

## **ANALYTICAL REPORT** on analyzing telephone calls from citizens to court

10 courts where the research was carried out received **7455** incoming calls in a week from the citizens and state bodies. The average number of calls in a day is **142**, average number of inquiries in a day - **151**.

Appellate Court of Ivano-Frankivsk oblast received the minimum number of inquiries during the week (total number of inquiries from citizens - **179**, in average – **36** per day, from the state authorities – **83** per week). Kyiv Oblast Commercial Court received the maximum number (total number of inquiries from citizens and state bodies– **2758**, in average – **552** per day).

According to the data from Ukrtelecom phone communications service provider, the number of callers who tried to reach the courts at the numbers for public communication, but failed to do so, amounts up to **50%** of the total received court calls number.

### i. Dynamics of court calls during the week

Almost all courts except for Circuit Administrative Court of Kyiv and Zhovtnevy District Court of the city Lugansk received the biggest number of incoming calls on Monday (average by all courts – **25%** of calls in Monday). Activity of persons wishing to obtain information from the court by phone dropped by mid-week (Wednesday – 17.7% of calls). On Friday 4 of 10 courts registered the smallest number of phone calls, in 5 courts Friday is next to the last day by court enquiries amount.

### ii. Dynamics of court calls during the week

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## **2) Calls processing. Human resources**

### i. Total number of employees answering to phone enquiries

According to the data provided by courts themselves, total number of persons answering to phone enquiries differs from court to court. It ranges from **2** employees in Circuit Administrative Court of Kyiv to **51** employee in Zaporizhya Oblast Court of Appeal and **24** employees in Chornobayivski rayon court of Cherkassy oblast (all of them are court staff). In the court having the greatest number of enquiries **10** (Kyiv City Court of Appeal) and **25** court staff employees (Kyiv Oblast Commercial Court) respond to phone calls.

### ii. Which employees respond to phone enquiries

The analysis showed that all employees including Chief Judges respond to phone enquiries.

Most calls are processed by the specialists of citizens' reception departments/information centers, judges' assistants, court hearings secretaries, secretaries and chief secretaries of the court. A sufficient portion of calls is responded by deputy Chief Judges and court managers, assistants to Chief Judges and deputy Chief Judges, Chief Judge reception desk employees.

### iii. Employees' workload on processing phone calls.

According to questionnaires filled in by court employees who directly respond to incoming calls they process from **6** to **45** enquiries a day.

According to the data by 10 interviewed court managers a court employee spends approximately 4 minutes on each call.

In average the responsible employees spend on citizens' phone enquiries from **24** minutes to **3** hours a day (from **8.5** to **63** man-hours per month). The average phone enquiries processing indicator in all 10 courts is in average **1** hour **20** minutes per day (over **25** man-hours per month).

Within the court in general from **4** to **37** man-hours per month are spent for citizens' calls (in average – **10** man-hours per month), from 84 to **777** man-hours per month (in average – **209** л man-hours per month).

Thus a court spends at least **half** of the working day of one specialist on phone responses only. Generally a court in average spends for this activity the resources of at least **1.2** court employees. At most – the resources of **4.6** court employees.

It should be taken to account that the data were calculated by the results of questionnaires provided by courts. Actually the number of employees handling citizens' calls exceeded by **30-40%** the number of employees who filled in questionnaires within this Project.

### **3) Technical capabilities of courts**

In most of investigated courts there are the so-called mini Automated Telephone Switches allowing to perform basic functions on calls redirecting to other speaker.

According to the data by court managers in average 2-3 phone numbers are notified to citizens. At the same time the number of lines to which citizens' call is several times higher. Based on the enquiries content analysis we may suggest that many numbers of the persons responsible for certain issues are provided to the callers by persons using generally accessible phone calls.

Automatic answering machine is used only by one court in the activities of only one department – public relations service.

### **4) Callers who phone to court**

Most persons calling to court are ordinary citizens without any powers of authority (parties, representatives of the parties). Among the courts which provided structured information on phone enquiries from state bodies, the number of such enquiries is in average **18%** of total number of enquiries. It should be taken into account that the share of one of four courts the data of which was analyzed amounted to **46%** of state bodies phone calls. In other courts these enquiries amounted to **4%, 5% and 17%**.

### **5) Citizens' information needs**

One of the principal research methods was content-analysis of the citizens' phone enquiries aimed to identify the most typical enquiries and subsequently optimize the provision of information regarding such enquiries to citizens.

- i. Enquiries on specific court cases.** Enquiries on specific court cases were the most numerous category of phone enquiries. They were more than **56%** of all phone enquiries by citizens.

Within this category the most frequent enquiries dealt with case **status** and **hearings date and time** (each question –**28%** of total number of enquiries within the category). Enquiries on case materials receiving (**20%**) and name, patronymic and family name of the judge who considered the case (**16%**) followed. In **5%** enquiries the citizens informed that they could not attend a hearing, and in **3%** of events the callers asked what they should bring with them to be admitted to participation in court hearings.

