

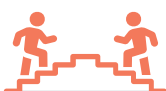
Toolbox for Study Visits

The role of local politicians and local governments can vary depending on the context. Visiting a local government in another country can contribute to new learnings and insights. This brief provides a set of questions to initiate discussion between local politicians in Sweden and their counterparts in ICLD partner countries during study visits abroad. The intention is to enhance the understanding of different systems in terms of the role of the local governments and local politicians.



The role of local politicians and political parties

What is your role as a politician in your local government?
How are councillors elected?
How is the head of the executive (i.e. mayor, governor) elected in your local government? Do mayors need to be part of a political party?
In Sweden the political parties are stronger than individual candidates, and the parties present a list of candidates for mayors. What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct electing mayors compared to having strong political parties?



Opposition

How do you personally work with majority and opposition?
How do you resolve conflicts?
Do opposition political parties have influence that is proportional to their (electoral) popularity, when it comes to decision making at municipal level? If not, what are the challenges?
How is political disagreement expressed? (i.e. protests).



Equity

Is it common for women or members of religious, ethnic or other minorities or vulnerable groups to be head of executive (i.e. mayor) in your local government?
Are there specific gender roles in the local government? Things that usually women do and things that usually men do?
Do members of ethnic, religious, national or sexual minorities or persons of various social and economic status or age have an equal chance of becoming successful politicians in your local government or do they face additional challenges compared with other groups?
To what degree are women and men equally employed in the labour force, outside of the home?
Pension: When do citizens retire? In which way does it affect society? Is there a young workforce?



Resources

What are the main sources of revenue in your local government? What are the main challenges in generating revenue that can be used to serve the population residing in the municipality?
To what extent are municipal revenues based on the local tax base? What is the median/average tax rate? What are the challenges in raising revenue for the municipal budget?
How are responsibilities for welfare and services (schools, health, etc) distributed between the national government, the region and the municipality?
What are the challenges in terms of limited resources and prioritising?



Privileges

What privileges do local politicians have in your local government?
In your view, to what degree are local politicians likely to use their power to accrue advantages for themselves and their associates?
Is it common that people pay local politicians to get applications approved or other types of benefits?



Citizen influence

How does your local government engage with citizens?
Who are the minorities in your local government? How can they provide suggestions and engage in decision making?
Some local governments have direct democracy, that is citizens can vote on proposals. Does your municipality have any examples of participatory budgeting, referendums, or other forms of citizens consultation? What advantages and disadvantages can you identify with such initiatives for citizens involvement?
Do you know about any other initiatives to enhance citizen participation?