



## **Minutes from the Second Meeting of the Thematic Working Group – Strengthening Accountability of the Joint Transparency and Accountability Initiative (JI)**

The meeting was organized via the Zoom platform, on April 6th, 2022. The participants discussed the following topics: the current status of initially identified measures and ongoing activities of the participating institutions, a newly proposed measure - Diaries of Public Officials, and potential suggestions to the next Serbian government.

On behalf of the JI's Secretariat, Mr. Srđan Majstorović moderated the meeting. Participants of the meeting included representatives of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Agency for Prevention of Corruption (APC), General Secretariat, Protector of Citizens, Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), National Convention on the EU, as well as representative of the EU Delegation in Serbia and the USAID in the capacity of observers. **(The list of participants is Annex 1 of the Minutes).**

### **1. Opening and Introductory Remarks**

On behalf of the World Bank, Ms. Verena Fritz welcomed all participants and expressed her gratitude to participating institutions and organizations for their commitment to the JI mission. She briefly outlined the new post-election landscape in which the JI will operate and emphasized the importance of identifying concrete actions for the forthcoming period. She proposed that one of the first actions of the TWG could be the preparation of the Policy Note – i.e. a short set of recommendations to the next Government on how to further strengthen accountability. She also encouraged all the participants to suggest new ideas that might improve transparency and accountability in the country.

### **2. Discussion on previously defined TWG's topics and newly proposed measures and actions**

The moderator reminded that previously proposed measures are:

- The development of the Model Code of Conduct for Public Officials and guidelines for its implementation with prescribed monitoring and supervision mechanisms
- The development of procedure which will prescribe that the Anti-Corruption Agency will publish regular reports/data on the implementation of recommendations by public institutions and their explanation (if it is submitted) in case recommendation is discarded.

The participants briefly presented ongoing activities of their institutions concerning strengthening accountability and reviewed the actions needed to be taken in the upcoming period. It was stated that the Report on the Implementation of the new Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2030 captured notable improvements in the field of interest of this TWG.

Yet regarding the previously adopted TWG's measures, participants agreed that additional effort is needed to support the APC's work on the development of the Model Code of Conduct of Public

Officials (Code). For this purpose, it was proposed to organize a separate meeting(s) between the representatives of the donor community and the APC. In this context, it was also noted that sharing SCTM's experience in the development of the Model Code of Ethics for Local Government Officials might be useful. The participants were reminded of the fact that the Model Code must be tailored to address a particularity of different types and levels of public officials while being generally applicable.

The participants were also informed that the General Secretariat started with preliminary consultation on the development of the "Public officials' diaries". This document should improve the accountability of public officials by publishing the public officials' activities throughout their mandate. This preparatory work is conducted within the General Secretariat, and concrete results will be shared with other TWG members soon, according to the representatives of the General Secretariat.

The participants were informed that the Ministry of Justice gladly accepted the invitation and will join the next TWG for the Strengthening Accountability meeting. It was noted that the joint work on needed actions and implementation of identified measures might also continue partly through bilateral meetings between the Ministry of Justice and the APC.

#### **Results:**

- To initiate a collaboration between the two sides, the participants agreed to hold a separate meeting(s) between the APC and the donors to facilitate the comparative analysis of codes of conduct for public officials, which comes as a prerequisite for the fulfillment of the TWG's measure - The development of the Model Code of Conduct of Public Officials, and the Guidelines for its implementation.
- The TWG's members are informed on the status of previously identified measures as well as on newly proposed measures and actions. Certain progress has been noted, but identified measures still need to be implemented, and further developments regarding introduction of "Public officials' diaries" is pending on formation of the new Government.
- The participants are invited to nominate new topics and ideas.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The moderator highlighted the following points about the second meeting of the TWG for Strengthening Accountability:

1. The JI Secretariat invites all participants to submit proposals for actions, for the next Government by **May 12, 2022**. These actions should be in accordance with the TWG's agenda, and effectively strengthen accountability.
2. Based on the submitted proposals, the JI Secretariat will prepare document with suggestions for the next Government with the selected topics for the further improvement of implementation of the principle of accountability in the public sector.
3. The JI Secretariat will take into consideration the document - Proposed Priorities for the New Government, and the New Convocation of the National Assembly 2022-2026 developed by CSOs coalition prEUgovor, in the process of preparing the document mentioned in previous point of conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The representative of Transparency Serbia shared with participants this document. He stressed that it contains proposals and recommendations for strengthening accountability in the work of public institutions. The document is available at <https://preugovor.org/Policy-Papers/1730/Proposed-Priorities-for-the-New-Government-and.shtml>