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European Union – Council of Europe Joint Project
“Technical Assistance on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece”

EUROPEAN LABEL OF GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE (ELOGE)

FINAL REPORT

EUROPEAN UNION – COUNCIL OF EUROPE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT ON INSTITUTIONAL ENHANCEMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE, GREECE

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**CENTRE OF EXPERTISE
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM**



ABBREVIATIONS

Centre of Expertise	Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform
CoE	Council of Europe
EETAA	Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government
ELoGE	European Label of Governance Excellence
ENPE	Association of Greek Regions
EU	European Union
iOS	iPhone Operating System (Apple)
ITA	Institute of Local Administration
KEDE	Central Union of Municipalities of Greece
Moi	Ministry of Interior
PHP	Hypertext Preprocessor
RDI	Regional Development Institute

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	5
2.	ELOGE IN GREECE: METHODOLOGY	6
24.	SELF-ASSESSMENT	7
25.	CITIZEN & STAFF SURVEYS.....	8
26.	ELECTRONIC WEB BASED SURVEYS.....	8
27.	GREEK ELOGE RESULTS.....	10
28.	GREEK ELOGE CONCLUSIONS	12

1. INTRODUCTION

About the Council of Europe Strategy and the Twelve Principles

In 2007 the European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government launched the [Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local](#) Level which was subsequently endorsed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2008 ([1022nd meeting – 26 March 2008](#)).

The Strategy is a practical instrument consisting of twelve principles aiming at harmonising and improving local governance across the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.¹ In fact, the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) is awarded to municipalities which achieve a high overall level of governance quality.

The Council of Europe's Stakeholders' Platform oversees the application of the Strategy.

About European Label of Governance Excellence in Greece

The ELOGE activity was implemented in Greece from May 2017 to March 2018 upon request of the Hellenic Ministry of Interior, in the framework of the EU-CoE Technical Assistance Project on Institutional Enhancement for Local Governance in Greece. It was run by the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform of the Council of Europe with the support of the Institute of Local Administration (ITA), which was accredited to award the Label in Greece until 31 December 2020 (see point b in the accreditation request form attached).

The aim of this action is to identify and certify municipalities which achieve a certain standard of governance according to the **12 European Principles of Good Democratic Governance**:

- Principle 1 – Representation, Participation and Fair Conduct of Elections
- Principle 2 - Responsiveness
- Principle 3 - Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Principle 4 - Openness and Transparency
- Principle 5 - Rule of Law
- Principle 6 - Ethical Conduct
- Principle 7 - Competence and Capacity
- Principle 8 - Innovation and Openness to Change
- Principle 9 - Sustainability and Long-term Orientation
- Principle 10 - Sound Financial Management
- Principle 11 - Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion
- Principle 12 - Accountability

The level of governance across the 12 Principles was assessed through:

- A self-assessment where municipalities identified their level of maturity for each Principle;
- Survey addressed to citizens, and
- Questionnaire filled in by staff of the local administrations.

¹ The Twelve Principles of Good Governance are available at http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy_Innovation/12principles_en.asp

² The European Stakeholders Platform granted ITA with the accreditation to award the label on 6 September 2017.

In order to share ownership of the results and maximise the transfer of know-how, all major stakeholders were involved in the selection process. More precisely, representatives of the Ministry of Interior, ITA, EETAA, RDI, and KEDE formed the National Platform, the entity responsible for assessing the scores and identifying the municipalities having achieved the highest overall level of governance according to the Twelve Principles.

The following documents are available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/eloge-in-greece>:

- ELoGE benchmarks for Greece (in English and Greek)
- Surveys addressed to citizens and local staff (in English and Greek)

2. ELoGE IN GREECE: METHODOLOGY

Following the launch event held on 15 May 2017 in Hersonisson, Crete and the collection of expressions of interest to participate in the activity, the Centre of Expertise developed ad hoc indicators to evaluate the respect of good governance principles in Greece.

The purpose of the ELoGE Matrix is to help municipalities assessing their strong and weak points across the twelve principles. This matrix was presented to Greek Mayors and local personnel during three workshops held in Athens on 21, 22 September and 3 October.

In order to cross-check the information provided by the matrix local personnel and local communities were also involved through questionnaires. Local authorities were supported by Council of Europe Experts throughout the evaluation process. Municipalities were able to submit the matrix along with evidence and surveys' responses to the Institute of Local Administration from 16 October 2017 to 24 November 2017.

