

→ Decentralized service delivery by a service desk

Country Bulgaria

Project title Pernik goes forward

Trinning Municipality of Doetinchem (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Pardubice (Czech Republic)

Municipality of Pernik (Bulgaria)

Project period 1 December 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 69,974

Project objective

Assure the general public accessibility and effective service delivery to citizens and entrepreneurs from a new service desk.

Project summary

The municipalities of Doetinchem and Pardubice assisted the municipality of Pernik to upgrade services mainly to citizens and separately to entrepreneurs and investors by information provision and operational administrative service delivery.

Core information

Pernik is an industrial town of approximately 100,000 inhabitants. The city is known for the international mask festival 'Kukeri', in early spring. Pernik is located at a distance of some 40 km from the capital Sofia and is the nearest satellite city. Pernik is in transition as old industries like coal mining have almost ended activities and new entrepreneurial plants and businesses are developing. There is a boom in housing and real estate business and moreover 60% of the contacts between municipality and citizens are related to these activities.

Problem analysis

Pernik had difficulties in providing effective services to its citizens and businesses due a lack of clear understanding of what was needed, for whom and how it should be delivered. Local government staff were short on knowledge and experience and were served by outdated technology. The municipality wished to improve and innovate administrative services, optimize the service provision process, better satisfy citizen's needs, save time, and reduce corruption.

A practice to improve service delivery of local governments

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Project implementation

To provide effective services, first of all target groups were defined. Furthermore knowledge was gathered, staff trained and the kinds of services delivered were defined. A guidebook was created, an information campaign set up and relevant software and hardware were acquired for the service desk. The project resulted in a clear overview of Pernik's municipal structure and allocation of tasks, a well functioning work team, defined functional and technical requirements and relevant data was collected. This led to the awareness to publish more extensive and relevant information on the Pernik website.

Process management

To resolve the problems, first of all attention was given to the political involvement. Awareness for the process of change and changed working processes was inevitable. Focus was put on publicity and transparency by awareness raising and providing conditions for sustainable development of the delivery. The municipal administration, supported by the Municipal Council, was involved as a supplier of the administrative services, while citizens, entrepreneurs and NGOs were involved as consumers. The involvement of the Czech municipality Pardubice as a tripartite partner proved to add valuable experiences and knowledge to the team since Czech municipalities recently went through the transition process towards EU membership.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Clearly define organizational structure, procedures and processes;
- Ensure data is accurate and relevant so that local government staff know they are using the latest information;
- Ensure local government staff are trained effectively in all relevant areas of local government operations. The quality of staff determine how well local government operates;
- Elaborate the municipality guidebook with procedures and processes;
- Offer direct help to the helpdesk itself.