

The Report on the project - Transparent Local Government

Transparency International Slovakia (“TIS“) within its Local Government Program and in the cooperation with **the City of Martin** prepared the project Transparent Local Government.

The project was launched in July 2008 and the overall aim of the project is to increase openness and transparency of local government and to eliminate the potential areas for corruption in the city of Martin.

The project consists of 3 phases (which are in more details described below) and concentrates on 17 municipal policies, which were identified as key municipal policies. These are:

- property disposal – selling and renting,
- recruitment policy,
- civic participation in municipal decision-making,
- access to information
- communication policy,
- ethical infrastructure and conflict of interest of elected representatives, City Hall employees and employees of municipal agencies (each area separately),
- town planning and constructions administration,
- subsidies granting,
- transparency in public companies,
- public procurement,
- public-private partnerships,
- housing policy,
- allocation of places in social care institutions,
- budgeting.

Both the City of Martin and Transparency International Slovakia had specific role in the process and responsibility which were embedded in the contract between the TIS and the given city.

The first phase of the project implementation

The first phase of the project implementation was the audit of the existing policies – audit of the current state in 17 policies stated above. It consisted of gathering data about the particular policies from the City Hall employees by questionnaires, meetings and consultations with the city deputies. TI Slovakia experts also conducted assessment of the city rules and procedures as well as analysis of the data and documents.

The basic concept through which TI Slovakia evaluated the policies was the following corruption formula:

$$\text{Corruption} = \text{Monopoly} + \text{Discretionary power} - \text{Transparency}^1.$$

¹ Klitgaard, R. *Controlling Corruption*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1998.

Consequently, the consulting team consisting of the TI Slovakia experts and the City Hall employees was established.

To identify most vulnerable areas where corruption can occur, several meetings were conducted. The first one concentrated on diagnosis of corruption in the City of Martin. It has been conducted in July 2008 and elected representatives as well City Hall employees took part at the workshop. The workshop was foreran by press conference where the project was introduced to media by the mayor of the City, A. Hrnčiar, the ambassador of the USA in Slovakia, V. Obsitnik, and the president of the Transparency International Slovakia, E. Sičáková-Beblavá. After that, the working meeting of the TI Slovakia experts, the elected officials of the City Hall and the employees of the City started with the aim to identify important actors and activities of the audit process.



Press conference devoted to the launch of the project. At the first photo from left, the mayor of the City of Martin, Andrej Hrnčiar, the ambassador of the USA in Slovakia, Vincent Obsitnik and president of TI Slovakia, Emília Sičáková-Beblavá.

At the same time, TI Slovakia translated the publication – “Restore the Health of Your Organization: A Practical Guide to Curing and Preventing Corruption in Local Government and Communities“, developed by UN-HABITAT and FPD. Publication consists of the two volumes - first volume represents theoretical and practical grounds to the theme of corruption and is concerned with concepts and strategies applicable by the governments at the local level. Second volume includes set of practical tools addressed to local leaders to initiate and implement process of prevention and curing corruption and also for consultants or facilitators who participate on this process. This publication was introduced to the City Hall employees and helped TI Slovakia to facilitate the diagnosis of corruption in the given city.

As already stated, TI Slovakia adapted this publication to Slovak conditions, therefore the recommendations and tools are applicable in the Slovak conditions as well. Among others, it contains references to Slovak institutions which could be helpful in reducing corruption.

At the end of the first phase of the project, the meeting with city representatives was held in September 2008. The subject of this meeting was to introduce the outcomes resulting from audit of 17 policies and to plan next steps within following phase.

The second phase

The second phase of the project implementation consisted of the concrete policy recommendations development and designing particular rules for each of the 17 above mentioned policies.

The methodology for recommendations development was also based on well-known Klitgaard's formula, so they are focused on increasing transparency and decreasing discretionary power in particular policies of the City of Martin. TI Slovakia experts were also inspired by anti-corruption best practices from abroad.

During this phase, several meetings were held. The two meetings (organized in August and October 2008) were about to discuss the system of ethical infrastructure on local government level and its implementation mechanisms. Next one was held also in August and concentrated on anti-corruption tools in public procurement in the City of Martin.

Many recommendations concern active disclosure of information through the city web page and introduction of electronic register for various kinds of applications. TI Slovakia also developed rules for strengthening potential whistleblowers as a protection for employees who report inappropriate behavior in their office.

To decrease the discretionary power, from many developed proposals we can mention, e.g. the method of the random selection when deciding on allocation of city social flats or the recommendation to conduct auction in decision-making about renting or selling flats, as well as recommendation to introduce electronic auction in the area of public procurement. Many recommendations concern conflict of interest policy and ethics. TI Slovakia helped to develop new Ethics Code and recommended to introduce Ethics Commissioner.

The third phase

The aim of the third phase ongoing from December 2008 to January 2009 is to discuss (with the City of Martin) and agree on the final versions of the new regulations and on the schedule of their implementation. Afterwards the training of the elected representatives and relevant employees of the City Hall will be implemented. TI Slovakia and other experts will assist in the implementation of particular steps by the trainings and additional workshops with the employees and the representatives of the City. The TIS experts are ready to offer their expert help until the end of February 2009.