



Local Government Support Project in Moldova

Concept of Citizens Information and Service Center

Chisinau, October 2013

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Acronyms used:

LPA	Local Public Authority
CPA	Central Public Authority
EGC	Electronic Government Center
CISC	Citizens Information and Service Center
EDRMS	Electronic Documents and Recordings Management System
LGSP	USAID Local Government Support Project in Moldova
ERLS	Electronic Registry of Local Services
SRLE	State Registry of Legal Entities
SCM	Standard Cost Model – public services direct and indirect cost estimation model
DS	De-concentrated Services
SIPA	System for Issuing Permissive Acts
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Glossary of used terms

<i>CISC</i>	Citizens Information and Service Center – LPA unit responsible for providing information to physical and legal entities on the activity of the Mayor’s Office, and facilitating service provision.
<i>Clients</i>	Physical and legal entities (including representatives of commercial and non-commercial organizations, investors, etc.) applying to the Citizens Information and Service Center to access some information, request assistance in solving some problems and/or requesting public services provided by the LPAs and other authorities.
<i>Direct costs</i>	Costs expressed in monetary units, incurred by physical and legal entities for accessing public services (e.g: the fee for a service or other official documents requested, transportation costs, multiplication costs, bank commission, etc.)
<i>Indirect costs</i>	Costs expressed in non-monetary units, but indirectly associated with the accessing of some public service (e.g. the time for standing in line at different authorities/institutions, traveling time, waiting time for the preparation of documents – which can be used for personal or business purposes).
<i>Front Office</i>	LPA department or unit which is in direct contact with its clients.
<i>Back Office</i>	Technical and human resources, and internal LPA services required for running the latter, performing the internal tasks and processing data and information upon request of the clients.
<i>EDRMS</i>	<i>Electronic Documents and Recordings Management System.</i> Data and E-Documents Management Information System.
<i>One-stop Shop</i>	A mechanism which allows the applicants of public services to provide standardized information and documents through a single reception point, thus fulfilling all relevant requirements of the legislation on requesting services.
<i>LAN</i>	<i>Local Area Network</i>
<i>Performance monitoring</i>	Supervision and monitoring by the public authority management through some relevant indicators of the performance of activity under subordination.
<i>Public services portal</i>	Electronic catalogue of public services provided by authorities to physical and legal entities, which can be accessed on the webpage: https://servicii.gov.md .
<i>Local network</i>	The term Local Area Network, abbreviated as LAN, comes from English, having the meaning of "local network" (of computers). A local area network represents an ensemble of transmission means and computing systems used for information transportation and processing. These are frequently used to connect personal computers and work stations in the offices of an institution with the aim to share the resources (e.g. printers) and exchange information.
<i>"Cloud" solutions</i>	Solutions for renting software and hardware. Through such services, the clients will not obtain physically the servers which are to be installed, but rather virtual processing and storage capacities that the clients can access on-line.

ICT Solutions Information and communication technology, abbreviated as IT and ICT, respectively, is the technology required for the processing (procurement, processing, storage, converting, and transmission) of information, in particular by using computers (electronic calculators)

I. Introduction

The Concept of Citizens Information and Service Center of the LPA (hereinafter referred to as the Concept) was developed within the USAID Local Government Support Project (LGSP).

The Concept was developed under a pilot project for modernizing the activity of local public authorities in the Republic of Moldova based on the example of and within the Ungheni LPA. Depending on the results obtained in the respective pilot project implementation, this Concept can be easily replicated in other local public administration authorities.

Upon drafting this Concept, the authors took into consideration the provisions of national development strategies in areas such as ICT, decentralization, and population's welfare improvement. Once implemented, and (as the case may be) replicated throughout the territory of the Republic of Moldova, this Concept will result in direct improvement of processes related to public services provided within the local public administration bodies, and contribute, at the same time, to improving the investment climate of the Republic of Moldova in general, the degree of population's satisfaction with the LPA and CPA activity, the indicators from the World Bank Doing Business reports, etc.

II. General

The need for reforming the public services at local level is a natural one, acknowledged at local and central levels. The legislators impose to the central and local public authorities to improve the efficiency of services provided to the citizens and the procedures for issuing permissive acts, expressly establishing the general obligation to periodically examine the current regulation, control, and administration areas, as well as the provisions within the latter. Thus, the LPA must take actions to rationalize through cancelling or merging procedures or requirements that are not indispensable by establishing one-stop shops for the purpose of improving the efficiency of information flow required to provide some rights and impose obligations.

