



## Module 25 – ACCOUNTABILITY

The Leadership Academy is a learning and action programme for mayors, senior officials and elected representatives of local government.

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Reform



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## 2 MODULE OVERVIEW

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### 2.1 BACKGROUND

Local government leaders are elected their representatives to carry out policies and programmes that are important for them; if they do not like what the municipality has done, they can elect new representatives.

The role of municipal managers is to fight for the community's interests and respond to their demands. Local people want high quality services; businesses want good infrastructure and support; young people want training and jobs; elderly people want a sense of safety and care; young offenders want a second chance; young mothers want pavements without potholes. Different groups want different things. The performance of the municipality is important for the different groups in the community in different ways.

A vibrant community will hold its municipality to account for its performance. How well do municipalities understand and respond to those interests and needs?

Unfortunately, in too many communities, local people lack the interest in, or understanding of, their municipality. This may be the result of history; it may come from a feeling that they cannot change things. At the same time, many mayors avoid local accountability, and sometimes they have faulty concepts of their roles. They may believe that it is politically difficult to work for the whole community and could make them vulnerable towards their Party. This shows a real lack of responsibility.

Municipal managers must learn to respect and listen to local people and organisations. This is the starting point for local accountability. It is a

core leadership function is to encourage local people and organisations to engage in local government. They will be more ready to do that if they believe that their municipality will do whatever is possible to respond to their interests and meet their needs.

Where municipalities are held accountable by their local communities, performance improves. At the same time, effective local accountability gives power to the Mayor and builds social capital.

During this session we discuss the concept of accountability and how to develop accountability mechanisms. The Module will also give an opportunity to recall relevant key Modules and learning points from previous Modules and discuss their interdependencies.

### 2.2 AIM OF THE MODULE

To strengthen participants understanding of and commitment to accountable local leadership and discuss some of the usual misconceptions about leader's accountability.

### 2.3 PLANNED OUTCOMES:

Participants:

- will develop a clear understanding of accountability
- will learn about the chain of accountability
- have a systematic review of accountability mechanisms
- will discuss how accountability relates to daily leadership challenges and practices

### 2.4 DURATION

- 90 minutes

## 3 MODULE OVERVIEW

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### 3.1 ACTIVITY 1 – INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE

The group makes an association cloud for the word 'accountability'. Then the trainer presents the accountability triangle connecting the components to the associations recorded. The accountability triangle is posted in a place where all have good view at it.

### 3.2 ACTIVITY 2 – PLENARY DISCUSSION OF THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The trainer raises two questions for plenary discussion in order to check whether the concept is clear or more clarification is necessary:

1. To whom are local leaders accountable?
2. Why is accountability important?

### 3.3 ACTIVITY 3 – WORLD CAFÉ: CONNECTING ACCOUNTABILITY TO LEADERSHIP TASKS AND PREVIOUS MODULES

The trainer reorganizes the room in a world coffee arrangement with four working tables and places a reminder of one previous Module on each of the tables:

- Table 1: Understanding leadership Module: the 'Challenge-context-leadership practices triangle' (handout 1)
- Table 2: Public ethics Module: the scheme of the three components of ethical decisions. (handout 2)
- Table 3: Performance management Module the scheme summarizing levels of performance management (handout 3)
- Table 4: Civil participation – summary table for the CLEAR tool (handout 4)

The trainer identifies four groups and assigns each to one table/topic. The groups recall the learning from the given Module and discuss what

role it plays in accountability. Groups report in plenary.

### 3.4 ACTIVITY 4 – OPEN SPACE: CONNECTING THE COMPONENTS

One participant is asked to stay at each table to be a recorder and reporter. People are asked to move around and contribute with ideas to tables they were previously not theirs. They have to add linkages to other components. The recorder adds the ideas to the flipchart papers developed during the world café and at the end reports the results.

### 3.5 ACTIVITY 5 – STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN THE ACTUAL PRACTICE

The trainer distributes principle 2, 3, 4 and 12 to four groups for discussing the strengths and weaknesses of actual practices. What are the obstacles and how could they overcome them.

