

Russian Federation

Delivering public services in times of fiscal consolidation

Main implications of fiscal consolidation for service delivery

The reduction in budget revenue during the global financial crisis and subsequent stabilisation of the economy has led to cuts in expenditure for managing the federal provision of public services, while also reducing the number of federal government employees. According to the Budgetary Address of the President of the Russian Federation Policy for 2011-13, by 2013 the number of government employees will be reduced by 20%. At the same time, new technologies will continue to be introduced that allow better services to be rendered at lower cost; these will include “one-stop-shop” delivery of state and municipal services, and e-services.

Key initiatives

The basic principles applying to public and municipal services in the Russian Federation are:

- the legitimacy of delivering public and municipal services;
- declaratory order of applying for public and municipal services to be delivered;
- the legitimacy of charging applicants a state fee and additional fees for the services rendered;
- the openness of public authorities;
- the availability of public and municipal services, including for persons with disabilities;
- the possibility of obtaining these services in electronic form, as well as in other forms at the applicant’s option.

July 2010 saw the adoption of Federal Law of 27 July 2010 No. 210-FZ on the Organisation of Rendering Public and Municipal Services, enshrining the country’s new principles for – and mechanisms of – interaction between public authorities and society in delivering public and municipal services.

In particular, the law enshrined the rights of citizens to receive: public (municipal) services in a timely manner and in accordance with standards for full, timely and reliable information on the order of delivering these services, including in electronic form; actual rendering of the services in electronic form, as well as options for receiving them in other forms; pre-trial review of complaints during the process of obtaining these services; and public and municipal services through a multi-purpose Centre.

In accordance with the law, government bodies and local government bodies must: render public or municipal services in accordance with administrative regulations; as stated above, provide an applicant with the possibility of obtaining public or municipal services in electronic form, as well as in other forms at the applicant's option; and provide other government bodies, local government bodies and organisations the documents and information necessary for rendering public and municipal services, as well as receive such documents and information from them.

The law prohibits the state from demanding information from citizens and businesses already in its possession, as well as information or documents whose disclosure is not required directly by the legal acts.

The specific instances of charging for public and municipal services – on the basis of either the Tax Code of the Russian Federation or its List of Paid Services are identified and approved by the government of the Russian Federation, the law of a region of the Russian Federation and the representative authority of municipalities.

The following actions have been taken to improve the quality of public and municipal services in the Russian Federation.

Regulation and standardisation of public and municipal services

Administrative regulation is developed for each public or municipal service. This is a legal act that establishes the procedure for delivering the service, the prescribed sequence of actions in its provision, reasons for these decisions, and deadlines and requirements for service quality (service standards). As part of the administrative regulations, requirements are established for, *inter alia*, service to and the comfort of citizens, as well as the personal responsibility of officials and the possibility of pre-trial appeal of their actions (or inactions).

Administrative regulations are developed with the involvement of citizens, civil society and scientific organisations. The regulations are subject to independent review as well as public discussion. Regulation of public and municipal services has systematised the powers of public authorities, filled legal gaps, specified administrative procedures, eliminated redundant steps, and reduced service delivery time.

Regulations of public functions and services at the federal, regional and municipal levels of government are due to be fully in place in 2012.

To protect the rights of citizens, a mechanism is being developed (and will soon be legislated) for pre-trial (out of court) claims against actions (or omissions) of public authorities and officials in rendering public and municipal services. In cases where services are of low quality, a citizen or business would file the claim in writing, in electronic form, or through a telephone hotline. In cases of outright violation of established standards and procedures, a mechanism is provided for administrative prosecution of officials within government authorities or local self-government.

Using e-government and cutting red tape

“One-stop shop” implementation

In 2007 the Russian Federation began establishing offices for delivering public and municipal services on a one-stop principle: multi-purpose centres. A recipient need only to apply for a service and should obtain results in due time, free of charge except for

special cases stipulated in the law. All the other work, including inter-agency co-ordination, is conducted by officers of the multi-purpose centres and the corresponding public and municipal authorities, in accordance with administrative regulations. Multi-purpose centres handle more than 100 public and municipal services.

