

VALuing Education and Experience of Local Councillors Europe – VA2EL



Leonardo da Vinci pilot project – Transfer of Innovation

Initiated by INDL (leader) and iriv (coordinator)



leader



coordinator



OIKODROM
theViennaInstitute
forUrbanSustainability



In France, Austria, Poland, Italy, Lithuania and Greece



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Decentralisation has become a reality in Europe. Local authorities have been in charge of new competences in many sectors such as local development, employment, social services, education, training, sport... The role of their representatives - the local councilors - has become more and more difficult as the environment in which they are working has become more complex. When their political responsibilities have come to an end, they wonder whether they have benefitted from the unique experience they have achieved through the years thanks to their period in office : will it help them find a new job or improve their current position.

Some referentials for skills and competences have been proposed to professionals working in the field of local development in France but there still does not exist an appropriate tool for identifying, assessing or valuing the competences which the local councillors may have acquired and as a result take advantage of their experience.

A Leonardo Da Vinci pilot project “Valuing Education and Experience of Local Councillors in Europe in a professional perspective- Va2el ” has been initiated by the National Institute for Local Development (INDL) and the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) in order to identify and value the formal and informal learning acquired by local councillors through their mandate. The Va2el project is based upon a former project, “Assessing Voluntary Experiences” (AVE) (see www.eEuropeassociations.net) which sought to identify, assess and value the competences of volunteers. The portfolio proposed in this previous project has been the basis for the transfer of innovation towards a new public – the local councillors – and a new field of activity: local development.

The partners gathered for the Va2el project are stakeholders in the field of local development together with training bodies and research institutes. The French team consists of the INDL as leader, *iriv* as coordinator and a regional association of local councillors in Brittany (ARIC). The European partners are based in Austria (a Research Institute called Oikodrom in Vienna), Italy (the Guglielmo Marconi University delli Studi - Usgm), Greece (the Education Association for Adults - AAE), Poland (a Research and Training Institute - IRSS) and Lithuania (a training body which facilitates access to the labour market - Klmcs).

The main objectives of the VA2EL project are to help local councillors acquire and make use of their knowledge, skills and competences in order to facilitate their self-confidence and their aptitude at work. In proposing to the local councillors a professional accompaniment based on the tool and method proposed by the Va2el project -a portfolio and an e-portfolio - the local councillors should increase their professional mobility and human capital by identifying the competence they have acquired. Most of the time, they are not even aware of the professional skills they have developed thanks to their period of office.

The VA2EL project answers the main issues of the Lifelong Learning perspective in three ways. It improves the transparency and awareness of the competence developed by a particular public – the local councillors - through formal and informal learning during their period of office. It also proposes a digital tool - an e-portfolio - and thereby develops access to and use of e-learning, based on Technology in Information and Communication (TIC). Finally the Va2el project should also help to identify and value new qualifications and professional profiles. The local councillors should be better informed about the needs of the job market: either by improving their present position during their period of office or thinking about a new professional position after its completion.

I. A more demanding role for local councillors in Europe

The development of local and regional democracy was the main innovation of the 20th century. The recognition of local democracy by the Council of Europe member states led to the elaboration of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the eighties - the first international binding treaty that guarantees the rights of communities and their elected authorities. This text, which affirms the role of communities as the first level for the exercise of democracy, has become the benchmark international treaty in this area.

Each of the six countries of the Va2el project have signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government.¹ The charter is founded on two considerations: public action is more efficient when the decisions are taken at appropriate levels according to the infra-state-control subsidiary principals; it is also more fair since the responsibilities of the local councillors are closer to those of the citizens. It should enhance the participation of the citizens in public affairs. The countries which have ratified the Charter are bound by its provisions. The Charter requires compliance with a minimum number of principles that form a European foundation for local democracy. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities makes sure that these principles are observed

A report, published in France in 2007 by the Observatory for Decentralisation (within the French Senate), emphasised the notion of “European local governance which recognizes and legitimates the role of the local councillors”². The report underlines a “reinforcement of the local competence that modifies the types of local governance” as the “convergent developments motivated by the necessity for reinforcing the legality of the local councillors”. Throughout Europe local councillors should not only be good mediators between the public and the administration but should also develop the quality of justice in administration and communication.

As a versatile person, the local councillor has become a specialist in many fields such as political planning, management, budget, civil and disciplinary matters. The workload for local councillors holding an executive function has constantly increased. The function takes up a lot of time and requires a constant updating of people’s skills and competences. Sometimes a full time mandate is required to work efficiently with the State, the European Union, other local authorities and firms.

In many European countries, local councillors have been thinking about how to gain better recognition of their unique experience, especially on the labour market, both to enhance their professional integration at the end of their period of office and to enrich the diversity of what they have to offer. The discussion has mainly focused on the status of the local councillors, and the necessary dimension of the training and professional reconversion that should be anticipated. Whatever the status of the local councillors in the different countries, their tasks

¹ Council of Europe, European Charter of Local Self-Government, Treaties series n°122, Strasbourg, 1985. The European Charter of Local Self-Government was drawn up within the Council of Europe on the basis of a draft proposed by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), predecessor of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. It was opened for signature as a convention by the Council of Europe member states on 15 October 1985, and entered into force on 1 September 1988. On the 1st of January 2010, the Charter was ratified by 44 out of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

² Puech (Jean) - senator and president of the decentralization observatory, report on the “liberation of the local democracy”, no. 74, November 7, 2007

and functions, and consequently the developed competence attached to them, are similar and facilitate a European vision and not just a national perspective.

II. A wide diversity among the administrative organisations across Europe³

In the six countries involved in the Va2el project, the situation varies considerably. Decentralisation has a long history in France, going back to the late seventies, and there is still an on-going debate, which focuses on current reform of local authorities. Austria has a federal constitution. In Italy Regions became autonomous some years ago and there is still an important gap between one region and another especially between the North and South (*Mezzogiorno*). Decentralisation has improved in Greece. Poland and Lithuania have experienced a huge administrative and political transition since the fall of the communist system in the late eighties (initiated by the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989 in East Germany and Solidarnosc in Poland).

Municipalities form only a part of a country's administrative regime, and their role depends on the overall shape of the system. In the countries under consideration here all the three basic types of administrative regimes are represented.

Austria is a federal state, with a constitutional division of power between the central government and the constituent units of the federation. Moreover, it represents a case of cooperative federalism, in that different "tiers of government" share powers over specific policy domains, with the upper level (in this case, the Lands) responsible for enacting legislation, and the lower level (municipalities) for its implementation.

By contrast, France, Italy and Poland belong to the category of regionalised states. That is, they have instituted self-government at the regional level. In all three instances regional governments are directly elected, and their powers are complementary to those of other levels of government.