### 3.6 ACTIVITY 6 – THE WEB OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRINCIPLES

In order to give a deep experiential learning of the complexity of the local governance challenge and of accountable leadership a powerful closing exercise is organized. The trainer organizes two circles of chairs and forms two groups and gives a ball of string to each. Both groups receive the 12 principles of Good Local Governance on cards. Each person chooses one principle and sits on a chair. Each person represents the principle he/she choose and puts the card with the principle on the floor in front of the chair. The person who represents accountability starts. Chooses a principle that he/she can connect to accountability, and keeping the end of the cord, throws the ball to the person representing it saying: "For being accountable I need to be ... Because ...". The next chooses another connection and throws the ball further keeping his part of the cord. Slowly a web of connections

forms. Holding the web participants shortly reflect on what they experienced and see.

This is closing exercise gives a deep experience of the interdependencies and is both intellectually

and emotionally powerful and memorable. A really high end for the program!

## 4 WORKING DEFINITIONS

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### 4.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

Underpinning the concept of accountability is the notion that one person is responsible to another, and is obliged to render an account of their decisions and actions to another party. By accountability is meant the imperative to make public officials answerable for their behaviour and responsive to the entity from which they derive their authority and obliged to disclose the results in a transparent manner.

### 4.2 CHAIN OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The mayor and elected leaders are accountable to the (whole) community. As elected representative they need to represent the interest of the community in public affairs. They can delegate responsibility to the executive of the local government coupled with adequate authority and discretion. Through regulation, policy and administrative arrangements responsibilities and discretionary power can be further devolved to the lower level managers. Each participant in the chain of accountability who has delegated the authority and resources to achieve objectives effectively and efficiently should also know to whom he/she is accountable. Each participant would have the authority and responsibility to judge the performance of those to whom responsibilities, authorities and resources have been assigned or delegated and to impose any sanctions - penalties or rewards - which may flow from such judgement.

### 4.1 ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

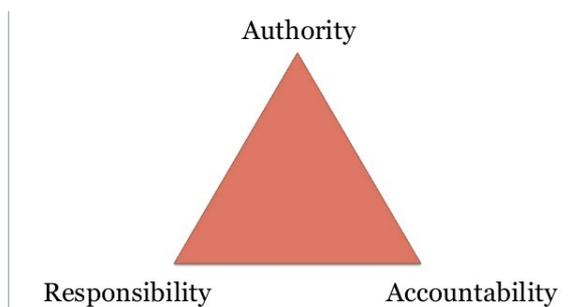
Accountability also means establishing clear objectives and criteria to measure the performance of public officials, as well as oversight mechanisms to ensure that standards are met. This includes social control mechanisms of policies and technical information such as accounting, budgeting, and performance measurement.

## 5 KEY CONCEPTS

### 5.1 THE ACCOUNTABILITY TRIANGLE

All those charged with governance are authorised, responsible and ultimately accountable for all aspects of the municipality's functioning, its results and impact. Accountability involves provision of information on, as well as explanation and justification of actions, activities and choices

At the same time for being accountable leaders have to be assigned not only responsibilities but adequate resources and discretionary power as well for the effective fulfillment of the responsibility. The accountability triangle is a visualization of this relation.



When leaders delegate responsibilities to managers and staff they should be aware that no responsibility should be assigned without the necessary resources to deliver. Without the balance of responsibilities and authority to allocate resources, people cannot be held accountable for delivering the assigned tasks.

### 5.2 COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S 12 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

In Module 1 participants have already learned about the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of

Good Governance. Here we bring back only the three most relevant for the exercises.

### 5.3 PRINCIPLE 2 OF GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE - RESPONSIVENESS

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

### 5.4 PRINCIPLE 3 OF GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE- EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

- Results meet 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.

### 5.5 PRINCIPLE 4 OF GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE- 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 are 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.

### 5.6 PRINCIPLE 12 OF GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE - 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.

