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Poštne storitve - Kakovost storitev - Merjenje napačne dostave pošiljke - Poročilo o izvedljivosti

Postal Services - Quality of Service - Measurement of incorrect delivery - Feasibility Report

Messung fehlerhafter Zustellung - Machbarkeitsstudie

Services postaux - Qualité de service - Mesure de la livraison erronée - Rapport de faisabilité

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDIZATION
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Foreword

This document (CEN/TR 16706:2014) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 331 “Postal services”, the secretariat of which is held by NEN.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. CEN [and/or CENELEC] shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

1 Scope

This Technical Report provides the results of a feasibility study to determine whether a European Standard for the measurement of incorrect delivery could be developed. CEN/TC331 decided a European Standard was not feasible but that the results should be kept and the report transferred into this Technical Report.

NOTE 1 At the end of 2011, TC/331/WG1 established Project Team F to research the measurement of incorrect delivery in accordance with the tender “RENEWED open call for project team experts for the execution of the work called for in the grant agreement SA/CEN/ENTR/EFTA/428/2009-06 Postal Services - Elaboration and adoption of standards documents in the EU and EFTA”. The Working Plan of PT F was approved at the plenary meeting of CEN/TC 331 in December 2011.

NOTE 2 According to the Working plan, PT-F presented to the TC/331/WG1 a first report at the meeting in Belgrade in March 2012. PT-F expressed the opinion that the development of a standard was not feasible and that they suspected that a standardization document would not produce the expected results, that is a reduction in the number of incorrectly delivered postal items. PT-F highlighted that such a measurement system had no capability to recognize and record when a real event occurred (only when the sender and/or the receiver submitted a complaint), and therefore it will be unreliable. PT-F also mentioned the difficulty in finding existing and feasible measurement methods which would reliably measure such rare events.

NOTE 3 In an open discussion with WG1 members at the March 2012 meeting, PT-F also mentioned a previous Feasibility Study and other research which came to the same conclusion that such a measurement is not feasible. PT-F and WG1 proposed to TC331 to adopt the feasibility study on “Measurement of incorrect delivery” at the Plenary Meeting in Ljubljana in May 2012.

2 Normative References

None.

3 Summary of Feasibility Study

The task has been to produce a feasibility study for measurement of incorrect delivery. PT-F focused on the following two issues:

— how to find an appropriate measurement system and a measurement method; and

— how to find a unambiguous and clear definition for incorrect delivery which will be unanimously accepted.

An appropriate measurement system is very difficult to establish as it shall be able to recognize incorrect deliveries in amongst mail that has been correctly delivered. Use of customer complaint data would not provide a reliable estimate as the intended recipient may not be aware an item has been incorrectly delivered.

A method by which it would be feasible to measure the number of incorrect deliveries is almost impossible to define, because these are rare events. Some indicators suggest that incorrect delivery occurs once in 100000, or more, correct deliveries (according to available data from EN 14012). Although a number of approaches were discussed, with those which are currently used in the postal measurements (test mail and real mail); telephone studies, field studies and others in social research, PT-F concluded that there is no one feasible method to measure such rare events.

The definition of incorrect delivery is directly related to any deviation from the correct delivery. Because the definitions and procedures for correct delivery vary by country PT-F was faced with many differences when they tried to propose a common definition for the term “incorrect delivery”.

Incorrect delivery may have two aspects: delivery to an unauthorized person, which is usually regulated by national postal legislation, and the improper procedure of confirmation, which postal operators usually define with product and service manuals. Who can be the authorized person is difficult to define and may differ for every country due to different legal systems and numerous national legislations. A further complication is that

it is often difficult to determine who has been responsible for an incorrectly delivery. For example, if the sender wrongly addressed the postal item, and the postman delivers that item as addressed, is it a correct or an incorrect delivery? When an unwanted event happens there is an obligation to determine who was responsible for the incorrect delivery; the sender or the postman or even an objective circumstance. However, this means that it is necessary to separately assess each event before it can be determined that it is an incorrect delivery.

