



STRATEGY 115

A study about the introduction of a public sector wide
telephone service “115” in Germany

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Publisher:

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Foreword

The idea of a single telephone number “115” for access to nationwide public sector services must be a good one, for in my nearly 30 years of service I have never experienced that an idea receive such a positive welcome within such a short space of time: one year. I have seldom experienced national government, regional states and municipalities united (not all, but many) in saying “yes, this is something for us”.

The expectations, not only of the public, but also of the administration and the wider economy are for a considerable improvement in the handling of public affairs. The responsibilities of public bodies are difficult for normal members of the public to appreciate, so that many good things are not undertaken, simply because many citizens do not know which body they need to deal with.

Despite considerable efforts in recent years to establish the Internet as a communications channel between citizens and the public administration authorities, the problem of responsibility remains: which website do I need to look at? As a result, 70% of first contacts between citizens and public bodies are made via the telephone.

The realisation of the idea “115” demanded a thorough reconsideration of the services and workflows: what to do first? How to achieve it? What are the legal and financial consequences? What is the right workflow, not from the view of the municipal administration, but with the best 115 service in mind?

This ISPRAT-study “Strategy 115” analyses these questions – and provides answers for public administrations, politicians and industry. The telephone number 115 is to be a cooperative system. Each community decides independently whether they will take part. There will be no central 115 service centre for Germany as a whole: instead we foresee localised service centres, many of which already exist and work well. We are using their experience.

For this reason we will not introduce the 115 service nationwide in one go. Instead we will work together with a number of pilot regions (Hamburg,

Berlin, Rhine-Main and North Rhine Westphalia) to study and solve the conceptual and technical problems. We need to ensure that the different systems on offer really fit together. The IT industry has a number of challenges to resolve. Industry and the economy as a whole need answers: answers provided by the ISPRAT-study "Strategy 115": answers based on a broad range of inputs from Industry, Administration, Politics and Management Science.

Harald Lemke

Secretary of State
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0 Objectives and Approach

Since the national government IT summit of December 2006, work has progressed towards the introduction of a public sector-wide telephone service “115”. The IT-summit gave the impetus to define more concretely the idea of a central hotline. The idea was well received by the press, politicians and public servants alike. Following interest in a *BürgerTelefon 115* at the conference of state prime ministers and amongst secretaries of state for eGovernment (both at federal and regional state level), the German Interior Ministry and the state of Hessen were commissioned with the preparation of a project to trial and introduce service 115. In the meantime, pilot regions have been identified in which a public-sector wide 115 service should be piloted from 2008.

The idea of *BürgerTelefon 115* service is charmingly simple: citizens and organizations can gain access to all public services – independent of the different administration layers and responsibilities – via a single, easily memorable telephone number. The realisation, however, is anything but simple: a uniform public sector-wide service number and all the related benefits thereof create a serious challenge given the federal administration structure of Germany. Even just the task of agreeing who should be responsible for developing the public administration-wide scheme for *BürgerTelefon 115*, its financing and coordination, is fraught with difficulties and potential conflicts.

In this study, ISPRAT e.V. has pursued the objective of firming up a realisation strategy for *BürgerTelefon 115*.^{Note 1} The goal has been to define a path towards a solution which allows a phased realisation of a public administration-wide 115 service – within the constraints prevailing in Germany. The study is intended to provide a decision support framework for decision makers involved with *BürgerTelefon 115* at federal, regional state and local municipal level. The study is presented as a contribution to considered and expert professional and academic debate on the subject.

As with all ISPRAT studies, *Strategy 115* was undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of professional experts and conducted during the period between June and November 2007. Initially an empirical analysis of existing *BürgerTelefon* concepts both within and outside Germany was undertaken. In parallel, a questionnaire conducted amongst ordinary citizens was used to assess the needs for a German-wide service.^{Note 2} Subsequent analysis assessed the critical success factors for a service introduction and the so-called *multi-centric model* for implementation. The organisational, technical and financial aspects of the implementation model were developed in parallel with an assessment of the legal viability of the scheme. Finally, the study team developed strategy proposals for

1 the term *BürgerTelefon 115* is used exclusively in the study – but is assumed to cover not only public services for citizens (*Bürger*) but also public services for companies and organizations

2 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

service introduction, including the short term measures necessary as preparation. This document summarizes the most important conclusions of the study. A more detailed presentation appears in the separately published full version of the study report.

1 Initial Outlook: the Introduction of a public-sector wide service number offers extensive benefits for all parties

There are more than 20,000 municipal authorities,^{Note 3} associations of municipal authorities and technical or specialist administration authorities in Germany which would need to be included in any scheme for a nationwide realisation of *BürgerTelefon 115*. Together, the call centres and telephone systems of these authorities already handle more than 120 million telephone calls from citizens each year.^{Note 4} Telephone is already the preferred means by which citizens and organizations make initial contact with public administration bodies.^{Note 5} Most citizen contact is with local administration authorities – with municipal bodies, the associations of such bodies or specialist units such as tax or school administration.

The responsibilities of the various bodies are not always clear to ordinary citizens, and this creates a problem.^{Note 6} As a rule, every second citizen is unclear which the right public agency is, to deal with a particular matter.^{Note 7} Attempts of citizens to resolve their uncertainty about which public agency to contact, by calling the normal office telephone numbers of local municipal authorities, usually lead nowhere. The problem is that switchboard receptionists are typically only trained to answer calls and connect through to individual extensions. For complex matters, citizens are often faced with making multiple calls. Not only this: the difficulty of getting hold of someone in the responsible office leaves much scope for improvement. Clerks and administrators are only available during strict office hours and within these support telephone enquires only during restricted periods.

Asked directly about these problems, 83% of the public see a benefit in a single telephone number (115) for public administration and services. Above all, they expect easier access to public authorities and an improvement in the quality of service and administration.^{Note 8} No doubt the perceived strong bene-

3 This very high number results from the fact that local administration in many of the 13,000 German municipalities is undertaken by a range of different and independent cooperatives, operational units and state-owned companies. Federal and regional state authorities add further to the number of independent bodies to be captured under the single umbrella of 115-service.

4 The established nine communal service centres already handle 12 million calls per annum from members of the public (see Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008). An estimate of 120 million calls per year was extrapolated on the basis of 1.5 calls per head of population per year. But the actual number of calls to public authorities is likely to be considerably higher than this, since direct calls to individual administrators and dispersed administration centres are not included in the data. Unfortunately, reliable statistical data about the number of these calls is not available.

5 BearingPoint 2006, Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

6 This confusion over responsibilities exists even within the local area of administration. The realisation of a common service number for all public sector services is likely to stimulate the number of calls from callers wishing to clarify the responsibilities of individual agencies

7 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

8 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

fits are in part due to the recent increase in the number and acceptance of call-centres as now used widely by industry. Citizens have become accustomed to the wide scope, comfort and ease of using telephone services. In addition, an increase in the demand for such services has resulted from the increasing geographical complexity of overlapping administrative responsibilities, and the high mobility of citizens commuting between diverse places of work and home.

But not only citizens and organizations can benefit from improved public services via telephone: public administration authorities also have much to gain. International and national experience demonstrates a range of benefits.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

BürgerTelefon initiatives in many other countries have already proved their worth. This study includes assessment of such schemes in USA, United Kingdom, France and Australia.

USA: The single service number used in USA is “311”. The service was introduced in 1997 following an initiative of the Office of Community Aided Policing.^{Note 9} Initially, the objective was to reduce the number of callers misusing the emergency number, 911. Individual local and regional public authorities are free to decide for themselves how best to implement the service. Since 2001, the 311-service has been complemented by another service number, “211”, used to provide for social and voluntary service agencies.^{Note 10}

To date, more than 70 different 311-projects^{Note 11} have been realised across a wide range of different sized towns – from as few as 5000 population in Bethel, Alaska up to the 8 million population of New York. Individual counties also offer the 311-service. As a result, the number of misplaced calls to the emergency number 911 has been reduced considerably. A number of different types of *BürgerTelefon* services have emerged. Typically these are not linked with one another. Measured in terms of the number of calls to the service, the acceptance of the various 311-projects has been high. The projects have also demonstrated that, apart from a

9 To reduce the high number of inappropriately placed calls to the emergency call number, 911, the introduction of a complementary service was intended to provide relief. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) allocated the call number “311” in spring 1997 as a nationwide, free tariff service (see <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/>).

10 Relevant to the introduction of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service in Germany is the fact that the FCC stipulated a requirement for close-to-nationwide coverage of the 211-service within 5 years – in contrast to a lack of stipulations on the 311-service. An inadequate coverage would have led to the withdrawal of the service number. To secure the future of the service, an alliance of representatives from different public administration authorities (municipalities, counties, state and federal authorities), as well as from non-profit and telecommunications organizations was formed. As a result, the 211-service is today more widespread than the 311 *BürgerTelefon* service. The 311-service is typically restricted to municipal areas. (see <http://www.211.org/>)

11 Schellong 2008

service and quality improvement benefit for members of the public, there are a number of internal administration benefits for the public authorities.

^{Note 12} Above all, the availability and analysis of call statistics have proven valuable for process control and performance management.^{Note 13}

United Kingdom: Public call centres have appeared in increasing numbers since the mid 1990s as a means of easing access to public services by members of the public. Most call centres deal with enquiries, while individual organisations deal with specialist services: for example. In 2006, England and Wales implemented a joint initiative for a single service number. Using the 101-service, members of the public may make enquiries or register problems or complaints (e.g. about noise nuisance or abandoned vehicles). The intention of the 101-service is to deal with matters of public security of a non-emergency nature. A pilot scheme was implemented in five regions of the United Kingdom and financed by the UK Home Office and the Department for Government and Local Communities. Should callers outside of the pilot areas try to call the 101-service, they receive a recorded announcement explaining that the service is not yet available in their region. The plan is for nationwide coverage by 2008.

