

T1. SUMMARY: THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN TRANSPARENCY OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE RELATED TO THE MUNICIPAL ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

Surveys in [Norway](#) and [Latvia](#) convincingly indicate that municipal websites are the most important source of information on municipal news, contact information and services provided.

On 8th November, Transparency International Latvia (Sabiedrība par atklātību – Delna) together with Transparency International Norway (Norge) and Transparency International Lithuania presented the [Transparency Index of Local Authorities \(TILA\) 2024](#) with updated methodology. Key insights were discussed, which were complemented by expert views in a panel discussion and a presentation from TI Ukraine's chapter on urban transparency research.

From 2021 to 2024, municipalities have demonstrated a stable positive development in their transparency. In comparative perspective, Norwegian municipalities show better results in politics and decision-making section, whereas Latvia shows stronger results in public procurements section. The main reason is that Latvia's normative acts make publishing information about procurement mandatory, while Norwegian regulations do not require local authorities to disclose information on bid summaries, awards, amendments, or contract implementation details. At the same time, high scores by Norwegian municipalities in the section "Politics and decision making" is ultimately linked to archiving of the composition of previous municipal deputies and committees, as well as the fulfillment of the criterion of the mayor's calendar, which is more often observed than in Latvia.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE TI UKRAINE PRESENTATION

- Launched in 2017, the Transparent Cities index enhances transparency and accountability in Ukrainian cities, adapting methods to wartime conditions. Annual transparency rankings cover the largest cities, expanding over time to include accountability and, more recently, cities close to the front line;
- A specialized methodology was developed for the wartime context, including transparency and accountability indicators and an Open Data pool for local governments. Indicators focus on transparency (62% increase since inception) and accountability (29% increase over two years);

- 70 cities were measured in 2022, expanding to 80 in 2023 with 10 frontline cities added. Implementation rate for 50 indicators averaged 42%, viewed as significant given current challenges;
- In Ukraine, cities face security risks, infrastructure destruction, and resource shortages. The focus on transparency varies by political will and prioritization despite dangerous conditions;
- The modified methodology after the invasion includes 3 categories: Transparent, Partially Transparent, and Non-Transparent. Out of all cities, 5 became transparent, 23 partially transparent, and over 50 remained non-transparent. In 2023 measurement, improvement of 5% in transparency was concluded despite challenges.

Further, the panel discussion focused on enhancing municipal transparency. Norway's approach was highlighted, emphasizing the role of the Municipal Board and a control committee to ensure efficient administration and prevent corruption. The importance of public scrutiny and media involvement was stressed. Panelists noted the need to balance between bureaucracy and user needs, suggesting simplified representation of information for citizens. The need for clear, accessible information, including corruption prevention plans, was also underscored by the panelists. The speakers agreed on the importance of municipalities being close to their citizens, enabling innovation and better governance. They concluded that while progress has been made, there is still much work to improve transparency and public trust.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE PANEL DISCUSSION:

- Transparency extends beyond publicized information and includes the quality and performance of municipal services;
- Municipalities must understand their own performance to communicate effectively with the public. Data quality and clarity are crucial for effective communication and municipal functioning;
- Fostering two-way communication and engaging the community are essential for building trust and accountability;
- Control committees can invite officials, including administrators and politicians, to explain actions, with findings open to public discussion and media scrutiny to ensure accountability;

- The press plays a critical role in holding public administration accountable by highlighting municipal activities, fostering public discussion, and stimulating citizen involvement;
- Municipalities need to balance thorough information sharing with accessibility, minimizing unnecessary bureaucracy that can complicate transparency efforts. Municipalities are encouraged to innovate and adapt their approaches, leveraging their proximity to citizens to build more personal and effective information channels;

During the development of the report recommendations were made for decision makers in Norway and Latvia. TI Latvia and its project partners recommend:

- Ensuring document and website section titles are precise and explanatory, making information easy and convenient to find;
- Providing guidance on navigating external resources, such as national-level resources or pages for municipal companies, when information is available through external links;
- Standardizing information publication for municipally owned companies so the information is accessible and easy to find;
- Publishing comprehensive descriptions of citizen engagement forms, such as public consultations, council session participation, advisory boards, collective submissions, participatory budgeting, etc.;
- Publishing archives in an easy-to-understand manner, allowing citizens to review the history of processes or decision-making and draw conclusions on long-term effectiveness;
- Conducting resident surveys on website usage, information accessibility, and ease of understanding;
- Reducing merely formal compliance with indicators or regulatory requirements;
- Promoting understanding among municipal staff of the benefits of transparent communication, including timely publication of information on municipal websites and user-friendly information summaries.

Find TI Ukraine's presentation [here->](#)

Find TI Norway's presentation [here->](#)

You can find the TILA 2024 report in English [here->](#)

You can find TILA 2024 report in Latvian [here->](#)

This publication has been produced with the financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the coordinators of this project and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Nordic Council of Ministers.



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Office in Latvia**