

## SUMMARY OF THE CUSTOMER SURVEY ON INTERCOMPARISON SERVICES

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Prof test SYKE (Finnish Environment Institute SYKE, Finland) conducted a customer satisfaction survey of 47 participants in January 2016. The overall feedback on the Prof test SYKE intercomparison services was mainly satisfactory and the respondents share the feeling that participation in the intercomparisons has been enhancing the measurement's quality control. In the future the respondents suggested to have intercomparisons eg. for AOX compounds and also suggestions about the sample concentrations were made (ammonium nitrogen).

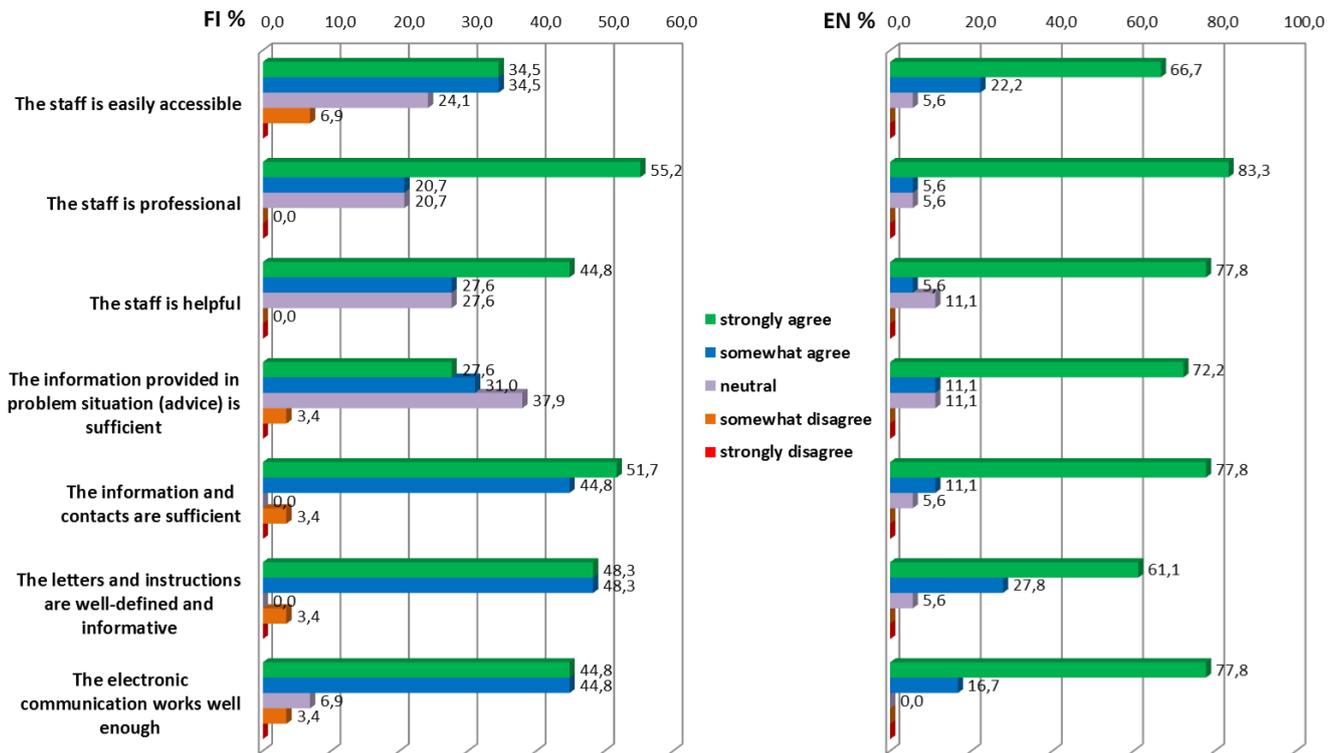
Out of the respondents, 29 were domestic and 18 were from outside Finland. The respondents represented mainly industry (32 % of the respondents) and private companies (40 % of the respondents). Altogether 17 % of the non-Finnish respondents represented universities and 17 % of all the respondents represented public government. Research institutes and other areas of function as eg. municipal laboratories were represented in total by 6 % of the respondents.

