



## Japan Local Government Centre, London

### Monthly Report for April 2009 (Germany) - Model project for a common telephone number to access public services at all levels

On March 24 2009, a model project introducing a common telephone number for all public services was started. In 30 cities and regions in Germany, with a total population of approximately 10 million people, the new telephone number 115 gives access to public services at all levels, from municipalities' services to those in the purview of the Land, up to such things as tax matters dealt with by the federal level. The aim of this model project is to provide answers to people's questions and help them achieve their aims within the first telephone call, which also includes transferring people on to the right person or organisation, without the person having to take down a different telephone number and calling again.

In the usual way of things, it is necessary for people who have a question or some kind of matter to take up with the public administration, to know the central contact number of the city administration, and in many cases also the city code. Once through to a certain section of the administration, if this was not the right place to deal with a query, very often it was impossible to connect within the same administration, let alone to connect to other bodies such as the tax authorities or the Press and Information Department of the federal government.

With this new number, these problems can hopefully be solved and people's queries and problems answered quicker and more comprehensively, with less hassle involved for citizens.

For this new telephone number, no new infrastructure has been established. Instead, the system is using the already existing phone service centres of the participating administrations, and has linked them up with each other. The staff in those service centres will make use of a knowledge-management system, which gives all the necessary information to answer the most common queries, 150 of which have been statistically selected. These include such questions as:

- I am moving from Cologne to Hamburg. Where do I have to register?
- I have bought a new car and need to get a new car registration number. What are the opening times of the car registration office?
- How long will I receive parents' benefit (Elterngeld)?
- How do I register a business?
- What documents do I need in order to get married?

*Any opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of JLGCC or CLAIR.*

The service from the new number hopes to hit a number of specified targets, among these are the following:

- The telephone number operates from Monday to Friday between 8 am and 6 pm.
- 75% of all calls will be answered within 30 seconds
- 55% of all calls should be answered exhaustively at first contact
- In case that there has to be further contact, the caller will be contacted by phone, email or fax, according to his or her choice, within 24 hours of service hours

The costs for a phone call depend on the network used and will be cheapest from the landlines of the Deutsche Telekom, where it will be seven cents per minute. Call charges from mobile phones depend on the company and operator.

The pilot will last for two years. It is hoped that it can be rolled out across the whole of the federal republic, as many *Länder* and cities have already expressed interest. Currently, a number of federal agencies, among them the federal taxation information office and the Chancellery are participating, as are the *Länder* of Berlin and Hamburg, North-Rhine Westphalia, and Hesse. Most of the cities involved in the pilot are in the Ruhr-area, while in Hesse it is the counties which are actively participating.

*Any opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of JLG or CLAIR.*