

LOCAL GOVERNANCE QUALITY IN TÜRKİYE AND ELoGE

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Prepared by

Dr. İnan İzci

Dr. Erkin Erimez

Argüden Governance Academy

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Argüden Governance Academy

Akasya Caddesi No:2 Göztepe Mah., Göksu Anadolu Hisarı,

34815 İstanbul, Türkiye Phone: +90 (216) 280 51 14

www.argudenacademy.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation, dissemination, and development process of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) of the Council of Europe in Türkiye. It examines the conceptual foundations of ELoGE, its alignment with the legal framework, its methodology, and recommendations for future improvements. Prepared with reference to the initiatives launched and carried forward under the leadership of the Argüden Governance Academy since 2022, the report aims to transfer experience and foster capacity development for local governments, central government institutions, civil society organizations, and academia.

Local governments need to strengthen quality of their governance practices in order to create public value in a more holistic, inclusive, and effective manner in an era of global crises, increasing urbanization, and the resulting shifts in societal expectations. In particular, investing more in good governance at the local level will be beneficial for safeguarding and strengthening democracy, ensuring sustainable development, and continuously improving quality of life.

ELoGE is an evidence-based assessment and development framework that translates the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance (as updated in 2024) into concrete objectives and indicators in a holistic manner. It enables local authorities to measure and improve their governance quality and to benchmark themselves against an international standard. ELoGE contributes to enhancing decision-making quality, efficiency in the use of resources, stakeholder participation and cooperation, transparency, accountability, and ultimately trust-based relationships with all stakeholders. In addition, it offers international recognition and access to networks of good practice.

The Turkish experience began in 2022 as a pilot implementation with Sultanbeyli and Şişli Municipalities. ELoGE can be awarded to municipalities for a one-year period only; procedure requires a renewed application each year and evaluation by an independent jury. Interest in the ELoGE among municipalities has increased steadily. As of the 2025 application results, 16 municipalities qualified to receive the ELoGE label. This process has contributed to the strengthening of good governance practices within municipalities and to the development of a culture of measurement, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Throughout the process, the following improvement areas have been identified:

- greater engagement by senior leadership,
- the dissemination of a governance culture across all organizational units,

- closing capacity gaps,
- deepening participation mechanisms, and
- more effective use of technology.

In this context, it is considered beneficial to:

- strengthen the supportive role of central government and municipal associations as a priority,
- form units that are working on improvement of quality of governance practices within local governments,
- support the continuous improvement of governance practices,
- ensure systematic reporting of undertaken activities,
- coordinate integration with digitalization efforts, and
- develop financial incentive mechanisms.

ELoGE should be regarded not merely as a label, but as a transformation tool aimed at embedding and continuously enhancing democracy and a culture of good governance within local governments. The four-year experience in Turkey has demonstrated the tangible benefits of this tool and indicated that its importance will increase in the coming period.

Integration of ELoGE's transformational and improvement approach to local government processes and practices through collaborative efforts of public, civil, and private sector actors will make a significant contribution to building a more democratic, just, prosperous, and trustworthy future.

STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT QUALITY AND TRUST THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today's world is striving to cope with challenging conditions and multiple, overlapping crises. In this context, issues such as geo economic turmoil, the increase of conflicts, environmental disasters, technological risks, social polarization, and the erosion of democratic values come to the fore.¹ Addressing these challenges requires all institutions—primarily public institutions, but also the private sector and civil society as well—to act with a more inclusive, transparent, accountable, and effective approach to governance. As societies seek responses to current risks and challenges and aspire to a future that is more democratic, more developed, and characterized by a higher quality of life, the quality of governance becomes more important.

According to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Report 2025, based on research conducted in 83 countries, only 43% of citizens believe that public institutions are responsive to their expectations and that their voices are heard in decision-making processes.² This situation indicates that public institutions and political actors need to make greater efforts to enhance levels of trust.

Meanwhile, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, and it is projected that by 2030 approximately 5 billion people will reside in urban areas.³ Cities have a profound impact on human life as ecological, economic, social, and political spaces. This reality highlights the critical importance not only of central governments and national policies, but also of local governments and local public policies. In short, the need to address today's risks and challenges in a more democratic, inclusive, and effective manner, and to ensure a safer, more stable, and more liveable future, points to the necessity of improving the functioning and practices of local governments. Rapid urban population growth, the climate crisis, economic fluctuations, technological transformations, and increasingly diverse societal expectations compel local governments to move beyond a traditional "service delivery" approach toward a more holistic, participatory, and strategic governance model.

Local governments represent the closest point of contact between citizens and public administration in everyday life. This relationship is key for effective democracy. They are public institutions that meet citizens' daily needs and play a directly decisive role in quality of life and development efforts. Politics, administration, and democracy practiced at the local level influence not only local communities but also national and global scales. For this reason, the proper and effective use of the powers and resources of local governments is also of concern to international institutions.

Since its establishment in 1949, the Council of Europe has led the development of various conventions and the implementation of policies aimed at strengthening democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance in its member states. Local democracy and the functioning of

¹ <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2026/digest/>

<https://rm.coe.int/2025-report-of-the-secretary-general-of-the-council-of-europe-en-final/1680b5ad96>

² <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2025.pdf>

³ <https://www.unfpa.org/urbanization>

local authorities hold a particular place in the work of the Council of Europe. This emphasis stems from the direct impact of local governments in the following areas:

- **Democratic development:** Enabling citizens and communities to influence their own lives and futures through representative, deliberative, and participatory forms of democracy; ensuring active citizenship, a strong civil society, and a democratic relationship between governing and governed.
- **Rule of law:** Ensuring that public officials at all levels of governance act within the guidance and limits of the law and respect citizens' rights and freedoms.
- **Implementation of fundamental, economic, and social rights:** Protecting citizens' fundamental rights and ensuring the realization of their economic and social rights through international conventions, national laws, and regulations.
- **Sustainable development:** Using public resources without waste and in a manner that maximizes public value through effectiveness and efficiency, thereby ensuring sustainable and inclusive development.
- **Quality of life / human well-being:** Contributing to individuals' healthy development and happiness by improving quality of life at the local level (health, education, security, and social cohesion).

While producing public value in areas such as the environment, infrastructure, urban planning, housing, transportation, health, culture, arts, and social policy, local governments serve and contribute to all the areas outlined above. In recent years, recognizing the importance of delivering these services in the most comprehensive, fair, and effective manner through the authority, resources, and capacities available to local governments, the Council of Europe has placed increasing emphasis on governance quality. Following a decision taken in 2008, the Council of Europe has been implementing initiatives aimed at developing and strengthening good governance across public institutions—particularly local governments—through the European Label of Governance Excellence.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE QUALITY

Before addressing concepts such as governance quality, standards, and excellence, it is critically important to clearly understand the distinction between local government management and governance. The frequent use of terms such as governance, good governance, or democratic governance—often without sufficiently clarifying their content and scope—can lead to

conceptual confusion and practical implementation challenges.

Although the roots of the concept of governance date back to Ancient Greece, its contemporary usage became widespread in the 1980s. In particular, the concept of good governance re-emerged in the field of international development to emphasize the fair, effective, and transparent use of resources. Modern public administration was shaped by traditional hierarchical structures differentiated by levels and functions, along with top-down command-and-control mechanisms specific to these structures. From the 1990s onward, accelerating globalization, technological advances, and social transformations increasingly challenged this model, leading it to evolve toward a more dynamic, interactive, and citizen-centered form. While this transformation is sometimes described as a “shift from local government management to governance,” such a framing is conceptually limited, as local government management and governance do not replace one another; rather, they refer to distinct but interrelated phenomena.

