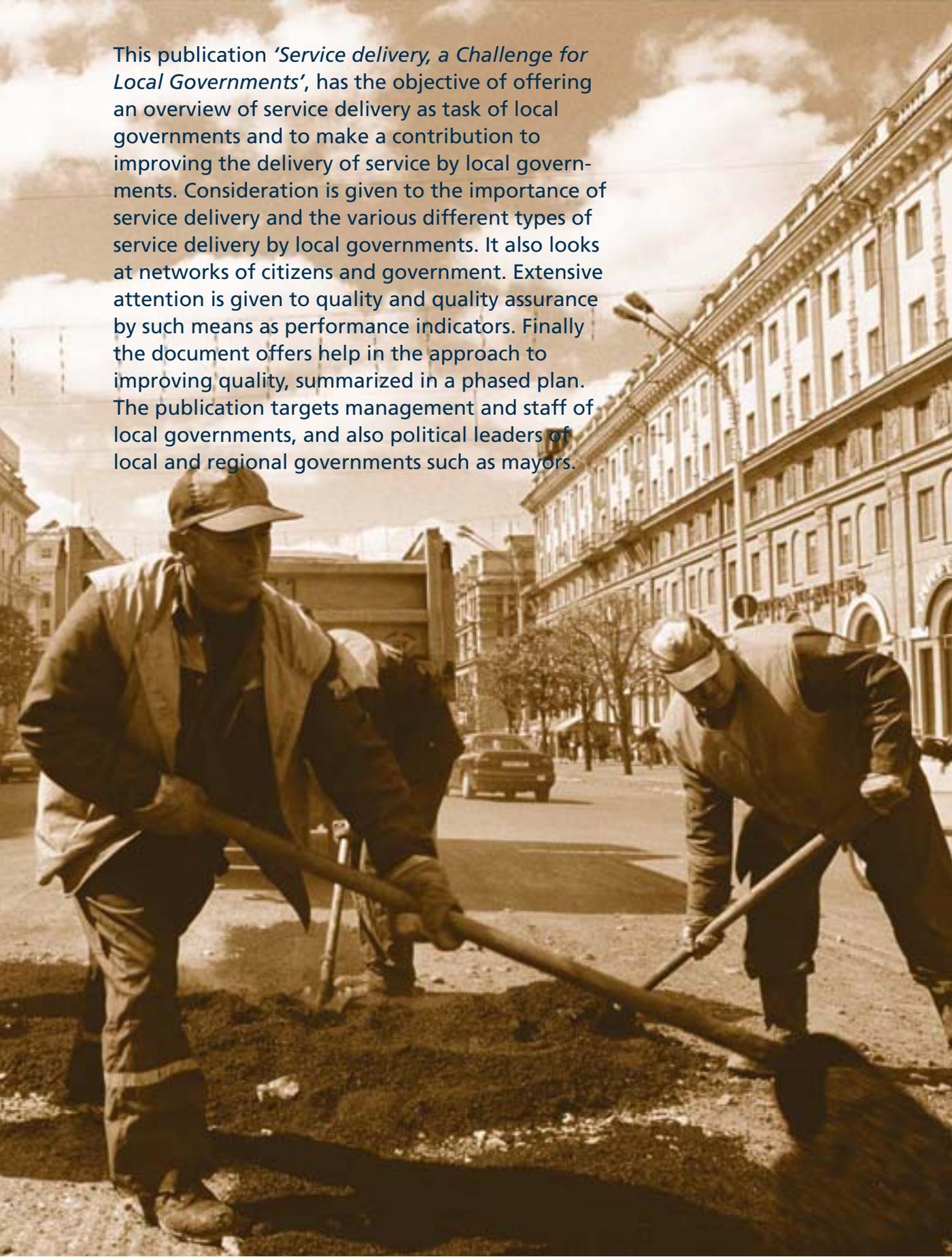


Service Delivery, a Challenge for Local Governments

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This publication *'Service delivery, a Challenge for Local Governments'*, has the objective of offering an overview of service delivery as task of local governments and to make a contribution to improving the delivery of service by local governments. Consideration is given to the importance of service delivery and the various different types of service delivery by local governments. It also looks at networks of citizens and government. Extensive attention is given to quality and quality assurance by such means as performance indicators. Finally the document offers help in the approach to improving quality, summarized in a phased plan. The publication targets management and staff of local governments, and also political leaders of local and regional governments such as mayors.



Service Delivery, a Challenge for Local Governments



Colophon

This publication has been developed in the framework of the LOGO East programme.

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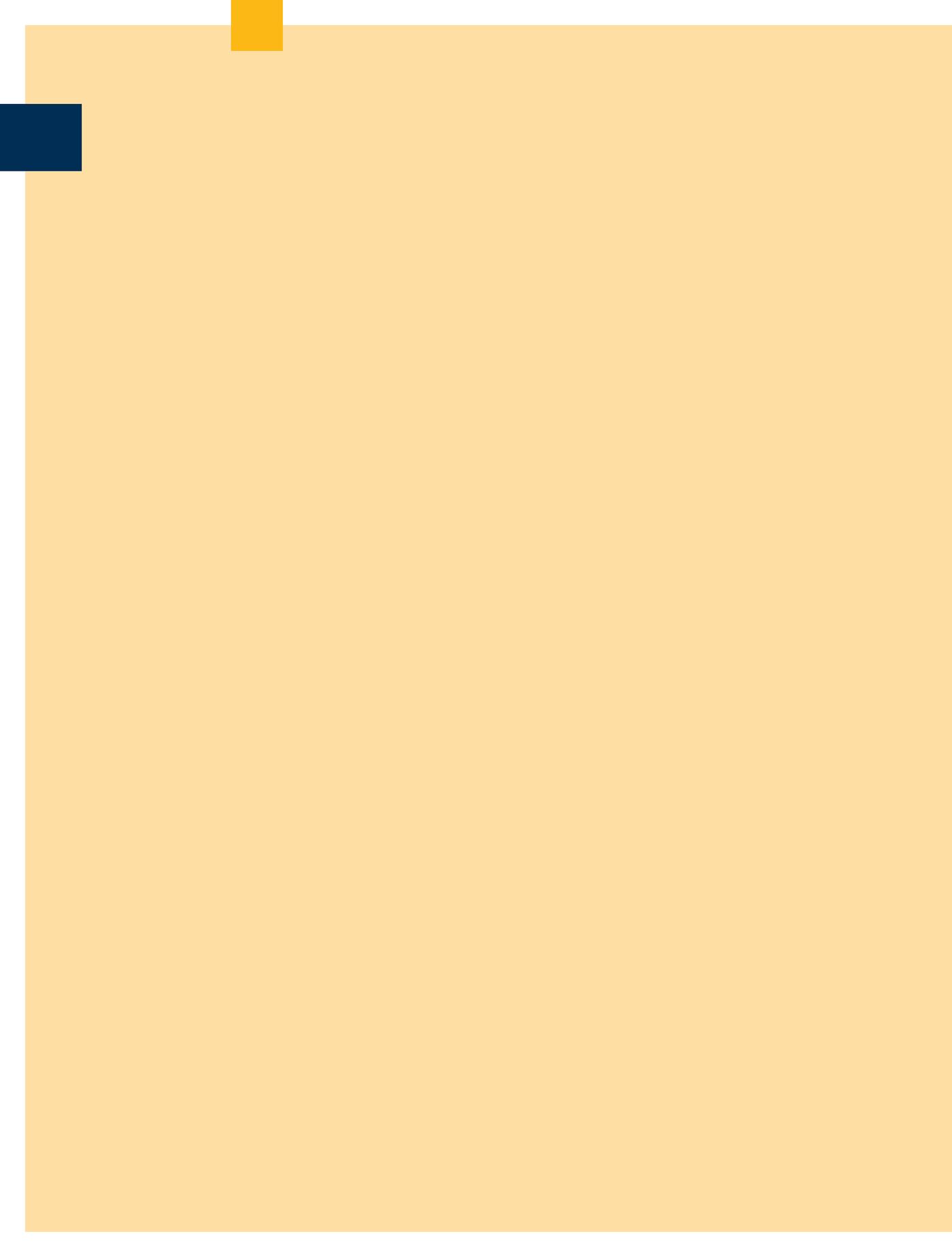
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Introduction

Service delivery is an essential function in the relation between government bodies and citizens. Over the past ten years the realization that citizens are customers has become increasingly important to the way governments think and act. It is good that in the world of government, and in particular, in the world of local government¹, we look at ourselves in a more critical way. Customers have a right to demand services from their suppliers that meet their needs: fast, accessible, of good quality and at modest cost, and all wrapped in friendly treatment. This applies particularly to the government as a supplier of key public services. The fact that the government is a monopolist in products that are often either not or hardly wanted, gives the government's relationship with its clients a double loading, and in fact mandates extra effort.

