

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR CIVIC EMPOWERMENT IN
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC (DT4CE)
2023 – 2025

**Final External Evaluation
MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

May 2026

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR CIVIC EMPOWERMENT IN KYRGYZ REPUBLIC (DT4CE) PROJECT

The EU Delegation funded “Digital Technologies for Civic Empowerment in Kyrgyz Republic” project took place from 1st of January 2023 till 31st of December 2025, implemented by Transparency International Secretariat (TI S) as a lead applicant in collaboration with Transparency International Kyrgyzstan (TI K) as a co-applicant. The project strengthened the capacity of civil society, asserting their rights and participating in governance processes through the use of digital technologies. By improving access to interactive digital tools (Outcome 1) and enhancing the digital capacities of CSOs and youth (Outcome 2), the intervention directly contributed to the intended impact: an empowered civil society that uses digital technology to become a stronger actor in democratic governance. Project core activities included developing and launching 4 digital platforms for civic participation on topics of legal instructions, road construction, legislative initiatives and public procurement monitoring, accompanied by outreach activities, capacity building activities and subgranting program for CSOs, 2 analytical papers on procurement law amendments.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR CIVIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC (DT4CE)

In accordance with the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the External Evaluation and following a competitive selection and procurement process, Transparency International Secretariat (TI S) commissioned an evaluation team consisting of Bunafsha Gulakova, Team Leader, and Sabina Salikhova, Data collection expert. The Transparency International MEL Unit provided normative tools and guidelines used in the evaluation process. This final evaluation provides an external and independent assessment of the project’s overall performance, impact, and sustainability, examining the project’s contributions across four civic tech platforms (Bilem.kg, Jol.kg, JMD.kg, and TSA.kg), ten sub-granted CSO initiatives, two reports on the Public Procurement Law Amendments, published in 2024, discussed in one high-level round table and a range of capacity-building and digital empowerment efforts. Special attention is given to digital inclusion and civic engagement among youth and women. The assessment applies to standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, with additional attention to innovation, inclusion, and civic space. It draws on project documentation, financial records, stakeholder interviews, and monitoring data, guided by Transparency International’s impact assessment framework.

RESPONSE TO OVERALL EVALUATION FINDINGS

This document summarises TI's reflections and intended follow-up actions on the findings and the recommendations of the independent final evaluation of the of the EU-funded project *Digital Technologies for Civic Empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic (DT4CE)*.

TI welcomes the overall positive assessment of the project relevance, the substantial project outputs, particularly the 4 unique digital platforms for the civic empowerment, as well as recognition of the challenging political and legislative conditions, shrinking civic space, that has left a significant influence on the project's implementation. The evaluation also recognises hackathons as an efficient way for youth engagement, the strategically calibrated project visibility, adaptive measures to the increasingly restrictive environment, and the strong quantitative performance against project targets, as the project met or exceeded most of the set target indicators, particularly

- Digital platforms recorded over 1 million visits and more than 2,300 registered users, significantly surpassing initial targets, in a compressed timeline.
- Hackathons attracted over 700 participants, exceeding the 500-person target and serving as an effective entry point for youth engagement in civic technology.
- The legislative initiative platform jmd.kg generated substantially more proposals and verified participants than foreseen in the logframe.
- Despite the uncertainty about the context of the CSO operations, over 90 CSOs were directly involved and benefitted from the project activities, including capacity building and sub-granting programs.
- Digital literacy trainings and tools, particularly with elderly groups, resulted in measurable behavioural change, including active submission of appeals and increased confidence in using digital tools.

TI welcomes the evaluation's recognition that these results demonstrate the demand for civic tech engagement mechanisms in Kyrgyzstan and appreciates the evaluator's ideas and suggestions how to increase accessibility of the platforms especially for target groups with disabilities, as well as the engagement with educational institutions.

The project team welcomes the evaluators' acknowledgment that the DT4CE project successfully piloted and seeded meaningful digital civic engagement mechanisms under politically restrictive conditions.

The section below responds in more detail to specific findings and outlines TI's planned follow-up actions in relation to sustainability, accessibility, coordination, and future civic tech programming.

RESPONSE TO INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

TI welcomes the final evaluation findings, which are very positive regarding the relevance of the project to the TI chapter and other stakeholders. This assessment validates our continued focus on these topics: **digital civic engagement** is a strategic priority for both TI-S and TI Kyrgyzstan, and at the national level, the project directly aligns with **efforts to empower citizens to exercise their constitutional rights through innovative technology**.