At its core, governance refers to the process by which an institution determines its present and future direction together with its stakeholders—foremost among them citizens, who are the ultimate holders of sovereignty—and ensures that these decisions are aligned with the institution’s values. Local government management, by contrast, refers to executive activities aimed at implementing defined objectives within established authorities, as well as responsibilities related to the use of resources.

In this framework, local government management primarily focuses on execution and operational processes and answers the question “What is done?”, whereas governance centres on the question “How it is done?” by encompassing areas such as strategic direction-setting, monitoring, oversight, stakeholder relations, and institutional accountability. The governance approach strengthens checks and balances by separating oversight mechanisms from executive decision-making in order to manage strategic and agency (principal–agent) risks.

- **Local Government Management:** Refers to organizing and carrying out activities within defined authorities, allocating resources, and ensuring that institutions operate in line with established directions. It focuses on operational processes and on “what is done.”
- **Governance:** Involves defining an institution’s mission, vision, priorities, and risk boundaries; appointing leadership; and monitoring and evaluating whether government acts in line with these objectives. It focuses on “how activities are carried out,” strategic direction-setting, and oversight mechanisms.

In this sense, governance goes beyond being a purely administrative arrangement; it represents a comprehensive culture and system concerning how institutions are directed, supervised, and held socially accountable. To facilitate clearer understanding and practical positioning, the table below presents a detailed comparison.

Comparison of Local Government Management and Governance

DIMENSION	LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT	GOVERNANCE
Core Definition	Execution of activities through defined resources in line with established authorities and direction	Operation of a citizen-oriented culture of direction-setting, evaluation, and oversight
Focus	Conducting daily operations, efficient use of resources, and ensuring internal compliance with rules and procedures	Determining, monitoring, and evaluating the institution's strategic direction; defining present and future goals with stakeholders; ultimately aiming to enhance development and quality of life
Key Question	What was done?	How was it done, and according to which principles?
Objective	Efficiency, order, and timely achievement of targets	Sustainability, trust, and value creation
Tools and Mechanisms	Hierarchy, procedures, work plans, budget control, performance measurement	Transparency, participation, accountability, fairness, and regulations and practices that ensure effective and consistent functioning (CRAFTED) ⁴
Time Horizon	Short- and medium-term	Long-term and sustainable
Risk Approach	Focuses on managing operational risks and ensuring correct execution of defined tasks	Focuses on managing strategic, agency (principal–agent), and reputational risks; aims to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability of quality of life
Decision-Making Style	Leader/manager-centered, rapid, and implementation-oriented; hierarchical and vertical decision-making; inward-facing communication and interaction prioritized	Guided by principles, values, strategy, and policy; emphasizes participatory, transparent, trust-based horizontal interaction and alignment; outward-facing communication and engagement
Key Actors	Decision-makers, managers, and implementers	Stakeholders, board structures, and the public
Success Criteria	Priority given to operational performance and target achievement; compliance with goals, rules, and budgets	Priority given to trust, legitimacy, long-term impact, and sustainable success; alignment of outcomes with institutional mission, values, and stakeholder expectations

In summary, governance constitutes a culture of checks and balances that protects institutions and the public interest against errors or shortcomings of those who hold power and authority. At the same time, it guides citizens—who are the ultimate holders of authority—in setting strategic priorities and objectives, while aiming to ensure, based on accountability, that powers and resources are used in the most effective and equitable manner. Local government management, in turn, focuses on the quality and success of decisions taken, resources used, and activities carried out to achieve the objectives defined within this governance environment.

STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT QUALITY AND TRUST THROUGH GOOD GOVERNANCE

The concept of governance focuses on how decisions are made, how implementation is carried out, and how oversight is conducted. For this reason, governance approaches may take on positive or negative meanings depending on preferences and practices. It is possible to encounter governance environments in which decisions are taken arbitrarily, resources are wasted, processes lack transparency, or oversight is not permitted. Good

⁴ Dr Yılmaz Argüden, "Keys to Governance", 2011, Palgrave MacMillan

governance, by contrast, is the opposite of such practices. At its core, good governance defines a culture that seeks to build trust-based relationships between institutions and citizens/stakeholders, with the aim of improving governing quality and overall quality of life. It encompasses the principles required to achieve this goal, as well as the structures, mechanisms, processes, and actions that ensure their effective implementation.

The fundamental objective of good governance is to build trust between citizens and the institutions that serve them. A lack of trust leads to friction between institutions and their stakeholders, causing organizations to operate with greater difficulty, more slowly, and at higher cost. Activities are disrupted, and objections and conflicts emerge. By contrast, the high level of trust fostered and sustained by good governance facilitates more effective problem-solving and cooperation. In this respect, good governance is not an abstract ideal but a practical necessity for building trustworthy institutions and improving quality of life for all. This culture requires the active participation and collaboration of public institutions, private enterprises, civil society organizations, and universities. It enables and supports the mobilization of knowledge, capabilities, and resources across sectors toward shared objectives.

Good governance can be likened to the nervous system of a city. The stronger the nervous system (structures and principles), the more resilient the city becomes to crises such as disasters or economic shocks. The more effectively this system functions, the easier it is to strengthen development and quality of life within the city. To remain resilient, adaptive, and robust, this system must be continuously improved. A culture of good governance is not merely a checklist of principles; rather, it encompasses a holistic cycle of planning, implementation, measurement, and learning that supports communities in becoming better over time.

Good governance provides guidance to public institutions and decision-makers, supports ethical and effective service to society, and operates oversight mechanisms to ensure this service delivery. In doing so, good governance deepens democracy by promoting participation, responsiveness, and active citizenship through concrete practices. At the local level, this approach includes questioning responsible actors, monitoring municipal budgets online, and putting forward proposals for improvement. Ultimately, good governance represents a continuous improvement journey informed by data, strengthened through stakeholder participation, which improves trust to the institution. The most critical compass of this journey is the establishment, protection, and continuous strengthening of trust between institutions and citizens.

The main benefits offered by good governance include the following:

- **Trust-building:** Trust is the essence of good governance. The success of institutions depends on earning the trust of their stakeholders.
- **Effective risk management and resilience:** Trusted institutions, supported by their stakeholders, can identify risks more rapidly and mobilize resources and stakeholder relationships in ways that enhance resilience.

- **Improved decision quality:** Data-driven and inclusive participation processes enable high quality decisions and facilitate societal acceptance during implementation.
- **Sustainability:** Supports decision-making that considers long-term impacts and the rights of future generations, ensuring balance and consistency between short-, medium-, and long-term objectives and outcomes.
- **Efficient resource management:** Resource are utilized responsibly, limited resources are directed toward areas of greatest societal need. The efficient use of resources in line with defined objectives is supported, and resources from different stakeholders are mobilized toward shared goals.
- **Inclusive outcomes:** Through inclusive policies and services, the well-being of diverse social groups and disadvantaged populations increases, strengthening social cohesion, peace, and prosperity.
- **Integrated governance:** Enhances a culture of trust among actors at different levels and roles within institutions, increasing coherence, alignment, and coordination in governing processes through consultation and collaboration.
- **Evaluation and oversight:** Provides opportunities to assess and oversee whether entrusted authority and resources are used appropriately and toward intended outcomes.
- **Continuous improvement:** Serves to identify improvement opportunities based on data, measurement, and benchmarking, and taking action.