Good quality and affordable service delivery is also a condition for the good image of government. The meaning of good service delivery for the image that citizens have of the government is not always valued fairly. Service delivery is not an isolated something, but is part of a complex relation between government, society and citizens. Complex because it involves various dimensions, complex because it is dynamic, and complex because the government is itself a complex body. To some it is seen as a many-headed monster. This complicated relation between government and citizens is handled in chapter 3. It shows that one person, one company are both customer and subject.

To many citizens their local government is the most tangible form of government, it is also the layer of government with which they have most contact in their everyday life. This applies to the individual who has chosen a residence, but also applies to the entrepreneur who seeks a place of business. The development of information technology and media are having an undeniable influence on this relationship. They are giving other government bodies the chance to get nearer to the citizen, but the fact remains that in the personal approach it is local governments that are closest to the citizen. The power of local administration is that it represents ordinary citizens. People eat, drink, work, sleep and have neighbours in a village or a city. The garden, the balcony, the natural green environment round the house or apartment all tend to come under the direct influence of what local government is doing. The layout of the residential environment, the feelings that people have when they are home of contentment and safety are partly determined by ideas and decisions that emanate from municipal councils. In assessing the citizen's opinion of government, this proximity and the fact that it concerns very basic matters for citizens is critically important.

¹ Where this publication speaks of local government, this also applies to regional government.

This publication examines services provided by local government. This does not mean that this is not of relevance to other government institutions. On the contrary, it is important that governments think together on the position of local government as service provider. In the Netherlands for example there is ongoing debate on the positioning of local government as primary government or as a service desk for all government bodies. Whether or not this latter will be the model for the future is uncertain, but it is clear that local government, due to its proximity, has a very special responsibility. Other governments should keep a close eye on this.

This publication seeks to contribute to improving service delivery of local governments. The importance of better service delivery is illustrated, and demonstrates that many places in Europe are working hard to bring about improvements². Old states are supporting new states, but it is also important to continue focusing on their interaction. In working on new relationships between citizens and government new insights emerge. Old EU states benefit from the experiences of new EU member states and naturally vice-versa. The principle of life-long learning, which is so important for the European knowledge-based economy, not only applies to citizens individually, but also to governments.

The planning, organization and the learning process are handled separately in chapter 6.

This results in a phased plan, which is also further examined in chapter 6.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Where</i>
1	Analysis	Chapter 1,2 and 3
2	Formulate ambitions	Chapter 2 and 4
3	Set up organization	Chapter 4 and 6
4	Develop protocols	Chapter 3 and 5
5	Develop quality system	Chapter 5
6	Set up implementation process	Chapter 4 and 6
7	Training and education	Chapter 4,5 and 6
8	Evaluation	Chapter 7

Opportunities for improvement lie in better organization such as agreement between the various links in the service chain, good utilization of information technology and media, and in researching the possibilities of providing a more decentralized service. Improvements start with a good analysis and mapping the expectations of citizens. Attention to training and study opportunities for staff also improves performance. Last but not least the acceptance of and commitment to the importance of good friendly service delivery by administration and management is an important factor in the creation of an own role and the success of future initiatives.

² See also the website <http://europa.eu/> for a selection of projects, themes and links.

A (local) government that is more responsive to citizens and businesses is essential in improving the capacity of local governments. This demands a customer orientation and the realization that the service delivery often leaves much to be desired. Old systems were more focused on keeping citizens under control and the government organization was mainly based on internal questions. Customer orientation is a mix of customer-friendly behaviour by government workers and the need to be steered by the demands of citizen as customer, even when you know citizens are not really eager to request licences, permits and other often complex documentation.

Improving service delivery is not an isolated process. The strengthening of citizens' participation, the fight against corruption and improving the skills of management and the administration are ongoing elements in improving service delivery. This publication focuses on service delivery, but relevant links are also made with other related themes.

1 Service delivery as key task

Service delivery is the government's key task. Government exists among other reasons because it is the only structure that can properly provide the guidance of certain critical services such as public order, safety, infrastructure, management and maintenance of public roads and so forth. The requirement and concern for such provisions gives legitimacy to government activities. It is laid down in constitutions and international treaties that government is responsible for basic services in many social areas including:

- Education and schooling
- Social security and basic provisions
- Legal protection
- Housing for the less advantaged

The government must provide citizens with guarantees on the continuity of service delivery: equal access to all irrespective of social and cultural background, and affordable prices. This has consequences for executive organizations. Transparency, efficiency, general accessibility and such like influence the quality of the package of products which the government delivers in its services to citizens.

1 Citizen satisfaction

Service delivery is part of a complex of relations between citizens and government (see chapter 3). Service delivery involves a series of products and services of a varying nature (see chapter 2). With service delivery the customer comes first. The setup of the organization and the basic attitude of employees take form according to the principles of customer logic. This is difficult for a government, as this is something that they are often not used to. Citizen satisfaction is crucial here. This naturally does not stand alone but is part of a broader whole that defines the relationship between state and society. Citizen satisfaction in the interplay between government and citizens is the determining factor for government acceptance³.

2 Trust

Trust is a key element in the relationship between voters and elected representatives and forms part of the representative legitimacy, part of the political system. If one desires a solid basis for making and enforcing rules for

3 This terminology is derived from professor Toonen, University of Leiden.

citizens and society, trust is essential. The power of the sword – action by army, police and justice and religious foundations are at present no longer sufficient for a large proportion of citizens and authorities (or are no longer relevant) to serve as basis for government action. Trust needs to be earned through transparent decision making, through effective and efficient action by the government, and a clear role for the elected representatives. This is the essence of a living democracy. Also for the still occasionally necessary use of military power, trust is also critically necessary.

Guarding the quality of the local democratic process has far-reaching effects. Trust is the first responsibility of the political administration. It must constantly strive to gain trust, to maintain a sustainable position of the government as carrier of public authority. The key task of political administrators is to reproduce this legitimacy. The aim in elections is to achieve an election mandate for the making of statutory rules, to take measures, to collect tax from citizens and to provide services that are of a valid public nature. These services might include legitimizing identity papers, providing permits after a careful weighing of interests, maintaining the public road network, etc.

3 Reliability

Reliability is another key element in the relationship between the government as organization and society in all its forms - individual citizens, companies, civil society organizations and so forth. It is determinant for the legitimacy of government as institution. We can thus speak of institutional legitimacy. 'Saying what you do and doing what you say'. Indicate clearly what citizens can expect and keep these agreements. This is the primary responsibility of government's management and derivative of this (day-to-day) administration. For local governments this is critical. A well performing local authority paves the way for the strengthening of local autonomy. Conversely, poor reliability, in the same way as poor service delivery, is disastrous to the image and autonomy of a local government. It means promoting and assuring professionalism in the public domain over the long term. It also means delivering what has been agreed, keeping promises and deadlines. Important also is that government bodies are fair partners to citizens and companies that need to build a home or set up a new business. This may sometimes mean that the requesting party may not be able to realize their ambitions. This could be because it harms the interests of others, or because it is not in line with agreed rulings. Then government can serve reliability by being clear, by providing explanations and sometimes by contributing to the search for alternatives. Lastly, integrity is also part of reliability. This equally applies to the administration. This is discussed in the section on networks between government and citizens.

4 Legitimacy

Reliability, trust and customer satisfaction build on each other. So service delivery is not purely an economic process. It is a determinant factor in the image of government, the position of government and the legitimate basis of its work. In this way service delivery is one of the pillars of the government's legitimacy and that requires awareness of its effectiveness and efficiency. Provide public services in a professional and proper manner and do so at the lowest possible cost. This adds to the trust and strengthens the foundations of society. Administration and organization both benefit in their complementary responsibilities for service delivery.

Joint action for instance means greater public insight in where resources originate and how charges are levied. Citizens sometimes feel that services should be offered free of charge as the service comes 'from government'. Simple explanations and citizens understanding that political representatives, officials and administrators are all seeking to guard the efficient handling of government processes only increases citizens' acceptance of the need to pay for services.

Where public service delivery is concerned, the people's representation is also a kind of consumer panel. Political representatives also have to behave accordingly. Municipal councils in particular can increase their visibility and so strengthen their place in the front line of the public domain. This makes them an important link in creating legitimacy.

2 What is service delivery?

1 Direct, indirect, individual and collective services

What does a proper service package consist of? What is service delivery understood to mean? And, why do we offer services at the local level? It does not always concern matters that are purely local. The issuing of passports can be a municipal service, such as for example in the Netherlands, but it is actually administered by the central government. The central government stands for the legitimacy of the document. The municipality actually supplies it to the person concerned and thus guarantees a careful procedure that is part of such an essential public service. The municipality is also a key link as it is responsible for the population register, and the municipal personal records database must guarantee the data is correct. This is fitting for municipalities as they are the closest government to citizens.

Hereafter we describe what service delivery is and show that government services can vary widely in character.

