

Arguments regarding the impact of evaluating the transparency of localities

Background:

The overall transparency average for 32 DPAs subject to monitoring equals to 37.67%, showing a +7.73% – increase relative to the 2016 ranking and a slight increase of 0.39% in comparison with the 2018 ranking.

The local public authorities recorded a decline in this area. Hence, the overall transparency average equals to 24.03%, showing a 4.47% – drop in comparison with the 2018 ranking, though having excelled the overall average of the first 2016 ranking by +0.48%.

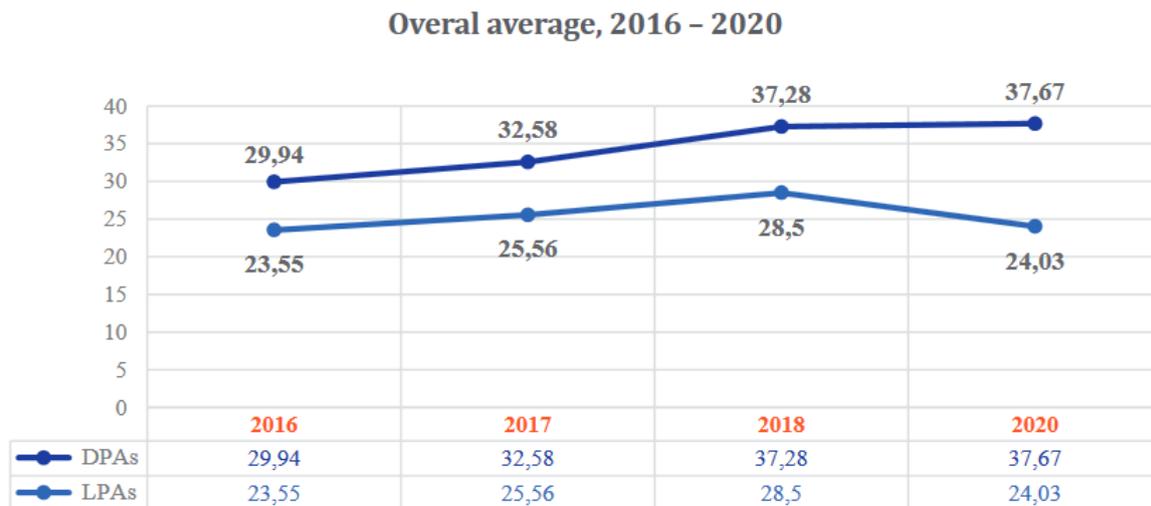


Diagram 1. Overall average of DPAs and LPAs transparency level in the 2016 – 2020 rankings

Source: Report on transparency of local governments in Moldova, 2020, <http://viitorul.org/files/EN%20Raport%20transparenta%20APL%20fin.pdf>

Explaining arguments:

- I. From the very beginning, I would like to mention that the results of the evaluation of the transparency of cities and villages show the existing reality. From a methodological point of view, the evaluation was performed correctly and according to the agreed transparency criteria. Despite a regression of the general average compared to the previous ranking, we cannot say that the project did not achieve its goal and that it did not have an impact.
- II. The results of the assessment of the transparency of cities and villages were influenced by the political context in the country and local elections, but also the parliamentary elections in 2019. Mayors who won seats in 2015 as candidates of various political parties during the term, but especially in the immediate vicinity of the elections, they became largely **members of the Democratic Party of Moldova**, under enormous pressure (promises, blackmail, including the initiation of criminal cases) of this ruling party. In the 2019 election year, they **focused their efforts on**

strengthening the positions of the Democratic Party of Moldova in the territory, but not on achieving the duties and increasing transparency. This approach of local elected officials has also led to a decrease in citizens' trust in the mayor's institution. According to the Public Opinion Barometer, conducted periodically by the Institute of Public Policies of Moldova, in November 2018 only 3.9% of respondents had a lot of confidence in the mayor's office, and in January 2019 there were 5.3% of respondents. After the local elections, in December 2019 the trust increased to 17.1%, and in June 2020 a lot of trust in the mayor's office as an institution has 16.6% of citizens.

- III. From the analysis of the evaluation results we notice that **several localities, led by mayors in opposition to the ruling party, have progressed in the ranking.** Here we can note the city of Glodeni (+ 5% and + 11 positions), the commune of Măgdăcești (+ 9% and + 19 positions), Anenii Noi (+ 19% and + 27 positions), Copceac (+ 8% and + 16 positions), and so on.
- IV. Another factor, which could indirectly influence the evaluation results, is the omission of 2019 from the IDIS "Viitorul" / INEKO evaluation. Or, after 3 years in a row in which the transparency rankings were elaborated, the local public authorities knew that their activity is subject to monitoring and the image of the locality will be reflected in the transparency ranking. During 2019, several mayors contacted us and asked us if this year we will develop the transparency ranking. It is possible that the omission of a year of evaluation led to the "relaxation" of local public authorities by possible pressure from civil society organizations.
- V. In addition, after presenting the results of the 2020 ranking, several localities wrote to us and called us to ask why they dropped in the rankings. We have the case of Bălți municipality, which is unhappy that it has accumulated a smaller number of points, although it is on the first place in the ranking. The mayor of Balti (he was in opposition to the Democratic Party of Moldova and is also in opposition to the ruling Socialist Party in Moldova) invited us to discuss the problems identified in our evaluation and the measures to be taken to accumulate more points in the ranking.
- VI. According to the results of the monitoring of cities and villages, the overall transparency average is 24.03%, decreasing by - 4.47% compared to the 2018 ranking, but it is above the overall average of the first ranking in 2016 (23.55%) with + 0.48%. Additionally, we need to mention a few moments:
 - 1) Compared to the last ranking in 2018, 23 localities (38%) progressed in terms of the score obtained, and 32 localities (53%) climbed in the 2020 ranking compared to the previous one.
 - 2) It is necessary to mention that **in the ranking of 2016 (first ranking) 50 localities were evaluated, and in the ranking of 2020 (last) 60 localities were evaluated. In order to make an accurate comparison, for 50 localities in the 2020 ranking, which were evaluated in the 2016 ranking, we have an overall average of 25%, with a progress of 1.45%.**

- 3) **In the case of 29 localities out of the 50 evaluated in the rankings of 2016 and 2020 we have a progress of the score obtained**, respectively 58% of cities and villages have progressed compared to the first evaluation.
- 4) The progress of localities in the last ranking compared to the first ranking is also highlighted from the perspective that **transparency indicators have been substantially modified and improved over the years, making it increasingly difficult for a local public authority to accumulate the maximum score for an indicator** (e.g. : indicators in the area of public procurement).

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