1. What would you identify as best practice to safeguard transparency of
   a) Court proceedings

   The best practice to safeguard transparency of Court proceedings is public access to court hearing. The principle of public proceeding implies that citizens and media professionals should be allowed access to the court rooms in which judicial proceedings take place.

   b) Selection of judges

   In order to ensure transparency and accountability in the process of appointment of judges, the appointment and selection criteria should be made accessible to the general public. Criteria and the procedure for the appointment of judges should be establish by law.

   c) Administration of the judiciary?

   For administration of the judicial system is important transparency, impartiality and accountability. The public must be able to receive information about the activities of judicial authorities and it should be effective.

   Do you have experiences with such practices? Which?

   In Georgia the public access to court hearing is guaranteed. The current version of the Organic Law of Georgia on Common Court is designed to ensure the transparency of the courts. The courts are now obliged to record court sessions and provide records to all interested parties upon request. In addition, the Public Broadcaster is authorized to record and broadcast court sessions except in cases when sessions are closed either in part or in whole, and to provide records to other media outlets upon request. The law also guarantees that the prosecution, defense, and any person present at the trial can record court sessions.

   In Georgia the High Council of Justice is constitutional body, which is designed as a key link in the administration of the court system. High Council of Justice competencies is appointment, dismissal of judges, judicial qualification exams. In high Council of Justice more than half of the elected members are Judges.

2. What would you identify as best practice to support and promote integrity of judges? Do you have experiences with such practices? Which?

   judges are required to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary. Judges shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of their
activities. Public support of the judiciary is essential, and that support is only possible when members of the judiciary maintain an exacting standard of impartiality and integrity. Judge should behave with integrity in office and in their private lives, should act in a way that is both impartial in reality and in appearance. In Georgia the High Council of Justice monitors compliance with the conduct of Judges and initiates disciplinary measures where misconduct has occurred. In Council of Justice more than half of the elected members are Judges.

3. What would you identify as best practice to prevent corruption within the judiciary? Do you have experiences with such practices? Which?

Qualified and ethical judges are key to ensuring fair and impartial decisions. Using objective criteria in appointment, promotion, transfers and disciplinary proceedings of judges can be an important factor for prevention of corruption in the judiciary. Transparency in courts can also contribute to the efforts to prevent corruption. Laws should also safeguard judicial salaries, working conditions and special attention should be given to professional and ethical training.

Corruption in Georgia has been an issue in the post-soviet decades. After 2004 the authorities increased judges salaries, making them among highest paid employees in the public service, and tightened controls on corruption.

4. What are the major threats, in your experience, to transparency and integrity and a non-corrupt judiciary? How are those threats best combatted?

Making court sessions public is a step forward to greater transparency of the judiciary system in general. In Georgia Publicity of information is ensured, which is reflected by posting the judgments, session schedules and information about the case development in the network, which is accessible for any interested citizen. For ensuring the independence of judiciary power, first of all its financial independence should be guaranteed. With this purpose, the budget of judiciary increased and the salaries of judges were increased dramatically. With the purpose of speeding up the case hearing and enhancing the accuracy and publicity of information about the sessions, introduction of special system for technical fixing of trial is envisaged at all the courts of Georgia. This system will provide possibility for simultaneous and digital recording of the case process, and as soon as the session is over, the trial is burnt on the CD and a brief session report is printed out, which is attached to the case.