Municipal services involve things provided by local governments for and to citizens. We do not limit ourselves here to services of an individual character but also look at services in the interest of the citizen collective, groups of people. The local governments perform acts that are of service to citizens, which creates possibilities for citizens (including companies and organizations), to do things that would not have been possible without the municipality's involvement, or that make it easier for them to do things.

Some services are directly aimed at citizens, other services work indirectly.

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Collective</i>
<i>Direct</i>	Passport Driving licence	Information: written, meetings District cleaning
<i>Indirect</i>	Permits Compulsory education	Waste collection Public lighting

The distinction between **direct** and **indirect** service delivery is significant for the way in which matters need to be organized. Direct services involve direct contact with citizens and demand an alert attitude from municipal staff concerned. Everything they do, and how well they do it, directly affects the people for whom they work. Indirect services often involve an extra step. Sometimes this is easier in

terms of personal relations but may demand greater understanding with regard to the effect of the measures.

Direct service delivery

Direct service delivery is characterized by the direct effect that is intended for citizens. There is one-on-one contact that revolves around a service, a product which the user benefits from directly and which the user often pays for. It concerns a transaction between the citizen concerned and the government in the form of a member of government staff.

Indirect service delivery

Indirect service delivery takes place in a context. It is derived from rules and does not only affect the applicant and/or the user. It is the user's first interest, but other interests also play a role and often require the interests to be weighed. Service delivery by local governments can also concern the further provision of services to other government bodies or organizations that perform a task in the public domain. The land and population registers for example, are dependent on the quality of information and registration with municipalities: central government can not function properly without a properly maintained population and land register.

Individual service delivery

Individual service delivery is aimed at services which have an effect on the individual or a limited group with a strictly private character (for instance residents of a home or a company). This does not mean that there are no third parties that may encounter the consequences of such a decision to provide a service. Even when a permit is refused this must be considered a form of service.

Collective service delivery

Collective service delivery is aimed at a community as a whole, a municipality, a district, or possibly a street. This to some degree also concerns the administrative functioning of a local or regional government. Some services do not always have to be directly carried out by the authority concerned. A local government may hire a waste-collection and processing company in the private sector to collect waste in its area of responsibility. However, the final responsibility for the quality of the service provided lies with the contracting out party – in this case local government!

2 A closer look at service delivery

Improving service delivery has large similarities with improving the relationship between citizens and administration. The quality requirements made of the service delivery can be broadened to a complete municipal task package. While it is tempting to make very precise descriptions of services, it is more important to consider the broad working of the relations between local governments and their environment. Attention to service delivery does not stand alone. In today's society people expect a lot from their suppliers and in citizen's first perception they do not distinguish between market parties and local government. Citizens expect full

attention and this has consequences for the method of approach by local government. This applies equally to direct delivery as to public action as authority. People who work for the government are confronted with this daily. They need to be aware of this, just like their official and administrative superiors need to be aware of the importance of training and education in the field of customer relations and the evaluation of that side of professional work. This demands investments.

The staffing of a civil amenity site ('Milieustraat' in Dutch, a form of decentralized waste collection) is crucial. In the Netherlands citizens and businesses make efforts to hand in special waste, so they deserve friendly treatment. They also deserve to be handled correctly whereby the rules of collection, storage and payment (if applicable) are clear and applied properly. A neat and well-organized collection location with personnel that pays attention to managing the site motivates citizens. This converts the service into a form of transaction that is pleasant for both sides: citizens are assisted efficiently, and the staff are rewarded by realizing they are professionally serving a public interest.

EXAMPLE OF A FORM OF DECENTRALIZED WASTE COLLECTION IN CULEMBORG (THE NETHERLANDS)

A civil amenity site (Milieustraat) is a location for the separated collection of waste (organic waste, paper, scrap, wood, electrical appliances etc.). Citizens bring their waste themselves and for the most part are able to hand it in free of charge. This is supplementary to waste collection from outside people's homes. Professional staff help the citizens. The layout is such that the site has easy access. Containers are in place per waste category. Household chemical waste (unused paint, small batteries etc.) can also be deposited. Strict rules are applied by direct supervision. Civil amenity sites are typically open daily including Saturdays.

This example is based on a civil amenity site in Culemborg, the Netherlands, that functions well. It shows that simple matters can have extended effects. If local government considers environmental management important, then the citizen sees that it will also be responsible in the context of other services.

3 Public service delivery by private parties

Service delivery does not necessarily have to be carried out by the public authorities themselves. In many EU countries services of general interest are provided by private parties. However, political opinions vary on this. In areas such as waste, public transport and post, major changes have already taken place. Privatization of public services demands a clear contract on who is responsible for pricing, quality and access. This may often be seen as a double contract: the private party receives the assignment from a government (customer 1) and supplies the service to citizens (customer 2).

It is interesting to observe that more and more mixed forms of Public Private Partnership (PPP) are being created. Government and business together set up a new legal entity to provide services (see also chapter 6). The question to what degree the involvement of the government should be extended continues to be a primary political question. One aspect such as the use of sanctions and coercive measures is an important factor in the considerations and also the certainty and availability of a provision.

Reasons to place a service outside the organization of government include the fact it is possible with less laborious decision-making, and that it is more clearly organized. More emphasis can also be placed on professional knowledge which means a service can be run by a professional organization without constant decisions needed. This is of course also where a danger lies. Considering civil-engineering works exclusively as a technical job can mean that planning for the public good may be insufficiently taken into account.

The next chapter examines the relation between citizens and local government. This network has many different dimensions. What service delivery is can very easily be shown in all forms of transaction with citizens and companies. It is good to look at these transactions with the support of the diagram as presented in the next chapter, and to give them a range of quality requirements. It is also good not just to focus on this but to consider service delivery as part of the total government programme. This sets down the political responsibilities in providing services.

3 The network of citizens and governments

The relationship with citizens is an important theme for local administrators and officials. It is a determining factor in their work. Many people working for the local administration derive an important part of their work satisfaction and pleasure from this, and they find inspiration here.

The relationship with citizens is dynamic and multidimensional. Dynamic because there is constant change. The educational level of people is increasing and with that their capabilities and expectations. Technological progress is offering more opportunities for providing and exchanging information. Globalization is changing perspectives, and Europe's development is leading to new standards for citizens, companies and public administration.

1 Dimensions of citizens and government relations

Citizens and governments relate to each other on different dimensions⁴. The citizen is the customer who places high requirements on the service delivery. The citizen is also the voter who, through their vote, invests in a relationship of trust with the people's representatives. Furthermore, the citizen is also a co-producer of policy. The local administration regularly calls on citizens to make policy together. Lastly, the citizen is part of a civil community in which the local administration is the authority and the citizen the subject.

<i>Citizen:</i>		<i>Local governments</i>
Customer	↔	Service provider
Subject	↔	Authority
Voter	↔	People's representative (elected person)
Co-producer of policy	↔	Policymaker

Customer – Service provider

Service delivery mostly involves the classic principles of market thinking. People request a service for payment and may expect to be helped for a reasonable price within a reasonable time period. Friendly treatment is part of this. There should be no emphasis on dependency even when citizens cannot go elsewhere to receive the requested service.

⁴ Hiemstra uses a similar classification in his book 'Performing Municipalities' (2003), be it that he applies five dimensions and describes the citizen as 'user'.

A customer-focused approach means that people are fully informed and that possible alternatives are pointed out. This is not the case for a driving licence or a passport for instance, but it does come into play with various types of permits. There are many sides to a building permit and it is important to be clear about everything involved to the business person concerned. If the applicant meets the conditions, they are in their right. It is not a favour that is granted to the applicant, but the person does need government approval to be able to build and operate a business.

Subject – Authority

With this dimension the dependency of citizens is a lot stronger. In principle the citizen keeps to the directions. This could be in traffic, but also for the issuing of a permit or the payment of taxes. Everyone is equal before the law, so in principle rules apply to everyone. This does not alter the fact that the actual way of acting can also be determined by rules of conduct from the traffic between the customer and the service provider. In this dimension respect and acknowledgement of each other's position is mutual. Citizens should realize that public servants apply laws and rules created in a democratic process. Individual application may be annoying, but it is a given. And it can again undergo judicial testing.

Voter – People's representative (elected person)

This dimension concerns part of the people concerned, but in a democratic system this is an important part. The voters' mandate given can be considered a bag of gold that is entrusted for a certain period. The elected representative must handle this prudently and can use their position in a representative body like the municipal council in dealing with citizens by guarding the local organization. The council can be considered a sort of customer panel. As said, the credibility of local governments and the public organization rise as the people's representation focuses more attention on efficiency, effectiveness and cost awareness. Waste collection cannot be free, many citizens realize that it costs money to collect and store waste. Costs and an efficiently working organization need to be taken into account. If the council shows that they are focusing on this, in addition to quality and safety this will help to increase its authority as people's representative. One can leave this to the people responsible for management, but it increases council acceptance and effectiveness if they speak to the responsible administrators/managers about the method of working, implementation and results achieved.

