

Palme Academy Introductory Course: **Module 6**

HOW TO RUN AND REPRESENT A PARTY

REPRESENTING AND GOVERNING

Political leadership, service delivery and accountability

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Introduction

What is a political party?

In most democratic political systems in the world, political parties play a crucial role in the way in which democracy functions. It is political parties that stand for election, who provide lists of candidates, and who write policy platforms for voters to consider. It is political parties that legislate and make decisions that affect all citizens. It is political parties that can be held accountable for their decisions and whose power can be taken away in free and fair elections.

Political parties' function as a link between citizens and political power. They organise people so that they can have a role in making political decisions. They can bring together voters, make them members, educate them on social issues, and mobilise them to make their own voices heard. When political parties function well, they are not only involved in creating policy in parliaments or running campaigns, they also help to make political and democratic influence a living reality for more people. They become a tool for people to influence social development, and to take control over their own lives.

What kind of party does a social democratic party aim to be?

There are many different types of models for political parties. If you want to learn more about how to form and develop a party, you will first need to define what party model you intend to use. Is it a party that consists mainly of a group of elected politicians representing various interest groups? Is it a party controlled from the top down – termed a cadre party? Or is it perhaps a populist party centred around a strong leader, with supporters rather than full members in the party's base?

In this course material, we of course assume that a social democratic party is basically and ought to be a popular movement party where the power in the party derives from its members and moves upwards through its organisation. It needs an inclusive and democratic way of working that features internal democracy, representativeness, and transparency.

The basis of such a party is the democratic grass roots movement and substantial popular participation. It is a party that brings together people of flesh and blood, who have commitment and a common vision of how our society should function and develop. In this sense, there is no

difference between a popular movement party and other popular movements. People join forces to play football or put on plays in a theatre group, to form a cooperative, or to learn to sew or weave. Those who want to be involved in changing the conditions under which people live in a broader sense become active in a political party. That is the foundation of a popular movement party.

The organisational focus of such a party is on developing strong local structures with a lot of active members. It is based on the idea that parties in a democracy should not only play an important role in parliaments but also in the surrounding community and civil society. Political parties, especially if they are also in power, are often seen as representatives of parliament or the government and not as representatives of people in everyday life. To avoid this situation, parties must create broad, inclusive organisations with democratic structures and ensure that they work in a way that is visible and which makes a difference in people's everyday lives.

But how do you do that?

Democratic parties in different parts of the world can learn a lot from each other's experiences and practices. This introductory course and its modules focus on how a party can strengthen its organisational and political capacity to become a strong and democratic party with active members and inclusive structures and activities. The strength of a party depends to a large extent on how democratic it is and how well the organisation functions. This requires organisational structures and ways of working that function well, and a culture of openness to people actively sharing in and participating in the political work of the party. A strong democratic party that is confident in itself encourages debate, active participation and criticism, and self-criticism.



An introductory course in running a party

This course is intended to provide an introduction to and an overview of how to form, organise, develop, and represent this kind of democratic popular movement party – from the top down and the bottom up.

Its target group is leaders and active members of social democratic parties. You might be leaders in many different areas at the national, regional, or local level. This course emphasises the local level, however, since the local level forms the base of a social democratic popular movement party and is the level that involves the most people. The material for this course is also useful for active members who are not leaders, in which case it can be used for self-study or as part of local member courses.

A six-module course

The course is divided into six self-contained modules. Each module has its own course material, which is intended to be used for three to five meetings of leaders and others in the party in the form of a study circle to discuss the questions and ideas that the module raises. But the

number of meetings to cover each module is flexible. Fewer meetings are also an option, although you will then need to pick out which of the topics and questions you are going to discuss, as you will probably not have time to cover everything.

The six modules in this introductory course are:

Module 1

Forming and Structuring a party

Module 2

Holding Elections and Reaching Decisions

Module 3

Formulating Policy and Leading the Way

Module 4

Reaching Out and Connecting

Module 5

Growing and Consolidating

Module 6

Representing and Governing

Module 6: Representing and governing

In this sixth module, we focus on those party representatives who are popularly elected or are about to become elected.

What does it mean to take on a leadership role and represent your party and your voters? What is expected of you in the party, in parliamentary assemblies, and when you are in government? What are the best ways to think and act in order to be successful in your role? What is good political leadership? This study material gives you an overall introduction to this, along with some practical tips on how to handle various situations and contexts. It focuses in particular on being a local representative, and is divided into four chapters:

- **Being an elected representative:** This chapter is about the basic principles of being a politically elected representative. What your role entails, who you are repre-

senting and what democratic, effective, and sustainable leadership is.

- **Working in parliamentary assemblies and groups:** This chapter is about the work of parliamentary assemblies elected by the citizens. What it means to be a representative of the party, to work together in party groups, and to work effectively in the parliament.
- **Negotiating, cooperating, and working in coalitions:** This chapter is about how to interact with other parties, negotiate coalitions, and find functional ways to work in order to get support for coalitions and to maintain them.
- **Working in government and in opposition:** This chapter is about the responsibilities and duties associated with being in government, what good governance and effective governance are, how to interact with public administration bodies, and with citizens, and how you should be thinking if you are in opposition instead.



The Swedish Social Democrats' Party Chair Magdalena Andersson with members of the Swedish Social Democratic Youth League.



BASED ON THE SWEDISH EXPERIENCE

This course is often based on the experiences and organisation of social democracy in Sweden. In other words, it is not meant to be a blueprint. The circumstances for political parties are different in different parts of the world.

Economic development will have progressed to different levels. The political conflict lines will be different. In some countries, ethnic conflict lines are very apparent. In others, class conflicts are the most predominant. In some countries, the political process is prejudiced by an earlier or ongoing struggle for freedom. In a country without a long tradition of a multi-party system, or in a relatively young democracy, the challenges are different from those in countries where democratic elections have been held over a long period of time. As a participant in this course, you may utilise the experiences of Sweden's social democratic movement and the ways it is organised. These experiences can then be applied to your own environment and adapted to your own experiences and circumstances.

That said, we would like to emphasise that the experiences of social democracy in Sweden can be of interest to study in other parts of the world. Sweden's Social Democratic Party has long experience of winning elections and being in government, always by virtue of being the biggest party. The membership of Sweden's Social Democratic Party has been consistently large. The party has had regional and local

branches throughout the country for a long time and, in collaboration with other parts of civil society, has often been able to dominate the political agenda. A brief explanation for this strong position is that the party has been successful in bringing together large groups in society around a common, future-focused and solidarity based social narrative, and through having a consistent goal to grow and change in pace with societal development.

This does not mean that there are no challenges left for social democracy in Sweden. On the contrary. In recent decades, the labour market has changed dramatically. Traditional working-class occupations have become fewer. After several decades of neoliberalism, nationalism and more traditional values have become a new factor in politics and have increased support for conservative parties. At the same time, strongly growing individualism, particularly in the larger cities, continues to attract voters to more liberal parties. More and more citizens are also choosing alternative forms of political engagement in single-issue organisations (e.g., the environment, feminism, or migration). It is more difficult to get people to get involved in party politics, to sit on an Executive, and to take on time-consuming official roles. These are the challenges facing many political parties today.

In short, a party must always be flexible and ready to innovate in line with societal development. We are all part of an

ongoing learning process. This is why it is so enjoyable and challenging to be part of a political party.

Things to bear in mind

How a party is organised at different levels in the society varies from country to country. In some cases, there may be more levels; and in others, there may be fewer. This module presents the models for the structure of the Swedish Social Democratic Party's organisation. So, you will find that there may be differences in the structure of the party organisation in your country. If you do not recognise your party's model in this module, then you should try to match the levels described here to your party's structure and explain why your party is organised in this way. The important thing here is to understand how the party organisation's fundamental decision-making levels are linked to and function in tandem with the society in which it operates, and internally with the organisational levels in the party.

There may also be differences in the local branch. The local branch is the party's base, and every party member must belong to a local branch. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party, this level is called the *Arbetskommun*, and corresponds to one of Sweden's 290 local government areas (municipalities). One local branch of the party per LGA/municipality. There may also be underlying social democratic associations and clubs that together form the local branch. ■

FACTS

FACTS IN BRIEF ABOUT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN SWEDEN

The Swedish Social Democratic Party was formed in 1889 as part of a broader popular movement and organising process with the aim of demanding political and economic rights for workers. The party's founders included trade union organisations who believed that the labour movement needed a voice in parliament. In the first few years, it was about demanding democracy, universal suffrage, and better social conditions for workers. The party formed its first government in 1920 and has since then been in government for a total of over 70 years. During these years, the party's main project has been to develop, and further develop, within the framework of 'the Swedish model'

– a modern welfare state aimed at increasing citizens' equality, social security and freedom. For a long time, there were only five parties in Sweden's *Riksdag* (national parliament) and the Social Democrats often received over 40 per cent of the votes in elections. Today there are more parties, and the Social Democrats Party has lost some of its broad support, and often has to form coalitions with other parties in order to be able to govern.

80,000 members
290 local branches
26 regional organisations

The party currently has about 90,000 members who are organised in 290 local branches (*Arbetskommuner*). Under these are a large number of associations and clubs, in residential areas and city districts in particular, which together with the local branch make up the basic organisation of the party. The local branches are in turn organised into 26 regional organisations called Party Districts (*Partidistrikt*). The party is classed as a mass-based party and its organisation is based on federal principles, where the regional organisations together constitute the party nationally, with the National Conference as the highest decision-making body. ■



Being an elected representative

You have been entrusted to represent your party and your voters. Congratulations! It is a distinguished and important role. For your party, your community and for democracy. For those of us who are politically active, it's difficult to imagine a finer role! In this chapter, we want to give you an introduction to what this role means, how you can best live up to the role you have been given, and how to be a good representative.

The role involves great responsibility with big obligations. The first thing you should ask is: What is the foundation of my role? Who am I accountable to? You are not representing yourself. Your position is not an end in itself. If the party members or voters lose confidence in you before the next election, you will have forfeited your right to hold this role. That might sound harsh, but it's something you must always bear in mind. Without the confidence and trust of those you represent, you don't have a role to play anymore. In a democratic party organisation and in a democratic form of government, the leaderships must be regularly re-elected at all levels. Party members and citizens always have the right to hold you to account, and to withdraw their trust if they do not believe that their representatives have performed their roles as they are expected to, or if they believe that someone else could do it better.

Therefore, being an elected representative always

means a temporary assignment. If the party members or citizens are not satisfied with the choices you make and the way you lead, or just think someone else has a better chance of doing a better job, it is natural that next time they will vote for a different representative. In most cases, intra-party shifts in power occur without any major differences of opinion or controversy, just as transitions of power after general elections normally happen in a peaceful and respectful manner. The less dramatic these transitions are, the better it is for the party and for democracy.

But your role and your assignment as a representative is bigger than that. It is something that goes beyond representing your own party's platform, and representing your own party's voters. You also represent the fundamental values associated with a democratic society and form of government. You therefore need to stand up for these values in word and deed every single day and never take

them for granted. This means that you must ultimately defend democratic processes – general and free and fair elections, freedom of expression and human rights – and fight unequivocally against discrimination, corruption, and the abuse of power.

The essence of democracy is respect for the rights and inviolable value of every individual. Every human being is unique, and every human being must count and be listened to. It is a view of humanity that does not allow people to dehumanize others, nor deprive anyone of their capacity and willingness to participate in a society permeated by rights and obligations. Every person therefore has the right to be regarded as an individual and not as a nameless number in the statistics on various areas of society. There is no other form of government based on this deep respect for the individual. The role of elected representatives therefore also entails a great responsibility for the public conversation, rhetoric, and the tone of the public conversation. We must not contribute to dehumanization and polarization, which poison debate. If the democratic system is not supported by you and other good politicians who have these insights, then the interests and needs of citizens, and their fundamental rights and freedoms, will ultimately be lost. That scenario is far worse than not being chosen as a representative or losing an election.

FACTS

WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY?

Being able to hold public decision-makers to account and demand that they take responsibility for their actions is fundamental to democratic government. Democratic accountability offers the people practical mechanisms for expressing their concerns, demanding explanations and imposing consequences for the actions and service of public decision-makers, as well as ultimately being able to replace them if they find that this is a better idea. It is based on the fundamental democratic principle of popular control over public decision-making. Primarily by participating in general elections, but also by the right to hold and participate in public demonstrations, and by investigative journalism, legislative initiatives, public debates, and referendums.

Democratic accountability also involves basic systematic structures, such as checks and balances and other mechanisms available to specific institutions to exercise control over a government. These include, for example, public hearings from legislative committees, questions raised by the political opposition, or scrutiny by ombudsmen and audit bodies. Accountability is not exclusive to democracies, but when it is democratic, it has the potential to promote good governance. ■



BEING GROUNDED IN YOUR POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Being a politician is often great fun and an opportunity for personal growth. Especially if you are working at a local level, close to people and the issues you are involved in making decisions about. You can then really feel that you are making a contribution. You get interesting tasks to do, hear people's ideas and get to experience their commitment, and you can feel satisfaction in creating change and achieving results. Results that make life better for people.

But there may also be times and situations when it might seem almost impossible to change anything. You may find yourself in situations where you need to confront people's suspicions, conflicts or even your own sense of inadequacy. It is therefore important to be well-grounded in your own engagement in politics, your values, and your desire to do it well. It is a good idea to go back from time to time and reflect on why you have chosen to get involved in politics.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- **Why are you a Social Democrat?**
 - What was the most important factor for you in joining the party? Its fundamental values? An important issue?
 - What do you answer if a neighbour or colleague asks you this question?
- **Why did you choose to become a politician?**
 - You didn't just choose to become a member of a Social Democratic party; you also chose to become an elected representative for your party. Why?
 - And why this particular role?
- **What do you want to achieve?**
 - What changes do you want to achieve? Why?
 - What do you think you can contribute in this role?
 - What issues do you want to pursue in particular? What issues are you passionate about?



Representing the people

What is your main task as a popularly elected representative? Your task can be expressed in many ways. It is a question of showing up and taking responsibility for leading, governing or managing your local community or your country, but ultimately it is always a question of serving the people. Of meeting their needs for security, social welfare and good living conditions. Whether it is in education, health care, communications, housing or a safe and secure childhood. If we have the fundamental view that the people have rights and that the role of elected politicians is to serve the people, then it is also clear that they are who you are accountable to. This is self-evident in a democracy. You are elected by the people, either directly in general elections to parliamentary assemblies, or indirectly to serve on committees and other bodies. While it is true that you represent your party, you are elected to implement the party's ideas and policy platforms, both you and the party are ultimately always accountable to the people.

That is a simple principle of democracy. And it should also be simple in practice. Sometimes, however, you might encounter elected representatives who see their task as being to represent only their own voters, or, in the worst case, even other actors and interests. As an elected politician, you must of course implement your party's policies and listen to many other relevant social actors, but your task always goes beyond that. That includes considering the needs of all residents and citizens and representing the whole municipality or country in the best possible way.

However, some politicians may tend to identify more with officials and seem to be representatives of the administration. The gap between voters and elected representatives can often feel great, and sometimes politicians are even seen as an entirely separate group who only represents themselves. For democracy to survive, and for the people to trust the political system, elected representatives must see the people as those to whom they are ultimately accountable, and the people must clearly feel that this is true. Of course, how to meet the people's needs may change over time, but there are nevertheless some starting points for us Social Democrats since it is fundamental to us to have the people and their needs in focus:

- We want to meet the needs of citizens together with them – not for them. Work in politics is based on democratic governance and the participation of the people. Transparency and an invitation to them to participate, take initiatives and exercise influence are important aspects of our work. Consequently, often the task of politics is to offer opportunities, create the right conditions, and make the best use of people's engagement with political issues.

- We aim to meet people's needs based on our fundamental social democratic values of justice, solidarity and freedom, and in accordance with the political will and vision we have expressed in our policy platforms and meetings with our constituents.
- We aim to meet the needs of the people efficiently and manage financial, human and environmental resources economically.

Having overall responsibility

Of course, saying that the task of politics is to meet the needs of the people is not the same as saying that politics must meet all the needs of all the people, all the time. It is unusual for politicians to be able to please everyone. On the contrary, politics is about balancing many different and sometimes conflicting interests and then finding the best compromise solution. For example, a local politician may have to weigh up the need for more housing in the municipality against the opinions of people who do not want any new housing construction at all in a certain area. Often such dilemmas can be dealt with through open dialogue. Those who have got engaged with the issue can be asked to make suggestions for alternative sites where it might be more suitable to build. The role of a local politician requires that you take responsibility for your actions while also being responsive. It is also easier to deal with situations of this kind if you act consistently, whether you are dealing with a fellow member of the party, a former Social Democratic municipal commissioner, an association, or an individual citizen.

Giving expression to the will of the voters

A key starting point for your work in politics is the political will and vision that your party has expressed in its policies and which the majority of the people have voted for. These are what guides your work and they determine how you are going to meet the needs of the people. For example, from the viewpoint of local politics, these may include various policy platforms and decisions:

- **Central policy platforms:** The party's overarching policy platforms, established at the National Conference and by the Party Executive, are of great importance for the formation of all policy and it often contains guidelines for municipal activities.
- **Municipal action program:** The local branch presents its policies to the voters in its action program, and this program then forms the basis for the party's actions in municipal politics. Your commitment to the people is to make this happen. The program is often comprehensive and summarises your options. It is the party's main municipal policy document and thus also the codex for the party's municipal politicians. It is often developed

out of a more extensive discussion on the party's policy platforms and as a rule is established by the local branch's member meeting.

- **Local policy platforms:** Local policy platforms are sometimes developed. Such programs summarise what the party wants to achieve in a particular residential area, a city district, or an urban district. In local policy platforms, the party can also present its attitude on issues that are limited to a local area.
- **Special policy platforms:** Often special policy platforms are developed for areas that the party wants to prioritise, such as elderly care, schools, unemployment, etc. They are presented in the election campaign and also constitute an important foundation for the work of municipal politicians.
- **Decisions in principle:** Issues of great economic importance or in-principal importance should be dealt with by the local branch before a decision is made in the municipal council. What is of economic or 'in-principle' importance varies from municipality to municipality and over time. It should be noted that even minor issues that have no major financial implications may well be of in-principal importance. If the local branch has made a decision on a municipal issue of this kind, the decision constitutes a clear directive for the party's municipal politicians.
- **Other election promises:** In local debates before and during the election campaign, representatives of the party often make promises in the form of initiatives in the municipal councils, opinion pieces in the media, and statements to the press. If promises have been made, it is then important that these are also kept.



Clarifying the practical implementation of policy

Your task is to actively pursue your party's policy within your sphere of activities, weigh up different interests and independently interpret the party's line and positions in practice. Policy decisions made at congresses or annual meetings are usually of a more general nature. They often indicate a direction or an overall goal. How to transform them into more detailed policies, and what daily action is required to achieve them within your area of responsibility, is up to you and your elected party colleagues. This requires

FACTS

POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN ELECTED ASSEMBLIES AND IN GOVERNMENT

The formulation and development of a party's overall policy is primarily carried out within the party organisation. But a significant portion of a party's day-to-day decision-making and policy development takes place in the work of the local, regional and national parliaments in which the party has representatives. The same applies to the party's elected representatives in power in local, regional and national governments, where a whole range of issues and initiatives need to be implemented in the role of government.

In both cases, but especially in government, there are also more resources at their disposal for their policy work. These include secretariats, officials and an administration that can collect data and appoint inquiries to assist in formulating government bills and decisions that will govern the municipality or the country. There is considerable pressure from the community at large in relation to complex issues and decisions that need to be dealt with, and you need to be able to act quickly in order to function in these roles.

Both these groups of elected representatives also have a looser connection to the formal decision-making hierarchy in the party. While the party members have chosen them as their representatives, they also have their mandate directly from the voters by being elected to the parliament or elected to lead the administration, and the voters are a much broader group than the party members. The basic principle here is that it is in elected representative's party organisation that decides the basic direction of policy and has given them the power to take political decisions on behalf of the party.

The parliamentary party groups and elected representatives also have an obligation to report regularly to their party organisation about their work, and to regularly raise in-principle policy issues. This means that you need to confine yourself to the bounds of the policy that the party has decided on, and if suggestions or questions arise that are deemed to fall outside of these bounds, you need first to consult on these within the party. It is always the party that ultimately sets its policy. ■

in-depth knowledge in your area, and if the people's needs are going to be your point of departure, then it is important to have a good picture of those needs. You need to know how the people will view your activities: what matters most, what works well, and what works less well. Having a clear picture of reality is an essential starting point for setting your goals, drawing up guidelines and formulating your strategy for the work you do in the future. Generally, much of the groundwork will have already been done. However, it is still wise to discuss these issues thoroughly in your own party group, and in close dialogue with the party as a whole. It is important that you have a collective picture of what you want to achieve and for whom you want to achieve it.

Engaging in active dialogue with the people

If the people are who you are accountable to, it is important to find out more about them – and about your target groups in different roles: Who are they? How can we get in touch with them? How can we find out what they think, what their ideas are? The role of the politician is always one of outreach. If you are to represent the people, you need a good knowledge of their needs and ideas. To be able to acquire this knowledge, you need to be responsive, work actively, plan and cooperate well with your local branch in in your outreach activities. Above all, however, you need to be aware of the importance of contact with the people and a willingness to prioritise such contact.

Competition for politicians' time is often great. It is easy to be drawn into conference rooms, read documents, listen to presentations and make decisions. But these things are not the only things that are important for a politician.

Contacts with people, conversations, and listening are always the main task of a politician. In order to become a good politician, you must therefore get out of the conference room and give priority to talking to the people.



BEING ACCESSIBLE AND PRESENT FOR THE PEOPLE

You and your party should be visible and known in the community. The better your understanding of people's everyday challenges, opinions and concerns, the better you will be able to represent them. It should also be clear to the people that you are aware of their problems, that you listen to them and that you are working to make positive changes to their lives. However, many constituents today feel that the distance between them and their elected representatives is too great. Party politics and politicians are met with mistrust, sometimes even contempt. Few people know who their representatives are, and this adds to a sense of us and them. Meetings and conversations with individuals play an important role here. In the local supermarket, in the town centre or at club or association meetings, schools and workplaces.

As a local politician, you meet many people, and need to be a good listener, interested in people's everyday lives, be able to answer questions, explain political decisions and receive criticism in a constructive way. This is so how they will get to know you, and their image of you will influence their image of the party and of democracy. What happens when the party is present in this manner is that you will be perceived as part of the local community, instead of part of an abstract regime. You become an 'ordinary' person who has won their trust to represent them. Besides regular meetings in everyday life, there are many different ways for parties and their representatives to actively meet people. Door knocking, town hall meetings, open party events, information tables at shopping centres, home meetings, and the like. In addition, most people are involved in various associations and clubs and often visit markets and sports events. Find them there, identify issues of common interest and start a dialogue. ■

FACTS

OVERLAPPING MANDATES AS A POPULARLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PARTY

In parliamentary electoral systems based on constituents voting primarily for political parties and their set list of candidates, as popularly elected representative, you have two overlapping mandates. Your mandate comes partly from the party organisation and its members who have chosen you to pursue the party's policies in parliamentary assemblies. Your mandate also comes directly from the people who have elected you in general elections to be their representative in the assembly.

The latter mandate is personal and no one other than the voters themselves or you can change this. There would need to be a new election, or you would need to resign from your

position to change it. If, for any reason, your party organisation loses confidence in you during your term of office and no longer wants you to be its representative, then you should resign from your position so that the party can choose a successor to fill the position. This is important for the functioning of the parliamentary system, in which the voters mainly vote for parties and hold parties accountable. However, there are no legal means for a party to force one of its elected representatives to resign from public office. This usually leads to expulsion from the party if a representative keeps their seat in the elected assembly and becomes what is termed an 'independent politician' for the remainder of the term of office. ■

Representing the party

Anyone who joins a party does so voluntarily. How much a person wants to get involved in the party and whether they want to stand for election for an official role for the party is also voluntary.

Anyone who does so however must always bear in mind that as an elected representative of the party, they are acting on behalf of its members. When they make statements and make political decisions, they do so not as an individual but as a representative of their party. The basic principle is always that the party formulates the principles and guidelines for its policy. You are required to work for the implementation of the policies that your party went to the election with. But the party's elected representatives also have both the members' trust and freedom to act within the collective decisions taken by the party. There will be many issues and occasions where you cannot base your response solely on the party's decisions, and your role therefore also includes a responsibility to look further afield, keep the party together and in practice lead the party in the direction indicated by its overarching decisions. This requires sound judgement and respect for the conditions of your role. Whether your actions were right or wrong will be judged at the next annual meeting or National Conference. It is a freedom that comes with accountability, where that accountability is constantly being tested by those who have voted you into office.

Know your party well

In your daily work, you need to make decisions and act on behalf of the party to the best of your ability. You have a duty to let your decisions be guided by the party's ideas and decisions in principle.

In order to do this, you need to be up-to-date on and knowledgeable about the party's policies and policy platforms. These and the party organisations' decisions on issues of general and in-principle importance, constitute the guidelines for the party's elected representatives. However, as we pointed out earlier, political decisions taken at congresses, annual meetings or local member meetings are usually of a more general nature. How to transform them into policies in detail and the daily measures required to achieve them within your area of responsibility will be up to you and the leadership you are part of – for example, in the party's group of elected representatives in local and national parliaments or governments. The party and its members will not be on hand to consult on every single decision or when things move quickly and take unexpected turns. You therefore need to have good political sensitivity and be secure in your understanding of the party's ideology and the values it stands for.

POPULARLY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES' RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS IN RELATION TO THE PARTY

The Swedish Social Democratic Party's Constitution highlights the following rights and obligations of the party's elected representatives:

RIGHTS

In addition to the rights conferred by membership of the party, a party member who holds public office with a mandate to govern has the right to:

- form an opinion on and make decisions in the area covered by the mandate, in accordance with the party's decisions in principle and policy platforms
- participate in educational activities organised for popularly elected representatives.

