

IDIS Report: Local governments in Moldova are overdue to ensure open communication with citizens

Local authorities are overdue in developing rules for participation in the decision making process, informing citizens on matters of public interest and publication of asset declarations of elected representatives. It concludes the report "Local Open Government for active and informed citizens", presented on June 27, by the Institute for Development and Social Initiatives (IDIS) "Viitorul".

"Transparency is the key word that should mean a fundamental change in Moldova. We cannot get very far as long as we do not know who and how to fulfill his duties at the central and local administration. And since the events of 2014 - 2015, we understand that a return to some normalcy in our country can only happen if we put up mechanisms to monitor decisions taken in the public space", said Igor Munteanu, executive director of IDIS "Viitorul".

In turn, Peter Tomášek, Development Cooperation Diplomat at Embassy of the Slovakia in Chisinau mentioned *"Given that more and more citizens come with complaints against municipalities in the country, the project implemented with the support of Slovakia will shed more light in the work of local authorities and citizens will be encouraged to be more involved in the LPA activity and contribute to the development of their community"*.

Attending the event, INEKO director, Peter Golias spoke about Slovakia's experience in monitoring public authorities and the implementation of this concept in our country: *"In Slovakia we managed to create a competition among municipalities to become more open for citizens and better in transparency rankings. We want this for Moldova. In this regard, we have developed this index of transparency in Moldova to provoke local authorities to be more open and thus, to introduce the public control on the decentralization reform and the use of public money"*. In the same context, Michal Piško from Transparency International Slovakia presented the ranking of transparency in 100 largest Slovak towns, stressing that the least transparent area is the public property sales and lease.

Applying the Slovak experience, 45 largest municipalities in Moldova were evaluated and ranked in the following nine criteria of transparency: access to information, participation in decision making, budgeting, public procurement, management of public property, professional ethics and conflict of interests, human resources, social services, investments, municipal companies and participation in companies.

Local government representatives should see this ranking both as an appreciation of their work, as well as motivation to improve their efforts and act in a transparent manner to provide quality information. These efforts should be viewed as a significant contribution to local economic development and improve the quality of life of citizens of these local communities, believes Viorel Parvan, author of the report and legal expert at IDIS "Viitorul".

According to the monitoring report, **19 of the web pages of local authorities have not web headings dedicated to decisional transparency**. The web pages that include such headings are not completed and did not contain the information required by law. And in 2015, **39 local authorities from those analyzed have not developed, approved and announced the internal rules of information, consultation and participation in the drafting and adoption of decisions**. A positive aspect is budgeting, where the 25 analyzed authorities published on the web the current budget of administrative-territorial unit for the year 2016. Regarding procurement, local governments demonstrate certain openness to the step of initiating procedures for procurement, but no municipality of those 45 has any archive of procurement outcomes of (at least) the last two years published on the website.

Author of analysis also notes the low interest of local government to respect professional ethics and prevention

of conflict of interest. Thus, although 23 local authorities have published on the web page the CV of the mayor, **most towns did not present the declarations on income and property of local officials.**

The report "Local Open Government for active and informed citizens" shows that only 15 municipalities have published on their official web pages official the information about competitions for vacancies held between 2014-2015, and none of the local governments have not made public on the website the processes - minutes of committee for selection of candidates for the vacancy. Among areas of activity of local authorities is the development and management of community social services. In this respect, the **vast majority of municipalities are not made aware of any information regarding existing social services.**

Other chapters analyzed are "public assets management" and "investment", where data show a much less encouraging trend, namely **about 1/3 of municipalities do not comply with transparency in management of public property** and only eight municipalities public on the website the information on projects managed by the local administration.

Taking into consideration the current realities, **Viorel Pirvan recommends the following measures:** creation by local authorities of a website in new or the reconstruction of existing page; consulting projects of decisions with citizens and publishing the synthesis of recommendations; creating advisory councils and working groups involved in the decision-making process; development of a Regulation on public access to an public meeting; ensuring transparency at all stages of procurement, including publishing public procurement contracts; drawing up Codes of ethics for local officials and employees of local authorities.

This Report aims to monitor local government in 45 administrative territorial units of level I from Moldova (38 cities and seven biggest villages), in order to determine the level of transparency in their activity. As sources of information the official websites of the central (tender.gov.md, cni.md, actelocale.md etc.) and local public administration authorities and the sociological research carried out in May-June among local government representatives were used.

The event is held within the project "Transparent, financially sound and competitive municipalities in Moldova" is implemented by the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms (INEKO) in partnership with IDIS "Viitorul", with support of the SlovakAid The project aims o increase the financial accountability of local governments in 50 municipalities throughout Moldova.

For details, contact Ana – Maria Veverita: ana.veverita@viitorul.org or at phone number (0 22) 221844.