		Assess feasibility of outreach activities, look at models of community outreach	Early 2014		
		Ensure offices are equipped with publications	Early 2014		
		Invite local media to build relations	Early 2014		
		Hold regional meetings with municipal structures and citizens	Early 2015		
Civil society cooperation - database	OMPR	Launch civil society database	July 2012		No budgetary implications
		Maintain database	Continuous		
Civil society cooperation - political dialogue.	Assembly Presidency Interested Members of the Assembly Assembly administration, Civil Society Relations Officer, OMPR (logistics support)	Form political working group to conduct strategic dialogue	March 2013		No budgetary implications
		Hold regular working group meeting	continuous		donor-supported activity
Civil society cooperation – NGO	Assembly Presidency Interested Members of		annual, starting in late 2013	Assembly will coordinate with civil society on all	TBD (donor supported activity)

forum	the Assembly, Assembly administration, Civil Society Relations Officer OMPR (logistics support)			stages of planning	
Visitor Information Center	OMPR	Opening of Visitors Center  Furnish and equip office  Install display of publications	September 2012		donor-supported activity
To enhance transparency of Assembly through live webcasting of Plenary, Presidency, and Committee meetings	Assembly administration IT section Support by OMPR	Assess practice of parliamentary webcasting and for technology needed to install and ensure webcasting  purchase of equipment  Live streaming of sessions, committee meeting on Assembly website	2013  Early 2014  From mid 2014	Presidency approval needed to shift priority  In line with Assembly Strategic Plan, objective 8.1 (shifting funds from TV to webcasting assessment)  Switch Plenary hall feed to web casting, purchase and install equipment for control room and up to eight rooms (Presidency and committees)	€10,000  €300,000

### ***Improve Media Relations***

Task	Responsibility	Indicators	Timeline	Comments	Budget Implication
Press conferences	Presidency Committee chairpersons OMPR support	Press conferences following meetings are held on a regular basis	continual		No budgetary implications
Background Briefings	Committee chairperson and members OMPR support	Agreement to begin background briefings for media and civil society and regular basis	continual	OMPR and Committee Coordinators work closely together to plan briefings	No budgetary implications
Improve media room	Support by OMPR	Increase open hours of	JFebruary 2013		

		room, develop ways to ensure room is open during all Assembly working hours			
		Create stand-up interview space	March 2013		€400
		Add shelving for publications	April 2013		€100
Educate journalists on the work of the Assembly	OMPR	Meet with journalists to discuss topics of interest	Early 2013	To be offered quarterly	No budgetary implications
		Develop information sessions	Late 2013		

### ***Capacity Building***

Task	Responsibility	Indicators	Timeline	Comments	Budget Implication
Training for OMPR staff	Assembly administration	On-site skills training in effective writing	September 2013 December 2013 March 2014	Writing for effect will help improve quality of press releases, publications, and other public information	€5,000
		On-site skills training on photography	October 2013	To help improve quality of photos as Assembly creates a photo database  In line with Assembly Strategic Plan, objective 8.1	
Create list of services for MPs	OMPR Assembly administration	OMPR publicizes list of services it provides to the Assembly	Late 2012		No budgetary implications
Recruit professional webmaster/graphic designer	Assembly administration OMPR	Develop terms of reference for position	August 2013	In line with Assembly Strategic Plan, objective 8.1	€3,000/yr
		Hire webmaster/graphic designer	June 2013		

Translation services	OMPR Assembly administration	Consistent translation of publications and website into Serbian and English	continual	In line with Assembly Strategic Plan, objective 8.1  Assembly should consider outside translation services to ensure all publications are translated in a timely manner	€10,000/yr
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