Finally, Greece and Lithuania are unitary states, as they do not have regional governments. While the former has, since 1994, had self-government structures at the provincial level (prefectures), municipalities remain the highest tiers of self-government in Lithuania. However, this will change in 2013, when regional self-government is introduced.

2.1 A snapshot of municipal councils

An overview of the administrative regimes of the six countries and the respective roles of municipal governments is presented in the tables below. France appears to be the first democracy in Europe in terms of the number of its municipalities and therefore the number of its local councillors.

The number of municipal councils and the number of municipal councillors vary greatly from one country to another. The figures range from 60 municipalities and 1,550 councillors in Lithuania, up to 36,782 councils and 556,091 local deputies (including mayors) in France.

This is hardly surprising as the six states differ significantly in terms of area and population size. However, even after discounting for population disparities, substantial divergence

³ Based upon the synthesis report made by Piotr Matela, *State of the art on local councillors*, IRSS, Warsaw, June 2009

remains. The councillor-to-population ratio is by far the highest in France, at 834, with second-placed Italy way behind at 266. Lithuania comes bottom again, with just 45 councillors per a hundred thousand inhabitants. However, the country also has sub-municipal government. The key figures defining the six countries' municipal landscapes are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Administrative regimes of the six countries and municipal landscape

	Austria	France	Greece	Italy	Lithuania	Poland
<i>Administrative system</i>	Federal state	Unitary regionalized state	Unitary state	Unitary regionalized state	Unitary state	Unitary regionalized state
<i>Regional level</i>	Land (9)	Regions (24) + Regional prefects	Regions (13) –	Regions (20, incl. 5 autonomous ones)	-	Voivodships (16) + voivods (representatives of the government)
<i>Provincial level</i>	Districts (99) –	Departments (101) + Prefects	Prefectures (54) + Prefects (central government)	Provinces (110)	Counties (100 – state administration)	Counties (Powiats, 379 (314 + 65 powiat-status cities))
<i>Municipal level</i>	Municipalities (2,358)	Communes (36,782)	Municipalities and communities (914+120 =1,034)	Municipalities (8,101)	Municipalities (60)	Municipalities (gminas, 2,478)
<i>Sub-municipal level</i>	-	-	Municipal – and Local Departments (6.130)	-	Wards (Elderates, 546)	Wards (Sołectwo, 40,398)
<i>Area</i>	83.858 km ²	551,500 km ²	131,957 km ²	301.323 km ²	65,300 km ²	312,685 km ²
<i>Population</i>	8.2 million	60.6 million	11.1 million	58.5 million	3.4 million	38.2 million
<i>Number of municipalities</i>	2,359	36,782	1,034	8,102	60	2,478
<i>Number of councillors</i>	41,958	514,519	16,582*	156,796	1,550	39,539
<i>Councillor-to-population ratio*</i>	51,2	84,9	14, 9	266.4	4,6	10,8

Sources: Country reports; European University Institute, Florence + EUI, country reports, own calculations.

* number of councillors per 100,000 inhabitants ; this number includes only the councillors at Municipal level

2.2 A snapshot of local councillors

In four out of the six countries – Austria, France, Italy and Poland - the age threshold for standing in local elections is 18 years old. In Greece it is 21 and in Lithuania – 20. In all countries except Austria, citizens of other European Union states can run for local seats; in Poland, this does not extend to mayoral elections. In Poland and France, the candidate must be resident in the municipality. Usually, passive rights are denied to convicted criminals and – to avoid conflict of interest - army personnel and certain public officials.

In all six states, municipal councils are elected by universal direct suffrage. In France the two-ballot procedure is used. The term of office is the lengthiest – 6 years - in France and the Austrian lands of Carinthia and Upper Austria. It spans 5 years in Italy and the rest of Austria, while Greece, Lithuania and Poland all elect local councillors for a four-year term.

In four of the countries analysed here - Austria, France, Greece and Lithuania – seats are allocated according to proportional representation. In France (in the smaller municipalities) and Greece a majority premium is used. In Italy and Poland the employed method depends on the size of the municipality. Proportional representation (albeit with a majority bonus in Italy) is used in the more populous ones, with the rule of majority used in those with less than 15,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, respectively.

In half of the countries – France, Greece, Italy and Poland - mayors are elected directly. In France and Greece the leader of the winning party list becomes mayor. In Italy mayoral candidates are included in party lists, but in the smaller municipalities it is possible to vote for a different mayoral candidate than the one on the chosen party list. The municipal councils convene at least once every quarter in Austria and Poland and four per month in Greece. The following table gives an overview of the basic facts on municipal councils in the six countries.

Table 4: Municipal councils

	Austria	France	Greece	Italy	Lithuania	Poland
Age requirement	18	18	21	18	20	18
Term of office (years)	5 or 6*	6	4	5	4	4
Electoral rule	Proportional	Proportional**, 2-ballot	Proportional with a majority premium	Proportional with a majority bonus or majoritarian***	Proportional	Proportional or majoritarian****
Election of mayor	Indirect – by the council	Indirect – by the council	Direct	Direct	Indirect	Direct
Minimal frequency of sessions	4 per year	4 per month	4 per month	4 per month	1 per month	4 per year

Source: country reports, EUI * - in Carinthia and Upper Austria; ** - there is a majority premium in smaller municipalities; *** - in smaller municipalities; **** - in smaller municipalities.

III. Being a local councillor in Europe in 2010 : a challenging “job”

Under the process of decentralisation, most of the local authorities in the European Union countries have increased powers. As a consequence, the role and mission of the local councillors have developed considerably. Just to participate actively in the city life is not enough. More and more specialised and technical skills, administrative and managerial competences are required to fulfill the function of local councillors. Most of the time, they are not prepared for such requirements and they have to learn by doing.

Elected for a mandate, local councillors are fulfilling a function but are also practising a real “job”, even though they are not elected on the basis of skills and competences but on a programme meant to answer their fellow citizens’ demands. This gap between the reasons for being elected and the reality of the mandate may be seen as a main challenge.

Whatever their names or status (mayors, deputy mayors ...), local councillors fulfill the same kind of mission: answering demands expressed by the population according to the legal mandate they have been given by the law. They are working for the common purpose. They are actively participating in the city life. They are expected to respect their electoral commitments and at the same time to defend the general interest in the perspective of a sustainable development and equal rights for all their fellow citizens: those who have elected them and those who haven't.

3.1 powers of municipalities and role of local councillors

Considering the distribution of powers between national and sub-national governments, we should make a distinction between the countries where the local authorities have both legislative and administrative powers (Austria and Italy) and the countries where they only have administrative powers (France, Greece, Lithuania and Poland).

