

→ Enhancing interaction between the City Hall and its clients

Country Romania

Project title Development of interaction and feedback between the City Hall of Targu Secuiesc and its citizens, NGOs and businesses

Trinning Municipality of Maassluis (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Hatvan (Hungary)

Municipality of Targu Secuiesc (Romania)

Project period 1 October 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 69,984

Project objective

Raise the effectiveness of internal management at Targu Secuiesc city hall by increasing interaction between public administration, citizens, NGOs and businesses, and by enhancing digital service provision and by upgrading skills and abilities of city hall staff.

Project summary

Hardware and software were upgraded for better and faster delivery of information to citizens. Municipal staff members were trained to work with the new equipment. Work visits were organized to Hatvan and Maassluis to learn from past experiences.

Core information

Targu Secuiesc has a population of 22,000 and is situated in Covasna County, the second largest town in the county after Sfantu Gheorghe. Together with ten surrounding villages it represents 25% of Covasna's population. The town has an important historical centre based on the traditions of ancient guilds which functioned until early in the 20th century.

Problem analysis

The main problem identified related to the lack of transparency in the local public administration's decision-making process. The causes included the stranglehold of traditions, the absence of citizen information centres, existing bureaucracy, complicated administrative methods, inefficient information systems, lack of IT knowledge, and ineffective communication and teamwork between back-office and front-office. The local authority wanted to raise the effectiveness and quality of services delivered to citizens, business and NGOs.

Project implementation

After establishing a project team, purchase for IT tools (computers, printers, touch screen system, counter client kiosk, photo copier, word center PRO 128) was prepared and various hardware systems (accounting, registration) were upgraded. The organization prepared for ISO certification and a training on internal management was organized for a group of 33 civil servants of Targu Secuiesc (mainly heads of departments). Furthermore the website www.kezdi.ro was upgraded, information made available on-line and booklets containing information for citizens were prepared. The team has been tested and certified for the European Computer Drivers License.

Process management

The project contributed to a change of attitude and mentality of Targu Secuiesc town hall staff. Co-operation between town hall departments and openness to new communication channels with citizens improved. Business, citizens and NGOs were constantly informed about project status through mass-media channels and the town hall website. In a self-critique mode, town hall staff admit that further efforts are necessary in effectively communicating with citizens. The process change had an impact across almost the entire organization by involving all departments with training sessions and acquisition of IT equipment (hardware and software). Decision processes were facilitated by including the mayor of Targu Secuiesc, the main promoter of the project, in the project team.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Encourage public administration organizations to show transparency and be client friendly;
- Optimize teamwork in the organization;
- Use the benefits of foreign partners' experience to best effect while always adapting solutions to the local context;
- Seek to convey to town hall staff the fact that local citizens are not often familiar with how the town hall works. They are the key to having citizens understand and should thus be open and responsive to citizen needs;
- Keep in mind that ultimately it is the citizen who is the most important client of local authorities.