To conclude, if it is impossible to build a measurement system that will identify each unwanted event when it happens, if it is impossible to find an acceptable method by which such rare event can be measured, if it is impossible to determine at the time of the event who is responsible for the incorrect delivery, if it is impossible to find a common definition of who can be authorized person in numerous postal legislative acts,..., then this is why it was concluded that the measurement of incorrect delivery was not an appropriate topic for a standard.

In accordance with the conclusion, it should be noted that the previous feasibility studies all rejected the possibility of developing a standards for the measurement of incorrect delivery. In this sense, we wish to note that we reviewed a lot of postal studies, legal acts and standards where we found direct and indirect support for that conclusion. Finally, let's look at the reasons why it’s impossible to continue this project from technical, legislative and economic points of view.

From a technical point of view, it is difficult to find an adequate method for measuring the number of incorrect deliveries because it is a very rare event. Also, it is very hard to set up a recognizing system which would be responsible for detection of all unwanted events. Now, systems count only events when the sender or the addressee complain about incorrect delivery, which NPO collects using EN 14012, and where he determinates the responsibility and yearly publishes the cumulative results.

From a legal point of view, it is not possible to provide a common definition for the event of incorrect delivery due to different legislative systems and the large number of different postal legislative solutions. Neither is it possible to standardize who could be the authorized persons for all countries or how the procedure of notification for all postal operators be consistently performed? Therefore, how can we measure events that we do not know for sure have occurred?

From an economic point of view any solution, which includes standardization documents, would be very expensive without clear benefits for customers, regulators or operators. Also, our consideration suggests that quality postal inspection or supervision could be a better solution for resolving rare cases of incorrect delivery than measurement.

Therefore, our final conclusion based on technical, legal, economic and other aspects is that a continuation of the project “measurement of incorrect delivery” is not feasible.

4 Feasibility Study

4.1 Introduction

The main task of when preparing a feasibility study (FS) is to investigate the positive and negative results of a planned project before it starts. In other words, for developing the FS it is necessary to review legal, economic, technical and other factors, according to a project’s Terms of Reference (ToR), in order to objectively identify the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed investment and the prospects for success.

Therefore in the FS we first tried to explain most important parts of project “ToR and Rationale” which we received with the Agreement and basic concept of our Work Plans, which are adopted in official meetings. Then we will present postal literature, standardization documents and other documents about this subject and what we found during research as well as provide some definitions and explanations of basic issues, which are necessary for understanding this subject. At the end we will analyse the prescribed project task from a technical, economic and legal view and give conclusions and recommendations.

Figure 1 shows the concept of the FS.

