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Local Transparency Index 2026 (LTI)

Summary of the Final Report

Transparency Serbia, September 2026

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Summary

What is the Local Transparency Index?

The **Local Transparency Index (LTI) 2026** is a research study¹ assessing and ranking 145 local self-government units (LSGUs) and 25 city municipalities in Serbia. This is the ninth time that TS has conducted the research, and the eighth consecutive year in which it has covered all cities and municipalities. The continuity and comprehensive coverage of the research have enabled it to become one of the important indicators for assessing the openness of the local self-government system as a whole, as well as of individual municipalities.

Municipalities and cities are ranked according to **transparency criteria** defined through 98 indicator questions. Final scores, i.e. index values, range from 0 to 100. This year, municipalities and cities received scores **ranging from 28 to 97**.

Trend of stagnation and progress among in-city municipalities

The **average score** of the 145 LSGUs in 2026 was 52, the same as in the LTI 2025, LTI 2024 and LTI 2023 surveys. Following four consecutive years of growth in the index, the average score has now remained stagnant for four consecutive cycles. The perception of stagnation is reinforced by the fact that 15 of the 145 LSGUs received the same score as the previous year, while the number of significant increases and decreases in scores was considerably lower.

The multi-year trend of stagnation can largely be attributed to insufficient measures to improve transparency, either through amendments to key regulations governing the work of local self-government or through insufficient engagement by state authorities in ensuring their implementation. Weaknesses in accountability mechanisms in many local self-government units may also be an additional factor.

Table no. 1: Highest, lowest, and average rating in LTI by year 2015-2026

Score/year	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Maximum	74	67	83	90	87	94	97	97	97
Average	40	40	46	48	49	52	52	52	52
Minimum	11	12	18	21	9	25	9	30	28

The scores of 60 municipalities and cities improved, while those of 70 declined. In the previous cycle, LTI 2025, 75 LSGUs improved their scores, while 64 saw their scores decline. In other words, the municipalities that made efforts to improve their transparency managed to compensate for the deterioration in the rest of Serbia.

Among in-city municipalities, the trend is more positive: 14 recorded an improvement, two had unchanged scores, while nine saw their scores decline. However, the progress made by in-city

municipalities did not affect the overall average, as they are ranked separately due to their specific characteristics.

Looking at the categories of indicator questions, the average scores likewise confirm the picture of absolute stagnation. Improvements were recorded in two areas, while scores declined in six. The changes, however, were very small. The exceptions are Public Procurement, where the multi-year decline has continued following amendments to the law and the abolition of the obligation to publish information on the contracting authority's website, and Information Booklets, where a significant increase followed a sharp decline, although the score remains below the levels recorded in 2024 and 2023.

Among individual indicators, it is worth noting that, for the first time since this research was launched, the budget is available on the websites of all 145 municipalities and cities. On the other hand, 19 of the 145 public enterprises included in the sample still do not have their own website, even though the legal obligation to publish documents on their websites was introduced back in 2012.

The best performers continue to improve

Of all 170 cities, municipalities and in-city municipalities, 10 recorded an increase of 10 or more points compared with the previous ranking (15 did so in 2025), while five recorded a double-digit decline in their scores (seven in LTI 2025). The number of municipalities with solid and excellent results is satisfactory: 30 of the 145 have an LTI score above 60 (27 in LTI 2025), nine above 70 (15 in LTI 2025), of which five scored above 80 (the same number as in LTI 2025), and three scored above 90 (two in LTI 2025 and one in LTI 2024).

Novi Pazar, which had held the top position on its own for four consecutive years, now shares it, with a score of 97, with **Veliko Gradište**, which ranked second in LTI 2025 and LTI 2024 and third in LTI 2023. After three fourth-place finishes in the past five years, **Tutin** is now in third place, with an index score of 90. **Kanjiža**, which ranked third in LTI 2025 and 2024, remains among the top performers, sharing fourth and fifth place. For the first time, one of the country's four largest cities, **Kragujevac**, has also reached the top tier. After a major jump from 24th to 6th place last year, it has now reached a tie for fourth place.

Is there sufficient willingness and capacity for further progress?

The LTI 2026 results, namely the stagnation of the average score for the fourth consecutive year, and particularly the fact that deviations from the previous year's results are small for a significant number of individual LSGs, indicate that many municipalities and cities may have reached the limits of what can be achieved with the existing level of political and administrative will and administrative capacity. The decrease in the number of responses to letters requesting verification, from 77 to 54 this year, suggests that LSGs are aware that they either cannot or do not want to change anything, or that, amid a heated political situation, they have assessed that remaining silent is the best tactic.

