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Postal services - Quality of service - Guide for the implementation of EN 13850

Service postal - Qualité de service - Guide d'implémentation de l'EN 13850

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Postal services - Quality of service - Guide for the
implementation of EN 13850

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Foreword

This document (CEN/TR 14709:2003) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 331, "Postal services", the secretariat of which is held by NEN.

According to the CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations, the national standards organizations of the following countries are bound to announce this CEN Technical Report: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Introduction

This Technical Report is supplementary to EN 13850 *Postal services - Quality of service - Measurement of transit time of end-to-end services for single piece priority mail and first class mail*.

It provides information to be considered when implementing the EN 13850. It has been developed to guide postal operators and regulators as to the use, benefits and restrictions of EN 13850. The first part of this report contains general information to guide regulators and operators in their decision on how and when to implement the standard. The second part of the report contains detailed information on how to interpret specific clauses in EN 13850 and should be read in parallel with the standard.

In addition to referencing this technical report, those seeking to implement the standard are advised to consult requirements and guidance from the national regulators and legislation that apply in their jurisdictions.

EN 13850 provides a defined set of minimum requirements to satisfy the information interests of the national regulatory authorities, postal customers and postal service providers for quality of service measurement, and to allow postal service providers to comply with the requirements of the 1997 Postal Directive of the European Commission.

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1 Scope

This Technical Report is an implementation guide to EN 13850 for use by postal operators, regulators and those responsible for commissioning, carrying out, or auditing the measurement of postal service quality. It gives information, which will facilitate the implementation of EN 13850. It gives an overview of the processes required and factors to consider when measuring quality of service. It provides guidance on alternative approaches allowed in the Standard including how to select and calculate alternative or additional discriminant factors and methods for weighting of strata. It describes a process for implementation of the measurement system, and provides examples and clarification on specific requirements of EN 13850. It gives information on how to interpret the test results obtained by measurement according to the standard.

This Technical Report does not alter in any way the requirements of EN 13850. It is concerned with technical issues in the implementation of the measurement system. The Technical Report provides guidance but it does not specify how the regulators shall enforce and monitor the use of the standard since this is the responsibility of the European Commission and the national regulatory authorities themselves.

Parts of this Technical Report may also be considered for guidance when implementing the following quality of service standards:

- prCEN/TS 14773 *Postal services - Quality of service - Measurement of loss of non-registered mail*
- EN 14508 *Postal services - Quality of service - Measurement of the transit time of end-to-end services for single piece non-priority and second class mail*
- prEN 14534 *Postal services - Quality of service - Measurement of the transit time of end-to-end services for bulk mail*

2 Purpose and use of postal quality of service standards

2.1 General

EN 13850 *Postal services - Quality of service - Measurement of transit time of end-to-end services for single piece priority mail and first class mail* has been developed in order to provide a standardised method that can be used throughout Europe for measuring the transit time of end-to-end mail services and to assist postal service providers in complying with the requirements of the 1997 Postal Directive of the European Commission.

For the implementation of EN 13850 and to guide the user of this and other quality of service standards the following facts and precautions may be considered.

EN 13850 contains a number of requirements which may be agreed with or should be approved by national postal regulators.

EN 13850 specifies technical requirements for the measurement including the preparation of reports on the results of measurement. However EN 13850 does not state how and when results should be shared with postal customers and users, who will order measurement to take place, and who will pay for the measurement; these subjects are outside the standard and will be determined by legal and regulatory requirements.

2.2 Benefits of the quality of service standards

The standardised quality of service measuring methods provide a uniform way for measuring the end-to-end transit time of postal items. Postal regulators can refer to the standard when requiring information about quality of service for postal operators. For any minimum service levels required by the European Commission or by national Directives for operators in the universal service, requirements can be made that the service be measured according to EN 13850.

Standardised measurement methods may help to keep the cost of measuring down. They could also make it easier to find contractors familiar with the methods and to evaluate the work of contractors for measuring and auditing. The standardised measuring methods may also eliminate debates and uncertainties about results from varying measuring methods.

Using standardised measuring methods will assure that the measurement will be done in an objective and equal way for all operators in accordance with the requirements of the 1997 Postal Directive of the European Commission.

The use of standards will ensure that reliable and correct information can be collected which can be presented to regulators and the public in an understandable way. It also allows the regulator to collect this information.

2.3 Limitations of EN 13850

The standard considers only the measurement of transit time (expressed as the percentage of mail delivered within $J + n$ days end-to-end) and does not consider other aspects of service performance. For example, the date of deposit is defined by the last collection of the day but the standard does not measure whether the timing of the last collection of the day meets customers' requirement, nor how the times compare for different service providers. Similarly the standard considers the date of delivery but does not take into account the time of day when the item was delivered, whether or not there are more than one delivery each day, the condition of items when delivered or the queuing time at post offices etc.

