



Transparency and Integrity Strategy of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality

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Table of Contents

Introduction..... 3
Vision 4
Strategic Directions 5
Direction I. Transparency 6
Direction II. Citizen Engagement and Accountability..... 6
Direction III. Human Resource Management..... 7
Direction IV. Ethics and Corruption Risk Reduction 8
Direction V. Public Procurement..... 9
Direction VI. Permits 10
Direction VII. Internal Audit 10
Direction VIII. Legal Entities subordinated to the City Hall of Telavi Municipality 11
Guidelines for the Implementation of the Strategy..... 12
Monitoring the Implementation of the Transparency and Integrity Strategy and Action Plan 12

Introduction

During recent years, Georgia has made significant progress in the fight against corruption and despite the challenges remains a leader in the region as is proved by various international surveys and rankings. Ensuring accountability and integrity are essential preconditions for democratic governance as well as for fight against corruption, as it promotes well-functioning public service delivery mechanisms and guarantees citizens' engagement in the decision-making processes. Additionally, it encourages efficient problem-solving and has a positive impact on the overall trust in the government.

Strengthening of local self-government and decentralization are the essential preconditions for the democratic development of the state. Increasing the involvement of municipalities in policy-making process and strengthening the Public Administration Reform at local level are crucial for effective implementation of transparency and integrity policy in municipalities. This itself is one of the priorities of the Association Agenda and, at the same time, has a positive impact on achieving the sustainable development goals.¹ Considering best practices, local strategic documents tailored to individual needs play a significant role in the process of preventing corruption, as well as in terms of systemic improvement of transparency and integrity mechanisms.

In order to strengthen the role of municipalities in the implementation of Anti-corruption policy, within the National Anti-corruption Strategy 2019-2020, one of the several other objectives (with regard to municipalities) is to advance integrity and transparency in municipalities, one of the activities of which is the development of integrity and accountability strategies. Developing transparency and integrity strategies and action plans in municipalities is also a recommendation provided by the Anti-Corruption Network of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-ACN).² Therefore, the City Hall of Telavi municipality in cooperation with the Good Governance Initiative project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) prepared the Integrity and Transparency Strategy and Action Plan of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality.

In order to develop evidence-based strategic documents the City Hall of Telavi municipality together with IDFI conducted an in-depth situation analysis in terms of transparency and integrity. Based on the recommendations elaborated for elimination the gaps and challenges

¹ Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia, 2017 – 2020, p. 18, available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/annex_ii_-_eu-georgia_association_agenda_text.pdf

² OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (OECD-ACN), Anti-Corruption Reforms in Georgia - Fourth Round of Monitoring of the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan, 2016, p. 23, recommendation 1, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/OECD-ACN-Georgia-Round-4-Monitoring-Report-ENG.pdf>.

identified within the situation analysis, the priority directions, goals and objectives of the strategy were determined.

The situational analysis was prepared with the active involvement of the City Hall staff and civil society representatives. During the preparation process of the situation analysis, the City Hall studied the existing anti-corruption legislative framework and policy-making documents; international recommendations regarding Georgia - OECD-ACN / GRECO monitoring reports and their general standards. The focus was on recommendations that were relevant to local government. At the same time, the state audit reports regarding the City Hall of Telavi Municipality were examined for the situation analysis.

Based on the transparency and integrity strategy of Telavi Municipality, the City Hall develops and approves a two-year action plan for the implementation of the strategy. To achieve the goals and objectives identified in the strategy the action plan determines specific activities, outcome/output indicators, responsible/partner structural units, risks, term of implementation and funding source.

In order to develop the strategic documents, in the City Hall of Telavi Municipality, a working group has been created which consists of the heads of the primary structural units of the City Hall. Once a year, the working group reviews the Transparency and Integrity Strategy and Action Plan of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality and updates the documents in response to ongoing challenges as well as based on the experience gained during their implementation.

Transparency and Integrity Strategy and Action Plan of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality is approved by the Mayor.