OBLIGATIONS

In addition to the obligations conferred by membership of the party, a member who holds public office is obliged to:

- let their decisions be guided by the party's ideas and decisions in principle
- maintain consistent and unbroken contact with the party organisation, for example by regularly participating in and contributing to the ongoing development of party activities
- regularly communicate with the party organisation on developments in the area covered by their mandate
- pay the office support fees (**taken from the elected representative's remuneration*) which have been decided by the party. Such fees are paid to the office directly linked to your role
- behave in a manner consistent with the values of social democracy.

Do what is in the best interests of the whole party

In a party, different groups and factions often arise wanting to highlight their candidate and their policy line. In many instances, elections have also been preceded by internal discussions and conflicts about who is actually to be the elected representatives. In a broad party with many members, it is natural that members think differently and that there are different factions within the party. It is an important part of the democratic process, as well as a positive sign of diversity and a breadth of opinion that can be a strength, both internally in policy development and externally in appealing to broad groups of voters. However, when the vote is taken and the decisions are made, those who are elected must represent everyone and take account



of both the majority and the minority in their exercise of power. One of the main tasks of a leader is to keep the party together. This does not preclude a situation where an elected representative might be at odds with some sections of the party. Annual meetings, National Conferences and member meetings make policy decisions after debate where it is not a given that everyone will always agree about the choices made. But everyone in a party must respect the democratic process and ensure that the best interests of the party as a whole take precedence. Party representatives also have a particular responsibility to maintain respect and unity between different factions. All members must also in turn sign up to the basic premise that the party's best always comes first.

Keep the party involved

As we stated above, your mission is to independently balance different interests and make assessments based on the party's policy within your sphere of activity. Even if the basic division between party organisation and politician is clear, this can be somewhat more complicated in practice. The boundaries are not clear. Although the job of elected representatives is to make decisions under free and fair consideration on measures that are pivotal to the people, they are also representatives of the party and should therefore participate in meetings and other party gatherings in order to take note of the views of members. You have a

clear responsibility here to bring up matters of principle within your area for the party organisation to discuss and take a position on. Continuous feedback allows the party to follow what is happening in your area. It is therefore important that the party members are regularly informed and consulted on the political process.

As a politician, you do not operate in a vacuum, but in close cooperation with the party organisation. This co-operation is based on common sense, where both parties have a responsibility for making it work. As an elected representative, you need to be clear at all times about what decisions are made and the reasons for these. Even quick or difficult decisions must be explained and justified. In turn, party members must always be aware that not every single detail of policy can be resolved at member meetings. Members and party organisations should take into account the various reasons that have formed the basis of elected representative's position on the matter when assessing how well they are performing their roles.

Respect the party line

Your role may sometimes require that you go against your own convictions and preferences. This could pertain to a political issue, where you think in a certain way, but the party makes a conflicting decision. That is when you need to respect the party's internal democratic process and represent the party's stance. That is how a democratic party

works. Having open debates and differences of opinion on political issues doesn't need to be a bad thing either – it is natural in political parties. It stimulates engagement, decision-making and democracy. Internal debates must precede the party's members making a democratic decision about the issue and these must be open and transparent. However, once a decision has been made, it is important that all party members and the leadership fall into line behind it. As a representative of the party, you have a special responsibility; you cannot cling to your own agenda. This would contravene the basic democratic rules of the game and divide the party, which will then be perceived as unfocused and frivolous by voters.

Maintain an active and open party dialogue

If a democratic party is to stimulate lively discussion about its policies and chosen course of action, there has to be an openness throughout the organisation, and a leadership that really listens. The more the leadership listens to arguments and opinions, the better the basis will be for making wise decisions that are in line with the will and intentions of the party. If this communication is inadequate, there will be uncertainty about what is happening and how you are performing your role. Such uncertainty can be disastrous. Never forget that the foundation of your party role is the trust that its members have in you. Such trust can always be revoked. This can even happen between National Conferences and annual meetings, if the worst comes to the worst.

Consequently, as a party representative, you need to be accessible to the members, and there should be a continuous dialogue between you and those who have elected you for this role. These dialogues can be informal. For example, you could meet regularly with members by participating in the party's member meetings, campaign activities or on social media. Members will then have the opportunity to ask questions and get to know you better, while giving you the opportunity to listen to how discussions are progressing in the party. But it is also important that there are good internal information procedures in place and formalised methods for elected representatives to inform and consult with the members and the party's internal decision-making bodies on a regular basis. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party, local branch member meetings often have a standing item on the agenda for reports from the Municipal Council group. The party's constitution also states that municipal matters of principle or of economic significance must be dealt with at local branch meetings.

Remain at the party's disposal

As the party's elected representative to public office, you are also responsible for participating in the party organisation's regular activities. This could range from participating in the party's external activities to attending public meetings, for example, canvassing in a residential district

or assuming a leading role on the local branch executive. You have a particularly clear responsibility to participate in the party's election campaigns. Even if the election does not "concern" your position or the assembly to which you have been elected, the party may need you to campaign and talk to voters. You are a local leader of the party and, if it is important to the party and its political objectives to achieve a good election result, then it is also important for you. Party work is teamwork and it is your responsibility to support the party at all levels.

It may also be a matter of actively participating in the party's internal activities. If you are a national-level representative, such as a member of the national parliament, it might be very much appreciated by the members and rewarding for you to visit local branches to strengthen morale, raise important political issues and contribute to the party's activities and development. The party may also have a particularly important and complex key issue that they need your help to explain locally around the country, in order to unite the party in some particular area. Local party member meetings are also an excellent opportunity to establish dialogue between the national and local levels. You can update members about the party's work at the national level, its progress with implementing various policy platforms and fulfilling electoral promises, while listening to the problems that local party members are struggling with in different areas and what they see as solutions to these.

Finally, you should also assist with the party's courses. As an elected representative, you are a sought-after and useful lecturer at the party's courses. New and younger party members could have a lot to learn from you, and this is an opportunity for you to share your experiences of politics and leadership. It could spark inspiration and engagement, and contribute to the party's growth and development.

Be visible and actively represent the party

As an elected representative, you are a person of interest in the media and in outreach activities. Leverage this actively and be visible to the public. You can reach out to many people with information about the party and its politics through newspapers, social media, television and radio. You can also engage in a dialogue with citizens through outreach activities. This is an important aspect of your role as a politician. Dialogue is namely fundamental to you and your party's ability to get your message across, earn trust, and implement your policies. As we emphasised previously, the cooperation between you and the party organisation is based on common sense. Local circumstances and mutual trust should guide your choice of solutions. This means that who does what in outreach activities and contacts with voters can vary.

However, it is always important that the party is visible and that it is clear that the party cares. This can mean that it is the party that calls a press conference where you will

present your policy in your area of activity. That it is the party that arranges a seminar or conference where you discuss topical issues, or which holds consultations and conducts surveys to give the voters the opportunity to express their opinions. Generally, this is a natural process. The fact that the party organisation is responsible for the arrangements does not, however, mean that it should do all the work. On the contrary, as a politician, you must also take on some of this work, for example when it comes to producing documentation, presentation material, survey forms, etc. You have the knowledge and often have the support of your administration to produce supporting documents. If you are active at the local level, you will often need to handle some of the practical arrangements for meetings, seminars and conferences, such as contacting participants and preparing programmes.

Live up to the party's values

As a member of the party, you must share the party's core values, as expressed in party platforms and the party's constitution. As an elected representative for the party, you have an especially great responsibility to promote and personify the party. This also gives the mass media and voters the right to scrutinise in question your actions and you as a person. Politics is fundamentally based on trust, and you must take good care of the trust that has been bestowed on you to the best of your ability. This also applies to matters of morality and ethics, in particular personal finances and your private life. As an elected representative of a party, if you behave inappropriately, your behaviour could damage trust in the party, as well as in politics and democracy in

general. You should therefore accept that you are always a public figure and no longer entirely a private individual, and assume responsibility for making this work in practice. Therefore, act and behave in a manner that gains you respect and trust, particularly based on what is consistent with the party's values and constitution. The ideals you profess as a Social Democrat must correspond to the way you behave and treat other people. Here are some basic rules to assist you:

- **Openness and honesty.** Try to always place your cards on the table and never hide the truth. The interests of the municipality or the country should never be confused with your own personal interests. If there is reason to suspect any such confusion or conflict of interest, it should always be discussed openly.
- **Comply meticulously with the rules governing benefits and economic activities where public funds are involved.** This applies in particular to entertainment/hospitality expenses. Not everything can be regulated in advance. Therefore, common sense must prevail, and it is often better to err on the side of caution. Responding to criticism by stating that the rules are unclear or can be interpreted in different ways does not inspire respect in people.
- **Always act in a way that will allow you to look people in the eye tomorrow and openly given account of what you have done.** If there are things you would not feel comfortable talking about, then you should probably not do them.



DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY

In general elections, a declaration of candidacy for public office is an agreement between the party and the party's candidates, whereby they undertake to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the values of Social Democracy. It clarifies the party's expectations of them and the rules they need to follow. This is signed by all Social Democrat candidates in Sweden, regardless of the position they are standing for:

Declaration of candidacy

I, the undersigned, am the candidate for the Social Democrats in the

- ☐ Riksdag (Swedish Parliament)
- ☐ Regional Council
- ☐ Municipal Council, or in elections that the Council will hold for:
- ☐ Regional or municipal executive committee/committee

I am aware of the rights and obligations I have as a party member and elected representative under the party's constitution and rules. Furthermore, I undertake to

- promote Social Democratic values and platforms that have been democratically established at National Conferences and by the executives at different levels of the party
- as a member of the group(s) to which I am elected (see above), contribute to positive unity and, if I should have a different opinion, report this at a group meeting. However, my different opinion must not jeopardise the stances adopted by other groups at future meetings. As an individual member of the group, I must not publicly refer to the group's deliberations. The group meeting may decide to publish what has been discussed and decided at group meetings;
- always respect privacy, behave respectfully in word and deed, and never expose anyone to harassment or abuse in any form;
- participate actively in the party's outreach activities during the election campaign and the coming term of office;
- consent to the party presenting me as a candidate via text and image in brochures and on websites, in accordance with the material that I submit;
- report any financial contributions to my personal election campaign openly to the local and/or regional election campaign management appointed by the party organisation, and conduct any preferential voting campaign in a manner that is clearly in line with the party's election campaign and election strategy in terms of message and campaigning methods;
- report to the nominating committees any circumstances in my private life that could be weaponised to harm the party and be prepared for questions that could be raised by voters, fellow members of the party and journalists, both before and after the elections;
- as a representative for the party, attend courses in accordance with adopted local and/or central skills development plans,
- contribute personally by paying the administrative fees decided by the various executives of the party;
- to resign from my role as an elected representative in the event that I, for any reason, leave the Social Democratic Party during the term of office;
- The party district/local branch may summon me for performance reviews during the term of office and assist me with crisis management if necessary.

Signature

Being a political leader

The main challenges lie in the complexity and speed of societal development, and in the conflicting objectives and contradictory demands constantly encountered in this role. As a politician, you must be able to take responsibility for the governance of a municipality or country with growing societal challenges and shifting interests, while meeting the expectations of citizens, and your own party's demands for influence. All of this must generally be done in cooperation with other parties and very often with parties that are also your political opponents.

Politicians must be able to cope with operating in several different arenas simultaneously: interacting with citizens and the media, with their own party and other parties, with leading civil servants in the administrative arm of government, and with networks of businesses and NGOs operating in the private sector and civil society. Consequently, the role will pose many contradictory requirements on your leadership qualities to be able to:

- be diplomatic, while being resolute and energetic
- listen and be responsive, while offering explicit guidance
- work efficiently and in a goal-oriented manner, while remaining engaged and process-oriented
- take responsibility for decisions made and endure the criticism of all those who think you are wrong
- have the ability to communicate with people, through direct meetings, or through traditional as well as social media
- work weekdays as well as weekends, while still appearing rested and alert in every situation
- always be up-to-date on issues and available, but still have time for family and friends.

Political roles can often be perceived as imposing demands that are humanly impossible to live up to. Therefore, you need to be proactive in your leadership – how you act, prioritise and relate to others, and how you can develop this in three dimensions:

- **Leadership that strengthens and develops democracy:** Being able to support democracy and empowering people in various societal processes in order to arrive at good decisions together.
- **Leadership that has an impact and delivers results:** Being able to govern and lead an organisation and to deliver services to the community based on overall objectives, economic conditions and needs.
- **Sustainable leadership:** Being able to strengthen and develop your leadership to manage your role as a politician and your private life.



Democratic leadership

The success of democracy and political parties is ultimately based on people's trust. It is a trust that is primarily bestowed on the individuals who represent citizens and their parties. Their behaviour determines whether democratic governance is experienced as credible. Therefore, their leadership needs to be in line with democratic values and how democracy views people. However, democratic leadership is also the most effective way of governing democratic organisations and societies in the long term. In essence, this is also about trust and legitimacy. In processes that strengthen people's participation, dialogue, trust and the ability to collaborate flourish. This is needed in large, diverse and complex organisations such as our municipalities and central governments.

Besides respecting the values and rules of a democratic form of government, there is a deeper insight and a practical approach in democratic leadership. The realisation that everyone must have the same rights and opportunities for influence, as well as the same obligation to take responsibility. That we are all interdependent, and that we are stronger and wiser together. That when everyone participates, it increases the community's capacity to manage conflicts and make wise and legitimate decisions. Conversely, there is the insight that the opposite would instead lead to increased tensions, abuse of power, and conflicts.

There are a number of fundamental approaches to democratic leadership. Regardless of whether it pertains to citizens, fellow party members, political opponents or civil servants:

- **Transparency and accountability:** Trust, inclusivity and cooperation require an open and transparent way of working that encourages people to participate and follow the decision-making process. Democratic leadership shuns unclear decision-making processes that happen in secret between people with ambiguous roles and functions, who cannot be held accountable for their decisions and actions. However, things do not always turn out as anticipated. You can make mistakes – that is human. The circumstances one is faced with in making a decision can be difficult and dynamic. In retrospect, some decisions may be perceived as very odd or wrong. The important thing is that you can take responsibility for the decisions you made and stand by why you made them at that juncture. Never shirk your responsibility for your actions. If decisions are made with transparency, it is easier to refer to them afterwards. On the other hand, if they are made alone, or by a very small circle of people behind closed doors, it will be more difficult to subsequently justify them. Accountability is further facilitated when transparency not only applies to the decision-making process itself, but also who was involved in the decision, as well as any other actors contributing to the process. As a politician, if you are criticised for promoting someone else's interests, or of being influenced by lobbyists, the most effective defence is to give an account of who you have met with and who is donating to your party. Putting your cards on the table from the outset will make it easier for you to defend yourself against criticism, no matter where it comes from.
- **Inclusivity and delegation:** Democratic leadership is visible and encouraging. It is about giving everyone the chance to have their voice heard and about everyone's arguments being valued based on the same yardstick. Democratic leadership believes in people's capacities, seeks to include people in decision-making, is attentive

to what the people or staff think, and is willing to discuss and consider their proposals. It requires sound leadership and self-confidence to open up decision-making processes. Clear communication and healthy dialogue are fundamental elements of such leadership.

Democratic leadership is also about delegating and actively supporting and promoting others. In many groups, the situation often arises where a few individuals do most of the work, while others feel that their capacity is not being utilised. Good leadership ensures that everyone has meaningful tasks that suit them. For the work to be engaging and effective, the division of labour needs to be clear, and those assigned to a task need to have room to manoeuvre so that they can make their own decisions about what methods to employ. The leader's role is not to be the one who personally makes all the decisions, or who gets all the credit. Instead, their role is to support and have confidence in the ability of their fellow party members or staff to solve problems and take responsibility. By allowing others in your team or organisation to be involved in taking responsibility, you can enhance the efficiency of your activities and create a sense of belonging. Being a successful democratic leader requires you to be engaged, able to see and utilise the capacities of others.

- **Cooperation and collaboration:** As the party's representative, you speak for the party in your contacts, negotiations and collaborations with a variety of actors. Some collaborations are absolutely essential to the performance of your role. Contacts with your own party, other parties, civil society, the business community, etc., and particularly, with the administration. The ability to cooperate well is therefore important. One of the cornerstones of democracy is the ability to seek common ground and compromise. Voters also expect their elected representatives to be mature enough to assume respon-



sibility for solving problems at the society level. The capacity to provide services to society is ultimately the result of teamwork involving your own party and other parties, the political majority and the opposition, as well as managers and employees in the administration.

As a leading politician, you also exert considerable influence on the public conversation and the climate of cooperation. If democratic leadership is about seeking common ground and collaborating across boundaries, it is important to show respect for your political opponents. This requires an awareness of how to talk about and describe your political opponents, showing respect for the views of others, as well as setting limits on what is acceptable in terms of your own language and that of others.

- **Innovation and development:** A party or an elected representative that never re-examines their position and forms of work will, sooner or later, stagnate, lose support and have few answers how best to respond to the societal development. Therefore, democratic leadership is also about being self-critical and creating arenas that

welcome debate on the chosen course of action, and the best way forward. Criticism of the current policy line should not be perceived as a threat, but as a desire to be involved in improving it. It is also vital to offer opportunities for party colleagues and staff to develop by trying out different activities and areas of responsibility than those they have had before, for example. A good organisation is an organisation that learns from its mistakes and from what went well. Always include monitoring and evaluation. What worked? What could we do differently? It is important that such evaluations are carried out without fear or concern about saving face. In an organisational culture where people are afraid of making mistakes, they often end up becoming defensive if they receive even the slightest criticism. This kind of attitude inhibits the development of the organisation and policy. It can be counteracted by a leadership that gives recognition to what has gone well, and provides clear and constructive but not personal criticism when things have not gone as well as hoped or anticipated.



THE SWEDISH SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S VIEW OF LEADERSHIP



Being a good leader is not something you are born to be; it is something you learn through your own experiences, and what people see as good leadership can vary from individual to individual. It can therefore be worthwhile for a political party to have a common, shared picture of what good leadership is.

Having a shared and clearly expressed idea about good leadership provides an excellent support for every leader in the party. Parties are idea-driven organisations. The party's values therefore form the basis of the party's activities and the approach the party takes to leading others. The Party Executive of the Swedish Social Democratic Party has therefore decided on a shared leadership approach. It is based on the party's values and the motto "**Your values must be who you are**":

- All people are of equal value and have an equal right to be different.
- We believe that every human being is a unique individual who thinks and reflects.
- People are social beings with the capacity and will to grow and develop, have an influence and take responsibility.
- We are all dependent on each other, and we need encounters and interactions with others in order to develop, learn new things, and grow as individuals.
- In democratic processes and meeting places that welcome curiosity and questioning, and which empower people, dialogue and learning – the individual will grow.
- Everyone should have the same rights and opportunities to have their say; everyone has the same obligation to take responsibility.

In the party, we must therefore strive for a culture in which people are heard, seen, respected and empowered. A culture that cultivates what is meaningful in being engaged in politics. Everyone has a responsibility for the culture that is developed within the organisation. However, as a leader, you have a special responsibility, since your behaviour has a major influence on how the organisation functions. The party's credibility stands or falls on how its leaders behave – whether it lives up to its ideas and value base or not. Social Democratic leadership should therefore be:

- **Democratic:** You should allow everyone in the group to express their views. You should listen to and evaluate everyone's arguments on the same basis. When a decision is made, it must be done clearly and transparently. After a decision has been made, you and everyone else in the party must stand behind it and work together for its realisation.
- **Visibility and encouragement:** You should endeavour to allow everyone in the group the opportunity and space to come into their own and to realise their potential. You should believe in people's capacity to grow in both old and new roles.
- **Brave and confident:** You should not back away from questions that you find difficult. You should stand firm and support others. If someone makes a mistake, you can be critical of the mistake of course, but at the same time support the individual as a fellow party member.
- **Visionary and persevering:** You should always maintain a focus on the party's political ideology, while daring to think innovatively within it. You should be able to back your actions, for a long time to come. This applies to political content as well as to how we behave towards each other. ■

Goal-oriented leadership

In your role as an elected representative, you must stand up for democracy every day and work to strengthen and develop democratic processes. At the same time, you need to deliver results. You will be involved in making decisions about public administration, or have direct responsibility for its governance and management, so that it can deliver services to society on the basis of given economic conditions and needs. The voters have put their trust in you to represent their interests. This means that they expect you to implement policy on concrete issues that are important to them, and therefore you should be able to communicate concrete answers to the following questions together with your party colleagues:

- What social problems do the constituents in your area consider to be serious problems?
- What solutions do they want to see in order to respond to these?
- How do they want society to change?

If you are responsible for the schools in your municipality, voters presumably expect the schools to be of high quality, for the teaching to be effective, for pupils to perform well and to receive adequate support to succeed in their schooling. It might also be a matter of a more concrete proposal that was one of your electoral promises to the voters. For example, to reduce the number of students per classroom. If, after the given time frame, usually a term of office, you have not succeeded in fulfilling this promise, it is probable that your constituents' faith in you will diminish.

That is why you need to be goal-oriented in your political work at all times and strive to achieve the results that were promised. It is you, as a political leader, who will be held to account when these expectations and promises are evaluated. When and how these evaluations occur varies. They may be internal evaluations at annual meetings or National Conferences, or externally in the next elections. They could also take the form of demonstrations by or petitions from citizens, debates against political opponents, or through media reports about your policy on concrete issues. Regardless of how and when an evaluation occurs, you must be prepared for all of your decisions and actions to be scrutinised, and that you will be held accountable for them.

In order to achieve results, you must have a clear idea of your objectives: What do the party and voters want to achieve? What is my role and my party group's task? In which direction should we go? If we do not have a clear objective, it is easy for us to be led instead of doing the leading. Your party identifies its overarching policy objectives. Which objectives are most relevant to you will depend on the area of responsibility of your role. For example, if your role pertains to education policy, one goal

may be to abolish fees in the education system. However, the objectives may also be beyond the realm of policy on concrete issues. For example, a strategic objective to reach new groups of voters or to secure majorities and governing positions in assemblies by building new coalitions.

Even if you were to formulate your objectives as a description of reality, they can still be very different from each other. The most common objectives are operational targets and perceptual goals. With operational targets, we express what we look want our activities to achieve: "by the end of the term of office, all children will have access to...", "all pensioners can have access to this service..." and so forth. However, people's stance or attitude is often just as important. With perceptual goals, we express how citizens or a certain target group should perceive our activities, or us, as politicians: "by the end of the term, four out of five should state that they think that the municipality is characterised by efficiency...", "that the municipality is developing in the right direction" and so forth.

Operational targets are relatively easy to measure, such as by using the available statistics. Perceptual goals require that a reliable picture of what people really think can somehow be obtained. This could be obtained by conducting various surveys of citizens on a regular basis, through opinion polls and by other means. To achieve your objectives, you will then need to employ strategies. Your strategies and those of your party colleagues are your chosen course of action and methods for achieving the objectives.

You can read more about objectives and strategies in the next chapter.

Sustainable leadership

As a political leader, you must stand up for democratic values and processes, represent the needs of citizens and the interests of the party, while delivering clear results based on your promises and meeting the expectations of the voters. You need to take responsibility for decisions made and learn how to deal with their consequences. As politically elected leaders, you are also subjected to constant scrutiny, and to potential criticism from political opponents, the media, the constituents, or from your own party. Often, the demands imposed on you will be contradictory in nature. In particular, to work constantly, to be well-read, informed and connected, yet still have time for family and friends, while attending to your own needs.

This is an enormous challenge. In order to manage your role and, at the same time, live well, you must find a way for your leadership to be sustainable. You will need to develop the ability to learn from both successes and failures, and to build a strong sense of self-awareness, and be confident in what drives you and, in your motives, while also being aware of your own abilities and limitations. You need to acquire and leverage experiences in order to constantly develop. You must be able to prioritise, set limits and ask for help.



CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

Public office is full of challenges. On the one hand, you are confronted with a large number of explicit demands and expectations regarding results, responsibility and availability. On the other hand, it is easy to feel that people have demands on and expectations of you, even if they are not explicit – and the list of these may feel endless. A useful tip for mapping out what is actually expected of you is to simply clarify these expectations by formulating them more clearly:

- 1 Write down the expectations that are explicit, and those you think people might have of you in your public office.
- 2 Verify the list by asking stakeholders and colleagues (such as the chair or fellow party members in the same party group, members of your party's executive, or an administrative manager within your area of responsibility) to write down their own lists of what they expect from you.
- 3 When you have received these lists, you can compare them to your own original list. In many cases, you will see that other people do not expect as much from you as you do from yourself. It can be liberating to remove some of the expectations you thought other people had of you. ■

It is important for all leaders to seek support. You don't have to face all the requirements and expectations alone. There are methods and useful tips for growing into your role as a leader. The first and easiest thing to do, is to seek support in your immediate surroundings, in the circle of other party representatives who work with you. Don't be shy about asking experienced colleagues and your immediate superior for advice, and to discuss issues and considerations with them. The party can also build up specific support for strengthening and developing its political representatives. Some examples include:

Leadership Training: Many parties today organise leadership training at various levels. These are an excellent way to acquire concrete tools for dealing with the various situations and aspects that come with political leadership roles. However, you can also think broader. There may be other leadership courses than those organised by a political party. Or do you feel unsure about a specific skill? If so, search for a course that could help you to develop that particular skill from within the public education system, or adult education providers or within associations, or on the private market.

Mentors: A personal contact in the form of a mentor is a simple and valuable support for those who are starting out in their role as a political leader. This mentor should

preferably be a more experienced colleague in the party, whom you trust and who has had a similar role to yours. Some parties have more formalised mentoring structures, but if this is not available in your party, you can take your own initiatives. Get in touch with a more experienced colleague in the party and ask if they would like to have a coffee or lunch.