France: Under the auspices of the initiative for *Administration Électronique*, which sought to revolutionise public administration, a pilot central service centre was introduced in the Rhône-Alpes Department (region) of France in 2003.^{Note 15} On six days a week, callers have access to the “Allô, service public” service centre using the four digit telephone number 3939. Calls cost 12 Eurocents a minute and last on average three minutes. In 2006, 1.2 million calls were answered by 3939 service agents. Around 80% of the enquiries could be answered directly by the service centre.

Australia: The Australian Centrelink service goes much further than the equivalent service centres in USA, France and the United Kingdom. The service is provided by a newly formed administration unit with the specific responsibility to act as a central point of enquiry for public services – dealing in particular with social services

12 Schellong 2008-02-20

13 Behn 2005

14 Cabinet Office 2005

15 Ministère de la fonction publique de la Réforme de L'état et de L'Aménagement du territoire (2005)

and the unemployed.^{Note 16} 289 walk-in centres, 23 call centres and an extensive range of Internet-based services provide a wide scope for members of the public to gain access to public services.^{Note 17}

Despite the different goals of the various schemes, the experience of international projects points to a high level of appreciation and acceptance on the part of the general public. A valuable spin-off has been the substantial reduction in the number of misplaced enquiry calls to the emergency service number. Furthermore, experience of the service has enabled a further honing of users requirements and identified further potential benefits. In the USA, the 311-service has increasingly come to be viewed by the public as the best point of access to public administration authorities. The authorities themselves have grasped the opportunity for systematic analysis of call statistics for use in improving processes and performance management.

There are also a number of valuable lessons to be learned from international experience in developing a strategy for service introduction, For example: in New York, the introduction of a BürgerTelefon service was included as part of a *political case* (an electoral promise for better public services and improved access to them). The resulting political resolve led to faster implementation and promoted public acceptance. A phased approach to service introduction – commencing with a basic offering and extending this over time both in the breadth and depth of services – allows public administration bodies to learn from their experience. Careful communication of the scope of the service, its evolution and the correct guarantee of client satisfaction are important factors in setting realistic expectations and meeting the demands of public administration clients – members of the general public and companies in industry. Positive feedback from members of the public (e.g. within the scope of a formal enquiry/complaint process) have a positive effect on the motivation of public sector employees. A form of competition has emerged between 311-projects in the USA vying to offer the best quality or range of services. This has led to cooperation between centres to share experience and in turn to big leap-forwards in service development.

But international experience to date provides little guide to the critical success factors for a public sector-wide, single and networked services number in federal public administration structures.^{Note 18} Such goals were not the main objectives of the schemes studied during their period of initial introduction. Instead the projects were developed based on independent models or around small “island” networks (France, Wales).

16 Halligan 2004

17 Scott 1999a, Scott 1999b, Vardon 2000

18 The experience of Australia’s Centrelink project is only of limited value when considering a duplication in Germany, due to the very different local conditions

NATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The beginnings of a *BürgerTelefon* have existed in Germany since the mid 90s (e.g. the “overseas crisis hotlines” of the federal Foreign Office and the *doline* in Dortmund). There are also a number of service-specific hotlines for public services.^{Note 19} Federal agencies offer a whole range of telephone services, from switchboard services, through telephone hotlines to service centres with extensive service portfolios.^{Note 20}

The *Strategy 115* study concentrated on an empirical study^{Note 21} of the work and experience of existing structures for (telephone-based) citizen/customer service in public administration. An extensive study of 15 existing or planned service centres covering a mixture of municipal and regional state areas produced a clear and overall positive impression:

Ease of Access: The establishment of a specialist telephone call centre can increase the success rate for callers trying to reach particular services from around 50% to over 90%.

Faster Execution: The majority (up to 80%) of enquiries can be dealt with by the first agent to answer the call – the exact enquiry completion rate depends upon the equipment and systems available in the call centre and the level of training given to the agents. The average handling time and thus the average call duration is comparably short. In the case that questions cannot be answered directly, calls are usually forwarded. Varying according to the scope of individual call centres, the call forwarding rate lies between 17% and 70%.^{Note 22}

Image and Acceptance: A successful telephone call centre is a good advertisement for the public body which operates it. The acceptance of telephone as a medium for access to public administration authorities is growing and replacing other means of access – specifically the need to visit council offices.

Higher Efficiency: *BürgerTelefon* services produce synergy effects and lead to improvements in efficiency – by gathering different types of knowledge and information together for the easy use of administrating agents when answering enquiries. Standard enquiries, routine matters and straightforward administrative procedures can be quickly executed with mini

19 Seiler/Tielsch/Müller 2002

20 BearingPoint 2006

21 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

22 Most established telephone call centres offer a callback services in the case that a particular specialist administrator is not available at the time of the callers initial enquiry.

imum effort. In parallel, the number of unsuccessful calls can be reduced for callers simply foraging for information or repeating calls to unavailable administrators.

Standard ICT-solution: The information and communications technology (ICT) employed today in public authority service centres is based largely on previously established solutions – the structure is not currently well-harmonized. Telephone call centres use standard IT-industry solutions for the handling and management of incoming calls.

In most cases the units are too small: Public authority service centres – in comparison with the call centres used by industry – are very small.^{Notes 23 & 24} Only one of the 15 service centres had more than 120 agents. As a result, it is difficult to achieve economic operation of call centres, including effective capacity control and efficient utilisation of infrastructure.

Limited networking of centres: The networking of call centres, either technically and/or organisationally is the exception rather than the rule. A systematic exchange of good practices and know-how/experience does not take place in practice.^{Note 25}

Apart from isolated reference projects, *BürgerTelefon* services have, in the main, been established by public agencies who have a high level of contact with the general public – for example at the Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Unemployment Agency) or the Deutsche Rentenversicherung (national Pension Fund). Since 2003, the Bundesagentur für Arbeit has operated 52 internal call centres with around 3200 agents – all “virtually” interconnected with one another and thus able to share the handling of enquiries during periods of overload. Published statistics of the Bundesagentur für Arbeit indicate that they handle 78 million telephone enquires per annum.^{Note 26}

Questioned about the value of their call centres, public authorities give an overall positive picture of the benefits, covering a range of different types and sizes of centre. However, there are no reliable sources of statistics to measure the quantitative value of the benefits - in particular the grouping of routine procedures.

Experience shows that the realisation of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service will lead to benefits for all parties (Figure 1). The benefits are not limited to members of the general public and companies – the public administration and political framework also have much to gain – in particular from improved control and perfor-

23 Average number of agents in a German call centre: 95

24 Ecmc GmbH 2003

25 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

26 BearingPoint 2006

mance management. In short, there is a good case for establishing a *BürgerTelefon 115*-service – there is a need and there are clear benefits.

Figure 1

BENEFITS FOR THE DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS

Target Group	Benefits
General Public and Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily memorable national telephone number • Improved point-of-contact with public administration • Improved and more “standardised” service level (availability, coverage etc.)
Public Administration Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed/improved contact with members of the public and industry • Systematic query processing (case) and complaint management • Improved service delivery and the possibility of uniform performance management • Workload sharing, bundling and consolidation • Indirect cost savings resulting from higher efficiency • Opportunity for ongoing modernisation of processes • Indirect support for other projects: e.g. EU service directive, eGovernment projects
The Political World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased transparency and accountability to the public/electorate • Current data on public needs helps to determine the appropriate political agenda • Political Case/Political Currency

There is a further potential benefit: the introduction of a nationwide *BürgerTelefon 115*-service may help Germany to meet the European Union service directive. The EU service directive demands that a single point-of-contact is made available for certain public administration services, as a means of communicating with all relevant responsible bodies. The precise impact of the directive on German law is still being discussed, but it seems likely from today’s perspective, that a nationwide *BürgerTelefon 115*-service could go a long way to satisfying the demands for common service standards and guarantees.

2 Service Objectives – BürgerTelefon: 115 as the central point of contact for public services

The service number 115 is intended to provide members of the public and companies an easy access to public services. There is a value simply in the use of a single number: the number is easy to memorise and can be used no matter which region the caller is in, which public service is involved and which public agency is responsible for dealing with the enquiry.

This all-encompassing service objective needs to be developed further within the overall strategic framework.^{Note 27} The experience of national and international public bodies who have already developed similar services provide a useful basis for comparison. Since the introduction of the *BürgerTelefon 115*-service will be undertaken in phases, the objective must be to meet the needs of the public and client companies whilst simultaneously achieving the potential for more efficient public administration. The solution needs to be future-proof: able to be adapted for an extended service portfolio once experience has been gathered from the initial service.

The objectives of the service need to be defined in detail within five broad categories (see Figure 2):

- The *channel* is the communication means used to invoke public services.
- The *service portfolio* describes the broad range of services offered.
- The *service scope* defines the depth and complexity of matters which can be resolved using the service.
- The *service coverage* defines the geographical area from which the call centre can be reached – in which places and regions members of the public can access BürgerTelefon 115.
- The *service quality* objectives include a definition of the service level to be achieved, e.g. availability, call answering rates and cost/benefit considerations.

²⁷ Assuming the empirical need for such a service, the strategy discussion needs to concentrate on how the *BürgerTelefon 115* service can be implemented on a nationwide and public sector-wide basis in Germany. In principle, the definition of needs can either be based on how services are to be provided (the service offering to the general public and other public administration clients) or on how the administration itself needs to change. Since the *BürgerTelefon 115* service is basically only an extension of the established task of “undertaking telephone contact with the public”, the definition is undertaken here in terms of the changed service objectives. The need to adapt administrative processes – from the perspective of the public administration authority – including changes to the telephone switchboard, the call centre and the 115-service centre is described in detail in the full version of the study report.

