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Poštnе storitve - Kakovost storitve - Načela ravnanja s pritožbami

Postal services - Quality of service - Complaints handling principles

Postalische Dienstleistungen - Dienstqualität - Grundsätze der Bearbeitung von Beschwerden

Services postaux - Qualité du service - Principes de traitement des réclamations

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EUROPEAN STANDARD
NORME EUROPÉENNE
EUROPÄISCHE NORM

EN 14012

September 2019

ICS 03.240

Supersedes EN 14012:2008

English Version

**Postal services - Quality of service - Complaints handling
principles**

Services postaux - Qualité du service - Principes de
traitement des réclamations

Postalische Dienstleistungen - Dienstqualität -
Grundsätze der Bearbeitung von Beschwerden

This European Standard was approved by CEN on 5 August 2019.

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDIZATION
COMITÉ EUROPÉEN DE NORMALISATION
EUROPÄISCHES KOMITEE FÜR NORMUNG

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EN 14012:2019 (E)**European foreword**

This document (EN 14012:2019) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 331 "Postal services", the secretariat of which is held by NEN.

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by March 2020, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by March 2020.

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

This document supersedes EN 14012:2008.

The content has been extensively revised to reflect:

- an increased requirement for postal operators and organizations to demonstrate a stronger focus on providing a quality mail and associated complaint handling experience to postal users;
- limiting the number of measuring parameters; and
- stronger alignment with ISO 10002 adhering to the measuring method described in the first edition of EN 14012 means that also the measuring requirements of this revised 2nd edition of EN 14012 are met. Annex G contains general information regarding measuring and reporting of complaints based on the criteria described in the first edition of EN 14012 and included in Annex I. However, this revised second edition of EN 14012 contains more requirements on improvements and corrective actions.

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According to the CEN-CENELEC Internal Regulations, the national standards organisations of the following countries are bound to implement this European Standard: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Introduction

General

In 1992 the European Commission pointed out in its Green paper the need to establish common rules for the development of community postal services and the improvement of quality of service. The Commission identified requirements for quality of service measurement including the management and measurement of complaints.

The 1997 Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on common rules for the development of the internal market of Community postal services and the improvement of quality of service, 97/67/CE article 19, requires universal service providers to publish information once a year on the number of complaints and the way they are dealt with. Complaints are requests given by users of the postal service in order to communicate that they feel that the service provided has not met the standard they expect or the standard the service provider has to comply with. It is recommended to investigate complaints in order to verify if there is actual non-conformity with the service and to respond to the complainants. Moreover, complaints are regarded as the instrument to protect users if the service provider does not respect the commitments and promises it has made.

The service provider can use complaints in its continuous quality improvement of the postal service. The level of complaints and the reasons for complaints provide important information about the satisfaction of users with different aspects of the postal service. There needs to be commitment to effective complaints-handling at all levels within the postal organization.

Development overview

An investigation carried out by the European postal regulators CERP in 2004 showed that the costs for fully implementing the first edition of EN 14012:2003 were likely to be too high, even for postal service organizations with existing established and sophisticated complaint management and measurement/reporting systems. This prompted CEN/TC 331 to start a revision of the European Standard in 2005, incorporating annexes about guidance for its use. This Third version of EN 14012 does not force those who already are using EN 14012:2003 to change their measurement systems to comply with the European Standard, but gives an opportunity to measure less extensively. This Third version is also aligned with ISO 10002 on Complaints-handling and thus places more emphasis on the need for overall quality improvements within the postal organizations.

Regulatory aspects, information about business sensitive information and special requirements for Universal services have deliberately been left out of this European Standard. The reasons are that it is up to the regulatory and governmental bodies, as well as in contracts between business partners, to refer to business agreements and this European Standard, and to state which part has to be followed and for which service.

National regulators may have more specific requirements than those given in this document.

Content description

This document provides guidelines beyond the requirements given in ISO 10002 and EN ISO 9001 in order to consider both the effectiveness and efficiency of a complaint handling process, and consequently the potential for improvement of the performance of an organization. When compared to EN ISO 9001, the objectives of customer satisfaction and product quality are extended to include the satisfaction of interested parties and the performance of the organization.

In this third edition of EN 14012, the general structure of ISO 10002 is followed. For general complaints-handling rules that are not postal specific, references are made to the latest version of ISO 10002, which may be revised independently of EN 14012.

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The intention of the modified EN 14012 is to provide guidance on how to set up a complaints-handling system for postal service operators. This leads to positive solutions for postal users who complain. It also provides sufficient information about quality of service related to complaints.