The following 23 Greek municipalities took part in ELoGE (in alphabetical order):

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Agia | 13. Larisa |
| 2. Agioi Anargyroi –Kamatero | 14. Milos |
| 3. Agios Dimitrios | 15. Mykonos |
| 4. Agrinio | 16. Palaio Faliro |
| 5. Amarousio | 17. Papagos- Xolargos |
| 6. Egaleo | 18. Pylos-Nestor |
| 7. Elassona | 19. Thermi |
| 8. Fyli | 20. Thessaloniki |
| 9. Galatsi | 21. Tripoli |
| 10. Igoumenitsa | 22. Xalkida |
| 11. Kallithea | 23. Zografou |
| 12. Kifisia | |

On 19 December 2017, following the review of self-assessment, evidence and surveys carried out by the Centre of Expertise, the National Platform³ agreed to award the Label to the municipalities

³ The National Platform was composed of major stakeholders on local governance in Greece, namely representatives of the Ministry of Interior, the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government

having reached a score of over 3.00 [full details are provided in section 6 of this report]. It is worth stressing that the differences in the total scores (the weighted self-assessment with the two indicators from the surveys) are small and all the municipalities received a score higher than 2.00.

Finally, the 15 municipalities having proved a high level of governance across the 12 Principles were awarded with the Label on 14 March 2018 in Athens during the Award ceremony.

Visibility and promotion

Following the Launching Conference, the activity was promoted during the Best Practice Open Day organised in Tripoli on 27 June 2017, on the occasion of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) Conference held in Chios on 12-13 June 2017 as well as at the Annual Conference of the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE) which took place in Ioannina from 30 November to 2 December. In addition, the partner institute and the Centre of Expertise liaised with Greek mayors on regular basis to raise awareness on the long-term benefits and the practical implications of their involvement in this action.

24. SELF-ASSESSMENT

Each municipality completed a self-assessment and was given the opportunity to provide supporting evidence for each of the 12 Principles. The evidence was evaluated by the experts who then verified/moderated each of the 12 Principles from all municipalities. In addition, there were two separate surveys completed by staff and citizens.

The results from the two surveys are presented on the corresponding columns of the aggregated matrix. The self-assessment matrix was cross-referenced with the results of the two surveys, so that the final score was determined. **The self-assessment was given a weighting of 60% with the scores from the citizen and staff accounting for an equal share of the remaining 40%.**

The aggregated score was determined by the experts with comments should the score differ from the self-assessment. In the case that the evidence evaluated from the experts gives a higher moderated score than the self-assessment score, there again is an explanation.

The aggregated matrix shows some clear patterns emerging. Specifically, Principles 5 and 10 received the highest scores across all municipalities, meaning the 'Rule of Law' and 'Sound Financial Management' are considered as strong principles. There were significant variations found in Principle 2. Principles 7 and 9 received the lowest values and indicate a weaker position for the majority of the municipalities' participating. Principle 3, 'Efficiency and Effectiveness', was also found to be awarded noticeably low values.

Another conclusion from scoring matrix is that in most of the municipalities (with only a few exceptions), the Mayor's self-assessment had higher scores compared to those from staff and certainly higher scores than the citizen's replies.

(E.E.T.A.A.), the Regional Development Institute, the Institute of Local Administration and the Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece (KEDE).

25. CITIZEN & STAFF SURVEYS

Overall the score was determined from three sources: the electronic self-assessment survey via the web based link, henceforth also called 'online distribution', the citizen and staff mobile app and traditional paper-based questionnaires.

The survey was carefully designed with structured questions for both staff and citizens. The main part of the survey was based on coded "agree/disagree" questions. Also the question format was predominantly open-ended questions, in which respondents had to type in text as an answer. Although making data / information handling more onerous, open questions allow more informative responses. It has been proved that open questions give more information especially when respondents use mobile devices. For the sake of unbiasedness, the responses collected were anonymous. Finally, another key design factor was that the surveys were carefully focused, consisting of clear questions and with logical sequencing.

Sufficient demographic information was gathered, since there was a big correspondence to the survey from both sides of the staff and citizens. More than 2500 responses were received, across all 23 municipalities. Approximately 40% of them were from men and 60% from women in both staff and citizen surveys. The data collected through the various surveys were collated and analysed with powerful statistical tools and programs (such as SPSS statistical package).

