

NDI REGIONAL INITIATIVE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

**DELIVERING DEMOCRACY:
STRATEGIES TO OPEN AND HONEST GOVERNMENT
Seminar for Emerging/Young Political Leaders from
Central and Eastern Europe**

**January 29–February 1, 2002
Warsaw, Poland**

Final Report

I. SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

In the first of two pilot seminars under the Central and Eastern European Regional Initiative, NDI co-hosted a conference entitled “Delivering Democracy: Strategies to Open and Honest Government.” In bringing together 24 emerging political activists from five of NDI’s CEE programs (Albania, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia) the aims of the seminar are to:

- Help participants build and refine their political leadership skills, particularly in the areas of coalition-building and communication, through training focused on combating corruption – an issue that represents a challenge to democratic development across the region;
- Encourage leaders to think about broader cooperation on anti-corruption – with other countries in the region and with European and North American organizations/donors.
- Provide a networking opportunity for emerging leaders to build cross-border professional bonds and share lessons learned.

Trainers and speakers for the seminar included:

- **Miroslav Beblavy:** Slovak Governance Institute, Executive Director
- **Kjell Larsson:** European Anti-Fraud Office, Acting Director for the Directorate of Intelligence, Operational Strategy, and Information Technology
- **Dorota Mitrus:** European Institute for Democracy, Director
- **Shannon O’Connell:** NDI/Serbia, Resident Representative for Party Building
- **Paul Rowland:** NDI/Serbia, Country Director
- **Emilia Sicakova:** Transparency International/Slovakia, President
- **Andrew Young:** NDI Political Party Trainer

II. ACTIVITIES

Opening Plenary and Reception

NDI trainers began the conference with an introductory/ welcome session focused on leadership; participants and trainers were asked to identify successful leaders whom they admired and to explain why. After this initial discussion, seminar participants moved to the residence of U.S. Ambassador to Poland, Christopher Hill, who hosted the opening reception. Ambassador Hill provided background information on Poland, also answering participants' questions related to development of democracy in Poland in comparison to other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. He spoke to participants about the need for young leaders in Central and Eastern Europe to overcome old biases and work together across the region to solve the problems that challenge each of their democracies.

Tackling Tough Topics: How and Why to Launch Issue-Based Campaigns

In this workshop, led by Ms. O'Connell, discussion focused on defining issue based campaigns, developing strategies and messages for such campaigns, and building coalitions.

After conducting a decision-making exercise with the participants, Ms. O'Connell began by defining an issue-based campaign as "an attempt to move public opinion or influence public behavior." She emphasized the importance of developing an effective, detailed strategy and sticking to it, and stressed staying on message at all times as the key component of a successful campaign.

Ms. O'Connell noted that political leaders commonly mistake tactics for strategies, when there is, in fact, an essential distinction between the two: strategy is the vision; tactics are the tools used to achieve that vision. The keys to a good strategy are: developing a well-defined plan with clear goals, identifying activities that will help one reach the set goals, and organizing a schedule for these activities.

Ms. O'Connell outlined the steps for creating realistic goals in an issue-based campaign. First, the focus must be relatively narrow. Rather than promising to deliver something as lofty as peace, it is more productive for leaders to start by promising to deliver jobs to a community. Campaign organizers must identify exactly what they want to accomplish and in what timeframe. Only after those goals are established should they look at which tactics to employ.

Second, campaign planners must keep goals specific, realistic, and attainable. They must clearly define what success would look like for their campaign. As an example, Ms. O'Connell used the popular "Got Milk" campaign that the U.S. Dairy Farmers employed to increase milk consumption among women. After conducting research, dairy farmers realized that the number of women drinking milk had declined sharply. Their goal was not to get all women to drink milk; rather, they chose the more

realistic goal of stopping the decline. Because their goal was clearly defined and realistic, they were better able to design a successful campaign.

Ms. O'Connell then moved on to the third area of planning: determining the target of a campaign. The ability to move public opinion to public action depends on understanding the political audience, and knowing whom to target. Leaders must identify, first of all the campaign's "base" of support – those citizens who are ready to support action on the issue. Next, leaders must identify citizens groups who can be convinced to join the base once they understand the aim of action on the issue. This group is known as the "persuadables". Lastly, campaign organizers must have an understanding of who will work in opposition to the idea or action -- no matter what. An effective campaign must include a strategy to contend with each of these categories.

