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**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS  
AMONG COURT USERS  
CHECKLIST FOR COURT COACHING**

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# CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS AMONG COURT USERS CHECKLIST FOR COURT COACHING

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The tool is intended for the use of teams of specialists and people with experience in conducting customer satisfaction surveys among court users, who can assist member states of the Council of Europe in assessing the organization of such surveys prior to their implementation. Similarly to other documents and manuals prepared by the CEPEJ Working group on the quality of justice (GT-QUAL), this tool is not intended as a simple checklist for double-checking what was done at the project site and what was not, but rather as a comprehensive guide to support a team of peer reviewers in providing training sessions for the benefit of those people who wish to conduct a customer satisfaction survey.

<b>BEFORE CONDUCTING THE SURVEY</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>
1.	<p>✓ Is there a project leader or a reference person in charge of leading and coordinating all activities at every stage?</p> <p>It is recommended to identify a person with decision-making power who is part of the working group, thus helping to ensure the proper execution of the survey and the achievement of its objectives.</p>
2.	<p>✓ Have all the teams and people necessary for conducting the survey been involved in the project organization?</p> <p>A key lesson learned from the successful surveys conducted in Europe is the involvement of as many as possible stakeholders of justice. In the following list are reported examples of stakeholders of the justice that may need to be involved in the organization of a court satisfaction survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President of the court and or head prosecutor</li> <li>• Magistrates</li> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Representatives of bar association / lawyers</li> <li>• Representatives from university</li> <li>• Private company or team of people who will operationally conduct the interviews</li> <li>• Ministry of Justice or other national court administration authority</li> </ul>
3.	<p>✓ Has a working group been set-up?</p>

It is necessary to set up a working group including people with different skills that will work in a more or less intense manner depending on the stages of the project. In addition to persons with specific expertise in the matter under scrutiny, one can think of involving several professionals who are needed at one or more stages of the research. By way of illustration, the persons listed below can be involved in the main stages of the project:

Stages of the survey Skills / Professionals	Definition of the objective	Definition of the target group	Definition of the sample	Drafting of the questionnaire	Data analysis and processing	Evaluation of results
- <b>Statisticians</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
- <b>Magistrates</b>	X	X		X		X
- <b>Lawyers</b>	X	X		X		X
- <b>Academia</b>	X	X		X		X
- <b>Psychologists/sociologists</b>		X		X		X
- <b>Communication experts</b>				X		

4.

✓ If the survey is intended for an entire territory or for the whole judicial system and as a consequence involves more than one court, was a Steering Committee set-up to coordinate the activity?

It is important that the organization put in place in order to conduct the satisfaction survey is appropriate to the scale / scope of the project. If the investigation is conducted against a large number of courts, than it is recommendable to set-up coordination or steering committee above the level of the specific working teams at each court.

The Steering Committee coordinates the efforts and activity of the different teams by creating synergies and avoiding duplication to ensure the most efficient and effective delivery of the survey.

In addition, the Steering Committee coordinates consistency of projects, advises on a common strategy and ensures that all activities are relevant.

5.

✓ Has the scope of the project been defined in terms of what is under scrutiny? (a serviced area/territory, a court, several courts of the same type, several courts in the same geographical district etc.)

This proposed definition of the scope refers to the identification of the boundaries of the initiative and elements of the judiciary that are under scrutiny. In fact, although this survey is typically conducted within the premises of a court, not all services are necessarily being evaluated. If the court in question has jurisdiction over a broad territory, possibly with other branches or functions in different locations, a careful evaluation of where the users should be interviewed is required.

6.

✓ Has a project plan been drafted including activities, documents, expected results and timelines?

A customer satisfaction survey is quite a complex activity which requires organization of people, time and resources. Defining a project plan is a mandatory step in survey management, where the necessary documentation is created to ensure successful project completion. The plan includes all steps to be taken to define, prepare, conduct and coordinate a customer satisfaction survey. In addition, the project plan clearly defines how the project is implemented, monitored, controlled and closed.