Explicit correlations were made to assess theoretical factors and behaviours that are not readily observable when looking at quantitative data. In order to highlight the interrelationships between the principles and draw significant conclusions for each municipality separately, reports on the data collected in all the 23 Municipalities were provided to municipalities to help them understanding their weaknesses and the services that could be improved. Furthermore, the municipalities that received a high score in some principles will be able to work as a reference for those that were awarded lower scores.

The ELoGE App also helped towards the digitalization of the municipality.

26. ELECTRONIC WEB BASED SURVEYS

An online tool was developed to collect feedback on the 12 Principles.

Having Google Forms as a basis, the collection of feedback evolved dynamically. A shareable link was created and subsequently incorporated to the various portals and social media platforms of each municipality.

The software used for the electronic recording of the questionnaires, had a dynamic format, i.e. it has the capability of adapting the content and appearance according to the entry / interaction of end-user. At the same time, the content translates to the server via PHP.

Two forms/types of user interface were especially designed for the case of the staff and the citizen respectively.

The advantages an online data collection tool offers are numerous. In this instance a software solution that offers transparency was selected; all the statistical data gathered would be available for online viewing.



Figure 1: The online distribution

The next step was to design and launch the ELoGE App. The ELoGE application was created and launched both on Google Play Store (for Android devices, such as tablets and mobiles) and the App Store (for iOS devices and operating systems).

An application that is downloaded onto the mobile / tablet of the user, beyond the visibility that it offers, creates a direct communication path between the municipality and citizens.

The application serves many functions and offers a rich experience with interactive content to the user. Getting even closer with a direct interaction, increasing respondents' willingness to participate in the survey and give quality responses is a valuable service for citizens.

ELoGE App was designed as a custom-made application, readily readable and easy to navigate. The application recorded opinions and helped the users to easily understand the Principles. In general terms, both the functional and the aesthetic design of the application tool were put in place, maximising the potential success of the research. Issues of web-security were also seriously considered and covered.