In **Austria**, Landers have both legislative and administrative powers (depending on the policy area, they implement federal law, legislate according to federal framework law, or both legislate and implement policies), municipalities only the latter. They carry out duties delegated by the federal and regional authorities. In **Italy**, regions have both legislative and administrative powers; provinces and municipalities only the latter

In **France**, local governments (from region to commune) have only administrative competences; regional and provincial prefects exercise a posteriori oversight of their policies, with disputes resolved before administrative courts. In **Greece**, sub-national authorities have administrative powers only. The prefect exercises both *a priori* and *a posteriori* supervision of municipal policies. In **Lithuania**, municipalities have administrative powers only. In **Poland**, sub-national governments have administrative powers only. In line with the principle of subsidiarity, municipalities are invested with the basic tasks of public administration

As far as the autonomous powers of municipalities are concerned, we may find the same kind of services delivered by the local levels of administration (municipalities) in mainly all the six countries:

- civil registration and civil service : appointment of local officers and public servants
- police : public order and local police,
- transport, local traffic management and urban transport, school transport and public transport,
- local planning, local infrastructures,
- Economic incentives, economic development,
- social welfare : social services and local health regulations, optional services such as daycare, social assistance
- healthcare : local healthcare centers and hospitals
- environment : water, sewage, roads, household refuse, water and gas infrastructures, environmental issues (protection of nature), waste management
- culture
- education : primary schools, school-related services, pre-school childcare, (also secondary and vocational schools in Lithuania) , school transport ;
- leisure and recreation
- agriculture, fire protection

In some countries, the powers of the municipalities are shared with other level of local authorities and state. For instance in France, education is shared with the department and region or social services with department or economic issues with regions. Another issue for local councillors is also to be aware of the European requirements in terms of rules and legislation.

3.2 role and tasks of the local councillors

A detailed list of the tasks fulfilled by the local councillors in the six different countries is provided in the annex 1. They are closely linked with the powers of the municipalities. They comprehend various activities such as organising the election, attending social events, delivering official documents, preparing and implementing the local budget, delivering any property certificate in the real estate, meeting their fellow citizens to answer their needs, taking any action to promote “public order, safety, security and salubrity”...

A mayor is generally supported by deputy mayors, chosen in the elected municipal team. They are working together with the other local councillors, belonging or not to the same political team.

Being a local councillor has become a professional activity. Serving the common interest now requires many competences in order to answer the demands expressed by their fellow citizens according to the legal and administrative framework. According to the typology proposed by sociology, a “work” can be done by anyone as opposed to “trade” which requires special skill or competence; a “profession” is a trade framed by a chart or code of deontology (professional practices generally approved by people practicing the profession).

Many professionals, recruited on the basis of specific skills and competences, work with local councillors. They are experts in specialised fields such as urban planning, local development or in transversal topic such as management, administration, communication. This paid staff prepares the work. In order to be able decide upon the right choice for the collectivity, the local councillors must also justify or acquire various skills and competences.

An elective mandate allows the local councillors to acquire or develop some knowledge and learning in various fields such as law, economy, sociology, environment... They also develop skills and competences: being able to communicate with others, to negotiate or to manage difficult situations, to defend a budget, to manage stress, to motivate a team...

Local councillors are elected on the basis of a political programme but also for personal or professional reasons. Their reputation or their professional activity may have prepared them to serve the common purpose. Farmers and craftsmen are usually elected in rural areas because they know the reality of the life of their fellow citizens.

3.3 Motivations expressed by local councillors

Being a local councillor is a personal choice. Many reasons may explain this choice.

Most of the local councillors express a concern for the public purpose (*res publica*). They want to serve the common interest and accept to dedicate a lot of time and energy to the community. They are often involved in associations, political parties or trade unions.

Many local councillors gain a social and political legitimacy towards their fellow citizens. They have the feeling of being useful to the Community, to serve the public interest, to transmit values, to apply the law, to enhance and support public policy. They mean to respect their commitments towards their fellow citizens and so keep their support.

They want to serve the general public as they address both population with special demands such as the disabled and the disadvantaged and the average population.

They are usually active and sociable and motivated by the possibility of influencing decisions being made by the local authorities: to contribute to improve the quality of life in their town and district.

They are prepared to overcome difficulties, to adapt permanently and to keep on proposing new projects that would answer the population's demands and would follow the more and more complex legislation and rules.

They like to work in a team: to enhance relations with other local councillors but also with professionals (paid staff of the city hall/town). They try to create relations of solidarity among local councillors: especially among associations or any network gathering local councillors (formal or informal).

They usually want to transmit their own experience: to support other local councillors and to prepare the future to enhance the renewal of the local team by taking into account the equality of chances, men/women, juniors/seniors.

In their elective mandate, local councillors have found a source of personal development and challenge: a form of recognition different from both professional and family life.

They sometimes obey a family tradition: their father/mother or grand-father/grand-mother or both were already local councillors. Some of them expect to strengthen a social status; they are motivated by a form of personal and social ambition. Some local councillors have the feeling to belong to an "elite" – this was underlined by Polish local councillors– this might be especially important for people with egalitarian backgrounds. Some local councillors want to gain power, to make connections, to build social networks.

Most of the local councillors have a passion for politics, the desire to have their own values and ideas put into practice. They want to improve people's living condition: they have the feeling to work for the sake of the local community and for their country.

Some involvements are also explained as a form of rebellion as they disagree with the current governors' behaviour, especially the use of public resources. This motivation was underlined by Italian local councillors.

In other cases, they were the only ones for the job, there was no other candidate. Some of them mean to promote the idea of choice as their profile was different from the other local councillors'. This idea has been highlighted by French local councillors.

Even though the reasons for becoming a local councillor might appear quite various, there is a common point, which is the will to be useful to others and to the Community. Moreover the elective mandate is based upon freedom: nobody is forced to be elected.

4.4 The need for training and professional support as expressed by local councillors

The local councillors represent a heterogeneous public. Their educational or technical backgrounds are quite different from one local councillor to another. The acquisition of a common basis of skills and competences is necessary to avoid making a gap between "those who know" and who exchange between them, and "those who don't know" who might have the feeling of being excluded from the debates.

Today, local councillors are faced with important responsibilities but most of them, particularly those exercising their mandate in rural or medium-sized local authorities, couldn't afford giving up their profession because the allowances perceived during their mandate are too weak or inexistent.⁴

The status of local councillors also differs from one country to another. In France, they are most of the time volunteers according to a republican tradition. It does not mean that they have less professionalism or fewer competences compared with their colleagues who benefit from allowances. The unpaid or low paid local councillors must not be considered as amateurs, less capable in filling their mission. When the local councillors combine their elected mandate with a profession, the allowances cover expenses only linked to their mandate.

