VNG
Association of Netherlands Municipalities

Principles for
the digital city

This brochure 'Principles for the digital city' informs you of the Smart Society knowledge network in the Netherlands and of a number of principles drawn up by the Dutch municipalities of Eindhoven and Amsterdam, both of which have already acquired considerable experience of digitalisation in the public space

In this brochure the VNG calls upon its members to participate actively in the activities of the Smart Society knowledge network, and to take part in the programme aimed at further elaborating the principles, with the eventual goal of adopting those principles at a General Meeting of Members. In this way the members will also contribute to the National Code on Good Digital Governance still to be drawn up.

Principles for the digital city

The Municipalities of Eindhoven and Amsterdam have formulated four *'Principles for the digital city'* on the basis of their experience with the deployment of new technologies in the public space. *The ambition is: a digital infrastructure that is easily accessible, fully available and as secure as possible for all residents and businesses in the municipality, irrespective of their social position or origin.*

The VNG recognises the value of these principles for every municipality, large and small, smart city or not. *After all, the impact of digitalisation is tangible in every municipality.* For that reason, the VNG together with the municipalities has accepted responsibility for further elaborating the ground rules within the knowledge network, so that those rules and principles can be adopted at a General Meeting of Members.

A widely shared and clear set of principles offers local administrators clear guidelines and solid handholds, in numerous situations. It offers guidelines for example for tendering procedures for (smart) lampposts, the deployment of blockchain or the installation of sensors. It makes it possible to grasp opportunities and to avoid pitfalls. The principles have been deliberately formulated in general terms, thereby leaving sufficient freedom for local adaptation while at the same time being sufficiently specific to offer valuable guidelines and handholds.

The 'Principles for the digital city' are:
1. *The digital infrastructure must contribute to a liveable, healthy and safe city.* The infrastructure is available to everyone in the city's public space, irrespective of social position and income. The infrastructure is fully available and easily accessible and is futureproof and safe. It is structured in accordance with cross-municipality standards and the European and national legislation and regulations governing privacy and security.
2. The market parties, institutions, government authorities and residents are producers and consumers of the digital infrastructure and of the 'smart services' that use that infrastructure. Together, in co-creation or individually, and wherever desirable or necessary for them, their aim is to improve the life of citizens in the city, and to help the city to achieve economic developments. The government oversees and regulates where necessary in order *to guarantee the access, availability and security of the digital infrastructure for everyone in the digital city.*

3. The technology used by the digital infrastructure and the Internet of Things *are known, secure and interoperable, features 'open interfaces', 'open protocols' and uses 'open standards, unless…'* otherwise specified by national or European standards. These take priority. Residents know what equipment has been installed in 'their environment', can exercise an influence on that equipment, and can make use of it.

4. Data is 'open and shared unless…' otherwise specified by legislation and regulations governing privacy and security, and unless the data owner does not wish to share the data. The data about the resident belongs to the resident; the resident is owner and decides what happens with that data. *The data collected by the digital infrastructure in and about the public space is public property.*

Principles as essential input for the Code on Good Digital Governance

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations will be drawing up a Code on Good Digital Governance in this Cabinet period. Municipalities are keen to contribute to this Code. The digitalisation of our society goes hand in hand with sometimes complex technical, social, legal and ethical questions, for example with regard to the deployment of new technologies and the collection of data in public space. The government is expected to correctly govern this digital transition. Municipalities are co-makers when it comes to the appearance of the (local) information society. After all, municipalities have a great deal of experience with digitalisation and technological applications in practice, and as time progresses, are learning to recognise the role they are required to play from their local government tasks. The rules of play in this brochure not only provide guidelines and handholds for municipalities in the digital transition but are also a key basis for the Code on Good Digital Governance that is currently being elaborated in the framework of the Inter Administrative Programme, together with Central Government.

Smart Society knowledge network

Principles are not static because the iSociety is also not stationary. From time to time they will have to be tightened up. We will only learn what works and what does not work through practice. Digitalisation will bring with it a new world. With that in mind, *an active Smart Society knowledge network in which municipalities participate and exchange information is essential.*

The knowledge network can be both an online and offline 'ecosystem' and marketplace for municipalities, businesses and science. It will bring together expertise, encourage the development of standards, promote cooperation and support the articulation of questions and the placing of key items on the agenda for Central Government. At administrative level, you will be called upon to actively participate in the activities of the knowledge network.

Organising Together

The fact that we can build on the efforts of Eindhoven and Amsterdam is an excellent example of the thinking behind Organising Together. In June 2017, the General Meeting of the VNG agreed to the proposal in favour of more combined operations by municipalities.

The municipalities undertook to commit to the use of jointly established standards, agreements and facilities, clearly brought forward in comparison with the current implementation periods. This will be achieved via Organising Together. The approach of Organising Together is characterised by close involvement and direction from the municipalities themselves, for example in the form of the grassroots submission of projects and issues, whereby a direct influence is exercised as concerns the decisions on what actions will be undertaken jointly and the provision of commitment to a number of structural investments. This approach is extremely valuable and will therefore also be followed within the Smart Society knowledge network.

Join the Smart Society knowledge network

Do you wish to join the Smart Society knowledge network?
Simply register with Aantink Yeh (Aantink.Yeh@VNG.nl). If after reading this brochure you have any further questions, please contact Roxane Daniels (Roxane.Daniels@VNG.nl)

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