7.	✓ Has the objective of the survey been defined? (monitoring user satisfaction, measuring court performance, improving service delivery, reforming the judicial system etc.)
The project objective consists of the benefits that the organization expects to achieve as a result of the survey. Setting a clear objective is important as long as conducting satisfaction surveys involves spending time and exerting effort. It is recommended to “translate” (reflect) the objective of the survey into a specific question of the questionnaire. A goal which is not clear or not well defined or measurable leads to a confused and inaccurate investigation.	
8.	✓ Has the survey methodology been chosen and evaluated? (user observation, interviews, questionnaires etc.)
The CEPEJ guidelines for conducting user satisfaction surveys cover the key methodologies to be used for this type of activity. It is important to share with the team what interviewing techniques have been identified and why.	
9.	✓ Is a professional statistician or a person with technical background (who is an expert in conducting this type of surveys) part of the working group?
Having a statistician in the team, in particular one with expertise in conducting surveys, would definitely help the project. It is definitely something that must be discussed during the review.	
10.	✓ Has the permissible interval error in the estimation of the target variable and of the confidence level been fixed?
Two parameters are needed to estimate the sample size that demonstrate two different things. The first parameter defines the width of the confidence interval. The permissible interval error is something more sophisticated. With a survey based on random sampling there is no guarantee that the estimated quantity is exactly that of the population. There is always a margin of error that can be reduced, but not eliminated. A confidence level of 95%, for example, means that there is a 95% of probability that the interval contains the true value of the population. This leaves a 5% chance that the selected sample is so extreme that the data of this sample do not reproduce the true value of the population.	
11.	✓ Has the methodology on which the questionnaire is based been agreed by the working group? ✓ Otherwise, what other methodology has been adopted?
The questionnaire included in the “Handbook for Conducting Satisfaction Surveys Aimed at Court Users in Council of Europe’s Member States” is based on the SERVQUAL methodology developed by Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry (1985). This conceptual framework is based on the idea that the quality of a service should be measured in terms of gap between the importance assigned by a customer to each service item and the actual perception of service received by the same customer. The quality of service is high if perception matches expectations, and vice-versa the quality is low if the experience is not as good as expectations for that service.	
12.	✓ Has the basic questionnaire proposed by the CEPEJ been examined? ✓ Was it modified or adapted to local needs? ✓ If you have made changes, what do they consist of and why?
This is certainly one of the key points of discussion of the review as it relates to the questionnaire itself. It is important to understand how the master questionnaire from the CEPEJ guidelines has been used, and if it was modified, how and why.	
13.	✓ Has the response scale been evaluated and defined? (e.g. 1 to 5, 0 to 10 etc.)
A Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in research that employs questionnaires. It is the most widely used approach to scaling responses in survey research, such that the term is often used interchangeably with rating scale.	
14.	✓ Has the target group been defined? (e.g. all users of a particular court, particular users such as victims, persons involved in divorce proceedings; professionals such as lawyers etc.)
It is important to identify the population to be questioned under the survey; in fact, if the random sampling has been done properly, the survey will reveal the characteristics of the whole population.	

15.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Have any categories of respondents created problems with regard to their classification in the target group?</li> <li>✓ If yes, why?</li> </ul>
<p>There are a few categories of people who can be treated differently from country to country. In some countries, for example, lawyers may be regarded as final users; in this case they can be asked to respond to the same questionnaire. In other systems they may be considered a specialized body; in this second case a customized questionnaire would need to be provided for them.</p>	
16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Has it been decided who represents the statistical unit? (i.e. who is the subject of interest of the survey)</li> <li>✓ May such unit be interviewed according to the judicial system?</li> </ul>
<p>This is a very simple question with regard to justice, because the statistical unit is usually a physical person visiting the court; nevertheless, in other cases the situation could be more complex. For example, if lawyers were the target, the survey unit could theoretically be a professional law-firm and individual lawyers would represent the statistical units.</p>	
17.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Is the criterion for the selection of the sample random?</li> </ul>
<p>It is very important to underline that only random sampling allows obtaining a representation of the target population. Very specific rules must be followed in random sampling in a way that the selection of people to be interviewed is absolutely random.</p>	
18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Have the estimation procedure and the estimators been defined?</li> </ul>
<p>The estimator is a statistical function to be applied to the sample data in order to obtain results applicable to the whole population. Depending on the type of sampling adopted the complexity of the estimator may increase or decrease.</p>	
19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Has the sample size been calculated using the appropriate formula?</li> </ul>
<p>The sample size is to be determined as an outcome of a function that depends on the error admitted and on the reference population (finite or infinite). Otherwise, in case of time or budget constraints, the sample size may be defined independently from the appropriate function and then the associated error would be calculated.</p>	
20.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Is the method of collecting information suitable for the purpose?</li> </ul>
<p>The CEPEJ guidelines for conducting user satisfaction surveys cover the key methodologies to be used for this type of activity (personal interviews, telephone interviews, postal, auto-fill, online questionnaire etc.). It is important to share with the team what techniques of interviews have been identified and why.</p>	
21.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Have the costs of the survey been estimated?</li> <li>✓ Are they affordable for the sponsoring organization?</li> </ul>
<p>Customer satisfaction surveys involve costs of mainly two types: direct costs and indirect costs. Direct costs are those paid directly for necessary items and services such as for materials to be used in the survey or for the external company that conducts the interviews. Indirect costs are those that do not generate an out-of-pocket expense but represent time and resources dedicated by the court to the project such as the time spent by the people involved (magistrates, staff, etc.), use of spaces and materials from the court (rooms, utilities, stationery, etc.). The review should help the working group in double-checking that all necessary items of the cost have been considered and assessed.</p>	
22.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Has the questionnaire been tested on-the-field?</li> </ul>
<p>The actual test of the questionnaire before the survey is officially launched is critical for understanding whether it will work properly in a real situation. During the on-field trial there is a possibility to see if something is wrong, if the questions are clear and understandable etc. The test offers the possibility to make changes and corrections to the questions in due time.</p>	
23.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Has the survey been promoted properly among the target group?</li> </ul>