Figure 2

SERVICE VISION

	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Time →
Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email, letter, fax, text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone 	
Service Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple Enquiries (Opening times, Contact names and responsibilities etc.) • Establishment of a cooperative translation service • Information collection, complaints etc. 			
Service Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All aspects of public service administration • German, English and regional languages • 06:00-22:00/ 6 days/wk 24/7 in case of crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional networks • Further regional languages • Overflow in case of crisis • 24/7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread network • Multiple languages • Overflow in case of crisis • Special functions • 24/7 	
Service Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, decentralised • Some regional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger regional cooperatives • Some national services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and public sector-wide 	
Service Quality Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal call centre service level (e.g. 80% of calls answered within 30 seconds) • Conforming to an agreed minimum service level 			

ACCESS CHANNEL

The ability to use the telephone as a means of access to public services will be developed further in the first phase of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. In the medium and longer term, and according to needs and public preferences, further channels will be incorporated, e.g. Internet access.

SERVICE PORTFOLIO (BREADTH OF SERVICE)

BürgerTelefon 115 should be the first point of contact for all enquiries concerning public administration. Initially, the *BürgerTelefon 115* service will provide information and answer simple enquiries, e.g. opening times of municipal offices, contact names and responsibilities, how to go about the processes and procedures of administration.^{Note 29} Experience with established public call centres shows that 80% of such enquiries can be handled directly and completely during the first call. Should the call centre be unable to deal with a particular matter directly, then a “dispatch function”^{Note 30} can be used to look up the name of the responsible administrator and forward the caller appropriately.

The aim should be to provide some of the services in multiple languages right from the start (in German, English and regional dialects as well as in other languages to cater for border regions or significant minorities of foreign residents).^{Note 31} Furthermore, *BürgerTelefon 115* should be available at times of day well beyond the normal opening hours of municipal offices – in this way, the needs of the public can be better met without significantly higher costs. Existing call centres are typically open 12 hours a day on weekdays, some also opening on Saturdays.

SERVICE SCOPE

Although the *BürgerTelefon 115*-service will initially only answer simple enquiries, forwarding more complex matters, the intention in the medium term is that it should assume more complex tasks and be able to initiate formal procedures (including complete handling of some matters). This could include recording information and accepting formal applications by phone, electronic medium or other telecommunications means and forwarding this information to the responsible administration agency. As a first point-of-contact, the *BürgerTelefon 115* service centre can act to bundle administration tasks together, separating and forwarding individual tasks to different administration agencies and acting to oversee the management of the process as a whole – providing information on status if requested.

28 The target group includes all clients and customers of public services and administration, including residents and (foreign) tourists. *BürgerTelefon 115* service should provide equally for the needs companies, organisations and associations as it should for individual members of the general public.

29 The range of services reflects on the one hand, the number of specialist administration areas and services available, and on the other, the number of different administration agencies involved.

30 Matters which can only be dealt with by a particular office or those requiring a legally binding reply will always be forwarded to the specialist department or administrator.

31 Further languages can be offered by means of a translation service, cooperatively used by all the service centres. In the medium and longer term a broad spectrum of foreign languages can be made possible – particularly for regions with a high proportion of migrant residents.

SERVICE COVERAGE

The telephone number 115 should be available nationwide and will be reserved accordingly, although full availability of the service will only be available in the medium to longer term, since different local and regional requirements have yet to be determined. On the one hand, it will be a matter of choice for individual public administrations whether they wish to partake in the 115 scheme, on the other, regional requirements vary greatly. Only in the case of metropolitan areas with a high proportion of commuters and inter-dependence is there already a clear cut requirement scenario. How great the public demand will be in thinly populated and outlying rural areas is partly unknown. For these reasons, the precise geographical coverage and range of services needs to be left open and realised in phases.

SERVICE QUALITY

Above everything else, the general public and client companies expect to be able to get hold of the administration easily and have their matter dealt with efficiently. Calls should be answered in line with industry call centre standards, which typically expect that 80% of calls should be answered by a human within 30 seconds.^{Note 32} The medium term goal should be to completely resolve the majority of simple enquiries (e.g. 80%) immediately.^{Note 33}

Public satisfaction with enquiry handling relies upon the 115-service centre accepting responsibility for the task in-hand and immediately starting to deal with it. For some matters, e.g. moving house or founding a company, the ability to offer a *one-stop* approach to handling the client may be appropriate.

A further measure of quality is to consider the cost-benefit payoff of calls made to the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. The service is of real value to the general public: reducing the time callers spend trying to find the right person to talk to and answering questions promptly and efficiently. Given the benefits, it seems reasonable to charge callers at local call rate, although the need to ensure acceptance of the service may speak in favour of a free service.^{Note 34} At local call rate, calls to the *BürgerTelefon 115* service are no more expensive than it would cost today to call the municipal offices. Most of the local municipal service centres assessed in this

32 Further quality parameters and targets need to be defined and realised in line with a formal structure for quality management

33 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008

34 A further argument in favour of a free tariff for calls to the *BürgerTelefon 115* service might be the inordinate amount of effort required to charge for 115-calls and/or forwarded calls.

study choose to charge calls at local rate.^{Note 35} The collected call revenues, after deduction of the relevant telephone service provider charges, can be used to cover the costs of the system itself, forwarding appropriate calls and financing network management.

35 Goldau/Meyer/Weber 2008: tariff free calls to public administration authorities are seldom made available. Of 155 telephone services covered by this study which are offered by federal authorities, only 12 are offered at a free tariff. The established calls centres covered by the study already achieve this service level; BearingPoint 2006

3 Critical Success Factors: Five important conditions must be met

The introduction of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service sets a significant, but nonetheless surmountable, challenge for political and public administration leaders. The responsibility to provide a “telephone interface” lies with each individual public authority. The problem is that the federally dispersed administration structure of Germany does not easily lend itself to a uniform scheme. Another challenge is the need to agree the standards and coordination mechanisms necessary for networking the different levels and agencies of public administration together under a single telephone number. In short, *BürgerTelefon 115* must be dealt with like any other new service offering. It will have to be realised in the climate of current weak municipal finances and the ongoing discussion about the modernisation of public administration and reducing the workload.

Previous experience suggests that the following conditions are critical for the successful implementation of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service:

- *Development of a “Political Case” for the service:* Introduction of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service demands close cooperation of the different federal, state and municipal public authorities. The initiation and successful fruition of such a project requires a widespread consensus spanning the different political bodies. Above all, a well-defined and understood responsibility model, covering federal and state agencies and their relationship with local and municipal bodies which are responsible for the decentralised delivery of services, is critical to success.
- *Communication and management of expectations:* There is broad scope for which services are offered and how these are initially implemented. Since the delivery mechanism for the affected services is new, it is essential that there is good internal and external communication^{Note 36} about the changes. Managing realistic expectations of all the affected parties and maintaining their motivation for the success of the implementation must be a defined objective right from the beginning. Failure to meet expectations reduces the perceived value of the project, potentially leading to a rejection of the scheme or even a refusal to continue working on it.
- *Implementation within the current legal framework:* In order to avoid the time-consuming complications and effort associated with changing laws, the *BürgerTelefon 115* service should be planned within the bounds of the current legal framework, particularly during the initial set-up phase.

36 Communication should include the basic goals of the scheme, the phases which will take place during service introduction and the benefits. It is equally important to cover not only the communication needs of the general public who will use the service but also the administrators and politicians who must participate in a successful launch.

- *Minimum solution complexity:* There is huge overall potential for consolidating public sector-wide services under a single umbrella of 115-service. However, wide-ranging process and organisational structure changes will be necessary to enable the inclusion of all the bodies and the achievement of the full range of benefits. The initial solution should therefore not be too complex (e.g. concentrating initially only on telephony as a communications channel) - in order that the risks associated with deployment are minimised.
- *Providing incentives and removing obstacles:* Since *BürgerTelefon 115* is dependent upon mutual cooperation but optional participation, it is appropriate to arrange incentives and remove obstacles for taking part. This applies particularly to encouraging different bodies to network together and cooperate across traditional boundaries of responsibility. Possible incentives could include:
 - *Financial encouragement:* a financial subsidy based on the achievement of high usage as well as customer satisfaction with the range and quality of services could encourage public agencies to become progressively increasingly supportive.
 - Know-how sharing and consulting/support structure: for example, establishing a platform for sharing know-how and experience between participating organisations and system operators, developing standards and guidelines and organising operator-cooperatives, as well as procedures for mutually sharing periods of peak demand and “overflows”.
 - Making resources or initial funding available: to ensure that adequate organisational and technical infrastructure is in place. This might include making technical know-how available for developing initial skills, networking existing service centres together and establishing the necessary inter-operability standards for the 115 cooperative.
 - Advertising and promotion of the successes of “model” regions
 - Development of a governance (management and control) structure reflecting the cooperative nature of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. This needs to include a capability for particularly experienced service operators to assist other public agencies in the implementation of the decentralised system.

These success criteria need to be considered not only in the choice of the most appropriate model for service realisation but also during the development of the service introduction strategy.

4 Implementation Model: a multi-centric model is best suited to a federal administration

The core elements of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service are the local and regional service centres,^{Note 37} which accept calls from members of the public and companies and deal with their enquiries. In order to provide uniform and public sector-wide service, these centres need to work together in a cooperative: sharing information, as well as forwarding calls between one another. There are five possible models for the implementation of the 115-service centres and the 115-cooperative. The models differ in their organisation, management and control structure (governance), processes and technology (Figure 3):

- *Centralised model*: This model foresees only a single service centre, although this might be “virtually” spread across several physical locations. This service centre provides service for the entire nation. A cooperative organisation is not necessary since all management and control functions are centralised. Processes and technology are uniform across all the locations or are only realised in one location.
- *“Islands” model*: Multiple local and regional service centres provide the service for their respective areas. Individual service centres are not linked and independently organise their affairs with each of the relevant local administration authorities. Consequently, the processes and technology reflect the local requirements and constraints of individual service centre – overall the picture is heterogeneous.
- *Star model*: This model is an extension of the *Islands* model – adding a central system “hub” to coordinate the individual service centres, enabling an exchange of knowledge and cooperation for handling of individual enquiries. Selected functions are dealt with by the cooperative as a whole, with processes and technology for these being implemented on a uniform basis or perhaps only realised at a single central location.
- *Network model*: As an alternative to a central hub, data exchange between the service centres can be achieved as required by inter-networking. Interconnections are established according to the common interests of regional entities and can be supported – where appropriate – with uniform processes and technology. The network model simplifies not only the connection to local administration authorities, but also the cooperation with regional agencies.

