



# 12

## PRINCIPLES OF GOOD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

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

**European Label  
of Governance Excellence  
(ELoGE)**



CENTRE OF EXPERTISE  
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## **PRINCIPLE 1 – Participation, Representation, Fair Conduct of Elections**

- ▶ Local elections are conducted freely and fairly, according to international standards and national legislation, and without any fraud.
- ▶ Citizens are at the centre of public activity and they are involved in clearly defined ways in public life at local level.
- ▶ All men and women can have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate bodies that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association.
- ▶ All voices, including those of the less privileged and most vulnerable, are heard and taken into account in decision-making, including over the allocation of resources.
- ▶ There is always an honest attempt to mediate between various legitimate interests and to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the whole community and on how this can be achieved
- ▶ Decisions are taken according to the will of the many, while the rights and legitimate interests of the few are respected.

## **PRINCIPLE 2 – Responsiveness**

- ▶ Objectives, rules, structures, and procedures are adapted to the legitimate expectations and needs of citizens.
- ▶ Public services are delivered, and requests and complaints are responded to within a reasonable timeframe.

## **PRINCIPLE 3 – Efficiency and Effectiveness**

- ▶ Results meet the agreed objectives.
- ▶ Best possible use is made of the resources available.
- ▶ Performance management systems make it possible to evaluate and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services.
- ▶ Audits are carried out at regular intervals to assess and improve performance.

## **PRINCIPLE 4 – Openness and Transparency**

- ▶ Decisions are taken and enforced in accordance with rules and regulations.
- ▶ There is public access to all information which is not classified for well-specified reasons as provided for by law (such as the protection of privacy or ensuring the fairness of procurement procedures).
- ▶ Information on decisions, implementation of policies and results is made available to the public in such a way as to enable it to effectively follow and contribute to the work of the local authority.

**G**ood Democratic Governance is a requirement at all levels of public administration. At local level, it is of fundamental importance because local government is closest to citizens. The Council of Europe defines it through the 12 Principles, which represent the fundamental values of European democracy and requirements for Good Democratic Governance.

— The 12 Principles are enshrined in the Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at local level, endorsed by a decision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2008.

— The Centre of Expertise has developed toolkits to assist local authorities in living up to these principles and thus delivering better services to citizens.

## **European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE)**

— ELOGE is symbolised by a crystal dodecahedron engraved with the 12 Principles. The Label is awarded by a national or regional Stakeholders' Platform to local authorities which demonstrate respect of the 12 Principles. This Platform needs to be accredited by the Stakeholders' Platform of the Council of Europe.

— Local authorities who wish to apply for the Label are evaluated according to the following tools: a benchmark, a survey of citizens, and a survey of local elected representatives.

— The evaluation allows local authorities to understand their strengths and their weaknesses when providing public services to the local community and exercising public authority. To improve the quality of local governance, local authorities can use various tools developed by the Centre of Expertise and take inspiration from their colleagues' best practices.

## **PRINCIPLE 5 – Rule of Law**

- ▶ The local authorities abide by the law and judicial decisions.
- ▶ Rules and regulations are adopted in accordance with procedures provided for by law and are enforced impartially.

## **PRINCIPLE 6 – Ethical Conduct**

- ▶ The public good is placed before individual interests.
- ▶ There are effective measures to prevent and combat all forms of corruption.
- ▶ Conflicts of interest are declared in a timely manner and persons involved must abstain from taking part in relevant decisions.

## **PRINCIPLE 7 – Competence and Capacity**

- ▶ The professional skills of those who deliver governance are continuously maintained and strengthened in order to improve their output and impact.
- ▶ Public officials are motivated to continuously improve their performance.
- ▶ Practical methods and procedures are created and used in order to transform skills into capacity and to produce better results.

## **PRINCIPLE 8 – Innovation and Openness to Change**

- ▶ New and efficient solutions to problems are sought and advantage is taken of modern methods of service provision.
- ▶ There is readiness to pilot and experiment new programmes and to learn from the experience of others.
- ▶ A climate favourable to change is created in the interest of achieving better results.