In local governments where good governance is institutionalized and continuously improved, the following outcomes are expected:

i. More democratic, responsive, and fair governance

- Decision-makers address citizens' needs and demands in an ethical, fair, and timely manner and use their authority and resources to meet these needs as effectively as possible.
- Meaningful participation and contribution by citizens, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders are ensured in political, administrative, and financial management processes.
- Decisions and activities are aligned with existing laws, long-term plans, and defined objectives.
- Decisions, resource allocation, and operational processes are carried out in a rights-based manner that considers the needs of all societal groups, ensures equal opportunities, and upholds fairness.

ii. More holistic, effective, and efficient functioning

- Decision-makers and implementers consider short-, medium-, and long-term impacts on all groups, future generations, and the environment.
- Public resources (time, financial resources, and human capital) are used efficiently to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Shortcomings in institutional functioning, ways of working, and service quality are identified, and institutional capacity is strengthened through continuous improvement.

iii. More trustworthy stakeholder relationships

- Decisions, the data/evidence on which they are based, the use of resources, and resulting outcomes are made accessible, understandable, and publicly available.
- Authorities are ready to publicly explain the reasoning behind their decisions, activities, and outcomes in evidence-based manner.
- By increasing cooperation and partnerships among stakeholders, greater resources are mobilized and shared outcomes are achieved.

GOOD GOVERNANCE EXAMPLE 1: REBUILDING A CITY AFTER A DISASTER

Following the February 6, 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, the government set a critical objective in the Twelfth Development Plan: to rebuild the affected cities in a disaster resilient manner. Which would ensure a good quality of life. The Plan envisaged a recovery process that is “people centered, participatory, inclusive, accountable, and transparent.”

In this context, the principles of good governance offer the following benefits in reconstruction processes:

- **Participation:** It is vital to involve citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in reconstruction planning. When communities are able to monitor the reconstruction processes, trust increases and resources could be utilized more effectively.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** For public trust, it is essential to share information on reconstruction plans, budgets, and progress. For example, reporting how many kilometers of water pipelines have been repaired or how available funds for this activity have been spent can help to demonstrate that the process is being carried out properly.
- **Inclusiveness:** A fair recovery and reconstruction process requires that new housing, infrastructure, and public services be accessible to everyone. This entails taking into account the needs of women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities in the design process.

For further information: From Disaster to Development: Civic Engagement©, Argüden Governance Academy Publications

GOOD GOVERNANCE EXAMPLE 2: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BUILDING TRUST

The participation and contribution of civil society are of critical importance for the development of public policies and practices. This approach is key for developing successful and trustworthy policies. Good governance practices anticipates the involvement of citizens and civil society organizations—such as associations, neighbourhood councils, professional bodies including bar associations or chambers of commerce—in a meaningful manner to the local governments'

- agenda-setting,
- decision-making,
- resource allocation,
- stakeholder relationship management,
- oversight processes.

In this way, both governing quality improves and more effective outcomes are achieved, while trust among stakeholders is strengthened.

For further information: Civil Engagement Model®, Argüden Governance Academy Publications

EUROPEAN LABEL OF GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE

CHAPTER 2

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN LABEL OF GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE

From an international perspective, the Council of Europe carries out the most comprehensive and detailed work aimed at strengthening democracy and good governance at the local level. The Council of Europe, of which Türkiye is a founding member, was established in Strasbourg in 1949 to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Today, the Council of Europe brings together 46 member states across the European continent, representing more than 700 million people.

Over the years, the Council of Europe has adopted more than 200 legally binding conventions in the fields of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. These include landmark instruments such as the Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence; the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse; and the European Social Charter, which aims to safeguard economic and social rights. In addition, the Council of Europe conducts extensive work in areas such as democratic citizenship, education, youth participation, media freedom, integrity in sport, and artificial intelligence.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, an institution of the Council of Europe, brings together more than 600 elected representatives with the aim of promoting grassroots democracy. The Congress is responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in the Council of Europe's member states. As the voice of municipalities and regions in Europe, it works in cooperation with the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to promote consultation and political dialogue between national governments and local and regional authorities.

The Congress is composed of two chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It consists of 306 full members and 306 substitute members appointed for a five-year term and represents more than 130,000 local and regional authorities across the 46 member states of the Council of Europe. The work of the Congress is carried out through three committees: the Monitoring Committee, the Governance Committee, and the Social Inclusion Committee.⁵

⁵ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/overview>

The European Label of Governance Excellence

In 2008, within the framework of the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level, the Council of Europe adopted the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance as its core reference. These principles articulated a shared European vision in areas such as transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and sound financial management.⁶

Subsequently, with Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5, the framework for “good democratic governance” was updated, and the ELoGE mechanism was restructured under a new Benchmark Framework consisting of 36 sets of objectives and 72 indicators designed to measure the governance performance of local governments.⁷ Following the Reykjavik Summit, responsibility for the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) was transferred from the Council of Europe to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Key milestones include:

- **2007:** Adoption of the *Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level* at the Valencia Ministerial Conference.
- **2008:** Adoption of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance and establishment of the ELoGE framework.
- **2023:** Launch of the second version of ELoGE following the update of the European Framework for Good Democratic Governance through Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5.
- **2024:** Transfer of responsibility for ELoGE to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities after the Reykjavik Summit.

ELoGE is a governance standard awarded to local authorities that can demonstrate their level of good democratic governance in line with the objectives and indicators defined in the framework through presenting the evidence. At the same time, it serves as an improvement tool by making visible both the strengths of institutions and the areas open to improvement, thereby initiating a continuous improvement cycle. This mechanism promotes good governance across local authorities operating in different countries. Within the Council of Europe’s ELoGE approach, the assessment process is supported by self-assessment tools as well as surveys conducted among citizens, elected representatives, and local public officials.

The 2024 update of the ELoGE framework introduced a shift “from structure to behavior” and toward a more “outcome-oriented” approach, expanding the framework to include themes such as digital democracy, the climate crisis, and urban resilience. A list of possible evidence have been incorporated to assess different levels of governance maturity. As part of these efforts, the Argüden Governance Academy participated in the meeting held in Riga, Latvia, in May 2023 and submitted 125 proposed new indicators along with a list of possible evidence for consideration by the Council of Europe and other participants.

⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/centre-of-expertise-for-multilevel-governance/12-principles>

⁷ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/centre-of-expertise-for-multilevel-governance/eloge>

Comparison of the 12 Principles of ELoGE: 2008 Strategy vs. 2023 Updated Framework

12 PRINCIPLES (2008 STRATEGY)	UPDATED 12 PRINCIPLES (2023 RECOMMENDATION)	DEVELOPMENT AXIS
Fair conduct of elections, representation, and participation	Democratic participation	Transition from an election-focused and consultative participation approach to a continuous, inclusive, and measurable model of democratic participation
Human rights, cultural diversity, and social cohesion	Human rights	Human rights strengthened as a distinct and central principle
Rule of law	Rule of law	Principle retained and strengthened
Ethical conduct	Public ethics	Shift from individual ethical behaviour to institutional ethical governance
Accountability	Accountability	Continuity preserved while strengthening implementation and oversight dimensions
Openness and transparency	Openness and transparency	Scope expanded through digitalization and data-driven governance
Effectiveness and efficiency	Effective, efficient, and sound administration	Evolution from performance focus to institutional resilience
Responsiveness	Responsiveness	Continued emphasis on timely and high-quality responses to citizens' expectations
Competence and capacity	Leadership, competence, and capacity	Leadership dimension added to technical capacity
Innovation and openness to change	Openness to change and innovation	Principle retained; emphasis on innovation, adaptability, and development in public administration strengthened
Sustainability and long-term orientation	Sustainability and long-term orientation	Climate, social, and financial sustainability dimensions deepened
Sound financial management	Sound financial and economic management	Expansion from fiscal discipline to a macroeconomic governance perspective

Overall, while the 2008 Strategy focused on defining the core principles of good governance, the 2023 ELoGE Framework deepened its approach along the axes of human rights, leadership, resilience, and sustainability. This framework is aligned with Türkiye's legal framework, national development plan, and numerous public policies, and through ELoGE it is possible to make tangible contributions to the implementation of these regulations and objectives.

Taken as a whole, through ELoGE the Council of Europe aims to raise awareness of good governance culture across all public institutions, establish governance quality standards, and encourage the lasting institutionalization of these standards. In this context, ELoGE seeks to strengthen institutional capacity and resilience within public bodies, enhance levels of public trust, support international reputation, and facilitate the sharing of good practices.

From the perspective of local governments, ELoGE is designed to measure

and assess governance performance through evidence-based evaluation of good democratic governance principles, objectives, and indicators. While the framework can be adapted to national contexts, it is emphasized that the principles of equivalence and quality assurance must be preserved during such adaptations. The current ELoGE framework consists of 12 principles, with three objectives defined for each principle and two indicators for each objective—amounting to a total of 12 principles, 36 objectives, and 72 indicators.

The implementation process involves evidence-based self-assessment, submission of an evidence portfolio for the relevant indicators, and final evaluation by an independent jury. Surveys conducted among different stakeholder groups serve solely to support the local authority's self-assessment process and are not directly included in the jury's scoring. Jury members are required to be experienced senior civil servants, academics, and representatives of civil society. This structure ensures that the Label is awarded in an independent, fair, and credible manner.

Benefits Offered by the ELoGE

ELoGE aims to make good governance a standard practice within local governments and to ensure its continuous improvement. Local authorities that receive the Label or embark on the ELoGE journey are expected to demonstrate ongoing progress in the field of good governance and to take improvement-oriented, action-focused steps toward excellence. These efforts contribute, on the one hand, to the institutionalization of good governance within local governments and, on the other hand, to improving the quality of decision-making, resource utilization, and service delivery processes. They also strengthen the functioning of local governments and their relationships with stakeholders. Furthermore, ELoGE enhances levels of trust and satisfaction among decision-makers and employees within local authorities. As a result, local governments are better able to generate more holistic, inclusive, and effective outcomes within their areas of responsibility, using their authority and resources more efficiently.

In summary, ELoGE supports local governments in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities in a more democratic and effective manner, continuously strengthening their institutional capacities, and sustainably enhancing development and quality of life. Implementing this process within an internationally recognized standard framework enables local governments to become more innovative and effective at both national and international levels.

The main benefits that ELoGE can provide may be summarized as follows:

- Encouraging the concrete understanding and ownership of the concept of governance among political, bureaucratic, and executive actors within local governments

- Providing a holistic, measurable, and continuously improving framework for good governance, democracy, rights-based service delivery, and effective management
- Enabling local governments to measure themselves, continuously improve their quality of governance practices, and participate to a journey toward excellence
- Strengthening institutional capacity by improving organizational functioning and the quality of ways of working
- Increasing the level of coordination and alignment among organizational units
- Supporting more appropriate, effective, and efficient decision-making, implementation, and evaluation through data-driven, measurement-focused, and well-documented processes
- Promoting inclusive approaches that take into account sustainable development, environmental protection, the fight against discrimination, and the needs and expectations of different social groups—particularly disadvantaged groups
- Encouraging citizens, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders to provide feedback to and engage with local governments within a good governance framework
- Offering a common standard for international networks, funding opportunities, and partnerships

ELoGE has a distinctive quality in that it transforms good governance into a holistic, concrete, measurable, and continuously improving standard for local governments. In addition, it is valuable for providing international recognition and benchmarking opportunities. The strongest impact of ELoGE emerges as the culture and principles of good governance become embedded in institutional culture, reflected in daily operations, and deepened over time. For example, beyond having guiding objectives and indicators that support more inclusive, meaningful, and effective civic participation, the encouragement of innovative practices in this area plays a decisive role. Issues such as climate change, development, and the consideration of groups including children, persons with disabilities, women, migrants, and older persons are addressed as fundamental requirements.

Beyond the benefits listed above, the ELoGE tool should be regarded as a complementary framework in Türkiye that aims to elevate the minimum governance standards prescribed by local government legislation to a level of “excellence.” It should be particularly emphasized that ELoGE is directly linked to existing legislation and that the majority of its indicators are designed in alignment with the legal framework. In other words, ELoGE

can be instrumental in identifying administrative and financial risks within local governments and mitigating them through appropriate improvement measures.

The principle-legislation mapping below has been updated in line with the principle headings of the new ELoGE framework and includes a practical complementarity (excellence) dimension.

Mapping of ELoGE Principles and Turkish Legislation

ELoGE PRINCIPLE	RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN TÜRKİYE	PRACTICAL COMPLEMENTARITY (EXCELLENCE DIMENSION)
Democratic Participation / Participation	Municipal Law No. 5393 (Right(s) of city residents); Regulation on City Councils; Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018	Meaningful participation, feedback loops, and inclusive participation methods to ensure "meaningful" engagement
Fairness and Equality	Directly linked to the principle of equality and fundamental rights regulated under Articles 10, 13, and 21 of the Constitution	Principles translated into concrete operational and policy practices
Openness and Transparency	Right to Information Act No. 4982; Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018	Proactive data disclosure, open data, clear reporting, and integrated reporting practices
Accountability	Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018; Court of Accounts Law No. 6085	Monitoring mechanisms explaining deviations between targets and performance, and citizen feedback systems
Public Ethics	Regulation on Ethical Principles for Public Officials; Public Procurement Law No. 4734	Conflict of interest management, whistleblowing mechanisms, and effective complaint processes for ethical violations
Sound Financial Management	Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018; Civil Servants Law No. 657	Long-term financial sustainability, risk-based budgeting, and investment prioritization

THE ELoGE JOURNEY IN TÜRKİYE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 3

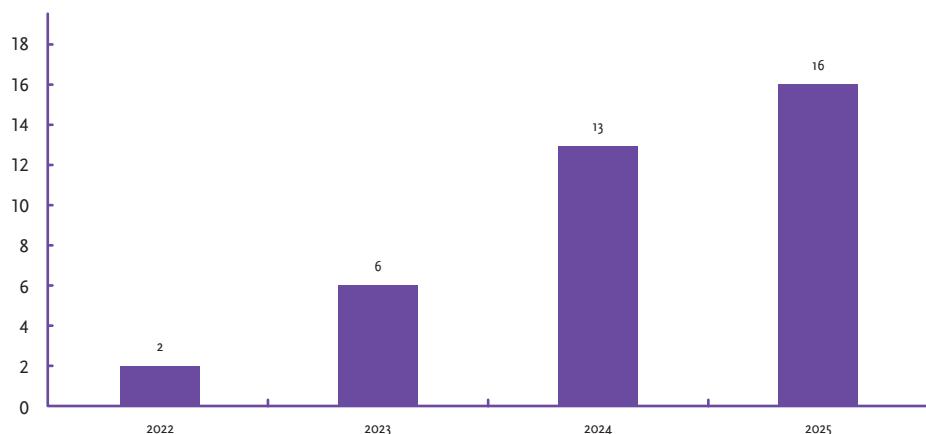
THE ELoGE JOURNEY IN TÜRKİYE

The Introduction of the Label in Türkiye

The European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) was awarded in Türkiye for the first time in 2022 within the framework of the **Integrated Municipal Governance Model project**. Coordinated by the Argüden Governance Academy, this project was implemented in partnership with the Council of Europe, the Union of Marmara Municipalities, and the municipalities of Sultanbeyli and Şişli, where pilot applications were carried out in two district municipalities. Within this process, interviews were conducted with municipal department heads to perform a gap analysis using the ELoGE framework, and surveys were administered to municipal staff, citizens, and council members. Subsequently, action plans were prepared for both municipalities, outlining short-, medium-, and long-term improvement measures. As a result of the implemented improvements, Sultanbeyli and Şişli Municipalities became the first local authorities in Türkiye to be awarded the ELoGE label for a one-year period at the end of 2022.

The implementation of ELoGE in Türkiye is carried out through a structure defined as the “National Platform,” which is authorized by the Council of Europe to award the Label in Türkiye. The coordination of the National Platform is undertaken by the Argüden Governance Academy, with the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (TBB), the Association of European Democracy (ALDA), and Özgeçin University participating as partners and contributing to the process. Over the four-year period from 2022 to 2025, the dissemination of the Label across Türkiye and its adoption by local governments continued to grow steadily.

THE NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES RECEIVED ELoGE OVER YEARS



2022 Pilot Implementation

1. Sultanbeyli Municipality
2. Şişli Municipality

2023 Period

1. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality
2. Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality
3. Bağcılar Municipality
4. Gebze Municipality
5. Sultanbeyli Municipality
6. Şişli Municipality

2024 Period

1. Adana Metropolitan Municipality
2. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality
3. Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality

4. Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality
5. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality
6. Amasya Municipality
7. Niğde Municipality
8. Avcılar Municipality
9. Bağcılar Municipality
10. Etimesgut Municipality
11. Kadıköy Municipality
12. Melikgazi Municipality
13. Sultanbeyli Municipality

2025 Period

1. Adana Metropolitan Municipality
2. Ankara Metropolitan Municipality
3. Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality
4. Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality
5. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality
6. Manisa Metropolitan Municipality
7. Avcılar Municipality
8. Bağcılar Municipality
9. Bakırköy Municipality
10. Bornova Municipality
11. Etimesgut Municipality
12. Fatih Municipality
13. Kadıköy Municipality
14. Odunpazarı Municipality
15. Sultanbeyli Municipality
16. Tepebaşı Municipality

Summary Table by Year

YEAR	NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES AWARDED ELoGE	PROCESS CHARACTERISTICS
2022	2	Pilot implementation
2023	6	Initial dissemination
2024	13	Scaling up and institutionalization
2025	16	Dissemination and consolidation under the new version

Throughout this period, it was observed that ELoGE began to gain wider recognition and dissemination across Türkiye through promotional activities, training programs, and public announcements. At the same time, specific improvements and gains were identified within local governments participating in the Label process. As illustrated in the table above, the process evolved each year with distinct characteristics. The introduction, development, and dissemination of the Label in Türkiye facilitated systematic learning and the accumulation of experience over time.

Benefits of Annual Label Renewal

In Türkiye, the right to use the ELoGE label is granted on an annual basis. From this perspective, the available data indicate that as the number of annual applications increases, the development impact of the process becomes stronger. By comparing the level of progress achieved under each principle by four municipalities that have been awarded the Label since 2023 (three consecutive years) and six municipalities that have been awarded the Label since 2024 (two consecutive years), the following findings were identified. Although the dataset is limited, the findings below are able to reflect the observed development trends.

Comparative Progress by Principle

PRINCIPLE	SHARE OF MUNICIPALITIES SHOWING IMPROVEMENT (3 YEARS OF LABEL USE)	SHARE OF MUNICIPALITIES SHOWING IMPROVEMENT (2 YEARS OF LABEL USE)
Participation, Representation, and Fair Conduct of Elections	100%	50%
Human Rights, Cultural Diversity, and Social Cohesion	75%	17%
Rule of Law	75%	67%
Ethical Conduct	75%	67%
Accountability	75%	0%
Openness and Transparency	100%	67%
Effectiveness and Efficiency	50%	83%
Competence and Capacity	100%	50%
Responsiveness	75%	17%
Sound Financial Management	0%	17%
Sustainability and Long-Term Orientation	25%	0%
Openness to Innovation and Change	25%	17%
Yenilik ve Değişime Açık Olma	25%	17%

The table above shows that applying to the process every year and the increase in the number of applications:

- strengthen the level of achieved improvements,
- reinforce development rates in correlation with the number of applications, and
- demonstrate that annual applications enable municipalities to implement governance-related improvement actions in a more structured manner.

The results further indicate that among the four municipalities that have applied for and received the Label for three consecutive years:

- all municipalities achieved improvement in three criteria,
- three municipalities achieved improvement in five criteria,
- two municipalities achieved improvement in one criterion,
- one municipality achieved improvement in two criteria, and
- no municipality showed improvement in the area of sound financial management.

This finding may be related to the fact that municipal financial management had already reached a certain level of maturity.

Using the same perspective, it was observed that municipalities applying for the Label for two consecutive years also achieved progress. However, the results indicate that this progress has not yet reached the same proportional level as that of municipalities applying for three years. An evaluation of the results for the six municipalities shows that:

- five municipalities achieved improvement in one criterion,
- four municipalities achieved improvement in three criteria,
- three municipalities achieved improvement in two criteria,
- one municipality achieved improvement in four criteria, and
- no municipality achieved improvement in two criteria.

Convergence of these two groups of municipalities could be achieved by implementing peer-learning approaches. These ten municipalities could share their experiences with new participants can help to motivate them for getting the Label. Such an effort could support the dissemination of good governance culture.

Throughout this process, the observations and experiences gained revealed the following achievements:

- Municipalities better understood the governance concept and institutionalized governance practices.
- A culture of measuring the quality of governance practices through evidence-based manner has been developed.
- A principle-based approach of “objectives–indicators–evidence–measurement and scoring” has been put into practice.
- Municipalities gained the ability to assess and improve their institutional capacities from a good governance perspective.
- The quality of communication, interaction, and participation with stakeholders (civil society organizations, neighbourhood representatives, and public institutions) has been improved.
- The vision for continuous improvement of governance quality and striving for excellence has been strengthened.
- The good governance principles prescribed by legislation began to be implemented more effectively.

- In some municipalities, good governance offices and teams were established, and institutional initiatives have been developed.
- The number of municipalities applying regularly to the ELoGE process increased, and their level of progress is higher compared to other participants.

During this period, the relationships and experiences triggered by the ELoGE process led the Argüden Governance Academy to carry out complementary support activities. Upon the recommendation of the Argüden Governance Academy, the Participatory Democracy School was implemented in Türkiye for the first time through the cooperation of the Council of Europe and the Istanbul City Council. The initiative focused on identifying the principles and tools through which civic participation can be strengthened at the local level. In this context, civic participation tools, good practices, and experiences used in various European countries were reviewed and experienced through workshops by participants. Specific areas such as public space design, participatory budgeting, youth participation, and citizens' panels were addressed. The characteristics and processes of civic participation were shared.

In 2025, a workshop entitled “*Towards a New Local Democracy*” was held in Ankara through the partnership of the Argüden Governance Academy and the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, with the support of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. With the participation of more than 100 attendees, the workshop addressed findings and solution proposals for strengthening democracy starting at the local level, both across Europe and in Türkiye. Through this event, the Council of Europe's report “*Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe*,” published in May 2025, was evaluated for the first time through a workshop held in Türkiye.

These activities show that the implementation of the ELoGE label is not merely an evaluation and certification mechanism; rather, it also triggers multi-dimensional initiatives that support the dissemination and strengthening of local democracy and governance quality while making tangible contributions in these fields.

The ELoGE Türkiye National Platform as of 2025



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the process of disseminating and implementing the ELoGE tool in Türkiye, a range of experiences have been gained, and important areas have been identified. These experiences have revealed that local governments face challenges in certain areas and that these areas require further strengthening. The main findings are summarized below:

- Leadership ownership regarding ELoGE and local governance quality accelerates the improvement and adoption of the concept and facilitates implementation efforts.
- Dedicated efforts should be spent to embed good governance practices in all units and processes of institutions.
- There are significant differences in governance capacity among local governments.
- There is a need for improving participation practices for making it more meaningful.
- There is a risk that the improvement cycle may not be sustained after the municipality gets the label.
- Technology and digital tools are not effectively utilized in line with good governance objectives.
- There are shortcomings in the documentation and reporting related to stakeholder engagement processes.

Based on these findings, and for illustrative purposes, it is recommended to take below activities:

i. Supportive actions by central government and municipal associations

- Central government and municipal associations should support local governments in the field of governance excellence. This may include benchmarking the ELoGE framework against legislation, institutional structures, and operational practices. Which would help to identify improvement areas, and to take necessary improvement actions.
- Developing ELoGE-based assessments and recommendations to inform legislative and institutional reforms.

- Designing and implementing financial incentives and other reward mechanisms related to the ELoGE framework at the central government level.
- Establishing working groups on ELoGE within municipal associations and supporting joint initiatives.
- Informing the Turkish Court of Account, İller Bankası, and other relevant institutions about ELoGE and ensuring alignment with audit and financing processes.
- Supporting cooperation and partnerships for the development of innovative practices in the field of good governance.

ii. Increasing innovative practices within local governments

- Conducting strategic planning, allocating resources, and implementing activities for improving governance quality.
- Establishing Governance Excellence Units within local governments and organizing continuous improvement activities, such as staff training programs.
- Providing Governance Literacy training for newly recruited staff or those with limited prior knowledge of the subject.
- Using the ELoGE framework as a guiding tool in digitalization, smart city initiatives, and local government activities.
- Publishing annual Governance Quality Reports at the local government level for effective disclosure to the public

iii. Social ownership and dissemination

- Establishing development- and implementation-oriented cooperation with city councils, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Promoting one ELoGE principle each month and organizing activities focused on that principle throughout the year.
- Encouraging universities, research institutions, civil society organizations, and other actors to conduct studies on local governance excellence.
- Strengthening governance excellence through tools such as Municipal Governance Scorecards, the Civil Engagement Model, and Participatory Budgeting.

CONCLUSION

ELoGE should be regarded not merely as a label or a symbol of reputation, but as a cultural transformation tool that enables the dissemination, continuous improvement, and deep institutionalization of democracy and good governance within local governments. Starting the ELoGE journey should be understood as an ongoing process of improvement in which the principles of good governance permeate daily operations and are embedded in institutional culture. At the core of this journey lies an approach centred on measuring governance quality, evaluating performance, learning, and continuous improvement.

The four-year experience in Türkiye has demonstrated that ELoGE strengthens the concept of good governance and institutional capacity, and—most importantly—enhances the trust relationship between citizens and local governments. The steadily increasing interest in ELoGE and the growing number of municipalities awarded the Label each year serve as the clearest indicators of this impact.

In addition to the increase in number of applicant municipalities, data obtained through the evaluation of applications and awarded labels show that municipalities applying more frequently have achieved improvements across a wider range of areas compared to those with fewer applications to the award process. This can largely be attributed to the fact that annual assessments enable clearer identification of development areas and support the implementation of targeted strengthening actions.

At the same time, it is evident that the ELoGE journey is still at an early stage. In particular, the new development areas emphasized in the updated 2024 version of ELoGE—such as digital transformation, climate resilience, social cohesion, and participatory democracy—require local governments to adopt a more holistic perspective, make stronger commitments, and engage in multi-stakeholder cooperation.

The potential of the Label to establish a lasting and transformative culture of good governance in Türkiye is significant. To realize this potential, a multi-stakeholder, integrated, and long-term strategy should be developed and implemented with determination, involving the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, central government institutions, the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, regional municipal associations, local governments, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. Such a collective effort will make a meaningful contribution to strengthening democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance at the local level, ultimately serving to improve quality of life, build a sustainable future, and strengthen democracy.

APPENDICES

ANNEX 1

Municipalities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in Türkiye may use the guiding questions below to comprehensively address the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE). These questions are structured to help institutions analyse their current situation and advance along their journey toward excellence.

1. Vision and Strategic Readiness

- To what extent do the municipality's mission, vision, and governance principles align with the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of Good Governance?
- Does the municipal leadership view good governance merely as a procedural requirement, or does it embrace it as an institutional culture?
- Has the objective of obtaining the ELoGE label been aligned with the municipality's strategic plan and its medium and long term goals?

2. Measuring Governance Quality (Self Assessment)

- Does the municipality regularly and objectively assess its governance quality using the Self Assessment Framework consisting of 12 principles, 36 objectives, and 72 indicators?
- Are the scores assigned for each principle (e.g. Participation, Transparency, Accountability) supported by concrete and verifiable evidence?
- Have different departments and units within the municipality been actively involved in the self assessment process?
- Have unit based and activity based improvement plans been prepared and implemented throughout the year?

3. Stakeholder Participation and External Assessment

- How are public perception and satisfaction regarding governance principles measured through the Citizen Survey among users of municipal services?
- Based on these measurement results, are appropriate awareness raising, capacity building, communication, and engagement activities carried out?
- To what extent does the Council Member Survey reflect the awareness and participation of local decision makers in governance processes?

- Based on these measurement results, are appropriate awareness raising, capacity building, communication, and engagement activities carried out?
- To what extent are civil society organizations involved as “civic oversight” actors in monitoring and evaluating the municipality’s good governance standards?
- Based on these measurement results, are appropriate awareness raising, capacity building, communication, and engagement activities carried out?
- Do citizens and civil society actors use ELoGE and other assessment tools (such as the Municipality Governance Scorecard and the Civil Engagement Model) to measure good governance?

4. Integrated Governance and Implementation

- Does the municipality use any approaches or tools (e.g. the Integrated Municipal Governance Model©) to embed good governance principles across all structures and processes?
- Are the 12 governance principles implemented in a holistic manner in decision making, resource allocation, and service delivery processes?
- Is coordination, cooperation, and information flow among different municipal units of sufficient quality to support integrated governance?

5. Continuous Improvement and Institutionalization

- Does the Gap Analysis Report and Action Plan prepared at the end of the ELoGE application process include concrete steps to improve institutional weaknesses?
- Have ELoGE training programs provided to municipal staff and council members helped establish a shared governance language and culture within the institution?
- After the Label has been awarded, has a regular monitoring and reporting mechanism been established to maintain and further develop good governance standards?

