

→ Implementing a citizen complaints procedure

Country Turkey

Project title Implementation of the complaints procedure in Bergama

Twinning Municipality of Alkmaar (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Bergama (Turkey)

Project period 1 June 2008 to 30 November 2009

Project budget € 63.163,16

A practice to improve the service delivery of local governments

Project objective

To improve the quality of public services and increase citizen satisfaction by implementing a complaints procedure in Bergama which will provide a sustainable system for registering and administering citizens' complaints and demands.

Project summary

A standard procedure for citizen demands and complaints was developed under the first phase of the LOGO East programme. As a follow-up project, an adequate citizen complaints procedure was implemented through establishment of a service bureau and allowing to pay closer attention to signals from the local community and increase citizen satisfaction.

Core information

Bergama is an ancient Turkish town of 55,000 inhabitants with various renowned historical and archaeological treasures. Agriculture, trade, and tourism are the main pillars of the local economy. The municipality of Bergama is the local administration serving citizens especially in the fields of infrastructure, city planning, and social services. Citizen Demand and Complaints Office is a department of the municipality.

Problem analysis

Public confidence in the municipality appeared to be weak. Despite frequent mentioning of several problems, applications were done orally and not in written form. Citizens were not aware of the procedures related to their demands and complaints, or found these procedures complicated. Bureaucracy leading to excessive length of work and transaction time, in connection with inadequate provision of information, resulted in complaints from the citizens. Insufficient use of information and communication technologies also contributed to this problem.

Project implementation

An awareness-raising meeting within the municipality was followed by development of a communication plan on the complaints procedure implementation. The project was promoted through the press and the website of the municipality. The application service bureau was established. Several training programmes were developed and provided to the staff of the service center, IT personnel, and mukhtkars on the importance of the new procedures and the establishment of a service centre that will enable accurate and effective recording, reporting and processing of citizens demands. A study visit was organized to Lüleburgaz, to benefit from their experiences with a similar service desk unit. Mahalle (neighborhood) and house meetings were organized twice a month in 18 neighborhoods on the complaints procedure and the services to be provided by the municipality in response to existing complaints. Citizen surveys were designed and conducted to measure satisfaction and assess the success of the complaints procedure. A sustainability report and action plan was developed, that include measures and recommendations to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Process management

The project actively involved citizens, mukhtars, and the municipal personnel. Awareness raising at the public level, as well as within the municipality has been necessary to create an understanding about the benefits of a standard complaint procedure for effective delivery of municipal services and the positive impact of the procedure on increasing citizen satisfaction. The promotion of the project strengthened the communication between the citizens and municipality. Through the service bureau, a computer-supported recording system has been introduced, capacity of personnel in using software and digital register system enhanced, and therefore the process of the complaints procedure has been brought to a satisfactory level for the citizens.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Make an in depth analysis of the current situation.
- Involve all related stakeholders in the analysis.
- Provide potential solutions; observe examples if necessary.
- Develop the required procedure.
- Provide necessary support equipment and staff as necessary.
- Test the procedure, evaluate interim results to optimize.
- Have active involvement at the political level and include the complaints procedure in the strategic plan of the municipality.