37 A local service centre is an organisational unit which is the entire responsibility of a particular public authority (typically a municipal agency). Regional service centres are typically financed by more than one body and provide services for a number of agencies.

Figure 3

FIVE REALISATION MODELS FOR BÜRGERTELEFON 115

	① Centralised	② “Islands”	③ Star	④ Network	⑤ Multi-centric
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single service centre as independent organisational unit, possibly distributed across multiple locations 		Local and regional service centres as independent organisational units	115 umbrella organisation	
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central partner management and standardisation by means of a single organisation 		Decentralised partner management by the service centre responsible for each area	Overall partner management via 115 umbrella	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional decentralised partner management in regional centres
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of incoming & outgoing calls by service centres. Overload management Centralized, Germany-wide query handling Central quality and know-how management Integration of regional & local agencies into central system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case handling on an area basis Decentralised quality and know-how management Regional authorities need to be integrated into multiple centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of incoming and outgoing calls by service centres Overloads regulated by cooperation Mainly decentralised handling of cases by service centres Partly centralised cooperation (e.g. for crisis management) Mainly decentralised quality and know-how management by service centres, partly centralised cooperation (e.g. sharing experience and generation/development of overall know-how) Integration of regional public agencies into a single regional cooperation centre or alternatively into multiple regional centres. Integration of all local public agencies into the local area service centres 		
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homogeneous systems Central know-how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heterogeneous systems Decentralised know-how 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heterogeneous systems and regions, some homogeneous regional centres Decentralised know-how cooperative 	
			The technology required for integration of public agencies reflects the processes to be handled		
			Cooperative routing according to guidelines yet to be defined		

- Multi-centric model:** This solution is a combination of star and network models. Several local and/or regional service centres are connected together by means of a central regional hub centre. The associated service centres use common structures and provide services in cooperation, e.g. helping other centres out during periods of call congestion. Since the regional hubs are also interconnected with one another, data sharing across the entire 115 cooperative is possible.

Seven criteria were used to assess suitability of each of the individual implementation models for providing the *BürgerTelefon 115* service (Figure 4).

Figure 4

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING THE ALTERNATIVE MODELS

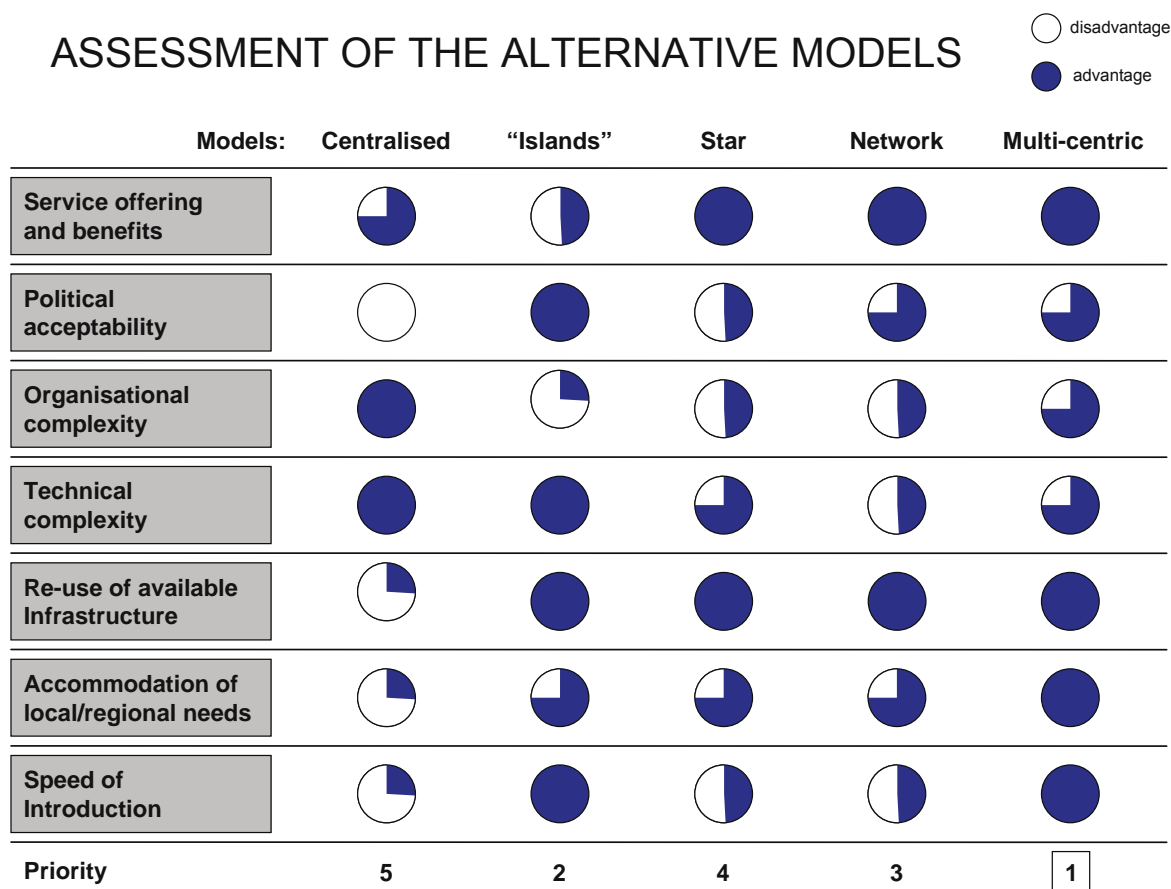
	Remarks
Service objectives and benefits	To what extent does the model fulfil the long term service objectives of <i>BürgerTelefon 115</i> ?
Political acceptability	What is the likely level of support for the model from the relevant political leaders at municipal, regional and federal level?
Organisational complexity	Is only minimal effort and risk involved in defining, setting-up and operating the new or adapting existing organisational structures to meet the requirements of the model?
Technical complexity	Is only minimal effort and risk involved in defining, setting-up and operating the new or adapting existing technical infrastructure to meet the requirements of the model?
Re-use of available Infrastructure	What is the extent to which existing telephone equipment, IT-infrastructure and established technical standards can be re-used?
Accommodation of local/regional needs	To what degree can local and regional needs and expectations be met by the model and to what extent can additional services be incorporated into <i>BürgerTelefon 115</i> ?
Speed of Introduction	How quickly can the first and subsequent phases of realisation be achieved by the model?

The assessment shows that the *Islands* model and the *Multi-centric* model best fulfil the criteria (Figure 5). In comparison, the other models demonstrate no significant advantages and are therefore not considered further in this report.

Services are provided as decentralised as possible in the case of both the *Islands* and the *Multi-centric* models – by means of local and regional service centres. By interconnecting with existing service centres, both models could be quickly established in the affected regions.

Further advantages of the *Multi-centric* model are the support of widespread information exchange and know-how sharing, as well as the promotion of uniform service quality. The regional hubs create an additional layer in the implementation model – helping to promote cooperation and synergies between processes and technologies. In consequence, the *Multi-centric* model is the favoured approach.