Networks: If mentorship is about turning to someone who is more experienced, then networks are based on getting support from others whose situation is similar to one's own. You can join a network of other elected representatives in the party. By sharing experiences and discussing policy challenges, the network can provide you with support. Sometimes, it can be nice to know that you're not alone in facing difficulties and that others are experiencing the same thing.

Regardless of whether your role takes a lot of time or imposes great demands on public visibility, you also have to allow yourself to be a human being. You may have long days with work, meetings and negotiations, but once you have free time, it is important that you disconnect from all demands and expectations. Nurture your relationships with your loved ones. Make sure you sleep well and eat properly, and get some exercise. Allow yourself to take a break and reflect on your everyday life: for example in a diary or notepad. It's easy to believe that you don't have time for breaks when you have such a challenging political role, but actually, the opposite is true: taking care of these aspects of your life are fundamental to your capacity to focus on your role and deliver results over a long period of time. Otherwise, there is an imminent risk that you will lose interest, suffer from burnout and become incapable of performing your role. Your political leadership will also deteriorate. Therefore, you need to respect your leisure time in the same way that you respect your working hours. By trusting your colleagues, you can delegate tasks you don't necessarily need to do yourself. It is important to remember that your role is not your entire life. Having a private life is a quintessential human need and like everyone else, political leaders are human beings.





BEING A YOUNG FEMALE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE

Equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a democratic society. Elected assemblies are the heart of democracy and so it is particularly problematic if women and men cannot participate equally and on the same terms. However, women still face greater opposition than men when performing their duties as elected politicians.

Male politicians can dominate conversations and attain positions of power and influence more easily, because there are still many visible and invisible structures in place that support men. While female representatives face higher demands and find it more difficult to be seen and heard in politics. They are interrupted more frequently during meetings and their appearance and clothing are commented on more frequently. They are judged more harshly in the media and more frequently exposed to hatred, threats and derogatory comments related to gender and sexuality on social media.

Furthermore, female politicians are often more concerned about making mistakes and experience more difficulties in reconciling work with family life than men do. Consequently, they resign from their political roles more frequently than men. Young women politicians in particular tend to be a vulnerable group. They belong to the demographic that most often feels questioned and subjected to bullying.

Support each other and learn the rules of the game

Gender inequality is, first and foremost, a structural societal problem that we all have a responsibility to change. This is particularly true for the political parties, democratic institutions and decision-making bodies that have a special responsibility for driving political and organisational change. But what can you, as a new female politician, personally do in addition to addressing these issues in policy?

It can be very disempowering if you have poor self-confidence, feel alone in your work and, for example, are unfamiliar with how decisions – informal as well as formal – are shaped and made.

Facilitation techniques for meetings and formalities are important areas of knowledge that everyone needs to know. Otherwise, there is a risk that your hard work will be in vain due to others contriving to get a decision through for example.

You also need to learn the informal rules of the game and to recognise and respond to master suppression techniques.

- Connect with experienced female representatives whom you can learn from. Create women's networks and get yourself a mentor.
- Hold meetings before the next meeting where you carefully review the documentation and situations that may come up during the meeting.
- Start a study circle in meeting facilitation and practice debating together.
- Promote other women. Listen to them, confirm what they say and provide constructive criticism.
- Make it clear that you are prepared to take on a position of power, and nominate and launch other women at the same time.
- Encourage and support each other!

As women are affected by master suppression techniques far more than men, it is also important to learn to recognise these and know what counter-strategies are available.

Read more about this in the Swedish Social Democratic Women's Association book *The Power Handbook* which you can find on their website:

<https://s-kvinnor.se/var-politik/political-program/the-power-handbook>



All of these demands and expectations may sound overwhelming. But there is also great joy in political work, which almost always eclipses its everyday difficulties. Having the pleasure of working together with others to influence societal development. Being able to see the concrete and sometimes rapid results of your work affecting the lives and welfare of many people in significant ways. You have been given the privilege of working politically on issues that are important to you. You have gained the trust of your fellow citizens to lead and improve society.

It is also stimulating to lead people and organisations, and to work with other committed individuals. Watching others develop and grow – and growing yourself from facing the challenges working in politics.

So how should you best manage your role as a politician? Ultimately, there is no single answer that will suit everyone. Above all, perhaps what you need is wisdom. A wisdom that is deepened by learning from successes and failures, from a growing self-awareness of what drives you and your motives, as well as the possibilities and limitations of your own capabilities. A wisdom based on the realisation that leadership is always a team effort that must be exercised in collaboration with others, and with a genuine understanding of the needs and wishes of other people. And it is a wisdom that does not allow itself to become intoxicated by power or allow power to become an end in itself.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is our principal task as popularly elected politicians? What does this mean in practice for our mission?
- What does it mean to express the political will of the voters? How does the mandate given to us by our party relate to the mandate given to us by the voters?
- What is the most important thing to consider as an elected politician, responsible for the big picture and for clarifying the practical implementation of policy? Why?
- What ultimately governs the decisions we make in our role as elected politicians? Where are the limits on our exercise of power, compared with those of our own party?
- What rights and obligations do we have in relation to our party as elected representatives?
- What fundamental principles do we believe to be the most important in our role to represent our party as a elected politician? Why?
- What does it mean to look after the best interests of the party as a whole and to respect the party's policy line? What might be the consequences if we fail to do so?
- What does it mean in practice to live up to the values of the party? Why is that important?
- What does it mean to exercise democratic leadership as a political leader? Why is that important? How does our own party view leadership?
- What are the fundamental approaches involved in democratic leadership in practice? How do we personally live up to these?
- What requirements does our role place on practising goal-oriented leadership? What is essential if we are going to succeed in this regard?
- What does it mean to exercise sustainable leadership? Why is it important and how can we best achieve this?



Working in parliamentary assemblies and party groups

One of the most important political roles you may have is to represent your party and your constituents in a parliamentary assembly. Regardless of whether your position is at a municipal, regional or national level, it entails that you represent all citizens in the forum that forms the basis for democratic work and the parliamentary form of government. This is where the people's representatives make decisions about the orientation of policy, legislate, and appoint and review the executive arm of government.

At the local level, this may involve maintaining and developing quality public services including well-functioning schools, emergency services and social welfare services, and deciding on local regulations. At the regional level, this could include providing good health and medical care, infrastructure and regional public transport. At national level, this is about legislative power, overarching economic policy, defence and foreign policy, and the national direction and coordination of all policy areas.

Parliamentary work

Parliamentary work as well as the roles and working methods of elected representatives at various decision-making levels are fundamentally reminiscent of each other. Regardless of the type of parliamentary assembly you are active in, or have been appointed by, you will always represent the people. You will debate, draft

motions, negotiate, build coalitions, and vote and make decisions with their best interests in mind. Your work will be clearly guided by the policy platforms and decisions of the party. You should stay in close contact with party members and participate in the party's discussions and activities.

In this chapter we mainly highlight the municipal level, where most elected representatives are active. Therefore, we proceed from the assumption that you, the reader, have been entrusted with representing your party at the local level, and that you are a member of the municipal council together with fellow party members and the local representatives of other parties. Being a local politician is a particularly stimulating role, because you are closer to people's everyday lives, have more personal contact with those you represent, and often see the results of your political work much faster than your colleagues at the regional and national levels.



THE MUNICIPAL DECISION-MAKING LEVEL IN SWEDEN

In Sweden there are three democratically elected levels. At the national level, there is the national parliament (Riksdag) and the national government. At the regional level, there are regions, and at local level, municipalities. The Riksdag decides on legislation that controls what the regions and municipalities can do. Regions are responsible for joint tasks within the region in particular on health and medical care and regional development. The municipalities handle local tasks, such as schools, childcare and elderly care services, as well as water and sewage and other practical service areas. In Sweden, municipalities have extensive powers to make autonomous decisions on how to manage their tasks and how to allocate their resources. For example, they can decide themselves what the municipal tax rate should be.

The municipal council governs and makes decisions

The local parliament comprises popularly elected politicians whose term of office is four years. Most politicians at this level are part-time politicians and perform their duties alongside their regular jobs. The municipal council is the highest decision-making body in the municipality. It is the only municipal body directly elected by citizens and therefore makes decisions about the overall focus of the municipality's activities and finances, as well as other fundamentally important matters for the municipality:

- the municipality's budget and decisions on how much tax the municipality's residents must pay
- the municipal administration's organisation and forms of activity
- members and substitute members of the municipal executive board, committees and other boards and drafting committees
- auditors who review the municipality's operations
- annual report and discharge from liability
- municipal referendums.

In addition, municipal council committees must escalate matters of principle or other matters of broader importance for decision in the municipal council. All citizens are welcome to listen to municipal council meetings.

The municipal executive board is appointed by the municipal council, and it:

- leads and coordinates municipal activities
- exercises oversight of the activities of other committees
- is responsible for municipal finances
- ensures that the municipal council's decisions are implemented, monitored and evaluated

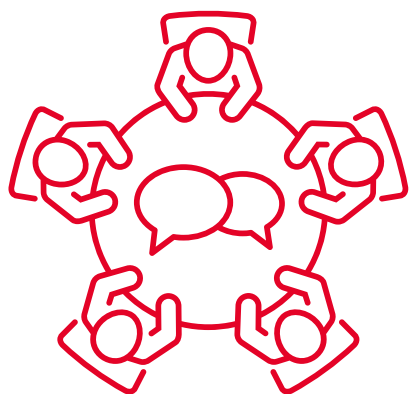
The executive board is to draft or express its opinion on all matters that the municipal council makes decisions on.

Politicians work in different committees

The municipal council determines the number of committees, their areas of responsibility and their tasks, and chooses their members. Each committee is responsible for a specific area. Examples of committees that exist in many municipalities are the education, social welfare and culture committees. A committee is a body with preparatory and executive functions, as well as certain decision-making functions:

- responsibility for day-to-day operations in the municipality, within its area of activity
- preparing matters to be decided by the municipal council
- implementing decisions made by the municipal council.

When the municipal council appoints a committee, the parties are entitled to be represented in the committee in relation to their numbers in the municipal council. This is often determined through an agreement between the parties. ■



THE WORK OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND MUNICIPAL COMMITTEES IN SWEDEN

The work in municipal politics follows different cycles. To start with, the term of office is an overarching cycle where the election year is followed by the interim years. Each year has fixed points that are primarily governed by the municipality's overall budget work coordinated by the municipal executive committee: the presentation of proposals for future municipal budgets, interim reports and possible proposals for amending the budget in different areas; the committees' presentation of their annual accounts and administrative reports; and audits comprising an audit report and discharge from liabilities. When the budget is being discussed, public political debates are common. In these, the representatives of the parties may freely express their party's views on how they want to see the municipality developing.

The work cycle of municipal councils also has an impact on the committees. When the budget is being prepared, each committee submits a decision document. Each committee must also prepare an annual report on its activity, including an analysis of target follow-ups and outcomes in relation to targets. Budget work is usually very time-consuming and means that other matters of principle are dealt with at other times of the year.

Committee work

A large amount of political work is done in the municipality's committees. The municipal council steers this work by setting the targets and budgets for their activities. The committees must then report to the municipal council how and to what extent the targets have been achieved. Each committee is responsible for a certain area of activity and all matters that are to be addressed by the municipal council are prepared by one of the committees. The committees can make immediate decisions on minor issues. In practice, municipal officials handle the actual implementation of municipal activities, but the elected representatives always have ultimate responsibility for these activities. For example, the tasks could include granting building permits, financial assistance or the organisation of elderly care. ■

The central role of party groups in elected assemblies

You are usually not the only one to represent your party in the elected assembly to which you have been elected. You are therefore part of a party group or caucus. If you are a member or substitute in the local parliament (the municipal council), you are part of the party's local parliamentary group (the municipal council group). Based on the party's policy platform and municipal action programmes, its task is to promote social democratic ideas and to thoroughly prepare and process municipal issues in the municipal council. It is within this group that you coordinate with your party colleagues, regularly discuss policy, inform each other about what is happening in your respective policy areas/committees, and stake out your way forward in terms of your stances and the decisions to be made in the municipal council. The work of the group should ensure that the party's policies and policy platforms are translated into political decisions, and that the group members are in agreement and act unanimously. It determines the party's position on matters and questions dealt with by the municipal council. The group, which is led by an executive and a group leader, must therefore work closely with its local branch of the party in order to ensure unanimity and effectiveness.

The local branch decides on the bylaws of the municipal council group, and when establishing these it may further specify who is entitled to attend group meetings and who has the right to take part in discussions and who has the right of initiation. In some parties, all party members are welcome to the group meetings to participate in discussions. In other cases, party members with special expertise or interests may be chosen to participate in the group's meetings and joint work. The group's structure and forms of work vary from party to party, just as they may vary between different local branches within the same party, depending on the size of the party and the number of party members in the municipal council. Ultimately however, only the members of the group – the elected representatives in the municipal council – have the right to vote. The Swedish Social Democratic Party distinguishes between three party groups at the municipal level:

- **Municipal council group:** Brings together the party's members and substitutes in the municipal council. Other groups may also be included in the municipal group, depending on the local bylaws. The municipal group prepares municipal council meetings and its positions on various issues, the party's actions in the debate, and what initiatives to take in terms of questions and interpellations.

- **Committee group:** In addition to being part of the party's main group in the municipal council, you are also part of the party's committee group in the committee where you work and have your particular political role. For example, in the schools committee or the town planning committee. This is where you and your colleagues can deal with the issues within your area in depth. The committee group can also initiate discussion in the party's municipal group on a particular issue, for example if you wish to broaden the discussion on a matter of principle that has an impact on the party's policies beyond the usual activity of the committee, and when the matter also pertains to areas covered by other committee groups.
- **Municipal group:** Brings together all party representatives in the municipal council, municipal executive committee and the committees, as well as the local party executive. Other groups may also be included in the group, depending on the local bylaws. This group may be large, and is normally convened to discuss overarching matters such as the budget, policy targets and guidelines.

The balance between the party's municipal council group and its committee groups depends fundamentally on whether you are working in a large or small municipality, as well as whether you represent a large or small party with many or few members. For a large party with many members, the emphasis of the work shifts outwards towards the committee groups, while for a small party with few members, the municipal council group becomes more operational. Ultimately however, it is in the municipal council group that decisions are always made on the party's stances on matters to be decided in the municipal council.

Regardless of whether your most frequent and closest collaborations with your party colleagues happen within the party's municipal council group or a committee group, the party's groups are where you can discuss the direction of policy in practical terms, as well as the conflicts of interest that, as a politician, you constantly face. A policy can be important to one group in society, while at the same time have negative consequences for another. In your party's groups, you can thoroughly explore the consequences of different decisions. These groups also serve as a forum for

areas that lie beyond policy on concrete issues per se. They can be a space where you can openly acknowledge your disappointments and frustrations, and support each other in your roles.

Get to know each other

A well-functioning group is ultimately based on collaboration built on trust. An open and accepting forum where one is allowed to think freely and thrash out the issues. The closer you cooperate with and the more you trust each other, the easier it will be to drive policy forward and achieve results – particularly in times of extraordinary pressure or crisis. You also need to show a united front. The goal is to work as a team, support each other and to work together toward shared goals. A discordant political party with members that are at odds with each other and pursuing different agendas does not inspire confidence and will find it difficult to gain the trust of the voters. The more trust and cooperation, the better the conditions are for electoral success.

Party groups are usually made up of individuals with different experiences and skills. The more effectively you leverage your collective skills and knowledge, the stronger your team and your work will be. Therefore, you need to get to know each other, both as politicians and as individuals, and be familiar with each other's backgrounds, experiences and interests. One way of laying the foundations for this is to jointly highlight every member's personal and political backgrounds, working life experience and volunteering, as well as their expertise within the group's area of activity. In practice, this could mean that all members could simply fill out a questionnaire to share this information. You can then discuss the results of the responses together and identify the group's strengths and weaknesses. It will then be easier for you to try to fill any gaps in knowledge through, for example, study visits, seminars and courses. It is also a great way to get to know each other and build a team. Furthermore, it is important to agree on a work culture where everyone feels welcome to freely participate, present their ideas and question what is being said. Everyone must be able to participate actively and there must never be a situation where just a few members of the group do all the work.





WHO ARE WE AND HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER?

Taking the time to meet to get to know each other, and to discuss your roles and the expectations you have, is a good investment for the future. For example, an agenda for an initial meeting might include the following questions for each of the group's members:

- Why did I become politically active?
- What do I do in my job and in my free time, aside from politics?

Expectations of the group's work:

- What are the group's most important tasks and questions?
- What do I expect from my party colleagues and the group leader?

You could also arrange a potluck get-together as the first social gathering in the group. Each member brings a dish of some kind that they like, music that they like, and a book that means something to them. This will jump-start the process of getting to know each other, and it will provide a solid foundation for a strong team that can work together effectively.

It's also a good idea to discuss the climate of cooperation in the group. How should you behave towards each other? What is acceptable to do and not to do? Agree on shared rules of conduct through a simple exercise:

- 1 Each member thinks about and lists the five most important behaviours that they believe promote cooperation and a constructive culture in the group.
- 2 Each member then presents their list to the group, which then discusses these and decides on five rules to adopt as a group.
- 3 Then, describe in the most concrete terms possible, what each behaviour entails, by offering two or three examples of situations that are relevant to the group's work.
- 4 Make a decision that these jointly developed rules are to apply to the group's work. ■

FACTS



BASIC CODE OF ETHICS

You and your party colleagues must agree on the ethical rules that apply to your role. You are responsible for deciding on a public budget and must treat the money paid in tax by citizens with respect. You must be able to separate your personal interests from your political responsibility to represent the interests of the people. Therefore, you need to establish clear boundaries for how tax money can be spent and on what. Some basic rules:

- 1 The rules for entertainment expenses must be clear and strictly adhered to.
- 2 Always act in such a way that you can stand for your actions when scrutinised by the taxpayers.
- 3 Never confuse your personal interests with the interests of the people in general. Never confuse the interests of your party with the interests of the people. If you are uncertain about a conflict of interest, the matter should be discussed and clarified within the group.
- 4 Practise transparency and honesty. Never conceal information or facts.

Failure to comply with these rules can have adverse consequences. It could hurt you, your party and the public's view of politicians and democracy in general. You and your colleagues should act as role models, and you should always be able to stand for your actions. One helpful tip is known as the "front page test." Imagine that your recent activity will be on the front page of the newspaper. Would you be proud or ashamed?

Irregularities/corruption usually involve:

- taking or giving bribes
- cronyism and conflicts of interest
- undue influence
- secondary occupations and other benefits
- theft, fraud and embezzlement.

Corruption is harmful to society, because it:

- threatens the rule of law and democracy
- damages trust in public institutions
- misappropriates public funds
- distorts competition. ■

Start with clear rules of procedure

The practical structure of the group's work determines how well you will be able to function in your roles and perform your tasks together. As we pointed out above, the party's municipal council group will differ from municipality to municipality, and from party to party. The important thing is to know what the mandate of the group is and how decisions are made. Therefore, in order to avoid any misunderstandings and unnecessary conflicts, it is a good idea to have rules of procedure that clearly stipulate the internal rules regarding:

- the composition of the municipal council group and who is to lead the group's work
- how often meetings should be held, and who convenes the meetings and how
- who may attend the group meetings and which groups have the right to take part in discussions, the right of initiation, and the right to vote
- what the mandate is for the group and its members and substitutes with regard to decisions
- what the boundaries and procedures are for preparing matters in relation to the party organisation and its decision-making structure.

The party's constitution provides the initial framework for the group and its work, but the party's municipal council group must also adopt its own rules of procedure for its particular circumstances. The proposed rules of procedure must be submitted to the local branch before being established in the group.

A key to the success of the party group is to have clearly structured rules of procedure in place, which are based on inclusion and transparency. In day-to-day operations, it is important that cooperation is democratic and efficient. It must be possible for all members to be heard, participate on the same terms and cooperate without too much ambiguity and conflict. You must also have the opportunity to be forward-looking, and to work proactively and strategically. Joint planning of shared work during the mandate period and the next financial year often requires one- or two-day meetings at some point during the year. Plan the work strategically, identify particularly important and complex issues, and make comprehensive annual plans based on the financial year. It is important that the group takes time to discuss matters of principle and overarching issues in a long-term perspective. To agree on policy platforms, policy objectives and guidelines – as well as thinking about the future. Unless this is done, urgent matters tend to take over and take up all of your time.

A large part of the group's work will then revolve around the regular preparation of issues that you do together prior to decisions being made by municipal councils or committees. Examples of agenda items from typical

meetings with the party's municipal council group or committees include:

- Review all important issues listed in the municipal council's agenda (or the committee's, if it is a committee meeting). Connect these to the party's position, and discuss how they relate to the municipal action program and previous decisions.
- Prepare documentation for each agenda item in order to facilitate well-informed discussions. What conclusions have the relevant party's committees arrived at? Do you need to consult again with groups in the community impacted by the decisions, or compile research results or other contributions to the debate?
- Matters of principle or of economic importance must be dealt with at local branch member meetings. Has such a meeting been held or should the group request that the question be tabled in the committee or municipal council?
- Even if the discussions are oral, decisions must be recorded in the minutes. One advantage is that the group's reasoning and decisions will be clear, within the group and within the party, and it creates clarity if any questions are raised regarding what was said and decided.

Decisions are best formed through free and open discussion. The more arguments that can be given for and against a matter, the better the basis for the decision will be. The more counter-arguments that are articulated and tested, the more risks and shortcomings that can be eliminated. This is why the climate of cooperation in the group should be characterised by open and fact-based discussions, where everyone can be heard. Adequate time must be made for discussions and decisions within the party group before the party's leading representatives have to present the party's position.

When you cannot agree

When it comes to how you should vote in municipal councils or committees, you should always strive for unity and cohesion in your own party group. However, in some cases, you will think differently and arrive at different conclusions. It is then natural to try to find common ground to reconcile differences based on your policy platforms and goals, even if this takes time and effort. On occasion however, even after immense efforts, we have to concede that some differences of opinion cannot be reconciled. That is when you need to vote. Once the majority has spoken, it is crucial that everyone falls in line with the decision made. If the majority voted for a different decision than yours, you have to put aside your own personal convictions on the matter. On matters where a consensus cannot be reached, it is even more important to maintain a good climate of dialogue in the group. You need to talk to each other, understand each

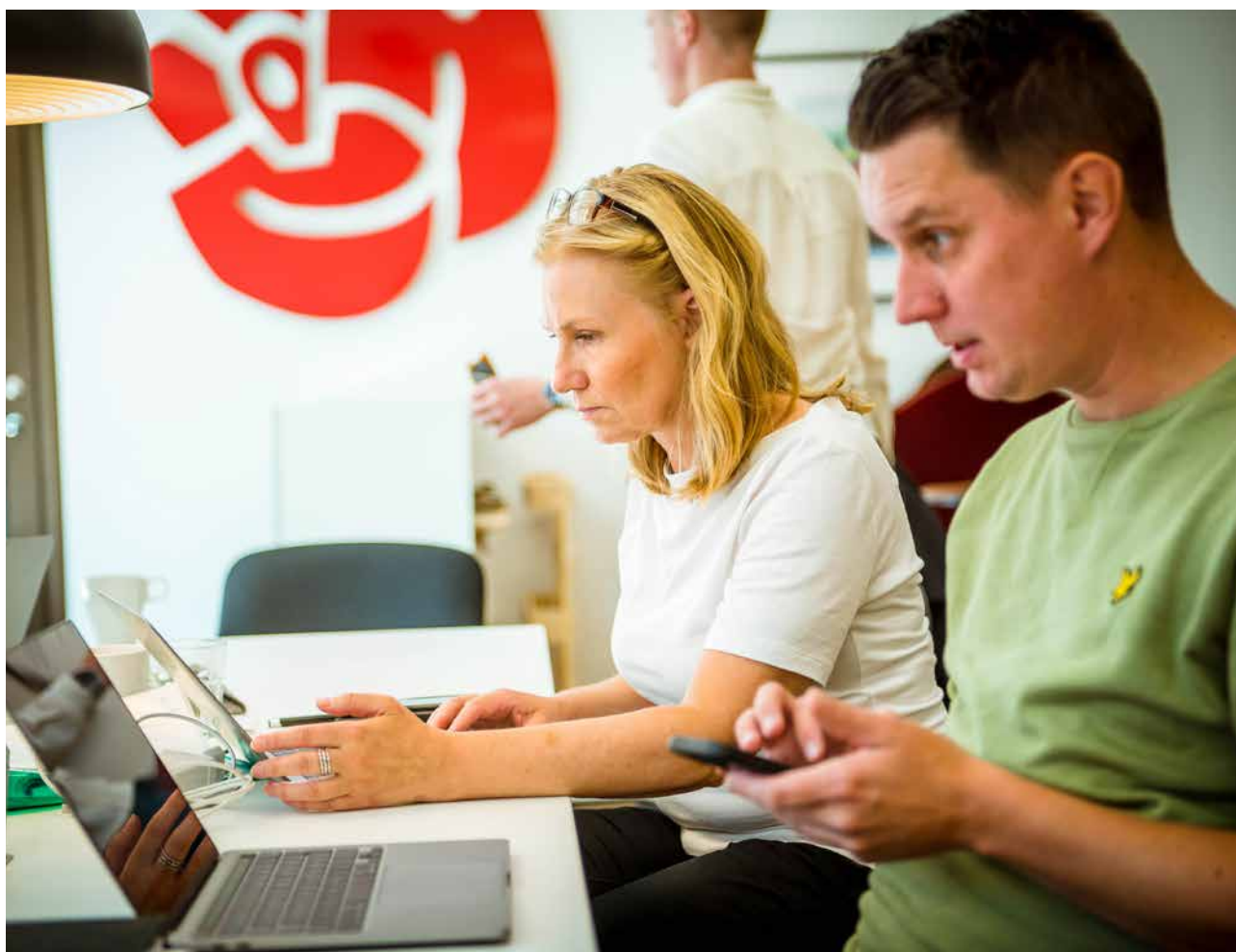
other, and coordinate how you will communicate your differences of opinion outside the group.

