

Foreword

This book was prepared under the “Local Government Policy Partnership” Program, which is a joint project of two donor organizations. The British Government’s Department for International Development (DFID), and the Local Government and Public Service Initiative (LGI) of the Open Society Institute, Budapest launched this regional program. The “Local Government Policy Partnership” (LGPP) projects intend to contribute to policy development and innovation in these countries.

LGPP hopes to develop expertise and to support professional cooperation among local government specialists throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Parallel to this, experiences from this region should be made available in Central and Eastern Europe, and in Central Asia. The core partner countries are the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. However, other countries have been invited to participate in these regional projects, which would help direct information exchange and comparison of policy efforts. Planned LGPP publications include policy studies and proposals discussed with government officials and experts in the countries involved.

Targeted beneficiaries of LGPP projects are national government ministries, local government associations, research and training institutions, and individual local authorities throughout the CEE region. LGPP intends to publish studies every three years. In 2001-2002, (the first year of LGPP operations), the following policy areas were selected:

- a) Education financing and management;
- b) Regulation and competition of local utility services, and
- c) Public perception of local governments.

Readers of this publication will find detailed information on utility and communal services from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. As access to information is critical for transparent management of these urban services, a separate chapter is devoted to this topic. In the introductory part the two managers of the project have formulated several policy recommendations on various aspects of regulation and competition rules in the local public utility and communal sectors.

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