Co-producer of policy – Policymaker

Citizens who contribute to thinking about policy options promote support for and efficiency of policy. Playing a part in implementation also contributes. The mutual interaction between local governments and citizens, and how citizens are approached by the own organization and/or administrators and people's representatives play an important role. Customer-friendliness is not directly the right term, but taking the contribution of people seriously, making a clear, comparative assessment and looking at how citizens' wisdom and knowledge can be used is a good thing. The water company of Razgrad (Bulgaria) involves young people and users in thinking about improvements to the water supply system.

An appeal like this to citizen's practical knowledge has two sides. People become aware of the importance of being economical with water, and they contribute practical experience as to the effects of the water supply system. An open attitude like this of the public enterprise adds greatly to confidence and support.

EXAMPLE OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE WATER COMPANY OF RAZGRAD AND CITIZENS (BULGARIA)

The water company in Razgrad faces huge water leakage and losses (around 60%) in the supply system. Connections are not individual, but per block of houses and flats. There is no individual responsibility per household for water consumption. The water company strives for individual connections, but this currently is very expensive. Anticipating this, the population of Razgrad are being informed about the importance of being economical with water. The company does this by for instance involving young people in excursions and campaigns like the 'Annual Water Day' and making cost information transparent via internet is also contributing to raising awareness among users.

Networks between government and citizens are not neutral. If you want to receive trust, you must give trust. While the whole is determinant, each part also has individual meaning. Government is primarily subservient, and administration and organization are expected to possess knowledge and insight.

2 Integrity

One aspect that deserves special attention where networks between government and citizens are concerned is integrity. By mirroring service to the satisfaction of citizens (customers) and placing trust and reliability in a broader context the basis is laid. Integrity is crucial here. Citizens must be able to rely on upright public servants, officials and administrators. This includes the careful handling of power and resources entrusted to serve the public interest. This is also an important task at EU level. It means preventing the misuse of power, guarding from people obtaining improper advantage in direct and indirect service delivery (bribes and gifts) and conditions such as transparency and verifiability.

Due care must be exercised in the execution of transactions on behalf of local government by adhering to the law and regulations and, by the willingness to account for and to take different interests into account. Information is a condition here. This is not an individual matter but a shared responsibility of the organization. This also applies to keeping up integrity in general. It is about the fact that the organization creates a culture in which honest handling is the

standard. This is important to citizens. People must know that it is normal that you are helped quickly, that information is public, and that it is not necessary and desirable to bribe or threaten.

Active attention to integrity is possible by setting up rules of conduct, by working with protocols, by making officials like administrators take an oath and by appointing a confidential representative. The administration has both the role of initiator and model here. The public official also has the right to be protected from unnecessary temptations by his employer. The employer must create a culture in which workers and managers dare to address these matters.

On an international level there are numerous examples of how this is being realized⁵. It is also important that integrity forms part of the workmanship of public servants. Attention to service and customer-friendliness includes attention for integrity. The vulnerability of government's relation with citizens is part of this.

Lastly, recognition and attention from the employer is a factor. This begins with reasonable salary payment, but extends further. Appreciation for good work and an eye for good working conditions have an effect on the climate of the public organization as a reliable and just employer.

If citizens call on the local government for a service in any form whatsoever (a concrete product, information, application of a rule etc.), they must be able to rely on the fact that they will be handled fairly by people who understand their business. They should not have to assume that the services are dependent on favours. They should also not be tempted to offer them.

⁵ For example via <http://www.egpa-ethics.eu> or <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html> or www.transparency.org.

4 Forms of service delivery

Service delivery occurs in many different forms. We describe these, and detail their meaning for the relationship between provider and user. The communications' side is explicitly examined here, maintaining relations is part of the way the service delivery takes shape. The provision of information here also forms part of this, it should be sufficient, clear and prompt.

1 Interaction, counters and procedures

Interaction between citizens and local governments occurs in many different ways. These different forms each offer opportunities to improve contact with citizens. This concerns the organization of the interaction. We previously described service delivery as a transaction involving an active contact in which an exchange occurs. It begins with the exchange of information and may end with an individualized transfer to the citizen of a concrete product such as a driving licence or permit to undertake a certain action such as founding a new company.

Providing general information is an important form of service delivery with a primarily collective character. This could be information via internet such as the website of the local government. This could also be via local media or via special publications from the local government itself (for instance instructions on how to apply for a permit, the application procedure for a travel document and so on) and may occur verbally via information desks of a local government. The citizens' image of local government is largely informed by these different types of information. It is important to keep in mind the design and aim for an unequivocal image. People must know they are communicating with their local government.

Simplification can be achieved by clarity: one telephone number for all services of the local government and a simple function for redirecting, one e-mail address for the primary contact and one postal address. This goes hand in hand with standard work processes, a database that is easily accessible for employees containing information on the local government that may be requested and an efficient IT architecture. This all requires considerable investments in people, knowledge and a physical infrastructure. The municipality of Heusden in the Netherlands has undertaken pioneering work in this area.

EXAMPLE OF A DIGITAL COUNTER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF HEUSDEN (THE NETHERLANDS)

The municipality of Heusden aims to help citizens as quickly as possible and has organized its work processes to this end irrespective of time and place. Their objectives include transparent work processes, clear insight by citizens in what the municipality does for them, and how they can work together. The focus is on the citizen as customer in the Heusden way of working. Thinking from the outside to the inside or external to internal. Ensuring that all services for customers are convenient, fast and simple. Heusden's local government is also result-oriented, project-based, flexible and efficient. An important spearhead is the digitization of work processes. The municipality aims for 100% work digitization or computer-aided. To do this they are making optimal use of available information and communication technology. The production, storage, retrieval, updating and transport of information occurs in a fully digital work environment. Also for communication, optimal use is made of new communication forms on the digital highway. So there is one digital 'counter' or desk for all citizens.

2 Counters (or desks)

Counters are an old traditional form of contact between local government and citizens when the citizen would literally stand at a counter (or sit in front of a desk) and be in contact with a local government employee. These are physical facilities often found in the city hall or at the office of the service provider concerned. It is often a contact with physical obstructions or barrier between customer and service provider, necessary for practical or security reasons.

The counter function is and continues to be an important form of contact between (local) government and citizens. Over past years much attention has been paid to improving its organization. The way in which the citizen is spoken to as customer, the time that they are kept waiting, and the physical conditions are all important. In many municipalities thought is being given to organizing a central desk, the so-called one-stop shop. Not a separate counter for every service, but a customized service at one location and organized decentrally. Governments are increasingly organizing their service provision for the citizen by setting up a front office where the first contact takes place, then following this up with various back office services. This requires good organization of the follow-up process.

The organization of the counter function requires a customer-oriented approach. Employees must be properly prepared for this. A front office function demands different skills to a back office function. Customer-friendliness is important in both, and this can be learned. The initial contact is about quickly obtaining clarity, clear registration, and sometimes identification. The service on-site can be speeded up by

good standards, forms and good basic information. The last item is important as creating and distributing clear information on what is needed for a particular service in advance helps speed up the whole process and has the citizen in and out of the door very rapidly.

Depending on the population and physical size of a municipality decentralized counters can also be used. At different locations in a municipality a one-stop shop is created. In Pernik (Bulgaria) a phased approach has been chosen to create this form. It is actually a step in the direction of citizens. The first contact is possible in the immediate environment of the citizen, close to home. Internet helps this yet further. The place where information is exchanged is no longer primarily of interest. In the Ukraine for instance the Crimean State Committee for water management has decentralized the application procedure for water permits.

It is important that basic information is always processed in the same way. Front office and follow-up processes (back offices) do not have to take place at one location if a direct and reliable IT connection is possible. This demands good organization and investments outside the direct sphere of city hall. It can also be done by working with other (semi-) government services. For certain services the physical counter can be eliminated entirely and replaced by a digital counter.

EXAMPLE OF DECENTRALIZED SERVICE DELIVERY IN PERNIK (BULGARIA) AND CRIMEA (UKRAINE)

Pernik is a city of 100,000 south of Sofia. The municipal administration chose to introduce one counter and decentralize to urban districts. Currently there are three decentralized counters from where the different government products can be obtained including certain money payment services. The process is supported by internet and Pernik works with standard forms exchanged via internet. What is special is that one of the decentralized offices is shared by other government services (one example is the national tax authority). Ultimately Pernik plans to have seven decentralized counters across the city.

In Crimea a pilot has been set up to decentralize the procedure for obtaining water permits. It is compulsory for farmers to obtain a water permit for the extraction of groundwater for irrigation. Obtaining a permit is a complex and bureaucratic procedure. By decentralization of the service, applicants for water permits can now start the permit procedure in their own district which means they do not have to travel to the head office of the State Committee in Simferopol. Things are being simplified.

