



# MAYOR OF TBILISI



## Address of the Mayor of Tbilisi to the Participants of the International Conference on Civil Participation in Decision Making

It is my great pleasure to invite you to the international conference to be held in Strasbourg on sixth of March 2020. The conference will focus on importance of civil participation in decision-making process.

Tbilisi is a 1500-year-old city that has served as a political, economic, educational and cultural centre not only for Georgia but frequently also for the whole Caucasus region. As Mayor of Tbilisi, I have a responsibility to meet the needs of every citizen and in doings so, use approaches that, if successful, are replicable by other cities of the region.

In order to address all the needs of the population, we must be in regular communication with them, to identify the challenges and find the best possible solution. Alienation of officials from poleis has always been a threat posed to governance, even in most advanced and established democracies and very often had devastating consequences for the respective nations. Unfortunately, elections are not a guarantee that the government policies are in line with the needs and expectations of people. Thus, new approaches, technological advancements and willingness, we all share, can help us in achieving the best results possible. For this reason, we are trying to build multiple channels between the governments and the people. Through these channels, we hear voice of our citizens, promote healthy competition of ideas and define the best strategies for future development.

There are several examples of new channels that help people share their ideas with the government. One of these is a project launched during my term of office called "Your Idea to the Mayor". It is a web portal ([idea.tbilisi.gov.ge](http://idea.tbilisi.gov.ge)) where any citizen has an opportunity to submit an idea or vote for proposed projects. This platform is a good opportunity to bring many interesting ideas, select the best ones and implement them for the benefit of all out citizens. This project was a part of Tbilisi's Open Government Partnership action plan. A new action plan for 2018-2020 is almost completed with the new ways of fostering civic participation as well as encouraging openness, transparency and accountability of the government. All traditional channels of communication are also in place such as consultations with NGOs, holding regular meetings with people and having open discussions with a view to taking into consideration the needs and interests of all stakeholders. Openness and transparency are key pillars to build accountability and trust, which are necessary for the functioning of democracies. As a democratically elected mayor with a popular vote, I am always open to new ideas and approaches.

Currently, we are working on numerous infrastructural projects, many of which aim to create more green recreational areas in Tbilisi, rehabilitate old and build new parks. One of the successful projects implemented in partnership with The Council of Europe is development of the park around Gldani Lake in Tbilisi. A special platform was established to ensure a wider participation of people in decision-making. Several public meetings were held with a considerable and keen interest from the residents of the area. Our goal is to use this model of a wider and active public participation in future projects as well.

As we share the story of Tbilisi's journey towards an open and accountable governance, I would like to invite you all to share your own ideas and examples and I express my gratitude for your willingness to contribute to the overall success of this conference.

Yours sincerely

Kakha KALADZE

Mayor of Tbilisi