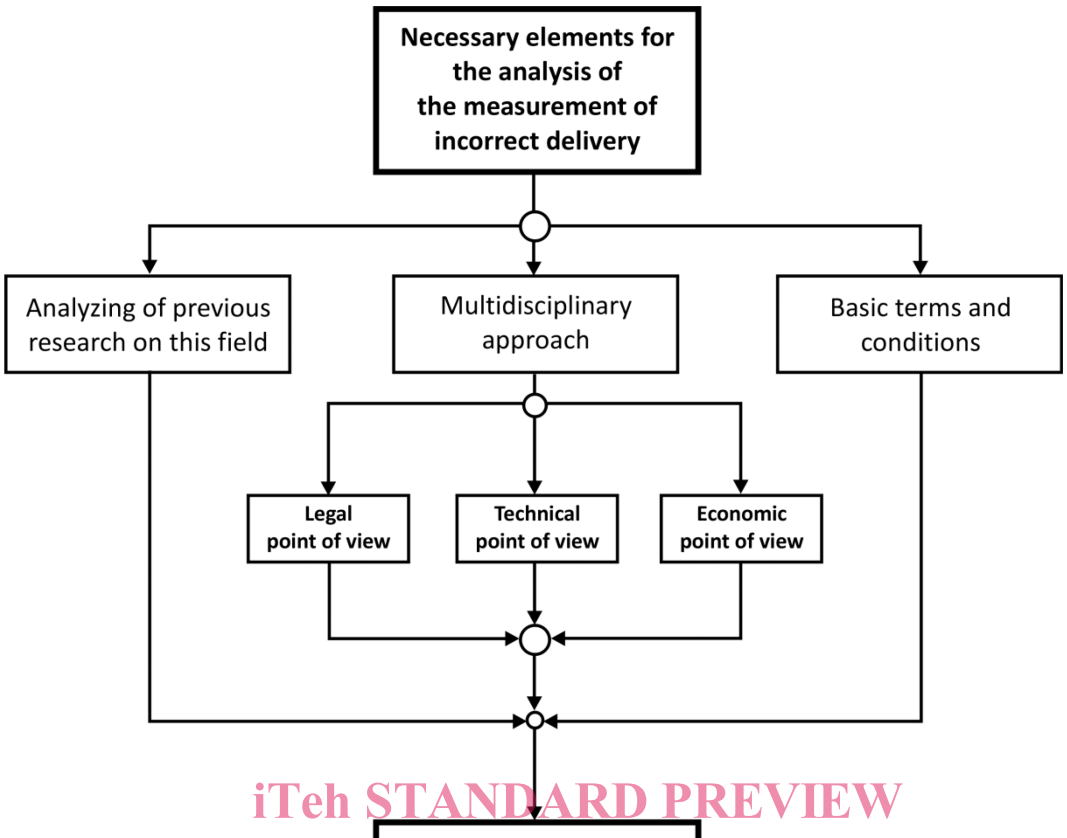

Figure 1 – Concept of the feasibility study

4.2 Clarification of ToR and Rationale from the Project

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Project, the objective of Project Team F (PT-F) is to study the feasibility of a standard in its 1st phase and, if appropriate, to provide a draft standard for the Measurement of incorrect delivery in its 2nd phase. The deadline for the 1st phase was set at 14 months (2 months for Working Plan and 12 months for the Feasibility Study) and, if TC/331 agreed to start the 2nd phase, a further 18 months. However, in collaboration with WG1, members of PT-F propose that TC/331 should accept the recommendation that it is not feasible to develop a standard for the “measurement of incorrect delivery” and therefore to end the project after the first phase. Here are some explanations for such a decision.

The rationale of the ToR states that: “Registered postal items contain – by nature – important messages or goods. Any of such items, which may be delivered to a person not being authorized to receive them may cause substantial problems, even if the correct addressee receives it afterwards. The knowledge of the quality performed by the operator would therefore give the customer an indication, to which extent registered postal items are delivered.”

A registered postal item according to the Postal Directive, is a postal service of “providing a flat-rate guarantee against risks of loss, theft or damage and supplying the sender, where appropriate upon request, with proof of the handing in of the postal item and/or of its delivery to the addressee“. Also, it is similarly described in the Universal Postal Convention. So, based on above it is one of the key tasks to give a clear answer on who is authorized to receive a postal item because this event “may cause substantial problems, even if the correct addressee receives it afterwards”. Therefore, special attention was paid to this issue, which we will explain later.

The part of the ToR that states: “The knowledge of the quality performed by the operator would therefore give the customer an indication, to which extend registered postal items are delivered” we find to be redundant because, according the standard EN 14012:2008, postal operators already have an obligation to collect the number of complaints about domestic and cross-border mail (see EN 14012:2008, Tables I.3.2 and I.3.4) in three separate columns: the total number of complaints for all postal items, of which are “justified complaints” (differentiation from non-justified complaints) and of which are complaints with compensation (what basically means how many complaints have for registered items) as well as according 12 different rows (criteria), including “misdelivery” (definition in EN 14012 is: 3.20 misdelivery - complaint about postal item delivered to the wrong address or the wrong addressee), what basically could be “an indication, to which extent registered postal items are delivered” for customers. Also, postal operators have an obligation to publish this “Report of complaints handling” where users could find out the exact number of incorrect deliveries during the last year and therefore we see no need for an additional explanation of this issue.

The last part of the rationale states: “This work will specify requirements for a method and its implementation aiming at measuring another aspect of the quality of delivery. It deals specifically with registered postal items delivered to someone not authorized to receive them.” Unfortunately, methods for measurement of very rare events (in our case more than 0,000000X of all postal items in traffic) are limited and mostly unreliable. A measurement system, which will be able to recognize every event when a registered postal items was delivered to someone who was not authorized to receive it, besides when addressee or sender submits complaints (which is the only source of information about this unwanted event by now), could be very hard to build up or even impossible. We will also explain these issues in further clauses.