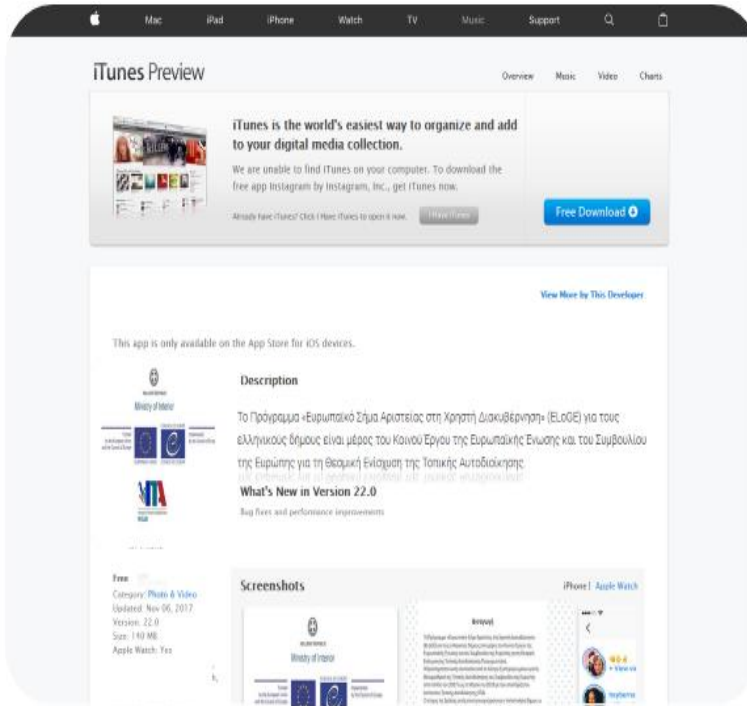


Figure 2: ELoGE App presence on the iOS App Store

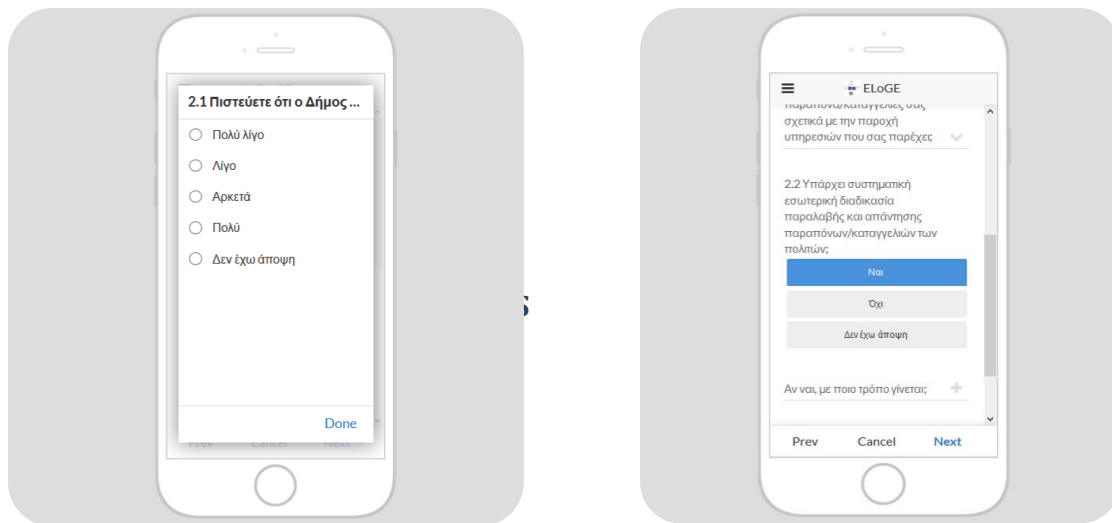


Figure 3 & 4: Screenshots from ELoGE App on iOS devices.

The following table sets out the results from the amalgamated scores from the self-assessment (moderated scores are shown) as well as the staff and citizen feedback. The weightings applied to each of these variables are as described in section 3 above.

The proposed final scores were considered by the National Platform on 19 December 2017.

It was agreed to award the European Label of Governance Excellence to municipalities scoring more than 3. Winner municipalities are highlighted below:

	Self-assessment (moderated)	Staff score	Citizen score	Total
1. Egaleo	3,63	4,00	3,64	3,71
2. Milos	3,88	3,31	3,37	3,66
3. Amarousio	3,96	3,04	3,01	3,59
4. Fyli	3,64	3,69	3,17	3,56
5. Papagos- Xolargos	3,16	3,74	3,81	3,41
6. Agios Dimitrios	3,58	3,13	3,04	3,39
7. Palaio Faliro	2,92	3,59	3,18	3,11
8. Agrinio	2,60	3,83	3,68	3,06
9. Thessaloniki	3,64	2,15	2,19	3,05
10. Pylos-Nestor	3,13	3,01	2,80	3,04
11. Kallithea	3,04	3,05	2,95	3,02
12. Larisa	3,08	2,86	3,00	3,02
13. Agioi Anargyroi -Kamatero	3,11	2,98	2,80	3,02
14. Agia	3,12	3,03	2,70	3,02
15. Igoumenitsa	2,48	3,91	3,78	3,02
16. Galatsi	3,74	2,14	1,57	2,99
17. Zografou	3,25	2,80	2,30	2,97
18. Ellassona	2,90	3,24	2,70	2,93
19. Tripoli	2,82	3,21	2,28	2,79
20. Thermi	3,27	2,09	2,00	2,77
21. Chalkida	2,56	2,35	2,36	2,48
22. Mykonos	2,50	2,76	2,06	2,46
23. Kifisia	2,19	2,27	2,19	2,21

28. GREEK ELOGE CONCLUSIONS

Overall the participation in this programme has been impressive, with 23 municipalities participating and 15 being awarded with the Label in March 2018.



The innovative approach taken in Greece to incorporate the views of citizens and staff has been clearly effective. With over 2,500 questionnaires completed (approximately 900 staff and 1600 citizens) this goes much further than previous ELoGE programmes. It is worth highlighting the considerable response rate of women to the surveys, who accounted for more than half of the participants.

In general, the scores provided by the citizens were lower than the assessments of employees. In turn, the staff (with a few exceptions) gave lower aggregate assessment scores than the self-assessment scores of the municipalities. The analysis provided interesting conclusions.