If we consider local councillors who are volunteers or weakly paid (they represent a majority in France): they have to keep on a professional activity in parallel to their mandate. It is a competence in itself to be able to combine social or elective activities with a professional activity.

We must make a clear distinction between local councillors who are working in rural or medium-sized local authorities, with a voluntary (unpaid) work for the local life, without any political ambition, and local councillors who are elected in big cities with a full-time (paid) work (paid). Managing a municipality of more than 2000 inhabitants requires skills and competences different from those required for a municipality of less than 200 inhabitants. Nevertheless, the functions of mayor remain the same whatever the size of the local authority. The experience is as fruitful. As a result, this experience deserves to be taken into account, and valued, on the labour market.

The local councilors, who exercise a local mandate for the first time, generally have no experience in this domain and are required to develop skills and competences which are different from the ones required in their professional activity. Thus they have to show a certain capacity of adaptation and innovation. For instance, the farmers are proportionally numerous in the population of mayors;⁵ they have to develop manager skills and competences, at the same time they must be close to the populations' expectations, thus to develop a certain inter-personal ease. They learn it gradually throughout their mandate; this is a learning-by-doing process.

⁴ For instance in France, most of the local councillors working in municipalities of less than 100 000 inhabitants have no financial compensation for the functions they hold.

⁵ In France, 18 % of the mayors are farmers, it explaining by the large number of rural districts.

Many local councillors, given the responsibilities they are assuming, have developed a unique knowledge in many fields. Their elective mandate requires professional skills and competences. Their experience deserves to be recognised as a professional activity.

As mentioned before, the “function” of local councillor has become a real “job”. In the so-called sociological typology, “work, employment, profession”: “work” does not require specific competences; “employment” requires competences; “profession” is an “employment” following a code of ethics. In this perspective, the “function” of local councillor appears as an “employment” and to a certain extent as a “profession”. It is thus normal that the responsibility of local councillors should be recognised as such and that their experience be valued on the labour market. It is also important, in this context of professionalisation of the local councillors to propose a training which has to be fit for their unique needs.

A right to training has been asserted in France for local councillors and has been strengthened by the “Democracy of Proximity” Act (1992). The training for local councillors should be compulsory for the community especially considering the increasing complexity of their functions. They are given important responsibilities. A strong demand in training has been expressed in the debates preparing the law. The most popular issues for which local councillors are asking to be trained are local finances, role/function of local councillor for the Community, town planning, social action and communication.

In the reality, the proportion of local councilors, who could follow training or even think of asking for one, is not so important⁶. This is especially true for those who are elected in small and medium size cities, who are the main target of the Va2el project. Many reasons may explain this fact.

The first reason is linked to the idea that the local councillors have of their “mission” or “function”. Most of them, especially in small and medium sized cities, see themselves as “enlightened volunteers”, not as professionals and are reluctant to follow any training courses. They also tend to consider the investment in training as a personal enrichment, and not as a collective one.

Another reason is the financing of such training. The costs linked to it are always seen as too expensive. It is the same with the reimbursements of expenses or the loss of salaries. While these are statutory, very few local councillors ask for them. Moreover, even though the local councillors are quite convinced by the need for being trained, the decision for financing such training must be taken by the municipal council. As this is not considered as being a main issue, this “cost” is often forgotten.

The training for local councillors is directly linked to the existence of a status. As France is the only country in the Va2el consortium to have proposed and applied such status (since 1992), this is still a “pioneer” debate for the other countries. Nevertheless, it has to be raised as the sustainability of the Va2el project - the tool and method proposed to the local councilors – depends mainly on the importance given to the role they are assigned.

On one hand, if local councillors are considered as “just mandators”, “enlightened volunteers”, it should be difficult to finance the accompaniment required by the e-portfolio proposed by the Va2el. On the other hand, if local councillors are considered as “main stakeholders” in the

⁶ According to Aric, French report, Va2el, March 2009.

local development field, training will be considered as being a collective investment which might be most fruitful for the Community. The only barrier remains the time local councillors will accept to dedicate to such training. Any initiative meant to propose appropriate tools and methodology, for the very special needs of local councillors are most recommended.

IV. From an elective mandate to the labour market – the va2el project ⁷

The local councillors are the main target of the Va2el project. Thanks to the tool and method it is proposing - a portfolio and its digital development, an eportfolio- the local councillors will be able to identify the tasks and activities they have been assigned in order to express them into competences and, if needed, to ask for training in order to assess them or improve them.

The VA2EL project should also allow the social and civic competences developed by the local councillors to be valued and should emphasise the initiative and entrepreneurship spirit they have proved during their mandate. These are the main competences highlighted in the eight key competences published both by the European Parliament and European Council in December 2006, as well as by the Lisbon strategy, which seeks to make Europe be the most advanced knowledge society.

The main idea and innovation of the Va2el lies in the ability for local councillors to take into account non-formal and informal learning, acquired through their period of office, in order to value new skills and competences that might be most relevant in adapting to the changing needs of the job market and increasing their chances of mobility.

Thanks to the Va2el project, a specific accompaniment should be proposed to the local councillors. Autonomy, competence and responsibility are raising the issue of the status of the local councillors in many European countries. The need for training and professional support underlines the need for a specific accompaniment for this very particular public. We have already underlined the question of the financing directly linked to the status.

Another issue of the Va2el project is the exchange of experience between local councillors in different countries using different politico-administrative systems and where the missions and competence of the local councillors vary. Other publics might also be concerned by the Va2el project in the long term such as professionals in the local development field, advisors in employment agencies responsible for supporting public agents.

The European approach is most important for our Va2el project. The tool and method proposed - a portfolio together with an e-portfolio- are meant to identify and value the local councillor's competences. The results should easily be transferred to other countries, such as the Central and Eastern countries where the transition process should lead to a more developed decentralisation and professionalisation of the function, the same process already experienced by most of the Western and Southern countries.

Another issue could also be the access or at least the awareness of other existing tools and methods to value skills and competences already proposed in a European perspective. In particular, the portfolio and e-portfolio could be used as a complement to the Europass. They should enhance local councillors to write their *curriculum vitae* according to European

⁷ Project initiated by Indl with *iriv* together with Oikodrom (Austria), Aric (France), AAE (Greece), KLMTCS (Lithuania) and Irss (Poland), projet Va2el (2008-2010), www.va2el.eu

standards, focussing on the unique competences they have developed during their period of office. Thanks to the experimentation proposed to local councillors in the different countries, the partners of the Va2el could see that even if they are familiar with the idea of European exchange, they haven't yet experienced professional mobility and so haven't used the Europass. The Va2el should be the first step to be aware of the other European tools proposed.