Results by area

Table 2: Performance of LSGs by area covered by the research

LTI	Assembly and Council	Budget	LSGs and citizens	Free access to information	Public procurements	Information Booklets	Public enterprises and public institutions	Public debates	Basic indicators
2026	34.1%	63.2%	45.9%	64.1%	36.0%	62.9%	55.1%	50.7%	58.1%
2025	37.3%	63.5%	46.9%	66.6%	46.9%	53.3%	54.9%	53.7%	68.8%
2024	37.8%	59.9%	44.8%	62.8%	59.0%	73.6%	53.0%	54.0%	69.1%
2023	39.5%	63.2%	44.7%	58.9%	62.2%	73.3%	51.3%	52.5%	68.4%
2022	35.4%	56.7%	48.0%	60.3%	72.6%	41.7%	47.6%	54.7%	69.8%

More responses to requests

Looking at the individual areas, the best result was recorded in Free Access to Information, although the score decreased from 66.6% to 64.1%. Only 14 municipalities and cities failed to respond to a freedom of information request submitted by a “mystery shopper” - a citizen who did not disclose that the request was being submitted on behalf of Transparency Serbia or for the purposes of this research.

More public budget consultations and budget portals, but many are not up to date

The Budget area remained at a solid level of 63.2%, despite a slight decline. The number of budget portals is increasing, enabling some LSGs with average or poor overall scores to achieve excellent results in this area. On the other hand, some budget portals are still not being updated. Among the indicators in this area, in addition to the fact that all LSGs have published their budgets on their websites, it is worth noting the significant increase in the number of LSGs that organised public consultations on the budget, including public meetings. This year, there were 102 such LSGs (70.3%), 35 more than the previous year (46.2%). A new indicator was also introduced this year: whether LSGs invited citizens to public consultations on the budget through at least three of the following five channels: an invitation on the LSG website, a press release, through local community offices, social media, and leaflets/direct notification of citizens. One quarter of municipalities and cities received a positive score on this indicator.

Information booklets more up to date, but still below the legal minimum

Following a decline to 53.3% in LTI 2025, the Information Booklets area recorded a significant increase to 62.9%. This is still below the levels recorded in 2024 and 2023, when scores were above 73%. Looking at individual indicators, the timeliness of information booklets has improved: almost 90% of city and municipal administrations published their information booklets on the Commissioner’s portal and updated them within the three months preceding data collection.

Public enterprises and institutions – positive average trends and open violations of the law in the absence of oversight

This is an area where, in a highly competitive field, legal violations are among the most obvious and blatant in Serbia. The legal framework is inadequate, yet scores have continued to improve. After seven years of consecutive growth, the LTI score reached 55.1%, which is still not satisfactory. Of particular

concern is the fact that 19 public enterprises (PEs) in the sample do not have their own websites, where they are required to publish documents. This has been a legal obligation since 2012. Documents from the procedure for selecting directors can be found on only 12% of websites. Slightly more than half of the PEs covered publish their annual work plans, as required by law, while even fewer publish their annual reports - only 42%.

Public debates and competitions - decline and disparity

The decline in the Public Debates area has continued, with the score now barely above 50%. There is a significant discrepancy between the number of published competitions and the results of those competitions.

Half provide information through social media

In the LSGs and Citizens area, where the score has long fluctuated between 44% and 48% (45.9% this year), there were no significant changes in individual indicators either. A new indicator was introduced: whether an LSG has an active profile on at least one social media platform where it regularly publishes news, announcements, reports, invitations to public debates, and public procurement information. This year, 55.2% of municipalities and cities received a positive score on this indicator.

Only seven municipalities inform citizens about the implementation of public procurement contracts

The multi-year decline in the transparency of public procurement information on LSG websites has continued. This year, the decline is a consequence of the abolition of the legal obligation to publish certain information on the contracting authority's website in addition to the Public Procurement Portal. This has been accompanied by a lack of willingness — and, in some cases, administrative capacity — among most municipalities and cities to do more than what is legally required. In addition, the indicators in this area were revised for LTI 2026, including the introduction of the indicator “Are documents confirming the implementation of public procurement contracts published on the website?” Only seven LSGs received a positive score on this indicator.

