



EVALUATION OF THE 2023 PERFORMANCE OF THE BATUMI CITY COUNCIL

CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Key Findings	4
Chapter 2. General Information about the Batumi City Council	5
Chapter 3. General Statistics	6
Chapter 4. Important Developments	7
Chapter 5. Oversight Function Implementation	8
Chapter 6. Activities of the Commissions and Factions	9
6.1. The Commissions of the City Council	9
6.2. Factions of the City Council	10
Chapter 7. Citizen Involvement and Accountability	11
Chapter 8. Gender Equality Council	12
Chapter 9. Business Connections, Undisclosed Assets, and Incompatible Activities	13
Chapter 10. Expenditures of the Batumi Municipality City Council	14
10.1. Labor Remuneration	14
10.2. Other Expenditures	14
Chapter 11. Recommendations	16

Transparency International Georgia has evaluated the performance of the City Council of the 2021 Convocation of Batumi Municipality, covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2023 (hereinafter referred to as the reporting period).

This report represents the key findings of the study and offers recommendations that, if implemented, could enhance the City Council's future performance.

The report is based on public information obtained from the City Council, observations by Transparency International Georgia, and media materials.

Previously, Transparency International Georgia published an evaluation report on the 2020 performance of the Batumi City Council in [September 2021](#) and a report on the 2021 performance of the same city council in [July](#) 2023.

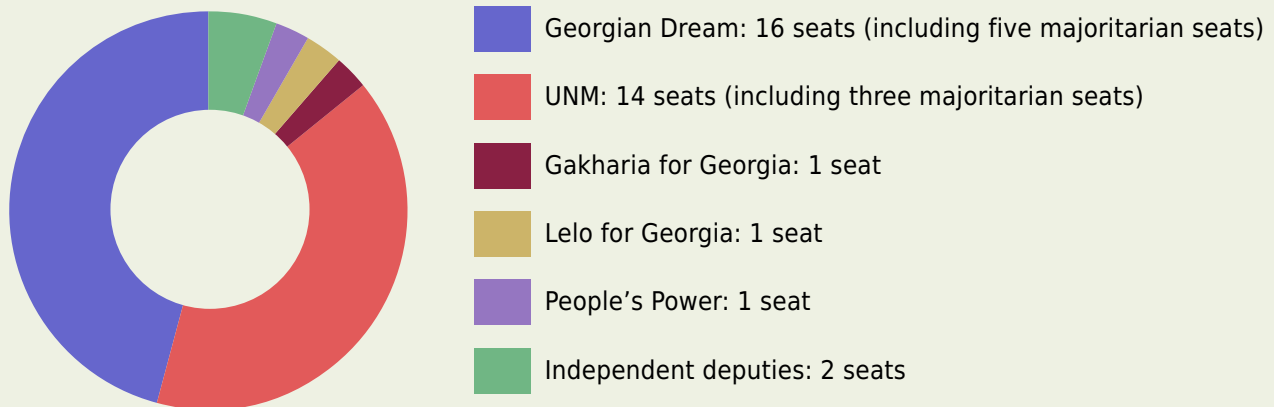
CHAPTER 1. KEY FINDINGS

- The Batumi City Council **has exercised weak oversight** of the municipality's executive branch, primarily due to the lack of political will among the Georgian Dream majority in the City Council to control the City Hall's activities;
- The City Council generally supports initiatives from the factions formed by the ruling party, while proposals from the minority factions are often not even presented at council sessions;
- During the reporting period, the Batumi City Council held **12** council sessions and **24** bureau sessions. No extraordinary council sessions were called, and no commission sittings were cancelled due to a lack of quorum, which can be assessed as a positive outcome;
- The Batumi City Council passed **42** resolutions, **40** of which were initiated and authored by the Mayor of Batumi, and the remaining **two** by the City Council itself;
- The City Council did not appoint an **independent auditor** to examine the performance of Batumi City Hall during the reporting period;
- A total of **GEL 2,175,343** was spent on salaries for the City Council members and office staff, with **GEL 993,423** going to the deputies and **GEL 1,181,920** to the office staff;
- Out of the total labor remuneration for the City Council's office staff, **GEL 93,626** was made up of bonuses and salary supplements;
- In 2023, **GEL 23,392** was spent on the telephone charges for city council deputies and office staff, **GEL 18,309** was spent on the maintenance of the vehicle fleet of the City Council, and **GEL 73,851** on fuel;
- **The quality of information provided by the Batumi City Council has notably deteriorated.**

CHAPTER 2. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE BATUMI CITY COUNCIL

The Batumi City Council comprises **35** members, with **seven** of them representing single-mandate majoritarian constituencies and **28** members elected through the proportional system.