These centres are now established in over half of the entities of the Russian Federation. From early 2010, according to expert estimates, 102 existing multi-purpose centres performed services for more than 1.5 million people. Almost 90% of visitors appreciated the work of the centres and actively support this source of public and municipal services.

The multi-purpose centres have proved capable of reducing delivery times for public services; reducing inter-departmental red tape; reducing corruption, due to lack of direct interaction with the authorities rendering services, or with intermediaries possibly involved in corrupt schemes; and enhancing the comfort and satisfaction of citizens by interacting with the authorities. Centres are now planned for every major municipality in the Russian Federation.

Delivering public and municipal services electronically

This would reduce the time and financial costs to recipients of services requiring co-ordination with the relevant authorities, and could in fact obviate any direct interaction with state officials. To implement these objectives, in November 2009 a single portal of public and municipal services was opened (www.gosuslugi.ru), which allows rendering services in electronic form. The single portal contains comprehensive information about the procedure for receiving public services, requirements for submitting documents and examples of such documents.

Converting services to electronic form is being carried out gradually, beginning with the most popular, socially relevant and (therefore) sought-after services. A list of 74 services for the federal executive authorities has been defined; these pertain to taxation, registration of legal entities and entrepreneurs, licensing, employment and social protection, registration (when a citizen moves from one region of the Russian Federation to another he must register himself in the region where he is staying and living) and immigration records, and health issues. A similar list of 58 regional and municipal services covers education, social welfare, civil registration, social security, housing and utilities. The scope can be extended further to include other services.

Integral to the process is the account of these services, identification of their structure and optimisation of the procedures for delivering them. Those activities are implemented effectively using information technologies: at the federal level by the Information System of Consolidated Register of Public and Municipal Services, and at the regional level typically by regional portals and registries. Information on the service is compiled, updated and published on the Internet, including locations for applying and contact details. These systems also allow electronic monitoring; interested persons are provided with the relevant forms and documents. In addition, these systems can interact with each other, synchronising the information they contain; this allows for consistent information resources at the federal and regional levels.

Optimisation of enforcement, licensing functions and rendering public and municipal services in key sectors of the economy

Starting in 2009, as part of the activities of the Government Commission for Administrative Reform, optimisation of the most popular public services began to be carried out. This involved interaction of different departments and levels of government authorities.

Comprehensive performance optimisation is also carried out for the delivery of public services in key sectors of the economy – in particular, agriculture, education, healthcare, construction, industry, civil registration, transport and communications, road safety, trade and foreign economic activities, environmental management, land and property relations, fisheries, migration, passport and visa services for citizens, state registration of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs, and tax administration. Optimisation relates mainly to reducing administrative barriers and restrictions, eliminating redundant requirements for activities carried out by legal entities and individual entrepreneurs, and eliminating duplicative and redundant functions, as well as reducing execution time. Decisions adopted in this area are recorded in the acts of the Russian government and their performance monitored, including through necessary changes in legislation.

So far, relevant decisions have been adopted in the field of agriculture, education, urban planning and health services, civil registration, transport and communications, and traffic safety.

Towards a more effective and performance-oriented public service

The previous section described key decisions implemented over the past three years in the sphere of public and municipal services, which indeed produced dramatic changes in the way services are rendered. Complete information on these and other decisions adopted in public administration is available on the official website of administrative reform, www.ar.gov.ru.

The President and government of the Russian Federation place a high priority on improving how public and municipal services are delivered. A government commission for administrative reform was created in 2003 to carry out the co-ordinated work of public authorities on administrative reform, including measures to improve service quality. Interested organisations and associations participate in the commission's sessions, allowing reflection on decisions adopted and feedback from service users.