Vision

The fight against corruption requires constant efforts and intensive work to eliminate potential corruption risks. The City Hall of Telavi Municipality understands that the introduction of high standards of integrity and transparency in practice is essential for the proper functioning of the service. This envisages the establishment of a transparent and accountable system free from corruption, where the ensuring integrity and creating ethical environment is of particular importance. Successful implementation of the transparency and integrity strategy and action plan creates an opportunity to change the governance processes in the municipality as needed.

Establishment of accountable and transparent government agencies for the prevention of corruption is of particular importance in bringing Georgia closer to the European family, as the

Georgia-EU Association Agreement commits the country to establish an accountable, efficient, transparent and professional public service.³

Considering that Georgia has achieved significant success in the fight against corruption, the main vision of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality at the new stage is the following:

1. Establishment of a transparent, accountable and corruption-free system at local level;
2. Increasing citizen engagement in the activities of the municipality and the population's trust of local authorities;
3. Ensuring the prosperity of the local population and effective management of public financial resources;

Strategic Directions

In order to ensure a high standard of transparency and integrity in the City Hall of Telavi Municipality and achieve the abovementioned strategic visions, the City Hall tends to determine eight significant strategic priorities:

1. Transparency that includes the accessibility of public information in the City Hall, proactive transparency and standards of data processing, including the accessibility of open data.
2. Citizen engagement and accountability that includes the tools of participation in the activities of the City Hall provided by law, the practice of participation of employees and the community in decision-making as well as budget drafting process.
3. Human Resource Management that covers the practical enforcement of basic and auxiliary civil service legislation on the recruitment, dismissal, remuneration, career development, ethics and etc.; distribution of human resources.
4. Ethics and disciplinary proceedings, that include the norms of ethics and integrity of the City Hall staff, rules and standards of disciplinary proceedings, and the awareness of City Hall staff on these issues, public servants' awareness of whistleblower protection instruments and existing practice in this regard.
5. Public procurements that address the procedures of planning and implementation of public procurement of the City Hall and the circumstances related to the implemented procurements.
6. Permits in the context of quality assurance of service delivery and their compliance with integrity standards.

³ “Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part” (2014), Article 4.

7. Internal financial control that is related to the proper functioning of the internal control mechanisms of a public institution.
8. Legal entities subordinated to the City Hall of Telavi Municipality in the context of ensuring high standards of transparency and accountability.

Direction I. Transparency

Certain transparency standards are already introduced in the City Hall of Telavi municipality, however, the City Hall realizes that it is important to refine and improve the existing standards; pay attention to the qualification of the person responsible for publishing public information; introduce in practice the standards of proactive disclosure of public information in open data format, ensure constant updating of data on the website and improve the access to public information. Together with the City Hall, it is important to establish these transparency standards in the legal entities subordinated to the City Hall.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall of Telavi municipality is to improve the quality of transparency in the City Hall**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Raise Awareness of the Employees of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality about Public Information** – for ensuring high standard of transparency it is important to raise awareness of employees, who are responsible for responding to the public information requests, as well as for processing and issuing public information and carrying out the appropriate procedure. In particular, the objective aims to raise the qualification of the person responsible for publishing public information and train the heads of the primary structural units of the City Hall in public information.
- **Improve Access to Public Information** – for ensuring high standard of transparency it is also important to ensure high access to public information. Considering this, the objective aims to improve the practice of proactive disclosure of public information and producing open data.

Direction II. Citizen Engagement and Accountability

Mechanisms for accountability and citizen engagement in the activities of the municipality do exist in the City Hall. However, the City Hall of Telavi Municipality recognizes that it is important to improve these mechanisms and raise public awareness about them in order the public to be informed regarding their rights and the mechanisms they can use to participate in the activities of the City Hall of Telavi municipality. It is important for the local population to get information about activities which are implemented by the City Hall on the basis of civic initiatives. It is also