Figure 5

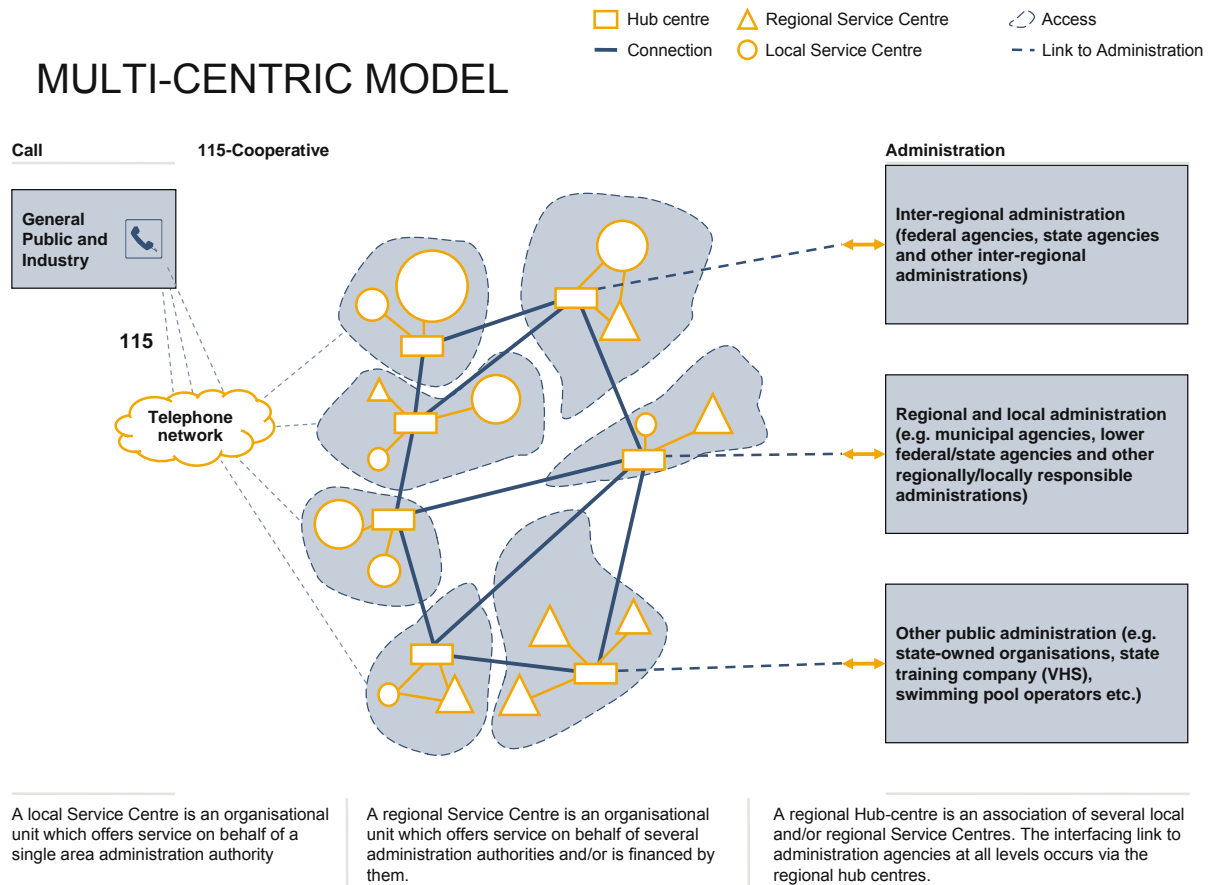


The feasibility of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service is very dependent upon whether there are any legal obstructions to its realisation. If its introduction required a change in the law, its political acceptability would be extremely limited, the complexity of the project would be much greater and a rapid realisation would be nearly impossible. For these reasons, the study undertook an assessment of the legal feasibility of the favoured *Multi-centric* model.^{Note 38} This concluded that there were no legal obstacles to implementation. On the contrary: the decentralised structure foreseen in the *Multi-centric* model reflects the statutory responsibilities and accountabilities of the different bodies. A network based on mutual cooperation and optional participation may thus be implemented, without requiring a change in the law.

The next section considers the organisational, governance, process and technological aspects of the *Multi-centric* implementation model as illustrated in Figure 6.

38 a full explanation of the legal constraints is contained in the full version of the study report.

Figure 6



ORGANISATION

Local and regional service centres are independent organisational units and the responsibility and financial liability of a single (typically municipal) public authority. A significant proportion of the staff in service centre organisations is committed to handling incoming calls. These staff can typically be subdivided into *first level* and *second level* groups. The *first level* agents are responsible for answering calls and handling matters which can be dealt with during the initial call, Should this not be possible within a pre-defined time limit, then the *first level* agents forward the call to the *second level* – comprising staff who continue the procedure or maybe undertake further investigation. The pool of *second level* staff can be divided according to specialist area, and may include subject experts from the relevant public authority as well as the service centre agent staff.

Since the quality of service is critically dependent upon the information available within the service centre, there needs to be an organisational unit specifically and

exclusively responsible for continuously updating and supplementing the sources of information. Other support functions required are quality management, training, IT/infrastructure management, marketing, press office, human resources and overall service centre management.

Depending upon how exactly the service centre is integrated into the public administration authority itself, different organisational structures may be used. Some functions (e.g. IT/infrastructure management or human resources management) can be delegated to other specialist bodies. It is also conceivable that the *Bürger-Telefon 115* service could be realised by a service organisation comprising units of several different operators or different public agencies (see chapter 5). The bundling of commonly used functions – both in the regional service centres and in the regional service hubs – is not only possible but may make good economic sense.

With regard to who should have the overall responsibility (umbrella function) for the 115-cooperative there are two alternatives: it could either be delegated to a “115 HQ” function or it could become an additional responsibility of individual members (or groups of members), working groups or a formal cooperation structure. Neither a centralised nor a cooperative form of management need be ruled out. A combination of the two is also possible, as is a model changing over time (e.g. in step with a particular level of implementation). Figure 7 illustrates the different organisational units necessary for managing *BürgerTelefon 115*.

Figure 7

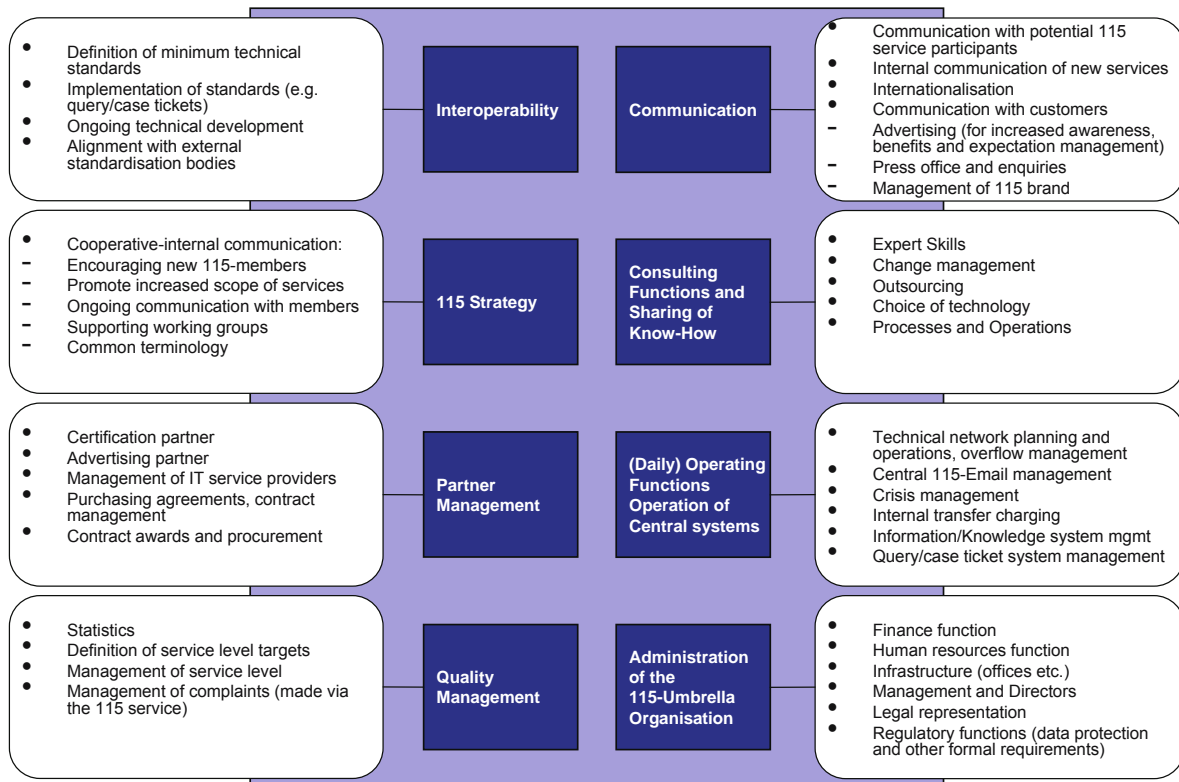
ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BÜRGERTELEFON 115

115-Umbrella Organisation		Service Centres		Regional Hub Centres
„HQ“	Cooperative	Local Service Centre	Regional Service Centre	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central responsibility for BürgerTelefon 115 - Initially established as a project organisation, club or foundation - In the medium term will need a more permanent form: o Legal form and dependency (if in doubt, as an independent organisation) o Functional units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central responsibility for coordinating areas of overlap • Can be flexible in how and where these functions are arranged, which roles can be mutually assumed and how these should report: - One member answers for all regions or one member per region - Cooperative answers for each region - Working group structure - In cooperation with shared organisational units - Via third parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A municipal/local administration authority uses/operates a service centre covering its geographical area of responsibility (also conceivable under different operating models – from an in-house solution, via PPP to full outsourcing models) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several municipal/local administration authorities use/operate a common service centre (organised as a single entity, by assignment and transferral of tasks to other single or multiple members of the cooperative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation between one or more regional or local service centres • Functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know-how exchange between centres - Shared operation of infrastructure components (e.g. databases and connections to information/knowledge management system) - Cooperation to handle overflow workloads - Shared representation of the regional cooperation within the overall cooperative
Responsible for 115-infrastructure and for coordinating areas of overlap		Responsible for providing 115-services and decentralised operational functions		

In defining the most important umbrella functions of the 115-cooperative it is important to decide, to what degree individual functions (e.g. external communication and marketing) should be assigned to particular organisational units. Since many of the functions are already established in existing service centres, there is much to be said for a strongly decentralised cooperative structure. Most of the individual functions illustrated in Figure 8 can be delegated to different members of the cooperative, mutually working for one another. In this way, only a small umbrella organisation is necessary

Figure 8

COMMON INTERESTS WITHIN THE 115-COOPERATIVE



GOVERNANCE

The assumption of responsibility by the service centres needs to be supported by the establishment of a cooperative management and control (governance) structure. The structure needs to reflect the need to establish overall management for the 115-cooperative – reflecting the optional nature of participation in the organisation as well as the communal goal of establishing 115 on a firm long-term footing. The prime role of the umbrella management will be to promote the regional availability of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service and to encourage the inclusion of a

wide range and scope of different services, as far as these can be supported by all the members. In addition, umbrella management will be responsible for agreeing guidelines and minimum standards for service quality, process procedures and technology. These will ensure a consistent image and perception of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service amongst members of the public and company clients. At the same time, they also simplify the integration of new members.

There are various ways in which the umbrella functions may be distributed between the umbrella organisation, the regional hubs and the service centres. For example, the 115 umbrella organisation could have responsibility for 115 strategy, partner management and overall communication. The regional hubs could support new members and promote not only the sharing of know-how and ideas between the service centres, but also a cross-regional quality management scheme. Working groups, comprised of representatives from the different service centres would develop overall standards and methodologies for interconnection. The responsibility for the management of local partners and for communication within the local area would rest with individual service centres – but these could also undertake operational tasks in support of central system components, e.g. operating systems which form part of the overall knowledge and information management system.

Current planning foresees establishing a small, formal “company-like” management (and reporting functions) within a small cooperative umbrella organisation beside a structure of management boards comprising members from the participating organisations. It makes sense to establish working groups and subject specific task forces (possibly also with regional sub-groups) to address all aspects of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. Elected speakers or representatives of the different working groups can then be empowered with the relevant management authority to make decisions on behalf of the entire cooperative.

