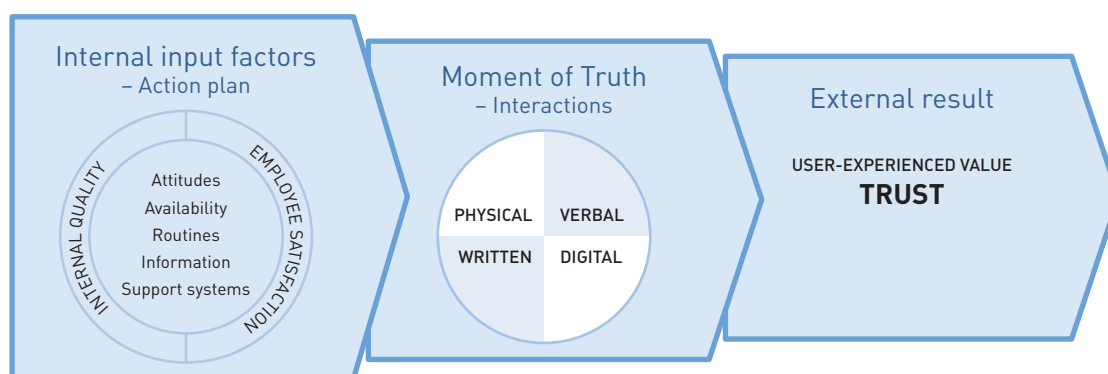




DOMSTOL
ADMINISTRASJONEN

Action plan for development of services at the courts and the Norwegian Courts Administration

The Moment of Truth



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Introduction

This is an action plan for development of services at the courts and the Norwegian Courts Administration (NCA).

The objective of the action plan is to ensure that:

- The courts and the NCA provide good and professional service in accordance with the expectations of the society
- The action plan supports dignified hearings and strengthens the general public's confidence in the Norwegian legal system

The service expectations in the society are becoming higher and higher. This is due both to higher expectations among the users of public services and to a growing demand for more efficient public administration. The courts and the NCA are not exempt from these expectations. The digital developments taking place in the society at large will also have an impact on the development of services in the courts.

The intention behind the action plan is to accommodate the society's service expectations. Hopefully, the plan will also motivate and inspire the courts and the NCA to continue the good service development during the coming years as well.

The general public has high confidence in the courts. A key factor in the users' image of the courts is their experience when interacting with the employees of the courts. It is very important to ensure everyone is handled in a good and professional manner at the courts. In order for the society to maintain high confidence in the courts in the future as well, the service work must be incorporated into the services provided by the courts in a systematic manner. The action plan is called The Moment of Truth precisely because the experience of receiving good service is created in the specific interactions between the users and employees of the courts:

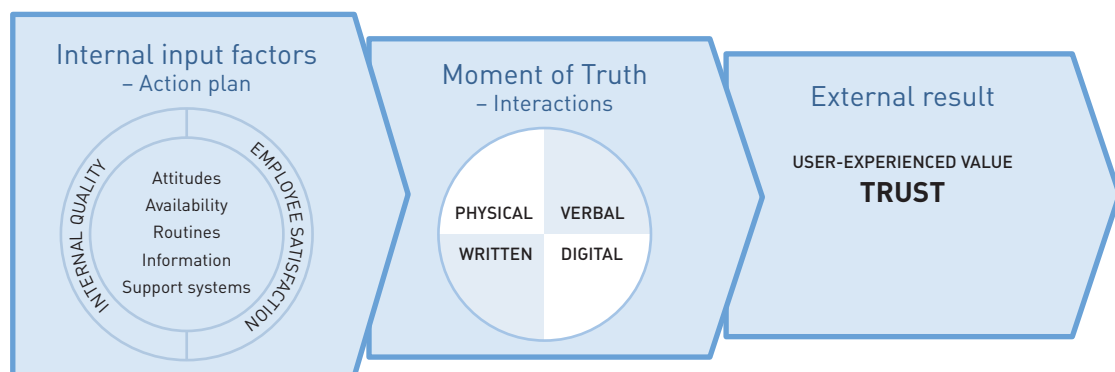


Fig.: Illustration showing how the action plan for service development may contribute to good interactions between employees and users. The illustration is inspired by *A model for modern provision of services* from the book by Andreassen, T.W, Lervik-Olsen L. (2015). *Service og innovasjon. Fagbokforlaget*.

One working group from the courts and one from the NCA developed the action plan in 2015. The starting point for the working groups was the previous service strategy from 2005, and they based their work on the service work already performed in the courts. There was a considerable effort to obtain and analyse the background material in order to gain an understanding of the needs of the users. New surveys were also used to supplement the available material.

