

## **10 Commandments of Communication between Researchers and Municipal Mayors**

*Mutual communication and close cooperation between researchers and academics on the one hand and municipal governments and mayors (as stakeholders) on the other is a fundamental pillar for effective solutions to local and regional problems. This decalogue aims to strengthen the links between the two worlds in order to achieve synergistic results that will lead to a real shift in community development. It includes strategies and practices that enable researchers to understand the needs and priorities of municipal governments and, in turn, enable municipalities to use research findings and expertise to drive concrete actions and initiatives. The emphasis is on active dialogue, information sharing and creating space for mutual inspiration. This networking creates an environment for creative and innovative approaches to solving problems that best meet the needs of the local community. The aim is therefore not only to strengthen the relationship between researchers and local governments, but also to create a platform for sustainable and inclusive development of local communities.<sup>1</sup>*

### **1) Understanding local needs and priorities**

Before engaging with mayors, it is important to carefully understand local needs and priorities. Conduct a detailed analysis of the situation in the municipality or region and tailor your research or academic activities to address the real issues and challenges faced by the municipality. Make use of publicly available information (municipal websites, specialised portals of relevant ministries, websites of regional authorities and associations of municipalities, articles in regional newspapers), but you can also undertake field research and visit the municipality.

### **2) Adapting communication and communication channels with mayors**

Consider the preferred communication channels of mayors and municipal governments. Some may prefer emails, while others may prefer face-to-face meetings or phone calls. Tailor your approach to best fit the needs and preferences of the specific mayor or municipality. Also, approach communication and collaboration with municipalities with an eye toward their size and the specifics of the mayor's job description. While smaller municipalities may require a more personal and tailored approach, larger municipalities may prefer a more structured and formal process. Similarly, full-time mayors may have more time to communicate and collaborate with researchers than those municipal leaders working only part-time.

### **3) Creating a partner relationship**

Given the neutral and respectful attitude of mayors towards researchers and academics in their fulfillment of the third role of universities, this positive atmosphere can be used to build trust and successful collaboration in solving local and regional problems as well as academics' research activities. Actively listen to their needs and views and try to find common points and goals on which you can work together.

### **4) Clear and understandable presentation of results**

Present your research or analysis results clearly and understandably. Mayors often do not have the time or expertise in municipal offices to study complex materials in detail, so it is important to

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<sup>1</sup> Teles, Filipe, Adam Gendźwiłł, Cristina Stănuș, and Hubert Heinelt, eds. 2021. *Close Ties in European Local Governance*. Palgrave Studies in Sub-National Governance. Cham: Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44794-6>.

present key information concisely and clearly. Use power point presentations with graphs, pictures or short videos. Provide mayors with one-page summaries of your studies and materials.

#### **5) Providing practical and applicable recommendations**

In addition to presenting the research results, it is important to provide mayors with practical and applicable recommendations on how to deal with problems or challenges in the municipality or region. Compared to politicians at the regional and national level, mayors have to deal with very specific problems every day that require practical solutions. Offer concrete strategies and procedures that can be implemented in practice.

#### **6) Involvement of local people**

Actively involve local people in problem solving and decision making. Encourage a participatory approach and seek feedback from the population by conducting quantitative questionnaire surveys or qualitative interviews, which can strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of proposed solutions and cooperation with municipal governments. Municipal councillors gain legitimacy from local residents in elections and their decisions have a significant impact on their lives. Involving local residents and taking into account the potential impacts on their lives is thus crucial for mayors.

#### **7) Seeking synergies with other actors**

Look for opportunities to collaborate with other actors in the area within the quadruple helix concept, such as non-profit organisations, the business sector, associations of municipalities, government offices or other research institutions in the region. Creating synergies can strengthen the effectiveness and impact of your activities at local and regional level. In their work within municipal governments, mayors are in regular contact with these actors, so their involvement can make a significant contribution to addressing needs at the local level.

#### **8) Maintaining an open dialogue**

Maintain a regular and open dialogue with mayors and municipal governments even after specific projects or activities have ended. Building long-term relationships is key to establishing new cooperation on other projects in the future. In addition, building long-term relationships can open up cooperation with other municipalities based on a recommendation from a mayor with whom you have already had some cooperation.

#### **9) Flexibility and adaptability**

Be flexible and adaptable in your approach to working with municipalities and mayors. It is important to be able to adapt to local conditions and changes in the course of cooperation. Changes can be both in relation to the activities implemented (financial and technical obstacles appearing) and on the part of the mayors (removal or resignation of the mayor, triggering new elections). Calculate and prepare for all possible scenarios.

#### **10) Adherence to ethical principles**

Adhere to the ethical principles and standards of the research and academic environment when communicating and collaborating with municipalities and mayors. Respect the confidentiality of information and ensure transparency of your activities. Keep in mind methodological and research standards such as obtaining informed consent from respondents, whether they are mayors or local residents. This is because unethical and negligent activities could not only undermine your trust, but also undermine the mutual cooperation between academia and municipal government as a whole.