3 Procedures

In many contacts between citizens and (local) government, procedures naturally apply. And procedures are important as they simplify government. These often do not apply to services that citizens look forward to (or enjoy), they are a 'necessary evil' and directly related to government's regulatory role. Procedures are often a source of irritation which is unfortunate as service delivery in principle involves a standardized method of working to answer a request from a requesting party. It describes the process action, the time span, the conditions and authorizations. For many public servants this is part of their basic work. For many citizens the way of thinking which lies behind it is unfamiliar.

It is important for procedures to be clear and that it is also clear why conditions apply. Before a driving licence is issued for instance the applicant's identity has to be confirmed. Many procedures could be improved by thinking about the need and use of the procedure. Sometimes a simple internal adjustment can eliminate the need for citizens to go to a counter. The reasons for specific procedures should also be carefully thought through. Many citizens understand that this does not occur automatically, and want a form of accountability for time and cost. It is worth investing in preventing double work.

Good basic registration is one way of avoiding double work. For a municipality a single unequivocal registration should be sufficient. That certainly applies when internet applications are possible and it is easy to switch between municipal services. A permit for a company requiring different decisions involves different sections. A building permit involves the zoning plan, the architectural layout, environment and safety. This is not surprising as each involves different areas of expertise. But an applicant company's basic information always remains the same and can therefore be stored unequivocally in one basic file. And this can then be called up for other services. The burden does not have to be placed with the company but can easily be solved within the municipal organization. Also here the one single counter can raise convenience for companies and the municipal customer.

4 Information function

Attention has already been paid to the need for efficient information provision. Local governments are an important information carrier in facilitating social initiatives. To stimulate social development (and a positive image) a proactive attitude by the local government can be very favourable. Basic information on housing facilities, planning regulations and the regulation of traffic flows are examples. But also who makes use of income support schemes, whether or not as part of the fight against poverty, and who has rights to forms of social shelter all fall under this. It is a service which fits well in the relationship between government as policymaker and citizen as co-producer.

Stimulating economic activity leads to new employment. It can also lead to improving public spaces by making smarter use of traffic routes and by replacing old buildings with new ones of higher quality. But it is not possible for local governments to achieve these effects alone. Citizens and companies must be willing to play the role of partner. Good use can naturally be made of contributions of other governments including the EU. One form of proactive service delivery is the service desk. This can stimulate economic activity and streamline municipal information provision with other governments and facilities. An example of this is the streamlining of procedures to establish a business, decide locations and obtain permits with the labour market and subsidy possibilities. The municipality of Razgrad (Bulgaria) has set up a desk for this with a view to the country's entry to the EU. They have also adapted their organization by setting up a division where economic policy, information provision on EU facilities and the service to citizens and companies are combined.

EXAMPLE OF A SERVICE DESK TO PROMOTE PPP IN MUNICIPALITY OF RAZGRAD (BULGARIA)

Razgrad is a city of 70,000 in northern Bulgaria. The city council has set up a service desk to stimulate Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) with citizens, companies and other organizations. As part of the 'front' organization of the municipality, the service desk facilitates use of EU support, is easily accessible and serves both companies and individual citizens.

5 Internet and mobile information provision

Important is the role and effect of information technology. Internet has changed the relation between customers and suppliers. More customized solutions are possible, the speed of information throughput increases constantly and distances play no meaningful role. The advent and rapid spread of mobile telephony has also had reinforcing effects. Internet has brought about huge changes in interactions between citizens and local governments. This applies both to service delivery to the individual and to collectives of citizens such as the entire municipality, districts, streets, special target groups such as young people, companies, schools and so forth.

There are several functions between government and customers (citizens and companies) that can be directly facilitated by the new information technology.

- **Electronic access;**
- **Electronic authentication:** the internet allows confirmation that a person or organization is who they say they are;

- **Unequivocal numbers:** in communication with an organization or person one number can be linked to the authentication;
- **Basic registration:** gathering all information which belongs together in one place;
- **Information exchange:** internal municipal information provision on one file, one case, and one person. Do not burden customers with this information exchange.

The counter function can also be managed digitally for much of the standard work. It is important that the information is clear and that there is a good helpdesk for user questions. In many countries this still demands a huge leap ahead as the numbers of citizens that have their own internet facilities varies widely. The outlook is clear though. The same applies in linking government institutions through the various layers of administration, and institutions performing government tasks. Many citizens make no distinction between the different layers and categories of government be they local, regional or national. Furthermore some transactions already require the exchange between governments. Here it is also valid that traffic between governments should not be placed with citizens, even if they stand to benefit.

Beyond internet is the development of mobile telephony, also a factor that must be taken into consideration over coming years. It could well be that as regards this development countries which are still lagging in information technology now have an extra opportunity to catch up. This is partly determined by the scale on which technology is available, and the costs of upscaling, for example through wider availability of computers. A whole different reach applies to mobile telephony. Philippine fishermen on simple sailing vessels are already using mobile telephones to conduct business with customers thereby eliminating traders as intermediaries. Tickets for large entertainment events are available via mobile telephones. This also has an impact on communication between governments and citizens for access, authentication and information exchange.

5 Quality and quality control

Business relations are increasingly coloured by thinking in terms of quality⁶. Customers stand at the centre and their demands for the services offered form the framework within which opinion is created on the quality of the work or product supplied. That demands special attention in communication between government and citizens. Quality control, the input and participation of citizens, gets attention among others by looking at benchmarking and at the way that information is provided. Attention is also given to charters such as the Citizen's Charter.

1 Service standards

The clearest way to define the claims of customers of local governments is by making service standards. These can be considered a quality framework within which local government seeks to perform: a local government is bound to requirements and records these publicly, for example via a charter. In this way the local government makes its functioning as service provider concrete. It gives citizens some certainty and also works as a form of 'management of expectations' to citizens. This creates clarity towards employees and can be used to judge staff and provide better insight in their performances. Civil service work sometimes seems endless as many things overlap. Service standards laid down in a charter create mutual clarity on performances to be delivered. Customer logic is the operative word in setting up the service standards. They must be concrete and measurable. They must be measured exactly on for instance time, but must also sometimes be qualitative, such as the evaluation of respectful treatment. Quality standards can be reduced to differences in appreciation of behaviour because what is respectful to one person, does not necessarily apply to another. And this does not alter the fact that describing qualitative standards and their compliance is a clear positive signal to citizens and organizations.

Standards can relate to various factors:

- **Time:** waiting time at the desk or counter, delivery time of a permit, handling time of an enquiry, time required to pay invoices;
- **Codes of conduct:** friendliness, but also for instance the simple use of a person's name when answering the telephone, confirming receipt of letters and e-mail;
- **Physical appearance and service:** layout of the waiting area, offering coffee, tea or water if the waiting times are (too) long, privacy (providing separate rooms);

⁶ A good website with among others quality instruments is www.12manage.com

- **Accessibility:** clarity on opening hours, advance information via brochures, extra help for people who suffer from a handicap;
- **Due consideration:** taking complaints seriously, offering some form of compensation if for example a service is not delivered on time, meeting commitments, asking the customer's opinion and doing something with it;
- **Information provision:** clearly present, informing customers proactively, for example notifying the citizen several weeks in advance regarding the expiry of their passport.

Service standards obligate the organization and administration to take measures and to enable their personnel to do the work well within the chosen framework. Choices can also be made clear. A better waiting room costs more money and that could affect other things. This weighting does not always have to be provided but the fact that choices cost money should certainly be indicated.

In formulating a charter, the aforementioned agreements receive even greater status and can be considered a kind of basic contract.

2 Charters

Various kinds of charters exist. Charters have an effect on the total public organization. Administration and organization agree on fixed methods of working and related standards. These apply municipality-wide and concern a large number of municipal services and products. In the Netherlands there is a major project at the Ministry of Interior and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) to stimulate the introduction of charters: 97 already have one.

There are also charters linked to products or parts of the public service organization. There is also a type of charter linked to the communication channel that the municipality uses for example the telephone, e-mail or written communication. A combination of charters is also used.

The type of charter says something about the scope of the agreement within the organization. The choice of the type of charter has an effect on the organizational burden. For example a municipal-wide charter demands a municipal-wide implemented quality system with all possible consequences. The responsibility can also change. A local government charter has an effect on the entire organization. Such a charter can not be achieved without a clear position for the administration. The administration commits itself.

This is simpler for a product charter, although the administration also enters into ties with the local community and with its own organization. The administration seeks to guarantee the working of these products. It gives the products a certain status. A charter that concerns the organizational unit is mainly the concern of the management and employees concerned. For mixed forms and for charters linked to

communication greater commitment from the administration is necessary. In all these cases local governments enter into a form of obligation to their customers, both inside and outside the local government.