The result of all this work is the action plan for service development that you are reading right now. The action plan consists of several action items. Every action item includes a description of the objective, the need and proposed measures for the courts and the NCA. Happy reading!

Action items in common for the courts

ACTION ITEM	Attitude awareness work – service-minded approach	
OBJECTIVE	Employees of the courts and the Norwegian Courts Administration shall provide professional service of high quality and serve as good representatives of the courts	
NEED	User surveys in the courts and talks with court presidents emphasise the importance of maintaining a focus on attitudes and having a service-minded approach to the work performed in the courts. Professional service in combination with good attitudes are important to ensure the society maintains high confidence in the courts in the future as well. A good internal working environment is essential to ensure successful service work. A good attitude among all employees of the courts is important – whether it be the person who answers inquiries at the reception counter, or the conduct of the engineer and the judge vis-à-vis the parties, witnesses, participants and others present in the court. Showing respect is highly valued by both court presidents and users of the courts. Acting in a dignified, respectful and proper manner create confidence in the court process. The presidents of the land consolidation courts emphasise that they want central service training measures for new first line employees.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	■ Integrate awareness work in the courts' governing documents, performance appraisal talks and recruitment processes ■ Meetings with collaborators and user groups should have a service-minded approach ■ Initiate measures that focus on improving different interactions with users ■ Implement positive working environment measures at the courts	■ Develop central service concepts to strengthen the attitude awareness work in the courts ■ Develop competence measures for new first line employees at the land consolidation courts ■ Develop tools for court presidents in order to maintain a continuous focus on attitudes in the courts

ACTION ITEM	Lay judges	
OBJECTIVE	Good safeguarding of lay judges	
NEED	The lay judges need more and better information on the assignment and on the legal system. Lay judges have stated that they sometimes have found it difficult to understand terms and phrases used in court. The lay judges want to communicate more easily and electronically with the courts.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Information to lay judges ■ Send out information to new lay judges ■ Conduct information meetings/courses for new lay judges ■ The employees of the courts should familiarise themselves with the information available on the Intranet and domstol.no, to allow them to present it to the lay judges Follow-up of lay judges ■ The courts are encouraged to start using «Veileder for ivaretagelse av meddommere i særlig belastede saker» and incorporate it into their routines. The guideline is aimed at the administrators and shows which measures may be implemented to safeguard lay judges in larger criminal cases. Guideline ■ The courts should prepare routines for the employees of the courts for how best to safeguard the lay judges before, during and after the court hearings	Information to lay judges ■ Structure and make existing information on lay judges more easily available for the courts ■ Prepare an information packet for new lay judges in the regular courts and in the land consolidation courts ■ Establish scheme for regular information meetings/courses for new lay judges in the regular courts and in the land consolidation courts Digitising ■ Develop systems for SMS notification of lay judges (postponement of cases, reminders regarding attendance, etc.) ■ Facilitate electronic communication with the lay judges ■ Develop info app for the lay judges (ref. witness app) ■ Prepare e-learning for new lay judges. The training must function as a basic training in how our legal system functions ■ Make the website for lay judges on domstol.no more user-friendly (structure, language, contents) Practical considerations ■ Focus on lay judges should be part of the introductory programme for judges in order to establish a common attitude regarding how the courts may safeguard the lay judges in the best possible manner

ACTION ITEM	Interpreters	
OBJECTIVE	Proper and due process for defendants, aggrieved parties, witnesses and others in need of interpretation in court	
NEED	Due to increased internationalisation, there is a growing demand for interpreters in court. The increased demand entails that the courts in general need good systems with an overview of available and qualified interpreters to facilitate more efficient ordering of interpreters. Internally, the courts must have good routines both for ordering of qualified interpreters and for facilitation of good working conditions for the interpreters. Competent interpreters with good working conditions is important to ensure efficient court proceedings, and requires that the courts handle this in a professional manner. This applies both in terms of good ordering competence among the case handlers, interaction with the judges in court and working conditions that make simultaneous interpretation via headsets possible. Joint guidelines must be established for how to handle incidents that render an interpreter unable to continue as an interpreter, or where the qualifications may be questionable. The responsibility for and follow-up of the Interpreter Register in Lovisa should be placed centrally within the NCA. The register should be integrated with IMDi's (Directorate of Integration and Diversity's) public interpreter portal, which will ensure a common approach to qualification requirements and any disqualification of interpreters.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Practical considerations ■ Training of judges and parties in use of interpreters ■ Good interpreting facilities in the courtrooms - facilitate use of relevant interpreting equipment - facilitation to allow several interpreters to work together and have good working conditions ■ Prepare local guidelines and routines for ordering and facilitation of the interpreters' working conditions	Practical considerations ■ Training of judges and parties in use of interpreters in connection with the Introductory programme for judges and any regional judge meetings ■ Standardise the judges' introduction when interpreters are used ■ Good interpreting facilities in the courtrooms - establish common standards for what constitutes appropriate equipment