More specifically, the 1st Principle "Representation, Participation and Fair Conduct of Elections", shows us that the population of the participating municipalities - especially women - believe that people have opportunities to intervene in decision-making processes. Citizens' participation in local public life is a very well-organised process and many municipalities have taken further initiatives in this direction. Employees, from their part, observe certain problems in the process, such as the inability of effective representation of all social groups and the lack of Immigrants Integration Committee (in some Municipalities).

Referring to the 2nd Principle of “Responsiveness”, the statistical data showed us that in all municipalities there is a complaints’ procedure, mostly electronic. However, deficiencies appear in suitably trained staff for front desk services.

The 3rd Principle “Efficiency and effectiveness” canvassed high scores. More specifically, from the answers collected, citizens and employees seem to be equally pleased with the services offered by the Municipal Authority. High rates of cultural satisfaction show the high quality work that municipalities produce in this area, meeting the needs of the members of their community. With regard to financial management and utilisation of available resources, high are the percentages of citizens that did not have an opinion or did not want to answer.

Moderate satisfaction is shown by the public in the 4th Principle, of “Openness and Transparency” about the information they receive on local affairs. In particular, the survey conducted amongst the employees shows that in some of the participating Municipalities, there is a difficulty in citizens meeting with staff of the Municipality or citizens having access to information, which makes it difficult for the public to be informed about issues on the local political agenda.

Analysing the 5th Principle “Rule of Law” it is observed that the Municipalities are trying to comply with the Laws and regulations in order to ensure fairness and impartiality, but these efforts are not systematic.

Principle 6, “Ethical conduct”, was awarded low values, since especially the citizens consider that conflicts of interests cannot be overcome by the municipalities. Furthermore, both the municipal staff and the citizens refer to deficient corruption control measures.

Strong differences between the municipalities and amongst the surveys of citizens, staff and elected representatives are observed in the evidence collected for the 7th Principle “Competence and Capacity”. However, all municipalities follow a specific training plan for their employees in order to ensure high standards in management services.

Amongst the principles with the highest scores was Principle 8 “Innovation and Openness to Change”, which itself can be another reference point of the Greek ELoGE activity. This shows the effort and the shift to the digitalisation of the services provided to the Greek citizen, as well as the “openness” of Greek municipalities, that seem to identify good practices through their participation in European Programmes, as declared both from the self-evaluation surveys and the staff survey.

Principle 9 “Sustainability and long-term orientation” received the lowest scores. Municipalities do not seem to have a strategic planning to ensure that the interests of future generations are taken into account. There is though a high degree of correlation between the involvement of citizens and the existence of strategic planning in municipalities. In particular, municipalities that involve citizens in procedures to find solutions to local problems and sustainability have, according to research findings, strategic planning (road map) with long-term and short-term goals. In terms of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources, only basic legislation appears to be respected.

Answers collected on Principle 10 “Sound Financial Management” reveal that the citizens seem to receive fragmentary information how the money received from the tax collection of the Municipality is distributed. From the part of municipality employees it is demonstrated that a) feasibility studies for costs determination are conducted b) consultations with sectors/citizens are carried out while preparing the budget and c) partnerships with private companies are often concluded.

Finally, concerning Principle 11 “Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion” low satisfaction is betokened by citizens’ and staff’s survey, concerning the participation of women in the decision-making and implementation process (This participation refers to being either direct or indirect through the legalized intermediary organizations/actors). At the same time, the respondents appear to be dissatisfied with compliance to the rules of impartiality, especially on issues of national/political/religious minorities.

Finally, as the 12th Principle of “Accountability” summarises, there is a strong need for internal control procedures to address maladministration. Lack of transparency in procedures is another problem as seen in employee research, since elected officials do not effectively explain their decisions to residents.

It is important that steps are taken to ensure this successful programme is sustainable. With regards the municipalities that have taken part in this programme irrespective of being awarded the Label, it is important that plans are developed to bring about further improvement especially in those areas where less strong scores were awarded. This includes putting in place the necessary steps to share good practice.

Considering these remarkable results, the Centre of Expertise would like to encourage the Institute of Local Administration to run a second edition of this activity between 2018 and 2020 to keep momentum high and raise the profile of Greek local authorities.

The outcomes and the methodology of the present ELoGE activity make the Greek experience a good practice and a case study which will be further celebrated and disseminated by the Centre among Council of Europe member states.

