

Translating and implementing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in Public Prosecution Offices

Organisation

Name	Public Prosecution Office Innsbruck
Country	Austria
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Year	2012
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Type of organisation	Government ministry
Function of organisation	General public services
Level of organisation	Central government

Description

Organisation of judicial authorities has a fundamental effect on how state authorities function as well as the citizens' trust in them. Public prosecution offices have also the role of evaluating and improving the citizens' orientations and how they deal with justice-seeking citizens. As a part of judicial governance, extensive improvement initiatives based on principles of leadership quality and continuous improvement should be carried out.

The CAF self-assessment highlights the connection between organisational behaviour and its effects, important requirement for an effectively operating public prosecution office. It means, for example, optimizing processes and staff placement. Therefore, an innovation program was introduced for the first time from September to November 2012 at the Public Prosecution Office Innsbruck (Austria) and repeated then in February 2014 and November 2016.

The objectives of the Quality Assessment of the Public Prosecution Office Innsbruck were:

- the improvement of its services by means of an assessment based on sectorial criteria and international experiences
- the application of improvement measures where the need for action is a priority
- the integration of different quality improvement initiatives into the organization's core business
- the facilitation of international benchmarking or benchlearning and exchange of experience between organisations within that sector

The process of preparing and applying the self-assessment involved the public prosecutors, the distinct prosecutors and the clerical staff using different methods and instruments.

The first step consisted in the presentation of the project to the participants together with an understanding of the CAF philosophy.

The next step was to adapt the methodology to the Public Prosecution Office and to define the approaches to assessing and choosing the enabler criteria. A participative approach was used so that all groups of employees could be included in the process, using different methods and instruments. Enabler criteria were described from self-descriptions in workshops with public prosecutors, management, clerical staff and district prosecutors, with the results being defined by the management of the authority and jointly evaluated

at the end. Subjective and objective indicators regarding the result criteria were defined by the leadership of the authority to carry out an extensive quality assessment of the public prosecution office's performance. According to the PDCA cycle, a simplified, situation-specific, five step rating system for "enablers" and "results" (as well as their importance for the organization) was implemented.

Innovative approaches

For the creation of the common definition of measures of quality improvement, the Public Office Innsbruck was compared with the Public Prosecution Office Bozen/Bolzano. The Office initiated the pilot project in 2004 with the aim of improving the organisation, the quality of the services, establishing a culture of information, communication, dialogue and assessing the quality in a target group-oriented manner from the citizens' and other public administrations' perspectives. This innovative approach allowed for benchlearning, namely the process of learning from each other.

Innovation projects, implemented starting at the end of 2012 and continuously checked and updated periodically, were the following:

- Opinion box
- Guidelines for law office employees
- Guidelines for district prosecutors
- Employee anonymous quantitative survey
- Ascertaining strategic partners
- Public relations
- Knowledge management
- Process description and innovation concept
- Organisation chart
- Survey
- Mission/vision statement
- Opinion box

Results and outcomes

To finalise and to evaluate the overall CAF projects, all employees of the Public Prosecution Office Innsbruck were administered a survey on the "Quality improvement after the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)". Overall, public prosecutors and district prosecutors stated that they had been adequately informed about the CAF project and that the work stages were transparent. As for the project's effects on quality improvement, a high percentage of all participant groups responded that they don't know. One third of public prosecutors and the majority of district prosecutors agreed instead that the project led to an increase in quality whereas office clerks were less decisive. As for the increase in quality for parties, counsel and other stakeholders, the public prosecutors displayed the highest approval rate.

The evaluation of the innovation program showed a comparatively homogenous rating from all participant groups. Responses as to whether suggestions were taken into consideration or employees were able to identify with the innovation program were more varied. Approximately 45% of employees agreed that the CAF program was challenging and almost 50% were satisfied with the procedure of the program and stated that their expectations were fulfilled. Moreover, the majority of the employees who have worked in the office for more than five years stated that the innovation program was checked regularly.

The CAF project's overall evaluation can be described as good and for many public prosecutors as being very good. The public prosecutors' assessment of the external experts' work was defined very good whereas almost the majority of the participants described it as good. Furthermore, the workload in the CAF project was assessed as "appropriate".

The responses as to whether employees would repeat the CAF project in their organisational units were instead more varied: public prosecutors were in agreement or in strong agreement, district prosecutors agreed and disagreed in equal shares while the majority of the clerical staff disagreed with a repetition of the CAF program. In conclusion, none of the employees who participated in the evaluation suggested any changes to the CAF project.

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Further information

The translation of the CAF model into the Public Prosecution Office was scientifically supported by the Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism at the University of Innsbruck in collaboration with the Institute of Public Management at Eurac Research Bozen/Bolzano (Italy).

Documentation on the CAF quality assessment can be found in Bernhart, J., Loderbauer, B. & Promberger, K. (2020). Translating and implementing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in public prosecution offices. In T. Prorok & P. Parzer (Eds.), *Transforming Public Administration with CAF*. Neuer Wissenschaftlicher Verlag.



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