	Ordering of interpreters ■ Develop good ordering competence among the case handlers ■ Correct number of interpreters based on the length and scope of the cases Follow-up of interpreters ■ Establish an internal procedure for follow-up of interpreters who do not comply with the qualification requirements	Digitasing ■ Include the interpreters in the “Ak-tørportalen” to ensure they are granted access to relevant documents and submission of electronic fees. ■ Develop electronic ordering systems for interpreters ■ Prepare guidelines that are adapted to electronic ordering Interpreter Register ■ Tidy up the interpreter categories in Lovisa to ensure the courts use the same classification as Tolkeportalen (the Norwegian National Register of Interpreters) ■ The Interpreter Register in Lovisa must be integrated with the Norwegian National Register of Interpreters Follow-up of interpreters ■ Establish a complaints scheme for interpreters ■ Establish a legal basis for disqualification of interpreters who do not comply with the qualification requirements
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ACTION ITEM	Safeguarding of witnesses	
OBJECTIVE:	Good safeguarding of witnesses	
NEED	Witnesses need both practical facilitation, good information and less waiting time at the courts. Witnesses need good safeguarding through shielding upon arrival at the courts, while waiting and when they leave the courts. It is necessary to reduce the waiting period for witnesses and to provide facilitation while they wait. 60% of the witnesses wait up to two hours, while 10% wait three hours or more.¹ Witnesses need more and better information, as well as correct information at the right time.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Information: ■ Easily accessible information on the courts' own websites and on information monitors in the courts. Inform about facilities, e.g. free Wi-Fi, beverages, food, parking and any facilities in the vicinity of the courts Reduce the waiting time: ■ Planning meetings are recommended for larger criminal cases ■ Active use of schedules ■ Reduction of waiting time for witnesses as a topic in regular meetings with prosecutors/attorneys Manage the waiting time: ■ Establish routines for notification of delays ■ Judges must make sure prosecutors/attorneys notify the witness support of delays to allow the witness support in turn to notify the witnesses in the case (and any others in the waiting area) ■ Offer facilities at the courts: Wi-Fi, beverages, food, parking	Information: ■ Prepare information as part of the attitude awareness effort ■ Develop and market measures for witnesses via websites, app, social media, Lovisa templates, meetings, etc. ■ Initiate collaboration within the justice sector for safeguarding of witnesses Reduce the waiting time: ■ Attitude awareness work to ensure the professional participants maintain focus on the witnesses' need for less waiting time Manage the waiting time: ■ Develop systems for notification of waiting time, e.g. SMS