Although the standard specifies a method that will be used by many postal operators, it shall be noted that the overall transit time quality of service result does not measure the postal operator's overall performance in a way that provides direct comparison of postal service operators.

2.4 Interpretation of results

Results from the quality of service measuring cannot always be used for direct comparison of the overall quality of service.

Direct comparison of two operators can be difficult to make. Frequently one is interested in comparing two operators covering the same geographical area, i.e. the quality that a customer receives when using one or other of the operators for collecting and distributing mail within an area. To do this, it is necessary to compare the transit time of the operators over similar studies of domains. The two overall figures of the operators' on-time performance may be misleading.

When interpreting the results from the measurement it is important also to consider the stratification and national and other peculiarities that apply in each specific case.

2.5 Use of survey results for quality improvement.

The standard sets out minimum requirements in order to produce one overall figure. It is recognised that operators or other bodies may wish to go beyond these minimum requirements in order to produce information to identify and correct specific areas of poor performance. The survey design can be expanded to collect this information.

EN 13850 provides minimum requirements and allows measurement systems to be enhanced. It should be noted that other methods are available to find problematic areas and that the standard may not be the only method to use for this purpose.

EN 13850 allows the use of test items containing electronic chips or other advanced technology so that each test item can be monitored at pre-defined points or throughout its whole journey to allow for more detailed diagnostic analysis of the transit time. If these are used, the organisation operating the measuring system shall take steps to ensure that the diagnostic system does not introduce biases in the end-to-end measurement system.

3 Considerations before implementing the EN 13850

3.1 Regulations

The standard itself is not meant to specify how the regulators shall enforce and monitor the use of the standard. This is to be done through the European and national regulatory work. In particular it does not specify how results shall be published by the regulator.

3.2 Measuring body (Contractors for survey operation)

EN 13850 states that measurement shall be carried out by an independent performance-monitoring organisation. This is defined as a body charged with the monitoring of the quality of service which is "external to, and having no links of ownership or control with the postal service provider thus monitored".

The independent performance-monitoring organisation is responsible for undertaking the survey. Usually this performance-monitoring organisation will act as a contractor for a sponsoring organisation which may be, for example, the postal service provider itself or a national regulatory authority.

The independent performance monitoring organisation provides a guarantee that results of the measurement have not been wrongly influenced by the postal service provider. Factors normally taken into account in choosing a performance monitoring organisation include the capability, experience and reputation of the organisation as well as any legal or regulatory requirements and, of course, cost. To cover all these points it is common to go through a formal tender process. Organisations which may have undertaken quality of service measurement include e.g. research institutes, consultancies, market research companies, universities and government organisations.

The performance monitoring organisation is required to ensure that the panel of senders and receivers is independent of postal operators and to manage the panel according to the International Chamber of Commerce/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice. This is intended to ensure that the postal operator cannot influence either the behaviour or reporting of the panellists, or the quality of service provided specifically to them. These codes of practice also require among other things that the identity of the panellists is not revealed to anyone outside the monitoring organisation, except with the prior permission of those panellists (see the comments on 5.1 in Clause 5 of these guidelines).

CEN/TR 14709:2003 (E)**3.3 Real mail information**

The purpose of real mail studies is to collect information on the flows and other characteristics of mail. They may use management systems or surveys specifically designed for the purpose.

It may not be necessary to wait for all real mail information before starting to use the standard as weighting can be applied after the event

5.3 of EN 13850:2002 "Real mail studies" lays down that the frequency of real mail studies shall be determined in accordance with the national regulatory authority and shall be performed at a minimum once every third year. The reason why real mail studies shall be repeated at intervals is that type of senders, type of mail, distribution channels, volumes of posted mail and other factors may have changed over time.

The review of the real mail studies aims at reflecting changes in the postal environment. Reasons to review and perform new real mail studies may be the following events:

a) General

- substantial increase/decrease of the economy in general
- substantial increase/decrease of the number of (a specific type of) postal items

b) Operational

- introduction of new postal products with considerable market share
- introduction of new logistics that affect the acceptance/distribution of mail or the weight/number of strata
- change of tariff structure

c) Legislative

- decrease of the reserved area
- increase/decrease of the universal service area

d) Others

- increasing/decreasing market share of other postal operators with branch or regional oriented customers and/or specialised services
- substantial changes in distribution between rural and urban populations (e.g. drift to the city)

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This list is only exemplary. There might be many more reasons based on national peculiarities and/or general effects that may prove the need for the performance of additional real mail studies.

