



Quality of service provision to entrepreneurs in the Małopolska Region

Report was created under the project Małopolska Economic Observatory.

Małopolska Economic Observatory
Marshal Office of the Małopolska Region
Department of Economy and Information Society

Address:

ul. Basztowa 22, 31-156 Cracow

Correspondence address:

ul. Raławicka 56, 30-017 Cracow

tel. (012) 63 03 374, fax. (012) 63 03 558

e-mail: gospodarka@umwm.pl

www.gospodarka.obserwatoria.malopolska.pl



HUMAN CAPITAL
NATIONAL COHESION STRATEGY



EUROPEAN
SOCIAL FUND



The project cofinanced by the European Union from European Social Fund

At the turn of August and September 2009 selected municipal and commune offices of the Małopolska Region were subject to "Mystery Client" research aimed at assessment of standard of service provision to businessman in communes from the Małopolska Region.

CATI technique was applied for the research. The auditors telephoned the offices and introduced themselves as persons who are going to set up a business activity in the nearest future (dependent on auditor's gender activity concerned construction services - interiors finishing or sewing). The auditors warned their interlocutors that they are at the stage of making decision on setting up a business and the phone talk concerning proceedings and information about costs time required for completing the registration process is going to help them in making final decision. After such introduction the auditor asked for presentation of subsequent steps of procedure, advice concerning taxation and information about opportunity to acquire support for starting a business and for investments made in course of activity.

The auditors called offices and introduced themselves as persons who are going to set up a business activity in the nearest future (dependent on auditor's gender activity concerned construction services - interiors finishing or sewing). The auditors warned their interlocutors that they are at the stage of making decision on setting up a business and the phone talk concerning proceedings and information about costs time required for completing the registration process is going to help them in making final decision. After such introduction the auditor asked for presentation of subsequent steps of procedure, advice concerning taxation and information about opportunity to acquire support for starting a business and for investments made in course of activity.

Sample: research covered municipal and commune offices from the Małopolska Region selected on a random basis. 102 audits have been completed in total.

Final result from the research is evaluation of audited offices made according to two criteria: receipt of response to questions asked by the auditors in course of interviews and subjective evaluation made by auditors concerning so called "soft" features - communicativeness, engagement, politeness, eagerness to provide support in issues out of clerks' competence. The last of these aspects can be considered as element of engagement going beyond some stereotypic roles.

Main conclusions from the research

Conducted research revealed high standard of service provision to future businessmen in municipal and commune offices in relation to their key competences. There are no major

objections concerning quality of information about procedures of setting up a business activity provided by the offices or standard of servicing.

It must be noted that evaluation of quality of clerks' work is only arbitrary one due to lack of fixed procedures which could be a reference for step by step analysis. In this case lack of such procedures is a serious problem, as a result of which, scope and way of providing information differ from office to office.

Undoubtedly, one of the most common mistakes made by audited clerks is making unreasonable assumption that interlocutor knows much more about the issue than he or she does in fact. Therefore, gross of information, e.g. about necessity to visit Treasury Office or ZUS (Social Insurance Institution), is not even mentioned during talk. Moreover, clerks tend to perceive procedure of setting up a business activity, and as a consequence, to provide information about it, by reducing it to what has to be completed in the commune office only. As a result, if asked what to do in order to register a business activity, the clerks inform only about necessity to fill in an application in the office. It happens very often that interested person must ask further questions in order to get the information about other steps of procedure.

It is important that this research breaks some stereotypes concerning relation clerk-client, which are still present in society. It highlights that the best assessed element of service provision is politeness (average 8.8 on a scale from 0 to 10). Communicativeness and engagement received high grades as well. There were only a few cases when we had to deal with situations where auditor was treated like an intruder. Most of the clerks were helpful and full of patience in explaining subsequent issues mentioned by the auditor. The best confirmation for this is that in half of the offices auditors were spontaneously offered help in completing applications and searching for PKD [Polish Classification of Activities] codes (in response to auditor's request only three offices refused to help in searching for PKD codes). Moreover, half of the offices did not refuse to advise on choice of the most convenient taxation form, although from formal point of view it is out of their competences.

Unfortunately, audited clerks have little knowledge of opportunities to obtain financial support. The most frequent response to request concerning such support is that it is out of office's competence. Help offered by clerks in this field is usually limited to giving the name of institution which is able to provide required information, more rarely to submission of specific contact data (address / telephone / website).

There are no major differences between provision of services to potential businessmen in municipal and commune offices, however, there are two elements which include

remarkable variations. The first one is inclination to give advices - commune offices are definitely more likely to provide client with advice than municipal ones. The other one is knowledge about opportunities of obtaining support in course of business activity - in this case municipal offices are much more competent.

Considering results of analysis for particular offices it must be taken into account that they refer to single audits which cannot be a basis for general conclusions about quality of service provision to businessmen in each of the offices.