## 6 EXERCISE HANDOUTS

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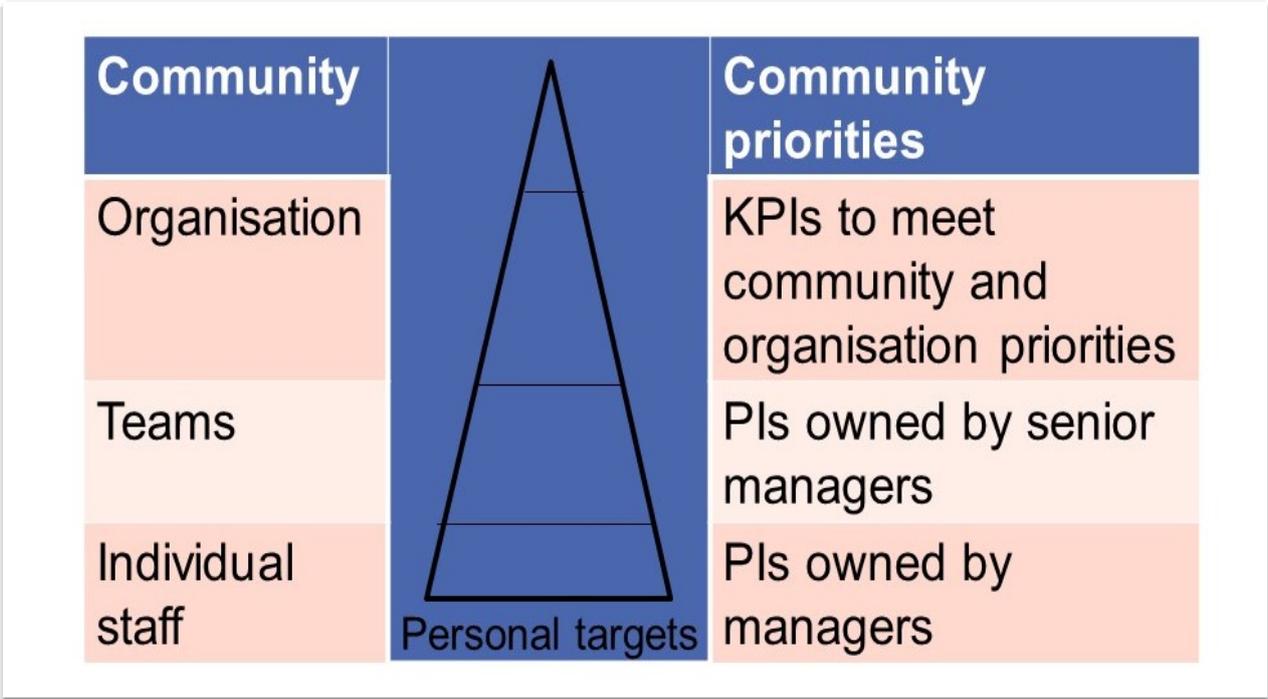
### 6.1 HANDOUT 1: 'CHALLENGE-CONTEXT- LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TRIANGLE' FOR ACTIVITY 3



## 6.2 HANDOUT 2: PUBLIC ETHICS SCHEME FOR ACTIVITY 3



6.3 HANDOUT 3: LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FOR ACTIVITY 3



## 6.4 HANDOUT 4: THE CLEAR TOOL OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE FOR ACTIVITY 3

FACTORS OF PARTICIPATION
<b>C</b> AN DO Citizens have the resources and knowledge to participate
<b>L</b> IKE TO Citizens have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation
<b>E</b> NABLED TO Citizens are provided opportunity for participation
<b>A</b> SKED TO Citizens are mobilized by official bodies or voluntary groups
<b>R</b> ESPONDED TO Citizens see evidence that their views have been considered

## 7 RELEVANT BOOKS AND PAPERS FOR FURTHER READING

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Council of Europe Abridged Handbook on Local Public Ethics at Local Level (2006) Available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2963293&SecMode=1&DocId=1339034&Usage=2> (last accessed July 2017)

Council of Europe, CDLR. (1998). Liability of Local Elected Representatives for Acts or Omission In the Course of their Duties. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806f93c8> (last accessed July 2017)

Council of Europe, CDLR. (2010) Status and working conditions of local and regional elected representatives. Available at: [http://www.ccre.org/docs/status\\_of\\_local\\_elected\\_rep\\_en.pdf](http://www.ccre.org/docs/status_of_local_elected_rep_en.pdf) (last accessed July 2017)

Council of Europe, CDLR. (1999). Supervision and auditing of local authorities' action. Available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2963323&SecMode=1&DocId=1349032&Usage=2> (last accessed July 2017)

Council of Europe. (2007). Extract from the Valencia Declaration 15th Conference of European Ministers responsible for local and regional government (Valencia, Spain, 15-16 October 2007) - Appendix I - [http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy\\_Innovation/Strategie2007\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy_Innovation/Strategie2007_en.pdf)

The World Bank. Site resources: Accountability in Governance. Available at: <https://siteresources.worldbank.org/PUBLICSECTORANDGOVERNANCE/Resources/AccountabilityGovernance.pdf> (last accessed July 2017)