The different types of charters can also be used in the build-up or the phasing of a quality regime. A charter of course does not have to be used as a means to action. A simple process with service standards related to customer contacts such as waiting times, payment periods and confirmation receipt can be very promising at start. Bergama (Turkey) has conducted a survey of customer satisfaction with regard to municipal services. The results of the survey are being used to create an improved complaints procedure.

Small steps that gradually lead to success can be very stimulating for the organization. Binding of the administration remains an important factor for success, as well as active involvement of management and embedding in the professional development of the organization (education and training as instrument).

EXAMPLE OF IMPROVING THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BERGAMA (TURKEY)

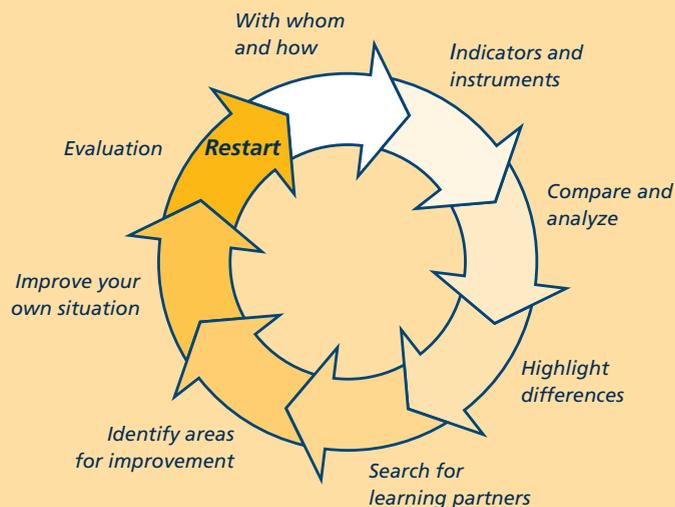
Bergama (western Turkey) has conducted a citizen satisfaction survey on local government service. The survey's results were used to improve the complaints procedure. A complaints procedure gives structure and insight in the problems which occur and how these come about. A well functioning complaints procedure allows the municipality to solve service bottlenecks quickly. And in the longer term it provides the possibility to better define the municipal organization's tasks, responsibilities and competences.

3 Benchmarking

The quality instrument Benchmarking mainly means comparing with others in order to then improve. Learning comes from comparisons. With expert assistance local governments choose their own learning environment by seeking partners that want to provide the same kind of performance, and agree on standards with them for the sake of comparison. Collectively examining the differences creates knowledge for improvement.

Choosing a benchmark requires administrative courage because publicity about results can lead to criticism and competition without learning being taken into consideration.

A certain amount of competition is not a bad thing, it can even increase the fun of the improvement process, but it must be clear that the focus is on learning from each other. A phased approach is best. This can be done by organizing the process as a cycle which constantly offers impulses for a new round of improvement. The Netherlands Ministry of Interior applies the following diagram in its information provision on benchmarking:



With whom and how is the first question. This might be neighbouring municipalities setting up a comparison process to learn from each other. But it is possible that their scale and nature are so different that it would be wiser to look further at municipalities with a similar size and character. This could be municipalities with many monuments, municipalities with more than five district centres, or municipalities with an abundance of water areas; all can be appropriate benchmarking candidates.

It is also important to look at the number of products, processes and organizational units that a local government wants to compare. In the Netherlands, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) has set up a project that has led to a family of benchmarks. From a website, local Dutch governments can check where they stand. They can search for their ideal comparison partners and choose their own methodology to improve. Part of the family is a group public service benchmark. Here questions arise that are also mentioned in the service standards:

- How accessible is local government?
- Are customers (citizens, businesses) helped within an acceptable time?
- Is treatment by officials and administrators correct and friendly?
- Do the periods within which the services and products provided correspond with the commitments made?
- What are the costs and is there information on allocation?
- Does the local government offer services electronically?

The answer to these type of questions can be compared to answers from other local governments. A database provides various indicators which offer insight in sub-topics which can be important in the quality assessment and comparison process. Examples of performance indicators are opening hours of the city hall, waiting times at the public desk, and opinions of citizens on service quality. In this way a municipality can draw comparisons and decide whether it is a question of self-congratulation or a determined improvement programme.

It is important that local governments outline their own objectives. The focus on quality does not have to lead to the same standard for all local governments. It is helpful to local government to know what is important where service quality is involved. The importance of attention to quality in a broad sense has already been shown. Many local governments focus attention on this. But there are other areas worthy of attention too. Local governments can learn from each other in all these areas and the system of benchmarking is a critical aid in the learning process.

4 Participation and accountability

Citizens can also actively be involved in the quality development process. This can be done for instance by creating panels next to the council. It can also be done by actively measuring how citizens look at the service quality of their local government. A system to improve the quality of service delivery in an ongoing manner is to regularly request feedback and regularly update status.

Another methodology is to commission a periodical survey. And naturally combinations are also possible. Periodical reporting, typically bi-annual or annual, means accountability. By actively informing customers and outsiders of the results of these surveys, a local government shows its customers that it takes its work and them seriously. Administrative involvement can strengthen this further. The handling of quality reports creates a kind of natural moment of attention in the periodical cycle of the administration.

Another special way of involving customers is by making separate agreements with local groups of organizations in the form of a covenant. These may be retailers, or perhaps users of a business park. The covenant can be limited to questions of service delivery, but also include other matters. A separate measure may involve the appointment of a kind of account manager to act as contact person.

Lastly, an audit can offer further accurate detail. This could be voluntary and of occasional character, say once every four or five years. An audit can also be imposed externally because the local government is undertaking measures for other governments. These benefit from constant quality and may include a regulation that a periodical audit takes place. The quality of information and speed of delivery are essential elements in the life of local governments.

6 Approach and organization

How do you structure a good organization and where do you start? What are the consequences for personnel and organization? And what is the role of the administration? Can you do it alone as local government or is it helpful to co-operate with other local governments? Is it a good idea to contract out things or can you also work together with private organizations and companies⁷?

In this chapter we look at how service improvement can be realized now. This discusses what you need to do as local government to improve service delivery. We refer back to past chapters.

1 Organization

Good service delivery demands constant attention from administration and management. The work is never finished. Overviews, codes of conduct, a clear method of working can all be well framed in policies by working with a citizens' charter (see chapter 5). And binding commitments can be made.

The service delivery of local government is about the relation between citizens and companies. At the start of the approach it is useful to map out where which service will be provided, and what services and forms of service delivery will be available through the local government. A good overview also includes who is responsible for what steps in the process of service delivery. The direct contact with customers is a responsibility which lies with the service provider themselves.

A customer-oriented attitude by officials who maintain direct contacts with citizens and companies is a basic condition for organizing the service delivery efficiently. This means that they must be enabled by the management of their organization to properly fulfil this condition, for example through training and education. To offer both customers and the executive service provider clarity on mutual expectations it is important to make an adequate description of products and protocols.

Improving service delivery is a process that takes shape over a longer period, but it also benefits from making small achievements in the short term. The responsibility for process management is an important part of the (administrative) document. A choice must be made to assess whether this concerns an organization-wide approach or that the service is offered in phases. Simplicity can be an important assistance in formulating an action plan. It could mean that priority is given to

⁷ The website <http://www.correlation-net.org.agenda.html> offers support in improving service by information, evaluation and measurement.

certain services. This demands insight into the interests of primary contacts and relationships with local government. It is good to know what citizens and companies think of this. A preliminary study among customers is a good first step. It is also important to assess whether customers' wishes can be met within a reasonable period, it is also important for all concerned to have better results in prospect. That applies to customers, and equally to all the different employees in the service chain.

An action plan requires a preliminary study, a process description with all the steps, an overview of contacts and products, and an objective. The final result may consist of multiple parts (protocol, product description, quality requirements). Because this targets improvement, the investment in physical facilities such as computers, telephones and so forth must be looked at. It is also important to assess whether staff have sufficient training and competence. Service delivery demands a good education and experience. Working in the front office demands different skills to writing a good permit application.

2 Customer contact

Attention has already been paid to options to keep in contact with citizens. Counters, telephone contact and internet have already been mentioned. The analysis and action plan may include the methods of communication.

The conclusion may be that responsibility for this is placed in a separate organizational unit, such as a customer contact centre, where the different ways of maintaining contact are organized. One front office for the entire local government organization, which has the form of a shop.

The single counter idea is one way of simplifying service delivery. With the help of internet, contacts can be improved even further by reducing waiting times. This applies to physical contact and applies to telephone contacts, whereby accessibility is also an important point to assess in the improvement process. Streamlining contacts, reducing waiting times and reducing the administrative burden are important methods to improve service delivery.

The approach to reducing the administrative burden takes shape by simplifying procedures and the permit process. This could be by assessing the need to work with a system of permits. It often appears that there are also other methods of working which are less of a burden to citizens and companies. As mentioned, by holding on to permits the method of work may mean that people do not have to provide superfluous information, the waiting time can be limited, and the procedure is clear. If the system of permits is applied properly, many citizens will understand that interests must be weighed. This understanding reduces a superfluous bureaucratic burden.

