

Summary Report from the First Plenary Session of the Joint Initiative for Transparency and Accountability (JI)

The first virtual meeting of the Plenary Session of the *Joint Initiative for Transparency and Accountability (JI)* took place in Belgrade on 14 December 2021. Offering a platform for discussion and for jointly identifying concrete issues and steps forward, this Initiative supports efforts by stakeholders from the Government of Serbia, the private sector, and civil society to make public policy processes more transparent, also in line with EU norms.

Participants of the meeting welcomed the Government's commitment to enhancing transparency and accountability of policy processes, and shared lessons with the audience from similar initiatives around the world. The meeting was articulated around three panel discussions on relevant topics of the Initiative, as follows:

- Panel 1 focused on the *importance of transparency for good governance in Serbia*. Participants emphasized that transparency is essential for the integrity and efficiency of public institutions, and to keep citizens informed about Government decisions. They welcomed that the new [Strategy for Public Administration Reform \(2021-2030\)](#), which prioritizes the principle of proactive transparency; and underlined the importance of the accountability of public officials. Participants agreed that Serbia has made initial progress on the transparency front, but pointed to further room for improvement on the timely publishing of information about key policy processes, e.g. data on the budget execution.
- Panel 2 focused on the *improvement of Public-Private cooperation on budgeting and investments*. The discussion focused on recent activities of the [Commission for Public-Private Partnership](#) and the importance of the new [Public Procurement Portal](#) for both the private sector and civil society. Participants pointed out that it would be desirable to see more publicly available information about sizeable public investments, including cost-benefit analyses. Furthermore, they acknowledged the role of civil society and the expert community in promoting and advancing transparency in decision making.
- Panel 3 discussed *integrity and accountability of public administration*. Panelists discussed the work of the [Anti-Corruption Agency](#) and stressed its significance in the prevention of corruption in Serbia. The discussion focused on the importance of accountability of local self-governments, especially regarding the Codes of Ethics, budgeting, citizens' guides to local public budgets, and different policy models aimed to improve transparency at the local level.