necessary for the City Hall to be more active in terms of meetings and discussions with the local population and to encourage civil society initiatives. The City Hall realizes that is of great importance to improve the communication with citizens, including by promoting the activities of the Civic Advisory Board, responding to the issues discussed at the Board and developing the capacity of individuals involved in public relations.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall of Telavi municipality is to strengthen the role of the society in implementation of local self-government and increase the accountability of the City Hall.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Increase Citizen Engagement in the Activities of the Municipality** – ensuring citizen engagement in decision-making process of the local self-government is the most important factor of democratic governance. Despite the efforts made in terms of citizen engagement in the activities of the City Hall, ensuring a high quality of involvement still remains a challenge. The City Hall of Telavi Municipality realizes that it is important to improve the existing mechanisms as well as to raise local population awareness of these mechanisms. At the same time, for the proper functioning and active use of the services offered by the municipality, it is important for the population to be properly informed. Accordingly, the objective considers to improve communication practices with the local population and raise local population awareness about existing forms of participation in the City Hall activities and the most necessary local services.
- **Introduce Policy Analysis Practice in the City Hall of Telavi Municipality** – the City Hall of Telavi municipality considers that properly designed policy and its coordinated implementation is just as important at the local level as at the national level. Considering that this contributes to the effectiveness of the relevant agency in achieving the set goals, as well as to the development of citizen-based approaches, the objective aims to introduce standards of policy analysis at local level.

Direction III. Human Resource Management

The City Hall of Telavi Municipality is aware of the need to introduce additional regulations in the field of human resource management. In particular, it is important to conduct functional analysis of the agency, define job descriptions in detail based on the analysis and determine employees' salaries according to the workload. The City Hall also considers it important to pay more attention to the professional development of the staff and introducing relevant issues to the newly appointed employees.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall is to ensure human resource sustainability and promote professional development of employees.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Improve Human Resource Management** – for uninterrupted functioning of the City Hall it is important to ensure proper personnel policy and optimization of the resources. Accordingly, the objective considers to conduct functional analysis, ensure the rationalization of human resources and employees' remuneration and support the newly appointed employees in the process of getting acquainted with the working principles and practices of the City Hall.
- **Refine the Professional Development System of Human Resources** – the City Hall of Telavi Municipality realizes that the quality and efficiency of the city hall activities is depended on the qualification of its employees. Therefore, it is important to constantly improve the qualification of employees. Considering this, the objective aims to carry out professional analysis of public servants, assess the needs of the employees and plan and implement relevant trainings.

Direction IV. Ethics and Corruption Risk Reduction

The City Hall of Telavi Municipality realizes that creating an ethical environment is crucial in the public service system since this promotes the formation of a transparent and accountable service. For establishing high ethical culture and standards the City Hall aims to develop a code of ethics and practical guide tailored to the specifics of the City Hall, which will provide specific examples and practical advices on the issues such as prohibited gifts, conflict of interest, position incompatibility, misuse of administrative resources, etc. At the same time, the City Hall considers it necessary to work intensively on raising the awareness of employees and officials on the issues of ethics as well as the institute of whistleblowers. In addition, the City Hall considers it necessary to assign an appropriate staff unit, who will be responsible for improving the ethics environment in the City Hall. Additionally, the City Hall aims to improve the abilities of the unit responsible for supervising ethical norms.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall is to establish high ethical culture and standards in the City Hall.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Improve Ethical Environment in the City Hall of Telavi Municipality** – in order to improve internal regulations related to ethics and integrity, the objective considers to develop and introduce in practice a code of ethics of the City Hall and its practical guide; raise city hall employees' awareness on issues of ethics, integrity and whistleblower institute and other relevant issues; introduce a consultation mechanism to improve the ethical environment.

- **Introduce Corruption Risk Assessment System in the City Hall of Telavi Municipality** – to establish corruption-free public service the objective considers to introduce corruption risk assessment mechanism in the City Hall of Telavi municipality.