However, there may be the rare occasion when some members feel that they cannot follow the majority decision of the group. There may be a need to give some leeway to an individual politician for various reasons. Such disagreements could have additional consequences if the majority is fragile and a member who votes against the group's opinion causes the majority to vacillate. If it pertains to matters of principle and important questions in one of the party's committee groups, the question could be escalated for a broader discussion in the municipal council group, or with the local branch executive. If anyone still feels unable to vote in line with their group, this should be reported at the group meeting. Sometimes, an agreement can be reached that it is appropriate for a substitute to represent the party at the relevant decision-making meeting. However, no member can be forced to resign from their seat.

When there is a broad majority on a matter, it is usually of no practical importance if one or two party representatives hold a different opinion from the group – a majority can still be formed. But if the group cannot agree, you must discuss how to deal with the situation beforehand. You should also identify potential conflicts in good time and discuss how to deal with them within the group and exter-

nally with the media. Therefore, an obvious principle is to report your dissenting opinions to the group's leadership in good time. When the group is discussing what the party's position should be, it is a given that you should present your opinion – argue for it if there is time – and clearly announce that you have a dissenting opinion. If it pertains to an important matter of principle, and if you know in advance that this issue will be addressed during the term of office, you should of course also raise this with the Nomination Committee and party members before the party's list of election candidates is set. If opinions are deeply divided on a key issue, the municipal group may also request that the party organisation convene a member meeting to consider the issue.

Although the pursuit of unity is important, there is also reason to discuss how far you should go in your endeavours to achieve clear party line. Belonging to the same party does not always have to mean that you always think the same way. On the contrary, it may be important to accept that we sometimes arrive at different conclusions. Perhaps this will win the respect of voters. Of course, the pursuit of unity presupposes that the group has a genuinely democratic approach and that everyone has the opportunity to influence decisions.





HOW MEETINGS ARE HELD IN SWEDEN'S MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

BEFORE THE MEETING

Notice of a municipal council meeting is sent to members 13 days prior to the meeting. The notice specifies the time and place of the meeting, and the matters to be addressed. Where possible, the relevant documents should also be sent at the same time. However, these must be sent by no later than seven days prior to the meeting. In the municipal council, urgent matters that have not been prepared or announced pursuant to the requirements of the Local Government Act may be addressed and resolved only if all its members agree to take up the matter and agree on the decision to be made.

Preparing a matter involves putting together factual data and the administrative organisation writing down its considerations and proposal for a decision. Municipal committees that have a special interest in the matter must express their opinion.

Before a matter is addressed by the municipal council, the municipal executive committee must always be given the opportunity to express its opinion. For matters that are to be decided by the municipal council, the municipal executive committee adopts the final proposal for a decision.

MEETING PROCEDURES

CALL TO ORDER: The Chairman welcomes everyone and calls the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: Execution of a municipal council decision is subject to the approval of the minutes of the meeting at which the decision was made. The minutes are approved by the serving chair and vice-chair, who ensure that the minutes correspond to the events and decisions at the meeting. Any divergent views on the substance of a matter between the chair and minute-checkers must be recorded in the minutes. If the discrepancy pertains to anything material in a decision, there is the option of handing over the minutes checking to the municipal council.

INSTANT APPROVAL: The municipal council may decide at a meeting that an item should be approved immediately. The item should be recorded in writing before the end of the meeting. If this is not possible, the text of the decision must be read aloud by the chair.

CALL TO ORDER: Call to order at the beginning of each new meeting day, at subsequent meetings, and whenever the Chair deems it necessary.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS: The municipal council has as a general rule that items requiring a decision should be addressed first, followed by questions and interpellations. The municipal council may decide to change the order of one or more items of business. An item is addressed by the Chair presenting a proposal for a decision. The Chair then opens the floor, which means that the members then have the right to speak.

RIGHT TO SPEAK DURING THE MEETING: Those who have the right to speak during Council meetings are:

- all members and active substitutes
- the Chair and Vice-Chair of a committee responsible for the matter at hand
- the Chair of a committee or municipal council committee or someone else responding to an interpellation or a question may speak when the response is being addressed
- the municipal director may speak on request, and also the secretary of the municipal council and the municipal legal adviser may speak on the legality of what happens at meetings, as well as the auditors when the auditor's report for the annual report is being addressed
- the auditors when the municipal council is addressing a matter pertaining to the auditors' administration.

ORDER OF SPEAKERS: A member who intends to speak on a matter can announce this in the manner agreed by their municipal council. The Chair announces when it is your turn to have the floor. Each speaker is responsible for behaving in a manner consistent with a respectful tone and order. The Chair has a special responsibility for maintaining order on the rostrum.

It is important to stick to the topic. The Chair must otherwise remind the speaker to stay on topic. Failure to comply means that the Chair can take the floor from the speaker. The Chair can also expel anyone who behaves in a disruptive manner and does not comply after being cautioned. However, no member may interrupt a speaker when they are speaking. An address to the meeting should not be longer than three minutes.

When participating in the municipal council's deliberations, you are also entitled to a short reply of no more than one minute in response to what a speaker has put forward. You may only request a reply during an address to the meeting, and the reply is to be given immediately after the speaker yields the floor. The individual who asked to reply is then given the opportunity to counterreply by the Chair. The right of reply is also given to a member who is directly named in the address.

MOTIONS: In connection with their statements on the rostrum, members often submit various proposals for decision, known as motions. There are several types of motions:

- **Motion to approve:** The municipal executive committee's proposal or someone else's motion is agreed with.
- **Motion to reject:** The municipal executive committee's proposal or someone else's motion is not agreed with.
- **Motion to amend:** A motion to amend a proposal is made. For example, if a proposed grant is SEK 20,000 and you

want to amend it to SEK 15,000, you are moving to amend the proposal to SEK 15,000.

- **Addendum:** If you want the municipal council to decide more on the matter and therefore request an addendum.
- **Motion to table:** You want the item of business to be tabled until the next meeting. In the municipal council, an item of business may be tabled if at least one third of the members approve. This is known as a minority motion to table. This may only be used once for each item of business. Any further tabling until the next meeting requires the approval of a simple majority. No additional documentation or other inquiry may be added to a tabled item of business.
- **Motion to reconsider:** The decision guidance documents for an item of business are found to be inadequate. You want the item of business to be referred back to the municipal executive committee or a committee for reconsideration. In the municipal council, an item of business may be referred back for reconsideration if at least one third of the members approve. This is known as a minority motion to reconsider. If any further reconsideration is requested at the next meeting, a simple majority must approve.
- **Motion to circulate for comment:** The opinion of one or more consultative bodies affected by the matter is to be obtained.
- **Motion to adjourn:** You want the meeting to be adjourned or part of the meeting to be postponed.

Longer motions are submitted in writing to the secretary of the municipal council to ensure that they are correctly rendered when the Chair reviews the existing proposals for decisions and in the minutes. The Chair may request that a motion or a special note to the minutes be made in writing.

END DEBATE AND REVIEW OF MOTIONS: When the final speaker has spoken about the item of business, the Chair says: *"Is the municipal council ready to vote on the question?"* This then concludes the deliberations on the matter. The Chair reviews the motions proposed during the deliberations and verifies that they have been correctly understood. The review is then confirmed by a fall of the gavel, after which a motion may not be modified, withdrawn or appended, unless unanimously agreed to by all members of the municipal council.

ORDER OF MOTIONS: When deliberations in the municipal council are ended, the Chair is to present a motion for a decision. The question should be framed so that it can be answered with a "yes" or "no." The municipal council must take a position on every motion and proposal submitted during the meeting. When there are three or more motions concerning an item, the Chair must clarify which motions should be moved against each other and in what order the motions should be made (order of motions). Motions can be divided into two categories:

- Formal motions concern how the item is addressed or the decision-making process. Formal motions are tabling, reconsideration, referral and adjournment.

- Main motions entail a decision by the municipal council on the item, in accordance with the normal decision-making process. Main motions consist of approval, rejection, amendment or addendum.

It is important that the different categories of motions are dealt with individually in an order of motions so that a main motion is not put forward against a formal motion. Formal motions must always be examined first, since they affect the decision-making process and the item may not even be decided during the current meeting. Supplementary motions are always dealt with last.

VOTING PROCEDURE: Normally, decisions are made by acclamation, i.e. you call out "aye" (yes) for a proposed decision you support and remain silent if the Chair asks whether the municipal council is all in favour of a motion you want to be rejected. The Chair listens to determine which decision has the most "aye" votes.

VOTING: If you wish to determine which proposal is supported by most of the members, you can call for a vote. This must be done prior to the Chair confirming the decision with a fall of the gavel. When prompted by the Chair, register your vote by pressing one of the Yes, No or Abstain buttons. Abstaining from a vote means that you have not taken part in the decision. Voting may also take place after a call to order.

DISSENTING OPINIONS: You are entitled to express your dissent to a decision to indicate that you do not agree with what has been decided. You may only express your dissenting opinion if you have participated in the decision. Dissenting opinions must be recorded in the minutes. A dissenting opinion is usually expressed orally, but if you wish, you may submit your dissenting opinion in writing. Written dissenting opinions must be submitted to the secretariat of the municipal council prior to the approval of the minutes.

AFTER THE MEETING

At the meeting, the secretary for the municipal council takes notes so that the minutes can later be drawn up for checking. The minutes contain information on the items addressed, the individuals in attendance and the matters on which decisions were made. Within two weeks, the minute checkers must check and certify that the information is correct. By no later than the second day after the minutes have been approved, a notification to this effect must be posted on the municipality's noticeboard on its website. For the decisions to come into force, this notification must remain published for three weeks. However, decisions may be implemented as soon as the minutes have been approved, unless there are special reasons for not doing so. Upon approval of the minutes, a copy is to be sent to the relevant committees, company boards, and other bodies or individuals directly impacted by the decision.



The role of the group leader

Each party represented on the municipal council must appoint one of its elected representatives as the group leader. The group leader has a key role in the party's work on the municipal council, including representing their party and coordinating the work of the party group. The role includes consolidating policy work in the municipality's committees with the party's work in the municipality and in the party as a whole by approaching each issue from this overarching perspective. The role entails:

- being responsible for keeping the public informed about municipal activities and for forwarding the information to the party group and its representatives in the committees
- representing the party group vis-à-vis the municipal council's chair and vice-chair and the municipal executive committee, while maintaining good contact with the municipal commissioners and opposition leaders, committee chairs and the group leaders of the other parties.
- responsibility for providing information about the group's work and policy positions to the party and the parties with which the party cooperates
- coordinating the municipal council group's work and positions – internally and with the party organisation and its decision-making structure
- creating good and efficient forms of work in the party group and making newly elected representatives feel welcome and involved
- leading the practical work of the party group by convening meetings, allocating assignments and tasks, and ensuring that a serving substitute is in place if an ordinary member is absent
- helping to profile the party's municipal policy and positions externally and, jointly with the party group, shaping public opinion.

The group leader has a great responsibility to represent the entire municipal group. However, the group leader does not always have to be the one who declares the party's position in a municipal council debate or in the media – it is useful to allow committee representatives to take part in the debate. This indicates that the party consists of many individuals who are all involved in shaping its policies. Since the group leader open has the role of representing the official position of the party, the group leader has the least scope for pushing an opinion that diverges from that of the majority of the party.

The group leader also has the task of creating an environment in which the group thrives and of clearly pursuing the party's policy. Of creating a strong and effective team and the foundations for personal growth, engagement and motivation for everyone in the group. The strongest engagement is generated when dedicated members experience a clear connection between the group's values and



goals, and their own driving forces. Group leaders should therefore work to increase the group's understanding of shared policy objectives and how the group can work together to achieve them. The assignment includes having a strategic role in the selection of issues, image and priorities, as well as involving the party group in these efforts. This also applies to the shaping of political visions. Here too, it is important to use methods that encourage participation. Through networks and extensive interaction with the general public, it is easier to pick up on issues that are important to the daily lives of citizens. It provides an important basis for policy platform work. The group leader should ensure that this work is done, and that the debate within their own group gets an occasional injection of other perspectives. Hiring speakers who bring new knowledge to the group, holding broader political discussions beyond the current political agenda, starting a study circle or conducting exploratory and engaging workshops. Conducting annual performance reviews for each elected representative is a practical way to develop both the individual and the group.

In municipalities where the party has many members in the municipal council and broad representation in numerous committees, the municipal council group may be so large that an executive is required to support the group leader. For example, the committee group leaders could jointly form a group management with the group leader as chair.

The municipal council group's relationship to the party

The local branch of the party and its elected representatives in municipal councils have different roles. But it is vital that they cooperate and coordinate their efforts. Both have a

responsibility to ensure that this is done efficiently. As we have seen before, the party develops the overall policies and decides on the party's policy platform. Municipal council members represent the party in the municipal council, where they are to implement the programme's policies in practice. At the same time, elected members have special legal and constitutional powers and are directly accountable to the voters. On occasion, this dual responsibility results in concopal councils and for returning with important policy issues for discussion and decision. The party must be given the opportunity to influence these processes, and is responsible for ensuring that the opinions of its members and citizens are passed on to the party's popularly elected representatives. Municipal matters of significance, being matters of principle or major financial matters, must therefore be dealt with at a local branch meeting. Deviations from the programmes must be discussed with the party, and all important issues must be discussed on a regular basis. If the conditions should change during the term of office, it is your responsibility and that of your party group to conduct a dialogue with members of the local branch executive about why you need to deviate from the programmes.

Otherwise, you have a shared local responsibility with the party for working on your policy platforms and for ensuring ongoing consultations on the overarching issues in municipal politics:

- The party organisation should ensure that its representatives in municipal politics have a good knowledge of the platforms. At regular intervals, for example once a year, you should reconcile election promises and platform items with reality: What have you accomplished, what remains to be done, what will you not manage to do as intended, and what must you reconsider?
- Municipal politicians should use the platforms as an important starting point for discussions about the direction of their activities. You are to take up substantial deviations from your adopted platforms in discussions with the party organisation. You are to regularly discuss which matters are matters of principle and discuss with the party organisation how these should be treated.

The normal procedures for establishing such communication and consultation are, for example, for the local branch executive to immediately call municipal council members and substitutes to a group meeting when the vote count is completed following a general election and it is clear which members will represent the party. At least once each year, the local party executive is to call the leader of the municipal group, the executive and the group leaders of municipal committees to deliberations on municipal activities. Each committee conducts an annual follow-up of the municipal policy platform to ensure that the platform is kept alive. The municipal group must then submit an annual report and a report on its completed activities to the annual meeting of the local branch.

Here, it is important to remember that consultation with the local branch is crucial, not just with regard to overarching issues. Numerous minor issues could also become politically charged and therefore important. It is often the small issues that are close to home that affect people the most. A major investment in the construction of housing can turn into a political stress if the local residents feel adversely impacted by the new production. Poor maintenance of streets and a slight increase in childcare fees could require far more engagement than more important issues of an overarching nature. That is why it is important to regularly discuss specific issues that may be of political interest. These are:

- Issues of significant local interest that concern a section of the municipality or a residential area.
- Questions that are of interest to a particular group. Not least, issues that could be perceived as setbacks for a group.

Even when it comes to more limited issues like this, the responsibility is shared, and these issues should be monitored and discussed regularly, for example, in preparation for each committee meeting.

However, your cooperation with the party organisation should consist of more than just maintaining a close dialogue with the party executive and attending decision-



making member meetings whenever your area of activity is on the agenda. One important reason why people join a political party is because they want to influence policy and societal development. As a member of the municipal council, you have a responsibility to ensure that individual party members also have this opportunity. To do this, you need to create an open two-way communication channel between you and the party members that allows them to be part of the decision-making process. The aim is to make it possible for the members to participate in the process. It is crucial that both the party and its municipal politicians assume their share of responsibility and consult with each other about what communication initiatives may be appropriate:

- *Intranet, information letters or e-mails to party members.* A simple e-mail/letter with notices from the various committees can be compiled.
- *Surveys and referrals for comment.* A good way to communicate with members is to regularly ask for their views on current issues. This can be done by e-mail/letter or through the website.
- *Consultations.* For major issues, it may be appropriate for the party to arrange a more comprehensive conference that allows for all fellow party members to participate discussions. This requires thoroughly prepared background material that provides facts and describes possible alternatives.
- *Meetings.* Most commonly, current issues are brought up for discussion in the local branch. Special thematic meetings, or seminars on the issue at hand can also be organised.

Sometimes the value of different kinds of party work is discussed. The party's active members may be critical of how municipal work takes precedence and is perceived as having 'higher status', and how those who receive municipal roles often disappear from party meetings and other party activities only to reappear when the nomination period is approaching. This can result in a rift between the members and municipal politicians that could be very detrimental to the party. This is a serious matter because, as an elected representative, you are a leader in the party and are needed in the party's activities, just as you need the party's channels and contacts with citizens. It could also backfire on you if your fellow party members lose confidence in you. The best way to prevent such a development is for you to remain active in local branch work. If you are active there and interact with your fellow party members, participate in studies and party outreach work, you stand to benefit from the best and most vibrant collaborations on party activities.

INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES BY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Each elected representative may submit proposals to the municipal council in the form of motions. You can also submit interpellations and questions. These are the formal instruments that elected representatives use to pursue the party's policy, especially when in the opposition. They should normally be submitted to the municipal office a few days in advance so that they can be printed and distributed to all members of the municipal council. In formal terms however, the motion or the interpellation is raised at the municipal council meeting itself. A group member who intends to raise a motion or make an interpellation must inform the group's executive beforehand. Established practice is for a motion, interpellation or question to be processed by the group meeting before being formally raised.

Motions are used to put forward a proposal. All members of the municipal council are entitled to submit motions. The proposal is addressed to the municipal council. The municipal executive committee is responsible for ensuring that the matter is prepared by municipal officials.

Interpellations make it possible for the municipal council to scrutinise municipal activities and include items on the agenda that are not otherwise there. They are addressed to an individual, primarily the chair of the municipal executive committee or one of the committees. Debates on interpellations may involve council members other than the individual to whom the interpellation is addressed or the individual who submitted it.

Questions are a simpler category than interpellations. They should be as brief as possible. When a question is asked, only the individual who has asked the question and the individual who is to answer the question may engage in debate, unlike interpellation debates. ■





ABOUT DEBATING



Debates are closely associated with politics and being a politician. They aim to highlight the dividing lines in politics through an exchange of views with opponents, and win people over to a particular position. Your task in a debate is to convey the views and priorities of your party. To succeed, you must prepare well, for example, by practising with your party colleagues before a debate. Prepare key messages and responses to fend off your opponent's attacks and to hone your own attacks on their weak points. Success requires that you have a good knowledge of the facts. However, be careful not to come across as too superior, or get caught up in the details or in overly abstract graphs. Foundation Max van der Stoep's political skills manual, *"Becoming a better politician"* lists some practical suggestions for success in debates:

- You never get a second chance to make a first impression. Smile, be friendly, shake your opponent's hand and wish them good luck.
- Brief messages with a few points are easier to remember, both for you and for the audience. When you put forward the party's goals or arguments, be sure to do so in the form of a list of no more than three points.
- If you are asked a question, always start by giving a clear answer before proceeding with a further explanation of your point of view. Make sure that the heart of your response does not get lost in a long and complicated explanation.
- Facts speak, but stories sell. Politicians who speak from experience and illustrate their arguments with anecdotes from life have a greater chance of success. The experiences of real people are better for illustrating your opinions than numbers and statistics.
- Make comparisons: "It's outrageous that you are complaining about a tax increase for luxury consumption, when so many people lack basic healthcare."
- Do not protest sullenly against or attempt to change the rules of debate. Do not attack the speaker or the moderator of the debate if you do not like how the debate is going. No one likes a whinger.

Non-verbal communication:

- Seventy per cent of the messages you communicate are not communicated verbally. This means that you must be well rested, not hungry and alert to be present and handle the debate.
- Look your opponent in the eye. When speaking, look at the opponent – do not look at the moderator or down at the table. Otherwise, you will come across as not really believing in what you are saying, or if you look away when attacked, it will look like your opponent has struck a sore spot in you.
- Be resolute, lean forward and be prepared. But do not frantically respond to every single topic. If the serving tray with drinks passes by and you didn't get a glass, don't run after it; simply wait until the next time it comes by. Then firmly take the glass you want.

- Remember that cameras capture everything. You are being filmed or photographed even when you are not talking. Therefore, always maintain an active posture, and do not look at the clock, as it gives the impression that you are longing for the debate to be over. Stay active and be alert.
- Do not groan when someone makes a point you do not agree with. It gives a disagreeable impression. Do not touch your face with your hands. It makes you look nervous. If you make any gestures, make sure they are open and inviting.

Tone:

- Your tone is very significant in a debate. Keep it alert and positive: You like the debate, you want to convince people, it is an enjoyable task.
- Use humour... if you are good at it! A good spontaneous joke is invaluable, but rehearsed wit that falls flat is fatal. When in doubt, refrain from making a joke.
- Never be arrogant and or belittle the views of other people. Everyone is entitled to their own views.
- Always be respectful. Attack the views of opponents, not their character. Do not belittle them. A good tactic is to begin with a phrase such as: "You have a number of valid points, but there is one thing I don't agree with..."
- Beware of subjects that you are emotionally invested in. They can make it difficult for you to control your emotions. Your opponent can take advantage of this by provoking an emotional reaction.
- Try to listen constructively to suggestions and keep an open mind for new ideas. Be confident without being arrogant.

Tricks and tips:

- Make an unexpected suggestion and ask your opponents to say yes to it right on the spot. Use it to clearly indicate what you stand for. Present a practical suggestion and actively challenge your opponent.
- Throw your opponent off balance by confronting them with statements they have made in the past.
- Ask your opponent questions about facts or figures they probably do not have at hand.
- Force your opponent to make an impossible choice by presenting them with an imaginary dilemma: "If you had to choose between cuts in healthcare or increasing politicians' pay, what would you choose?"
- Cite third-party sources: "Opinion polls have shown that the inhabitants of this city reject Council members' plans to increase parking fees."
- Forestall by hitting back first. To counter an anticipated attack before it has even begun is one possible way to neutralise it. ■

Conducting parliamentary work efficiently

Your role of representing citizens and implementing the party's policies and programmes in municipal activities entails some basic practical tasks that are undertaken jointly with your fellow party members in the municipal council and your committee group:

- Preparing decisions for the municipal council by reviewing the agenda at a pre-meeting and jointly deciding on the position to adopt and actions to be taken on each issue.
- Preparing issues in the committees you serve for decision by the municipal council, or directly making decisions regarding issues that the committee has a mandate to make.
- Listening, gathering and channelling the views of citizens and party members on various issues, and advocated for the party's municipal policy and its various areas of activity.

If you and your party colleagues work solely on the basis of the municipal executive committee's or committee's agenda, you risk being controlled by a few full-time politicians or by civil servants in the administration. The group will then only react to the agenda and the documentation they receive, but not take any initiatives of their own. In order to achieve results, you must take the initiative and have a clear idea of your specific objectives: What is it that the party wants to achieve, what is my role and that of my group? In which direction should we go? What issues should we pursue and how? If you do not have clear objectives, it is easy to be led instead of doing the leading.

Clarify the party's political agenda

In the run-up to general elections, the party expresses the party's overall goals for municipal policies, as well as its own concrete policies – through action programmes, opinion pieces and election material. These communicate the will and vision of the party, and therefore constitute the most fundamental guidelines for your political work and how you intend to meet the needs of citizens. It is an important task to review existing programmes and guidelines, and discuss what they mean for your work in the group. For your findings to provide guidance, you will need to translate the wordings and overall objectives even more clearly, into concrete and defined objectives that can be applied to the work of the municipal council group and within your respective committees. What does the overall goal entail for our activities? What does our committee actually want to achieve in the long and short term? How can we best proceed in practical terms to convert the



party's policies into concrete proposals? The planning work in a municipal committee includes setting administrative and activity goals. This is important if your political goals are to be reflected in the committee's and administration's planning and activities.

In order to succeed in setting your goals, it is important that you have a shared view of what you want to achieve and for whom. Your activities must be planned on the basis of a clear overview of your role and your electorate – from both the short and long term perspectives. It's about:

- **Mapping** – A picture of the needs of citizens and their views of activities, as well as the political landscape within your committee's domain. What are the most important issues for the party and for citizens? Who are your main political opponents, and what issues will they be pursuing?
- **Target groups** – Which groups should you focus on primarily in your political work? How can you have a dialogue with them?
- **Goals** – What specific political objectives should you set pursuant to your agenda based on the party's policy platform? This includes how you describe your vision and goals for the short and long term, and proceed from there to consolidate your strategies and messages.

Identify the needs of citizens and map the political landscape

If the needs of citizens are to be the starting point, it is important for you, as a politician, to have a clear picture of these needs. When taking on work in a municipal committee, you and your party colleagues in your committee group need to know:

- how citizens view your activities, and what is most important in their eyes
- what works well and what does not
- what changes they want to see.

Generally, much of the groundwork will have already been done, and the committee's political agenda is largely governed by the party's overall local political strategy and position. But it would make sense to systematically discuss, analyse the overall strategy and clarify these issues within your area. By doing so, you can build on your picture so that it is more up-to-date and complete, and ensure that everyone has the same picture of the situation.