It is inevitable that the local public administration that uses information technologies, new and innovative concepts, is more open and modern will become more efficient and capable to respond to the challenges of the time. This Concept provides recommendations, solutions, and an action plan for LPA development so that the latter become more efficient, more dynamic and closer to the needs of citizens.

III. Problem definition

This Concept development was preceded by an analysis of problems and identification of opportunities for improving the public services provided by LPAs. The opportunities for improving the public services from the point of view of citizens proceed, for instance, from the following situations:

- Services are provided in different locations (offices, floors), in the LPA premise, which fact makes it difficult for the citizens to immediately find the person(s) providing the given service(s);
- Insufficient information about the procedure for service provision, relevant regulations, list of documents requested, terms of execution, etc.;
- Regardless of the fact that there are one-stop shops within LPAs, the applicants submit a set of required documents which is attached to the request by physically showing up at the mayor's office. The request for services in remote mode (via internet, telephone, fax) is not possible;
- LPAs cannot provide service in remote mode, the physical presence of the applicant at the mayor's office is required.

LPAs are also faced with a number of problems related particularly to the current organization, and especially to the insufficiency of resources for the implementation of ICT solutions, such as:

- the lack of registries in hard copy of the services provided, and the lack of record keeping of services, respectively;
- insufficient resources (for e.g. cars, funds for covering the telephone costs, in some cases, the computers used are old and need to be replaced);
- the risk of discontinuing some services which are provided only by one person, whose absence makes it impossible to further provide them;
- low storage security of documents/information (for example, there is no fire alarm system for the hard copy archives in the LPA offices);
- insufficient licensed programs, lack of automated programs for documents handling;
- limited communication at the level of electronic data exchange between LPAs, DSs, and other local actors, the lack of corporative e-mail addresses.

In general, the situation elucidated within the Ungheni LPA is very similar to the situation in other LPAs, while some problems are similar to the problems encountered within the CPA. Finally, the citizens, including business environment representatives have to travel long distances, consuming time, efforts, and money in order to obtain information or services from the LPA and CPA.

To resolve the above-mentioned problems, as well as modernize the LPA according to the best international practice, it is proposed to establish a Citizens Information and Service Center of LPA. Successful practices of local authorities have demonstrated that the service centralization after establishing the Citizens Information and Service Center, and the facilitation of access to information and services allow diminishing the time for servicing the clients by 50-70%.

IV. The Mission, goal and objectives of CISC. Advantages of CISC

CISC represents an absolutely new approach to provision of public services, where the citizens have the statute of consumers (clients). Thus, as consumer, the citizens expect from the local public administration bodies to pay prompt and necessary attention to the process of settling requests, complaints filed by the citizens, as well as to provision of necessary services. In the process of

establishing the CISC, public administration acknowledges and realizes this concept of citizen-friendly governance concept.

Mission of CISC: Providing quality information about LPA and provision of public services to physical and legal entities in a professional manner.

Goal of CISC: To improve the quality of information and of public services provided by LPAs through the implementation of innovative practices and tools, provided in one single access point.

Objectives of CISC implementation include:

- facilitating the mechanism for informing and providing services to physical and legal entities;
- reducing direct and indirect LPA costs, and the costs of clients applying to public services;
- improving communication with the citizens to contribute to increasing the level of satisfaction and transparency in the LPA activity;
- facilitating electronic cooperation between LPA, central, and de-concentrated institutions.

CISC Advantages:

a) for physical and legal entities applying to CISC services:

- easy access to information and services;
- clarification of procedures for obtaining endorsements, certificates, and other documents issued by the mayor's office;
- orientation towards other institutions or assistance in resolving problems that are beyond the competence of the mayor's office;
- use of template forms which should be filled only with personal data;
- facilitation of the access to public services provided by the central authorities.

b) for mayor's office:

- a better image for the LPA activity;
- the skilled LPA staff will be able to focus on carrying out complex tasks without being disturbed by the citizens with requests and simple questions;
- establishment of standard procedures for information circulation;
- reduced stress of the civil servants in carrying out their duties;
- use of template forms that can be processed and recorded more easily.