PROCESSES

The pre-condition for widespread penetration of uniform service processes across all service centres is the use of consistent procedures at the basic processing level. In addition, mandatory rules for interconnection need to be established – defining the transfer of responsibility, calls and information within the cooperative, or to and from the public administration authorities connected to it. The use of a two-stage process in the handling of incoming calls ensures high availability of the service centres: *first level* agents answer calls and carry out initial handling, forwarding more time consuming matters to *second level* specialists. In the case of enquiries which cannot be directly dealt with by the service centre, relevant information can be gathered and forwarded to the responsible body. The basic procedure and the data form transferred with the case need to be the same in all service centres. Nonetheless this can accommodate slight differences in at the in-

dividual process level, for example: in the case that different information sources or systems are used, or because of the way in which a particular local authority is connected to the system.

The basic conformity of processes plays an important role in being able to act in particular situations, which often have an impact across a whole region (e.g. during a crisis). The procedure for registering such reports, the method of handling, the processing of information and forwarding within the cooperative must all be standardised in order that the enquirer is handled in a consistent manner. Only in this way can an effective and consistent information transfer be achieved.

The support processes for quality management and information management have direct impact on the service quality of *BürgerTelefon 115* and this should be as consistent as possible across all the service centres. In consequence, there needs to be significant commonality of procedures, enquiry/case data and monitoring objectives. Sharing of know-how between the service centres about quality assurance methodologies and achieved targets has the potential to yield significant improvement. But more important than this is the subject of information management: relevant information and knowledge affecting more than one party must be generally available and reliable and the responsibility for updating and maintaining it will need to be distributed.

A support process of particular importance to *BürgerTelefon 115* is the integration of service centres into downstream public administration units. Cooperation promotes the exchange of information and leads to quicker and better services for members of the public and client companies. Not only this: the administration unit can be relieved by transfer of workload to the service centre.

TECHNOLOGY

The main components of the IT-infrastructure are: on the one hand, the different applications and systems for data and speech processing; on the other, the networks and interfaces for interconnection of service centres and communicating with public administration organisations. The challenge lies in meeting the defined requirements and quality standards using heterogeneous IT-solutions which either already exist or are likely to prevail even in the future - all this while nonetheless ensuring full compatibility between service centres. The agreement of standards for exchange of data within the 115-cooperative or with external partners will go a long way to achieving this, as will measures aimed at inter-operability. New system solutions and interfaces should be – as far as possible – implemented commonly and uniformly.

The infrastructure in the service centre includes: the knowledge/information management system; a search function able to access different information sources; an enquiry/case ticketing system for documenting enquires and forwarding

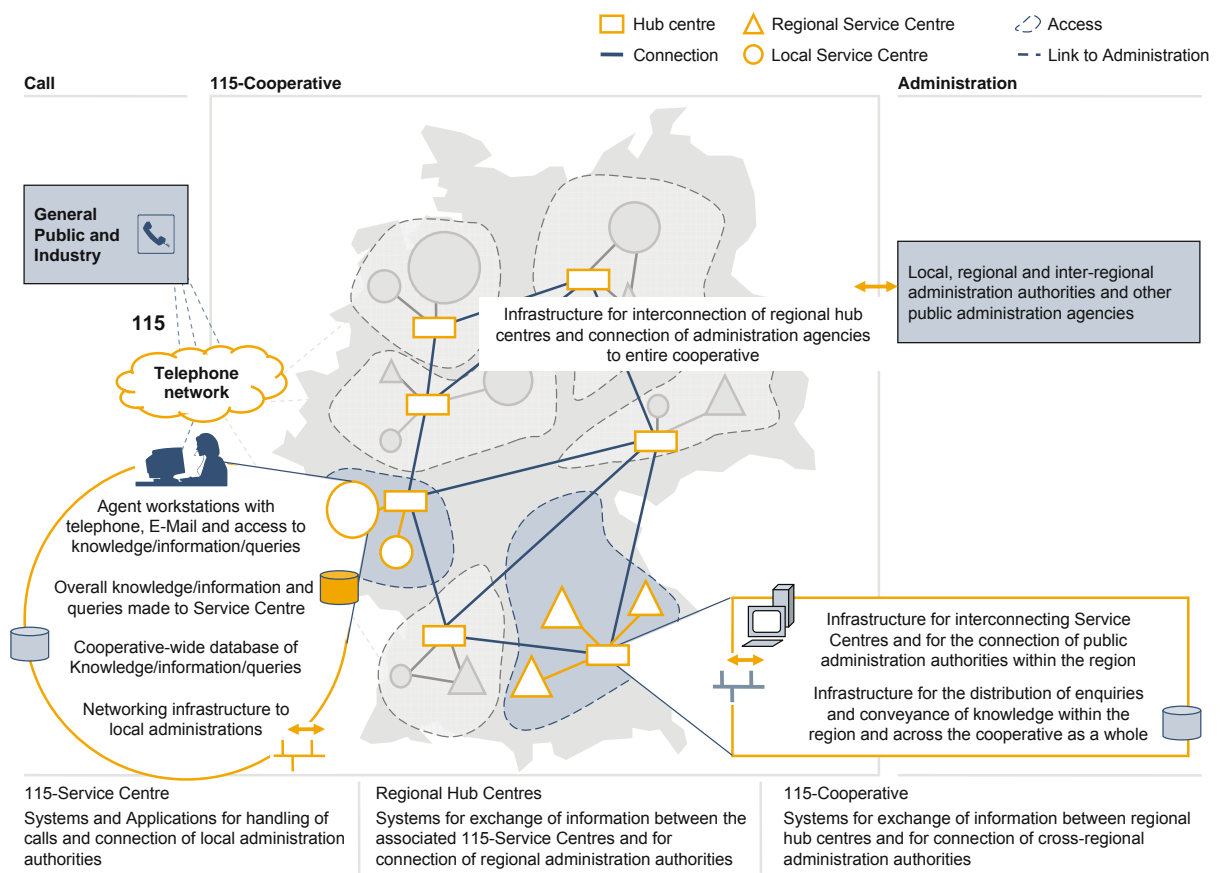
them; as well as a telephone system for distributing calls between the various handling agents. In addition, when technically possible and economically viable: interfaces for the integration of specialist procedures of the local administrating authorities.

- *Information/Knowledge Management:* The information/knowledge management system is of utmost importance for the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. On the one hand, different types of information and sources of data must be gathered together. On the other hand, the majority of the information/knowledge needs to be spread across the service centres and kept in synchronisation. The information/knowledge management system needs to be integrated into the applications used in local service centres, as used by the telephone agents. The system needs to offer functionality which allows the information stored in it to be collected from, and maintained by, a large number of different authors. In addition, interfaces are required for repeated exchange of data, including a capability to transform the notation and structure of the information. An efficient mechanism for the distribution and synchronisation of data within the 115-cooperative can be implemented with the help of the regional hub centres, which themselves are interconnected and also act as “data hubs” for their respective regions. The greatest challenge of information/knowledge management lies in recreating the many different structures and types of information, reflecting the entire public administration arena, in a uniform but flexible manner. In addition to using XML as a mark-up language, effective methods are needed to help define, agree and implement comprehensive terminology and relationships.
- *Enquiry/case management:* The requirements arising from the need to integrate the enquiry/case (ticket) management system with, and to distribute tickets between, the existing systems are similar to those of the information/knowledge management system. In comparison, the data structure and administration task is much simpler. A case ticket need only comprise relatively few standardised fields. Since the number of case tickets which need to be distributed affect only a small portion of the overall information/knowledge base, the same infrastructure can be used to cover both areas.
- *Call distribution:* According to the geographical location of their fixed line or the current location of their mobile telephone, callers will be assigned to a particular region and forwarded to the relevant service centre. Should the service centre not be immediately BLE to accept the call – perhaps because all the agents are currently busy and do not become available within a pre-defined acceptable waiting time – then the call is forwarded to another service centre. A rule set needs to be defined and programmed into the telephone call distribution equipment to cover under what circumstances calls are to be forwarded (e.g. according to waiting time, perhaps dependent on day of the week and time of day) and what conditions must be met by the

receiving service centre before any calls are forwarded. Such overflow rules require a connection between the affected telephone call distribution systems and may also require the provision of additional technical equipment. Such schemes are easier to implement in a homogeneous system landscape.

Figure 9 illustrates how the different building blocks of the infrastructure are used to connect members of the public and companies to the *BürgerTelefon 115* service, and how this in turn is connected to the public administration organisations.

Figure 9



5 Business and Operating models: keeping cost and complexity under control

There are additional costs for administrations implementing the *BürgerTelefon 115* service, though the overall extra cost is limited. It is recommended that a tit-for-tat approach be used with respect to charging for services between 115-service centres and the 115-umbrella organisation, since this involves only minimal complexity. But which operating model is best suited to a particular service centre depends upon the particular circumstances of the affected local administration authority. This decision can, and is appropriate, to be taken in a decentralised manner.

JUSTIFIABLE FINANCIAL COSTS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION

How high the costs of the implementation of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service will be for individual administration authorities (assuming the current starting point) depends upon three main factors: the service range (portfolio) and scope (level of complexity and detail) to be provided in the service centre; the number of personnel; and the necessary infrastructure. The following sections estimate the costs and revenues for each of the local and regional 115-service centres as well as for the planned 115-umbrella organisation. The basis of the figures used in the calculations is the empirical set of values obtained from studying similar services already offered both nationally and internationally.

Set up and operation of a local or regional service centre

Costs in the set-up phase comprise the investment in initial planning, hardware, software and system integration, as well as the costs of establishing offices, individual workplaces and training staff. How high these costs are depends on a large number of variables: e.g. the existing infrastructure, the planned service range and scope, the required quality of software and hardware, the scale of technical integration necessary to incorporate specialist public administration agencies and the amount of estate or office space required.