Public opinion and the issues in focus that are high on the agenda are revealed through conversations with citizens, in surveys and in various types of media. The party's dialogue and communication with citizens have a key role in this regard. It is crucial that you have a clear picture of the political debate, in municipal politics as a whole and within your particular committee's area, as well as the debate that may be occurring at national level. Has there been any debate that affected your committee's area? Has the local newspaper addressed any of your issues of concern? Have your issues been discussed on social media or in newspapers through letters to the editor? It is crucial to be familiar with public opinion and the most important issues on the political agenda, as well as where the other parties stand on these issues. What proposals have they made? Check their budget proposals or proposals that were previously presented to the committee or municipal council. What do you think they might prioritise? You can get an indication by reading their policy platforms in the run-up to elections – is there anything there that affects your committee's area? In addition, you should discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents: Where are their strengths? Which groups will benefit from their proposals? Which groups will lose out from their policies? What is the view of citizens regarding our opponents and their policies?

In addition to differences on concrete matters, you should have a clear picture of the ideological differences between you and your opponents within your committee's area. Where are the dividing lines? How do these reveal themselves on various political issues? Who are you the furthest from politically? Who or which party(s) are your main opponents?

In addition, you should look to other political actors. What other actors are there in the local community that may have similar interests to your party on various issues – associations and clubs, trade unions, business organisations or other interest groups? Map out their stances on various issues and the proposals that have been provoked from various quarters. Which interest groups are close to you politically that can you cooperate with?

Your self-image and position: Just as you need a clear picture of your opponents, you should ensure that your self-image is accurate. It is about the results that your policies and decisions actually have or will have, and your assessment of how citizens and your target groups perceive

you. Who benefits from our policy? Who does not? What are the outcomes like? What concrete changes and improvements have citizens been able to notice? Or if you are in the opposition, what would the outcomes be in practice, if we were able to implement our policies? What will the consequences be if my party's policies become a reality? What are the strengths and weaknesses of our policy? In addition to scrutinising your policy, this is also a question of examining what you think is the voters' image of you: Do you stand for innovation and development, or of stagnation, bureaucracy and pessimism? Are you perceived as receptive and open – or as dictatorial? Do people see you as capable of government – or incapable of action? As constructive or whining?

Relationship with other parties: The policy platforms you presented before the elections are a starting point for the objectives you set for the work to be undertaken during your term of office. However, the political situation and the balance of power after the election obviously play an important role. In many of the municipalities where you are not in the majority, you will need to consult with one or more other parties when setting the goals for your work. Even on individual political issues, you could be faced with a conundrum: compromise to get the main features through while giving in on other matters, or abstain and get nothing implemented at all. This requires sensitivity and a willingness to compromise. It requires that you be clear about what the cornerstones of your policy are, and what you can change more easily.

The important thing is to discuss where the boundaries go – what can you accept? What are the ideological similarities and differences between your party and the other parties? What are the options for cooperation on specific issues, and what are the conditions for broader and longer-term coalitions?

Activities within your committee's area: It is crucial that you are highly knowledgeable within your own committee's area and its activities. By reviewing the minutes, financial statements and budget, as well through study visits, you can build on your knowledge of the issues and areas of activity that you deal with in the committee. You should review:

- **Activities** – in terms of quantity and quality. How has the scope and focus in the committee's area changed in recent years?
- **Needs** – and how your activities are responding to them. Are there other, more effective ways to meet these needs?
- **Finances** – financial performance during the term of office and what it means for your target discussions: What is the most important thing to watch out for? What can be streamlined or reorganised?

- **Planning** – what it says about your activities going forward. You can usually find this in budget and multi-year plans. What ideas about change, cutbacks and expansion have been discussed?
- **The staff** – both the management and employees are highly knowledgeable about today's activities and tomorrow's needs. They often have ideas and suggestions on how to change and streamline activities.

Finally, when mapping out the political landscape and developments within your committee area, it is also important to look for larger trends and overall changes. What overall changes in society, in municipal activities, and in the political landscape, are important for your committee's area?

A review of activities can easily become comprehensive and time-consuming. Naturally, the intention is not to acquire an in-depth knowledge about everything, but to have an adequate overview for setting targets for activities and the changes you want to see during the term of office. It may be useful to divide up the work within the group so that everyone has their own part to map.

Clarified target groups

As we pointed out above, the mission and those whom you serve are closely connected. If you have the basic view that your mission as a municipal politician is to meet the needs of citizens, the people to whom you are accountable are also obvious. An important job is therefore to find out more about those people: Who are they? How can we get in touch with them? How do we find out about their views, needs and ideas? For your practical work, it is essential that you discuss the needs and realities of various citizens and the groups you should specifically address. It is usually quite simple: You know who is affected by your activities. But sometimes it's more difficult: If you work in a larger and more comprehensive committee, perhaps every citizen is affected by your activities in one way or another. Therefore, it is particularly important that you identify and clarify the target groups as far as possible. This allows for you to reach out to people more effectively, adapt your communications and messages, and get their views and communicate with them. You usually have to prioritise between groups and try to concentrate your efforts. The main content of such a discussion may include:

- Who are most affected and/or interested in our area of operations and policy? This is about identifying target groups to the extent possible in order to derive the most benefit from your efforts.
- How can we reach them? Are they organised in any way? Are there any associations and clubs that have an interest in our issues? Are they listed in an open register where we can find names, phone numbers and more?

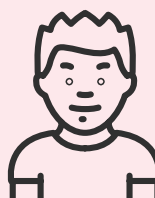
- Do you have close friends and allies? Are there any groups that share our views and which can help you to reach groups that we have difficulty getting in contact with?

The target groups that you choose will depend on the local conditions and the focus of your role. Here are some examples, divided up by area of activity:



ELDERLY CARE:

- Pensioners or a smaller group of pensioners according to age, income, etc.
- Residents of serviced accommodation and other institutions for elderly care.
- People in line for a place in elderly care.
- Staff in elderly care.



LEISURE AND YOUTH:

- Clubs and associations.
- Staff at youth leisure centres and similar.
- Cultural associations, theatre groups, etc.
- Staff at libraries, art galleries, museums, etc.



CHILDCARE:

- Families with children of a certain age.
- Parents with children in preschool.
- Parents with children in line for a preschool place.
- The staff of childcare facilities.



SCHOOL:

- Students and their parents.
- Teachers and other school staff.
- Home and school clubs and associations.
- Adult students.

The choice of target groups also greatly affects the party's overall political position and profile in local government work, and should therefore also be linked to the party's overall political position, strategy and messages.

Clear goals

In order to succeed, you must have a clear idea of your objectives: In concrete terms, what do we, the citizens and the party want to achieve? What are our political objectives? How do we describe our short- and long-term objectives to constituents? Your party identifies the overall political objectives which must then be made more concreted and clarified further based on your joint analysis. Having clear goals is key to getting this work to function effectively. If your role pertains to education policy, one goal might be to employ more school staff. However, the objectives may also be beyond the realm of policy on concrete issues. For example, a strategic objective to contribute to boosting confidence in the work of the committee or the party in the area.

Objectives can be formulated in a number of ways. Unfortunately, we often see examples of objectives that do not fulfil their purpose, i.e. they do define what we want to achieve. Objectives and means to achieving them are often confused. An important basic rule is to express objectives as a description of what you want to achieve, not how you should achieve it. The objective should express a future state: “When we have worked on this during the term of office, the reality should be like this...” Consequently, we should avoid expressing objectives as for example “we are going to employ another 25 qualified teachers.” That is a means. Instead, the objective is to “provide all students with access to qualified teachers and a good education.” Regardless of the policy area you work in, this checklist can be useful for achieving clear and useful objectives. They should be:

- ✓ **Specific:** So that they are clear and delimited, and cannot be misunderstood.
- ✓ **Measurable:** So that you can evaluate and know when the objective is achieved.
- ✓ **Accepted:** So that everyone is involved in the work and motivated to achieve the objective.
- ✓ **Realistic:** So they are perceived as grounded in reality and achievable.
- ✓ **Timed:** So that everyone knows when the work must be undertaken and when the objective must be achieved.

Even if you formulate your objectives as a description of reality, they may be very different from each other. The most common objectives are formulated as operational targets and perceptual goals. With operational targets, you are expressing what you want your activities to look like: “by the end of the term of office, all children will have access to...,” “all pensioners have access to X service...” and so forth. However, the stance or attitude of people is often just as important. With perceptual goals, we express how constituents or a certain target group should perceive the activity or you as a politician: “by the end of the term, four out of five should feel that the municipality is highly

efficient...,” “that the municipality is developing in the right direction” and so forth.

As you work on formulating your objectives, it is also helpful to set goals at different levels, depending on how extensive they are and the period of time they cover. Three different time frames are commonly used:

- **Vision** – an overall objective that you work towards in the long term. It may be a target scenario covering several terms of office: a freer end goal to which all your political decisions and hard work will one day lead.
- **Long-term objectives** – the objectives that you are working to achieve during your term of office. Election promises are a clear example. You and your party ran for election based on promises that you now have a mandate to put into practice. Your vision and long-term objectives should be connected. You proceed from the vision and ask: “If we are to approach the vision we have adopted, what must we achieve in the next term of office?”
- **Short-term goals** – It is not enough to set objectives for such a lengthy period as a term of office. Practical matters would then likely be put off – “we have several years ahead of us to do that.” Therefore, you should break down the long-term objectives into yearly interim goals. The main question then becomes: “If we want to achieve our long-term objective at the end of the term of office, what do we need to achieve this year to move towards the long-term objective?” These interim goals are the targets that must be achieved during your term of office, in order to achieve your long-term objectives.

Structured implementation

Achieving your objectives requires a strategic plan that comprises conscious choices and methods for how to succeed. When working out such a plan, some questions that you can jointly ask yourselves are:

- What is required to achieve our objectives? What strengths, opportunities and resources do we have?
- What are our weaknesses, challenges and threats? What resistance will we encounter, and how should we deal with it?
- Who is responsible in practice for implementing which parts of our strategic plan?
- How do we continuously monitor our activities and evaluate the results?

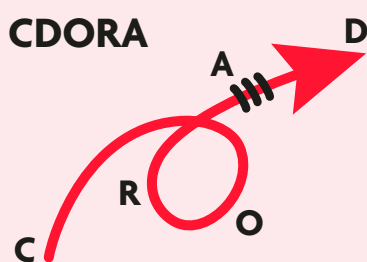
Naturally, there are a number of different issues that are relevant when drawing up your strategic plan. These are just a few examples of questions you should consider. The most important thing is that you and your party colleagues in the committee or municipal council are aware that a detailed plan is needed for how to practically achieve your objectives, step by step.



HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE YOUR OBJECTIVES?

Setting an objective is not the difficult part of drawing up a strategy. Rather, it is how you are going to achieve your objective. In this regard, you may need some help to get started. There are many good methods that can be used to clarify how to get there. A simple template that can be used is the acronym “CDORA.” It forces you to see more than just the final destination, and to instead clarify the entire journey there, including all the obstacles.

- **CURRENT SITUATION:** What is the current situation?
- **DESIRED SITUATION:** What do you want to achieve? What does it look like at the finish line?
- **OBSTACLES:** What obstacles may arise in the work to achieve the objective?
- **RESOURCES:** What resources are available for achieving the objective in practice?
- **ACTION:** What practical steps must we take to achieve our objectives?



Clear messages

Once you have established the objectives of your work, you have an overview of what you are to achieve. However, you also need to briefly explain to constituents and your target groups what your priorities and proposals are. It will not suffice to refer to a programme or to a comprehensive document of the objectives. You need to be able to briefly answer questions such as “What do you want to achieve?” “What will you be doing?” when asked by individuals and the media. Therefore, it is a good idea for you to make your main messages clear. This will provide you with a focused response for those who are interested, and everyone in the committee can use the same description to keep your communications clear and consistent. Try to formulate a short message that sums up:

- 1 What you want to solve/accomplish
- 2 or whom you want to do it
- 3 why you want to do it
- 4 how you want to do it
- 5 what distinguishes you from your political opponents.

When you have answered this, it is a good idea to also check how the target group perceives your messages. If your message is that a major road needs to be extended in order to improve access to your local community, but the target groups you have chosen believe that the biggest problem is noise from traffic, you have less chance of reaching them.

When you answer the question of what the problems are and how they should be solved, this is ultimately to help citizens to see that your party has realistic solutions for them. During election campaigns in particular, your task is to distinguish your party from the other parties by offering realistic plans and a clear strategy that clarifies how you will achieve your goals. Remember that how you formulate the message – what words, sentences and perspectives you use – will also reveal a lot about you and will be decisive for how people will perceive the party. Read more about communications and agenda setting, and the selection of target groups and messages in the fourth module of this introductory course “*REACHING OUT AND CONNECTING – Communication, agenda setting and organising election campaigns.*”

When you need to change course

What happens when you need to change your course and change your positions? If you discover that you are unable to implement your policy platform? Or that it would be very wrong to do so? There may be several reasons:

- Financial limitations make your ambitions impossible to achieve.
- The conditions have changed in some critical way: Laws and regulations have been amended, technology has changed, etc.
- There have been better proposals or alternatives after your policy platform was adopted.
- The needs have changed.

There may be good reasons to change a position. However, do not forget to always initiate a discussion with the party organisation if you feel there is reason to depart from the party’s previous promises. You will then need to jointly discuss how to manage this appropriately and a new position to take. Naturally, opinions could also change and political lines may be redrawn within a party. It is not surprising, but when that happens, clarity is particularly important. There is a risk of internal quarrelling if you go against the principles and promises made before the elections. When this happens, you should endeavour to explain why. On major issues of particular importance, it is always desirable that as many members of the party as possible be involved in expressing their opinions. It may not be enough to invite the party members to attend a group meeting to discuss the issue. In such cases, you can convene a general member meeting of the local branch or utilise some other type of consultation procedure with the members.

Naturally, the aim is to seek consensus through discussion. Ultimately however, an internal decision must be adopted.

But there may be situations where the municipal council group must be accountable to the electorate in a different way than other party members. One example could be a difficult decision on cuts in the municipal budget. The members of the municipal council are legally responsible for the consequences of the decision, since the municipal council is the highest decision-making body in the municipality, which is both an employer and a public authority. No rules or recommendations can cover all cases that may arise. However, some simple principles could be:

- It is always good if a decision once made by a particular constellation – municipal group meeting, membership meeting, etc. – can also be revoked by the same assembly. It lends a strong democratic legitimacy to the new decision.
- It is not good if a decision is taken at an ‘unnecessarily high’ level in the organisation. In the example above concerning budget cuts, it must be asked if the membership

meeting is the right instance to make the decision – what happens if the members of the group cannot, for reasons of conscience, agree to comply with the decision? In the interests of ‘trust’ and ‘accountability’, perhaps it should be made further ‘down’ in the organisation?

There is also a risk of an external outcry from citizens who feel that you are not living up to your promises. It is important to discuss in advance how you would deal with such a situation and to consider the possibility of this happening in the discussion before you decide to deviate from the policy platform. A rule of thumb is to be open and to explain why you are unable to fulfil your commitments. You must be able to back up why you changed your mind and explain the reasons. People usually have more respect for straight answers, even if they are negative, than for evasive and veiled responses where politicians deny what is obvious to the individual citizen. meeting of the local branch or utilise some other type of consultation procedure with the members. Naturally, the aim is to seek consensus through discussion. Ultimately however, an internal decision must be adopted.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What do democratic forms of government look like in our country? What role do political parties play in elected assemblies?
- What form of elected assembly is there at the local level where we live? What is its role in running public administration?
- How is power distributed and what is the relationship between local elected representatives and the local branch where we live?
- What role do party groups play in elected assemblies? What is their task? What governs their political work?
- How can we best achieve an efficient and effective party group? What happens when this doesn't work and consensus cannot be achieved?
- What is the group's relationship to the party? What principles and procedures govern this relationship? Is this properly defined in our own party's constitution?
- On what issues should the party group consult with the party organisation? Why is it important for the party members to be involved in the democratic decision-making processes in the elected assemblies?
- How can party groups in parliaments work in the most efficiently and goal-oriented ways?
- In what way can they clarify the party's political work? What particularly important questions must they be able to answer in this regard?
- What is the most important prerequisite for the party group to be able to deliver results and achieve its objectives?



Negotiating, cooperating and working in coalitions

The policy platform you presented prior to the elections is a key starting point for setting the objectives of your policy work during the term of office. However, the political situation and the balance of power after the election also play an important role. In a municipality where you are not in the majority, you will need to consult with one or more other parties when setting the goals for your future work.

You can either compromise – to get important aspects of your policy implemented, while giving in on other matters – or refuse to compromise and get nothing through at all. Sometimes how the electorate views trade-offs and post-election compromises will come up in the discussion. In the vast majority of cases, parties that act responsibly given the parliamentary situation and try to come together to form an effective government, rather than engage in political squabbling, will gain more respect from the electorate. However, this requires genuine sensitivity and a willingness to compromise, as well as a clear understanding of your party's political cornerstones and what you can more easily compromise on. Therefore, it is important to discuss where the lines are drawn – what you find acceptable to change, and how this is linked to the development of the municipality and the party in the long run.

Cross-party cooperation is not limited to critical issues about which particular majority will govern the mu-

nicipality during the term of office. It also characterises the ongoing day-to-day work of the municipal council and its committees, such as when a ruling majority or minority government regularly seeks to cooperate with opposition parties on individual issues, or when opposition parties join forces to consolidate their overall impact. This is a natural element and key aspect of parliamentary work.

Collaboration with other parties can take various forms. It may involve working out compromises and joint proposals about more delimited and specific issues, or about cooperation on concrete issues that cover a wider policy domain. If your party is in government but without a majority of its own, it can also agree to more formal budget cooperation to ensure that other parties will vote in favour of the party's budget. Or the solution may be a formalised coalition with closer and more structured cooperation, where you have a shared policy platform.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF COALITIONS

Electoral alliances aim to combine the resources of two or more parties to improve the election results for members of the alliance. This may involve uniting behind joint candidates or, in systems with single-member constituencies with a simple majority, agreeing not to compete against each other in specific areas. Often, the ultimate objective is to achieve the share of votes required to win an election, to achieve a majority in the legislative assembly and to form the next government.

Coalition governments are usually formed when no single political party wins a majority of seats in the parliament. In parliamentary systems, the largest party usually reaches an agreement with like-minded parties to form a legislative majority and the basis for a government. Based on political agreements, the government then comprises representatives of various member parties, and their legislative proposals are usually supported by these parties' members of the parliament. Although minority coalition governments have sufficient support for forming government in parliamentary systems with what is termed 'negative parliamentarism', they lack a clear majority in the parliament. As a result, they must constantly negotiate for support to get through their legislative proposals.

Grand coalitions are formed when the country's largest and most important political parties – those that are traditionally the main competitors for government – come together in a coalition government. Building a coalition between these natural competitors is often especially difficult due to the traditional rivalry between them. Grand coalitions may be formed in times of national crisis because no other option is possible, or to limit the influence of one or more fringe parties.

Legislative coalitions are based on an agreement to achieve specific decision-making objectives in the parliament without a division of government power. These coalitions are most commonly formed among, but not limited to, opposition parties. ■

Coalitions with other parties

A more systematic cooperation between two or more parties means that the parties have agreed to support each other and cooperate on the basis of a policy platform that is a compromise between the respective parties' policies. If you are fortunate enough, there are other parties that agree with your party on many different issues. It is a clearly beneficial if the parties with whom you will cooperate share some fundamental values with your own party, but this is not always needed, nor a prerequisite for cooperation. It can sometimes involve a former political opponent who, because of a changed situation, has become more attractive to cooperate with. The key condition for coalitions is that cooperation should allow for all the parties involved to implement their policies.

Regardless of the party constellation, the cooperation must not entail substantial departures from the party's fundamental values and the basic policies that the party stands for. It is about being adept at negotiation and compromise. But some compromises can be difficult for the party to accept internally and to justify to voters. If the party is perceived as having given in too much, it can easily be regarded as a betrayal of previous principles and past promises. Voters who have given you their trust should be able to recognise themselves in your policy work, in the positions you take and in the decisions you are involved in making. However, sometimes you and your party group will be faced with the choice of either being unable to implement your party's policy at all, or of negotiating a compromise and getting only part of your policy implemented. Doing everything you can to make your election promises a reality can also be regarded as the most responsible thing a party can do. The electorate usually expects you, as an elected representative, to use a constructive approach with other parties and representatives – that you don't turn too much of an ideological blind eye to the circumstances, or paint yourself into categorical corners, but instead try to implement your electoral promises to the extent possible.

Before you enter into discussions with other parties, you should be well prepared within your own party. Since compromises with other parties are a sensitive issue, it is important that all decisions relating to this are properly discussed within your party organisation, and that the party group is assured of support for the group's actions. This is especially important if you get to the point where you have to drop one of the issues on which the party went to the elections. Therefore, it is important to ask some strategic questions when entering a coalition or alliance with other parties: What opportunities do we have to achieve good results during this term of office? In which coalitions or alliances will we have the best opportunities to implement what we set out to do? Other questions are: what obstacles

are there to pursuing our issues in certain alliance constellations? And how important is it for our own party to effect change in a certain area during this term of office?

It is also important to safeguard cohesion within your own party before and during the years that you are part of a coalition government. As an assembly party group, you cannot be out of step with your own party. It is often your own party members who have to endure pressure and criticism as result of the party's cooperation with other parties. Further, when governing in a coalition, one difficulty could be that you don't always get to announce, "We have now pushed through this and that issue." Another dilemma is that the compromises you have agreed to may be elevated to the party's own policy platform, thereby entailing a risk that your own party's profile will be erased.

Develop a party strategy

The first step in building a coalition is to develop a strategy that can lay the foundations for successful negotiations. The more prepared the party is, the more likely it is that you can identify strategic coalition partners, negotiate a good agreement and avoid the most common pitfalls. This initial strategy work includes setting the party's goals for working in a coalition, determining the internal party rules that must be adhered to, preparatory consultations with various decision-makers and key individuals in your own party, establishing different pathways to achieving the party's objectives regarding the coalition, as well as identifying potential coalition partners.

The outcome of these efforts could of course affect how your party will interact with other parties even prior to an election outcome, as well as how you choose to conduct your election campaign. At this point, you can already choose to join an electoral alliance and campaign together, or to simply find common political ground with potential partners while designating other parties as your main opponents. Once the election results are finalised, the negotiations on forming a government begin immediately and the party with the clearest and strongest basis for a government will then have the best chance of forming a government. Consequently, the party should be out in good time and establish a team that is responsible for developing the party's coalition strategy by:

- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the party as a potential coalition partner
- Identifying the strengths or weaknesses of potential coalition partners
- Prioritising the policy proposals that the party is to focus on during negotiations, as well as specific ministerial/municipal commissioner posts
- Outlining the function and structure of a potential coalition
- Developing a negotiations strategy and proposals on how the negotiation process should proceed

Negotiating on coalitions

There are several key factors to consider when negotiating. Initially, it is important to determine the interest of various parties in forming a coalition. This can be done through informal probes or direct contacts. However, you could lose time and credibility if you work too broadly on all the possible alliance combinations, without first identifying who is actually inclined to start negotiations, as well as which alliances have the greatest chance of political success. Therefore, before your party begins negotiations, you need to revisit to your goals and strategies to find the answers to:

- Which party/parties is/are needed, in terms of numbers, to achieve a parliamentary majority?
- Who is open to commencing negotiations?
- What parties do you have the greatest affinity with on various key issues? With which party or parties can you get the most of your policy platform implemented?
- What alliances have the best chance of working well during the term of office?
- Which alliance will strengthen your party in the next elections and in the long term?

FACTS

ESTABLISHING RULES FOR THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Before formal negotiations can begin, the potential coalition partners must reach an agreement on how to conduct the negotiations in practice. This may include:

- The size of the negotiating teams.
- Whether the negotiations are to be held in one longer, continuous deliberation, or split into several sub-phases with intervals built into the process.
- Whether a particular individual is to be appointed to lead the negotiations and who this individual should be.
- The venue for the negotiations.
- The agenda for the negotiations, including the order in which various items on the agenda should be addressed.
- Documenting the process – helps to prevent misunderstandings, keep track of the negotiations and facilitate the creation of an agreement document.
- Confidentiality agreement.
- External communication about the negotiations.
- A timeline of the negotiation process that takes into account the deadline by which an agreement must be reached and the time allowed for each negotiating team to consult with its own party.

The partners may then choose to sign a written document stipulating the rules of the negotiation process.

In preparation for the negotiations, each participating party should prepare a position statement that describes the party's overall stances on key issues. This will help the parties to clarify where they agree and where they disagree on various issues, which will facilitate the negotiation process. At the same time, the parties can each supplement this document with the starting points for what is acceptable and unacceptable in the forthcoming negotiations, and define possible negotiation steps and scenarios in the process. The latter are, of course, kept to yourselves.

The parties should then jointly establish the core principles that they cannot or should not negotiate away. Each party will have such inviolable principles and they must be managed in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. The final coalition agreement will then include the core political principles of each party that have emerged from the agreement. Others will have been set aside for the sake of reaching an agreement.

A negotiating process and an appropriate negotiating team are then agreed on. It is important that the parties' senior leadership are not directly involved in the negotiation process, but that negotiators are appointed by them and are given clear instructions to negotiate on the party's

mandate. This allows for party leaders to act as a "Supreme Court" if the negotiations should end up in deadlock. The appointed negotiators must be skilled and respected by all participating parties.

During coalition negotiations, it is not an option to try to force the other party to make concessions as a negotiating strategy. Achieving mutual concessions is the most logical method for the negotiations, and they should preferably be based on logical reasoning and shared goals. The parties involved must know what they want to achieve through a coalition, but must also be realistic in their view of what can be achieved through a coalition. There must be a willingness to compromise and the coalition and its agreement must be of benefit to all the parties to it. In order to reach an agreement, the parties must at the very least share some common objectives. If the parties are completely opposed on all their objectives, a coalition will not be possible. However, the parties' objectives need not be identical either. In order to have the best chance of success, the coalition should at least be based on a shared vision and agenda for the term of office.