Draft documents visible before adoption in only one quarter of LSGs

The Assembly and Council area has traditionally received the lowest score, and the decline recorded since 2023 continued, with the score reaching 34.1% this year. Around 40% of LSGs publish on their websites, rather than only in their official gazettes, documents adopted by the assembly, while 15% publish documents adopted by the council. Only half publish the agenda of the next session, while fewer than one quarter of municipalities and cities publish draft documents before the session. Twenty out of 145 LSGs do not have an official gazette or a link to it.

Continuous progress: Veliko Gradište, Žabari, Novi Pazar and Bogatić

For years, Transparency Serbia has emphasised the importance of sustainability. It is not enough to publish information or a document once; it needs to be kept up to date. To ensure that this does not depend on goodwill or enthusiasm, it is best to have established procedures and clearly defined responsibility for their implementation. Establishing sustainable systemic solutions should be a greater priority than simply achieving a good score through campaign-based and irregular publication of information during the verification process, following the efforts or pressure of individuals who demonstrate enthusiasm or see a political benefit in doing so.

An analysis of how many LSGs have recorded an increase or at least maintained their score in previous cycles points precisely to the issue of sustainability.

This time, 33 LSGs recorded an increase or maintained their score in the last two LTI cycles - LTI 2026/2025 and LTI 2025/2024. This is somewhat better than the previous year (29), but worse than two years ago, when there were 36.

Only 10 municipalities and cities have not recorded a decline in their scores over three consecutive cycles (17 in the corresponding comparison in 2025), while six have maintained their scores without a decline over four cycles (nine in the previous research cycle). Only two - Veliko Gradište, whose score increased from 47 to 97, and Žabari, from 40 to 56 - have recorded continuous growth from 2020 to the present. Two more have recorded continuous growth since 2021: Novi Pazar, from 78 to 97, and Bogatić, from 28 to 43.

An examination not only of the final rankings, but also of the preliminary scores before verification and the responses to verification requests, suggests that, in some cases, continuity of good scores is the result of well-organised mechanisms.

In some cases, however, good scores are the result of periodic campaign-based actions, when Transparency Serbia, during the verification process, “reminds” LSGs about the information and documents being requested. In such cases, the data may remain outdated or disappear from websites by the time of the next research cycle.

It is also worth mentioning LSGs such as Bogatić, which maintain at least minimal continuous progress despite consistently remaining in the lower part of the ranking.

Although there were fewer significant increases and decreases this year, there are still LSGs that record a substantial decline in the following research cycle after achieving an excellent score. Užice, Sokobanja and Zaječar are examples of this. There are also cases where an excellent result is followed by a multi-year decline: Sombor, after holding a score of 88 and second place for three consecutive years, has now slipped to an index of 66.

How to make progress - regulations, commitment and support

Transparency is still, unfortunately, in only a small number of cases the result of an awareness of its importance, concern for the well-being of citizens, and a desire to address corruption risks associated with local government and administration. In the absence of such awareness, it would be useful to have requirements established through regulations and written procedures, whether at the local or national level. Results - both greater transparency and a higher LTI score - can also be achieved by working with local governments and administrations through projects that bring together civil society organisations, donors and LSGs. Even transparency that is “imposed” as a donor requirement for the implementation of other projects and programmes is better than genuine and home-grown non-transparency.

There is little need to elaborate on the importance of complying with legal obligations. This applies equally to LSGs and their obligations. In Serbia today, there is a need to persuade those subject to the law to comply with it, and the same applies to LSGs and their transparency obligations. Only after this threshold has been crossed can we move towards higher standards, which is what a significant number of LTI indicators address. The result — greater transparency and a higher LTI score — will be welcome

whether municipalities are genuinely working for the benefit of citizens, whether local authorities want to gain political points by presenting themselves as open and transparent, whether they seek to outperform their “rival” and/or neighbouring municipalities and cities, or whether they are seeking to meet conditions “imposed” by donors.

The main conclusion of the LTI 2026 research is that transparency continues to stagnate at a low level. It is necessary to establish **sustainable mechanisms** through regulations that will precisely define **procedures, obligations and responsibility** for implementing these procedures.

