

No 4566/1

19/02/2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

By this letter, we'd like to express our support for the initiative of Tbilisi City Hall concerning participation in Open Government Partnership Pilot Program.

Open Society – Georgia Foundation is a donor organization registered in Georgia, which in parallel, is a member of Open Society Foundations Network. Alongside with other priority areas, we support the development of local governance, transparency of public institutes and establishment of participatory democracy mechanisms in the country. We also are proactively involved in the Civic Forum of Open Government Partnership Georgia.

It's worth underlining that transparency and public participation in a decision making process at Tbilisi City Hall was being improved during the last 3 years. Pursuant to the research carried out with OSGF financial support, current index of information accessibility in Tbilisi City Hall is of more than 90% that can be perceived as a significant improvement compared to previous years¹. Likewise, Tbilisi City Hall has already started to upgrade its website with OSGF support as to make it more informative and interactive. It is important that in the last years Tbilisi City Hall approved high standard of public information proactive disclosure and gradually provides for e-accessibility of information. Regular weekly meetings were introduced during the incumbent of a new Tbilisi Mayor, where every citizen is given a chance to meet decision-makers.

Despite the significant advancement, Tbilisi City Hall and, in general, local government throughout Georgia face the challenge concerning lack of public participation effective mechanisms, implementation of state authorities forms of accountability and openness of public information. Steps taken towards the openness of public information in some cases lack sequence and sustainability that naturally preclude smooth functioning of the system in accordance with principles specified by Open Government Declaration.

Namely due to this fact, Open Government Partnership New Pilot Program will be an effective mechanism for Tbilisi City Hall to evolve an action plan together with CSOs and further on, in cooperation with the mentioned CSOs, to strive for its implementation. During the last years, we observed actions made by Georgian Government in terms of participation in Open Government Partnership and can state with confidence that this initiative proved to make crucial contribution into the growth of open governance among Georgian central institutions. Now it's local governments' turn.

Capital of Georgia Tbilisi is the biggest municipal unit in the country. In addition, Tbilisi Government and its staff have all the capacity to carry out the open governance process successfully. Involvement of Tbilisi in this process would impact not only the capital and its residents, but also governments of other municipalities and generally open governance at the regional level.

This is the reason, why we endorse initiative by Tbilisi City Hall to participate in Open Government Pilot Program. And we as a donor organization express our readiness to support them and ensure involvement of Georgian CSOs in the above mentioned process.

Please, do not hesitate to contact us in case of any additional queries.

Faithfully yours,

Keti Khutsishvili
Executive Director
Open Society – Georgia Foundation

¹ Report "Access to Public Information in Georgia" pg. 35, <https://goo.gl/IIO2vr> [18.02.2016].