4.3 Set up our Working Plan according the ToR and Rationale

A Working Plan was established with four steps; the first step was to exchange ideas about the scope and rationale from the ToR and to discuss the vision in accordance with those objectives and tasks. Two objectives were determined:

— to identify market needs for the measurement of the incorrect delivery of registered items and

— to find an appropriate method with which can be possible to measure incorrect delivery.

Also, in order that to accomplish those objectives, it would be necessary to first identify and define the basic terms of the task, e.g. what is incorrect delivery, who may be an authorized person according to national legislation and how a system could recognize that an unwanted event (incorrect delivery) occurred.

In a second step it was planned to explore available postal literature, standardization documents and good practice. After we finished this step, we could say that we found and reviewed many studies on postal operations, got familiar with different forms of normative documents and sent many e-mails to our professional colleagues in other countries, but we have not found many sources where our subject was widely and competently discussed.

In some studies, where we found some discussions about miss-delivery in general, usually those subjects are described in the manner: yes, this is very important issue in regard of quality service, because users react much worse than when postal operator loses their postal items. Also, when users make ranking of all improper handling with their postal item from bad to worse, miss-delivery is usually in the middle of ranking list. But, when researchers asked a direct question about their experience, mostly all users say that they have no practical knowledge. Also, according to reports of quality service, which we found on Internet, as well as in direct contact with our professional colleagues in other countries, we found that this occasion (incorrect delivery) was the rarest indicator of quality service. Therefore we concluded that incorrect delivery is a very rare event, but once, when it happens, it has much effect on the consumers’ perspective of the quality of the postal service.

During the research of postal legislation and other postal studies, we were faced with a lot of different definitions about who is the authorized person for a correct delivery. Different legal systems, different national laws and different postal laws in different states make it nearly impossible to define this authorized person. Also, when we add different meanings and different ways of writing the address on postal items in different

states, unique differentiation of who is the authorized person becomes more and more unclear. Due to that reason, we decided that we should also include addressing in our project because that issue has a very important impact on delivery.

Next important and major issue of our project was to find a method of measurement. We expected initially that it would be very difficult to find an appropriate answer to this question and for that reason we were very focused on this issue during research. We presumed that an incorrect delivery is a very rare event, but after we consulted literature and our professional colleagues in other countries, we were surprised how rare this event truly is. So, we concluded that a traditional method for measurement with test items cannot be an option, that a direct telephone survey with addressees who reported incorrect delivery is not representative, that field research on a representative geographic area is much too expensive and so on. So, from the start, we predicted that we were facing a questionable mission.

4.4 Results of previous research about measurement incorrect delivery

In this clause we will point out the studies compatible to our task which are leading to the same conclusions. The first study is the feasibility study “Measurement of wrong delivery and correct notification” which was produced from the CEN/TC331/WG1/PT8. WG1 had set up for 4 different projects, where 2 projects ended with Technical Reports (“Quality of access to postal services” and “Information available on postal services”) and 2 projects ended without a standardization document (“Measurement of wrong delivery” and “Measurement of correct notification”). For our project “Measurement of incorrect delivery” both these previous projects may be relevant, because incorrect delivery, according to the explanation of our ToR, can be understood as delivery to the wrong person or as an incorrect notification procedure.

In those projects PT8 defined four possible reasons for wrong delivery and we used these definitions in a similar way, but instead of “wrong delivery” we used “authorized person”. Their first definition “delivery to the wrong address and to the wrong person” could be translated as “delivery to the unauthorized person” which is either the result of an error by the postman or by a mistake made by the sender when he/she is writing the address and therefore, this shall be judged on a case by case basis. Second (theoretically), “delivery to the wrong address, but to the authorized person”, according to our interpretation, is a correct delivery because the sender only indicates the address where an authorized person lives, not as an order to hand over the item exclusively at this address. Third, “delivery to the address indicated on the item, but the recipient not living there”, probably referred only to ordinary mail because, for registered item, the postman needs to ask the receiver for a record of delivery (otherwise it is a postman error which has infringed the correct procedures, but which, statistically speaking, is virtually impossible to measure). Only, delivery to the right address, but to the non-authorized person, is an issue according to our task and we can consider this as an incorrect delivery because the sender, according to national postal laws, usually orders the delivery of his postal item exclusively to the person marked on the envelope.

