

Working meeting organized by NDI with the Committee for Oversight of Public Finances of the Assembly of Kosovo and the National Audit Office of Kosovo on cooperation between the SAI and Parliament

On 31 October–1 November 2024, a working meeting aimed at strengthening cooperation between Parliament and the SAI-s was held in Pristina. The meeting was organised by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and was attended by representatives of the Parliament of Albania and the Albanian Supreme Audit Institution (ALSAI). The working group held meetings at the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo and the National Audit Office of Kosovo (ZKA).

The first working meeting was held at the Assembly of Kosovo, where representatives of the Parliament of Albania and ALSAI were attended by Ms. Hykmete Bajrami, Chair of the Committee for Oversight of Public Finances and committee members Ms Arta Bajralija and Ms. Yllëza Hoti.

Ms. Hykmete Bajrami welcomed the establishment of the Subcommittee on Public Sector Auditing in the Parliament of Albania and the Directorate for Relations with the Subcommittee within ALSAI. She stressed that the Assembly regards the NAO as a partner, since through the NAO's audit reports and recommendations, the Assembly is informed about how public funds have been spent and how audited entities have responded by taking corrective action to implement the recommendations issued by the NAO.

Ms. Hykmete Bajrami emphasized: "It is very important to have effective cooperation with the NAO while respecting its independence."

During the meeting, representatives of the Committee presented its role and scope of work, as well as the way in which the Committee coordinates its work with the NAO. They stressed that the main focus is to increase the level of implementation of recommendations issued by the NAO, as the principal instrument available to an SAI for the sound management of public funds, improvement of governance and prevention of corrupt practices.

The second working meeting was held at the National Audit Office of Kosovo, where representatives of the Parliament of Albania and ALSAI were received by Auditor General Ms Vlora Spanca, Deputy Auditor General Beza Halilaj, Assistant Auditors General Zukë Zuka, Emine Fazliu, Ramadan Gashi, and others.

Ms. Vlora Spanca, Auditor General, welcomed the establishment of the Subcommittee on Public Sector Auditing as an oversight mechanism within the Parliament of the Republic of Albania and stated: "Supreme Audit Institutions have the mission of providing Parliament and citizens with objective and independent information on the spending of public funds, as well as assisting Parliament in holding entities that manage public funds accountable."

The Auditor General, Ms. Vlora Spanca, also emphasized: "Safeguarding its independence is vital for the effective functioning of a Supreme Audit Institution."

With the aim of benefiting from the NAO's experience, Director General Mr. Safet Berisha presented the constitutional and legal framework, while Ms Qëndresa Mulaj, Director for International Cooperation and Communication, presented the NAO's cooperation with the Assembly, specifically with the Committee for Oversight of Public Finances and the Committee on Budget, Labour and Transfers.

It was also highlighted that the implementation of recommendations remains an important issue for both the NAO and ALSAI, and that the role of the Committee and the Subcommittee will be important in increasing the level of their implementation.

During these meetings, members of the Committee for Oversight of Public Finances and representatives of the NAO answered participants' questions and helped clarify the Committee's role and scope of work in relation to the National Audit Office.

ALSAI thanks the organisers of this working meeting, represented by Ms Ana Kovacevic, Director of NDI Albania, as well as the Committee for Oversight of Public Finances, represented by Ms Hykmete Bajrami, and the NAO, represented by Ms Vlora Spanca, for their hospitality and for sharing their experience.

The Parliament of Albania was represented at the meeting by Mr Eduard Shalsi, Chair of the Standing Committee on Economy and Finance; members of the Subcommittee on Public Sector Auditing, Ms. Emilia Koliqi (Chair), Ms. Sorina Koti and Mr. Alban Xhelili (members); as well as Nivini Lekaj, Besi Londo and Dea Dragoti from the staff of the Directorate for Monitoring Services of Independent Institutions.

ALSAI was represented at the meeting by Ms. Brunilda Zeneli, Director of the Directorate for Relations with the Parliamentary Subcommittee, and Ms. Kristina Pushi, auditor in the Directorate for Relations with the Parliamentary Subcommittee.

NDI, as the organiser, was represented by Ms Ana Kovacevic, Director of NDI Albania; Mr. Rinor Beka, Programme Adviser at NDI Albania and Ms. Sabina Babameto, NDI Albania Officer.