For the base, strategists must ask how they will solidify and activate these supporters. Ms. O'Connell stressed that members of the base should never be taken for granted. The persuadables are perhaps the most ambiguous group, but winning their support is critical to the eventual success of the campaign. Planners must dedicate time to figuring out who composes this group and how they can be convinced to support the campaign, and motivated to become part of the base.

Finally, strategists must determine who the opposition will be, and how to neutralize opposition activities. An important tool in planning for how to manage this audience segment is for the campaign planners to consider how the opposition would run a campaign against the issue at stake. Ms. O'Connell advised that participants be ready for anything that the opposition could throw against them.

In developing an issue-based campaign strategy, it is crucial to remember that values are the cornerstone of any good strategy. Planners must look at values first when defining a strategy and decide which values they intend to represent. Without a strong foundation in values, an issue-based campaign will not succeed. Ms. O'Connell also stressed the importance of staying on message; the most successful campaigns can withstand strong, organized opposition but still get their message across. This is achieved through constant public communication efforts that entail repeating the message consistently, while never straying from the topic at hand.

As an exercise to practice these concepts, Ms. O'Connell asked the larger group to break up into 4 multi-national, multi-party groups. She asked each group to develop a strategy for an issue-based campaign topic of their choice -- corruption, drug abuse, or any other issue of interest. After working in groups for twenty minutes, the participants reconvened to discuss their proposed campaigns, and to share perspectives on areas of particular difficulty in developing such a campaign. They also discussed which segments of the population could be targeted for which kinds of issues.

Ms. O'Connell's next training segment involved message development and delivery. Drawing on American examples of issue-based campaigns, including American TV ads promoting awareness of child hunger in the United States and a post-September 11 ad promoting ethnic tolerance, Ms. O'Connell engaged participants in discussion of the qualities that constitute a solid, clear, and memorable means to deliver a message.

Participants once again split into their groups to develop a message for their issue-based campaign. Ms. O'Connell emphasized that an effective campaign targets a specific demographic. Leaders cannot target "hard-workers" or "honest people"; rather, the target group must be well-defined and tangible – for example, "mothers", "employed people", or "youth" – so the leaders do not have to spend time and waste resources determining who belongs to the target group.

Obstacles to Open and Honest Government: An Overview of Corruption

Transparency International-Slovakia (TIS) trainers Emilia Sicakova and Miroslav Beblavy provided an overview of the nature of corruption, in practice, and why it persists. In addition to defining areas of corruption, the trainers examined economic reasons for the presence of corruption in political systems throughout the world, including in countries in transition.

Participants broke into multi-national teams to discuss the most prevalent forms of corruption in their countries. After group discussion, participants reported back to the plenary on what they had identified as the specific challenges of corruption. Some participants identified education, while others saw the most damaging effects of corruption in the public health or infrastructure sectors. All agreed, however, that corruption is taking a considerable toll on the development of Central and Eastern European states and slowing economic and political reform efforts.

Building Open and Honest Government: Anti-Corruption Tools

The next session focused on the concrete tools political leaders can employ to build openness and honesty in government. The TI trainers underscored that instituting the means to guarantee transparency in any process, such as by promulgating Freedom of Information legislation, can help to limit the space where corruption can exist. Codes of ethics and clear establishment of official standards of behavior, as well as reform of public administration through decentralization, are useful first steps to combat corruption. Both trainers emphasized that corruption cannot be eliminated solely through efforts of the government or civil society, but only through a unified and coordinated effort of these two sectors.

The TI trainers noted the special responsibility of political leadership to work against corruption – both within their parties and within government. In regard to fighting corruption in government, concrete measures include parties' announcing a clear declaration of political will to fight the problem and committing to do so; taking actions that focus on prevention through systemic changes; and advocating specific anti-corruption legislation and working toward its adoption. In terms of fighting corruption within political parties, the TI trainers introduced the concept of Political Party's Integrity System (PPIS) to improve the perception of transparency within a political party. In particular, PPIS must address party finance, business activity, interaction between public finance and activities of party members, and sanctions for disobeying party rules.