Distribution of mandates in the Batumi City Council



- **Five** commissions operate within the Batumi City Council:
 1. Education, Culture, Tourism, and Sports Issues Commission;
 2. Health and Social Affairs Commission;
 3. Financial and Economic Development Commission;
 4. Infrastructure Development Commission;
 5. Legal and Procedural Affairs Commission.
- Representatives of the political parties in the Batumi City Council have formed **two** factions: the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia and the United National Movement.
- The Bureau of the City Council includes the council chairperson, the first deputy chairperson, the deputy chairpersons, and the chairpersons of the commissions and factions.

CHAPTER 3. GENERAL STATISTICS

- During the reporting period, the Batumi City Council held **12** council sessions and **24** bureau sessions. No extraordinary council sessions were called, and no sessions were canceled due to a lack of quorum.
- During the reporting period, the Batumi City Council adopted **42** resolutions, with **40** of them initiated and authored by the Mayor of Batumi and the remaining **two** by the city council itself;
- During the same period, the Batumi City Council also adopted **105** ordinances, with **89** initiated and authored by the Batumi City Hall and **16** by the Batumi City Council itself;
- In 2023, the legal supervision body issued a negative opinion on **one** legal act, which the city council took into consideration (however, the city council did not provide information about the content of the legal act);
- During the reporting period, the Mayor of Batumi submitted a draft legal act to the city council only **once**, seeking consent for the signing of a contract on behalf of the municipality. The city council approved it on May 19, 2023, by passing an ordinance titled “On Giving Consent to the Mayor of Batumi to Enter into a Sub-loan Agreement with the Ministry of Finance of Georgia for the Implementation of the ‘Batumi Municipal Infrastructure – (Phase V)’ Project;”
- During the reporting period, the Batumi City Council adopted **15** [decisions](#) on the basis of which various objects of the municipal property were transferred free of charge to the state and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara;
- In 2023, no e-petitions were registered with the Batumi City Council.

CHAPTER 4. IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

- During the reporting period, spatial-territorial planning documents were submitted to the Batumi City Council on **four** occasions;
- In 2023, the Batumi City Hall **did not establish** any new municipal organizations, nor did it submit proposals for the reorganization or liquidation of any of the existing organizations to the City Council;
- The following socio-economic programs and subprograms were approved in the Batumi municipal budget: support for homeowners' associations, construction of apartments, rehabilitation of run-down buildings, dismantling, housing construction, financing and promotion of inclusive education and additional educational services, and youth promotion;
- During the same period, the Batumi City Council **did not establish** any violations of the Rules and Procedures or the Code of Ethics.