3 Co-operation

Part of making policy in the field of service delivery is the demand for co-operation with other (local) governments. The collection of taxes and contributions for general services is a perfect opportunity to think about co-operation. In the Netherlands examples can be found of combining collection and levying for collection of household waste and contributions for waste water treatment.

Co-operation can reach further. Local governments can join forces and link their services in certain areas. It does however, require clarity. It means that municipalities must organize their own affairs well first prior to offering the service in co-operation with two or more partner municipalities. Benefits of scale are an obvious motive, two can often do more than one and total costs decline. It is also important to consider accessibility for citizens in the co-operation and distance to the centre of administration must be a point of consideration.

In working with a front office, combining work in the back office is also conceivable. Service delivery in the social field (such as income support and facilities for the handicapped) demand specialized knowledge of the law and customized solutions for customers. Social service delivery can be divided into work in direct contact with citizens and in work that must be performed behind a desk such as investigative work and consulting and such like.

A large-scale form of service delivery in which co-operation can offer major benefits is collection and storage of waste. The first choice is to co-operate with private companies or not, then work can be contracted out to market parties. The problem behind this option was briefly discussed in chapter 2 and so we provide no examples here.

Another effective form of co-operation in local government is joining forces with private partners. Public Private Partnerships (or PPPs) are an increasingly accepted form of working internationally. Service delivery, making policy and realizing projects with a social impact overlap. Arrangements can be made whereby benefits can be achieved for both partners from the private and public domains. Process management in this form of co-operation demands careful attention to organization, management, responsibilities and communication. Public Private Partnerships are a form of co-operation whereby both co-operation with organizations outside government, and content of realizing facilities for citizens, fall under the term service delivery.

With Public Private Partnerships it is important to guard against pitfalls inherent in contracting out work. Knowledge of EU regulations is important in properly implementing this form of co-operation. But it is certainly worthwhile investigating. Waste management and public transport are two examples of areas of service where forms of Public Private Partnerships are often successful.

4 Education and training

The education and training of staff involved are essential in improving quality of service delivery. Many staff in the public service are educated specifically to perform certain tasks, often of a legal or administrative character. Direct communication with customers has rarely been part of their education. A customer-friendly approach is essential in good relations between citizens and their local government. This requires both know-how and a good feel for personal relations. In the Bulgarian city of Sandanski the local government has deliberately chosen to train employees of the local bus company, mainly drivers, to improve their relationship with their travelling public. This is part of the policy to encourage people to use public transport and so reduce car traffic pressures in the city.

A counter function at which citizens are served via the one channel demands staff who may not be highly knowledgeable in all fields, but who do know about accurate registration and have patience and ability in handling sometimes irritated customers. The organization must thus invest on two fronts, training staff in the back office to realize that supplied data may not be from a colleague but a citizen. And training staff in the front office to handle customers with a smile. And especially in the case of notices of rejection!

5 Planning and control: a phased plan

An approach to better service delivery starts with good planning. Do not promise too much too soon, but take steps on the path to new and improved forms of service delivery. Make clear in the planning, and communicate this widely, that local government attaches great importance to the opinions of citizens with regard to its performance (and not just during elections). The introduction of a quality system is an important means for this. It is also important to present work on better service delivery as a programme. Local government wants to achieve better quality performance over a long period and that requires a systematic approach which can be considered a programme with several parts. This also makes it possible to indicate both internally and externally that not everything can be done at the same time, but that in a series of steps the aim is to improve the total package of services. With which part(s) to start is a political decision.

This chapter introduces an approach that will enable a local government to improve its service delivery. The following phased plan shows the approach.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Objective</i>
1	Analysis	1 Insight in expectations of citizens and companies 2 Map customer contacts linked to services and products
2	Formulate ambitions	1 Formulate vision of administration and organization and choose improvement process 2 Set up internal and external communication process
3	Set up organization	1 Set up programme management 2 Determine roles and responsibilities 3 Set budgets
4	Develop protocols	Describe products and methods of working
5	Develop quality system	Determine standards and agreements per product (group)
6	Set up implementation process	Introduce new method of working, adjust organization, incorporate physical measures
7	Training and education	Identify knowledge and skills required and lay down introduction processes for staff
8	Evaluation	Assess results with employees and customers, and determine consequences for follow-up processes

Some steps can run parallel to each other or can be prepared or initiated even if a previous step has not been completed. In particular the sixth and seventh steps are closely related to each other and can for the most part be done simultaneously. The communication process in step 2 continues until the final evaluation.

It is important to keep the organization under tight control and follow progress of all people concerned. The method by which the improvement process occurs is itself an exercise in a customer-focused approach.

Lastly, it is important to seek co-operation with other (local) governments and to assess where obstructions may occur due to higher regulations. Good service delivery by local government also helps national and regional governments in their organizing of good and careful relations with citizens and companies. The effects can extend far beyond the outside walls of local government.

7 Summary

Trust and citizen satisfaction in service delivery is an important factor in maintaining the legitimacy of government authority. Local government has the monopoly on the provision of services, some of which citizens sometimes do not look forward to. It is important that these services are professionally provided by capable, trained, dedicated staff. Services should be professional, prompt and modestly priced, irrespective of whether the service targets the individual or the collective.

Service delivery is not an isolated thing, but is part of a much larger whole of relationship patterns between local government and its citizens. It is a dynamic network in which the contacts with companies and citizens need to be of the highest quality. Integrity is all important. No individual can be seen to be personally benefiting.

The network of citizens and local government takes its shape from the different forms of service delivery. These are provided directly at counters, and more abstractly in procedures of a formal nature. Service delivery sometimes takes the form of co-operation between government and citizens.

Information provision fulfils important functions in the overall communication between local government and local community. New information technology anticipates and supports this and has a far-reaching influence on the dynamic between government and local community.

Service delivery is increasingly being managed by thinking in terms of quality. Citizens are customers and appreciate orderly performance from their local government, in the same way as from their bank, insurer, baker or book store. There are many instruments to assist improving work quality and it is possible to give citizens and businesses a role in this.

In improving service delivery it is important that the chosen method of working fits the type of organization that a local government seeks to be. Every local administration wants to be recognized by and popular with its citizens. It must lay emphasis on the customer. Together local governments can be examples to each other. It is encouraging to see that throughout Europe hard work is being done by local governments in improving the confidence of citizens and their organizations.

Each deserves the confidence of the other.



VNG International

International Co-operation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities

Committed to strengthening democratic local government worldwide

The key task of VNG International is strengthening democratic local government. It is a small, dynamic company annually managing some 60 plus projects and programmes with a focus on decentralization and capacity building. VNG International supports local governments, their associations and training institutions in developing countries and countries in transition.

VNG International's approach

For VNG International, strengthening democratic local government means working on three inter-related levels:

- **the individual level**-training and motivating municipal staff and elected representatives;
- **the organizational level**-advising local authorities on their organization structures and working methods;
- **the institutional level**-adapting financial relations, laws and institutional arrangements.

The VNG International approach builds on:

- Colleague-to-colleague co-operation
- Institutional linking

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Romanian Federation of Local Authorities

To become the unified voice of Romanian local governments in representing their interests towards central government and Parliament

The key task of the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities is to represent the interests of local authorities in the context of national and political systems and provide services and professional assistance to local authorities, including member associations. The services seek to improve the professional relations and accelerate and improve the exchange of information. The Romanian Federation of Local Authorities was founded in 2001 from the Association of Romanian Municipalities (AMR), the Romanian Association of Towns (AOR), the Romanian Association of Communes (ACoR) and the Union of County Councils of Romania (UNCJR).

Scope of work of the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities

The main activities carried out by member associations are related to platform and communication tasks, while the Romanian Federation has an important role in lobbying (recognized by the central government as its partner representing local and regional authorities), and international relations (recognized by many international institutions and donors). Training activities take place both at the levels of the associations and the Federation and are generally financed by international donors. Depending on content, these programmes can address any or all local and regional authorities, focusing on specific issues. International co-operation projects and information provision play a critical future role for the Romanian Federation of Local Authorities.

January 1st 2007 Romania became a member of the European Union. This meant a new approach to international co-operation and the process of creating cohesion and equality. The LOGO East programme provides us the opportunity to see and to understand clearly what an association of local authorities can do to develop its international activities and to assist its members' twinning processes. It also creates opportunities to aspire the achievements of others and plan future regional projects and replicate LOGO East performance of local authorities in neighbouring countries.

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National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

Strengthening local democracy and developing local communities

Founded in 1996, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria represents and defends the common interests of municipalities at the central level. According to the Local Self-Government and Local Administration Act it is entitled to develop proposals for change and improvement in local self-government regulations, to prepare opinions and proposals on the draft budget of the country concerning municipalities, and to be a member of international associations.