**Dinner with Mr. Kjell Larsson, Acting Director for Intelligence,
Operational Strategy and Information Technology Directorate,
European Commission Anti-Fraud Office**

Kjell Larsson delivered a keynote speech addressing the problems and potential solutions to combating corruption in government. Mr. Larsson noted that overcoming old thinking in post-communist countries remains a challenge to efforts to reform the system, but also offered some useful starting points to begin to address the issue.

Limiting the power of politicians and drawing a distinct line between public administration and politicians are essential first steps to creating more transparent government that is less susceptible to corruption. Similarly important are efforts to improve standards of management and accountability in public administration, and to improve coordination between police and customs.

Creating greater accountability in public administration can also help to improve relations between the government and the public and further close the space for corruption to exist. The public has a role to play in defeating corruption by refusing to engage in it. Increasing public trust in administration can lead to decreased public resentment, thereby decreasing the incentive for members of the public to flout official authority, including by engaging in bribery and other similar activities.

Mr. Larsson concluded that the only way to combat corruption is to embark on a long-term process of improving public institutions and generating greater public confidence in government.

Networking, Organizing and Coalition-Building Around an Issue

Shannon O'Connell and Paul Rowland's training on networking, organizing, and coalition building around an issue assisted participants in distinguishing between campaign-related activities. They first emphasized the importance of teamwork in politics, emphasizing that power is more powerful when it's shared. Political work on

every level involves working with people who might not share the same beliefs or ideas, and group building is an important tool for success.

Mr. Rowland and Ms. O'Connell then described the difference between networking and organizing, two methods that politicians use to begin forming coalitions. Networking is an informal method of building alliances, and it is an opportunity for people to gain information and offer their expertise to others. Organizing is the next, more formal stage that involves mobilizing people within a network to lend their expertise to a campaign. It is important to identify and categorize potential allies early on; Ms. O'Connell suggested using a system of concentric circles, with the strongest supporters – such as family and friends – closest to the center, and with outright opponents in the outermost circles. The circles will help determine how organizers can best allocate funds and responsibilities.

The trainers then discussed the importance of understanding how coalitions form and function effectively. It is important for coalition builders to understand people's motivations to best use their skills and resources and also to know how to motivate them. Ms. O'Connell defined the four stages of forming a group: *Forming* is when a group comes together and measures itself against other groups, establishing its own identity. *Storming* is the stage in which members voice their concerns and internal discontent develops as members explore each other's "hidden agendas". *Norming* is the stage in which the group becomes more interdependent. *Performing*, the final stage in group building, is when the different factions coalesce, having established structures and relationships and is working together to achieve the tasks at hand.

Public Speaking and Presentation Skills

Paul Rowland led the workshop on public speaking. Encouraging participants to begin thinking critically about their own public speaking abilities, Mr. Rowland asked participants to list their greatest fear about public speaking. Most noted that not knowing the subject in sufficient detail or having their mind go blank were their greatest concerns. Mr. Rowland then recounted the basics of the topic, noting that leaders generally speak too much and say more than is necessary. An ideal speech will reflect the same message several times throughout, and would contain at the most three main points. Sending numerous messages to an audience often confuses them, as the major concepts can easily be lost in the chaos of trying to deliver too many messages.

Each participant then prepared and delivered a brief speech in their language of choice. The participants recorded one speech in front of the camera, and then received comments and suggestions from Mr. Rowland and other participants. After taking a few moments to absorb the suggestions, the participants gave the same speech. Both speeches were videotaped, and participants were given their tapes to take home with instructions on how to view it critically with an eye to enhancing their own message delivery.

Group Simulation Exercise

The participants were broken down into multi-national, multi-party groups to work on an anti-corruption simulation in order to practice the political skills they had developed throughout the conference. This also allowed them the opportunity to solidify ties with each other and share perspectives on the problem of corruption and means to combat it.

Each group was given a scenario involving corruption in a fictional country; each participant was assigned a role in that fictional country's political system. Participants had to work together to develop a strategy of how to respond to the situation and how to develop a strategy to combat corruption in the situation they were given. Teams then presented their strategies to other participants and to the trainers. Discussion of each program followed, and trainers and participants gave feedback on what aspects of each strategy were likely to be most effective. The trainers stressed, in general, the need to set attainable goals, stick to a strategy, and develop and repeat a single message.