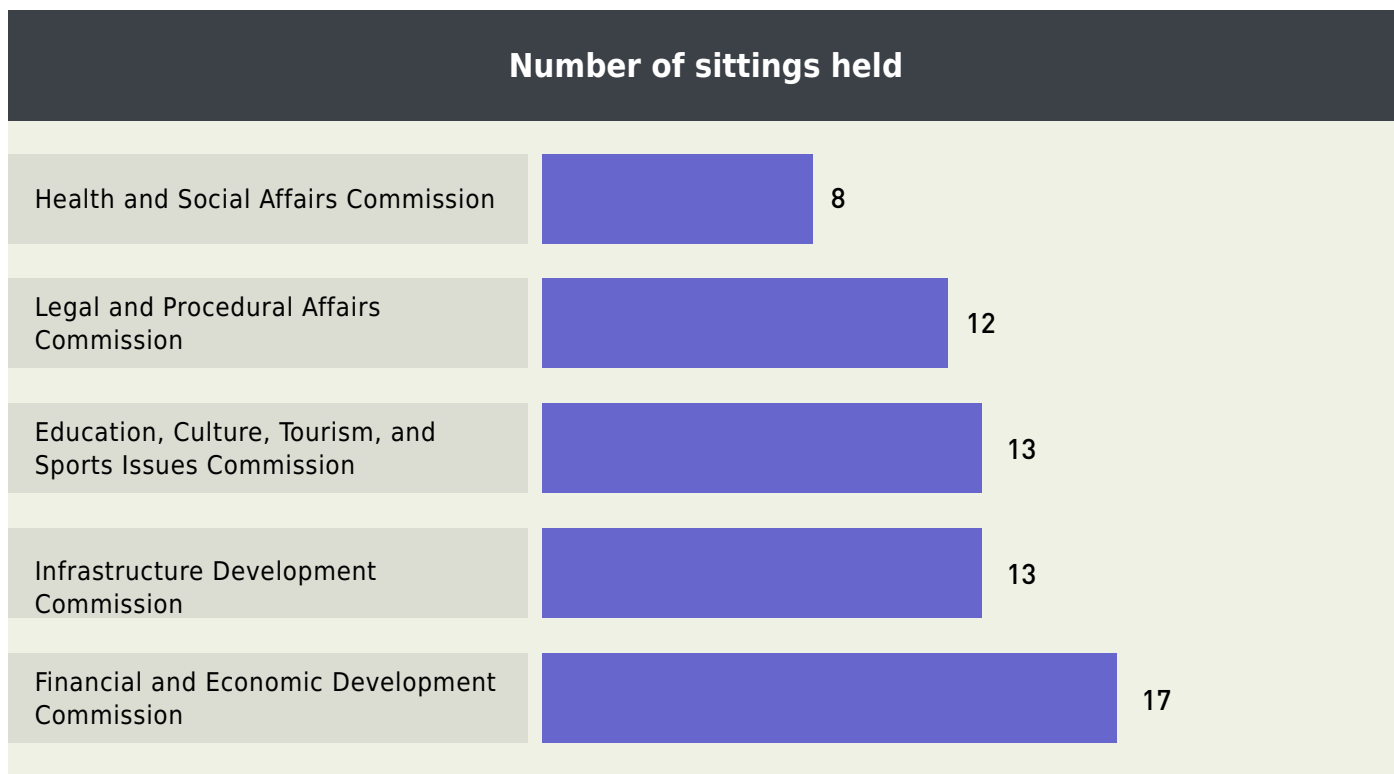
CHAPTER 5. OVERSIGHT FUNCTION IMPLEMENTATION

- The Batumi City Council provided incomplete information regarding the submission of reports by **the Mayor of Batumi and other high-ranking officials of the mayor's office** on the activities they had performed. The public information provided by the City Council does not specify how many times municipal officials were summoned to the City Council and whether their performance was assessed positively or negatively;
- The City Council did not provide information about the **procurements** carried out last year;
- No information was supplied about the summoning of representatives from the mayor's office to the City Council sessions to discuss issues raised by the council commissions and factions;
- Six members of the City Council directed **queries and information requests** to the Batumi Mayor and other officials. However, the provided public information does not specify the topics of these inquiries. Most queries came from opposition party deputies: Revaz Kharazi, Akaki Gvinianidze, Natalia Dzidziguri, Vazha Darchia, Nato Natsarashvili, and Nazi Putkaradze. Deputies from the ruling party did not exercise this right;
- In 2023, the Batumi City Council **amended the budget four times**. On all four occasions, the amendments were initiated by the Batumi Mayor;
- The Batumi City Council provided information on the opinions and comments submitted during the 2023 budget review by the council commissions ([Financial and Economic Development Commission](#); [Education, Culture, Tourism, and Sports Issues Commission](#); [Infrastructure Development Commission](#); and [Legal and Procedural Affairs Commission](#)), factions (the [Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia](#) and the [United National Movement](#)), the [Gender Equality Council](#), independent deputies ([Akaki Gvinianidze](#) and [Vazha Darchia](#)), and, individually, by the deputy from a faction ([Revaz Kharazi](#));
- The Batumi City Council did not appoint **an independent auditor**;
- During the reporting period, the Batumi City Council did not consider **a vote of no confidence** in the mayor;
- In 2023, the Batumi City Council approved all topics presented by the Batumi Mayor;
- The Batumi City Council did not establish any **temporary working groups**;
- During the reporting period, the City Council did not discuss issues of official incompatibility and **conflict of interest** among its members. It also did not identify any irregularities, conflicts of interest, or official incompatibility in the activities of the Mayor of Batumi, including in relation to public procurement processes;
- In 2023, the City Council reviewed **16** initiatives, including **12** from members of the majority and **four** from members of the opposition. Of those 12 initiatives submitted by the majority, 11 were approved, while one was forwarded to the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Georgia. None of the initiatives from the opposition were taken into consideration;
- The Batumi City Council did not discuss **local taxes and duties** during the reporting period;
- In 2023, a total of **14 deputies** were **absent** from Batumi City Council and commission sessions, both for valid and invalid reasons. Lasha Kilaberia had the highest number of absences, totaling 23 (of which seven were from council sessions and 16 from commission sittings), all of which were for invalid reasons, which led to the termination of his duties as a deputy.