Involving citizens and service users in the design, delivery and evaluation of public services

Citizens, non-profit organisations and business structures are involved in the legal acts governing how public and municipal services are provided.

As stated earlier, independent review of proposed administrative regulations for public and municipal services is performed by individuals and legal entities, including business associations and public organisations. An opinion is prepared and then directed to an authority developing administrative regulation. That authority considers all opinions received from the independent review and decides on the action to be taken. The review evaluates the possible positive and negative effects for citizens and organisations of implementing the provisions.

At the same time, citizens and organisations participate in public discussions of draft bills prepared by the state authorities.

An important role for expert organisations in the process of improving the quality of public services is regular monitoring of the performance quality of the most popular and socially important services, including surveys of citizens and legal entities. Optimisation of public and municipal services in the most significant sectors of the economy is carried out based on the results of the monitoring.

Promoting open and transparent government

Key initiatives

Making information available

In order to ensure the rights of citizens and organisations to have access to information on activities of the government of the Russian Federation – federal, regional and local authorities – a federal law was adopted in 2009. Federal Law of 9 February 2009 No. 8-FZ on Ensuring Access to Information of Activities of Public Authorities and Local Self-Government enshrined the mechanisms of interaction between society and public authorities (local government) in this field.

Fostering integrity and transparency

The basic principles of transparency of public authorities and local self-government are:

- openness and accessibility of information on their activities;
- the reliability of that information and the timeliness of its provision;
- freedom to seek, receive, transfer and disseminate that information in any lawful way;
- respect for the rights of citizens to privacy, protection of their honour and reputation, the rights of organisations to protect their reputation when providing information on the activities of public authorities and local self-government.

In particular, the law enshrines the rights of citizens to receive accurate information on the activities of public authorities and local self-government; to refuse to be informed of these activities; to receive the requested information (access to which is not limited) without having to justify the request; to appeal actions (or omissions) of public authorities and local self-government, or their officials who violate rights of access to such information or the established procedure for obtaining it; and to be compensated for damages caused by violation of their rights of access to such information.

In accordance with the law, state authorities and local self-governments, in providing access to information on their activities, should comply with requirements such as ensuring the reliability of the information; comply with deadlines and procedures for provision; remove from the information provided data relating to restricted information; create within their powers the organisational, technical and other conditions necessary to implement the right of access to information, as well as state and municipal information systems for information user services.

In the Russian Federation, building open and transparent government involves interaction based on information and communication technologies at the following levels:

- public authorities and citizens (government to citizen);
- state and private companies (government to business);
- between public authorities (government to government).

Increasing the openness and transparency of government through policy formulation in the area of regulation promotes public consultation. Consultations with representatives of business entities and other activities are conducted prior to the adoption of draft normative legal acts of federal executive authorities, as well as during the preparation of draft acts at higher levels. Within the public consultations the draft acts are directed to the largest business association of the country as well as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation; they are also posted on the website.

Results of public consultations are recorded in a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). RIAs are mandatory for acts that regulate the supervisory relationship, mandatory requirements for products and production processes, or conformity assessment (Order of the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia of 31 August 2010 No. 398). Both RIAs and public consultations are organised by the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. The procedure for consultations is enshrined in agreements that the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation prepares for signing with the respective organisations.

Safeguarding integrity

Conflict of interest

A definition of conflict of interest is provided by the Federal Laws on Public Civil Service of the Russian Federation and on Municipal Service of the Russian Federation.

A conflict of interest is a situation in which the personal interest of a civil (municipal) employee affects or may affect the impartial performance of official duties and for which there is or might be a contradiction between the personal interest of that employee and the legitimate interests of citizens, organisations, societies, entities of the Russian Federation or the Russian Federation, which may result in harm to these legitimate interests.

To regulate conflicts of interest in public authorities and local self-governments, two commissions were formed: one to regulate compliance with requirements of official conduct for civil (municipal) employees, and one to regulate conflicts of interest.