Direction V. Public Procurement

Despite the efforts made by the City Hall of Telavi Municipality to establish high standards in public procurement, there still are some challenges in this direction. The City Hall aims to improve the internal control mechanisms as well as introduce the integrity risk assessment practice in the process of planning and implementing public procurement. The City Hall analyzes that it is a priority to eliminate shortcomings with regard to tenders and promote increasing competition. Herewith, in order to ensure the high quality of transparency, it is of great importance to actively disseminate information about the ongoing tenders as well as other issues related to the procurement. No less important is to ensure high transparency of property privatization process.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall is to establish high standards of public procurement in the City Hall.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Improve Internal Control Mechanisms in Procurement Process** – considering that well-managed procurement plays a significant role in increasing the efficiency of public sector and building citizens' trust, it is of great importance to ensure adequate quality of public procurement system transparency at all stages of the procurement cycle. Accordingly, the objective considers to introduce a mechanism for monitoring the conditions of infrastructural facilities, an electronic monitoring mechanism for the implementation of public procurement contracts, as well as integrity risk assessment system (it is important to implement these activities in the legal entities subordinated to the City Hall).
- **Improve the Transparency of Public Procurement in the City Hall** – in order to increase the transparency, the objective aims to ensure proactive disclosure of public information about ongoing tenders and other issues related to the public procurement (it is important to implement these activities in the legal entities subordinated to the City Hall).
- **Improve the Public Procurement Planning Process by the City Hall** – the objective considers to ensure the proportionality of tender applications, as well as improve communication with potential suppliers to assess their needs (it is important to implement these activities in the legal entities subordinated to the City Hall).
- **Strengthen the Control Mechanisms in Property Privatization Process and Ensure Process Transparency** – the objective considers to ensure equal conditions and create competitive environment at the announced auctions. In addition, it aims to introduce monitoring mechanism of implementation of privatization agreements.

Direction VI. Permits

Basic standards regarding the issuance of permits have already been introduced in the City Hall of Telavi Municipality. The City Hall realizes that the information about these services, their delivery and the appeal procedure is important to be accessible on the City Hall website in an easily understandable form.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall is to facilitate the use of permitting services for municipality population.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Promote Informing the Population about the Permitting Service by Telavi Municipality** – for the proper functioning and active use of the services offered by the municipality it is important for the population to be properly informed. Accordingly, the objective considers to raise local population awareness.
- **Improve Complaint Consideration Procedure Related to Permitting Service** – to simplify the use of the service and introduce an innovative e-services the City Hall will ensure the introduction of an electronic mechanism for appealing decisions on permits.

Direction VII. Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Unit of the City Hall of Telavi municipality, as an internal control mechanism, plays a fundamentally important role in terms of preventing corruption and establishing a high level of integrity in the public service. The proper functioning of the Internal Audit Unit is essential for ensuring the effectiveness of the local governance. Although the Internal Audit Unit of the City Hall of Telavi Municipality is functioning properly, due to the importance of its activities in terms of risk management, the City Hall considers it as a priority to strengthen the Unit, especially in terms of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations, ensuring professional development of its employees and improving ethical environment.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall is to strengthen internal audit unit.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Improve the Management of the Risks Facing the City Hall** – the objective considers to strengthen the Internal Audit Unit in terms of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and providing it with adequate human and financial resources. Within the framework of the objective, Telavi City Hall will ensure the independence of the Internal Audit Unit and equip it with adequate human and financial resources. In addition,

the City Hall aims to introduce the practice of continuous periodic training of Internal Audit Unit staff, including on the issues of ethics and conflict of interest.

Direction VIII. Legal Entities subordinated to the City Hall of Telavi Municipality

The City Hall of Telavi Municipality realizes that for ensuring the transparency of the activities of the legal entities under its subordination, particular attention should be paid to the elimination of the shortcomings identified in public procurement. In order to improve public procurement standards in legal entities subordinated to the City Hall, the objectives defined in the procurement direction for the City Hall should be gradually implemented by the legal entities as well. Besides, it is important for each legal entity to have a strong and proper internal control mechanism. It is necessary to develop a rule for accounting representative expenses and to substantiate the need for each expense on the basis of the rule. It is necessary to analyze the activities of legal entities and, if necessary, reorganize them. The standards and principles of the City Hall shall be effectively implemented in legal entities the degree of transparency and accountability of which needs to be significantly improved.