¹ Witness Survey 2012

	Shielding: ■ Make physical adaptations at the courts to ensure the courts will have several separate waiting areas ■ Establish routines at the courts to ensure prosecutors/attorneys notify the courts of the needs of the witnesses. See "<u>Erfaringsbanken</u>" (experience data bank) for good routines for this ■ Use the witness support scheme for assistance with shielding of witnesses Witness support: ■ Continued focus on quality assurance of own witness support scheme, including marketing of witness support to prosecutors/attorneys locally (e.g. possibility of shielding)	Shielding: ■ In case of new buildings/ rebuilding/relocation, the need of the witnesses for shielding should be emphasised ■ Attitude awareness measures among the professional participants in order to be aware of the need of the witnesses for shielding Witness support: ■ Continued focus on quality assurance and further development of the witness support scheme in Norwegian courts
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ACTION ITEM	Media	
OBJECTIVE	Better facilitation for media and openness in the courts will increase the knowledge of the judicial world and help ensure good confidence in the courts	
NEED	The media has clear expectations regarding both openness in the courtroom, access to evidence and practical facilitation in and outside of the courtroom. For the courts, the media constitutes the most important channel for information to the general public. Openness and information on cases at the courts are important elements in the values of the courts. In some cases of great public interest, the media has even higher expectations and further need of facilitation at the courts. In a time when the media may report directly from the courtroom, good preparations and routines are required to ensure the courts will be able to safeguard various different practical needs and issues. The judges' media handbook provides recommended guidelines for how to practise public access to information. In order for the courts to be the subject of high confidence in the future as well, it will be important for the courts to interact with the media in a good and professional manner. In a service perspective, there is a need for certain practical routines concerning more public access to information to ensure this issue to a greater extent is handled in the same manner by the courts. This will ensure more predictability for the media.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Practical facilitation ■ It is recommended that the courts safeguard facilitation for the media in and around the courtrooms ■ The courts are encouraged to publish indictments and judgments on an electronic media website ■ The land consolidation courts are encouraged to publish key decisions on their own website Preparation of cases which will be the subject of considerable public interest ■ Use the checklist for court cases subject to considerable media interest: http://intranett/Praktisk/Of-fentlighet-og-media/Handte-re-media/ Knowledge regarding the rules for public access ■ Enhancement of competence relating to rules regarding public access ■ Good knowledge regarding the regulatory requirements relating to public access. See recommendations in The Judges' Media Handbook	Practical facilitation ■ It is recommended that the NCA prepare a model for how the land consolidation courts are to publish decisions on the Internet Preparation of cases which will be the subject of considerable public interest ■ Highlight what services the NCA may provide related to cases of considerable interest to the media ■ It is recommended that the NCA keep the guidelines «Håndtere media» (Handle the media) on the Intranet up to date ■ Further develop the example overview of various practical considerations for planning of large criminal cases Knowledge regarding the rules for public access ■ Work to ensure the courts to a greater extent practise the rules regarding public access vis-à-vis the press in the same manner ■ Continue with competence measures relating to the public access rules

ACTION ITEM	Pupils and students	
OBJECTIVE	Good information and safeguarding of school classes	
NEED	Openness is required regarding the activities of the courts, and the courts also have an obligation to provide information as part of our social responsibility. The activities of the courts are included in the curriculum on both the lower secondary school level and the upper secondary school level. By facilitating for school classes, we may contribute in a helpful manner to ensure coming generations will be better informed regarding the courts' tasks and role in the society at large.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Information to the schools ■ It is recommended that the courts send information circulars to relevant schools in the judicial district regarding the services that the courts may provide for the schools. In addition, the courts refer to the information and proposal for school assignments related to the judicial system which are available for the schools on domstol.no. The schemes there include role play, quiz, discussion topics and explanation of terms, etc. ■ Update the courts' websites with information on the services provided by the courts and with reference to the information that is available on domstol.no Services for the schools ■ Insofar as possible, all courts should give school classes an opportunity to follow suitable court cases ■ Establish good routines for follow-up of pupils and students upon visits to the courts ■ The courts should prepare a scheme for a practice period/week adapted to lower secondary and upper secondary schools ■ Examples of other potential services for the schools include ● loan of courtrooms for role play on days when the courts have vacant courtrooms. (See links on www.domstol.no. for different role plays) ● guided tours and talks with judges	Information to the schools ■ Update and further develop the information to the schools on domstol.no Tilbud til skolene ■ Prepare proposal for guidelines for schemes that both regular and land consolidation courts may use vis-à-vis pupils and students

ACTION ITEM	Plain language	
OBJECTIVE	Plain language during communication with the users of the courts	
NEED	Plain language supports due process and creates confidence in the courts. User surveys at the courts show that the language in the judicial system may be difficult to understand for people who are not members of the legal professions. Numerous court presidents have also pointed out plain language as an area they would like to prioritise. Plain language in letters, templates and decisions is an improvement target for the courts. There must be a systematic effort to make the written communication with users and the general public simpler and more easily understandable.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	■ Include plain language as part of the courts' competence plans ■ Start using «Anbefalinger om domskrivning» (Recommendations for writing of judgments) in the NCA's report series 1/2015. ■ Work actively to improve the language, structure and form used in written communication ■ Use of proof reading for quality assurance of written documents	■ Prepare a strategy for the courts' written communication vis-à-vis the users. ■ Review templates in Lovisa with regard to plain language