Postal specific issues which will be taken into account are:

- many postal organization employees are in frequent contact with postal users during the delivery of their core job and may be able to deal with complaints on the spot. Most of this contact is not recognized as complaint handling contact and is therefore not formally recorded. (For example, a postman conducting regular collection and delivery activity);
- cross border mail may generate cross border complaints where it may be difficult to establish which postal operator is responsible;
- postal operations involving multiple operators carrying an item of mail will result in complaints being made to organizations that may or may not be the responsibility of that organization;
- person who complains may not be the person who has paid for the service; for example, a recipient of a mail item complaining about an incorrect delivery procedure;
- postal business in Europe is regulated by European and national regulatory law. This regulatory law focuses primarily on the Universal Postal Service (which differs from Member State to Member State);
- there is a new emphasis on e-commerce
- the Technical report on measuring and handling complaints concerning damaged, delayed or lost postal items CEN/TR 16915:2015 is incorporated in this standard under Annex J.

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1 Scope

This document specifies complaints-handling principles related to domestic and international postal services. It applies to both national and cross border services. Attention is given to how to handle complaints in multiple operator situations. The standard also gives guidance for compensation and redress procedures.

This document can be applied to all types of postal service, both universal service and non-universal service, and by all types of postal organizations. It defines various types of complaints and establishes a methodology for handling complaints in order to improve the service given to postal users including persons with disabilities and older persons. It also gives guidance for complaints-handling processes to be set up by postal service providers in order to improve quality of service.

This document is applicable to the processes of the organization and consequently the quality management principles on which it is based can be deployed throughout the organization. The focus of this document is the achievement of ongoing improvement, measured through the satisfaction of customers and other interested parties.

It is important to note that the number of complaints received might not be related to the level of service given. A large number of complaints on the contrary could reflect the effectiveness of the postal operator's complaint handling process.

This document consists of guidance and recommendations and is neither intended for certification, regulatory or contractual use, nor as a guide to the implementation of EN ISO 9001.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 10002, *Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>
- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>

3.1

compensation

redress given to a complainant by a service provider

Note 1 to entry: Compensation rules are generally specified in the terms of business.

3.2

complainant

person, organization or its representative, making a complaint

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3.3

complaint

expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its products, services, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

Note 1 to entry: Organizations can have a more detailed definition of what comprises a complaint in their respective complaint handling approaches.

[SOURCE: EN 10002:2018]

3.4

complaints-handling process

process starting at the receipt of a complaint through a series of actions resulting in a final response or any necessary escalation

3.5

cross-border mail

mail distributed from one country to another country

[SOURCE: EN 14534:2016]

3.6

customer

natural or legal person having a business relationship with a postal operator

Note 1 to entry: A consumer who purchases postal services is a customer.

3.7

customer service

interaction of the organization with the user throughout the life cycle of a product or service

3.8

feedback

opinions, comments and expressions of interest in the products or services or the complaints-handling process

3.9

final response

communication by means of which the service provider informs a complainant of the results of any investigation caused by a complaint, and whether the complaint is considered to be justified or not

Note 1 to entry: A continued dialogue between the service provider and an unsatisfied customer, after the complainant has been informed about the results of the investigation in the final response, is considered a new complaint about complaint handling.

Note 2 to entry: Even if the complainant is still not satisfied with the content of the final response, the specific complaint is solved by the final response.

3.10

justified complaint

complaint regarding a subject for which the service provider, after investigation if necessary, recognizes that it may not have fulfilled its obligations in whole or in part

Note 1 to entry: Examples of the obligations of the service provider are its descriptions of products and prices, its general terms of business and its regulatory and legal requirements.

3.11**multiple operators**

carriage of mail that involves more than one operator from its introduction into the postal process to its delivery

3.12**postal item**

anything dispatched and/or to be delivered by a postal service provider

3.13**user**

natural or legal person benefiting from postal services

Note 1 to entry: A sender or recipient of a postal item is a user.

Note 2 to entry: The concept of user is wider than customer.

Note 3 to entry: The concept of user includes persons with disabilities and older persons.

4 Complaint handling - Guiding principles**4.1 General**

The overall reason to effectively manage, register and categorize complaints is to easily find information about opportunities for improvement of the quality of products, services and processes. When choosing activities for continual improvement, the organization should identify which causes of complaints that are the most important to start to deal with.

The total volume of complaints and the reasons for those complaints should not be taken as the sole measure of an organization's performance. Many organizations positively generate complaints from users, even in times of high service performance, to further drive service improvement. Comparing total complaint volumes can be misleading. Complaint volumes should also be reviewed against other factors, such as total volume of postal items.

Adherence to the guiding principles set out in 4.2 to 4.14 is recommended for delivering an effective complaint handling process.

4.2 Visibility

Information about how and where to complain about postal services should be well publicized to postal users.

4.3 Accessibility

A complaints-handling process should be easily accessible to all complainants and through a variety of complaint access channels, so that no complainant would be disadvantaged. Information should be made available on the details of making and resolving complaints. The complaints-handling process and supporting information should be easy to access, understand and use by the widest range of users.

Wherever possible, accessibility to the complaints-handling process should be free of specific charge. There shall be at least one free of specific charge access channel available to users who wish to contact an organization to make a complaint.

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4.4 Acceptability

A complaint can be accepted from the sender or the addressee of a postal item or service.

Complaints related to the postal service provision can also be accepted from third parties, authorized to act on behalf of senders or recipients.

General complaints made by third parties about things not related to specific postal items may also be accepted, even if they will not be classified in the complaints-handling system. Examples of such complaints are wrongly parked cars, noisy mail delivery personnel etc.

For cross-border and multiple operator handling see Clause 4.13.

4.5 Responsiveness

Where the complaint cannot be dealt with immediately, receipt of each complaint should be acknowledged to the complainant. On request complainants should be kept informed of the status of their complaint through the complaints-handling process, including when to expect the next step or the final response to their complaint.

4.6 Objectivity

Each complaint should be dealt with in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner through the complaints-handling process and according to the standard complaint handling procedures in place.

4.7 Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within the organization, and should be actively protected from disclosure to any other source (either internally or externally) unless the complainant expressly consents or requests for specific details to be disclosed.

4.8 User focused approach

The first goal of complaint handling is the complainant's satisfaction and the recovering of confidence in the postal service to engender long-term loyalty to the postal organization involved.

Postal organizations should take account of users' needs and expectations when designing and deploying complaint handling processes. Complaint handling systems should be open to user feedback, and should show commitment to helping the postal organization to resolve the root causes of complaints and to avoid them re-occurring.

4.9 Auditability

Postal organizations should have documented procedures regarding complaint handling. These procedures should be auditable, as and when required.

4.10 Continual improvement

The continual improvement of the overall quality of service is the main objective of the complaint handling system, and using the information from the complaint handling process to improve the overall quality of service should be a permanent objective of any postal organization.

Complaint handling processes should allow analysis of complaint causes.

Postal organizations' complaint handling systems should be flexible to allow modifications, in order to take into account changing technology, dynamic market conditions and changing user needs and expectations.

4.11 Conformity with national and international framework

Organizational or national rules for complaints-handling may be more detailed than the procedures outlined in this European Standard. Postal service organizations' complaint handling processes should be developed and deployed according to any existing national law.

4.12 Resolution of problem at local level

Responsibility for the reporting and resolution of the root cause of the complaint lies with the service-, product- or process-owner in the organization responsible for the specific service failure or product concerned.

Oral complaints that are solved 'on the spot' (outlet, distribution base or sorting centre) may not be recorded.

4.13 Complaints on postal items handled by multiple operators (cross border or multi-handled domestic mail)

The responsibility to handle a complaint is with the original operator, who is the contractor.

In the case of postal items being handled by multiple operators, any of the postal operators involved in the supply chain should accept a complaint made by the user. Agreement on who is responsible should be determined by procedures developed between multiple operators, but the responsibility for dealing with the complainant until there is a resolution or transfer of the management of the complaint to the right operator lies with the postal operator receiving the complaint.

If a postal operator receives a complaint where they have no part in the supply chain the complainant should be informed about appropriate referral channels if possible. Complaints that obviously do not refer to the postal operator that receives the complaint should not be accepted or counted in that organization complaint data.

4.14 Compensation to users

Users are entitled to make claims for compensation if they perceive that the postal organization has not met the product or service specification contained within the organization's general terms of business. The general terms of business should specify how, when and what level of compensation could be expected to be paid.

5 Complaint handling commitment

Postal organizations should be committed to effective and efficient complaints-handling and the analysis of complaints should contribute to the improvement of the organization's products, services and processes. It is particularly important that this is positively accepted and promoted by the postal organization's top management.

This commitment should be reflected in the definition, adoption and dissemination of policy and procedures for the resolution of complaints. The policy should be made available to users and other interested parties.

Management commitment should be shown by the provision of adequate resources, including training, and by continually following up and analysing the complaint figures and how these have led to the continual improvement of services, products and processes.

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All personnel in contact with complainants should treat the complainants in a courteous manner and promptly respond to their complaints, or direct them to the appropriate individual or service in the organization that is able to respond to the complaint. All personnel should also:

- be aware of their roles, responsibilities and authorities in respect of complaints,
- be aware of what procedures to follow and what information to give to complainants.

All employees of the organization should be informed of the organization's complaint handling procedures and be able to effectively direct the complainant towards the relevant complaint handling channels.

6 Complaint handling management

Postal organizations should plan and design an effective and efficient complaints-handling process in order to improve the quality of the products and services provided.

Postal organizations should also take into account (and deploy where possible) good practices of other organizations with regard to complaints-handling. The complaints-handling process should be linked to and aligned with other processes of the quality management strategy of the organization.

7 Operation of the complaints-handling process

7.1 Communication

Information concerning how and when to make a complaint should be made available to users.

The information should be in clear language (e.g. use well-constructed sentences, use commonly used vocabularies, and avoid jargon). Information and assistance in making a complaint should be provided in whatever language the services were offered in. Alternative formats, such as large print, Braille or audio (e.g. audible website) should be provided. Further examples of alternative formats can be found in Annex B. No complainant should be disadvantaged when wishing to make a complaint.

Annex B contains recommendations on how users can access information on the organization's complaint handling processes, plus suggested information to be communicated to users.

7.2 Access to complaint handling processes

It is important that users can actually make complaints through a range of appropriate access channels. Postal organizations should provide the means for any user to complain to the organization without difficulty. At the first point of contact, for every possible access channel, users should be able to request an alternative format that is accessible to their specific communication requirements.

Mobile postmen and postwomen, even if they are in contact with customers, may not be required to receipt and register complaints but they should inform customers on how to make a complaint and direct them to appropriate channels.

Annex B outlines recommended channels of access for users who wish to complain to a postal organization, plus recommendations on how the channels could work in practice.

7.3 Timescales for users to make complaints

The postal organization should define, and communicate to users, a maximum time limit for complaints to be made about postal products or services.

Complaints made to postal organizations shall be accepted between maximum and minimum time limits for complaints as appropriate for the different kinds of products or services.

The timescales for users to make complaints may vary depending on the type of complaint the user wishes to make. Different product or service failures will generate different maximum time limits for users to make complaints. These timescales should be made clear in the information about how to make a complaint. Users who request to communicate via an alternative format, shall not be disadvantaged due to delays incurred in providing that alternative format.

When setting timescales, other national and international regulations such as UPU regulations should be considered where appropriate.

7.4 Receipt of complaints

Upon receipt of a specific complaint it should be recorded with the necessary supporting information and a unique identifier.

Complaint handling personnel should ask the complainant about all facts relevant to the complaint.

The record of the initial complaint should identify the remedy sought by the complainant and any other detail necessary to assist effective handling of the complaint.

Annex C provides suggested complaint details that organizations should collect upon receipt of a complaint.

7.5 Classification of complaints

There are many different types of complaints that are received by postal organizations. As well as logging the complaint details, it also should be classified by its cause i.e. the type of problem the complainant is complaining about.

Complaints can be received on a single mail item or service failure or be a general dissatisfaction and could generate multiple complaints, which may or may not have the same cause.

Once a complaint has been accepted, postal organizations should ensure that the type(s) and cause(s) of each complaint can be recorded in a way allowing for later analysis and input to continuous improvement of the quality of products, services and processes.

Annex E contains suggested categorization and classification of types and causes of complaint.

7.6 Acknowledgement of complaints received

Receipt of each complaint should be acknowledged to the complainant in all cases where further enquiry or research is necessary; if possible in the same format the complaint has been made. Acknowledgement should be done as soon as possible but timescales will depend on the complaint channel used and operational capability. The complainant shall be informed about maximum time scales within which a response can be expected.

7.7 Tracking of complaints

The recorded complaint should be tracked from initial receipt through the entire process until the complaint is closed. An up-to-date status should be made available to the complainant upon specific request.

7.8 Investigation of complaints

Every reasonable effort should be made to investigate the relevant circumstances and the information surrounding a complaint. However, the level of investigation should be commensurate with the seriousness, frequency of occurrence and the severity of the complaint, and be related to the product or service involved.