Initially, the parties will want to clarify their positions and not make any concessions. They will probe at each



other's positions and try to determine how they should negotiate. Negotiating on the simpler issues first and giving each party some small victories in the initial phase can create momentum and a positive atmosphere, and thereby accelerate the process. A good negotiator, who is accepted by all the parties, begins by emphasising what the different parties have in common. In this respect, policy on concrete issues must be the main starting point for negotiations and political cooperation. Your potential coalition partner could be a party that lies close to your party ideologically, but could just as well be a former opponent with a completely different ideological base. Ultimately, the most important thing is what potential partners practically think through the policy issues. If there is a consensus on issues that your parties need to cooperate on, it will be easier to set aside ideological or historical battles. In particular, this lesson can be learned from Swedish municipal politics: policy issues and the municipality's best interests tend to be the focus, while traditional left-vs-right issues are not given the same space as at the national level.

Following a tough election campaign, old grudges must be resolutely cast aside and the parties must be professional and show respect for each other and each other's objectives. Each party must be able to understand the views of the others, even when there is disagreement, and they must have the courage to not always be the party that knows best. The relationship between the leaders of each party is a key issue here. They do not need to be friends, but they have to respect each other and the fact that each of them represents their group of voters. They have to accept that a coalition needs to give each leader some space in relation to their own internal and external support groups. Leaders who see negotiations and cooperation as an aggressive zero-sum game are doomed to failure.

There must instead be a feeling of partnership, even if the parties are different in size. This does not mean that all responsibilities and positions must be evenly distributed, but that each group must be respected for the unique qualities they bring to the coalition, and exert a representative influence on how decisions are made and how these positions and responsibilities are distributed. Although your party and the parties you will cooperate with have received different levels of electoral support, it is important that your cooperation treats all the parties as equals. If one party is perceived as being the main party, while the others are seen merely as supporting parties, this can easily create friction in negotiations and cooperation. Supporting parties may feel steamrolled, that their contribution is not heard or considered, and they may then find it difficult to justify the coalition to their members and their voters. It is therefore important for all the parties involved in the coalition to be heard, and for the positions of all the parties to be respected in negotiations. A common enemy can also help, or if the municipality or the country is facing a particularly urgent task where there is a need to rally around and solve



the situation together. Although this can initially bring different parties with different ideologies, over time it is often insufficient for keeping a coalition intact.

As was concluded above, the negotiating parties must be realistic and willing to make concessions, but they must not either lose sight of their ideological tenets nor what their voter groups particularly want to see enacted. Participants in a negotiation are usually prepared to make concessions. Otherwise, they would not have begun the negotiations. However, we should not be overly blinded by a positive negotiation process or a feeling of camaraderie. It is therefore useful to have internal debriefing sessions built into the process. This is usually necessary because the leader of the party is not directly involved in the negotiation process, and debriefing must take place with other key individuals and groups within the party. Where necessary, you can also delegate particularly difficult or technical issues to specific working parties.

Finally, in order to maintain the attention of all participants throughout the negotiation process, an “all or nothing” negotiating strategy should be employed where nothing is agreed on until everything is agreed on. This will ensure that all parties remain engaged and will prevent individual parties from disengaging as soon as they get what they want. Nor should any insider information about the negotiations be divulged or leaked to the media. Prior to the start of negotiations, the parties should establish clear rules on who will talk to the press and when. Excessive transparency can be dangerous, as it encourages the parties to act tough in order to play to their own supporters. It is usually best to wait and present the coalition agreement in its entirety. This will make it easier to claim that, despite some inevitable concessions, the success of the agreement in other areas more than compensates for these concessions.

VARIOUS FORMS OF NEGOTIATION

The ability to negotiate is important in politics, where negotiations are part of everyday life. But what exactly do we mean by negotiation, and what should you be aware of in order to succeed? Arjen Berkvens of the social democratic Max van der Stoel Foundation explains it thus: “In a successful negotiation two or more parties with conflicting points of view are moved to shift their positions – by exchanging information about their views and gaining insight into each other’s positions and the prevailing balance of power – to such an extent that they can join in a fruitful collaboration.” He describes three main negotiating methods:

- 1 Argument-based (persuasion)
- 2 Power-based (pressure)
- 3 Exchange (win-win situation)

It is important to establish a good strategy before beginning the negotiations. The first step is to thoroughly analyse the launching point and choose the most appropriate negotiating strategy. If the other party chooses to use a power-based negotiating method, it is unlikely that a persuasion-based strategy will succeed. If you do not notice a difference in the negotiation method until the negotiations are in progress, you will already have lost ground against your opponent. So, it is crucial to assess your opponents’ basic approach and strategy in advance. The main principle here is to look at the existing balance of power and the relationship between the parties:

- Do you have a good relationship with the other party?
- Are both parties open to argument?
- Do both parties want to maintain a good relationship, or even to improve it?
- Is there some degree of alignment between your interests?

If all the answers are yes = persuasion.
If all the answers are no = power.
If the answers are mixed = exchange.

ARGUMENT-BASED NEGOTIATIONS: Here, both parties endeavour to find the best solution to the issue that divides them. They present all the best arguments they can raise and the solution that has the best arguments wins. This method presupposes firstly that the parties trust each other and that they intend to continue to maintain a good relationship in the future. Secondly, it presupposes that both parties are prepared to adjust or even abandon their own position. This type of negotiation only works when there are no secret agendas or underlying threats. Another important prerequisite is that neither party withholds information. Only someone who feels that they have all the facts on the table will be persuaded by arguments. If you want your counterpart to change their position, you should not only present arguments that are in your favour, but also try to understand how the solution pro-

posed by the other party serves their interests. You must not only convince them that you are right, but that your solution also works best for them.

- List your arguments.
- Be open to being convinced by the other side’s arguments.
- Be honest about both the weak and the strong points of your proposed solution.
- Do not use dirty tricks and avoid putting pressure on the other party.
- Actively reconcile the interests of the other party in the proposed solution.

POWER-BASED NEGOTIATIONS: In this case, the parties will not be open to the shortcomings in their own proposal for a solution. They will keep their cards close to their chest and insist that they are right and that the other party is wrong. The negotiation process is nothing other than a battle of wills, where each party tries to pressure and impress the other party by means of a unilateral power game. Sometimes the threats may need to be followed through in order for a party to increase the pressure and demonstrate its strength. But it is usually sufficient to simply mention the threats in order to keep the negotiations going. If you do issue a threat, it is important that you are also prepared and able to follow it through if necessary. Otherwise, it will seriously undermine your position.

There are different ways of putting pressure on the other party during negotiations: creating negative media attention, calling in critical expert opinions, holding protest meetings, initiating strike actions or legal proceedings, or breaking off the negotiations altogether. In this type of negotiation, most of the work is done before the actual talks begin. You need to take stock of all the means at your disposal for putting pressure on the other party and ensure that you have them ready to be launched. Secondly, you must get an idea of how much pressure the other side can put on you. A SWOT analysis can be useful in this regard.

You will also need to decide on the parameters for your negotiations. Not only should you set an objective for what you want to achieve and declare it publicly, but you should also establish a lower threshold for the absolute minimum that you will accept. Let’s call the objective the “target point” and the lower threshold the “resistance point.” There must be a certain margin for negotiation between the two points. Obviously, the other party will also have a target point and a resistance point, which reflect yours inversely. The margin for negotiation lies between your opponent’s resistance point and your own resistance point:

YOUR TARGET POINT

..... OPPONENT’S RESISTANCE POINT

(MARGIN FOR NEGOTIATION)

YOUR RESISTANCE POINT

..... OPPONENT’S TARGET POINT

Power-based negotiations may well fail. The most common cause for a breakdown in negotiations is that by one or both parties have such high demands that an agreement cannot be reached. Fortunately, such a deadlock rarely arises in the beginning. But during the course of negotiations, if it appears that a rapid agreement will not be reached, it is likely that the parties will begin to make good on their threats, making them a reality. This generally makes the parties adjust their resistance points. This often leads to the resistance points getting closer to each other until they coincide or at least create a margin for negotiation. As negotiations are usually held in several rounds, there is generally enough time for such an adjustment to take place.

There are more reasons why it is important to allow sufficient time for negotiations. It prevents an escalation, which is another key cause of failure in negotiations. Heated discussions and conflicts are a natural part of such negotiations. Harsh words or a display of emotion can in themselves be power games, but sometimes the parties may just be reacting unnecessarily harshly or emotionally. This can happen because the party wants to appeal to its supporters. If this escalates however, the party may risk getting caught up in the emotions and categorical demands of its popular power base. Negotiations may also escalate and breakdown due to a miscalculation. One party may demand too much and become overly convinced by their own arguments without considering the resources of the other party. Further, it is not uncommon for negotiations to fail because of subjective factors such as anger and feelings of personal offence, even in cases where an agreement would otherwise have been possible. That is why it is expedient to conduct the negotiations in several rounds, to allow negotiators sufficient time to regain their composure and take stock of the situation.

- Determine your target and resistance points and gauge your opponent’s points.
- Decide on and get ready your means of putting pressure on the other party.

- Be selective with information, conceal your weaknesses.
- Be tough on the issues in the negotiation, but keep your tone respectful and friendly.
- Don’t let arguments affect you.
- Use proportionate means.
- Ensure that there is sufficient time and that there are several rounds of negotiations.

EXCHANGE-BASED NEGOTIATIONS: This type of negotiation avoids the extremes of the other two methods and is often referred to as “horse-trading.” The parties do not try to persuade their opponent to change their attitude through reasoned arguments or threats and power games. They proceed from a pragmatic acceptance that both parties have views that are not always compatible. The parties then seek to combine their conflicting views into a full package of measures that suit the interests of both parties. Here, it is important that the parties respect each other and try to understand what the other party is trying to achieve with the position they have taken, because in this type of negotiation, it is not about a party’s position, but about the underlying interests. These interests must be taken seriously by all concerned, and both parties must seek creative solutions that serve each other’s interests. It is important to find an agreement package that sufficiently satisfies both parties so as to provide the basis for further cooperation. Not surprisingly, this method of negotiation is often used when trying to form a coalition government. Each party enters into negotiations with a wish list and tries to realise as many items on this list as possible.

- Identify and understand the interests that motivate the other party’s positions, recognise their importance and try to find common ground.
- Be pragmatic and look for creative solutions that serve the interests of both parties.

Get support for and launch a coalition agreement

When the negotiations finally turn into a coalition agreement, it is important to present it as a formal document signed by all parties to demonstrate unity, promote transparency and avoid misunderstandings and divergent interpretations. The advantages of reaching an agreement are that it:

- offers a well-defined political agenda against which the parties' policies and performance can be measured at a later date
- makes it more difficult for the parties to breach the agreement
- reduces uncertainty – in the public eye and within the parties, as well as their party organisations
- helps to identify and prevent conflicts even before the coalition is up and running.

However, the coalition agreement will first have to be approved by the decision-making bodies of each party. The process can vary from one party to another. It will be easier to secure support for the agreement if the decision-making bodies are consulted while the party's strategy is being developed, and if they are informed at appropriate intervals during the negotiation process. If there are concerns about possible leaks before the final details of the agreement have been approved by their respective decision-making structures, the parties can schedule their internal approval processes to take place simultaneously.

Party leaders must also recognise the importance of explaining and selling the approved agreement to their own party at the grassroots level. When joining a coalition, party leaders often take it for granted that their party members will simply accept their policy positions. However, this is often where the parties face the most resistance, as party members tend to be the most conservative in terms of the party's policies, and they may perceive the coalition agreement as jeopardising the party's identity and ideological profile. Time and resources must therefore be set aside to explain the agreement and secure the support of the party organisation, among members and the party's core constituents.

After you have successfully formed a coalition, you can then start to implement the agreed programme. This is where the media battle begins. You will undoubtedly have had to make concessions, perhaps even break election promises. "Selling" the outcome of the negotiations requires smart communication and a well thought-out media strategy. Here, it is important to emphasise the wins, and although you should not ignore the failures, you should not exaggerate their significance. Balance each mention of a



concession with a result achieved, and carefully choose the arguments you use to justify your concessions: Is it in the national interest, to prevent a greater evil, or because you received so much in return, etc.

Finding ways of working in a coalition

For the impending coalition, having a sufficiently detailed written agreement to serve as a policy guide for the coalition's day-to-day work is very important. However, it is also important to have shared ways of working in place, the basic elements of which should also be part of what is specified in the coalition agreement. The parties need to know who is responsible for what and who is doing what, and what the preparation, decision-making and follow-up processes will be like during the term of office. Within your own party, these procedures must also be complemented by clarifying how to proceed in joint internal communications and decision-making processes with your coalition partners, in order for the coalition to function well and remain intact. All parties involved should have a clear agreement on and understanding of how decisions in the coalition are to be made, how information is to be shared, and who has what roles and responsibilities.

Particularly in the beginning, it needs to be clear how the coalition is to be communicated externally – to the

media and the electorate. How are you going to describe the coalition? What is its purpose and what is it intended to achieve first and foremost in terms of policy? How do you defend yourself against potential criticism of the coalition by the media, political opponents or citizens? Most coalitions require some form of communication to the public, even if parts of the negotiations and internal work need to be kept away from the eyes of the public. Depending on the type of coalition involved, a coordinated communication strategy may need to be developed. Party leaders and representatives must then engage in ongoing two-way communication with their members and core electoral base to inform them about the coalition's goals, achievements and challenges. Leaders who regularly monitor how the coalition is perceived by their supporters will be better equipped to respond to dissatisfaction and retain a committed party organisation. It is also necessary to have insight into how the party's image is impacted in order to ensure that the party maintains its own identity.

Communication within the party and between the parties is crucial for ensuring that the coalition communicates with the public effectively and in a coordinated manner. Imbalances in the information shared between the parties can easily fuel misunderstandings and increase tensions. To the extent possible, communication should be based on transparency. Hidden agendas and dishonesty have been the downfall of many a coalition. It also needs to be clear to all parties which party representatives get to talk about which issues and how things should be communicated when it comes to concrete policy. In some cases, the division of responsibilities can be based on political issues and election promises. If your party has a particularly strong profile on a policy issue, while the other coalition

parties have other profile issues, it may be natural for your party to be responsible for statements and political moves concerning that particular issue. This is usually solved by assigning each party special responsibilities in the government locally that the coalition will result in. In other cases, representatives of several parties might participate when key developments and policies are presented in a particular area. Ultimately, it is important for the coalition parties to speak to the public with a reasonably unified voice, while giving each member party the opportunity to share the stage.

Speaking with one voice to appear united does not have to mean always having the same take on basic messages in prioritised policy areas, but that the coalition uses the same language, ideas and positions when addressing the public. The leaders of the party often become the main spokespersons of the coalition, and through joint initiatives and activities, they can convey a picture of a strong and coherent coalition and a shared political direction. If the coalition is one that is deeper and longer-lasting, you can strengthen its impact on the public by branding it with a proprietary graphic profile, logotype and proprietary coalition messages and slogans that are easily recognisable. Branding is usually most important for opposition coalitions and election coalitions. Individual logotypes for each member party can also be displayed next to the coalition logotype to increase public awareness and recognition of who is part of the coalition.

Maintaining a coalition

For a coalition to work in the long term, the policy platform needs to be backed up by clear ways of working for finding solutions and ways forward when things don't run smoothly. It is not recommended that you enter into a coali-



tion without having an agreement on how to proceed in the event of unforeseen circumstances. Shared ground rules are key here. Everyone should be aware of where the outermost limit is. A mechanism for dispute resolution should be set up and approved by all parties from the outset. This may involve a negotiator/dispute resolution facilitator, a well-respected person within or beyond the coalition. It is much easier to agree to a framework for dispute resolution before disputes arise than after the fact. Internal differences of opinion must also be kept confidential. When problems arise, this is essential to maintain public confidence and to avoid weakening the coalition. Individual parties should not try to gain an advantage by leaking or divulging information about internal disputes.

Although one of the major benefits of having a coalition agreement document is that it creates a degree of certainty and predictability, there may still be times when amendments will need to be made in response to changing circumstances. Therefore, the parties should agree on a procedure for deciding whether to amend the agreement or not. Amendments can take time to negotiate, which increases uncertainty. Furthermore, a renegotiation can cause conflicts or generate negative media attention. Amendments should thus be considered only when necessary and based on a full consensus between all the parties.

As described above, it is important to regularly consult and communicate with all coalition partners at all levels

of leadership. It is better to have too much communication than too little if you want to maintain trust and a meaningful cooperation. Coalitions live and die on trust. Trust is built by being honest, consistent and following through on one's promises. It also takes time to build trust, and personal relationships need to be established based on respect. Although there may be ideological differences between the parties in your coalition, you should nevertheless feel that you can trust each other. There should be no doubt that the representatives of the other parties have good intentions for the municipality or the country and its citizens, even if you sometimes disagree on policy. This may be a simple matter of getting to know each other – not just as part of the innermost circle of decision-makers, but even outside of formal meetings. Investing time and energy in social activities that bring together the various party groups is a good idea. For example, you could meet up after municipal council meetings to jointly reflect on the decisions made in relation to the policy platform, or do the same over an informal dinner as a social gathering. Do not underestimate the importance of social gatherings, of meeting and getting to know each other better, and cooperating well.

Read more about coalitions in the online publication on the topic: “Coalitions – A Guide for Political Parties” by the National Democratic Institute and the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Why can it be useful to cooperate and work in coalitions? What are the limits of this cooperation – when is it not a good thing?
- What kinds of collaborations and coalitions are there? In what situations and under what conditions do the various forms of cooperation work best?
- What is the situation like in our own party and where we operate? What are the conditions for getting our policies realised and for cooperating with other political parties?
- What facilitates the formation of a coalition government? How should the party best prepare itself?
- What is important to consider and do, before entering into negotiations on a coalition with other parties?
- What is the best way to set up negotiations and create a strategy for negotiations? What is of paramount importance to keep in mind if you want the negotiations to conclude successfully and have a good outcome?
- What are the most important starting points for the party in coalition negotiations? What are the greatest risks?
- What do you need to consider in particular in order to secure support for the coalition agreement once the negotiations have concluded?
- For a coalition agreement to work well, what is the role of the party's grassroots members and closest supporters?
- What is a successful coalition in practice ultimately based on? What should you keep in mind to make it work in practice in your day-to-day work?



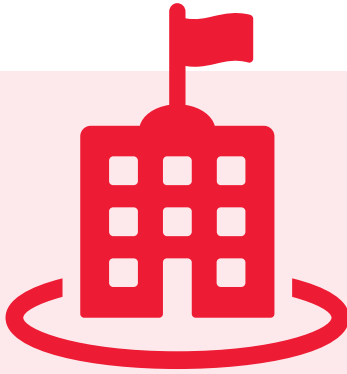
Working in government or in the opposition

Regardless of whether your party makes it all the way to achieving a majority in the parliamentary assembly, either as a single party or in cooperation with other parties, there are a number of things you should consider in an executive and governing role. The same applies if your party ends up in the opposition instead. How do you govern effectively? How do you operate as an effective opposition? What demands are there on you, as a politician, and on the political parties in these roles?

In government

Being in government, or having executive government power, means that the party's representatives have been appointed to govern the municipality or the country. In political systems based on parliamentarism, this means that the government is appointed by and accountable to the elected assembly. Naturally, the government has the right of initiative and actively plans how it wants to govern, but the parliament has the ultimate authority to make decisions on decisive matters. In addition to appointing a government, the parliament mainly exercises its power in

the handling of the annual budget, in the adoption of acts of law (primarily at the national level) and regulations, or when it deliberates on the government's proposals for reforms and policies with a more far-reaching effect on public administration and its regulatory system. The government also often deals with a range of smaller and more general issues, for which it has the authority to make decisions day-to-day without having to first take the matter to the parliament for consideration. The same is true for government agencies or committees that are part of public administration that regularly make decisions as part of exercising public authority in their particular areas.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SWEDEN

A government's role, way of working and powers differ considerably at the national and local levels, and depending on how things work in different countries. For example, Sweden has a special parliamentary system at the local level that differs from that of many other countries. Municipal councils can be called municipal 'parliaments', while the municipal executive committee and municipal committees jointly constitute the municipality's 'government'. The various committees most closely resemble the different ministries of the national government, but unlike at the national level, the municipal council (and not the 'head of government') appoints the chair ('minister') of each committee. At the local level, the government is comparable to a 'coalition government' since representatives of both the majority and the opposition have seats on the municipal executive committee and on the other committees, and thus participate in preparing matters for decision and in making decisions. However, who has the majority is always a crucial factor, as this determines who holds the key positions in these bodies, as well as which budgets and proposals will ultimately be approved by the municipal council. In Sweden's Local Government Act, the municipal executive committee's main tasks are to:

- lead and coordinate the administration of municipal affairs
- supervise the activities of the other committees and the activities of municipal enterprises
- oversee and monitor the development of the municipality's economy
- express an opinion on matters to be decided by the municipal council
- manage the financial administration, and
- implement the decisions of the municipal council.

In practice, the municipal executive committee must govern and have overall oversight of municipal affairs, which entails making the decisions that impact day-to-day operations, preparing particularly important matters for decision by the municipal council, and leading its administrative organisation. The municipal executive committee has the overall responsibility for implementing decisions made by the municipal council, and is also responsible for municipal administration and the ongoing work of the municipal committees. ■

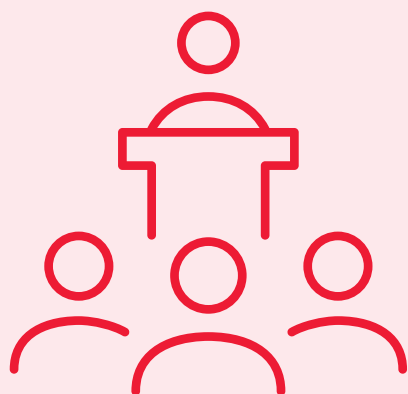
The basic principle of parliamentarism is that a government must have the support or at least be accepted by the majority of the members of parliament. The latter scenario is sometimes referred to as 'negative parliamentarism' and means that parliament has confidence in the government as long as the majority of the members of parliament do not actively vote against it. It goes without saying that it is more effective and much easier to govern if your party has or is part of a parliamentary majority. However, it is also possible to govern with a minority government. This is when agreements with other parties will be required for the government to get its policies implemented. For example, a formalised budget cooperation could ensure that other parties vote in favour of the budget in exchange for influence on the details of the budget. As we saw in the previous chapter, cooperation in a coalition or budget cooperation will also impact the preparation, decision-making and follow-up processes of the government parties during the term of office.

Governing effectively and successfully

What does effective and successful government mean? On an overarching level, it may be easier to describe it as having the confidence of parliament, getting your budget passed, being able to implement your policy and getting re-elected at the next election. Achieving this is conditional on the party and its representatives demonstrating clear political leadership that has high trust among the electorate, which hinges on the delivery of the ultimate goals of your role. As we explored at the beginning of this module, this role can be described in many ways. It is about leading, developing, and administering. Ultimately however, it is a matter of serving the citizens – meeting their needs for security, health and social care, education and employment, housing and good living conditions. The ultimate goal of democratic governments is to deliver collective goods to their citizens. Therefore, there is no better way of understanding what good and successful government is than to see it as government's capacity to achieve what its citizens ask for. There is no better way to win elections either. Judgement on the performance of a government is ultimately delivered by the voters at the next election. It is they who always have the last word.

As we also pointed out previously, the role of politician is about assuming an overarching responsibility. It is about balancing many different and often conflicting interests and then finding the best compromise solution. This requires both sensitivity and the ability to prioritise among limited resources in a manner that gains the trust of the electorate. Success is thus conditional on each government balancing different interests, defining how policy will be put into practice, and making independent assessments. To govern, you need to interpret the party line and positions in practice, as the policy decisions adopted by National Con-

ferences or annual meetings tend to be of a more general nature. It falls upon the government to interpret how they should be transformed into more concrete actions and what day-to-day measures are required. This requires in-depth knowledge and, if the needs of citizens are to be the starting point, it is important in fact to have a good picture of what the needs and the will of the people actually are. You need to know how they will view your activities: what matters most, what works well, and what works less well. Having a clear idea of their reality and expectations is therefore an essential starting point when drawing up guidelines and setting your goals for the work ahead. It is important that you have a shared and realistic picture of what you want and can achieve during the term of office.



WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE

The United Nations has taken a leading role in reconceptualizing governance. In the UN's definition, governance is the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs. It is the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences.

Good governance is the process of measuring how public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption and with due regard for the rule of law. It is promoting capacity in public administration, as well as it is transparent, participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable and inclusive.

The UN concept is as a model to compare ineffective economies or political bodies with viable economies and political bodies. It centres on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to selected groups in society.



To implement and measure this, there are **nine principles**:

- **Participation** – All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.
- **Rule of law** – Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.
- **Transparency** – Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions, and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.
- **Responsiveness** – Institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders.
- **Consensus Orientation** – Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.
- **Equity and Inclusiveness** – All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency** – Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.
- **Accountability** – Governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organisations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders.
- **Strategic vision** – Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural, and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.

Good governance is a value in itself, but it is also the most critical means for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and for how a society can organise itself to ensure equality of opportunity and social justice for all citizens. This is an important perspective that correlates to a high degree to the views and values of Social democracy and to the need of strong and democratic political parties. Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute, a global affairs think tank in London, has however criticised past studies of good governance to place too little importance on developing political parties, their capacity and their ties to their grassroots supporters. While political parties play a key role in well-functioning democracies, elsewhere political parties are disconnected from voters and dominated by elites, with few incentives or capabilities to increase the representation of other voters.



A clear strategic agenda

It is not enough to only be passionate about politics and have good intentions. Success begins with a clear analysis and strategy to be able to lead, initiate actions and allocate resources based on a shared vision with clear goals for what your government wants to achieve. In order to lead societal development, the current situation must be clear to you, the needs of the citizens must be identified, and the main societal challenges defined – as well as the position of your party and the government concerning your political opponents and the parties you cooperate with. Parliamentary balances of power set the boundaries for strategy and governing during the term of office.