Scope of work of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

Representatives of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria participate in the councils of regional policy, social policy, small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism, cadastre and property registry, application and monitoring of the national plan for agricultural and rural area development, and others. Representatives also participate in the governing bodies of the pre-accession programmes ISPA and SAPARD as well as in the governing committees of many donor programmes facilitating financial support to municipalities.

- **Consultative papers:** consultative papers are regularly written to assist members in preparing and implementing municipality budgets, determining local fees, service charges and handling other complicated issues;
- **Handbooks and reference books:** containing information on relevant topics such as municipal property and finance, concessions, civil registration, successful practices of local governments in Europe, legislation, health care and education, lobbying etc.;
- **Training:** experienced trainers, timely topics and interactive exercises assist members to improve their capabilities;
- **Information services:** twice a month the Information Bulletin is issued in a circulation of 1500 copies.

The projects implemented by Bulgarian municipalities on the basis of their bi- or trilateral partnerships within the framework of the LOGO East programme support the build-up of capacity for the provision of high quality services in public transport, services for children and youth, assistance in the development of sustainable projects, one-stop information provision, urban planning and water management, reducing water losses etc.

LOGO East is a door to partnership, a spring of ideas to enrich municipal know-how, and a source of improvement of the services we provide to citizens.

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Union of Municipalities of Turkey

To gather municipalities that are contemporary democratic local bodies into one framework

The Union of Municipalities of Turkey is an umbrella organization which aims at improving the operating effectiveness of contemporary democratic Turkish municipalities. The Union of Municipalities in Turkey undertakes initiatives at parliamentary, national and international government levels to represent municipalities and safeguard their interests such as providing assistance to improve municipalities' financial, social, legal and political efficiency.

Scope of work of the Union of Municipalities of Turkey

Convinced that municipalities with well trained staff raise the quality of services provided to citizens, the Union of Municipalities of Turkey provides training activities for both elected and appointed municipal staff. Training is conducted through seminars, round table meetings, symposiums and international conferences. The Union also provides assistance to municipalities in preserving their interests regarding trade unions, social, economic and personnel issues. The Union is also a significant channel of communication between local administrations and parliament and public opinion.

The Union operates with three key components. The Council is the main decision-making body of the Union. The Unions' President is head of administration and representative of the legal personality of the Union. The Executive Committee is composed of the President and fourteen mayors elected from among members by the Council for a term of one year.

The LOGO East programme is showing us that town-twinings can lead to favourable concrete results. The programme has introduced new practices to pilot municipalities in a wide range of public service delivery, from social services to waste management. An important fact is that small municipalities involved in the programme have been successful in conducting international partnerships.

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Association of Ukrainian Cities and Communities

Safeguarding Communities

The Association of Ukrainian Cities and Communities, founded in June 1992, is a voluntary union of local governments formed to promote members' interests, raise the effectiveness of local government, and progress advocacy, interaction and co-operation.

Scope of work of the Association of Ukrainian Cities and Communities

The Association of Ukrainian Cities and Communities provides:

- Assistance in drafting of laws
- Analysis and expertise
- Information and training
- Legal advice and assistance
- Partnership services to international organizations and foreign associations
- National section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
- Co-ordinate activities for the municipal movement in the Ukraine

The LOGO East Programme supports Ukrainian cities in resolving problems in the social area and housing and utilities sector, and obtaining access to experience of EU countries in internal management and optimally delivering services to citizens.

Such programmes support Ukrainian communities to contribute to the integration of Ukraine into Europe.

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Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities in Serbia

To represent interests, provide high quality service, and support development and improvement of local government through joint effort of its membership in line with European standards

The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities supports local governments in their efforts to upgrade their legal and financial capacity. The Standing Conference is dedicated to fostering co-operation and dialogue among local governments and to supporting their initiatives vis-à-vis central government. It also represents the key note of information flows on issues relevant to towns and municipalities. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities in Serbia is the national association of local authorities founded in 1953 following the examples of local government associations in the countries in Western Europe.

Scope of work of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities

To become a complete and reliable representative of local government's interests, the Standing Conference has set out strategic goals and aims:

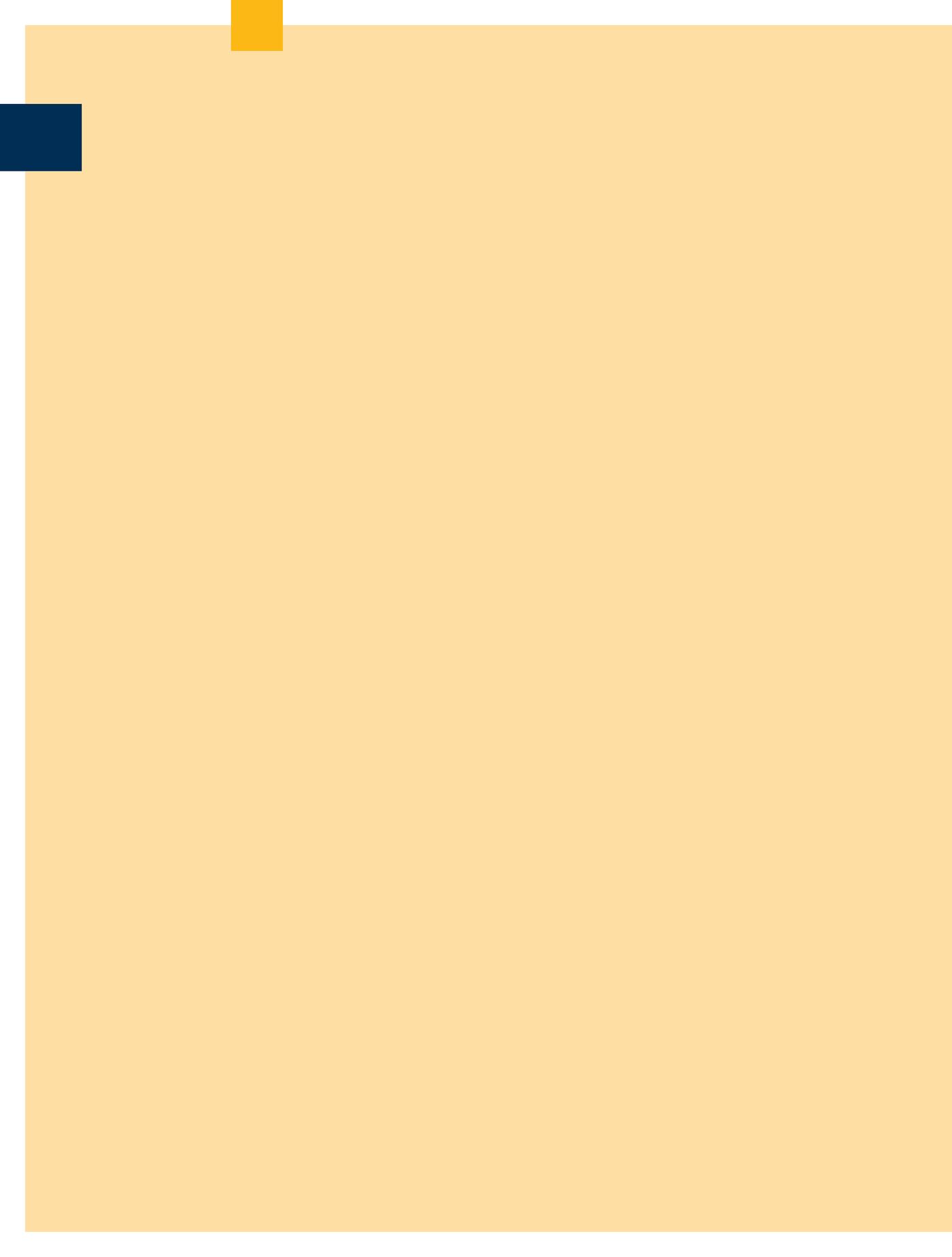
- Complete and reliable participation in legislation building process;
- Providing services to its members according to their needs and interests;
- Development of wide field of training programmes for local officials;
- Representing interests and needs of local governments to Central Government;
- Offering and organizing expert assistance;
- Ensuring long-term effectiveness by building modern organization systems and structures.

The Standing Conference enjoys well-developed international co-operation with many other national associations of local governments as well as with relevant international associations.

The programme LOGO East provides an excellent opportunity for Serbian municipalities to get acquainted with good practices of local governments from the Netherlands, strengthen existing partnerships and build new ones. As the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and VNG International have had fruitful co-operation for many years, I hope it will continue long into the future, and that the number of municipalities involved in the programme will grow strongly.

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**Buitenlandse
Zaken**

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This publication is supported by practices designed to improve the internal management of local and regional governments. The practices are a review of achievements made within the programme LOGO East; they describe the process of change and are intended to be used as guide to action. The programme LOGO East fosters innovations and improvements in the local and regional government sector in Central and Eastern Europe through exposure to good local and regional government practices in the Netherlands.

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