

Jussi-Pekka Alanen • Managing Director • The association of Finnish local and regional authorities

The Ethics of Municipal Administration and Human Well-Being

The paper first outlines the historical roots of the Finnish and Nordic tradition of local self-government, based on strong individualism, sense of responsibility, and mutual trust. Municipal administration requires citizens who are willing to take responsibility for local government. The economic recession did not destroy the Finnish commitment to the values of the welfare state. The current challenge is to find a balance between the tasks and the economic resources. The primary goal of municipal administration is to promote the well-being of the inhabitants. Since municipal administration is democratic government, those who act within it are obliged to follow democratic rules of procedure. A local politician and a municipal office-holder are both morally responsible to their constituency. A criterion of a morally, not only legally, acceptable decision is that it is capable of being publicly justified. Attaining that sort of transparency combined with simplicity is, however, not easy in the current circumstances, where often only bad alternatives are available, lay-offs of teachers being one example. The creation of a new system of municipal assessment could be seen as providing a basis for a municipal discussion of value priorities.