4.1 a portfolio

A portfolio is “an organised collection of materials that presents and verifies skills and knowledge acquired through experience. It is of particular relevance to validating non-formal and informal learning because it allows the individual candidate to contribute actively to the collection of evidence and also offers a mix of approaches strengthening the overall validity of the process”.⁸

A portfolio might include documents such as “resumés, performance appraisals, references from current and past employers, supervisors and colleagues, and photographs of completed work certified by a referee.” This human resources tool is fulfilling five main functions: an active memory, an evolutive tool for identifying and knowing competences, a collective and conservative tool, a self-evaluation, a personal data basis, a given value to informal competences.

As far as the portfolio proposed in the Va2el is concerned, the following points have to be detailed by the local councillors thanks to an on-line questionnaire:

- a) expressing their motivations for being local councillors ;
- b) detailing the most challenging situations local councillors may have experienced during their period of office focusing on their status/function, their fields of responsibility ; the main elements of the tasks fulfilled, the ways and means to exercise the mandate, the training followed ;
- c) on this basis, identifying their competences : they have been gathered according to five main topics : communication ; administration, budget & accountancy ; management & organisation ; management & implementation of projects; analysis of public needs;
- d) as a result, proposing an action plan: a pass into the labour market by focusing on the goal of achieving a special competence, the action to take, the time dedicated to achieving the goal and the expected result.

At any step of the process, the local councillors have to give very concrete examples and evidence of work done. A portfolio is not a declarative process: each experience or competence identified has to show a tangible result.

A portfolio is a dynamic process: it has to be updated by local councillors each time they might have to identify and justify a competence. Any further experience might enrich the table of their competences. Being a local councillor has to be considered as a trade with missions to fulfil, competences to justify in order to enhance their work on the field and towards their fellow citizens. These skills and competences might also be used in a personal way by local councillors at the end of their elective mandate or any time they want to value this special experience on the labour market.

Cedefop, *Lignes directrices européennes pour la validation des acquis non formels et informels*, Office des publications de l'Union européenne, Luxembourg, 2009

A portfolio is a personal tool: the data collected have to be kept confidential. All the data stored in the eportfolio will be considered as private data by the administrator of the tool, the Indl. This has been a main commitment of the leader of the project all along the process.

4.2 an e-portfolio

A recent trend in the field of validating non-formal and informal learning is the use of digital portfolios. This trend has been underlined by the expert of life long learning of the Cedefop⁹. Such portfolios also known as e-portfolio or cyber portfolio offer the possibility to combine text, audio, graphic and video-based presentation of information. They also offer increased capacity to accumulate data that can provide the audience with greater insights into the achievements and successes of the learner.

The Cedefop experts have warned on the potential risks carried out by digital portfolios. For instance, the technological novelty of the product can overshadow the purpose of the portfolio and learning to use the technology itself could subsume the learning opportunities of portfolio construction. Furthermore, developing a digital portfolio risks including unnecessary information and material that is not wholly derived from the candidates' own efforts.

Whatever the drawbacks of an eportfolio, with the special learning process it implies and the access to Internet tools it requires, it might be a useful step forward for local councillors to have access to innovative training. There are at least three main reasons to justify the proposal of an e-portfolio.

Many local councillors are working in the countryside. A learning tool at a distance should reduce the time to attend a training session. Moreover, it would be a way to reduce the "digital split" between more advanced and less advanced regions, on the condition that the region has been equipped with Internet.

Thanks to the e-learning approach, many local councillors might have the opportunity to contact local councillors from other regions, in their country but also in Europe. The exchange of experience depends on having linguistic skills. Many cities have already developed twinning with other European countries and the basis is usually a cultural or touristic one. Thanks to the Va2el, it could be an exchange of expertise: the "job" of local councillors in a European perspective.

On a personal basis, the use of such a portfolio means that people will become used to Internet tools. This has become a key issue even in small cities since most of the administrative process tends to be made online in order to reduce public costs and to allow for transparency of information. Local councillors, like any citizen, have to adapt to this new administrative process.

On the basis of the experimentation, it has been underlined that even though the eportfolio was useful to prepare at a distance the work to fill the different parts, collective work was vital to ensure that the experience was well described and the competence deduced was relevant. On this last point, the accompaniment by a professional in human resources is required as self-evaluation is not enough. Local councillors need to be supported in their professional

⁹ Cedefop, Thessaloniki, December 2009

evaluation to find and select the relevant experience and deduce the appropriate competence that might be useful on the labour market. The action plan should also be a collective activity together with professional support. Their involvement is very reliant on human relations and collective work. This is also very true when they have decided to identify and value the skills and competences they have developed: they need the help of others, especially other local councillors who are aware of the difficulties faced.

4.3 expected impact – a better recognition for local councillors

The main impact expected for the Va2el project is to propose a tool and a method to identify and value the formal/informal learning of local councillors to integrate them in their professional careers. The impact of the Va2el project should be seen in two perspectives:

1 – in the short term: proposing a tool and method in order to identify and value the competence acquired and developed by the local councillors while exercising their mandate;

2 – in the long term: proposing a support to local councillors so that they can value their experience in the framework of their professional career and in the occasion of a professional reconversion.

Taking into account this dimension, the digital portfolio insists on the idea that the responsibility of a local councillor requires sharper knowledge. Local councillors wouldn't develop certain skills and competences without a professional accompaniment, which should allow them to dedicate themselves more effectively to their mandate, and so to enhance their work for the general interest..

Local councillors are more and more demanding in a professional support to be able to: identify or develop particular skills/capacities (relational ease, capacity of management), express them in competences (according to the professional environment of the local authority in which they are exercising their mandate) , value them on the labour market.

The Va2el project proposes both a unique tool and support to local councillors in order to help them in considering their professional career or in a possible professional redeployment with new perspectives.

Our project should enhance the professional support of local councillors in many ways:

1. by its innovative approach: an e-portfolio based on an original portfolio designed to the needs of local councillors ;
2. by its European dimension: the experiences of the local councillors in six countries will be considered : France, Austria, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland ;
3. by its pedagogy: proposing a method to identify non formal and informal learning based upon an experience developed during an elective mandate;
4. by its scientific approach: a consultation and experimentation have been made among the local councillors coming from 6 different backgrounds . The institutional and national backgrounds have been taken into consideration.

A website (www.va2el.eu), together with a blog, has been updated throughout the process in order for to meet the expectations of the local councillors in a very particular domain: the professional accompaniment and the preparation of their professional redeployment. The

testimonies of many local councillors from the 6 countries of the consortium have been meaningful to help other local councillors or professionals working with them to accompany them on the labour market, to have a better understanding and so recognition of their very particular experience.

