

→ Introducing a new HRM approach

Country Serbia

Project title Improving internal management by introducing a new HRM approach

Twinning Municipality of Sittard-Geleen (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Valjevo (Serbia)

Project period 1 December 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 54,089

Project objective

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

Project summary

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

Core information

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

Problem analysis

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

Project implementation

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

Process management

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

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

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

→ Improve complaint handling and quality control

Country Serbia

Project title Improve the complaint handling and assure quality control

Twinning Municipality of The Hague (the Netherlands)
Municipality of Belgrade (Serbia)

Project period 1 December 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 18,834

Project objective

Improved functioning system of handling complaints and assure quality control.

Project summary

The project aimed at improving the complaint handling within the municipality of Belgrade through analysis of the current system, elaborating of procedures for the new complaint handling system, training of staff and informing citizens on the new complaint handling system.

Core information

The municipality of Belgrade, with a population of 1,6 million, is the capital of Serbia and the centre of Serbian government, culture, education, science and economy. Belgrade has the status of a separate territorial unit in Serbia, with its own autonomous city government. Its territory is divided into 17 city municipalities, each having its own local council.

Problem analysis

The municipality of Belgrade experienced a lack of satisfaction of citizens when it comes to efficiency of administration in solving complaints. The procedures were experienced as complicated and transparency of administration needed to be increased. Furthermore there was a lack of independent control of the administration. To overcome these problems, a system of complaint handling within the Belgrade's administration was improved.

Project implementation

Initially the complaint mechanism for the whole municipal organization was envisaged to be addressed, but this proved to be too ambitious considering the time frame. Focus was put on improving the complaint

handling system of one particular unit: communal inspection. Analysis of the existing process of complaint handling was made, the procedures for new ways of complaint handling were prepared and trainings in the area of complaint handling and project management were delivered. The project resulted in a well functioning complaint system in the area of communal inspection and staff capable to deal with the complaint system. The improved complaint system provides useful management information on how to improve the functioning of the communal inspection unit, resulting in a better service delivery to citizens.

Process management

During the project implementation focus was put on one specific unit (communal inspection), rather than the management level of different services. Additional trainings on project management were provided to get the staff acquainted with project-based working.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Handling complaints in an efficient and effective manner improves the level of satisfaction on service delivery by citizens;
- Try to focus and formulate a pilot (unit/department) before introducing new methods and approach organization-wide;
- Complaint mechanisms can provide useful management information about how to improve service delivery;
- Meaningful changes in municipal organization, with a lot of impact on citizens, can be introduced through small and not so costly interventions.