V. Remodeling the procedures for providing public services and for operational processes

Before bringing all services under the roof of CISC, the processes for providing the latter must be improved through remodeling, if needed. The remodeling process involves organization of workshops with the participation of representatives from the DS, ministries, and other actors involved in the service provision, identification of proposals for improving the current processes, using ICT solutions, as well as closer collaboration between DSs, LPAs, and other stakeholders involved in the service provision process.

Some remodeling solutions require legislative amendments to be promoted, which may last a longer timeframe. Other operational solutions can be implemented in the short/immediate run, such as:

- Preparation of service provision related information and its posting on the LPA webpage, billboard, and publication in local mass media;
- LPA connection to the databases of State Enterprise Cadastru, State Enterprise CRIS Registru, etc.;
- In the incipient phase – including in the documents' circulation the scanned electronic versions of documents and organizing the work mainly in electronic form in order for the original documents to reach the file only by the end of the procedures.
- Receiving requests for documents and intermediary services in a single point, at CISC, and consecutively engaging the CISC to contact the de-concentrated authorities to respond to the requests received on behalf of the applicants.
- Carrying out random visits and controls based on risk criteria with the intention to get mainly in-officio approvals (if the information provided allows this). Implementing a single point for payment for public services, as well as system for providing all the information related costs and payments in the process of authorization.

Due to the fact that the service provision remodeling process is a continuous one, the LPA will constantly strive to find solutions for improving/simplifying the processes.

V.1 Establishment of collaboration and cooperation between government bodies

As a result of analyzing the current situation regarding the provision of services by LPAs, it was found out that there is insufficient communication at the level of electronic data exchange between LPAs and other institutions/bodies, including the DSs at local level. The majority of current deficiencies can be settled by insuring a closer cooperation. For example, we can specify the following ways of cooperation between government bodies:

1. Establishing cooperation between the LPAs and State Enterprise CRIS Registru on access to databases may eliminate the need for submitting copies of the identity cards and documents confirming the registration of legal entities, which are currently requested for the issuance of permit for operation;
2. Establishing cooperation between LPAs and government bodies, the DSs involved in the endorsement of construction works may eliminate the need for requesting additional documents, carrying out additional controls, verifications, etc.

V.2 Use of innovative practices and methods

Some of the existing procedures are to be reviewed and improved by using innovative practices and methods. These practices and methods relate to ICT and already existing legal procedures, such as affidavit, tacit approval principle, organization of post-factum inspections and controls, etc.

Thus, pursuant to the current legislation:

Affidavit is a procedure by which in a relation with the authority, aimed at requesting/obtaining a permissive act or the right to some actions/inactions for unfolding business activity, any physical or

legal entity carrying out entrepreneurial activity has the right to declare upon sole responsibility the existence of permissive acts previously issued and/or the existence of some legal acts recorded and/or registered previously by an empowered authority in the given area, in the manner provided for by the current legislation.

Tacit approval principle – a principle by which an authority establishes a deadline for informing the service beneficiary about the approval or rejection of the request for service of the latter (5, 10, 30 days, etc.), and if the given deadline expires and the authority does not communicate its decision to the beneficiary, the request of the latter is considered as tacitly approved.

Post factum inspection principle – a procedure by which an authority carries out an inspection provided for by the legislation following the issuance of a permissive document (service), while the service beneficiary is obligated to observe the conditions of permissive document issuance without such inspection/control.

VI. Duties of the CISC

The key duties of the CISC include improving the services provided by LPA and providing information to physical and legal entities. In this sense, CISC represents the main tool for accomplishing the objectives of the latter, the overall goal of which will be to provide good quality services in a prompt manner, upon submission of a minimum set of documents.

