

→ Introducing a new HRM approach

Country Serbia

Project title Improving internal management by introducing a new HRM approach

Twinning Municipality of Sittard-Geleen (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Valjevo (Serbia)

Project period 1 December 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 54,089

Project objective

Develop a Human Resource Management system in the municipal administration of Valjevo.

Project summary

The project aimed at developing a Human Resource Management system in the municipal administration of Valjevo and implementation of some elements in one department as a pilot project.

Core information

Valjevo, with a population of 61,270 is situated in a valley through which the Kolubara River is running. The over 600 years old city is the economic, administrative and cultural centre of the region and has numerous institutions and businesses. The municipality is in the centre of a tourist area characterized by rivers, mountains, caves, springs and skiing facilities.

Problem analysis

The municipality of Valjevo faced a number of problems, including absence of a systematic approach to quality control, insufficient planning and control, overloaded management and a high turn-over of municipal staff. The absence of an HRM strategy was one of the main reasons for these problems. The high turn-over of municipal employees, also a result of political appointments, means that whenever there have been local elections, new persons are recruited, causing a loss of experience. By addressing this problem through an HRM approach, the municipality would build a cadre of permanent professional municipal staff.

A practice to improve internal management of local governments

Project implementation

In order to overcome the existing problems related to HRM, an HRM training plan was developed, based on a quick-scan by HRM experts from the Netherlands partner Sittard-Geleen. An HRM handbook has been developed and senior managers and two HRM employees of Valjevo municipality were trained. During a study visit to the municipality of Sittard-Geleen, the participants were exposed to Netherlands' practices of HRM. A pilot project was formulated to implement the HRM instrument (job descriptions, interviewing techniques) in the ICT department. A plan for establishment of a full-time professional HRM position in the municipality of Valjevo has been developed.

Process management

The main stakeholders involved in the project were the head of administration and members of the municipal council who are responsible for the political commitment and policy related to organizational development and HRM. Also the heads of municipal departments, HRM advisors, and a selection of employees were involved in developing the training plan, training sessions on HRM and piloting two new HRM instruments. The study visit to the Netherlands was of high importance as heads of departments, politicians and HRM staff got acquainted with a well functioning HRM system. Until that time it was unclear what the effect of a new HRM approach could be and the capacity needed in the departments. Awareness was raised on the fact that an improved internal functioning of a municipality results in improved service delivery to citizens.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Include study visits in programmes as it clearly shows participants how HRM can function in another country. Schedule a study visit preferably early in the project as it shows municipal employees in an early stage what they can achieve;
- Raising awareness among politicians is crucial to get commitment for introduction of new management and work methods;
- Avoid political instability and consequent changes in staffing.