TI agrees with the evaluators' estimation of the **high relevance of the project topics and activities to the context of the region**. It reflects the Kyrgyz societal, economic, and political realities, acknowledges the challenges for civil society and project implementation, whilst finding ways to adapt and still meaningfully engage with beneficiaries. This was supported by the majority of the interviewed stakeholders.

While the project responded to the Results-Oriented Monitoring review recommendations and included Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) capacity-building efforts, as recognised by the evaluator, even more structured outreach could have further increased impact. This reflects the importance of addressing genuine citizen needs for engagement and transparency, but also the fact that DT4CE has allowed TI to reach out to wide range of stakeholders, including regional CSOs, students, and marginalized groups, such as elderly citizens, rural residents. Some of the interviewees also acknowledge that **these platforms have created safer digital avenues for public participation that would not have otherwise emerged in the current context**.

The project team highly values the evaluators' high reference to the DT4CE project's digital tools, which have demonstrated strong alignment with TI anticorruption goals, national priorities, such as Digital Transformation Concept 2024–2028 and the National Development Programme 2030 on transparency and civic engagement. The conclusion that the platforms have filled practical gaps in civic education and infrastructure monitoring, acknowledges the innovative character of the actions and the necessity of adaptive measures to navigate the changing context.

COHERENCE

The evaluation recognises strong alignment between the project aims, outputs and outcomes and the fulfilled mandates of TI S and TI K. TI welcomes the acknowledgment of **TI K intentions to keep the platforms independent, enabling their safeguarding role for civil society and (virtual) public spaces** to exchange opinions and information.

It was confirmed that DT4CE components complement each other, are built on logical sequence, and have been implemented accordingly. The evaluation also acknowledges the projects efforts to **utilise synergies with other interventions**, existing resources, for example,

collaboration with the Kyrgyz Internet Society. At the same time, the evaluation highlights certain coherence challenges. Formalised cooperation mechanisms between civil society-led civic tech initiatives and state institutions were not fully established, structured and vertical dialog was limited and structured institutional embedding remains limited. This is well noted. However, it should be clarified that limited institutional embedding reflected a deliberate strategic choice to preserve platform independence.

We accept the evaluation's findings that the beneficiaries, especially the CSOs engaged in the action, have expressed that deepening synergies (like shared dissemination, data base, stronger network building) among beneficiaries or stakeholders could have been increased the benefits gained from the project. This will be taken into account for future program planning if an opportunity for upscaling arises. This would, however, require significant additional/new resources.

EFFICIENCY

Assessing the project's economical use of resources, we appreciate that the evaluators acknowledged the success of the **sub-granting mechanism**, which accounted for approximately 15% of the total budget, as a relatively **low-cost yet high-output component of the project**, responsible for enabling the implementation of civic tech initiatives, hackathons, and local competitions, contributing to the project outcomes. The evaluation highlights the multi-layered implementation structure, procedural complexity linked to Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EU External Actions requirements, and the six-month duration of sub-grants as potential efficiency constraints. This is duly accepted.

We agree with the evaluators' remark that the costs of technical platform development were higher than initially anticipated; however, they remained below market value. Considerable time was invested by TI-K staff in negotiating competitive rates and identifying qualified providers within the available budget allocations.

The evaluators refer to two limiting factors in relation to the timeline – the length of the sub-granting program and the project implementation delays. The sub-granted projects were implemented within 6-7 months, that is, within the originally anticipated time frame and proportional to the available volume of the budget (10 – 20k per project, enabling the sub-grantees to have a reasonable balance between staff costs and activity budget). We appreciate the evaluators' acknowledgment of the resolved activity delays, such as platform development, implementation of the dissemination activities, compressed timeline for platform audience building, and will take into account the comment about **modular instead of linear project activity logic** for future planning.

EFFECTIVENESS

As per the evaluation, notably, the project has **exceeded several initially set targets**, for example, instead of anticipated engagement of 10 CSOs in the action, the number is above 90. The anticipated indicator of 1 million platform visitors was slightly exceeded, but within a compressed timeline of 1 year instead of planned 2 years.

The **effectiveness of the platforms is also proven by the numbers of interactions** – citizens reporting road constructions, suggesting and voting for ideas for legislative amendments, or downloading resources from the bitem.kg, platform for simple language guides and legal instructions.