Such procedures can be established through LSG acts regulating the presentation of public enterprises and public institutions on LSG websites, rules of procedure of assemblies, and other specific matters, or through broader acts governing the design and maintenance of LSG websites. Existing acts regulating various areas, such as public consultations, could also be improved. It should be recalled that, alongside individual work within local government and regulations adopted at the national level, models of acts developed and promoted by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)¹, as well as some promoted through specific donor-funded projects, also play an important role in improving transparency standards. Improving existing model acts and developing new ones could therefore have positive effects on the state of transparency as a whole. Transparency Serbia is ready to support LSGs that wish to improve transparency and, consequently, their LTI scores.

Another incentive for increasing transparency among LSGs could come from the national level in three ways. One is the introduction of legal obligations for LSGs at the national level, provided that their implementation is monitored and violations are sanctioned, which is generally not the case. Equally important would be for the national level to set a good example, as it currently cannot boast a high level of transparency, compliance with the law, monitoring of the implementation of regulations - particularly those concerning LSGs - or the sanctioning of violations or initiating procedures for their sanctioning. Although local government was identified as one of the areas of particular importance in the 2024 Anti-Corruption Strategy, there have so far been no concrete measures that would lead to an improvement in the situation and that could be reflected in the results of this index.

It has been confirmed many times that better results can be expected when laws require transparency, when direct responsibility and sanctions are prescribed, and when sanctions are actually applied. As soon as obligations are removed — as was the case with public procurement - only a small number of LSGs will continue to apply good practices. And if violations of regulations are tolerated, over time fewer and fewer entities subject to those regulations will comply with their obligations.

The influence of political and administrative will, as well as capacity and priorities - particularly during election periods or periods of heightened political tensions - could be observed through the research and, consequently, in the results.

The LTI itself, as a long-term monitoring mechanism, has demonstrated cycle after cycle that it can serve as an incentive and a guideline for local governments that are willing to increase the transparency of their work. The LTI, and the public attention it receives, also helps citizens understand in which areas and how the performance of their municipalities can be improved, and encourages them to demand steps in that direction.

Individual increases and declines

Looking at individual results, there were no major changes among the top 10 municipalities and cities in 2026. Of the top 10 in LTI 2025, seven municipalities and cities remain in the top 10. After four years at the top of the ranking, Novi Pazar now shares first place, with a score of 97, with Veliko Gradište, which ranked second in LTI 2025. Tutin is in third place with a score of 90, after ranking fourth three times in the past five years.

Kanjiža, which ranked third, and Kragujevac, which ranked sixth, now share fourth place. They are followed by Leskovac in sixth place (down from fifth), Pirot in seventh (up from 11th), while Bor (down one place) and Zrenjanin (up from 18th) share eighth place. Tenth place is shared by two cities that made significant progress - Novi Sad (26th in LTI 2025) and Šabac (42nd in LTI 2025).

Significant progress in the ranking was also made by Požarevac (from 56th to 16th place), Golubac (from 103rd to 52nd) and Prijepolje (from 112th to 52nd).

At the bottom of the ranking are Preševo (LTI score of 28, two points lower than the previous year), Bujanovac (31, down eight points), Alibunar (32, down four points), Lučani (33, down one point) and Bosilegrad (33, down 10 points). A total of 15 LSGs have an index score below 40, an improvement compared with the previous year, when there were 17.

As for Serbia's largest cities, Niš, after last year's 10-point increase, recorded an eight-point decline in its index score this year (58) and fell from 16th to 35th place. Novi Sad improved its score by nine points, rising from 26th to 10th place. Belgrade has traditionally been in the lower part of the ranking; this year, its score increased by two points to 48, moving it from 100th to 89th place.

Table 3: Highest-ranked LSGs in LTI 2026 and their previous scores

LTI rank/score	LTI 2026	LTI 2025	LTI 2024	LTI 2023	LTI 2022
Novi Pazar	1/97	1/97	1/97	1/94	1/87
Veliko Gradište	1/97	2/94	2/88	3/82	7/76
Tutin	3/90	4/82	9/74	8/76	4/81
Kanjiža	4/84	3/86	3/87	4/81	5/79
Kragujevac	4/84	6/79	24/62	16/66	14/65

What the Index does and does not say about corruption

Finally, it is important to reiterate that **poor results overall or in individual categories do not necessarily mean that corruption is widespread in those areas or in those LSGs.**

Likewise, **good results do not guarantee that there is no corruption in an LSG, but they reduce the likelihood that poor governance or corruption will go undetected. The LTI measures transparency, which is one of the most important preventive anti-corruption mechanisms, while the score reflects the situation at the time the research was conducted and the results were verified.**