



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND PUBLIC OVERSIGHT: DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS AND LEGAL MECHANISMS

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| Article history: | Abstract: |
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| Received: 10 th July 2025 Accepted: 7 th August 2025 | This article investigates the juridical pathways through which social accountability converts citizen input into publicly reasoned decisions and verifiable administrative follow-through within Uzbekistan's architecture of public oversight. Employing doctrinal-legal and comparative-legal methods, it aligns the Constitution and core statutes on public control, openness, appeals, normative legal acts, and personal data with widely accepted procedural standards for participatory governance. Participation mechanisms are analytically situated along a thin-conventional-thick spectrum to furnish a neutral design vocabulary. |
| Keywords: Social accountability; public oversight; citizen engagement; legal design; reason-giving; deliberative participation; implementation tracking; Uzbekistan. | |

Contemporary scholarship on public participation has moved beyond appeals to an abstract citizen "voice" toward the analysis of legally mediated mechanisms that translate that voice into decisions and actions by public authorities. Within the framework of social accountability, accountability denotes the institutionally embedded capacity of citizens to demand explanations and corrective measures from the state, coupled with the state's willingness and ability to respond. This bidirectional logic distinguishes social accountability from generic participation rhetoric. The World Bank's systems perspective conceptualizes social accountability as the interaction of five constitutive elements—citizen action, state action, information, citizen-state interfaces, and civic mobilization—underscoring that effectiveness depends on their configurations and complementarities, rather than any linear sequence of steps¹.

In international standards (UNICEF 2019; OECD 2020), a "community" is the minimal, internally heterogeneous social unit (geographic or network-based); community engagement is an empowerment process that ensures two-way communication, access to planning/monitoring/evaluation, and the deliberate

mitigation of power asymmetries². Against this background, the article (i) maps national norms onto international frameworks of social accountability, (ii) identifies legal and procedural gaps, and (iii) advances legal-design mechanisms—notably, public reasoned responses, public registers of implementation, facilitated citizen-state interfaces, and validated indicators—that convert citizens' voice into enforceable obligations of public authorities.

The study combines doctrinal-legal and comparative-legal approaches. First, it undertakes a close reading of primary sources of Uzbek law including: the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023 revision)³; the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Public Control" No. ZRU-474 (12 April 2018)⁴; the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Openness of Activities of Public Authorities and Administration" No. LRU-369 (5 May 2014)⁵; the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities" No. LRU-378 (3 December 2014)⁶; the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Normative Legal Acts" No. LRU-682 (20 April 2021). Second, these norms are systematically compared with international frameworks on community engagement and social accountability. Participation

¹ Grandvoinnet H., Aslam G., Raha Sh. Opening the Black Box: The Contextual Drivers of Social Accountability. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015

² Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement. UNICEF (C4D), 2019

³ Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023 revision). URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/6451070>

⁴ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Public Control" No. ZRU-474, 12.04.2018. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/3705209>

⁵ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Openness of Activities of Public Authorities and Administration" No. LRU-369, 05.05.2014. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/2380398>

⁶ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities" No. ZRU-378, 03.12.2014. URL: <https://lex.uz/docs/2529943>



formats are characterized using the thick/thin distinction (facilitated small-group deliberation vs. large-scale low-depth input), drawing on design and democratic-innovation literature⁷.

To evaluate Uzbekistan's eight legally recognized forms of public oversight (petitions/requests; participation in collegial meetings; public consultations; public hearings; public monitoring; public expertise; opinion surveys; hearings of officials' reports), the analysis applies a diagnostic grid: (i) existence/accessibility of a public interface; (ii) a public, reasoned response obligation; (iii) named (personal) responsibility for follow-up; (iv) public tracking of implementation status; and (v) inclusion of marginalized groups in line with international standards. Doctrine is contextualized with secondary sources on civic space and governance and academic work on social accountability.

In a broad sense, social accountability denotes a set of civic and institutional processes enabling communities to scrutinize public power, obtain corrective change, and vindicate rights. By contrast, public oversight in Uzbek law is a juridically formalized channel for such interaction—comprising eight legally recognized forms—and functions as a gateway for petitions and proposals. The concepts diverge at the point of state obligations: social accountability materializes only where the channel is coupled with a duty to respond publicly and with reasons, to assign named responsibility, and to ensure implementation (i.e., to translate voice into enforceable follow-up)⁸.

Mapping Uzbekistan's legal framework onto international standards:

Information. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Openness of Activities of Public Authorities and Administration" No. LRU-369 (5 May 2014), together with official portals (e.g., data.gov.uz), provides baseline access to official information. At the statutory or secondary-norm level, provisions on the publication of public, reasoned responses and consolidated participation outcomes are not expressly specified and may be formulated with reference to international guidance on two-way communication and reason-giving.

Citizen-state interfaces. The Presidential Virtual Reception Office⁹ (pm.gov.uz) and the Unified Portal of

Public Services (my.gov.uz) enable electronic submissions under the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. For purposes of alignment with international process design, procedural standards concerning facilitation, briefing materials, feedback loops, and moderator roles may be set out in uniform terms.

State action. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Public Control" No. LRU-474 (12 April 2018) provides for consideration of inputs and the adoption of decisions, and the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities" No. LRU-378 (3 December 2014) provides for a reasoned reply to the applicant. A general statutory requirement for public dissemination of reasoned replies and disclosure of implementation status is not specified and could be clarified with reference to systems-based frameworks on social accountability.

