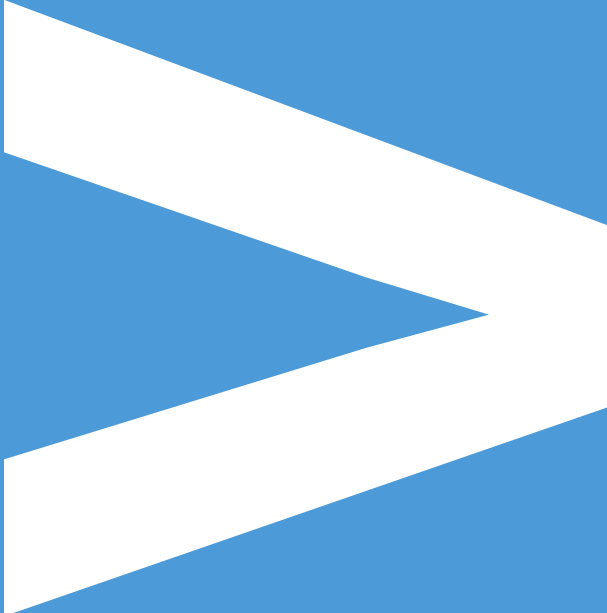


**A concrete
arrangement**

The Charter Group
for Public
Accountability



Introduction

The Charter for Public Accountability is a declaration of intent regarding prudent and public accountability by autonomous administrative authorities (AAA's). Signatories to the charter agree to hold themselves publicly accountable according to the values stated in the charter and are willing to submit to an official external review. An independent Review Board will periodically assess how and to what extent the signatories give practical shape to this intention.

The arrangement which is designed to ensure that the declaration of intent in the form of the Charter is manifest and verifiable, is described here as a development process for both signatories and members of the Review Board. Making public accountability manifest and verifiable assumes there is a standard. Public accountability viewed as a learning process assumes a standard that does justice to the development perspective of the organisations in their specific social environment. A dynamic standard that leaves room for diversity and development starts from the relative position of the organisations with respect to the charter and the objectives that they have set for themselves in relation to the charter. What is important is that the organisations set themselves a realistic objective and on the basis of self-evaluation periodically report on how they are achieving their ambition. The arrangement provides an instrument with which the organisations can determine their relative position, a tool for both the organisations and the members of the Review Board, and also a format for the self-evaluation.

The arrangement describes in four parts – accession, determination of position, organisation of the learning process and the learning itself – the process of public accountability with learning moments in the form of self-evaluation and reports by the organisations, opinion forming and advice by the members of the Review Board. The Manifest Arrangement was adjusted in 2005 following an evaluation by the Review Board. In 2007, and subsequently every two years, the Charter Group will consider whether the Manifest Arrangement needs to be reviewed/reassessed.

Review in 2009 resulted in minor changes within the Arrangement. Specifically the role of the board of non-executives within the AAA's.

Accession

The group of signatories of the Charter for Public Accountability can be joined by executive agencies that are autonomous administrative authorities. AAA's that are public service providers and thus supply services to citizens, organisations and businesses (not primarily to government bodies) and that have the intention of publicly accounting for their acts in accordance with the values of this charter and that are willing to undergo an external review. A more comprehensive memorandum with criteria for joining is published (in Dutch) on the website of the Charter Group (www.publiekverantwoorden.nl).

Determining present position

To determine an organisation's present position with regard to the charter, an instrument has been developed (see the checklist). The aim is to provide a practical elaboration and operationalisation of the values of the charter as deduced from the main objective: public accountability to the interested parties addressed by the charter.

The learning process

The learning process begins with a self-evaluation by the AAA. The AAA draws up a report of this in which it clarifies its relative position with regard to the charter. The report will state the current level of activity in a number of areas – quality, price performance, responsive action & participation and transparency – and include

explanatory notes describing what tools the AAA has put into place for each of these areas internally and how each area has been operationalised externally.

Here the management of the AAA formulates its observations and/or its 'surprises' with regard to the instrumentation and operationalisation of the charter and priorities and objectives for the future (e.g. on the basis of a comparison with the long-term policy plan or other relevant documents). The AAA sends its report to the Review Board. The report is accompanied by the long-term policy plan, recent annual reports and if possible, illustrative examples.

The AAA invites the Board for a visit if necessary. The subject of a review is the manner in which the AAA interprets and organises its public accountability, not the effectiveness of its methods of public accountability in terms of how it is valued by the environment or the AAA itself. The Review is based on confidence in the integrity of the information provided by the AAA on the one hand, and on observations made by individual members of the Review Board, on the other. Before its review, the Board requests any additional documentation it considers necessary and it formulates its own 'surprises' and any additional questions. The Board informs the AAA of the areas in which it wishes to obtain more in-depth information by means of interviews with key figures or via external in-depth study.

