USAID Renews Grant to SPEA
Parliamentary Development Project for Ukraine Continues

Starting in 1991, professors from Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) began a dialogue with visiting parliamentarians of the then Republic of Ukraine to help them understand the American system of governance.

Two more delegations, from a newly independent Ukraine, later returned to IU to discuss specific projects, including the writing of a new constitution.

Out of these conferences grew the three-year Parliamentary Development Project for Ukraine (PDP), directed by SPEA's Charles Wise through a cooperative agreement with the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation, and funded by $3.45 million grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The PDP has been the principal program through which USAID provides technical assistance to Ukraine’s national Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. In the 1994-97 phase, five key areas of institutional reform were targeted: legislative-executive relations; legislative processes; budget processes; committee structure and operations; and transparency.

During this period, the PDP made significant contributions in developing a democratic, national legislature. For example, in June 1996, a new constitution was passed. Equally crucial PDP activities included the steady publication and distribution of information and the translation of approximately 150 laws, legislative rules, analyses, and articles from Western sources.

The PDP is publishing five handbooks, in each of the five key areas, written by PDP advisors and Ukrainian specialists. A sixth handbook spells out the responsibilities of being a parliamentarian in a democratic system.

In 1997, USAID awarded SPEA another $2 million renewal grant to complete Phase II of the project through December, 1999. With the new constitution in place, the PDP will continue providing technical assistance to the deputies, but will turn its efforts to new areas such as improving the country’s capabilities for policy analysis. A system of Ukrainian experts will be created, drawn from non-governmental organizations, research universities and institutes, and the Verkhovna Rada, to provide indigenous analyses of prospective policy proposals.

The PDP also will work closely with popularly elected local councils which, since June 1997, have become important components of Ukraine’s fledgling democracy. The PDP will work systematically to help these political structures operate more autonomously, so they can make sound policy decisions to support reform efforts, and establish governing structures that promote democratic accountability and transparency.

Many IU faculty and staff have participated in the activities of the PDP project, meeting Ukrainian delegations here at IU and spending two-week assessment visits in the Ukraine. Current SPEA advisors on the project are Robert Agranoff and Larry Schroeder. Ellie Valentine continues to be the field coordinator in Ukraine. Over the years, the project has also sponsored a number of Ukrainian students coming to IU for graduate training and work on the project.

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