It is often a challenge to identify what is most important in a flow of different events, and this puts you at constant risk of being reactive. Ongoing day-to-day tasks that need to be handled rapidly often run the risk of taking over the proactive long-term perspective. Therefore, always endeavour to start by identifying the most important strategic issues and key tasks, so as to allow scope for governing proactively with a long-term perspective once the regular daily items of business start landing on your desk for decision. Otherwise, there is a risk that you will get lost in the stream of questions, requests, disputes and crisis management tasks that are typical of a normal term of office.

A strategic analysis and agenda will naturally proceed from and interact with your party's political agenda, and will often build on the strategic analysis previously prepared by the parliamentary party group that we described in the second chapter. You could say that this is the development of these, and your coalition agreement if you have one, which are intended to describe in practical terms how you will prioritise and govern your administration, now that you have access to executive power. Naturally, the party organisation and its executive, as well as the parliamentary party group, are involved in this work. The party always has the final say on policy, and it is always the members of the party in the parliament who vote through the government's policies in the elected assembly. However, with the party having won government and the powers that go with this, the initiative largely falls on you and your party colleagues to lead and further develop the party's strategy for the practical implementation of the party's political agenda.

When preparing a strategic agenda, it is important to see the bigger picture and not get bogged down in mapping the short-term needs of the electorate or the party's current positioning in the political landscape. This is in fact also applicable to policy development in the party organisation or to the work of the party's parliamentary group, but it is especially important when you hold power in government, and thereby are directly responsible for the development of the municipality or the country. A long-term perspective helps to build a robust strategy and leads to successful

governance. It determines whether a municipality is able to meet key challenges, and proactively and effectively leverage good opportunities. In order to influence long-term development in your municipality, what issues are important to prioritise? There is a set of questions that can be used as reference points for such an analysis:

- Economic development.
- Demography and its trends.
- The financing of the health care system, schools, social care and other welfare services, as well as taxes and charges.
- Trade and industry, and its development and conditions.
- Social cohesion and integration.
- Education and the supply of skills.
- The environment and climate change.
- Or other strategic areas such as digitalisation and its opportunities.

Change is the only thing that we know is certain. It demands that those who exercise political leadership are willing to change and try out new solutions. But what does it mean to be willing to change? It means being curious and systematically and consciously striving to understand societal development and the impact of its challenges. It is about listening to a wide range of perspectives from different actors, and having the courage to try out new solutions to old and new problems. But for this to be possible, the electorate will also need to understand and embrace change. Democracy comes with a large measure of inertia. An inertia that demands constant discussion with party colleagues, representatives of other parties and the electorate.

Proactive policy development

Proactive policy development is particularly important in governing and implementing the strategic agenda. It is the means by which you can take the initiative and find the ways to achieve your political goals. In practice, having the political solutions is the way in which you lead a country or a municipality. A significant portion of the party's day-to-day decision-making and policy development is done by the party's elected representatives in government in local or national administrations where many issues are dealt with and where initiatives need to be implemented. In government, there are greater resources at disposal for policy work compared with the resources available within the party organisation or the party's parliamentary group. You have access to the administration and its resources for conducting inquiries. These include secretariats with officials who can collect data and appoint inquiries to assist in formulating your proposals for decisions that will steer the country or the municipality.

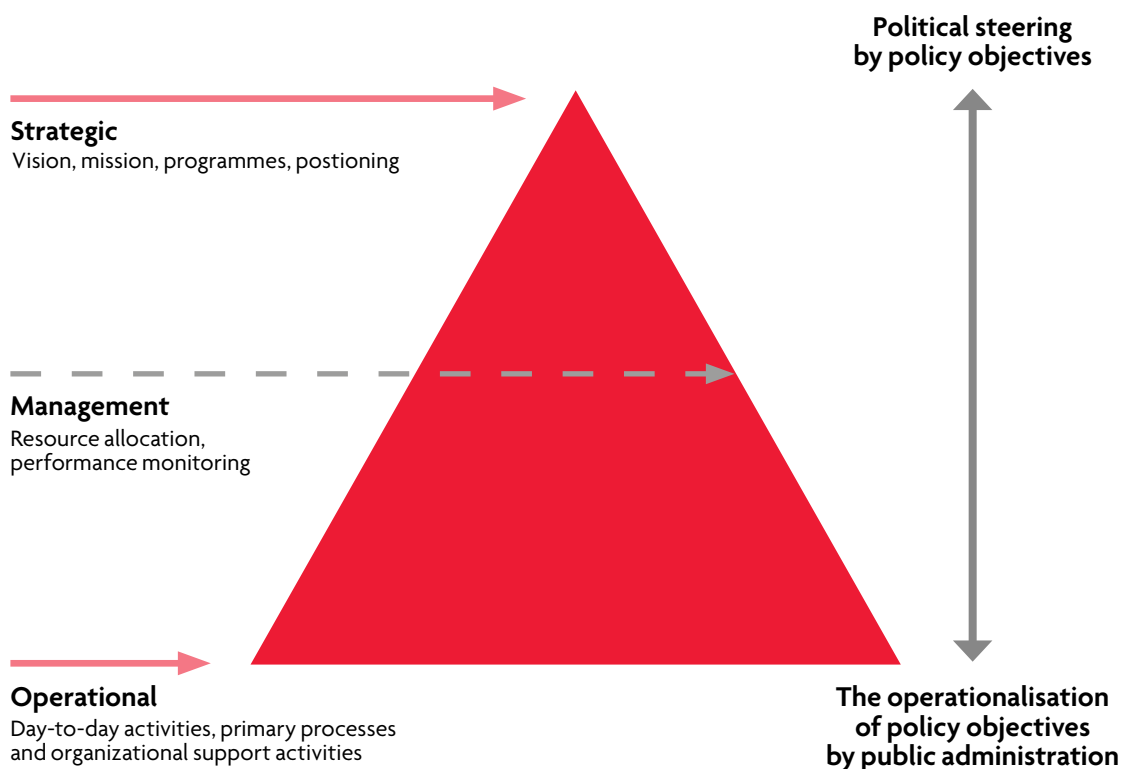
THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

A strategic agenda should be the starting point for creating a more itemised and practical action plan in the next phase. Good policies and plans are meaningless if they cannot be translated into programmes and actions that achieve the government's most important goals. Strategic plans require appropriate and specific objectives, a

well-defined division of responsibilities and budgetary resources. Each administrative unit should have a clear mandate and know its role in achieving the priority objectives within its area. Although there are numerous strategic planning methods, they must all ultimately **answer five simple questions:**

- 1 OUTCOMES:** What outcomes or results do we want to achieve?
- 2 OUTPUTS:** What must be put in place and what are the best ways of doing it to achieve the outcomes we want?
- 3 ACTIVITY/BUSINESS PLAN:** What exactly has to be done, by whom and by when?
- 4 RESOURCES:** What inputs – financial, human and other resources – do we need to implement the activity/business plan?
- 5 INDICATORS:** What metric or indicator will we use to monitor progress and evaluate the achievement of our outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs?

A strategic plan will help you to focus on your key objectives and tasks. It is a tool to develop budgets, allocate resources and ensure that implementation problems are identified, addressed and overcome. It will help you to steer your administration efficiently.



A good strategic plan and clear political leadership starts at the top with a clear-cut vision and mission for the work that is well positioned in the political landscape and which takes societal development into consideration as well as the priority needs of citizens and both your positions and those of your political opponents.

It will help you to steer the administration by clarifying how you need to prioritise and allocate resources, as well as how to follow up on your priorities. It will also make clearer how the administration needs to prioritise in order to operationalise and manage their activities to attain the overall political goals which are set by you in government.

Steering the administration

Efficient public administration promotes and strengthens democracy and good governance. It is crucial to ensure that, as democratically elected leaders, you can safeguard the rights of the electorate and mobilise resources through taxes and from other sources to provide essential services to the community. An efficient and accessible administration that has complementary and well-coordinated components will boost the legitimacy of the political system and the public's confidence in you.

Therefore, one of your key roles in a governing position is to actively lead the administration to achieve this. The administration manages the routine work and thus the actual implementation of the political decisions that are made. In Sweden, the administration operates more independently and thus mainly consists of non-political officials, along with smaller political staffs who assist elected representatives with their day-to-day work. But in many other countries, other parts of the civil service may also consist of political appointees. Regardless of whether the officials are political or non-political appointees, their task is to prepare and implement the decisions you have made in a professional way, with the citizens' best interests in mind.

Management by objectives

To create conditions conducive to efficiency and trust between governing politicians and the administration, it is preferable to use a model with objectives for performance monitoring. In Swedish municipalities, the aim is to move from governing by means of detailed rules and instructions, to governing by formulating objectives and setting tasks. On the initiative of the ruling majority, the elected assembly sets fixed objectives that are the job of the administration to implement. The committees must then report to the municipal council how and to what extent the targets have been achieved. For this to work, objectives set at the political level must be clear and the financial framework needs to be well defined. The models needed to evaluate the attainment of the targets must also be thoroughly laid out.

Political steering of the administration by means of detailed instructions on how their activities should be organised and conducted takes more time, is less efficient and becomes a breeding ground for mistrust if government officials feel that their expertise is not being taken seriously. With management by objectives, politicians stake out the overarching goals and assign roles to each activity, while leaving a considerable amount of freedom for the administration to choose the method of implementation. The objectives must be practical, well-defined and realistic, and set for each financial year, as well as for the entire term of office. Key elements of management by objectives include:



- ✓ **Delegation:** Delegation is effective if the process is clear whereby politicians make the overarching decisions and set the direction by means of objectives, and the administration is responsible for implementing the decisions with a certain amount of freedom.
- ✓ **Financial framework:** The political leadership assigns the administration a budget that officials must adhere to. It must be realistic and closely linked to the objectives and tasks decided by the politicians.
- ✓ **Evaluation:** Regular follow-up is key. The political leadership must ensure that decisions are implemented as planned. This requires considerable transparency in the administration's work, and a close and ongoing dialogue with officials.

With a clear division of responsibilities based on trust, there is no competition between politicians and officials/civil servants. As a municipal politician, you should not be competing with officials over who knows more, etc. They will always have more in-depth knowledge than you. On the other hand, you need to be well acquainted with the needs and the will of the electorate, and have a good knowledge of the implementation process and how the bureaucratic system works. Ultimately, you are the one who has the trust of the electorate to represent them. In other words, politicians and civil servants have different roles and functions – but you are dependent on one another.

Division of responsibilities between elected representatives and civil servants

In principle, the dividing line between municipal politicians and municipal civil servants is a simple one: politicians make decisions and shape policy; civil servants prepare and implement decisions and policy. The division of responsibilities may seem clear, but questions may occasionally arise about whether a decision was actually made by politicians or if it was made by an official. As politicians, you may sometimes feel that conditions are not ideal for governing or making decisions, because the issues have not been prepared or investigated in the way you would have wished. However, the biggest problems arise if you feel that the administration and civil servants are disloyal and do not implement your decisions. The latter is a serious situation and one that you must try to avoid. That is why you need to establish a relationship with the administration and its officials that is based on trust and confidence. Civil servants may not belong to the same party as you and may vote for your political opponents, but this does not need to destroy the trust and confidence between you. Instead, you should base your trust on the fact that the civil servants are experts, and are professionals who adhere to their ethical standards as civil servants, i.e. in their roles, they are able to put aside any personal political opinions and make an effort to do as good a job as possible.

Another challenge is that in municipal politics, voters do not always see the difference between politicians and civil servants. Many perceive both of these categories to be representatives of the municipality, its management and operations. This confusion can be problematic when it co-

mes to accountability. It is difficult for citizens to hold civil servants to account in general elections. One method of clearing up this confusion is to be clear and actively inform the public. Another is that politicians should never hide behind the administration. If your policy does not turn out well and becomes unpopular among electorate, you should never blame the civil servants. As the politician in charge, you must assume responsibility for your decisions. This pays off in the long run. In particular, it creates stability in the relationship between politics and the administration, and the electorate appreciates politicians who take responsibility for their leadership rather than hide behind others.

On the other hand, you can always ask civil servants to provide you with adequate documentation and the information you need for making decisions. But you also need to be alert to whether they are actively trying to lead you into making decisions that you are actually doubtful about. It is equally important that you, as politicians, never forget that you represent the electorate first and not the system. If the majority of the electorate are dissatisfied with the way in which the administration works, it is your responsibility as politicians to try to change the system. Do not defend bureaucracy to the electorate. It is they who finance the administration through the taxes they pay. Therefore, they are entitled to demand an administration that works for their best interests and provides good service, easy-to-understand rules, efficient utilisation of resources and a friendly reception. As politicians, you must therefore be sympathetic if the citizens perceive the system as having become too complicated, too bureaucratic, or otherwise not working for their best interests. That is when you are responsible for changing it.

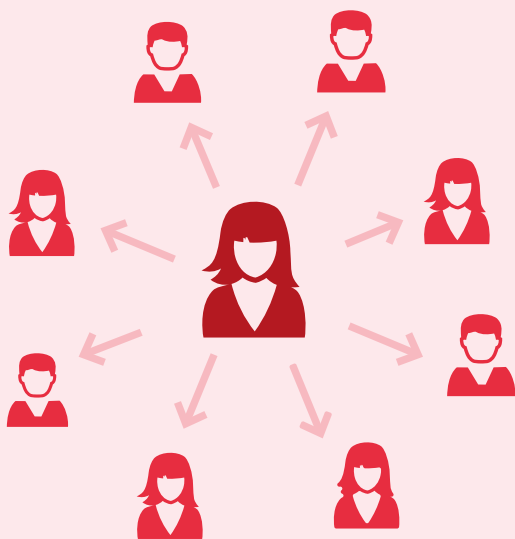




MANAGING ROLE CONFLICTS WITH THE ADMINISTRATION

As an elected representative, you are expected to assume responsibility for managing the municipal administration and for deciding on a municipal budget with all that means in terms of the knowledge required. You may sometimes feel entirely at the mercy of municipal civil servants or, on the contrary, that you have never found division of roles between politicians and officials to be a problem. In the latter case, you can almost always count on the fact that you actually do have a problem. How do you avoid being controlled by the administration? In the Swedish Social Democrats' module "Being a local politician," Anders Johansson, former municipal commissioner in the Swedish municipality of Sigtuna, emphasises the following:

- 1 Always focus on the fact that you represent the electorate and thus have an important democratic task to be their voice.
- 2 Always prioritise people over the system. Bureaucracy is there to help elected representatives to provide services to citizens – not the other way round.
- 3 Do not use dictatorial language with civil servants unnecessarily, but if it really is necessary, you should make it very clear who makes the decisions.
- 4 Focus on the possibilities – not the obstacles. There is never just one truth. Ask follow-up questions and find new approaches to challenges and tasks. Request additional alternatives to decisions presented in the decision guidance.
- 5 Form relationships of trust with senior managers to assure the impact and results of your policy. Strive for interactions with the administration to be characterised by trust. Show respect for its management and employees.



A simple answer to the question of how the division of responsibility works is: politicians are responsible for the WHAT (what to do) and civil servants for the HOW (how to do it). This may seem crystal clear, but it cannot be emphasised too often.

Are we, as politicians doing what we agreed to do? Are you, in the administration, doing what you are supposed to do? In principle, you need to check in with each other on a daily basis – formally and informally. There may be a political issue that is growing in importance, such as local schools lacking places due to a baby boom in recent years. This is a typical situation where you, as a politician, will want to get the decision guidance as quickly as possible, and may be tempted to take matters into your own hands. However, it is important not to go over the heads of the organisation in the administration. You would risk access to expertise and risk damaging trust within the organisation. Another classic trap that is easy to fall prey to is if you feel uncertain about whether the highest-ranking civil servant will produce the material you want. It might then be tempting to directly approach someone further down in the organisation's hierarchy. This is not a good idea either, because it creates conflicts and erodes structures. In such a case, you may want to consider whether the civil servant needs to be replaced.

Municipal finances are a key component of your political role and of municipal activities. Here, the greatest risk might be becoming captive to the administration, because there is usually not just one solution when it comes to municipal finances. As an elected representative, you must acquire sufficient knowledge to ask many difficult follow-up questions. Every political leader must assume the ultimate responsibility for municipal finances. If you have the knowledge and confidence to engage in in-depth dialogue with civil servants and bring new and different perspectives, it is often possible to find alternatives to the so-called "only solution."

Furthermore, your official role is not just about having the trust of the electorate. It is also about gaining the trust of those you work with. It is essential to have access to civil servants you can rely on. This may sometimes require courage at times, since you often need to air sensitive questions with those who have expert knowledge on the matter. As a municipal commissioner, you are alone as a decision-maker. You need to feel sufficient trust within the organisation to be able to fully explore and test proposals freely, without these being turned into news items in the media or outside city hall. There are also periods when it is particularly important to make things clear. When you have won an election, the first six months are crucial. During this period it is important to lay out your goals for the administration and thus what you expect from them. ■

Contact with the administration and its staff

It is natural for politicians to stay in touch with and discuss matters with the head of the administration. The head of the administration is responsible for the administration and allocating tasks for day-to-day activities in accordance with your policy directives, goals and guidelines. Therefore, you should normally go via the head of the administration to obtain documentation and information about municipal activities. It is then up to them to allocate the work to produce the information you have requested. Although local politicians have an overarching employer and work environment responsibility, they must never take over the managerial role. It is important to maintain a clear distinction between politicians and civil servants.

However, this does not mean that you cannot have direct contact with the administration staff or those who work in organisations that report to the administration. On the contrary, it is important to stay in close contact with the activities pursued within your area of responsibility and with the people who work there. Politicians need to have a broad and well-supported overview of how these activities function on an everyday basis. It is not enough to just get information via the head of the administration and part of the administration closest to you. This would entail a serious risk that information you get is filtered and that your general picture of activities could be a distorted one.

A dialogue with staff and union representatives will provide a broader basis for making better informed decisions. It is particularly important to maintain contact with municipal employees who have direct contact with constituents, such as schoolteachers and elderly care staff. They are the first to notice the consequences of a political decision in their day-to-day work and they are the people who are most in touch with the needs and views of the constituents. Your contact with these employees is also an important indicator that you value their work and ideas, experience and commitment. It gives you the opportunity to show that you want to base your decisions on comprehensive data, and not rely solely on information from the administration's management. However, your contact with these activities require planning, and an important starting point is that you should not just pay them a visit during an election year – it should be a natural element in

your schedule every year. Why not work with the staff for one or two full workdays? This can provide you with a good insight into and an understanding of the activity.

Make sure the bureaucracy performs well

The public sector is there for the citizens. They are entitled to demand good service, simple and easy-to-understand regulations, efficient use of resources and to be treated in a pleasant and helpful manner. It is their tax money that finances municipal activities. Therefore, your task as a politician is to stand on the side of the citizens and to fight unnecessary bureaucracy, waste and corruption. The municipal organisation must be efficient and economical.

As mentioned above, an important part of creating the prerequisites for this is a well-functioning system for governance and planning. An efficient organisation is mission-driven rather than rules-driven. A results-oriented administration that formulates its tasks in the best possible way and is not hampered by unnecessary rules and directives. An inefficient organisation does not listen to the people it was created to serve, and tends to micromanage its employees. You should instead strive for an organisation that listens to criticism and proposals, and which leverages its employees' experiences, ideas and commitment. An organisation that seeks the best solutions and gives those who work there the freedom to find them. There must be opportunities to exercise influence, and it is important to try to eliminate bureaucracy and complexities in contacts with citizens. Some factors that could be of significance here are:

- **Simple language** – Contacts with citizens must involve the use of simple language. Forms, letters and messages must be designed to be readily comprehensible.
- **Easy contact** – It should be easy to reach the right person. Opening hours, the website, telephone hours, e-mail, reception, switchboard and registering complaints must all work well.
- **Quick response** – Regardless of how a citizen has initiated contact, they should receive a quick response.
- **Friendly reception** – The behaviour of individual staff is key to how citizens perceive the activity. Everyone is entitled to be treated kindly and correctly.

“Every wasted tax penny is a theft from the people.”

Gustav Möller, Swedish Social Democrats Minister of Health and Social Affairs, 1939–51.

Accountability and transparency

Accountability is a fundamental pillar of democracy and good governance – it forces governing politicians and the public administration to focus on results, define clear objectives, develop effective strategies and to give an account of the results. Accountability means holding individuals and organisations responsible for their performance and actions as objectively as possible, and it has three dimensions.

- **Political accountability** means that there are transparent and regular methods for sanctioning or rewarding those in official roles in the public sector through a system of checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judicial arms of public authority.
- **Financial accountability** means that those who manage resources, or hold public office or some other position of trust, must account for the intended and actual use of these resources.
- **Administrative accountability** means that internal control systems are in place for the management of the administration's activities, including established practice, codes of conduct and audits of the administration.

Corruption and conflicts of interest

“Power corrupts” according to a famous quote. There is a lot of truth in this. Holding a position of power means that politicians get to exercise considerable power in many decision-making processes. You have the power to decide on



matters that affect people, financial resources, employees and the administration. It would be disastrous for democracy, people's trust and societal development if this power were to become an end in itself, or if you were to abuse your position of power for your own personal gain or that of your family. This is not what your role is intended for. You represent the citizens, not yourself, and you must always work to further their interests. With power comes responsibility.

However, in many parts of the world, this is exactly how politicians abuse their positions of power. They funnel taxpayer money into their own bank accounts or use it for their own consumption. They place their own family members or friends in positions of power, and ensure that they have access to faster and better public services than other citizens. They accept bribes to get things done that are just part of the job, or in other cases when contracts are being awarded. Whatever the case may be, abuse of power and corruption is a slap in the face of all those whom the elected politicians represent. Any such act undermines the legitimacy of democracy. Citizens stop believing in democracy when their political representatives do not act in their interests as a group.

There are a number of causes of corruption. From legal loopholes to conflicts of interest for those directly involved in decision-making, to insufficient funding for public administration, and weak systems for auditing and supervision. Corruption flourishes where the media is not free to expose abuses of power, where civil society organisations cannot hold those in power accountable for their actions, and where the political opposition is too weak. When corruption is endemic, minor reforms will be unlikely to make a difference. Experience has shown that you need to work on several fronts in order to:

- create a strong political will to establish and implement sustainable and effective anti-corruption programmes
- identify public activities and situations where there is the greatest risk of corruption, and then review the regulatory framework as well as its administrative procedures.
- establish and enforce appropriate practical mechanisms for accountability and learn from other best practices and examples.

However, it is equally important to focus on preventive measures and on changing values by, for example, creating a culture of professionalism and actively training those who work in the administration in this area. An important aspect of these efforts is to provide adequate salaries and ensure that there are deterrent penalties in place to make corruption a high risk activity for very little gain. It is equally important that transparency permeates government decision-making processes and public administration, to allow citizens and other key stakeholders a good insight into the activity.

Transparency and open processes

Transparency is important for keeping abuse of power and corruption in check, as well as enhancing the efficiency of the administration, and ensuring that citizens can participate in the democratic process and hold the administration to account. A rule of thumb is to make as much information and as many processes as possible open to the public. This is a key aspect of democratic governance and modern public administration. However, a political leadership, as well as activities in the administration, is very often subject to numerous conflicting demands and conflicts of interest. One basic example is when the need for transparency has to be balanced against the need for speed and efficiency. Without transparency, citizens do not have insight into how decisions are made and find it difficult to follow the process. For this reason, it may be tempting to argue for full insight into all stages of the political process and public activities. However, if the support of citizenry were to be required for every single decision in the course of day-to-day work, politics and public activities would lose momentum and have poor outcomes. There are also situations in the exercise of public authority that are surrounded by secrecy or the need for confidential internal discussions or negotiations. As we mentioned above, your role as an elected politician is to represent the citizens. They have trusted you to act on their behalf, which means that you should not have to consult them every step of the way. On the other hand, you should always be able to back up the decisions you have made.

There is a difference between disclosing everything about every single decision, and contextual transparency that allows access to the spaces where decisions are made. The latter usually has no effect on efficiency or being able to achieve results. It is about giving citizens the opportunity to follow the political process and to gain an understanding of the political priorities and the decisions that are made. Participation in democracy can thereby increase, and citizens get good opportunities to exercise their influence and hold their politicians to account. So, there are good reasons why all parliamentary sessions, debates, interpellations, question times and the like should be open to the public. The same applies to how you as a popularly elected leader in government work to ensure that agendas and decisions are open to the public, even when government meetings or the internal preparation of matters are not.

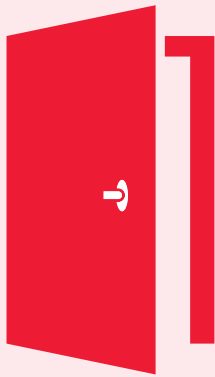


Selflessness
Openness **Integrity**
Objectivity
Accountability
Honesty
Leadership

PRINCIPLES TO ENHANCE INTEGRITY IN GOVERNANCE

Accountability and transparency are integral to good governance. These concepts are further complemented by integrity, which is fundamental to sound professional ethics. It is synonymous with incorruptibility and honesty. It requires that holders of public office do not incur any financial or other liabilities to third-party individuals or organisations that could influence them in the performance of their duties. In an attempt to hold its public servants to such standards, in 1994, the UK introduced a code of conduct with seven principles for public life:

- **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- **Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merits.
- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



THE SWEDISH PRINCIPLE OF PUBLIC ACCESS

The principle of public access to official records has existed in Sweden since 1766 and is found in Sweden's constitution. It means that the public and the media are entitled to see into the activities of the central and local governments' activities. This is manifested in a number of different ways:

- Anyone can read the documents produced by government agencies.
- Officials and others who work in central government and in the municipalities are entitled to talk about what they know to outsiders.
- Officials and others who work in central government and in the municipalities are typically entitled to disclose information to the media for publication or to personally make such information public.
- The public and the mass media are entitled to attend court proceedings.
- The public and the mass media are allowed to be present when the chamber of the Riksdag, municipal council, county council and other such decision-making bodies meet.