CHAPTER 6. ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSIONS AND FACTIONS

6.1. THE COMMISSIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

During the reporting period, the City Council's commissions held **63** sittings. No sittings of any permanent commission were canceled due to a lack of quorum.



The Legal and Procedural Affairs Commission of the City Council prepared **12** conclusions on the compliance of draft legal acts to be considered by the City Council with the existing legislation.

When examining the compliance of certain legal acts of the City Council and procedural issues with the Rules of Procedure, the Legal and Procedural Affairs Commission identified and promptly addressed instances of non-compliance, and prepared conclusions regarding the legislation.

Throughout the reporting period, the commissions presented **seven** legal acts for consideration at City Council sessions. Also, all commissions submitted comments and recommendations on the initial 2023 budget draft.

However, no information was provided regarding specific measures taken by the commissions to oversee the activities of the bodies and officials accountable to the City Council. In response to our requests for public information, we were informed that the City Council hears and reviews reports to oversee the performance of these entities in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the City Council.

The commissions of the City Council did not invite any individuals to participate in their work either on a short-term basis or for the entire term of the commission's authority, nor did they seek permission to involve external experts or specialists in their work. During the reporting period, the only individuals invited by the commissions to participate in the reviews of legal acts were officials from the municipality.

6.2. FACTIONS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

In 2023, both factions in the Batumi City Council - the [Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia](#) and the [United National Movement](#) - submitted remarks and recommendations on the 2023 initial budget. However, they did not present any other draft normative or individual administrative legal acts, written initiatives, or motions.

The total amount of labor remuneration for the chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of the City Council faction was **GEL 356,928**. Both factions had identical position titles, the same number of officials, and identical amounts of labor remuneration for officials.

During the reporting period, among officials of the City Council factions, Tengiz Apkhazava, the chairperson of the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia faction, made four business trips to Tbilisi. Rostom Khalvashi, the deputy chairperson of the same faction, undertook a business trip to Barcelona, Spain. A total of **GEL 5,900** was spent on these business trips. No other faction officials traveled on business trips in 2023.

The City Council did not provide information on the telephone communication expenses of faction officials, nor did they disclose the costs of repair and maintenance as well as the fuel for the cars assigned to them.

CHAPTER 7. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In the provided public information, the City Council has not specified which programs in the budget were aimed at citizen involvement. To promote citizen participation in local self-governance, a civil advisory committee was established, and the measures were approved to form a public hall and an advisory council.

The Batumi City Council announced all 12 sessions in compliance with the requirements of the law.

CHAPTER 8. GENDER EQUALITY COUNCIL

During the reporting period, the Gender Equality Council did not conduct an analysis of any legal acts and did not draw up any proposals. It also did not perform expert analyses of draft legislative and legal acts and did not draw up any proposals.

To ensure gender equality, the City Council developed an action [plan](#) for the Gender Equality Council for 2023-2024. However, it did not establish a monitoring and evaluation system or develop recommendations.

The Gender Equality Council did not review any applications, documents, or other information related to gender equality violations. It also did not present any proposals or recommendations to the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia.

Instead of a report on the performance of the Gender Equality Council, the City Council provided us with a [report](#) on the activities of the head of the Gender Equality Council, Natalia Zoidze, who also serves as the Deputy Chairperson of the City Council. The 2023 report on the performance of the Gender Equality Council was not available on the official website of the City Council either. Only the [reports](#) for 2019-2021 and 2021-2022 can be found there.

CHAPTER 9. BUSINESS CONNECTIONS, UNDISCLOSED ASSETS, AND INCOMPATIBLE ACTIVITIES

The companies owned by the father of Levan Dolidze, the deputy chairperson of the Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia faction in the Batumi City Council - Bondi 2009 LLC and Monoliti 2005 LLC - [continue](#) to participate in public procurement tenders announced by municipal entities. These companies have received over **GEL 50 million** in revenues, with Bondi 2009 receiving **GEL 46,354,585** and Monoliti 2005 receiving **GEL 4,309,744**.

First in [2023](#) and then in [2024](#), Transparency International Georgia published information about alleged corrupt deals involving Akaki Beridze, the Director of the City Infrastructure and Amenities Department.