Civic mobilization and citizen action. The operating framework for non-governmental organizations includes registration procedures and public funding instruments, while policy documents and the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023 revision) indicate support for civil-society participation. In line with international references, additional provisions may be formulated to structure participation pathways and the visibility of outcomes—for example, standardized notifications and public dashboards—consistent with established practice

For analytical purposes, Uzbekistan's legally recognized forms of public oversight can be situated along a widely used participation spectrum—thin, conventional, and thick—as descriptive categories rather than evaluative judgments. *Thin* denotes high-reach, low-intensity inputs (e.g., large-scale submissions or surveys) oriented to collecting views; *conventional* refers to established formats where citizens and officials interact within preset agendas and recorded statements; *thick* denotes informed, facilitated small-group deliberation with structured reason-giving and follow-through (briefing materials, moderator roles, feedback closure, and public tracking of implementation)¹⁰. Movement along this spectrum reflects procedural design choices (information quality, facilitation, reason-giving, visibility of follow-up), not the formal legal label of a mechanism.³

⁷ Organizing Engagement. *Types of Engagement: Thick, Thin, and Conventional*. URL:

<https://organizingengagement.org>

⁸ UNICEF. *Minimum Quality Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement*. New York: UNICEF, 2019. URL: <https://www.unicef.org>

⁹ Presidential Virtual Reception Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan (official citizen appeals portal) [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://pm.gov.uz>

¹⁰ Grandvoinnet H., Aslam G., Raha S. *Opening the Black Box: The Contextual Drivers of Social Accountability*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015. URL: <https://documents.worldbank.org>



Illustratively, requests—regulated inter alia by the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Appeals of Individuals and Legal Entities”—operate as a *thin* channel insofar as individualized submissions receive reasoned replies to applicants; when secondary norms provide for de-identified public reason-giving and implementation registers, the same channel can support greater feedback visibility without altering its legal basis. Public consultations on draft normative legal acts—under the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Normative Legal Acts”—constitute a *mixed* format: publication of drafts and maintenance of proposal tables create a structured interface; uniform accept/reject logs with reasons and formal closure notes align the procedure with elements associated with *thick* design while preserving scale. Public hearings—are commonly *conventional* meetings; where briefing packs, independent facilitation, named task lists, and timelines for feedback are specified, the same format can approximate *thick* deliberation consistent with comparative process guidance. Finally, hearings of officials’ reports function as conventional oversight sessions; the use of named assignments and public status-tracking supports clearer follow-through within the existing legal framework.

Within the current framework, a general statutory requirement to publish de-identified, public reasoned responses to civic inputs is not expressly specified; such a provision may be articulated at the level of primary or secondary norms with reference to acts on openness and appeals. General process requirements for briefing materials, small-group facilitation, recording of alternatives, and feedback loops can likewise be standardized in alignment with international guidance on two-way engagement. Provisions on named responsibility for follow-up and public status disclosure may be formulated as cross-cutting rules applicable across participation formats. With regard to inclusion, operational mechanisms (accessibility formats, targeted accommodations, outreach to under-represented groups) can be set out to accompany baseline equality guarantees.

Against this background, a design-oriented package may comprise: (i) briefing packs for each participatory process (options, impact rationale, evidentiary baseline); (ii) representative sampling protocols (open call, networked outreach, limited random selection) where appropriate; (iii) facilitated deliberation in small groups (8–12 persons) with independent moderation and recorded

consensus/dissent; (iv) proposal-tracking tables with reasoned acceptance/rejection, named responsible officials, and deadlines; (v) task lists with public implementation status; and (vi) personal-data safeguards via de-identification in line with the personal-data statute.

Indicators can be aligned with five contextual drivers so that monitoring corresponds to the causal architecture described in the literature¹¹. For information: awareness of channels, perceived credibility, and the share/timeliness of reasoned responses; for the interface: number and uptake of platforms, availability of trained facilitators, and user satisfaction; for mobilization: number and reach of organizations/initiatives and campaign conversion; for citizen action: problem salience, willingness to participate, and the share of collective petitions; for state action: timeliness and quality of reasoned responses, publication of follow-up pathways, and verified completion. Such indicators allow progress to be tracked along the thin–conventional–thick spectrum and support iterative adjustments to procedures.

The international literature treats freedom of expression and access to channels as enabling conditions, while practical outcomes are associated with bidirectional communication, informed deliberation, reason-giving, and follow-through. In this perspective, participation formats function predictably when the informational layer (briefing materials), the process architecture (facilitation, proposal logging, feedback closure), and the response layer (public reason-giving, named responsibility, implementation tracking) are specified together.⁷¹⁰¹¹ Within systems views of social accountability, these elements interconnect with citizen action, state action, interfaces, information, and mobilization, allowing procedural standards to be tailored to context while remaining consistent with general references. Where additional formalization is envisaged, transitional approaches—such as integrating participation outputs with existing horizontal accountability bodies, articulating efficiency-oriented justifications for response pathways, and working through approved programs—offer routes to operational detail.

A coherent legal-design architecture can be articulated by specifying (a) publication of de-identified, public reasoned responses and implementation statuses across participation formats, (b) standardized procedures for briefing materials, representative selection (where applicable), facilitation, proposal-

¹¹ Grandvoinnet H., Aslam G., Raha S. *Opening the Black Box: The Contextual Drivers of Social Accountability*.

Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015. URL: <https://documents.worldbank.org>



tracking, and named tasking, (c) rules on named responsibility together with publication of follow-up pathways and personal-data safeguards, (d) inclusion mechanisms to accompany baseline equality guarantees, and (e) driver-aligned indicators to monitor implementation. When so framed, existing channels provide the institutional locus for translating citizen input into publicly reasoned decisions and traceable follow-up, consistent with international process references.

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