In principle, everyone has the right to read the documents held by the administration/government agencies. However, this right is limited in two ways. Firstly, the public is only entitled to read public documents. Not all government agency documents are considered public. For example, an internal draft of a decision, letter or similar document regarding a matter is not a public document as long as it does not leave the administration/government agency. Secondly, some of the information in public documents is confidential, i.e. subject to secrecy. This means that the public's right to read these documents is limited. It also means that government agencies are prohibited from disclosing the sections of these documents that contain such information. These may concern, for example, documents with information that has an impact on national security or the country's relationship with another state, or the protection of an individual citizen's personal or financial circumstances. ■

Active dialogue with citizens

As we have seen in the previous section, it is important for citizens to be given clear information about the municipality's decisions and administration. However, the municipality's responsibility goes beyond merely informing citizens. It has a responsibility to engage them in active dialogue. They need to listen to the electorate's thoughts on what is working well and what needs improvement, and to their concerns about the future. This means that you, as politicians, should not shut yourselves up in meeting rooms, but should plan and allocate time for meeting people and organisations in your line of duty. In the course of your party's outreach activities as well as through your own initiatives. However, it is also important to ensure that the municipal administration has well-considered methods for systematically leveraging the views of citizens. Their ability to participate in and influence the development of their local community is key for building trust in democracy and for finding solutions to complex challenges in a municipality's operations. In this context, a structured municipal citizen dialogue can be useful.

First of all, it is crucial to establish that dialogue is not the same thing as informing. Dialogue means assuming that others have something to say that is important to know about and to take on board. Then, we must also be prepared to change course. This means organising citizen dialogues around issues that can be influenced. The issue and target group must be clearly defined, as well as how far it can be influenced. The dialogue must be conducted systematically and the results must be utilised.

To further clarify the concept, we can describe what citizen dialogue is not. It is not a dialogue when a decision has already been made and the municipality's meeting with citizens is more about informing them about the decision. Furthermore, any individual politician often has numerous conversations in various forums and locations. These conversations are important for talking politics and keeping the democratic conversation going. However, it is not citizen dialogue, which is more connected to a municipality's direct exercise of public authority in various areas of activity. Dialogue with the users of the municipality's welfare services (users of social care, pupils, parents, clients, patients, etc.) is not citizen dialogue either, as it targets only a group who use a service, and usually only answers the question of how the services are perceived or how they need to be developed. However, such dialogues with users are important as part of the municipality's role as a service actor.

A formal citizen dialogue has a broader impact and aims to get the perspectives of various groups on an issue, and it also encompasses the questions, why and what? This is not something that is undertaken by municipal civil servants themselves, as the correct procedure needs elected representatives to be involved and to own the process.

In most cases the municipality initiates a citizen dialogue in response to a need for knowledge from the citizens in some domain, or to build trust and confidence. The same is true when societal development leads to complex situations that require the participation of many in order to solve problems such as insecurity, social unrest, group conflicts or school closures, etc. Based on target groups and broad participation, several methods may be needed to reach the people that the municipality wants to reach. Historically

in Sweden, more and more municipalities have chosen to offer both in-person meetings and digital channels for participation, although this will differ depending how deep the level of participation envisaged. Digital channels are mainly used for the dissemination of information and consultation. The dialogue stage uses both digital and analogue methods, and the cooperation and co-determination stages mainly utilise methods involving in-person meetings.

FACTS

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

As a political leader, you will often have to manage crises. These could be crises that threaten the safety of citizens or employees. As the person with ultimate responsibility for municipal activities, many people will expect you to take charge, keep a cool head, be present and energetic, and to clearly lead others in doing what needs to be done. Although it may feel lonely, you can get a lot of help from others and by having well-planned ways of working. From the onset of the crisis, it is important that you maintain a close dialogue with the rest of the municipality's political leadership and the administration as a whole, as well as with your party group and party organisation. It is important for them to be informed of developments and to be able to offer and provide support for how the crisis should be managed.

You should also set up a special crisis management group comprising a limited number of individuals in key positions in the municipal organisation who are those most affected by the crisis you are in. The group must have a clear division of responsibilities and a predefined procedure for its work, and for how other key actors and citizens should be informed. This group is a temporary arrangement and is dissolved as soon as the crisis is over. Among other things, it is responsible for conducting a status review and finding out what has happened, analysing possible scenarios going forward, establishing an action plan for what must be done, and maintaining the coordination and flow of internal and external information. The group needs to keep a logbook from the outset about what decisions are made and by whom. Depending on the size of the municipality and the nature of the crisis, the group's operational management should generally be kept separate from you and your official role. In such a case, the group reports on operational procedures to the municipality's political leadership, who make decisions on overarching strategic issues and communicate clearly with the citizens.

In order to be prepared for crises, who is to do what must be decided on and documented in advance. A widely known crisis management plan must be in place, so that you can quickly escalate to a state of heightened preparedness. The plan should identify the individuals who should take action and what their roles should be. Whatever the situation may be, there is a simple rule of thumb. The better prepared you are, the easier it will be to deal with the crisis.

POLITICAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A crisis breaks out, journalists swarm in and the next day, you or your party are the front page news. A political crisis of confidence may concern you personally, a party colleague, your party organisation or the administration for which you are responsible. In this situation, many people often start to ignore or play down the significance of early indications that something is unfolding. You may be too busy with other matters, too close to see things clearly, or simply underestimate the importance of the situation. Nevertheless, it is important to start dealing with the issue in good time. When an issue suddenly flares up, it is not unusual that it has been simmering for some time without being dealt with. Therefore, there is a lot to be gained by quickly taking charge of the situation. There are some golden rules for managing political crises:

- **Be ready.** Your day-to-day work should include keeping crisis management and crisis communication in mind.
- **Understand the media logic** and the role of the media. Ensure that you have good and reliable journalist contacts.
- **Act as soon as the first signs of a crisis appear.** Don't sit down and wait until it blows over; you should proceed from the worst-case scenario. Assemble a crisis team and appoint a spokesperson.
- **Keep your party and your supporters well informed** of all the facts. Internal communication is just as important as external communication.
- **Silence is rarely golden** in these situations. Explain the situation in its entirety in one sitting, do not do this piecemeal. Validate public sentiment.
- **Be honest and open.** The whole truth will eventually come to light – whether through internal leaks, zealous journalists or a commission of inquiry.
- **Never blame the media.** Do not use words such as “witch hunt” or “conspiracy.”
- **Demand a retraction** if the allegations are unfounded, while also actively seeking to remove the issue from public focus as soon as possible. ■

Increasing engagement and nurturing democracy

The involvement and participation of citizens is always fundamental to democratic governance and a democratic society. Creating opportunities for citizens to personally participate in or influence their society and public activities is vital for gaining support for your policies and engagement. For politicians, it is natural to see party politics as the obvious route for getting involved and having an influence. At the same time, we know that only a minority of people consider the natural way to do this is to join a political party. Therefore, it is important to discuss alternative methods for citizens to participate in municipal activities within various areas, to exercise influence as users of services and as citizens. These may include:

- Parent boards with children and young people in preschools and compulsory schools.
- Pupil boards in upper secondary schools.
- Family boards related to elderly care.
- Self-management or user participation within childcare, schools and elderly care.
- Cooperatives and associations running municipal activities.
- User consultations and citizen consultations for acquiring ideas and opinions.

There are great opportunities to pursue these alternatives in the governance and administration of a municipality, where the activities are conducted in close proximity to the constituents and their everyday lives.

Your role to safeguard democracy includes respecting the rights of individuals, and nurture their active participation. Every human being is unique, and every person and their voice must count and be listened to. The more people participate, the greater the democracy and the better the activities will be for more people. Democracy entails a view of humanity that does not allow people to dehumanize others, nor deprive anyone of their capacity and willingness to participate in a society permeated by rights and obligations. The role of elected representatives therefore also entails a great responsibility for the public conversation, rhetoric, and the tone of the public conversation. We must not contribute to dehumanisation and polarisation, which poison debate. In the course of your and your party's political work, you must safeguard the opposition and treat opposition parties as you would like to be treated if you were in their shoes. Engage enthusiastically in tough debates on matters of fact, but avoid using excessively harsh words, accusations and burning all your bridges. Whoever is in power today may be in opposition tomorrow; parliamentary and democratic work is only rewarding when all parties can cooperate to seek solutions

to major and minor societal challenges. Safeguarding democracy and the municipality you are part of governing is a responsibility shared across party boundaries.



Work in opposition

When people engage themselves in politics, it is mostly because they want to be part of changing society for the better. Their consistent goal is therefore to win elections in order to be in power to implement their party's policies. Working in the opposition may not be as interesting but is, nonetheless, important. Effective opposition has a key role in a democratic system of government and in the development of the municipality. The role of the opposition is to critically scrutinise those in power and to formulate and offer the citizens policy alternatives.

Nevertheless, ending up in the opposition can feel like a failure. How you and your party colleagues handle an election defeat is therefore of great importance. You cannot just give up and remain passive in anticipation of the next election campaign. This would mean a considerable risk that you will lose again at the next elections. Instead, it is crucial to engage actively in being the opposition from day one. Elections are won on election day, but the foundations for winning an election are laid between elections. So, be active and continue to present your policies, and actively campaign throughout the period. It makes you visible and relevant to the electorate, and keeps you and your party members motivated.

Strategies for working in opposition

The role of the opposition is not always simple. It is a dilemma whether you should oppose everything all of the time or make your own constructive suggestions. You can sit with your arms folded and watch as the majority rules, or join in and mitigate the impact of any damage.

What strategy to choose for your work in opposition is not always clear, as it depends on who the majority are and how it works. However, a basic decision you need to make is whether you are going to employ:

- **A closer and more cooperative approach to the ruling majority** – with the aim of trying to sway them and influence their decisions, so that the decisions are as compatible as possible with your own ideas and values; or
- **A more polarised and conflict-oriented opposition strategy** – with a greater focus on criticising the ruling majority, presenting your own proposals and thereby accentuating the differences in policies and holding the majority fully accountable for their policies.

What role to choose depends on the short-term and long-term goals you have set and your local circumstances:

- How did your party lose in the most recent elections? Do you expect to be able to regain power at the next elections?
- Is your party one of the most dominant parties? How much support do you have?
- How is the ruling majority working? How big and how united is it?
- Is the ruling majority interested in the opposition's views? How sympathetic are they in their contact with you?
- Is the municipality a large or small one? What are the conditions and forms of work like for policy and government work? Is there a need for and is there a tradition of cooperation?

There are a range of factors that might determine which kind of opposition role will be the most successful. The balance of power in the ruling majority and its attitude, as well as various political issues and events during the term of office will influence how you work. In particular, these factors will determine the extent of your political differences with the majority party/parties. If there is excessive political polarisation, it may be difficult to assume a more neighbourly opposition role. The most common role is probably one that combines the two principal types of work in opposition. Ultimately, it is about how to best achieve your political objectives and what the members of your party want.

However, the success of an opposition party is not solely linked to the political agenda and the political landscape. It is also influenced by the culture and attitude that, in the minds of voters, exists in the parties and among their representatives. In the role of opposition politician, it is easy to get caught in the 'squabbling trap' and not be perceived as constructive and responsible. Politicians who are present, accessible and who work in a committed and constructive manner on urgent issues that affect the everyday lives of people have it easier. Consequently, there should always be a sincere political will to do the best for the municipality.

Political squabbles, arrogance and irresponsibility are usually not the hallmarks of success at the ballot box. A local perspective, common sense and interpersonal relationships are often good starting points for cooperation with other parties. However, this must not mean that you depart from your values and the policies that you, as a social democrat, stand for in any decisive way. If the electorate has given you their trust, they must also be able to recognise themselves in the positions you take. That is why it is necessary to thoroughly discuss what attitude and direction to adopt in the role of an opposition party.

Turn disadvantages into advantages

By definition, working in opposition means that you are at a disadvantage in terms of your policy having an impact. The ruling majority has greater opportunities to do so. They have been entrusted with the mandate of the electorate to govern and thus has the municipal budget and administration at their disposal for implementing their policies. At the same time however, this means that they are more in the spotlight. Citizens expect the ruling majority to deliver on their political promises and to resolve the crises and challenges that the municipality faces from time to time. Likewise, the media has a far greater interest in those in power and subjects them to continuous scrutiny and holds them to account for what they do or fail to do.

The opposition gets to go about its business quietly and with less political influence and less attention from the media and citizens. It can be a thankless task to operate under these less than favourable conditions, but they can be turned into an opportunity. As representatives of the opposition, you are better placed to build closer interpersonal relationships at the grassroots level – with voters and citizens. You do not have to spend all your time on decision-making and administration, which allows you to focus more on a bottom-up perspective. You can listen to the constituents, foster relationships and identify any growing discontent regarding various issues, for which you can hold the ruling majority to account. Because you are not in power and therefore do not represent the establishment, it will be easier for you than for the ruling politicians to have in-depth conversations with people and hear their thoughts, opinions and disappointments. You have the opportunity to create a public image that you are 'one of them'. In other words that you, like the citizens, are dissatisfied with how things are developing and with the achievements and policies of the ruling majority. That you are on their side in their fight against the ruling majority. This means that you can adopt an underdog position while allowing your policy development and strategies to be influenced by what the citizens think about the majority and its policies. During this process, you will also have the opportunity to show the voters who you are, to establish personal ties, and to build long-term trust that will benefit the party for several elections to come.



BEING IN OPPOSITION IN MUNICIPALITIES WITH WEAK REPRESENTATION

In some municipalities, you may have a very small presence in the municipal council and have only one regular seat on the various municipal committees. In such cases, it is particularly challenging to pursue a meaningful opposition policy. You will need to do a lot of work alone in being those who scrutinise public opinion, while actively pursuing social democratic policy for the future.

Therefore, it is recommended that you collaborate with social democrats from other municipalities who are also in opposition. You do not have to reinvent the wheel in every municipality. Utilise the good ideas and examples that you can get from your party colleagues in their work in opposition, share your own experiences and work together across municipal boundaries, for example, by developing a network of municipal opposition parties in your regional party district. Every vote is important and there is no municipality in which the situation is hopeless.

Your election success is driven by robust and smart opposition politics, and it will be of importance not only for you, but also regionally and nationally for the party. ■

Work proactively and strategically

Your role in the opposition includes working actively in opposition and keeping the ruling majority on its toes. Dissatisfaction with the majority must be channelled in your communications with citizens. The majority's proposals must be continuously scrutinised in the parliament, in the media and in meetings with citizens. You need to carefully examine and question the policies of the majority. At the same time however, it is important to accentuate the dividing lines between you and them. You need to work proactively to generate public opinion in favour of your own policies. You need to present your party's vision and your political solutions to society's problems. It will not do to simply shape public opinion to oppose something – people will also need to see a solution and a way forward.

If you want to successfully seize the initiative and influence the political agenda, it is important to work proactively with voter communication and policy development. Here, you and your party organisation have an important role to play in reaching out, communicating, listening to and involving party members and citizens in policy discussions. And in creating the organisational conditions for effective policy development that can leverage these dialogues, as well as the skills within the party and the community at large. You also need to create cohesion and avoid getting caught up in internal conflicts, regardless of whether these conflicts are within the party or with other opposition parties with whom you are trying to form an alliance.

In order to work proactively, you need to formulate a clear and effective strategy for your policy work and your communication with citizens. It is about what you should focus on in order to leverage the opportunities that exist based on the resources at your disposal, and then planning your work so that you can seize the initiative, be relevant and gradually win the confidence of the electorate. This strategy then needs to be supplemented by how you will conduct your work in more detail during your term of office. What must be done, when and by whom?

A strategy must gain support through decisions and participation in the party group and the local branch, and it needs to be put down in writing. The strategy will not be sustainable unless it is expressed in writing in a document that has been adopted. It is not enough to merely have the idea in your head. A strategy must also be developed further by those who will work with it. Joint discussions must be held, analyses conducted and priorities decided on. If everyone expected to work in the opposition is to maintain their interest and commitment, they must also be allowed to participate in the development of the overall strategy. Developing a well-processed strategy may seem tedious and time-consuming, but once it is in place, it will make your day-to-day policy work much easier. The joint strategy serves as the guiding principle in your work – you know what to do and why. You will have a shared analysis, awareness and consistency in everything you do. It will increase your chances of seizing the initiative, being united and effective, and strengthen your chances of being seen as a credible and competent political party.

So, what do you want to achieve? How should your work in opposition be conducted? What would you like to accomplish during the term of office? How should you best utilise your resources to achieve your goals? From the outset, you must have an idea of what results you want to achieve in the next elections, and you must then organise your work accordingly. You need to start by analysing the political situation and the conditions in the municipality. What does the political landscape look like? What are the positions of the political parties, and where are the main lines of conflict? What is at the top of the agenda? What changes in society are influencing and will continue to influence the agenda during the term of office? And, not least, what does public opinion say? How do voters perceive your party and the other parties?

Based on your policy platforms, objectives and the overall role in opposition that you wish to assume, the strategy will then need to be amended with the primary conflict line and what your main policy issues will be during the term of office, as well as what your main target groups and messages will be. But how do you develop a strategy? A number of points/questions should be answered to start with. For example, go through the questions below and let the answers form part of the basis for your future strategy.

✓ **What is the purpose?**

The purpose of well thought-out opposition strategy is ultimately to get your policies implemented and to win elections, so that you can implement as much as possible of your policy.

✓ **What are the objectives?**

What do you primarily want to achieve politically during the term of office and in the next elections? Keep in mind that your objectives should be realistic and have a deadline, but that they should also be a challenge. They should require that something extra. An objective should include a future qualitative condition while also being quantitative.

✓ **What are your policy platforms like?**

What is your policy platform like in relation to that of the ruling majority?

- Your municipal action programme and electoral platform – what issues did you take to the elections? What issues are particularly important to continue pursuing and to make voters aware of?
- The majority's policy platform – what specific issues are they working with? What are they doing about their electoral promises and other issues that have come up and that you are critical of?

✓ **What is the current situation?**

You then need to start by analysing the political situation and conditions in the municipality. What does the political landscape look like? What are the positions of the political parties, and where are the main lines of conflict? What is at the top of the agenda? What changes in society and the world are influencing and will continue to influence the agenda during the term of office? And what does public opinion say? You should find out what the electorate, organisations and various actors think and feel. What is their perception of you and of the ruling majority? Sort the answers into problems and opportunities. Be honest! You must approach all the information gathered without sentiment.

✓ **Who are our opponents?**

You need to be well informed about your opponents and their policies. Your role is to examine what they are doing and what the consequences are for citizens. This will also form the basis for contrasting their policies with yours. And you must also find out how the majority works, how united they are, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and what popularity they enjoy. Are there issues that disunite the majority, on which you could potentially base your cooperation with some of the parties in the ruling majority?

✓ **Who are our allies and close friends?**

There are many organisations and people in society with whom you can work and form an alliance: trade unions, environmental organisations, consumer organisations,

etc. Alliances with stakeholder organisations can help you to reach and gain more sympathisers. You can also start cooperating to build a coalition with other parties. Please refer to the previous chapter about negotiating, cooperating and working in coalitions.

✓ **Who are we?**

You will also need to scrutinise yourselves more closely. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Why are you in opposition? The question must be analysed and answered thoroughly if you want to be able to formulate and organise your work to regain the confidence of the electorate. Is it the content of your policies that has failed to attract voters? Is it your profile or have you not been very good at organising and conducting an effective election campaign? What did the voters think of you? What do you stand for and what do you offer in the political landscape?

✓ **What are our target groups?**

Should you communicate with everyone or are there specific target groups that are particularly useful for you to try and reach? Obviously, it's best to reach as many people as possible. But if you talk about everything with everyone, then in practice, you are talking to nobody. Your resources are limited, and therefore, you will need to prioritise and focus on the most important groups where you have the best chance of winning them over. The target groups you prioritise will also have an impact on your choice of position in the political landscape, as well as the issues you should focus on and how you should organise your communications. Remember not to lose sight of the electoral majority – the percentage of the electorate that you need, alone or jointly with coalition partners, to achieve your objectives in the forthcoming election. You will never win if you focus solely on a small and very specific group of voters.

✓ **How do we want to be seen?**

Based on your analysis of the realities and people's perceptions of your opponents and you, you can agree on how you would like to be seen in the eyes of the voters. This may be about your choice of policy issues, how you prioritise and organise yourselves, and what methods you choose to use, as well as your approach and attitude.

✓ **What issues do we want to highlight in opposition?**

You have now analysed the current situation, your opponents, your allies and yourself. You have identified the primary target groups that you should work with and the issues of the greatest importance to citizens in the municipality. On the basis of this and your basic policy platform, you choose the issues that you want to prioritise in your forthcoming work in opposition. It is important that these are compatible with developments in the political landscape and the political position you wish to take in relation to your opponents. In this respect, it is important to be

able to offer a clear alternative. If the alternative you offer is ambiguous and unattractive, voters will find it difficult to distinguish you from your opponents. Therefore, highlight the differences between your proposals and those of the majority. It is especially important to show what your highest priorities are. Which proposals are important for your profile and positioning, and which distinguish you from the other parties. You should therefore give messages about these in a particularly prominent place in your communications. It is a good idea to focus on fewer but more important proposals than on many minor ones.

When all these questions have been answered, they will provide a basis for formulating and drafting a political strategy. There should be a main strategy for the entire local party branch and assembly party group that governs their work in opposition in the municipal council, which should then be broken down for the various committees and the areas in which they operate. (See Chapter 2)

Decide on an action plan

It is not enough to simply have a documented political strategy. To get anything done, the strategy must be put into practice – how will you act in order to achieve your objectives in practice. A simple action plan is needed. It should describe in practical terms what activities you should implement, and who is responsible for what. It should also include a timetable, budget and specify how you will evaluate your work. Some of the aspects to include are:

- **Organisation** – What will its structure be and who is responsible for what?
- **Method and forms of activity** – How will you conduct your work? What methods will you use?
- **Budget** – What will the initiatives and operation cost?
- **Activities** – What should be done, how and when? Who will do it and what will it cost?
- **Evaluation and follow-up** – Have you accomplished what you agreed to do? Does the action plan match the strategy or does something need to be reassessed and adjusted?

In opposition, it is crucial to find smart and cost-efficient solutions for producing documentation and reaching the electorate. You need to be economical with resources. For example, a draft proposal for the municipal budget must not exceed the budget proposals of the majority and the municipal administration, in terms of precision and focus. That would not be an optimal use of the time at your disposal. However, it is necessary to present a well-considered budget proposal in all areas, in order to foster confidence in your party, and it forces you to work through the proposals and to be realistic. As an opposition party without access to the expertise of the municipal offices, it may be difficult to calculate the costs of your own policy proposals. You should therefore try to maintain good contact with various municipal officials. Your capacity is also dependent on the expertise and other conditions in your own party group.

Finally, focus on the future. Work strategically, purposefully and use your time in opposition to prepare for a future in government. Being in the opposition can be a long, drawn-out period of time, so do not be impatient about getting results. Keep believing in your cause and avoid getting too frustrated. This may be particularly difficult when you have just lost an election and are facing a long journey ahead before it is time for the next election campaign. With patience and perseverance, you will eventually get a new chance. When the electorate starts longing for change, you must be well prepared – mentally and in terms of your election programmes and organising. Take advantage of your time in opposition. It is often a good opportunity to make changes in your own party and for new people to advance in the hierarchy. Stir the pot and, if necessary, wash it clean, because this is the perfect time for some new faces to appear and for former representatives to retire. On the other hand, if your party has been ruling for some time, it will take time to get used to your new role. In general, being in government means having to work hard and getting stuck in protracted and difficult municipal administration processes. A period of being in opposition gives you time to recuperate, raise your sights and start over, and to plan for the next election victory.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What does it mean to be in government? On what terms are you appointed and under what conditions do you work? How does it work in our country or municipality where we live? Does it differ in any way from what is highlighted in this chapter?
- What is good governance? What role do political parties play in achieving this? Why?
- What does effective and successful government mean? What are the different ways in which this could be described? In our view, what is the most important perspective?
- How can a government best seize the initiative and govern successfully? What are the most important factors to consider? What tools do we have in our toolbox to succeed?
- What is the relationship between the governing political leadership and the public administration? How is this best managed in practice? Why?
- How are the responsibilities best divided between elected representatives and government officials? As a politician, what is important to keep in mind in your contacts with the administration and its staff? How are we doing on this?
- Why is accountability important in the government of a country or municipality? How can citizens hold the government to account in practice? What are the risks if the administration and its activities are not seen as transparent?
- In government, what is the best way to promote people's participation in and nurture democracy?
- What choices do we need to make when in opposition? What must we keep in mind for getting the party's policies implemented in the best way, and for influencing societal development to the largest extent possible? Why?
- How do we turn disadvantages – such as being in the opposition – into advantages? What is important to keep in mind if we want to be able to work proactively and strategically in opposition?

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Notes

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An introductory course in how to run and represent a party

Democratic parties in different parts of the world can learn a lot from each other's experiences and practices. This introductory course and its modules focus on how a party can strengthen its organisational and political capacity to become a strong and democratic party with active members and inclusive structures and activities.

In this sixth module, we focus on those party representatives who are popularly elected or are about to become elected. What does it mean to take on a leadership role and represent your party and your constituents? What is expected of you in the party, in parliamentary assemblies and in government? How should you think and act in order to be successful in your role?

We focus in particular on being a local representative and explore the basics of a political role in the following areas:

- Being a popularly elected representative.
- Working in parliamentary assemblies and party groups.
- Negotiating, cooperating and working in coalitions.
- Working in government or in the opposition.

You can read more about the course and find all its modules here

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