<p>It is recommended that before the interviews start, the initiative is communicated to the people visiting the court. For example, posters promoting the survey can be displayed on the walls of the court premises. This simple action can give a great contribution on the respondents' willingness to take part into the project.</p>	
24.	<p>✓ Have the interviewers been selected and trained in using the questionnaire?</p>
<p>Whether the interviewers are employees of the court or students or professionals from a specialized external company, prior to the fieldwork it is recommended to have a number of motivational and training sessions with them.</p>	
25.	<p>✓ Have the interviewers been trained with respect to the techniques of approaching and conducting dialogue with people belonging to the target group?</p>
<p>The interviewers should be trained on techniques of interviewing (approach, questionnaire, closure), on behaviour and good conduct, on what to do and what to avoid doing when interviewing people, and on the questionnaire flow (screening, main and demographic questions).</p>	
26.	<p>✓ Has any technique been adopted to prevent non-sampling errors?</p>
<p>Steps should be taken to correct possible errors in the coverage (one reason for such errors could be that the list of the population from which the sample is taken is not up-to-date). Prevent or amend non-response errors (such as trying to obtain the agreement to cooperate from those who refuse to take part in the interview). Reduce error (understanding of the questions, re-wording of sentences by the interviewers, structure and words of the questions etc.)</p>	
<p><b>AFTER CONDUCTING THE SURVEY</b></p>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>
27.	<p>✓ Has the quality of the completed questionnaires been verified?</p>
<p>Before processing questionnaire data it may be advisable to consider, at least in the sample, the quality of the questionnaires (errors, inconsistencies, missing data that might be recoverable etc.). This, for ongoing investigation, could allow, on the one hand, to correct distorted behaviours of the interviewers, and on the other to retrieve missing information that is difficult to recover at a later stage. This operation also increases the quality of data entered into the database.</p>	
28.	<p>✓ Is there a software or a procedure for loading the completed questionnaires?</p>
<p>It is recommended to set up a database the questionnaire data would be entered. The database should have automatic control systems of data quality (e.g. each field is made available only when the previous question has been filled-in with a valid response, etc.).</p>	
29.	<p>✓ Has any quality control activity been performed on the data?          ✓ Of what type?</p>
<p>It may be advisable to consider, at least in a sub-sample of questionnaires, the quality of the data entered by cross-checking against the paper-master questionnaires.</p>	
30.	<p>✓ How have the results been analysed?          ✓ How have the data been presented?</p>
<p>It is important to use analytics methods, charts and appropriate indicators according to the type of variable in order to evaluate results. Moreover, the graphical representation must be suitable and effective (adequate type of chart, use of colours, consistency of scale and values, etc.)</p>	
31.	<p>✓ Have any events been organized to present the results of the survey?</p>
<p>Communication of results is important for the success of this initiative, especially if we consider that justice is a public institution and the customer satisfaction studies are of interest for the whole community.</p>	

32.	✓ How were the survey's results brought to the attention of the public? (only paper documents, press release, web-site etc.)
It is recommended to use all available tools for disseminating the results.	
33.	✓ Has there been an opportunity to meet with the Presidency of the court or with the competent authority of the court administration in order to draw the lessons and define the course of action for improvement?
It is fundamental that in addition to the organization of the survey, the courts set-up specific groups in charge of the monitoring of critical areas and the implementation of the necessary changes emerged from the research. A project that does not provide for an activity of follow-up is useless; moreover, it is a source of frustration for customers and for its sponsors.	
34.	✓ Has the working group planned to organize the survey in the future in order to see how the perception of users changes during time?
Customers satisfaction surveys are not conceived as a 'one time only' experience but should be organized with a yearly or bi-yearly frequency in order to monitor the evolution of users' perception and to measure the reactions of citizens to reforms or to organizational changes within that specific court.	