It is essential for the local councillors still in the exercise of their mandate to be able to prepare their professional future. This feedback should also allow them exercising more serenely their functions because it is a question of valuing their very particular experience.

4.4 new perspectives offered by the Va2el project

Thanks to the exchange of practice among the consortium, the Va2el project could underline many issues in the local development area.

A first issue discussed among the partners was the proposal of a certification or qualification that would be directly linked to the “function” of local councillor. The idea is not to require *ex-ante* special “skills and competences” to become a local councillor since this should be open to any citizen. The point is to enhance *ex-post* the fact that to be able to answer fully and in the best way their fellow citizens’ demands, local councillors have acquired or developed skills and competences that deserve to be valued and officially recognized by the Community.

As far as France is concerned, the “Valuing prior learning” process proposed by the law of social modernisation in 2002¹⁰ could be a way to achieve this goal. A law was adopted on November 2009, in the general framework of lifelong learning and professional orientation. It is proposing the opportunity for local councillors to value, the professional skills and competences acquired in relation with their local mandate. The e-portfolio proposed by the Va2el project should be meaningful in this perspective because so far there is no pedagogical tool nor methodology which can identify and value such an experience¹¹.

Among the other countries, Poland has been most interested in this possibility to propose a qualification or at least any official recognition of the local mandate. In Lithuania, local councillors were interested in the e-portfolio as a tool for self - assessment and recognition of the skills acquired during the mandate. And most important and giving reasons for their interest point is expectancy to formalize informally gained competences in the future.

A second issue is the need for a professional support for local councillors in difficult economic times together with the decentralisation process. The idea of a status, which is directly linked to proposed training, has been renewed.

In Austria, during the elections for the local councils in the federal states in 2010, the association of municipalities (*Gemeinebund*) emphasised the difficult situation mayors as well as the municipalities are faced. Due to rigid cost-cutting programme by the current government, the municipalities cannot afford all the benefits and tasks. It was made clear that also the social security system, especially for mayors, is not well established. These may be reasons why it has become more and more difficult to identify citizens willing to run for local councillor or mayor.

¹⁰ Valider les acquis de l'expérience des élus locaux - VAE

¹¹ Reference of the law : loi n° 2009-1437 of the 24 novembre 2009 relative à l'orientation et à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie (<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>)

In Greece, a new reform for local administration structures and functions has been planned by the government in 2010. Local authorities are faced with huge staff reductions: At the same time, a transfer of powers and resources is being organised, a new Governance system and Economic Review and Financing. Local councillors are more directly exposed to the demands expressed by their fellow citizens.

The main issues raised by the Va2el project are actual debates across Europe.

Conclusion

The Va2el Project is addressing the main actors of the decentralisation process, the local councillors. It has been implemented in the framework of the sub-programme Leonardo da Vinci of the Lifelong Learning programme (LLL) whose main aim is to value the non-formal and informal learning to enrich the concept of human capital among European citizens.

Local councillors play a crucial role in the local democracy process. The responsibilities they are undertaking under the different official rules organising the decentralisation process in the different countries are more and more extended. The reality of the missions and tasks fulfilled by local councillors differ from one country to another but their motivations remain the same: serving the common purpose and answering the demands of their fellow citizens. The “professionalisation” of the mandate of local councillors has been a consequence of the complex environment they are working in. There is an increasing number of rules to apply coming both from national and European levels. As a consequence, there are also duties to be undertaken on the local level with the decentralisation process.

The skills and competences developed by local councillors during their period of office have not yet been identified nor valued on the labour market. Albeit meaningful for local councillors when they have to think of a professional redeployment or to improve the opportunities of their professional career, their unique experience is often unknown or misunderstood.. Thanks to the Va2el project, local councillors should be able to use a professional tool in order to prepare and enhance their coming back on the labour market. The portfolio process is meant to allow them to be aware of the tasks fulfilled, skills and competences acquired and to value them. This is part of the recognition of their elective function and unique status.

A digital development of the portfolio - an *portfolio* - proposed by the Va2el Project is a personal digital file in which the learning outcomes of their elective mandate are defined, justified (thanks to the “evidence of work”) and stored so that they can be recognised and taken into account by a training body or by any employer. The eportfolio is a simple, efficient and recognised tool to do this in the labour market, in order to enrich and update the career of the local councillors with new and relevant experiences.

When interviewed about the reasons for applying for office, local councillors often answer that they are mainly motivated by the desire to be involved, to be active on the ground, to make a difference and improve local life. They like the idea of serving the local community, to transmit values, to support and promote public policy.

Elections are the perfect time to review the successes and failures. Electors are making a choice; they express either their trust, in renewing the local team or their dissatisfaction by

electing a new local team. Local councillors do not own their elective mandates. This is the “glorious uncertainty” of the election. Even local teams who haven’t failed and have kept their promises may be defeated. In any case, the individual work done by local councillors for their Community remains. The Va2el project is also meant to recognise and value this civic and social involvement of local councillors for their fellow citizens.

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Annex 1 – Tasks fulfilled by the local councillors



Austria¹²

In general all the municipalities and therewith the local councillors have to fulfil the same tasks. However, in reality there are differences which can be traced back to on the hand the regulations of the “*Länder*” and on the other hand the regulations of the municipalities themselves. The duties of the each municipality can vary according to the region, the economic structure or the size of the respective municipality. The same holds true for the legal, economic and other tools, which can be used by each municipality. Again the situation of statutory cities is different, as they do not only have to fulfil the duties of a municipality but also the duties of the district administration. The Federal Constitutional Law states two types of duties which have to be fulfilled by the municipalities and therewith by the mayors, his/her deputies and the local councillors: assigned tasks (by Bund and Land) and autonomous tasks.

Tasks of mayors

Mayors in municipalities or rather the mayor and his deputies have lots of duties and responsibilities but in most instances they divide them up to each other.

1. Overall responsibility for the duties of the municipality in its own sphere of competence : Implementation of legislated regulations and notices ; provision of governmental tasks (*behördliche Aufgaben*) within the own sphere of competence
2. Implementation of the governmental administration affairs (assigned sphere of competence)
3. chairmen of Local Council (*Gemeinderat*) and City Council (*Gemeindevorstand*, *Stadtrat*) or City Board (*Stadtsenat*)
4. Continuous Administration, Superior to public servants (in the municipality office), which are bound to his/her instructions
5. Outward representation of the city
6. In case of emergency (catastrophes e.g.) interim injunction , etc...