In December 2023, Transparency International Georgia also [published](#) information regarding conflicts of interest and alleged corruption involving the Director of the Batumi Municipal Inspection, Archil Kontselidze, and his family members.

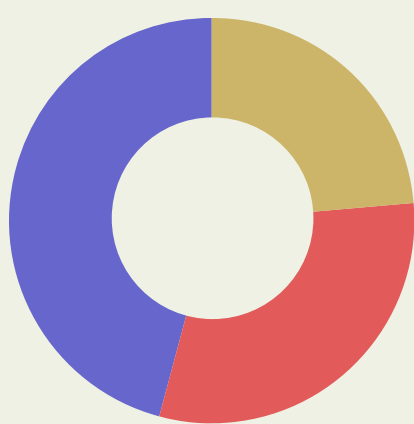
CHAPTER 10. EXPENDITURES OF THE BATUMI MUNICIPALITY CITY COUNCIL

10.1. LABOR REMUNERATION

In 2023, the City Council paid a total of **GEL 2,175,343** in salaries to its deputies and office staff. This included **GEL 993,423** for the deputies and **GEL 1,181,920** for the office staff. Of the total labor remuneration paid to the office staff, **GEL 93,626** was paid as bonuses and salary supplements.

Labor remuneration paid by the City Council in 2023 (GEL)

Total: 2,175,343



993,423

City Council deputies

664,982

Full-time employees of the City Council office

516,938

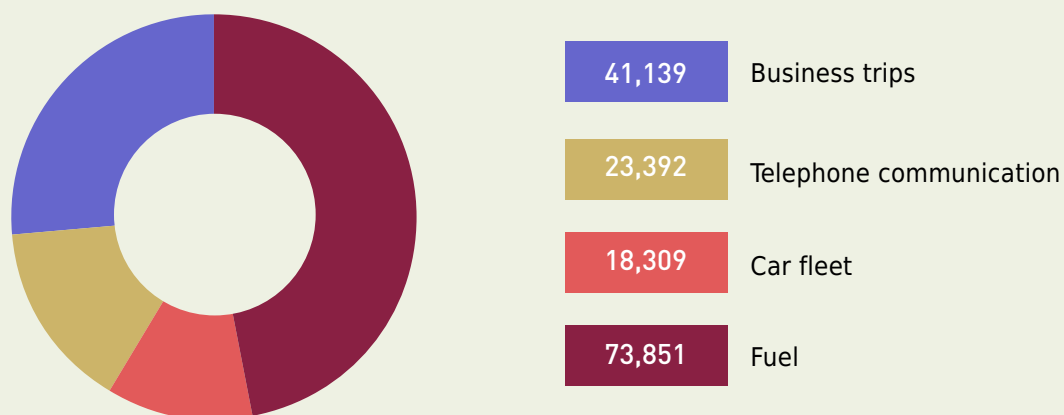
Part-time employees of the City Council office

10.2. OTHER EXPENDITURES

During the reporting period, City Council members and office employees went on **74** business trips, including **14** trips abroad. City Council Chairperson Ramaz Jincharadze traveled most frequently - **13** business trips, including three abroad (Germany and Poland). Nino Tskhvaradze from People's Power made **seven** business trips, four of which were abroad (France and Turkey). Deputy City Council Chairperson Irakli Tavdgiridze traveled **six** times, including two times abroad (Poland). A total of **GEL 41,139** was spent on business trips.

Other expenditures of the Batumi City Council in 2023 (GEL)

Total: 156,691



The City Council did not provide information on the cars assigned to specific officials, including their models and year of manufacture, as well as their fuel, repair, and maintenance costs. Similarly, the City Council did not provide data on telephone expenses for specific officials. The information was provided only in the form of total amounts, without a breakdown by officials.

CHAPTER 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Oversight Function

- City Council members should more actively exercise their oversight functions, particularly by asking questions more frequently, summoning officials of municipal bodies accountable to the city council, and considering the possibility of a vote of no confidence in the mayor;
- The City Council should appoint an independent auditor;
- It should become mandatory for City Hall officials to report to the City Council.

Sessions of the City Council

- The Rules of Procedure of the City Council should clearly define valid and invalid reasons for absences from sessions;
- Citizens should be allowed to freely attend sessions of the City Council and sittings of the commissions.

Citizen Involvement

- The official webpage of the City Council should proactively publish information about the activities of the City Council members. This will ensure the accountability of the deputies to the electorate.

The Gender Equality Council

- The Gender Equality Council should increase the number of initiated projects, recommendations, and proposals for their submission to the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia.