


Working with external experts - experience from environmental audits

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Example 1 - Packaging waste audit

Objective of the audit:

To identify whether the state's activities support the collection and recovery of packaging waste in order to encourage packaging undertakings (persons who package goods, import or sell packaged goods) to recover as much packaging waste as possible

Role of external expert:

To commission an opinion poll to investigate awareness of residents of sorting packaging waste and their habits.

Well respected market research company (Turu-uuringute AS) was chosen to carry out poll and analyse results.

Omnibuss 1000 survey

- Wide sample – 1000 people representing cross-section of population
- General poll is formed from separate surveys and questions
- Less expensive when commissioning separate survey
- Regular survey – 11 times a year
- Relatively quick

Execution of survey

- Survey had 14 questions. Questions were prepared by audit team and later reviewed with external experts.
- Opinion poll and analysis of results were conducted within 2 months. Report consisted of analytical text, graphics and data tables.

Questions from survey (example 1)

1. Based on your knowledge which waste from following list can be disposed for free? Several choices are allowed.
 - Municipal waste (non-hazardous waste)
 - Packaging waste (e.g. Plastic and cardboard boxes and cups, plastic bags, glass jars, shampoo bottles)
 - Deposit packaging bottles
 - Hazardous waste
 - Waste electrical and electronic equipment
 - Tyres
 - End-of-life vehicle
 - Construction waste
 - Batteries and accumulators
 - Furniture
 - Food waste
 - Garden waste
 - Nothing from above-mentioned
 - *I don't know*

Questions from survey (example 2)

3. Where do you usually take your separately collected packaging waste? Several choices are allowed.

- Dump into municipal waste
- To public packaging container
- To collection point of packaging subject to deposit/automatic machine
- To waste plant
- I use green and yellow plastic bag service to collect packaging waste
- I burn
- Other (please specify):
- I don't collect packaging waste separately
- *I don't know*

Positive experience

- External expert provided full service (from reviewing questions to analysing results)
- Results were very informative and readily usable (report consisted of analytical text, graphics and data tables)
- Results widely accepted due to wide sample representing whole population

What to consider?

- Quality comes with the cost
 - ✓ Audit team must consider the required level of comprehensiveness and representativeness of survey
 - ✓ Preparation by NAO is crucial (understanding of topic, quality of questions)
- Results were maybe too informative in context of particular audit

Packaging waste audit – survey among colleagues

- Audit team carried out survey within staff of NAO Estonia.
- It's objective was to test usability of collection network of packaging waste.
- It benefited both sides:
 - Audit team gained valuable feedback and examples from real life (photos!).
 - Members of NAO gained better understanding of packaging waste topic.

Packaging waste audit – feedback from colleagues



Packaging waste audit – more feedback...



Example 2 – lessons from water infrastructure audit

- In 2013 NAO Estonia conducted audit “Sustainability of the state developed drinking water and waste water infrastructure and its impact on achieving environmental goals”
- External expert was asked to analyse sustainability of price of water service.
- Benefits of external expert were smaller than initially planned.

Lessons:

- Ensure you have plenty of time (NB! commitments of expert)
- Required level of knowledge within audit team?
- Involving expert to discussion of audit results

Thank you!

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More information about NAO Estonia environmental audits:
<http://www.riigikontroll.ee/tabid/206/Area/15/language/en-US/Default.aspx>