Anti-corruption

Greater transparency in government is supported by anti-corruption policies. Thus, the Russian Federation ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 31 October 2003 (Federal Law of 8 March 2006 No. 40-FZ). On 31 July 2008 the President of the Russian Federation approved the National Anti-Corruption Plan, and the Presidential Decree of 13 April 2010 No. 460 approved both the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and National Anti-Corruption Plan for 2010-11.

Work on anti-corruption pursued by public authorities in accordance with these documents is in particular aimed at:

- improving the public service and municipal service including settlement of conflicts of interest of public and municipal employees, and ensuring compliance with the relevant prohibitions and restrictions;
- improving mechanisms for delivering public and municipal services and for public and municipal procurement, in order to eliminate corruption-generating factors;
- introduction of information and telecommunications technologies in the activities of public authorities, allowing for transparency of such activities;
- legal education to cultivate in society an intolerance of corruption, ensuring interaction between society and the state on anti-corruption issues, and media involvement in anti-corruption issues;
- assessment of levels of corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures, in order to take further effective administrative and legislative decisions in this area;
- improvement of the regulatory system governing relations in most corruption-generating areas.

In addition, the Russian Federation regularly monitors the departmental anti-corruption activities of federal executive authorities. At the same time, a sociological study is now being conducted among the general population in different regions of the country, aimed at assessing the level of corruption and effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. The survey was completed by the end of 2010.

In order to ensure the openness and transparency of public authorities, federal legislation established an extensive list of public positions that require their holders to provide information on their income, assets and property liabilities, and similar information relating to their family members (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 18 May 2009 No. 559 on Representation by Citizens Intending to Hold Positions in the Federal Public Service and Federal Government Officials of Information on Income, Assets and Property Liabilities, Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 18 May 2009 No. 557 on Approval of List of Positions in the Federal Public Service by Appointment to which the Citizens and by Holding of which Federal Government Officials are Required to Submit Information on their Income, Assets and Property Liabilities, as well as Information on Income, Assets and Property Liabilities of their Wife [Husband] and their Minor Children).

Public procurement

Increased transparency in government is promoted by the regulation of public procurement. In the Russian Federation, public procurement is regulated by a single federal law (Federal Law of 21 July 2005 No. 94-FZ on Placing Orders for Goods, Works and Services for State and Municipal Needs); one of the main objectives of this law is to ensure the openness and transparency of procurement.

Standards provided by this federal law require that public and municipal customers publish all information regarding procurement (notices, documents, records compiled during the procurement procedures, information on performance and the execution of

contracts) on the official Internet sites. (An exception is procurements that are classified). In 2011 a single official website will operate containing all information on public and municipal procurement in the Russian Federation. Thus, any interested person can, without any additional registration, obtain all information on public and municipal procurement.

Since 2009 the Russian Federation has been transferring the main part of procurement to an open electronic auction. This auction provides the highest level of competition and, consequently, maximum budget savings – by minimising both the opportunity for bidders to collude and the potential for abuse by customers through administrative intervention in the process of selecting suppliers.

Lobbying

The legislation of the Russian Federation provides preconditions for lobbying activities:

- The Regulation of the State Duma of the Russian Federation (Order of the State Duma of the Russian Federation dated 22 January 1998, No. 2134-II GD) provides the possibility for experts and representatives of public associations to participate in meetings of committees and commissions; the right of committees and commissions to involve experts in their work; the right to invite to meetings of the State Duma representatives of public organisations, scientific institutions, experts and other professionals, to provide necessary information and opinions for draft bills under consideration by the State Duma and other issues;
- The regulation of the government of the Russian Federation provides that co-ordination and advisory agencies may include representatives of scientific organisations, public associations and religious organisations that have the right of deliberative vote in the co-ordination agencies (Order of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 1 June 2004 No. 260).



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