The review starts with a meeting between the Review Board and the management of the AAA about the observations made on each side. Then the Board meets with key figures within and outside of the organisation. The organisation under review ensures that the interviewees are at least from management level and that the interviewers from the Review Board have seen the organisation's self-evaluation beforehand. The board forms an opinion on the basis of the information it obtains and informs the management of its findings. In its observations on the AAA's practical methods of public accountability and in its recommendations, the board focuses in particular on the relationships, possible discrepancies, on the tools used in the areas listed for attention in the Charter, and the way these areas are operationalised.

In its recommendations, the board can state what it thinks should be the desired learning curve, taking into account the need for a certain equilibrium in the development of the organisation. The AAA is given an opportunity to be heard before the findings and recommendations of the Board are set down in writing. The findings and recommendations of the board are public. Each organisation is reviewed at least once every four years. Reviews can be carried out more frequently at the organisation's request. The self-evaluation becomes part of the regular cycle of management, control and accountability.

Learning

Learning has a dual meaning. It refers to the organisational development process: the board assesses the development of the organisations with regard to the charter and advises on the learning curve. But it can also refer to the shape given to the learning process: how well the current position is assessed and self-evaluation carried out, the quality and usefulness of tools used, best practices and peer learning across organisations, and the manner in which the board arrives at its opinion. The Review Board periodically draws up a general report of its findings with regard to learning and the learning process, which is made public.

Checklist



Checklist

Main objective

Public accountability addresses society in general and the interested parties in the individual organisations as a group.

Elaboration in themes

Four themes have been elaborated in relation to the five areas listed in the charter:

Charter

Areas

Quality	Clients & commissioning bodies	Responsive action & participation	Society	Transparency
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Determining present position

Themes

Quality	Price performance	Responsive action & participation	Transparency
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Interested parties

Society, environment & principal	Society, environment & principal	Environment	Society, environment & principal
		Principal	
		Society	

The following interested parties are distinguished:

- parties with a direct interest in the social environment of the AAA:
 - clients, interest groups, chain partners, other commissioning bodies, etc.
 - the political principal as owner and commissioning body
 - society
- (see also target groups)

Sub goals

For each area, the charter states what may be expected of the organisations that have signed the charter. Objectives are linked to this.

Indicators

The indicators linked to the sub-goals form the basis for determining current position. The indicators are formulated as a number of increasingly higher threshold values so that they show the direction in which development is taking place.

Target groups

The choice of specific instruments and the way they are used varies per organisation, depending on the specific environment of the organisation and the target groups for which the instruments are used. Each organisation specifies the interested parties and clarifies its concepts of client and service.

What

This gives a list of aspects relating to sub goals, indicators and instruments to be used.

Possible instruments

The organisations choose the instruments they believe are most suitable for achieving the sub goals with relation to their specific target groups. The list is not limitative.

Possible operationalisation

Where possible, gives ideas for how instruments can be used.

Quality

Price performance

Responsive action & participation
Environment

Responsive action & participation
Principal

Responsive action & participation
Society

Transparency

Main objective

Public accountability by AAAs

Sub goal

Informing the environment as to quality requirements, outcomes of quality measurements and the operation of the quality system.

Assessing and reviewing whether products and services are supplied in accordance with the specifications and at the agreed price/performance ratio.

Actively involving the environment in the development of the organisation and the quality of its services.

An open attitude towards the policy and other wishes of the political principal with regard to the policy system.

An open attitude to developments in society, effectively and efficiently translating them into societal objectives and discharging accountability in this respect.

Actively providing insight into the structure of the organisation, its activities, the division of responsibilities, objectives and policy, obligations entered into, intentions, actions and performance.

Indicators

The AAA has formulated external quality requirements for all products/ product groups and services.

- The AAA consults its clients (or a delegation of its clients) as to their opinion about their own external quality requirements before these are set by the AAA.
- The external quality requirements formulated by the AAA are public and can be found quickly on the AAA's website.
- As part of the service, clients are actively invited to take note of the information on the quality requirements.
- The results of the body's own external quality measurements are public and are discussed with clients (or with a representative group).
- >>

For all products/ product groups, there is system of information to show how far supply conforms to the specifications and agreed price/performance ratio, and on the basis of which an assessment can be made.

- For each product/ product group, this system also gives insight into the structure and development of its price and cost price.
- As part of the service, clients are actively invited to take note of this information.
- This information can be found in a simple manner and the way it is presented is geared to the needs of clients.
- >>

The AAA has made a careful analysis of the clients and stakeholders in society and regularly checks that this analysis is up to date.