Most of the domestic respondents have been participating in Prof test SYKE proficiency tests for a long time, at least since 2006. At least from 2010 onwards, four out of five foreign respondents have been participating in tests. Altogether 68 % of the respondents have accredited their methods of analysis, 30 % have accredited methods for sampling and 11 % have accredited field measurements. Most of the respondents have non-accredited methods of analysis (79 %) and methods for sampling (64 %), the latter especially valid for domestic respondents (79 %). Furthermore, especially domestic respondents (52 %) have non-accredited methods for field measurements, whereas 22 % of the foreign respondents have those.

Chemical-physical analyses are done by most of the respondents (96 % in total) and nearly half conduct microbiological analyses (40 %). One third of the respondents conduct field measurements (34 %). The most common sample matrices are water, sludge, soil and sediment, also biofuels are analysed by 34 % of all the respondents. Additionally the participants reported many other sample types, eg. waste and side products as well as biota.

According to the feedback about the customer service, there have been minor problems with the accessibility of the staff (Figure 1). Also some need of improvement is needed in the guidance in problematic situations, communication and instructions. Overall satisfactory on the given information and instructions has been increasing compared to the previous customer satisfaction questionnaire on 2010. Some respondents suggested an electronic client interface having basic information already available. Just recently, after the questionnaire, Prof test SYKE has introduced a client interface Prof testWEB and welcomes customers to use it in future. Overall the respondents were satisfied with the total number of organized proficiency tests yearly as well as the number of samples and measurands. Nevertheless, suggestions were made for eg. sample sizes and intercomparisons for new materials, like recycled material (compost). The satisfaction on the sample concentrations was mainly high, but higher concentrations of ammonium nitrogen in waste and domestic waters were requested. The preparation and testing of the samples was mainly considered to be reliable.

The general satisfactory on the preliminary results is high. The preliminary results arrive in time, are well-defined and also sufficiently informative. Some positive feedback was given on shortened delivery time for the preliminary results. Mostly the respondents find the used assigned value reliable (88 % of the respondents) and the used total standard deviation for proficiency assessment suitable (79 % of the respondents).



**Figure 1** Given feedback (percentages) on the customer service and information from the provider (FI: domestic respondents, EN: foreign respondents).

The final report was in general considered well-defined (88 % of the respondents) as well as sufficiently informative (87 % of the respondents). The schedule for the publishing the final report received more positive feedback this year than on 2010. Most of the respondents (88 %) consider the publishing schedule adequate. Feedback from the domestic respondents indicates that the Finnish final reports are supported. Further, the non-Finnish respondents are mainly satisfied with the Finnish final report when the summary and figures are in English. According to these responds, Proftest SYKE will maintain the current policy having the final report in Finnish when > 90 % of the participants are domestic.

The pricing policy received mainly satisfactory feedback although also some unsatisfactory feedback was given on the price versus benefit as well as on the breakdown of costs. Most of the domestic respondents (93 %) consider the participation in the Proftest SYKE proficiency tests has improved the quality of their measurements. The percentage of the “Strongly agree” responses has increased since 2010. Also the foreign respondents share the similar opinion (72 %).The respondents gave wide range of suggestions for the future proficiency tests and intercomparison studies. Proftest SYKE will carefully review those and consider the suitable ones when developing the activities in the future.

Proftest SYKE thanks warmly all the respondents for the cooperation. Among the respondents there was a lottery, separately for the domestic and foreign respondents. The fortunate winners were Nina Rosenback-Holmström from Åland, Finland winning the book “*Suomen uhanalaiset kasvit*” (*Endangered plants in Finland*) and Maaris Nuutre from Estonia winning the book “*The Gulf of Finland*”. The winners of the drawing are warmly congratulated!