

## Local Government and Civil Society

Local Government and Civil Society are key elements of the liberal understanding of a political system.

Local Government as one part of the political system of any country guarantees that there will be a distribution of power among different political players and not the accumulation of power in the hands of a central, often authoritarian government.

Civil society by liberal standards means that the citizen act self-responsible for and in their living environment in a democratic structure, not negating that there has to be a minimal state with rules and laws to guarantee democracy, human rights and freedom.

This seminar wants to provide the knowledge for a better understanding of the importance of local politics within a governmental framework to either build up or stabilize democracy and liberal individual freedom.

The seminar is divided into 3 phases:

**Phase I** (17.08. – 14.09.2008), held online, teaches the basics and prerequisites of local politics like decentralization, democratic and financial structures. Out of this group of online participants there will be selected up to 22 to continue with phase II and III.

**Phase II** (22.09. – 25.10.2008) again held online is mainly a preparation for the participants for phase III, a 1-week-seminar held in Gummersbach in October/November 2008.

**Phase III** (26.10. – 02.11.2008), the international seminar, taking place at the IAF in Gummersbach, Germany intensifies the knowledge of local government by introducing, how local government functions, how citizen get involved in it discusses limits to it, deals with the concept of lean management within a local government. And last but not least introduces to the liberal ideal of a working civil society.

It is the first time that this traditional seminar is conducted with an online phase. During this phase we will provide you with a general introduction into the system and structure of Local Government from a liberal point of view. We will also help you to become more acquainted with the preconditions required to establish a self-responsible Local Government and discuss with you the pros and cons of such a political structure as well as the image of Civil Society by liberal standards.

Besides your active participation in the different discussion fora, we also expect you to submit a short essay about the situation of Local Politics in your respective countries and share your knowledge and experiences with your co-participants. At the end of this online seminar phase we will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire.

Successful participants from this online phase I (August 17 – September 14, 2008) will later participate in another online phase II (September 22 – October 25, 2008) and will be invited to the international seminar on Local Government and Civil Society in Gummersbach, Germany (October 26 - November 2, 2008).

Online phase II will be a preparatory phase including both group as well as individual work, which is necessary for the international seminar to be a fruitful and sustainable event for all participants.

The one week seminar taking place in Gummersbach will mean working intensively on the topic to deepen in the knowledge of the structure, preconditions and problems arising when establishing a functioning Local Government. We will discuss the opportunities and limits of tasks for Local entities and how a civil society founded on liberal beliefs should be structured.

After the seminar in Germany you will have the opportunity of joining the international liberal network as members of the Liberal Club where you may continue to exchange ideas and experiences.

As has been mentioned above we can only choose a maximum of 22 participants from phase I to continue with the seminar curriculum and be invited to Gummersbach.

On what basis are we going to decide who will be invited? It will be a transparent process based on the mixed assessment of performance indicators and regional factors.

**Performance will be marked as follows:**

Personal Introduction	1 point
Continuity and quality of Fora contributions	up to a total of 5 points
Essay submitted	1 point
Quality of essay	up to a total of 5 points
Questionnaire	up to a total of 2 points

To secure an international and regional mix of participants, the Foundation will invite the two best performers from Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean Countries and Latin America. This gives a total of 12 participants. The remaining 12 participants will be chosen according to performance regardless of the region of residence.