Real mail studies can be expensive which is why EN 13850 allows up to 3 years between studies. Nevertheless there may be situations where real mail studies should be made more often, such as rapidly changing events in the areas a) to d) above. It is also necessary to consider the effect on the measured quality of any changes in the real mail parameters. If a factor is not very discriminant in practice then big changes in the real mail parameter may have little effect and three years would be sufficiently frequent. However, if a factor is very discriminant then small changes in the real mail parameter could have such a big effect on quality of service that more frequent real mail studies are needed.

4 Implementing the standard**4.1 Steps to consider before implementation**

In principle the following steps are required in order to implement quality of service measurement in accordance with the Standard. Indicative time periods are shown for each stage. GANTT charts showing the different stages are contained in Annex A.

- a) Study the Standard and this implementation guide and produce an outline specification for the survey. This specification should identify, in particular, the geographical stratification that will be used and the discriminant parameters that will need to be considered. (up to 6 months)
- b) Organise real mail studies to collect the information required for the survey. The real mail study shall cover different days of the week and periods of the year. (between 6 and 12 months)

- c) It is possible to proceed with call for tender processes, the selection of an independent survey operator, and begin contract negotiations before the final results of the real mail studies are known (preliminary estimates can be used instead). (up to 12 months, at the same time as b. is performed)
- d) Once full results of the real mail studies are available the design of the survey can be finalised and contractual negotiations with the survey operator completed. (up to 4 months)
- e) A period will be necessary for set up and testing of the survey. (up to 9 months)

The timetable for activities a. through e. should be planned so as to have them completed at the end of a calendar year.

- f) Full survey operation will start at the beginning of a calendar year and is required to last for 12 months in order to meet the requirements of the standard. (12 months)
- g) Reports shall be available within 3 months of the end of measurement period. (up to 3 months)

Many universal service providers already have some system in place for measuring end-to-end quality of service.

If there is no existing real mail study in place but a system to measure quality of service already exists, it may be possible to speed up the collection of information on real mail by using existing management information available to the postal service provider. In other words the real mail studies would run in parallel with the quality of service survey, and the results of the quality of service survey would be adjusted retrospectively using weighting at the end of the first year of operation. It could then take 16 to 24 months to the start of the measurement period and a further 15 months before results for the calendar year are available (see Table A.1).

In a number of cases faster implementation may be possible:

- If a system to measure quality of service already exists with a design already based on real mail studies and concepts, with minor modifications required, it should be possible to make the modifications required for compliance with the standard with little delay. (6 to 12 months to start of measurement period, see Table A.2)
- If a system to measure quality of service already exists with a design already based on real mail studies and concepts, but major modifications are required before the survey is compliant with the standard, there may be significant contractual issues with the survey operator. Time will have to be allowed for this, more time being required for a bigger survey. (12 to 18 months to start of measurement period, (see Table A.3)

In the worst case where there is neither a system to measure quality of service nor an existing real mail study in place it could take up to about 30 months to the start of the measurement period and a further 15 months before results for the calendar year are available. (see Table A.4).

4.2 Considerations in case of multiple operators

EN 13850 can be used both by universal service providers and by other postal service providers operating in a liberated market.

4.2.1 Field of study

The first step in designing the measurement system is to decide on the field of study. EN 13850 provides for a number of alternatives.

- For domestic services, the field of study defines the parts of the country in which items will be posted and the parts of the country where they will be delivered. Thus if a postal service provider only offers a service in certain parts of the country, the field of study may be restricted to those parts of the country. On the other hand it is important to make sure that all parts of the country served by the service provider are covered in the field of study, including those parts served through collection or delivery agents.
- For cross border services, the posting or the delivery field of study may, for example, be defined as the whole of a single country or as a group of countries. It may be useful to measure the overall service to/from a group of countries in order to reduce the work in the case of an operator forwarding or receiving small amounts of mail to/from several countries.
- For both domestic and cross-border services the standard may also be used to measure the service provided by a group of operators.

CEN/TR 14709:2003 (E)**4.2.2 How and when to use EN 13850 or other quality of service standards**

For technical reasons EN 13850 may not in all parts be suitable for the measurement of very small volumes of mail and for operators with limited coverage. For these reasons the following technical points should be considered by service providers operating in a liberated market:

- The geographical stratification and discriminant factors should be examined to ensure that they are appropriate. For example, addressing characteristics may be highly discriminant if the operation is highly automated. EN 13850 allows discriminant characteristics to be changed if necessary.
- The types and numbers of customers who can take part in the survey should be examined. If an operator is only offering service to limited numbers of customers, it may be difficult to recruit sufficient panellists, particularly since the survey requires co-operation from customers.
- The types of induction should be examined. For example, if preferential treatment is offered to certain classes of customers, then the class of customer becomes an important discriminant characteristic
- It is important to consider how dates of induction and delivery can be recorded accurately and without bias. For example, if receivers receive high volumes of real mail each day there may be problems in intercepting test items. Alternatively if the volume of real mail per poster or receiver is very low, it may become noticeable to the postal operator that a panellist in the survey is sending or receiving test letters with a consequent risk of bias to the survey results.
- Information on real mail will be required for geographical stratification and the discriminant characteristics.
- Operators offering delivery by a specific time should note that the time of day of delivery is not measured in the Standard
- If an operator is accepting mail only under special conditions of posting, it may be more appropriate to use the Standard for bulk mail.
- If an operator is using an end-to-end track and trace system it may be more appropriate to obtain quality of service information from the track and trace system. (CEN/TC 331 intends to develop a standard for measurement of (parcels) quality of service using a track and trace system.)
- For cross-border mail, real mail information is required for both the posting and delivery countries. In many cases the operators in the two countries will collect and share information on real mail flows in their own countries. If shared information is unavailable the operator commissioning the survey will have to collect information about the flows in both countries.

The results from the quality of service measurement will provide as a minimum a single overall figure for each operator. When interpreting the quality offered by different operators (see 2.4) it should be borne in mind that there may be several factors affecting the comparison. For example, one operator may be providing a service for local mail posted and delivered within a city whilst another operator offers a national service. Similarly two operators may both offer a national service but in practice have different patterns of real mail.

For closer comparisons between operators, it may be necessary to compare their performance in similar circumstances. EN 13850 allows this to be done by calculating transit times for particular study domains which form subsets of the field of study. The geographical stratification, e.g. local mail, long distance mail, or rural mail, and the methods of induction and delivery may be useful as study domains.

(The need for new standards or changes to existing standards to deal with liberalised markets will be further studied by CEN/TC 331.)

4.3 Extension to a wider EU

By 2004 the European Union will be enlarged by the accession of a number of additional European countries, and preparing the additional countries for using the standard is a highly important subject. The new mandate M/312 given by the European Commission to CEN mandate provides therefore for a dedicated Work Item to work on these issues.

The need, based on requirements of the European Commission, for application of this standard in the short run is given for EU member countries only. As shown in 4.1 of this paper the steps to be considered before the standard can be implemented may require a substantial period of time.

In terms of the domestic measurement system every single member state will have to undertake these steps on its own. To ensure that new EU member countries are able to comply with the standard when joining the European Union it is therefore highly recommended that pre-accession countries should start to undertake the necessary steps (4.1 a-e) as soon as possible. As far as cross-border flows are concerned this will need to be done by present EU members as well as pre-accession countries.

EN 13850 includes flexibility areas for adapted implementation; however, these flexibility areas may not be sufficient and some important questions need to be addressed and answered about, for example, the cost of the monitoring system for small cross-border flows or for small operators.

The following questions in particular need to be studied:

- Should the new countries have the same timetable for implementation?
- Which are precisely the flexibility areas in the current standard available to new countries that could solve some of the issues?
- Which other issues require further investigations in order that they are addressed within the new Work Item mandate?

The topic of new countries and the application of the standard differs whether we consider the domestic or the cross-border element.

4.3.1 Domestic

In principle and a priori each Pre-Accession country has a domestic market and postal volumes which are large enough to apply the current standard without modification. There might be a need to consider some transitional period to reach the full application, principally in the area of the real mail studies.

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4.3.2 Cross-border

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The enlargement of the EU by 10 new countries will considerably expand the size and cost of the required measurement system. The current standard requires a specific statistical accuracy to be achieved on every country-to-country link. With 15 members, this means the monitoring of 210 links. With 25 members, it would mean the monitoring of 600 links. In addition, priority mail volumes on a large number of these additional links are very limited.

The statistical design and in particular the geographical coverage have therefore to be reconsidered within the new Work Item. The concept in general could be that the level of accuracy and representativity of the measurement system should be proportional to the size of the actual mail volume.

One practical area for solutions to limit the size of the cross border study and for cost effectiveness is the concept of grouping countries by geographical regions. For example instead of requiring a specific annual accuracy between Portugal and Latvia, it could be as appropriate to require a specific accuracy between the Iberian countries as a group and the Baltic countries as another group. Similarly, lower accuracy requirements could be required for the smallest actual mail flows links. Many design scenarios, including simplification of some mail characteristic requirements for small flows can be considered and should be studied by the new Work Item. EN 13850 already allows for a field of study to contain a group of countries. If the field of study covers a group of countries, the country of posting and/or delivery may need to be included in the geographical stratification.

It should be specified that the redesign of the cross-border study for the enlarged EU should not be limited to the new links with the joining pre-accession countries, but should apply on a similar basis within the current EU.

As far as the timetable for the cross-border study is concerned, the implementation process can only start when the Work Item group has concluded its work and CEN/TC 331 has formally proceeded with the modification of the standard. This will probably be several years from the publication of the current standard.

Pre-accession countries will not be able to begin their preparations until a common specification has been agreed.