

Interview guidelines

The research findings should help to:

- ↳ Identify the key problems in the activity of local administration associated with the competence gaps/skills gaps among local government officials
- ↳ Outline the scope and type of needs related to the acquisition of knowledge and skills by local government officials, and explore the attitudes towards participation in training
- ↳ Assess the usability of previous training experience among main groups of local government officials working for municipal administration

Assessment of the operations of local government at the municipal level and residents' expectations

- How would you assess the current operation of local government in Greece? What is a success and what is a failure? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the local government and its operation? What is most missing and most needed for local government to operate seamlessly?
- Would there be a need for any reform of local government that would improve its performance? What would such a reform involve? (*about reasons for postulated reforms!*)
- What is your overall perception of the *activities of the local government* in this municipality? How is the performance of the local government reflected in public opinion? To what extent can the local government take credit for successes (if any)? To what extent have the failures (problems) been caused by the activity of the local government?
- What are the residents' expectations towards local government? How do you view those expectations? Are they justified? Do local authorities take those expectations into consideration when planning their activities?
- What are the key intentions and key goals of the local government? What are the priorities in local government operations in the next few years?

Management of the local government unit

- Are there any spheres in the operations of local government which pose particular problems for the management of the local government unit (*the entire unit, not just the local government office*)? Which spheres are those? What do the problems consist in? What are the consequences of those problems? Has anything changed in this respect in recent years? If so, what has changed and when?
- Where do these problems stem from? What are their sources and causes? (*probe in detail about local/translocal causes of problems*)
- How do the authorities of the local government unit address those problems? How successful are they in overcoming those problems? What is the outcome?

Assessment of the performance of the local government administration

- What are the strongest obstacles in the management of the local government administration? What do those difficulties consist in? What are their sources?
- How would you assess the performance of the municipality administration (*as a unit/office of public administration*)? Is the administration efficient in fulfilling the tasks within its area of responsibility? What kind of factors influences this performance? Which elements enhance/constrain the performance of the office?
- Is the administration effective in fulfilling the tasks and plans formulated by local authorities? Which factors play a role here/influence the effectiveness?
- Is the performance of the administration assessed/monitored in any formal way? How is this done? (*probe in detail*)
- How do local authorities identify problems related to the operations of the municipality? What kinds of methods (*formal/informal*) are used for such identification?
- How do the municipal authorities cope with the difficulties in managing the administration? Are they able to overcome those difficulties? Why? What kinds of factors determine the success/failure of those measures? What kind of factors influences the effectiveness of local authorities in solving those problems?
- Have there been any significant changes in the operations of the administration? If so, what did they involve? Why were they introduced? What were the outcomes of those changes?
- Do you see the need for any changes in the operations of the administration? What would such changes involve? What would be the purpose of those changes? Are/will those changes be introduced? (*if not, why not?*)
- Are there any problems in the supervision over the operations of the organisational units? What kind of problems are those? What are their causes? How are those problems solved? How would you assess the effectiveness of local government in addressing those problems?
- Does your municipality have a current development strategy? Does the strategy cover the performance of local administration or effectiveness of its activities? (*If so, probe on how this is included in the strategy, what specific provisions there are and whether they are executed.*)

External collaboration

- What is the picture of collaboration between local government authorities and the residents? To what extent are residents involved in the local governance affairs/public affairs? Do residents show interest in the affairs of the municipality? How is that interest manifested?
- Who are the most important external partners of the local government? What determines their role/importance? What does the collaboration with those partners look like? How would you assess this collaboration? What kind of postulates can be formulated with respect to this collaboration?
- What is the picture of the collaboration between the local government and external institutions/other local government units? What does that collaboration involve? What are the purposes and drivers of this collaboration? How would you assess it?

- Are there any practices to co-ordinate the activities/implement the policies with the neighbouring local government units? What do those practices involve? What are the practical aspects of this co-ordination? How is this collaboration carried out on a daily basis?
- What is the state of collaboration between the local government and the region (regional authorities)? What does this collaboration involve? Should any changes be introduced in this respect? Why?

Staff's motivation and engagement – capacity building factors at the LGU

- What is your view on the motivation of the staff at the local government office and their engagement in their work? What kinds of factors most strongly influence the level of motivation and engagement and how?
- Does the management of the administration take any actions aimed to improve the staff's motivation and engagement? What kinds of activities are those? Why are those activities undertaken (or why are no activities undertaken)?
- Is there any monitoring of the staff's needs related to the tasks they fulfil (*If not, why not? Is there perhaps no need to do so?*)? How does the office obtain information about the staff's needs related to their job responsibilities? Is there a systematic approach to identification of staff's needs related to their work? (*If so, what does it consist in?*) How is the information used?

Previous experience of training and attitudes related to training

- How would you assess the competencies of the staff at your local government office? Are there any knowledge gaps and/or skills gaps? What are they? What is the importance of those gaps? How do they affect the performance of the office?
- What is the staff's attitude towards participation in external training? What kinds of training are more appreciated than others? Why is that? Are there any examples of training that the staffs do not want to undertake? What are those?
- How would you describe the benefits of staff's participation in training? What is the most important element for local administration management? What is crucial for the management of the local government office?
- Does the participation of staff in training really translate into improved performance of the office? Does the staff training translate into improved quality of services offered by the office? How? What are the tangible benefits for the operations of the office?
- Are there any disadvantages/problems related to staff's participation in training? What are they? How bothersome are they? Can they be prevented in any way? How does your office address them?

Perception of training needs

- What kind of training is needed in terms to improve performance of municipality? How and by whom should this training be organized? Who should be trained and what should be the scope of training?

- What training for local government employees and council members is the most valuable in terms of using the acquired knowledge to improve local government management?