

## Parliament-to-Citizen Forum

16 April 2024 Hotel Tirana International, Balsha Room

### Background

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) will organize the Parliament-to-Citizen Forum to promote participatory democracy and facilitate dialogue between citizens and the Parliament of Albania. This initiative stems from a series of regional workshops and capacity-building activities, which provided civil society actors with the knowledge and skills needed to engage with parliamentary decision-making processes and advocate for local concerns. These activities have highlighted several issues regarding the representative and oversight function of the parliament and civic engagement. Civil society actors have voiced concerns such as the limited presence of Members of Parliament (MPs) in the community, challenges accessing timely information for public hearings and decision-making, and the need for more transparent and effective consultation processes.

In response to these concerns, IDM plans to introduce deliberative tools such as Citizens Assemblies and issue-based public hearings with parliamentary committees. Taking inspiration from the best practices of the Scottish Parliament, Citizens Assemblies will be implemented in Albania to further enhance civic engagement and promote meaningful participation in parliamentary processes.

In line with the strategic objectives of the Albanian Assembly, the forum aims to establish an annual practice of ongoing dialogue and collaboration with citizens and interest groups. The ultimate goal is to integrate this practice into the parliamentary calendar.

Additionally, by leveraging diverse perspectives and expertise from forum participants—including MPs, parliamentary staff, civil society organizations (CSOs), youth, activists, and citizens—the forum will provide valuable inputs for formulating strategic objectives and priorities aimed at enhancing public participation, transparency, and responsiveness within the Parliament. Thus, the forum serves as an important platform for collaboratively shaping the Parliament's approach to public engagement, aligning it with the needs and expectations of citizens.

Each panel of the Parliament-to-Citizen Forum will feature presentations, and interactive discussions, providing participants with opportunities to share insights, exchange ideas, and propose actionable recommendations for enhancing parliamentary engagement and responsiveness.

This initiative is part of the project "Increasing Parliament's Responsiveness to Citizens' Concerns," implemented by the consortium of IDM, AIS, and Citizens Channel, with financial support from the British Government.

## Draft Agenda

10:00 - 10:15	Registration and Welcome Coffee
10:15 - 10:30	<b>Opening Remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Sotirag Hroni, Executive Director, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)</li> <li>H.E. Alastair King-Smith, Ambassador, British Embassy Tirana</li> <li>Mrs. Ermonela Felaj, Deputy Speaker of the Albanian Assembly</li> </ul>
10:30 - 11:30	<b>Panel I: Citizen engagement and public consultation</b> This panel will address issues related to transparency and effectiveness in consultation processes in parliament. It will incorporate insights from the Scottish Parliament's successful endeavors in fostering citizen engagement and public consultation. This panel will bring together local stakeholders and youth from Albania to discuss strategies for enhancing citizen participation and inclusivity in parliamentary processes. <p><b>Potential panellists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Emir Abrashi, Policy Analyst, Democracy Plus, Kosova</li> <li>Mr. Lorin Kadiu, Executive Director, Citizens Channel</li> <li>Mr. Aleksandër Trajçe, Executive Director, Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)</li> <li>Mrs. Besmira Lekaj, HANA Centre, Lezhe</li> </ul> <p><b>Interactive discussions. Q&amp;A session with the audience.</b></p>
11:30- 12:30	<b>Panel II: Introducing Deliberative Tools in Parliamentary Practice</b> This panel will provide reflections from the learning visit in the Scottish Parliament on the Citizen Assemblies and explore mechanisms for embedding deliberative democracy within the parliamentary scrutiny function, ensuring meaningful citizen participation in decision-making processes. <p><b>Potential panellists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mrs. Ruth Hart, Engagement Lead Capacity Building &amp; Standards, Involve UK</li> <li>Mrs. Ina Zhupa, Member of Parliament</li> <li>Mrs. Klodiana Spahiu, Member of Parliament</li> <li>Representative of the staff of the Albanian Parliament</li> <li>Mr. Klaudio Hyseni, Durresi Aktiv</li> </ul> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Mr. Gjergji Vurmo, Senior Advisor, Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)</p> <p><b>Interactive discussions. Q&amp;A session with the audience.</b></p>
12:30 - 12:45	Recap of key insights and recommendations from the panel discussions.
12.30-13.30	Lunch