National and international experience suggests that the range of investment costs lies between about 100,000€ and 400,000€ per 100,000 head of population. The real costs will not be known until the first pilot projects go live. The approximate split of the costs is as follows:

- Planning costs, including external support, approx 20%
- Hardware, software, system integration and equipping workstations, approx 60%
- Staff training, approx 10%
- Office space/estate costs, approx 10%





Figure 10 illustrates qualitatively the relative need for funds, depending upon the maturity of the existing infrastructure.

Figure 10

Figure 10

○ low
● high

FINANCING REQUIREMENT DURING THE SET-UP PHASE: AS A FUNCTION OF MATURITY

Maturity	Existing Services	Financing Requirement
Existing call centre or BürgerTelefon Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwarding of calls to connected agencies • Multiple different services • Occasionally: assistance in areas beyond normal responsibility 	
BürgerTelefon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide ranging assistance within own organisation • Forwarding of calls, advice or information about other contact persons 	
Telephone Switchboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forwarding of calls within own organisation • Simple advice and information about own organisation 	
No Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No services 	

The initial investment could be covered by start-up financing, provided either by an external public body or a private finance house. A number of different variants are conceivable, e.g. central or decentralised financing and private-public partnership.

Once the service centre has been established, there are costs for ongoing operation. These comprise: costs of staff; hardware; software; data storage and updating; network and telecommunications; office/estate costs, as well as the costs

of external support services. As an estimate of the ongoing costs of operation, various national and international public service centres were evaluated which share similarity with the planned 115-service centres. The conclusion was that the cost per call depends upon: the service portfolio and scope; the number of staff; the degree of sophistication of the infrastructure; and from the duration and number of calls per head of population.

Building on this analysis, two scenarios were developed,^{Note 39} in order to estimate the range of the operating costs associated with a 115-service centre for around 100,000 head of population.

- In *Scenario 1* the volume of calls is assumed to reflect 1.0 calls per head of population per year. In this case, the cost per call is around 3€,
- In *Scenario 2* the volume of calls is assumed to reflect 1.5 calls per head of population per year. In this case, the cost per call is around 5€.

On this basis of this calculation model, the total costs per 100,000 head of population (assuming a stable “steady state” and ignoring depreciation costs) lie between 300,000€ and 750,000€. The following caveats, however, should also be noted:

- There is a minimum size for which a 115-service centre can be set up and run efficiently. It is not the case that the operating costs of a centre for 50,000 head of population will be half the costs of a centre catering for 100,000.
- A 115-solution built by a cooperative to cover a much larger regional area is likely to benefit from lower costs resulting from the efficiency of scale.
- The distribution of the costs across the individual cost categories can vary greatly from one case to another.

Income and other funds can be obtained during the operations phase from a number of different sources: additional budgeting; reallocation of other expense budgets or budgets of other departments, cost assignment or call charges; and transfer charging for services provider to third parties for specific duties. The general public and companies using the 115-service should not have to carry the costs, other than maybe a nominal call charge, yet to be determined.

39 In order to estimate the range of likely costs only minimum and maximum scenarios have been developed. The following assumptions with respect to operating costs underlie each of the scenarios: 1.) staff costs: approx 80%, 2.) infrastructure costs: approx 15%, and 3.) costs for external support services: approx 5%

Establishment and operation of the 115-umbrella organisation^{Note 40}

The 115-umbrella organisation plays a decisive role in the coordination of the headquarters activities and the decentralised service centres. For the set up of such an organisation there are costs involved in: planning, including external support services; hardware and software, including system integration and equipping workstations, staff training and acquiring office space. A rough estimate of the costs involved puts them between € 1.3m and € 2.3m. A more precise forecast can be made once the role of the 115-umbrella organisation has been defined by the business plan in more detail.

The start-up capital could be financed from one of a number of sources: central financing, public financing via a fund, private capital financing – or another common means – a combination of these sources.

The annual operating costs of the 115-umbrella organisation lie roughly between € 2.7m and € 4.8m. Should the tasks of the 115-umbrella organisation be delegated to decentralised organisations, then the relevant costs will be incurred by these organisations instead:

- There is a manpower need of between 25 and 35 employees. Qualified personnel are required to: provide advice and consulting support to the decentralised 115-service centres; undertake ongoing quality control; develop standards; and ensure ongoing communication. The total cost of staff thus lies between € 2.0m and € 3.5m per annum (assuming an average annual cost of between 80,000€ and 100,000€ per employee [including employer costs of social contributions etc.])
- The annual costs associated with software, hardware, telecommunications, other materials and rent are estimated between € 0.4m and € 0.7m.
- The need for external support services and know-how, including legal advice, auditing, production of annual report etc. add an estimated further € 0.3m to € 0.6m to annual costs.

Annual operating costs could be covered by a combination of central government financing, transfer charging of costs to the 115-service centres, call charges (e.g. Charged for overflow calls), providing service to third parties or other targeted measures.

40 Following this study and the detailed definition of the responsibilities and tasks of the 115-umbrella organisation, a detailed business plan needs to be developed.

Assessment of the overall Addition Costs and Benefits

Assuming estimated operating costs of no more than 750,000€ per 100,000 head of population, then the total nationwide costs for a *BürgerTelefon 115*-service covering all public administration and regulatory authorities would be € 600m per annum. However, not all of these costs are additional costs of providing the service, since most public authorities already offer telephone access to public services. Assuming a reallocation of current budgets, the *additional* costs are estimated (even in the medium to long term) to exceed no more than 15% to 20% of the current expenditure on telephone services – a total additional expenditure of no more than € 125m per annum (including the costs of overall coordination functions). The additional costs result, above all, from the higher level and range of services.

Considered against the additional costs, there are a number of beneficial effects and cost savings which result, although some of these appear indirectly in different places, e.g. at downstream authorities where the workload is reduced. The degree to which the additional costs are compensated by cost savings is very difficult to estimate based on the empirical data available. But a noticeable impact on increased efficiency and reduced cost of “downstream” individual public administration authorities can be expected in the medium term from the introduction of 115-service centres, even if the range and level of services is improved. The beneficial effects include:

- Savings resulting from fewer calls and reduced disturbance to employees in public administration and regulatory offices (reduction of “search” calls to identify contact partners and elimination of repeat calls).
- Savings and productivity improvements resulting from bundled processing of administrative procedures (use of shared data, collected only once).
- Indirectly, there is an additional value and improvement potential arising from the ability to involve members of the general public more quickly in control and management processes (e.g. Planning and execution of repairs).

COST SETTLEMENT ON A BASIS OF TIT-FOR-TAT HANDLING OF SERVICES

There are various possible models for cost settlement and charging for services provided between 115-service centres and the 115-umbrella organisation. Three models were studied in detail. Considering all the advantages and disadvantages, the “tit-for-tat” model (minimal transfer charging) for cost settlement is recommended. It is the least complex and minimises the overall additional costs

which the public authorities need to budget for.

- *Tit-for-Tat Model (small central fund)*: each municipality carries the costs of its own 115-service centre. Municipalities and authorities or regulators, who are 115-members but do not operate their own 115-service centre, contribute proportionately to their usage to the costs of the cooperative service centre and/or pay into the cooperative fund (e.g. for helping to finance the 115-umbrella organisation). For handling calls from members of the public outside their geographic area of responsibility no charges are raised (“tit-for-tat” service principle). The big advantage of this comparatively simple model is that only minimal invoicing and financial settlement is required. As a result, there is not a need for significant reallocation of authority budgets between the 115-members. This should help to ease the political acceptability of the scheme. The disadvantage is the lack of a mechanism to encourage service improvement. In addition, the costs are not correctly distributed according to actual usage.
- *Service fund model (large central fund)*: On top of their own basic costs, each participant is obliged to contribute to a central fund. The amount of the contribution depends upon the status or size of the individual authority. The central fund is used to cover the costs of services provided out-of-region and also finances the 115-umbrella organisation. The advantages of this model are two-fold: first, the payment to the central fund is relatively limited; second, by coupling the flow of funds with service performance, there is a motivation for service improvement. The disadvantage is that considerable effort is required to calculate membership fees and usage charges.
- *Full invoicing model*: Each call is chargeable and the statistical details of all calls are collected. The 115-umbrella organisation undertakes a periodic invoicing of all members of the 115-cooperative. The invoice includes usage charges for service centre services, and in addition, a fixed allocation of the costs associated with providing the 115-umbrella organisation and the inter-regional services. Beside a fair allocation of costs to actual usage, the advantage of this model is that it lends itself well to an operating model involving private enterprise and other external partners. The disadvantages are that the solution is not only complex and costly to implement but may not be acceptable to participating public administration authorities.

DECENTRALISED DECISION-MAKING ABOUT OPERATIONAL REFORM

115-service centres could be run according to one of a number of different operating models. The best model for a particular case depends upon the specific operational constraints of a particular public administration authority. It is therefore left up to individual bodies to decide for themselves which operating model suits them best. Even when different operating models

are used in parallel, there is no risk to either the service reliability or the secure legal framework on which the service is based – this is guaranteed by the commonly defined service requirements and agreed quality standards.

There are four basic operating models which can be considered:

- *Full, independent service provision:* Service provision is arranged either directly within the administration itself (e.g. a specific office or department) or by a subsidiary public organisation founded specifically for the purpose (subsidiary company, AÖR, publicly-owned limited company or such like).
- *Public-public partnership:* The joint responsibilities of authorities at different layers of administration; federal or municipal institutions, are bundled together in a public-public partnership. Typically the parties contracting to be provided with 115-service centres are also liable for the costs of doing so.
- *Public-private partnership:* one or more public bodies (municipalities, states and/or federal agencies) together with a private partner (or consortium) found a company together to provide 115-services. The private partner provides capital and know-how and carries some of the risk.
- *Full service provision by private organisations:* The full range of 115-services are contracted to be provided by a private operator. A comprehensive contract with the operator includes service portfolio and service level agreements.

Figure 11 illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of each operating model, and lists the challenges faced by the scheme participants.