Tasks of Managing City councillors, Members of the Municipal Executive Board (Amtsführende Stadträte):

1. supporting the Mayors in officiating (see tasks above)
2. responsible for a defined sphere of actions (within the own sphere of competence), although bound to the instructions of the mayor ; sphere of actions: e.g. road and hydraulic construction, environment, village renewal, education, culture and youth, fire brigade, administration of cemeteries, administration of housing, economy and tourism, urban redevelopment and city administration, social welfare and health, general administration and financial management.
3. contact with the citizens, enquiries of local citizens at the consultation hours, on-site inspections
4. participation at (social) events
5. cooperation with the responsible administrators specialised in one sphere of action (of the municipality office), etc.

Tasks within the Local Council

¹² Oikodrom, Vienna, 2010

1. Participating at the meetings of the Local Council, participating in the discussions of regulations, and enactments
2. Legislating enactments (Beschlüsse) regulations (Verordnungen) and notices (Bescheide) on e.g. the municipal estimate of the budget and the balance of accounts
3. Appealing notices of the mayor
4. participation in technical boards (Ausschüsse) ; etc.

Sphere of competence of municipalities

Own sphere of competence

1. appointment of the Gemeinde authorities; settlement of the internal arrangements for performance of the Gemeinde functions;
2. appointment of the Gemeinde staff and exercise of the official responsibility over them
3. local public safety administration, local events control;
4. administration of Gemeinde traffic areas, local traffic police;
5. crops protection police;
6. local market police;
7. local sanitary police, especially in the field of emergency and first aid services as well as matters pertaining to deaths and interment;
8. public decency;
9. local building police excluding Federal-owned buildings which serve public purposes; local fire control; local environment planning;
10. public services for extra-judicial settlement of disputes;
11. debtors' sale of goods

Assigned sphere of competence - The assigned sphere of competence comprises those matters, which the Gemeinde in accordance with Federal laws has to undertake at the order and in accordance with instructions of the Bund, or in accordance with Land laws at the order and in accordance with the instructions of the Land. The business of the assigned sphere of competence is performed by the Bürgermeister (mayor). In doing so, in affairs concerning the Federal execution he is bound to instructions of the responsible Bund authorities. In affairs concerning Land execution the mayor is bound by instructions from the responsible Land authorities.



France¹³

The mayor – the main actor of the local development. The mayor and his/her team is asked to be responsible for the local public service . The mayor represents the State/public authorities in her/his town/city whatever the size of the local authority.

His/her main duties are :

- the ones subjected to the hierarchical control of the « préfet » (civil servant representing the State) ; they are part of the so-called « proximity administration » ;
- the ones under the authority of the « procureur de la République », public prosecutor ; as the mayor is considered as an officer of justice together with an officer of civil status.

¹³ Iriv, Paris, july 2009.

The mayor and his/her team's duties comprehend: the publication and implementation of laws and rules together with the implementation of general security measures. Special tasks/missions are also very linked to his/her elective mandate ¹⁴ :

1. to organise political and/or socio-professional elections together with all the publicity required ;
2. to authenticate the signature of any official document ;
3. to deliver any document , assessment or certificate linked to the situation of the people (such as the evidence of stay for foreigners willing to ask for a permanent stay) ;
4. to certify copies of document (for diplomas for instance).

There are also special police services that the mayor is applying in the name of the State on the basis of special laws (such as legal or public advertising¹⁵). Concerning all these tasks/functions, the mayor is following the hierarchical principle. It means that the “préfet” may address the mayor any instructions or order; in case of non answer or inappropriate action, the “préfet” may use his/her power of substitution.

The mayor is sharing his/her tasks/functions together with his/her team composed of the deputy mayors. The deputy mayor has received a special delegation of power to clarify his/her main field of activities in the city administration (such as the education deputy mayor or the sports deputy mayor...). The deputy mayor doesn't need any special delegation of power for the duties under the police ¹⁶.

Here is a non exhaustive list of “collective” missions/tasks legally dedicated to the local councillors (mainly mayors and deputy mayors) to be voted by the local team (conseil municipal) :

5. civil acts (birth, death, marriages, any official assessment) ;
6. local property ;
7. price/costs of the local public services ;
8. preparation, contract and implementation of public offers of a low amount ;
9. alienation of real estate up to 4.600 euros ;
10. insurance contract ;
11. using a right of pre-emption according to the Urbanism code ;
12. legal actions in the name of the local authority, etc....

Personal tasks and missions dedicated to the mayor :

13. local and rural police in order to promote ‘public order, safety, security and salubrity’ ; such as allowing demonstrations, prevention against accidents or any natural disasters ;
14. special police in the name of the State (such as public advertisement) or in the name of the local authority (traffic or parking ; nautical activities ; building falling in ruins).

¹⁴ Art. L. 2122-27 du CGCT.

¹⁵ Loi du 29 décembre 1979 sur la publicité et les enseignes.

¹⁶ Art. L. 2122-31 et L. 2122-32 du CGCT.

Main missions and tasks are also dedicated to the local councillors in the field of Urbanism. Most of the local authorities (cities and towns) have adopted in France a Local Plan of Urbanism (Plan local d'urbanisme -PLU). The building allowance is delivered by the mayor.



Greece¹⁷

Task 1 - Legal framework for the various decisions taken in the Council

Research for all laws and Ministerial decisions concerning public works and budgets allocation-procedures to be followed

Task 2 - Proposals for the various areas of responsibility of the Municipality

Justification and submission of complete proposals for the provision of services as sports, health centres, kindergartens, renovation of public buildings.

Task 3 - Financial audit of the Municipal Committee and the expenses

Examination of the legitimacy of the budget decided by the Municipal Committee and the procedures followed for allocation of the expenses-

Task 4 - Cooperation with neighbouring Municipalities

Communication and consultation in common issues such as transportation, road planning, Management of waste, environmental protection

Task 5 - Submission of opinion to the upper levels of public administration

Submission of proposals for any public work or city planning and environmental protection decision affecting the Municipality towards the Prefecture the Region and the central government

Task 6 - Participation in any decision taken by the Municipal Council

Participation in the discussions according to the agenda of the session, argumentation on the issues, participation to the voting for each topic

Task 7 - Social Networking and management of social dialogue

Organisation of public discussions-Contacts with experts on local issues. Organisation of e-forums for the active participation of citizens (problems they face, objections to the decisions, submission of opinions concerning future planning etc)

Task 8 - Member of the Boarding Council of the “Centre for the elders”

Supervision of the services provided such as organisation of cultural events and excursions, allocation of budgets, help at home for those with special needs, health services, organisation of learning groups for gardening, painting, knitting etc. Cooperation with the personnel of the centre.

Task 9 - Member of the Boarding Committee for the sports

Creation, reservation of all the relevant infrastructures (gyms, swimming pools, sport grounds) supervision of the services and the functions, financial control. Cooperation with the personnel of the centre.

¹⁷ AAE

Task 10 - Member of the Boarding Committee of the “Baby Centre”.