Also, PT8 investigated three possible reasons in “Measurement of Correct Notification”, which we also analysed, and we came to the same conclusions. They wrote: “On the one hand there are different products where a notification may take place, there is one circumstance (absence of the receiver) when a notification should take place and there are different features a notification should contain rightly”. Also, they mentioned that incorrect notification is a rarer event than a wrong delivery and that statistical requirements as well as costs of measurement would be higher than for a wrong delivery. Therefore, they came to the same conclusions as we do: “PT8 felt unable to draft a standard according multiple features and requests, especially in the light of the different approaches and regulations on these topics in the European countries.”

In “Report on the Quality of Service and the End-user Satisfaction”, which was produced by ERGP in November 2011, our NRA colleagues investigated via a questionnaire different issues about procedure of delivery. Less than 1/3 of all NRAs indicate that they have some kind problems with registered services in the delivery phase and specified: “many variations of registered items with specific delivery conditions, leaving notification without any attempt of delivery, incorrect disposals, in domestic traffic return to sender within 3 days, lack of possibility to fully trace registered items and other failures in delivery”. After we carefully read the whole report and discussed it together, we concluded that 67 % of all NRA’s have no specific problems regarding their registered service as well as the above mentioned reasons could be in relation with the term “incorrect delivery as whole” but those cannot be measured in the same way.

On the other hand, we read in one old WIK study, which was mandated by the EC on “Quality of Service Objectives, Performance and Measurement in relation to Community Universal Postal Service”, where the difficulty of establishing a representative measurement system in the delivery phase was discussed. They concluded:

"Instead of a representative measurement system, results of the measurement of complaints could be used to get an overview over the loss of postal items. However, complaints could only give hints about the extent of lost and damaged mail. It is possible that the sender will never become aware of non-delivery, thus will never complain about the lost item. The same is true for the addressee who often does not expect a mail item and is therefore not aware of its loss.” We came to the same conclusion when we were thinking about our task measurement of incorrect delivery, because sender and/or receiver are usually not aware that their postal item was delivered to a non-authorized person and therefore this measurement system couldn’t be representative and reliable.

At the end of this clause, we wish to point out one important fact which can be a possible reason why it is very hard to standardize any kind of process in delivery phase. Traditionally, Universal Postal Convention prescribes technological unity in the international postal traffic and therefore almost all countries have same technical requirements and technological process in accepting, sorting and the transporting phase. But, Universal Postal Convention doesn’t regulate the delivery phase and, for that purpose, UPU rely on national legislations. In other words, each UPU member state delivers cross border postal items in the same way that it delivers domestic traffic. So, that fact is very important when anybody considers developing any kind of standardization's document for the delivery phase, because many different ways of delivery exist and therefore it is very difficult to produce a common standard that will apply to all different states.

4.5 Some initial definitions about basic terms and process

4.5.1 Introduction

In this section we will try to define some basic terms that would help us in mutual understanding the basic content of the project.

4.5.2 What is incorrect delivery?

The answer is very simple: incorrect delivery is the contrary of correct delivery. So, we should first try to answer what is correct delivery of registered items, and after we found that definition, we can say that any deviation from this process means incorrect delivery. Also, we concluded that there are two basic components for correct delivery of registered postal items, first, the delivery of the postal item to an authorized person (as a rule, from hand to hand) and second, the correctly conducted procedure of notification (both, if postman finds an authorized person or doesn’t find) as well as the procedure of leaving advice of delivery and/or return to the sender.

Incorrect delivery is any kind of deviation from the prescribed way of delivery of a registered postal item by the terms and conditions on offer by the postal operator.

4.5.3 What is delivery of registered postal item?

The general definition of the word delivery is not useful because it is defines through itself (closed loop). We found definitions like: “The act of conveying or delivering” or “something that is delivered” or “the act of delivering or distributing goods, mail, etc.” but those definitions were not appropriate for our specific requirements, especially for delivery of registered postal items. Therefore we proposed the following definition:

Delivery of registered postal items is the act where a postman hands over a registered postal item to the recipient (addressee) or an authorized person who should confirm delivery (usually with signature).