Figure 11

OVERVIEW OF OPERATING MODELS: ADVANTAGES; DISADVANTAGES & CHALLENGES

	Advantages	Disadvantages	Typical Challenges
1 Public Agency provision of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access to public resources and thus relatively easy to manage • Clear lines of responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible slow adoption of new innovations • Public authority must shoulder the economic risks alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of expertise / inadequately trained staff • Difficult to ascertain actual costs
2 Public-Public Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of scale are easier to achieve • Good match of working culture between public cooperation partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts arising from different interests of partners • Delays caused by lengthy decision and agreement process • Possible slow adoption of new innovations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing mechanisms for balancing the interests of different partners • Adequately coping with local or political sensitivities • Networking the various partners • Overcoming inflexibility of employees
3 Public-Private Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know-how transfer • Precise formulation of objectives • Organisation better suited to change, distribution of responsibilities and management review/control structure • PPP more socially acceptable than outsourcing • Better allocation and strict management of risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity of governance • Complexity of contracts • Existing reservations • Difficulty drawing up business case • Typically more difficult to reverse • Legal concerns surrounding administration law and data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and other obstacles of letting contracts • Avoiding monopoly structures • Development of adequate internal expertise • Economics, in particular the handling of VAT • Differing working cultures • Convincing staff councils
4 Private Entity provision of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus of both public and private cooperation partners on their respective core activities • Fast adoption of innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of know-how • Difficult to reverse • Legal concerns surrounding administration law and data protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and other obstacles of letting contracts • Avoiding monopoly structures • Development of adequate internal expertise • Economics, in particular the handling of VAT • Differing working cultures • Convincing staff councils

6 Strategy for Service Introduction: the seeds of success need to be sown now

The introduction of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service will take several years, and responsible parties need to start their preparations now – establishing the right framework to meet critical success factors. Above all, the way in which the launch is executed and communicated will govern how well the new service number is accepted by the general public, industry, public administration and the political world. In planning future rollout of the service, flexibility needs to be retained – it is critical that the initial pilot service are a success and develop into exemplary reference projects.

DETERMINING THE RIGHT APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There are two alternative approaches for the introduction of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. A phased approach, based on the *multiple nucleus strategy* is the most likely to lead to success:

- *Multiple Nucleus Strategy*: Initially, several selected local and/or regional service centres are established, to offer a limited range of services. Progressively, more service centres are added, until complete coverage is achieved. The initial minimum service offering is also progressively extended. The advantages of this approach are its relative simplicity and ease of political execution. Participants are motivated and the service offering can be developed based on experience.
- *Big Bang Strategy*: A comprehensive *BürgerTelefon 115* service is introduced in one big bang, including a full portfolio of offerings. The advantage of this approach is that there are no coverage holes – right from the start there are no regions without access to 115-service.

There is scope to vary the phasing and initial priorities of a *multiple nucleus strategy*:

- *Coverage priority over range of services*: This approach focusses on achieving full geographical coverage quickly with only a basic service offering. Subsequently, the minimum service offering is extended in a phases.
- *Equal priority for range of services and coverage*: In this approach, the range of services offered increases proportionately with the geographical coverage.
- *Range of services have priority over coverage*: In regions where it is possible, the widest possible range of services are offered and further developed. Administration authorities who wish to join the service later are obliged to offer the same range of services. The obstacle for entry of new participants thus grows over time.

The current view is that the *coverage priority over range of services* option is the most preferable, since the early widespread coverage and effective handling of the public's most pressing needs will increase the acceptance of the *BürgerTelefon 115* service. This approach allows actual experience and a better understanding of real needs to feedback into the subsequent service development phases, guaranteeing a more efficient use of resources. At the same time, the barrier to late participation in the *BürgerTelefon 115* service is kept relatively low. Measures such as prizes for innovation, or competitions, ensure healthy activity in the continuing development of the service offering (Objective: to remain open and flexible to possible future needs).

COMMUNICATION: CREATING THE RIGHT MESSAGE FOR EACH TARGET GROUP

BürgerTelefon 115 is a massive public undertaking and involves all the usual risks. Communicating correctly the project's objectives and the approach that will be taken can lay much of the foundation for a successful project. In particular it is critical only to set expectations for *BürgerTelefon 115* which can realistically be met.

The differing interests of the affected parties necessitate tailored messages for each target group:

- *The general public, industry and trade associations:* It is important to communicate clearly the services to be offered and set realistic expectations.
- *Public administration authorities (federal, state and municipal):* These parties need to be informed about the various ways in which they can participate in the 115-service offering and the planned milestones.
- *The political world:* Politicians need to be informed about the benefits and be advised early about critical decision dates, in order that appropriate resolutions and formal project approvals can be agreed.
- *Within the 115-cooperative:* Information needs to be communicated within the 115-cooperative to ensure an appropriate balance of different participants expectations. Agreed standards also need to be propagated in an appropriate form.
- *The Media:* As an important determinant of public opinion, the media needs to be kept well informed about the benefits and milestones.

During the different phases of project realisation (strategy, planning, pilot service and rollout) slightly different messages need to be communicated (Figure 12).

Figure 12

COMMUNICATION TO TARGET GROUPS: MUST DEVELOP AND CHANGE OVER TIME

Development phases				
Target Groups	Strategy & Definition	Planning	Pilot Trail	Roll-Out
General Public, and Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project status Setting expectations Communication of possible benefits Realistic milestones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about achieving the next milestones Setting expectations (maybe) opportunity to partake in the planning phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationwide and decentralised regional information about successes and experience with the service, assessments, planned changes etc. Advertisement of service offerings in pilot areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing communications of the success achieved, as well as planned actions and milestones etc.
Administration (federal, state and municipal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project status Communication of most important milestones Possible benefits and associated costs (maybe) opportunity to partake in the definition phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project status Communication of the phases of work and important milestones Possible functionality, implementation and financing opportunities Explanation of possible operating and business models (Maybe) opportunity to partake in the planning phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding the services to be provided and obligations to be met Communication of successes and experience Information about the service offering in the pilot areas and the planned extension of this offering Possible functionality, implementation and financing opportunities Communication of the possible ways in which to participate in the cooperative Participation in pilot schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing information about project status Information about the service level achieved, quality etc.
Political world (federal, state and municipal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project status Communication of political benefits (maybe) opportunity to partake in the definition phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project status (maybe) Decisions which need to be made and resolutions which must be agreed Setting expectations Explanation of possible operating and business models Beteiligung an Planungen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project status Setting expectations Communication of successes and experience (maybe) Decisions which need to be made and resolutions which must be agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing information about project status (maybe) Decisions which need to be made and resolutions which must be agreed Communication of key performance indicators
115-cooperative partners	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting expectations Active participation in the planning process and the development of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of agreed standards, services etc. Active participation in the planning and development of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmarking visits and communication of best practices Ongoing information about new members, additional services, approval procedures, standards etc.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of possible benefits Information and national and international experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing communication about planned milestones and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing communication about planned milestones and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing information about important successes, experience and planned actions/activities

The next step needs to be the development and implementation of a detailed communication strategy. This should provide answers to the following questions:

- What needs to be achieved with each target group? What should the relevant party think or do afterwards?
- Which messages are best suited to the individual target groups? Which aspects of the *BürgerTelefon 115* should be highlighted? (e.g. Single point-of-contact for information, complaints and wide-ranging enquiries)
- Which media channels should be used and when?
- What are the best means of checking the effectiveness of the communication? Which methods can be used to check which messages have been understood, by which target group and how well?

FURTHER SHORT TERM MEASURES

A number activities need to be initiated by politicians and responsible project managers in the short term in order to ensure the successful launch of *BürgerTelefon 115*. The activities derive from the recommended multi-centric model and associated implementation strategy:

- *Establishment of a Project Organisation:* There many regional, local and wide-ranging coordination activities involved in the establishment of the *BürgerTelefon 115*-service. A proper organisational structure for the coordination of these activities needs to be established in the near future. An effective combination of centralised and decentralised project managers is recommended, and clear roles and responsibilities need to be defined – in particular covering the 115-umbrella organisation.
- *Resolution of Project Financing:* A business plan and financial guidelines need to be established for the 115-umbrella organisation. On the basis of these plans, the start-up project financing needs to be arranged. In particular, it needs to be resolved whether central funding will be made available for local and regional 115-service centres
- *Service Definition:* Documentation of quality, process and infrastructure standards is an urgent priority in order that local and regional administrations can start the implementation of the *BürgerTelefon 115*-service in the near future. The service definition needs to include minimum standards and lay out the necessary tools to meet them. In parallel, the assignment and activation of the uniform 115-service call number needs to be arranged with telephone service providers. In addition, there needs to be a plan for how to deal with service “blackspots” – regions in which initially there will be no 115-service coverage.
- *Time Schedule:* The 115-service offering should initially be tested in several pilot regions. The speed of rollout to full coverage will depend upon the success of the pilot trials. It is therefore important to choose regions for the pilot trial with the best prospect of success (e.g. existing infrastructure, willingness to invest or established association and cooperation of municipal authorities). The experience of relevant administration authorities should be systematically evaluated. Interested regional or municipal authorities who turn out not to be sufficiently experienced can instead be offered support services.

This ISPRAT study *Strategy 115* has made concrete proposals about how the idea of a *BürgerTelefon 115*-service could be realised in practice and explained how a public sector-wide cooperation could be achieved within a federal structure. The realisation of this idea will make a significant contribution to the modernisation of public administration in Germany.

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Jan-Henrik Ziesing (Fraunhofer FOKUS, Berlin)

The authors would like to thank:

Dr. Dirk Graudenz (ISPRAT, Sprecher des wissenschaftlichen Beirats)

McKinsey & Company (Hamburg)

Barbara Krug (ISPRAT)

Thomas Langkabel (CSC)

Karoline Rohweder (ISPRAT)

We would also like to thank the representatives of the various service centres for their open discussion

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Frankfurt am Main / Hamburg, December 2007