CISC, in its quality of LPA Front Office, will be used for providing all the existing public services currently provided by the LPA. Taking into account the fact that improving the efficiency of services is an on-going process, the services provided through CISC will be of different maturity level, as mentioned bellow, while the mayor's office staff will strive to develop the services and bring them to the highest level:

1. *Information* – Publication and dissemination of information. All the service provision related information will be published on the mayor's office webpage, and will be also made available through the guidelines issued and disseminated by CISC.
2. *Interaction* – The citizens will have the possibility to contact the mayor's office and de-concentrated services through the web-page or upload template application forms and documents.
3. *Transaction* – The citizens will have the possibility to carry out full transactions in electronic form. For example, the possibility to file a request and related documents in electronic form without involving the applicant in the process of obtaining a permissive document. In the case of CISC, the service is considered to be a transaction when the applicants file a request at the CISC, while the whole circuit of document, access to information, and coordination with other authorities involved is insured electronically and is transparent for the applicants.
4. *Transformation* – The public authorities transform the current operational process to provide more efficient, integrated, unified, and customized services. This level represents an integration of internal and external institutions and systems to insure full communication between the public authorities. In the case of CISC, a service is considered to be at the level of transformation when it is eliminated through exchange of information between the authorities.

CISC will fulfill its duties by accomplishing their goals, mission, and tasks in 2 (two) consecutive stages:

- i. *Preparation stage*, which will involve creation of CISC, as a unit, approval of Internal Regulation, appointment of the Consultation Commission members, approval of the list of services provided by LPA, and of respective guidelines and regulations, as well as launching the CISC activity in an office designed for such purpose;
- ii. *Implementation stage*, which will include procurement of software and hardware, required for CISC activity, CHIPS staff training, piloting and starting full operation of CISC from organizational, operational, and ICT points of view.

CISC shall have the following specific duties:

- informing the citizens about the activity of Local Council and Mayor's Office, providing information about Local Council (council structure, nominal list of its members and their political affiliation, the name and composition of Local Council commissions, etc.);
- receiving requests for obtaining endorsements, approvals and documents under the LPA scope of competence;
- informing the applicants about the procedure and process for providing local public services (basic information, issuing unit, costs, timeframe, list of required documents), and reception of requests;
- receiving claims, suggestions and complaints from the citizens;
- informing the applicants about services provided by other authorities and services from the locality, and by other central public authorities;
- establishing collaboration relations with other institutions/organizations;
- processing the requests and distributing the latter among the specialized staff of the mayor's office and representatives of other state bodies, and DSs involved in CISC activity;
- issuing permits, certificates, and other documents prepared and approved by the specialized staff and management of the mayor's office;
- receiving requests for obtaining public services provided by other public authorities and de-concentrated services;
- providing assistance in obtaining public services in electronic form which are available on the Public Services Portal (<https://servicii.gov.md>);
- digitizing the requests and related documents received and entering these in the electronic registry of the mayor's office;
- coordinating and facilitating interaction between the LPA and organizations involved in public services provision in the locality;
- assisting in making payments for different public services in the very premise of CISC;
- organizing hearings for citizens by the LPA management.

VII. Legal statute and organizational structure

VII.1. Legal statute

CISC will be an internal unit of the LPA and will be regulated through a Regulation on CISC Foundation approved by the LPA Local Council, as well as through proper amendments which are to be introduced in the Regulation on LPA Activity.

CISC will operate according to the following rules:

- a. CISC shall be managed by the head (coordinator) of respective unit;
- b. CISC shall be under subordination and management of the Mayor, respectively;
- c. CISC staff shall be LPA employees, thus being recruited and remunerated in compliance with the current legislation regulating work relations of the staff of local public authorities|;
- d. The technical and material base of CISC shall be on the balance sheet of the Mayor's Office, which will be responsible for CISC technical-and material endowment;
- e. CIPS activity and legal statute of the latter shall fall directly under the current legislation regulating the activity and legal status of LPAs, with all rigors and benefits associated.

VII.2. Organizational structure. Confidentiality clauses.

The organizational structure proposed in this Concept is correlated with the size and work load of the Ungheni Mayor's Office. For other LPAs, the organizational structure can be different, according to local conditions and needs.

CISC will subordinate to the Mayor's Office and will have a consultative role, being presided by the Mayor, and comprised of the following members:

1. LPA representatives
2. Representatives of de-concentrated services
3. Representatives of business environment and civil society

To insure functionality of the service provision process, 2 operators will work in the CISC who will be responsible for providing information and consultation services to the citizens, providing assistance in accessing public services provided by the LPA, as well as in accessing the services available through the public service portal (<https://servicii.gov.md>).

One of the operators will perform, at the same, the function of CISC Coordinator. Depending on the work space and work places, representatives of de-concentrated services or municipal enterprises can also operate within the CISC (regularly or periodically, during the working hours, as set in the agreements signed between the LPA and respective institution) to consult physical and legal entities.

CISC employees are obligated to observe confidentiality of any data and information which is declared confidential in compliance with the current legislation and CISC Regulation. The confidentiality clause will be included in the labor contracts signed with CISC employees. Labor contracts will be signed under the conditions of the Labor Code of the Republic of Moldova.

VIII. Chart of CISC space organization. ICT hardware and software

CISC will be located in the premise of the mayor's office, on the ground floor, and will be marked with a billboard and other information elements. The entrance in the building and the corridor for accessing the offices of CISC employees will allow free access to persons with physical deficiencies. The operators' desks will be located and delineated so as to allow the citizens to discuss with the operator in private, insuring a comfortable position to both the operator and the client and allowing them to make notes.

The physical space will be divided into two areas:

1. Space for visitors

2. Working space for CISC operators

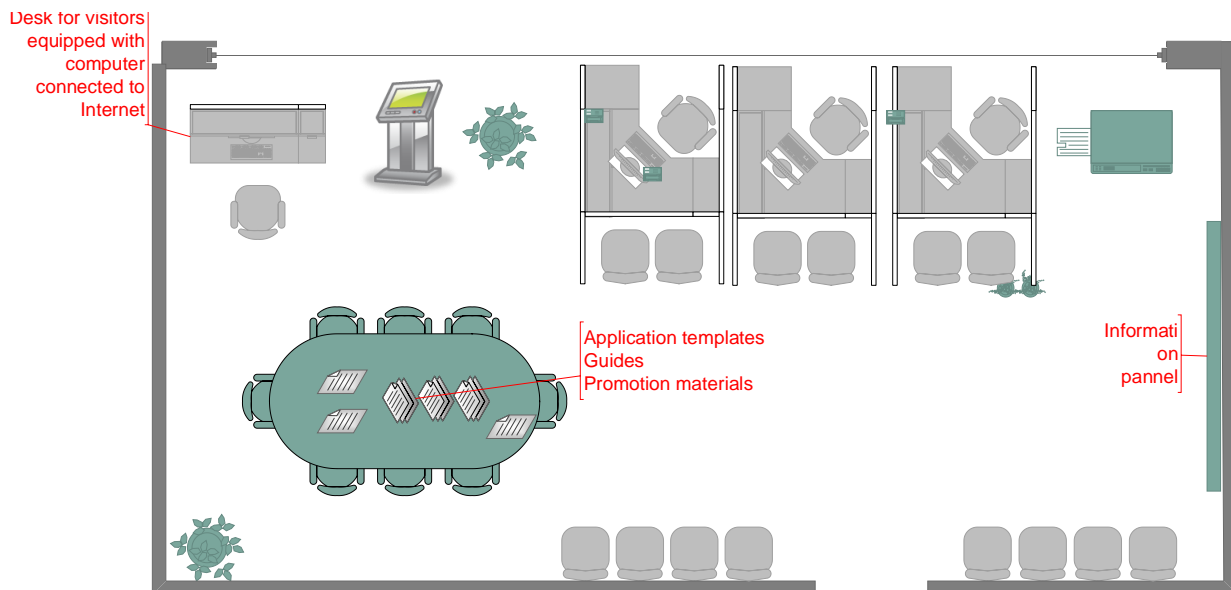
The space for visitors will be equipped with:

1. Chairs for people in the waiting line
2. A table and information billboard for posting information, promotional materials, and application forms
3. A terminal for collecting payments for the services provided
4. Work station (computer) for self-servicing of citizens, accessing information, and requesting electronic public services through the public service portal.

The space designed for CISC operators will be equipped with:

- work tables for operators
- work stations (computers) connected to the network of the Mayor’s office employees.
- telephone devices
- multifunctional device (xerox/printer/scanner) for making copies of the documents or printing the information required for the public services accessed through Internet.

The chart on CISC space organization is provided below:



In phase I (see chapter XI „CISC creation plan”), the operators will focus mainly on providing information and concentrating the reception of requests and issuance of documents in one single place, which will already constitute a significant improvement in the LPA activity by facilitating access to information and services for citizens.

However, to insure complete CISC functionality in the process of providing services and managing the information and documents of the mayor’s office, phase II will be implemented, which will include developing an integrated information system of the mayor’s office, which will comprise of technical and program solutions. Following an analysis of information solutions currently existing on the market and of those provided by Government through the Electronic Government Center, the integrated information system of the mayor’s office will be based on the Electronic Registry of

Local Services (ERLS) and the System for Issuing Permissive Documents (SIPD). These systems will cover the whole circulation cycle of documents and information, starting with filing of requests for obtaining services, providing services, circulating the documents both within mayor's office, and by communicating and exchanging information with the de-concentrated services, and finishing with the archiving of documents. The IRLS and SIPD will operate on the M-Cloud platform provided by the E-Government Center.

IX. Rights of CISC

To carry out its duties, CISC will have the following rights, exercised by the Mayor as the CISC Manager:

- a) to request and receive from public institutions and central and local public administration authorities the information and support required for unfolding its activity;
- b) to sign collaboration contracts for access to and exchange of information with institutions and enterprises collecting and managing the information required for performing its duties;
- c) to issue entries, acts, and documents on behalf of the Mayor's Office, required for accomplishing its objectives and performing its duties;
- d) to receive through the Mayor's Office technical and financial assistance from institutions, authorities, international organizations, domestic, and international donors;
- e) to collect fees for the additional services requested, other than the ones that local public authority shall provide in compliance with the current legislation;
- f) to represent the applicant before public authorities, as a one-stop shop, with regard to the business activity of the latter without proxy or other document authenticated in writing;
- g) to have priority in obtaining permissive documents, public services or information from the public institutions and authorities, required for performing its duties as a one-stop shop with regard to business activity;
- h) to engage specialists, experts, consultants for the services required for accomplishing the objectives;
- i) to benefit from other rights associated with the mayor's office within the limits set by law and regulatory acts.

X. CISC financing and assets

CISC will have the following types of assets:

- Office equipment: computers, furniture, information and publicity billboards.
- Xerox/printer/scanner, payment terminal.
- Information programs.

Funding sources for the creation and implementation CISC include the following:

- a. LPA allocated budget;
- b. Funding from donors for the procurement of some initial assets (furniture, computers, information programs, and licenses), for staff training, free access to some E-Government Center applications/resources;
- c. Funds collected to the Mayor's Office account for the services provided to clients.

Payment for LPA services will be made through the following methods:

- By making payments in a bank;
- Through a payment reception terminal located in the premise of CISC;
- Through e-payment service offered for free by the E-Government Center.

The unit accounting (and accounting related reporting) will be kept by the accounting service of the Mayor's Office.

The unit coordinator will be responsible for drafting and submitting to the Mayor's Office leadership and Consulting Commission the CISC activity reports (monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual). As a result of implementing the Integrated Information System, the LPA will have real-time access to information on all the service provision relate processes. The statistic reports will be generated through information system. The instruments available for generating reports will provide the possibility to extract statistic data and reports for all the LPA services and activity or for each service separately for any time frame.

CISC performance related data, periodical reports, and other relevant documents will be brought to the knowledge of the Town Council, as well as made public on the webpage of the Mayor's office and in other sources.