6. International Cooperation and Peer Learning

- Does the municipality engage in experience sharing with other local authorities by using good practice platforms offered by the Council of Europe and/or municipal associations?
- Is the ELoGE label used as a strategic tool to enhance the municipality’s reputation among international institutions and to strengthen its capacity to access grants and loan resources?

ANNEX 2

IEWS ON THE ELOGE EXPERIENCE IN TÜRKİYE

During our work carried out for the ELoGE application, guided by the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of Good Governance, we completed the transformation of the municipality's institutional structure into a transparent, accountable, and data driven model. From decision making processes to resource utilization, the development of institutional standards and measurement tools at every stage enabled the municipality to evolve beyond being merely a service providing organization into a disciplined institution centred on ethical values and democratic participation. Critical processes such as decision making, resource management, and service delivery were rendered open to public scrutiny through systematic mechanisms and ethical standards. Thanks to updated departmental regulations introduced during this process, institutional functioning was freed from dependency on individuals and structured in a systematic manner, while inter departmental coordination and service quality were strategically safeguarded.

The most tangible benefit of this institutional transformation has been the diffusion of a rights based and inclusive governance approach across all levels. From the municipal council to field personnel, a way of working that safeguards the rights of vulnerable groups and standardizes interaction with civil society has been adopted at every level. This branding process not only enabled more efficient use of municipal resources but also made trust, transparency, and sustainable development integral components of the municipality's institutional identity.

Nalan BAŞARAN ÖZTÜRK

Director of Strategy Development, Avcılar Municipality

(Contributed to ELoGE activities as Director of Strategy Development at Şişli Municipality during the 2022 period)

As Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, we have started the ELoGE journey not to obtain a certificate, but to institutionalize a governance approach as a best practice for capital of the Republic. We embraced governance not as a procedure, but as an institutional stance.

As one of the first two metropolitan municipalities in Türkiye to receive this label, we have had our approach to governance internationally recognized. Throughout this process, we placed citizen feedback at the centre of our decision making processes and transformed transparency from a preference into an indispensable institutional principle. While strengthening our institutional capacity, we invested in our human resources and built a municipality that learns and continuously improves itself. We regarded innovation not as an option, but as a necessity for adapting to changing needs. We managed our resources with a long term and sustainable perspective that addresses today's needs while safeguarding tomorrow's Ankara. We positioned inclusiveness, human rights, and social cohesion not at the margins, but at the core of service delivery. The ELoGE process enabled us to make what we do well measurable, to courageously identify areas for improvement, and to assume the responsibility of doing better every day. For us, good governance is no longer a goal—it is a standard.

We consider this label a an indicator for 1 consistency, trust, and sustainable value creation for Ankara's future.

Melek Günden Çınar
Head of the Strategy Development Department,
Ankara Metropolitan Municipality

Receiving the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) for three consecutive years is not, for us, a story of “getting labels”; rather, it represents the annual reaffirmation of our determination to embed good governance at the very core of the institution. The fact that ELoGE is valid for only one year serves as an important reminder that keeps this determination alive. The label is not a title to be obtained once and set aside; instead, it transforms governance into a field of commitment that is measured, reviewed, and continuously improved.

In our Municipality’s 2025–2029 Strategic Plan, the strategic reflection of this approach is clearly defined through the objective of “enhancing institutional service quality through a mindset of continuous improvement through effective governance.” Accordingly, we have positioned ELoGE as a concrete, auditable, and improvable tool that translates this objective into our day to day practices. We are aware that participation does not organizing meetings and events; it means monitoring how participation is reflected in decision-making processes, making this impact visible, and securing the outcomes within the framework of transparency and accountability.

The most significant turning point of this three-year journey has been the transition from management driven by individual initiatives to a systematic model based on institutional standards. We strengthened critical processes such as decision-making, resource management, and service delivery through appropriate management systems and operational frameworks designed to meet—and where possible exceed—the demands, needs, and expectations of our stakeholders. As a result, internal coordination and service quality have moved beyond “well-intentioned practices” and evolved into a realm of “measurable management,” monitored through indicators, evaluated based on results, and linked to continuous improvement actions. This transformation has also provided the strongest foundation for perception and reputation management, as institutional reputation is primarily built on consistency, predictability, and the capacity to deliver services at a uniform standard.

At this point, ELoGE’s framework of 12 principles has offered us not merely a checklist, but a compass. While these principles have strengthened a shared language and a common reflex for working to the same standards within the institution, externally they have enabled trust, transparency, and institutional reputation to grow together along a single, reinforcing trajectory. The ceremony culminating in the presentation of the label represents far more to us than a ceremonial moment; it signifies the public affirmation of institutional capacity, standards, and a disciplined approach to development, as well as a public commitment to sustaining a strong culture of good governance.

ELoGE enables us to transform trust into a manageable, measurable, and sustainable institutional output. Efficient use of resources is, of course, indispensable; however, the true value that creates lasting impact in public administration lies in strengthening transparency, the sense of fairness, and the perception of service quality simultaneously in the eyes of our citizens. For this reason, ELoGE is, for us, more than a visible symbol of good governance; it is a concrete reminder of the promise we make to ourselves each year as an institution—to always do better.

Within this framework, we recommend that municipalities applying for ELoGE approach it not as an “application for a label,” but as a framework for institutional transformation; that they establish a strong discipline of evidence and data from the outset; and that they avoid confining stakeholder participation merely to isolated activities.

Dr. Serbay ÖZTÜRK
Director of Strategy Development, Bağcılar Municipality

Developed by the Council of Europe, the ELoGE label provides an internationally referenced framework aimed at enabling local governments to assess and enhance their institutional capacities in line with the principles of good governance. For Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality, the ELoGE process functioned not merely as an evaluation mechanism, but as a comprehensive institutional learning and improvement process in which governance practices were analysed on an evidence based basis and strengths as well as areas open to improvement were systematically identified. During the implementation of the process, the competent ELoGE experts of the Argüden Governance Academy made significant contributions to ensuring a shared and accurate understanding of the Council of Europe's good governance standards within the municipality, structuring self assessment and evidence based reporting processes in a sound manner and conducting evaluation stages with methodological consistency. Thanks to these contributions, practices in core governance areas—such as decision making, participation, transparency, accountability, and service delivery—were addressed in alignment with Council of Europe standards, strengthening a shared governance language and a sustainable improvement approach within the institution. At the same time, the ELoGE framework contributed to positioning Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality's governance capacity on a more coherent basis for internal stakeholders and on a more understandable, comparable, and trustworthy basis for external stakeholders and the public.

Evren KOLSAL
Head of the Strategy Development Department,
Eskişehir Metropolitan Municipality

As Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, throughout the ELoGE process we transformed our institutional structure into a governance model that is more transparent, accountable, and grounded in data and evidence, guided by the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of Good Governance. Institutional standards and measurement tools were developed across all stages—from decision making and resource utilization to service delivery, monitoring, and evaluation. In doing so, our municipality went beyond being merely a service providing organization and strengthened a governance structure centred on ethical values and democratic participation.

Through the systematic mechanisms established during this process, and as a requirement of our transparent governance approach, decision making, fiscal management, and service processes become more transparent and become open to public scrutiny. Inter departmental coordination was strengthened through the establishment of a Good Governance Working Group, and a culture of good governance was embraced across the institution.

This holistic approach ensured more effective and efficient use of public resources while making trust, transparency, and sustainability inseparable elements of our municipality's institutional identity. With the ELoGE process, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality achieved a significant success recognized at the international level by transforming a contemporary local governance approach into a lasting governance culture. This progress was realized through determined efforts carried out under the visionary leadership of Mayor Fatma Şahin and the guidance of Secretary General Sezer Cihan, strengthening the international visibility and recognition of the Gaziantep Model while ensuring that the achievements attained are translated into a permanent and sustainable structure.

Dr. Ekrem ASLAN
Coordinator, Good Governance Working Group
Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality

For Sultanbeyli Municipality, the Council of Europe's ELoGE label has served not as an end result, but as a guiding framework that supports continuous improvement. In this context, many practices already in place within our municipality were revisited in line with the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, inclusiveness, and effectiveness; shortcomings were addressed, and strengths were further enhanced.

As a result of this process, our decision making, implementation, and reporting mechanisms were rendered more transparent, traceable, and accountable, and our governance approach was anchored in institutional standards. To strengthen participatory democracy, the City Council was restructured as an inclusive and effective consultation platform comprising representatives from all segments of society, and the opinions and recommendations discussed within the City Council were conveyed to the municipal council and directly reflected in decision making processes.

In line with the principles of citizen centric and effective service delivery, the municipality's communication structure was redesigned, and the Sultanbeyli Communication Centre (SİMER) was established. Through this system, citizen requests, suggestions, and complaints were rendered measurable, traceable, and feedback based, thereby strengthening the administration's responsiveness and capacity to respond to citizens.

At the same time, a data driven and evidence based management model was established, grounded in the principles of effectiveness and efficiency. Within the framework of inclusive governance, access to decision making processes was expanded for all segments of society; in this regard, units responsible for relations with neighbourhood representatives and civil society were strengthened, and demands conveyed through these channels were systematically integrated into decision making processes.

All these efforts have strengthened our municipality's institutional capacity, human resource competencies, and culture of continuous improvement, contributing to the establishment of a sustainable, trustworthy, and participatory local governance model.

Mehmet AKTAŞ
Director of Strategy Development, Sultanbeyli Municipality

AUTHORS

Dr. İnan İzci

*ELoGE Türkiye Coordinator and Member of the Academic Board,
Argüden Governance Academy*

Dr. İzci completed his undergraduate studies in **Economic and Social Policy** at the University of London and obtained his master's degree in **European Public Policy** at the same university. He earned his PhD in Political Science from the Free University of Brussels, focusing on **metropolitan governance in the digital age**.

Since 2007, Dr. İzci has worked in the fields of **local governance, development, and international relations** at the Istanbul Provincial Special Administration, Sarıyer Municipality, and various other institutions. Since 2017, he has held multiple roles at the Argüden Governance Academy. He has served as the coordinator of projects and initiatives such as the **Municipal Governance Scorecard, Metropolitan Municipality Governance Scorecard, and Integrated and Inclusive Strategic Planning**. In 2023, he played an active role in organizing Türkiye's first **Council of Europe Participatory Democracy School** and contributed as a trainer. In addition, he served as a consultant in the **Municipal Financial Governance Project** implemented by the World Bank in 2019. At the international level, he has developed and implemented numerous collaborations and initiatives aimed at promoting a culture and climate of good governance at both local and central government levels.

In 2022, Dr. İzci coordinated the **Integrated Municipal Governance Model** project, which enabled the introduction of the ELoGE label in Türkiye. Since then, he has served as the **National Coordinator of ELoGE**, contributing to the evaluation of label applications, the delivery of training programs, and the development of stakeholder relations.

Dr. Erkin Erimez

*ELoGE Türkiye Expert and Member of the Academic Board,
Argüden Governance Academy*

Dr. Erimez completed his undergraduate degree in **Electronic Engineering** at Bosphorus University, earned his **MBA in Marketing** at the same institution, and obtained his **PhD**—also from Bosphorus University—in the field of **strategic partnerships**.

Within the Argüden Governance Academy, he has contributed to work in the areas of **local governance, local development, sustainability, integrated reporting**, and related fields. He has served as an expert and author in numerous projects, including the **Municipality Governance Scorecard, Metropolitan Municipality Governance Scorecard, Integrated and Inclusive Strategic Planning, Integrated Municipal Governance Model**, and the **Civil Engagement Model**, among others. Since 2022, Dr. Erimez has been contributing as an expert to the dissemination, adoption, and evaluation of the **ELoGE label** in Türkiye.

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Argüden Governance Academy is a non-profit foundation dedicated to enhancing governance quality in the public, civil society, private sector, and international institutions. The Academy's mission is to improve the quality of governance to increase trust for organizations in order to achieve

a sustainable future and improve the quality of life. With the vision of being 'a center of excellence' for development and widespread adoption of good governance culture, the Academy brings together leaders from all age groups, private sector, civil society organizations, public institutions, and international organizations. Since 2014, the Academy has completed a decade of impactful initiatives, striving to foster the development and widespread adoption of a culture of trust at public, private, and civil society organizations.

In its 10-year journey, fostering trust in institutions through a holistic and integrated governance approach, the Academy has:

- Organized more than 100 training programs, graduating approximately 6,000 individuals.
- Evaluated the governance quality of around 1,500 institutions in 25 projects.
- Published over 100 publications, reports, and articles that intellectually guide the development of governance.
- Engaged with over 100,000 individuals through more than 350 events, contributing to the internalization of the culture of good governance in both individuals and institutions.
- Enhanced the value created by collaborating with over 350 institutions active in every sector.
- Leveraged in-kind contributions to the maximum extent, utilizing every \$1 of cash donation to raise a \$1.5 in-kind contribution. This approach enabled the implementation of activities with an economic cost of \$2.5 for each \$1 of donation.
- Benefited from the support of hundreds of volunteers who, believing in the importance of good governance for a sustainable future, contributed over 40,000 volunteer working hours to the Academy's initiatives.

Argüden Governance Academy is a non-profit foundation dedicated to enhancing governance quality in the public, civil society, private sector, and international institutions.

Our Purpose:
Improving quality of life and sustainability of the future.

Our Mission:
Improving quality of governance to improve trust for organizations.

Our Vision:
Being 'a center of excellence' for development and widespread adoption of good governance culture.

Target Audience:
Current and future leaders of public sector institutions, private sector companies, NGOs, and international institutions; as well as individuals of all ages, from 7 to 77

The Academy conducts impact research such as Sustainability Governance Scorecard® that analyzes over 200 Global Sustainability Leaders from 7 different stock exchanges to help improve peer learning on sustainability, which was picked among good examples to improve the sustainability on a global scale at the G20 Tokyo, and Municipality Governance Scorecard® that was recognized by the OECD and UN as a governance innovation for local governments, as well as developing and conducting education programs for public, corporate, and NGO leaders. Academy's education programs on governance also target children and youth, and a vibrant Youth Network has been developed covering 40 universities in over 20 cities.

The Academy also conducts good governance advocacy programs such as leading the process of awarding the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) and School on Participatory Democracy, in collaboration with international organizations such as the Council of Europe.

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For any further questions on the publication, please contact us:

Argüden Governance Academy

Akasya Caddesi No: 2 Göztepe Mah.,
Göksu Anadolu Hisarı, 34815 İstanbul, Türkiye

Phone: +90 (216) 280 51 14

E-mail: info@argudenacademy.org

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