- ii. General information enquiries.** Almost **30%** of all phone enquiries to the researched courts were general court information enquiries.

Among them **26%** of caller asked judge's secretary phone number, **20%** - case management department phone, **15%** of enquiries in the category dealt with the issues on state duty payment; **13%**

- court operations mode; **12%** - judge's phone and **14%** of enquiries asked to notify the court address and explain how to get there.

**iii. Other enquiries.** Court employees who filled in the questionnaires had the possibility to indicate other types of enquiries which were not included in the first two categories but took place during the research. Total number of them was 10.1% of all enquiries.

**iv. Unanswered enquiries.** In average approximately 8% of enquiries received by courts during the research were not answered due to certain reasons (employees not entitled to provide information, no possibility etc.). This number was calculated and provided by court employees who filled in the respective forms.

## **I. Main problems identified during the research and ways to solve them**

### **1) Thousand of citizens cannot obtain the information they need promptly and in full.**

In other words citizens' needs in the information on court proceedings and court operations in general are not satisfied in full. We came to this conclusion having analyzed phone communications service provider - about **50%** of callers do not reach the court, and data by court staff - **8%** of phone calls are left unanswered.

These statistics are deteriorated by the absence of professional phone communications training of court employees who communicate with external communities, lack of necessary equipment which facilitate and accelerates information provision process. Having no doubts as to the employees' professionalism in legal matters, it should be noted, however, that the same questions by citizens are answered by 5-25 employees in one court, who occupy different positions and have other principal duties in addition to phone communication with citizens, and this fact confirms that there are problems regarding possibility to provide full information on the matter in which the caller is interested.

As the result in average **2 thousand** of calls per month remain unanswered as the person failed to reach the court by phone due to certain reasons, more than **4 thousand** of calls are answered mainly by unprepared employees (except for courts where information centers are created). In connection with this the level of actual access to the judiciary and public trust in courts deteriorates.

Possible ways to solve the problem

- Implementation of so-called call centers on the level of separate courts, regions and even jurisdictions. A caller may always phone to such call center and get the desired result. If all operators are busy the caller will be told about that (to avoid the possibility of failing to reach the court by phone). A citizen's enquiry will be promptly answered if it falls within the court's terms of reference and the employee is entitled to provide a response. Otherwise the caller will be politely notified thereof.

- The citizens would like to obtain the information from other sources. For example, they can enter case number at the court's web site and obtain case status data online. But they rarely know about this option. The citizens should be automatically notified by phone on other sources from which they can obtain information faster, easier and cheaper than by phone.

- Implementation of the technology of case information obtaining by phone menu. Thus, for example, a case party may enter unique case number and receive case status information in voice mode or by message sent to his/her cell phone.

- Professional development of operators answering citizens' phone calls (see below).

### **2) Court employees are overloaded with the work that is not typical for them**

Court employees perform a great deal of work on citizens' phone calls processing. In average a court spends over **209** man-hours per months (actually over **280**).

From **3** to **40** persons, depending on the court, are engaged in phone communications with citizens. Ha In average **1.2-1.6** of full working day of one employee is spent on citizens' phone calls.

But due to the absence of professional phone communications training, workload with other duties, lack of phone calls equipment and software most of court employees are burdened with the duties not typical for them.

Possible solutions of the problem

- Based on the citizens' enquiries analysis and drawing of the court phone communications map – a scheme providing the answer to the question what would a caller hear/receive having applied to court with a certain question. Answers to typical general questions of the callers, such as court address, how to get to the court, working hours (**8.1%** of enquiries of all phone calls, in average – **12** similar enquiries a day); state duties payment details (**4.3%**); procedure of court decision copy issue (**2.5%**) etc. may be easily automated using IVR technology. A caller would press a certain button and get a reply at once and without the assistance from a court employee. Replies to other enquiries may be optimized if an operator would use automated case management system of the court.
- Specialization of court staff, professional development of external public phone communications operators. One professional operator whose working place is equipped with a computer having access to the Internet, appropriate software, headphones and microphone etc. will be able to substitute several court employees who respond to citizens' enquiries in between fulfilling their principal job responsibilities. Resources already being spent by court for phone communications would allow to initiate staff training and specialization.
- Using other channels of distributing replies to most frequent phone enquiries of citizens. Using the capacities of web sites (court, SJA, regional information portals etc.), preparing brochures on topics in which the citizens are most interested, placement of the necessary information on the court information stand, publicizing of up-to-date information in the media etc.

### **3) No single approach to information provision by phone**

There are certain doubts as to the possibility of a caller's identity check by a court employee. Court employees willingly shared their experience of checking a phone speaker. Even though such techniques are perceived in a rather skeptical mode, there is obvious need to unify approaches to the information that may be provided by courts through phone communications and forms of providing thereof.

Possible solutions of the problem

- Systematization of the citizens' phone enquiries, development by the working group by coordination of the State Judicial Administration of Ukraine of methodology guidelines for court staff (operators) regarding response to external public phone enquiries.