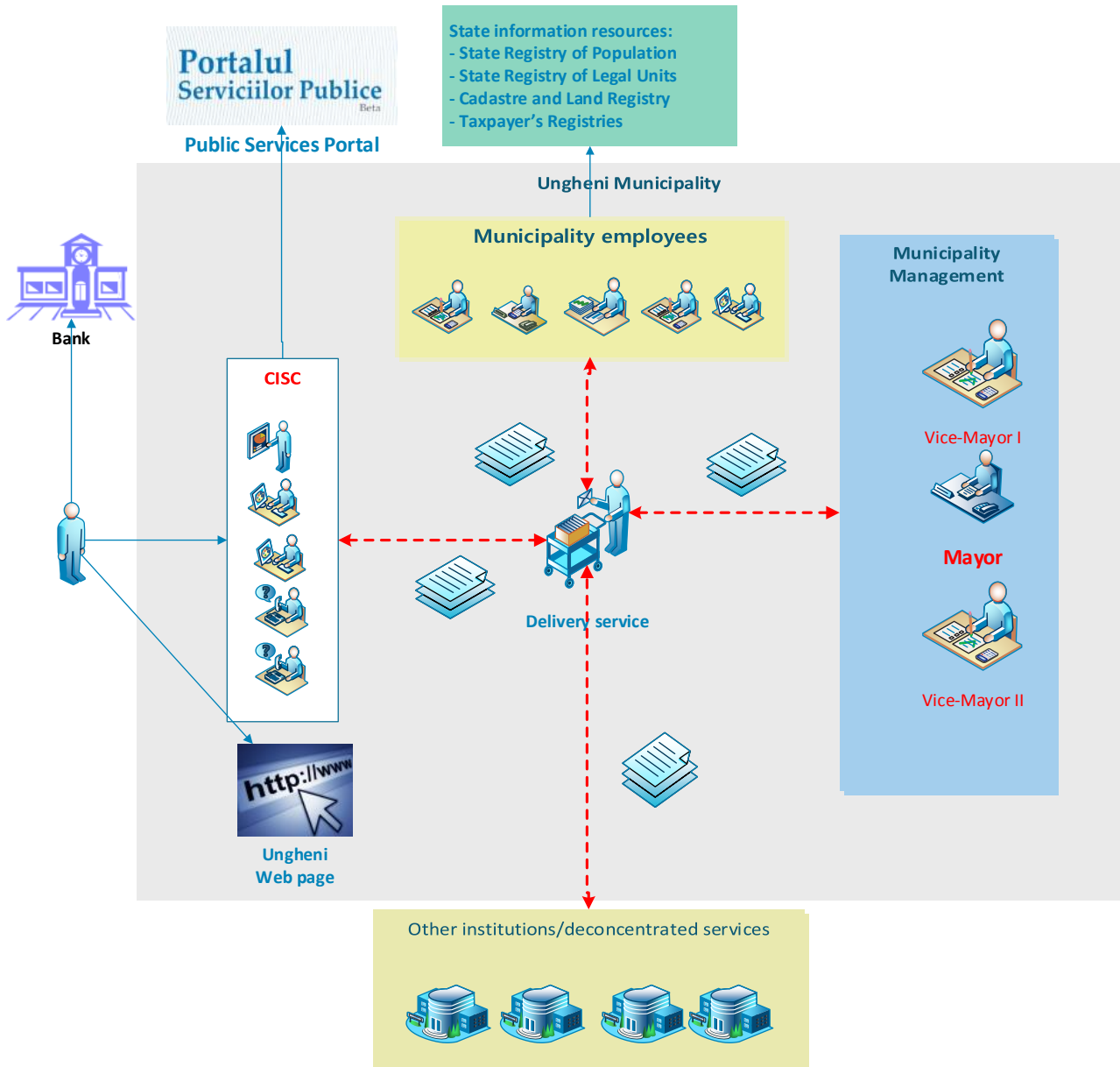
XI. CISC implementation plan

CISC will be implemented within the LPA in 2 stages:

- In the 1st implementation state, before developing the ERLS and SIPD, CISC will perform the function of interaction between the citizens and the mayor's office, while the management of information and documents will be done in hard copy manually. All the requests and sets of documents will be submitted to CISC, recorded in the common registry of in-coming documents, and then submitted to the Mayor for examination and designation of persons responsible for their execution.
- In the 2nd stage, the entire circuit of information and documents will be insured in electronic form.