## **PRINCIPLE 9 – Sustainability and Long-Term Orientation**

- ▶ The needs of future generations are taken into account in current policies.
- ▶ The sustainability of the community is constantly taken into account.
- ▶ Decisions strive to internalise all costs and not to transfer problems and tensions, be they environmental, structural, financial, economic or social, to future generations.
- ▶ There is a broad and long-term perspective on the future of the local community along with a sense of what is needed for such development.
- ▶ There is an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which this perspective is grounded.

## ELoGE Benchmark

■ For each of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, the following information is provided in the benchmark:

- ▶ A description of the Principle and a list of the activities that would typically help a municipality to deliver in accordance to that Principle;
- ▶ A self-assessment section where municipalities are asked to identify their level of maturity for that Principle;
- ▶ Evidence to support the self-assessment provided by the municipality.

■ A municipality would be expected to:

- ▶ Consider the evidence they have available to support the delivery of the Principle;
- ▶ Make a self-assessment of their maturity to that Principle; and
- ▶ Record the evidence they would wish to offer in support of their self-assessment.

## **PRINCIPLE 10 – Sound Financial Management**

- ▶ Charges do not exceed the cost of services provided and do not reduce demand excessively, particularly in the case of important public services.
- ▶ Prudence is observed in financial management, including in the contracting and use of loans, in the estimation of resources, revenues and reserves, and in the use of exceptional revenue.
- ▶ Multi-annual budget plans are prepared, with consultation of the public.
- ▶ Risks are properly estimated and managed, including by the publication of consolidated accounts and, in the case of public-private partnerships, by sharing the risks realistically.
- ▶ The local authority takes part in arrangements for inter-municipal solidarity, fair sharing of burdens and benefits and reduction of risks (equalisation systems, inter-municipal co-operation, mutualisation of risks...).

## **PRINCIPLE 11 – Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion**

- ▶ Within the local authority's sphere of influence, human rights are respected, protected and implemented, and discrimination on any grounds is combated.
- ▶ Cultural diversity is treated as an asset, and continuous efforts are made to ensure that all have a stake in the local community, identify with it and do not feel excluded.
- ▶ Social cohesion and the integration of disadvantaged areas are promoted.
- ▶ Access to essential services is preserved, in particular for the most disadvantaged sections of the population.

## **PRINCIPLE 12 – Accountability**

- ▶ All decision-makers, collective and individual, take responsibility for their decisions.
- ▶ Decisions are reported on, explained and can be sanctioned.
- ▶ There are effective remedies against maladministration and against actions of local authorities which infringe civil rights.

## How Does It Work?

### STEP 1

- ▶ Submission of a request for accreditation to the Council of Europe by a ministry, an association of local authorities, or an NGO. (Contact information and more details are available on the website of the Centre of Expertise.)
- ▶ Presentation, adaptation of the benchmark and a training for the municipalities on how to use it.
- ▶ Municipalities' self-assessment according to the benchmark and surveys of citizens and elected officials.

### STEP 2

- ▶ Collection and assessment of the results of benchmarking and surveys, preparation of a report.
- ▶ Identification of the municipalities closest to the implementation of the 12 Principles.

### STEP 3

- ▶ ELoGE Award Ceremony, discussion of the results.
- ▶ Sharing of experience between the municipalities, preparation of improvement plans according to the results of the benchmarking and surveys.

— The E-Tool on good governance at local level is designed to raise awareness and promote understanding of the 12 Principles as well as to help with the implementation of the ELoGE benchmark.

<https://etool.coe.int/login>

The Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform was established by the Council of Europe in 2006. Its mission is to promote Good Governance through legislative assistance, policy advice, and capacity building to public authorities. The Centre currently has a repertoire of about 20 capacity-building tools which take inspiration from the relevant European standards and best practice. These tools enable the reinforcement and evaluation of the capacities of local authorities with respect to the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance. The Centre's connection to the Council of Europe's intergovernmental Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) offers it ready access to high-level government officials from the 47 member states with a reservoir of knowledge and expertise in governance reforms.



[www.coe.int/good-governance](http://www.coe.int/good-governance)

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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