Accordingly, in this direction **the strategic goal of the City Hall is to ensure the transparency of the activities of Legal entities subordinated to the City Hall.**

For achieving this goal, the City Hall of Telavi municipality outlines the following objectives:

- **Improve Human Resource Management of Legal entities subordinated to the City Hall**
– it is important that the standards and personnel policy existing in the City Hall be implemented in the legal entities under its subordination. The objective aims to conduct functional analysis in legal entities to identify the need for their reorganization, as well as optimization of human resources. It also aims to introduce transparent, open recruitment practices.
- **Increase the Transparency of the Activities of Legal entities subordinated to the City Hall**
– this objective considers to ensure the preparation of comprehensive activity reports by the legal entities subordinated to the City Hall, full disclosure of public information and its updating (including staff lists, charters, procurement plans, budgets, budget execution reports, and administrative reports).
- **Improve the Ethical Environment in Legal entities subordinated to the City Hall** – to introduce in practice the standards of ethics, integrity and conflict of interest, the objective aims to raise staff awareness of public information, including open data and their proactive disclosure.
- **Strengthen Internal Control Mechanisms of Legal entities subordinated to the City Hall**
– the objective considers to develop a statute and internal regulation for each legal entity

subordinated to the City Hall and introduce a high standard of accounting representative expenses by developing a special rule.

Guidelines for the Implementation of the Strategy

The City Hall of Telavi Municipality will implement the strategy on the basis of the following principles:

Accountability and integrity: the City Hall of Telavi municipality will provide reports about implementation of the strategy and the activities implemented by the City Hall in order to promote transparency and prevent corruption.

Evidence-based approach: integrity policy will be based on risk assessment at the City Hall of Telavi municipality, analysis of implemented activities and evaluation of the implementation of strategic documents.

Result-oriented approach: the City Hall of Telavi municipality will set realistic goals and take into account the available data, which will enable the evaluation of the outputs.

Civic Sector Engagement: the City Hall of Telavi municipality will collaborate with governmental, non-governmental and international organizations as well as the business sector to effectively implement integrity policy. The civil sector will be involved not only in the development of strategic documents but also in the process of monitoring their implementation.

Transparency of the process and public consultations: the process of preparing strategic documents will ensure openness and the involvement of the local community to take into account their needs and opinions, build trust towards local government and promote citizen empowerment.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Transparency and Integrity Strategy and Action Plan

The purpose of the monitoring methodology of the implementation of Transparency and Integrity Strategy and Action Plan is to establish guidelines, based on which it will be possible to monitor the implementation of the Transparency and Integrity Strategy and Action Plan as well as the policy, which will contribute to the achievement of the goals and objectives.

The monitoring methodology is based on the principles of openness, accountability, responsibility and engagement. The document presents the approaches required for monitoring, methodological tools for qualitative and quantitative assessment.

In the process of monitoring, the implementation of the objectives and activities defined by the Transparency and Integrity Action Plan will be measured according to the quantitative and/or qualitative indicators determined for them in the Action Plan.

Objectives and activities will be given one of four statuses:

1. Fully implemented - the activity/objective is fully completed or almost fully completed and only a minor part is to be performed.
2. Mostly implemented - main part of the activity/objective has been completed, however, some part is still to be performed.
3. Partially implemented - a certain part of the activity / task is performed and the main part is not performed.
4. Not implemented - the activity/objective was not performed at all or so insignificant part of it was performed that it is virtually impossible to mark progress.

The City Hall of Telavi Municipality will prepare monitoring reports annually to assess progress and challenges. The monitoring report will be provided to non-governmental organizations involved in the process for comments. The final monitoring results may be processed by an independent expert. The monitoring results will be discussed with the City Hall staff and the public.

The implementation of the action plan will be coordinated by the City Hall of Telavi Municipality, where in order to effectively manage the process, a contact person will be appointed, who shall be fully informed about the action plan, its implementation stages and responsible units.