XII. Documents circulation chart

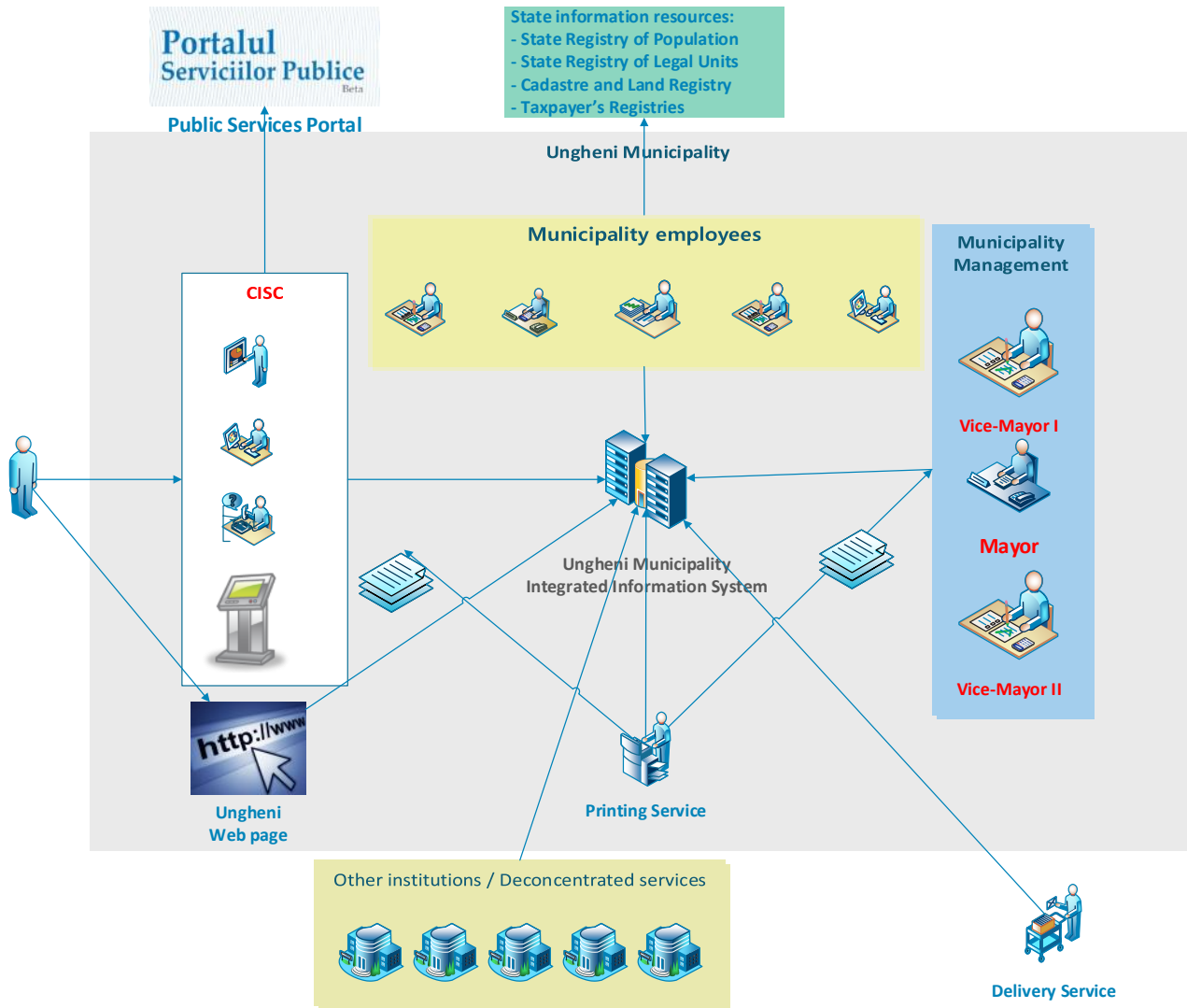
In the 1st state, all the document flows will be done manually. An optional messenger service will be instituted, responsible for the circulation of documents between the CISC, specialists of the Mayor’s office, and those of de-concentrated services. The payment for services will be made in the bank. Thus, in the 1st stage, the chart of document flow within the CISC will look as follows:



In the 2nd stage, after the implementation of the Electronic Registry of Local Services (ERLS) and of the System for Issuing Permissive Documents (SIPD), provided by Government through the E-Government Center (which will serve as a basis for the integrated information system of the mayor’s office), the management and circulation of documents will take place in electronic form. These systems will cover the entire circulation cycle of documents and information, starting with filing requests for obtaining services, for service provision, documents’ circulation both within the

mayor’s office and de-concentrated services through communication and information exchange, and finishing with the archiving of documents.

Payment by clients will be possible to make through the payment terminal installed in the premise of CISC, which will be connected to the ERLS. The chart and functionality of CISC is provided below.



XIII. Final provisions

The implementation of Citizens Information and Service Center in the LPA represents an innovative element and a change in the concept for communication and collaboration between the LPA and citizens, and will contribute to higher transparency in the LPA activity, accessibility and efficiency in providing public services, and minimization of efforts/costs both on behalf of the LPA, and of the service beneficiaries.

CISC implementation and replication in other LPAs will contribute significantly to the accomplishment of strategic development objectives of the Republic of Moldova.