Supervision of the functions concerning education, health, baby care, nutrition, safety of the children attending. Cooperation with the personnel of the centre. Allocation of budget.

Task 11- Member of the Boarding Committee of the “Municipal Enterprise for Local Development”.

Supervision of the services provided such as local events, support of citizens with special needs, adult training programmes, development of planning for the tourism development, fund raising activities (European funds, cooperation with local enterprises), and promotion of quality issues and social inclusion of special groups.

Task 12- Representative in inter-municipal Associations

Promotion and support of common proposals such as studies and research for the local authorities, the status and training of the elected, the revision of the legal framework

Task 13-Member of the boarding Committee of the “Centre for Cultural Development” of the municipality

Participation in the supervision, planning and implementation of local events e.g. festivals, exhibitions, cultural, informational and training activities of local interest

Task 14- Member of the “Education Committee” of the municipality

Supervision of schools in organizational issues, infrastructures, financing of operational costs, security issues, extra-curriculum activities etc



1. Strategic planning

To prioritize goals so that public resources and efforts are well allocated and most urgent actions/services identified and addressed;

2. Fund-raising

To identify grants and other funding opportunities; to adapt the political agenda to the available granting opportunities and to draw up and submit the relevant project proposal;

3. Projects’ Leadership and management

To manage resources and ensure that they are used properly and that works progress in time and to budget;

4. Counselling

To respond to citizens’ needs by offering them personal and institutional hearings and advice;

5. Management and efficient handling of public services

To run public procurement procedures and ensure that public and social services are lawfully awarded and delivered;

6. Planning and revision of public budget and public heritage

¹⁸ USGM

To plan a reliable allocation of resources for public services and public works, by consideration of the revenues and expenses and to check their thoroughness periodically;

7. Financial management and monitoring

To assure financial compliance reviews of contractors through on-site visits and desk reviews.

8. Public Relations

To manage the flow of information between the Municipal office and its public.

9. Negotiation

To dialogue and resolve disputes internal to the Municipal office to produce an agreement upon courses of action, or externally, with granting institutions and contractors;

10. Monitoring and checking administrative acts and procedures

To check the correctness and lawful administrative procedures through accession to all acts and facts passed by the municipal leading majority (minority councillors);

11. Emergencies response

To quickly take action and provide for assistance to people in need or endangered in unforeseeable circumstances;

12. Administrative initiative taking

To take initiative on current administrative actions, by presenting new or alternative development plans;

13. Chairing Council and moderating works

To preside over the municipal council, approve the council meetings agenda, direct and moderate works.



Lithuania¹⁹

1. Formation of the municipal board, municipal council committees and commissions.

forms a municipal board; forms the municipal council committees and commissions and public commissions or councils provided by the Law; elects the chairman for the Control Committee, after his submission appoints a deputy chairman of the Control Committee;

2. Election of the mayor - elects the mayor and dismisses him from office before time; after the mayor's submission, appoints and dismisses from office a deputy mayor (deputy mayors) before time; after the mayor's submission, defines activity areas for a deputy mayor (deputy mayors);

3. Decision for municipal administration and elderate establishment - makes decisions concerning municipal administrator's acceptance to office and his dismissal from public service, after the mayor's submission, approves the municipal administration structure, administration statute and wage fund; after the mayor's submission, may make decisions concerning elderate establishment and their number, allocates municipal territories to the elderates, defines their boundaries and changes them by necessity after having evaluated the local public opinion;

¹⁹ KLMTCS, Kaunas, 2009

4. **Approving the municipal budget** - pursuant to the procedure prescribed by the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Budget Structure, approves the municipal budget and its fulfilment account, specifies by necessity municipal budget; allocates budget assignments for the budgetary institutions; determines prices and tariffs for the payable services provided by municipal enterprises, special purpose companies, municipal budgetary and public institutions, specifies prices and fares for passenger transportation running local routes, prices of centralized heating supply, hot and cold water, determines local duties and other contributions;
5. **Approving the municipal programmes of social and economical development** - approves the municipal programmes of social and economical development; - makes decisions concerning disposal of the property that belongs to the municipality by ownership rights, sets the order for management, use and disposal of that property, except for the cases when the order is provided by the law; - makes decisions concerning management, use and disposal of state-owned land attached to the municipality by trust right and other property of the state as well; makes decisions concerning establishment of budgetary institutions, municipal enterprises and family units, public bodies and joint stock companies;
6. **Approving the municipal territory planning** - approves the territory planning documents; establishes territories under municipality protection, announces local objects of natural and cultural heritage, makes decisions concerning improvement in environmental protection; submits proposals concerning change in municipality territory boundaries, gives names to municipalities and changes them, forms residential areas, defines their names and territory boundaries, make changes in territory boundaries, also gives names to streets, squares, buildings, works and other objects, which belong to the municipality by the ownership right, and changes them; approves the rural development programmes;
7. **Regulation for greenery protection** - approves regulations for greenery protection, management of cities and other residential areas rules of sanitary and hygiene, waste management, animal keeping, marketing etc;
8. **Decisions of compensation payment** - makes decisions concerning compensation payment to certain consumer groups for buyable fuel, electricity and heating, hot water and natural gas;
9. **Decisions of charity** - defines procedure for distribution of charity obtained in the name of the municipality
10. **Decisions of formation unions** - makes decisions concerning formation of municipality unions, cooperation with municipalities in foreign countries or joining international self-government organizations



1. Communication with residents/municipal marketing - the councillor represents the will of his/her constituents. Robust communication is one way of ensuring that they have a say over local government policy.
2. Enhancing community participation - councillors are tasked to promote the ideals of self-government among the local community. In this context, enhancing community participation would mean engaging more and more people in activities aimed at the common good.
3. Management of municipal finances - one of the central tasks of the municipal council is to enact the municipal budget. Besides supervising how municipal money is collected and spent, councillors should be adept at securing external funding for municipal tasks.
4. Compliance with national law on local government - knowledge about the mechanics of local government
5. Support for the NGO sector - councillors are expected to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, striking partnerships that help them exercise their functions.
6. Strategic management - ability to define the lines of the social and economic development of the municipality, to draw up local development strategies.
7. Utilization of EU funds - knowledge of procedures for obtaining EU funds
8. Addressing local social problems - councillors should be aware of the symptoms and causes of local social problems, as well as the ways of combating them
9. Public-private partnership - as decentralization gathers pace, knowledge about PPP is ever more vital for councillors
10. Social development - councillors should be aware of the links between economic growth and the cultural and social resources of the local community
11. Promoting the municipality - should have PR knowledge to be able to promote/publicize the municipality, local goods, foster local identity.

²⁰ Irss, Warsaw, 2009