- The AAA has clearly described the interests and competencies of each client/stakeholder group in their relationship to the AAA, has discussed this with the relevant interested parties and has geared the consultative structure to this.
- Informing the environment regularly and in a structured manner on whether the specified tasks and competencies have been complied with.
- >>

The AAA has created a process whereby the policy agenda of the principal is translated into objectives for its own organisation.

- The AAA can carry out the agenda of the principal as far as it concerns the AAA's service in a reasonable time frame.
- The AAA contributes proactively to the agenda of the principal as far as it concerns the AAA's service.
- The AAA contributes proactively to the policy agenda of the principal for the entire policy system.
- The AAA discharges accountability for the effectiveness and efficiency of the aforementioned stages.

The AAA has created a process to obtain information about developments in society.

- The AAA translates developments in society into organisational objectives.
- The AAA contributes to realising social objectives.
- The AAA translates developments in society into social objectives in an effective and efficient manner.
- The AAA discharges accountability for its own effectiveness and efficiency in the aforementioned stages.

Meeting the requirements stated in legislation, regulations, protocols and contracts (such as the Civil Code, establishing Acts, Government Information (Public Access) Act) and, win the event of departures from these, actively reporting this to those directly involved.

- Providing information on request.
- Proactively informing the environment.

	Quality	Price performance	Responsive action & participation Environment	Responsive action & participation Principal	Responsive action & participation Society	Transparency
>> Indicators	For products, product groups and services for which external quality requirements have been formulated, development objectives are also formulated (based on the results of quality measurements). These development objectives are discussed with a representative group of clients.	One aspect of this information is that it provides clients with a clear picture of their rights and possibilities if products or services are not supplied in accordance with the specifications. - On the basis of the available information the AAA carries out its own review of supply with regard to the specifications and the agreed price/performance ratio. - The AAA's assessment of supply with regard to the specifications and agreed price/performance ratio is reviewed externally.	Asking the environment regularly and in a structured manner for its assessment of the specified agreements concerning tasks, interests and competencies. As an organisation, translating the opinion of the environment into development objectives regularly and in a structured manner. - In consultation with the environment, structured and regular formulating of development objectives for the specified tasks, interests and competencies. - Within legal boundaries, the environment has a voice in decisions on development objectives.			
Target groups	Society, environment & principal	Society, environment & principal	Environment & principal		Society	Society, environment & principal
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality requirements - Quality measurement - Quality system - Development objectives 	Supply of products, and services in accordance with the specifications and at the agreed price/performance ratio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of the organisation - Quality of the services and the way they are provided - Quality of the policy system 		Developments in society, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individualisation - increased flexibility - from fragmentation to managing demand - migration - sustainability - ICT - good governance 	Structure of the organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - activities - division of responsibilities - products and services - objectives and policy - obligations entered into - intentions - acting and performing

	Quality	Price performance	Responsive action & participation Environment	Responsive action & participation Principal	Responsive action & participation Society	Transparency
Possible instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal standards and performance indicators - Audits - INK-model for total quality management - Balanced Scorecard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Auditing - Cost-price model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of client satisfaction surveys to be conducted each year - Number of consultations to be held each year - Group representing users with regard to policy - Advisory councils/ user councils - Contracts with commissioning body - Contracts with users - Service level agreements with clients - Acting as an antenna 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting as an antenna - Publication policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual report - Internet site - Consultation - Publication policy - Procedure for management of complaints - Handling of objections by National Ombudsman - Security protocols
Possible operationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality charter - ISO certification - Certificate for sustainable forest management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear and transparent structure for quotations - Benchmarking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Client satisfaction measurements - Functional consultations - Drawing up goal and regulations - Advisory council/ user council - Advisory publications for press release/ press conferences - Research and development programmes - Exchange of knowledge and information through publications, participation in seminars, in programmes etc - Participation in collaborative alliances 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisory publications for press releases/ press conferences - Research and development programmes - Exchange of knowledge and information through publications, participation in seminars, in programmes etc. - Participation in collaborative alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual reports must satisfy the criteria for the Kordestrofee - Government Information (Public Access) Act publications - Sending press releases, covenants, etc by e-mail or placing them on the Internet

Members

The Charter Group for Public Accountability consists of the following organisations:

- Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers
- Executive Agency of Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- Central Organisation for Work and Income
- Healthcare Insurance Board
- Land Registry Office
- Government Road Transport Agency
- National Forest Service
- Prorail
- Social Insurance Bank

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