The evaluation further recognises that the legislative initiative platform exceeded its logframe targets in terms of verified users and submitted proposals, and that hackathons attracted over 700 participants, significantly surpassing initial expectations. It also highlights measurable behavioural change among elderly participants who, following digital literacy trainings, actively engaged with the platforms and submitted appeals and petitions. While the evaluators underline that sustained engagement and deeper institutional embedding would require longer-term follow-up, they also confirm that the functional viability of the tools and their demonstrated ability to mobilise citizens effectively within a constrained political environment has been confirmed within the DT4CE timeline. TI very much welcomes these results.

The evaluation further recognises that sub-grantee feedback indicates a **strong positive impact on digital capacity and confidence among participating CSOs**, with a significant share reporting the highest level of improvement in their ability to apply digital tools in practice. The high levels of user registration and interaction already demonstrate clear **demand and early-stage scalability potential of the digital platforms**, sustained and organic engagement requires continued follow-up.

The evaluation further recognises strong improvements in CSO digital capacity and confirms early-stage scalability potential, while noting that sustained engagement will require continued follow-up.

IMPACT

The project contributed to **strengthening civic engagement and participatory governance** by introducing and operationalising four digital platforms that enabled citizens and civil society organisations to engage with public processes. The evaluation concludes that over-exceeding the intended number of received helpdesk requests, interactions in the jmd.kg, platform for legislative initiatives, demonstrate a clear **capacity of civic technology to mobilise public participation** when accompanied by **targeted outreach**. Due to the late launch of the platforms, it is however hard to assess the wider impact of the digital tools.

The procurement analysis has been utilised in further negotiations with the government also by other stakeholders.

Subgrants have played an important role in mobilising youth, developing small-scale digital initiatives, and raising awareness within communities.

These outcomes support the project's **theory of change** that equipping citizens with simple and understandable tools to navigate government processes can build confidence, normalise interaction with public institutions, and gradually foster demand for more responsive services.

Overall, the project team supports the claims **that the project effectively strengthened CSO digital capacities, generated strong short-term civic engagement** through hackathons and active use of digital platforms, also moderately tackling the GESI awareness topic. The project's strength lied in **prototyping and implementing digital tools**, contributing to concrete civic outcomes and efficient use of funds. Likewise, we agree with concerns voiced by the evaluators, that sustainability and institutionalisation remain mixed, as long-term impact depends on further funding, further opportunities to develop technical capacities of the participating organisations. However, we see that a substantial work has been invested to lay a foundation for future interventions.

SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation notes that there is evidence that certain **capacity-building results are likely to continue beyond the project's lifetime**, including capacity and institutional development reported by the CSOs and demonstrated by TI-K. Several sub-grantees reported long-term impact on their internal procedures based on the training received, suggesting a degree of internalisation of knowledge and skills introduced through the project. One of the sub-grants effectively leveraged the project's support for its own digital platform to pilot participatory governance mechanisms at the municipal level and to secure the local municipality's commitment to infrastructure improvements. One municipality has agreed to continue using the platform after project completion, demonstrating a tangible example of participatory governance enabled through sub-grant support.

In addition to the above, Transparency agrees with the evaluators' conclusion that the **sustainability among CSO sub-grantees remains uneven** due to limited administrative resources, short project funding cycles, staff turnover, particularly amongst small, regional CSOs.

The evaluation further highlights **financial and political risks, including restrictive NGO legislation and shifting donor priorities**, as key external factors **limiting long-term sustainability**. TI concurs that these contextual developments significantly constrain sustainability beyond the project's control. At the same time, Transparency agrees with the evaluation's finding that the **public procurement studies contributed to upstream sustainability**, as their findings were referenced in discussions with international partners, showing continuous relevance, even if not part of direct project results.

EU ADDED VALUE

We support the evaluators' acknowledgment that the EU financial support and normative positioning clearly benefitted the project, enabling activities that, according to subgrantees,

would not have been possible otherwise and had created an independent and safe space. EU backing strengthened the DT4CE credibility and legitimacy, supported engagement with public authorities, and provided a degree of support for local civil society actors, enabling continuous effort in such areas as public procurement monitoring and digital transparency. TI supports the evaluators’ assessment that the EU-supported governance framework for the projects analytical work and digital tools reduced perception of unsafe political activities. Compliance with EU procurement and governance standards strengthened institutional trust and reinforced the legitimacy of project outputs, contributing to what the evaluation identifies as **added value of EU support**.

Whilst the evaluation characterises EU visibility as moderate, opportunities to further leveraging EU communication platforms for advocacy could be explored in future programming. The TI project team would like to add that the EU visibility was ensured throughout the project circle, following the dedicated Communications Strategy, consistently applying EU branding, coordinating with the EU contact point and **strategically calibrating the visibility and dissemination, navigating the changing civic space and legislative environments**.

RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation team has come up with three distinctive recommendations, that will be addressed in the following. For full description of the recommendations, please refer to page 32 of the [Final Independent Evaluation of the EU-funded project Digital Technologies for Civic Empowerment in the Kyrgyz Republic \(DT4CE\)](#).

Specific recommendations for TI-K and TI-S

<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>Enhance accessibility for Persons with Disabilities</p>	<p><i>TI-S and TI-K accept the recommendation. However, implementation of the recommendation is subject to availability of adequate financial resources and future funding opportunities.</i></p> <p>The recommendation suggests that the platforms undergo an accessibility audit by Q2 2026, identifying concrete areas of improvement and developing a phased action plan. It particularly emphasizes inclusion of citizens with disabilities, including visual, hearing, cognitive, and mobility impairments. TI recognises the significance of the GESI mainstreaming and fully agrees that to achieve genuinely democratic participation, barriers to accessing the services shall be identified and systematically removed.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the implementation of this recommendation requires capacity building within the project team, engagement of various experts, as well as strengthened collaboration with CSOs working directly with the above-mentioned target groups. Despite the lack of systematically aggregated data, we would like to mention that in the project activities the participation for people with</p>
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	<p>disabilities was enabled. This includes, for example, trainings for young people with sub-grantee RC Kaniet in Jalal Abad, activities of the sub-grantee CA IDEA, Info sessions of the project team on platforms and the call for subgrants in Naryn and Bishkek. This experience provided valuable insights and feedback. CA IDEA organised a design sprint for improvements of the platform jmd.kg, and the winning project implemented a technical solution – speech to text translator for submitting legislative initiatives, which directly improved accessibility of the platform.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>Clarify platform maintenance and post-project responsibilities</p>	<p><i>TI-K and TI-S accept this recommendation. However, implementation of the recommendation is subject to availability of adequate financial resources and future funding opportunities.</i></p> <p>Transparency International Kyrgyzstan acknowledges the importance of conducting a review of the digital platforms to assess ongoing hosting, maintenance and other requirements for content management. TI-K has already secured funding for a transition period to ensure continued operation and maintenance of the platforms in the short term, thereby mitigating immediate sustainability risks following project closure.</p> <p>In order to safeguard their independence and operational integrity, for the time being, TI-K intends to retain full ownership and management responsibility for the platforms. Options for optimising the platforms, for example, potentially merging certain platforms to ease the maintenance or increase visibility, are under consideration and will depend on the availability of future funding.</p> <p>Technical support from TI-S IT will continue, particularly regarding app store registration, system oversight, and digital security standards. In addition, TI S IT Security and Safety expert has provided templates for contingency planning, and is available to advise on risk mitigation scenarios for privacy and digital security. The recommendation to explore mirror hosting or cross-border hosting solutions is recognised as a relevant risk-mitigation measure and will be continuously reviewed in accordance with the risk assessment of TI K.</p> <p>Should funding become available, TI-K will consider to engage experts to conduct the proposed technical review, develop a platform management roadmap, including plans for ownership, maintenance responsibilities, needs for resources and risk mitigation measures. The implementation of more advanced hosting and security arrangements however largely dependent on securing additional financial support.</p>

Specific recommendation for TI Kyrgyzstan

<p>Recommendation 2</p>	<p><i>Transparency International Kyrgyzstan partially accepts the recommendation, considering it only partially implementable. While</i></p>
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**Institutional
Coordination and
Sustainability**

the strategic objective is sound and efforts will continue where appropriate, the extent of formal institutional uptake remains dependent on the evolving political context and the willingness of public authorities to engage.

TI Kyrgyzstan agrees with the logical rationale of this recommendation and recognises the importance of formally presenting DT4CE-developed civic tech tools to relevant public institutions (where feasible). These efforts are also sustained in meetings with local and international stakeholders. Throughout the project implementation, TI-K has made significant efforts to engage and collaborate with governmental stakeholders. The Memorandum of Understanding signed with the General Prosecutor's Office in 2025 serves as concrete evidence of such engagement, it demonstrates institutional openness to cooperation in areas of public accountability and transparency.

At the same time, the current political and administrative environment remains fluid. Ongoing changes in parliamentary functions and shifting mandates of government agencies affect the continuity and predictability of dialogue with governmental institutions. Nevertheless, the platforms have been presented to the Union of Regional Municipalities, and engagement with municipal-level actors has taken place where conditions allowed.