Action item specifically for the land consolidation courts

ACTION ITEM	Practical considerations related to court hearings	
OBJECTIVE	Good planning of practical conditions in connection with court hearings	
NEED	Surveys carried out in August 2015 show varying degree of satisfaction with the courtrooms used by the land consolidation courts. More suitable courtrooms and information on practical issues such as access to food and beverages, copying and Wi-Fi are among the elements wanted. The attorneys in particular have commented on these issues. Based on experience, the attorneys would also like adjustable height tables. The surveys highlight a desire for practical conditions in connection with court hearings in the land consolidation courts to preferably become comparable with the conditions in the regular courts.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	■ Establish an internal experience databank showing the suitability of different courtrooms as regards size, furniture, microphones, video projectors, etc. ■ Prepare a list of preferable facilities at courtrooms, to be submitted to the municipalities when ordering meeting rooms ■ Review the possibility of parking, waiting areas, access to food, beverages and copying, etc. ■ Obtain information on any wireless networks and passwords ■ Provide information specifically on practical conditions upon summons to court hearings ■ Distribute the land consolidation court version of «Rettsmøtene skritt for skritt» to new land consolidation court judges and assistant land consolidation court judges when it becomes available	■ Establish a section in the letter template for summons to court hearings where it is possible to insert information on practical conditions ■ Prepare an adapted version of «Rettsmøtene skritt for skritt» (Court hearings step by step) for new land consolidation court judges and assistant land consolidation court judges

Action items Norwegian Courts Administration

ACTION ITEM	Accessibility
OBJECTIVE	The NCA must be good at promoting its services and have good routines for handling of inquiries
NEED	Several courts report that the NCA takes too long to reply to inquiries. It is also necessary to quality assure/establish routines for how inquiries are to be handled (for example written replies to written inquiries). In addition, the courts would like a better overview of the services that the NCA may provide. The feedback from the courts indicates that it is unclear which services the NCA may provide. This applies, for example, to framework agreements, human resource issues, support in case of conflicts at the courts, support in case of threats, management support.
PROPOSED MEASURES	Norwegian Courts Administration
	■ Establish routines for handling of all inquiries ● Automatic notice of receipt upon receipt of mails ● Internal deadlines for reply for different types of inquiries ● Specify for the courts which channels must be used to reach the NCA to ensure reply from the appropriate person ● Establish mail receptions for units ■ Use of absence indication ● Ensure accessibility in connection with unit meetings, vacations, etc. ■ Clarify with the units what services the NCA may provide to the courts ■ Establish a good Intranet structure in order to better promote the NCA's services

ACTION ITEM	Collaboration with the courts
OBJECTIVE	The NCA must be good at collaboration, and communicate actively with the courts
NEED	The courts and the NCA interact in many different ways. Surveys show that there is a need to improve the collaboration with the courts in certain areas. The courts would like fewer major projects/activities to be initiated, more involvement by the courts in projects/activities and better follow-up in the line upon completion of projects/activities. It is also desirable to lower the ambitions for development of routines and guidelines that have the form of complex projects, and instead place more emphasis on simpler methods that may be implemented quickly in a practical manner at the courts. The courts also indicate that they would like a better dialogue and clarification between the units in the NCA, as well as better handling of consultation processes with longer deadlines.
PROPOSED MEASURES	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Execution of projects and other activities ■ Mapping of needs and practical usefulness (prepare decision basis) for the courts before initiation of projects and other activities ● Prioritise what to initiate ■ Clarify the useful effect for the courts ■ Maintain a practical focus on the end result ■ Improve the information to the courts regarding completion of projects and other activities ■ Relevant units must assume responsibility for follow-up of results from completed projects and other activities Internal collaboration ■ Strengthen the internal communication between the units Consultation processes ■ Plan and coordinate future consultation processes in a good manner ■ Prepare and publish overviews showing future consultation deadlines, for example using a calendar

ACTION ITEM	Reuse of translations
OBJECTIVE	Easily accessible and quality assured information for users in several languages at a lower cost
NEED	As an increasing number of court cases involve parties with mother tongues other than Norwegian, there is a growing demand for information for users in several languages. Currently, the individual courts themselves must ensure that information is translated. Some translated documents are available in <i>Erfaringsbanken</i>. Different courts order translation of the same documents separately, which is very costly and time-consuming. There is a great potential for reuse of translated documents.
PROPOSED MEASURES	Norwegian Courts Administration
	■ Establish a common ordering system for translation of documents for the courts ■ Establish a searchable filing system

ACTION ITEM	Development of information for selected user groups	
OBJECTIVE	Prepare good information for specific users	
NEED	The websites domstol.no, jordskifte.no and all court websites are central sources of information for users and citizens. Some specific needs have been identified through the work on the action plans that may supplement the ongoing work. Land consolidation courts There is a need for more specific information on the types of cases handled by the land consolidation courts and their judicial means, and a desire for access to archives with court records and links to a map access solution from the land consolidation courts' own website. There is also a need for more user-specific information. Digital information material The courts would like the NCA to help develop relevant information that may supplement the domstol.no website and be distributed electronically to user groups. This will improve the opportunity for the users themselves to obtain and share information. New information tools provide new opportunities for reaching user groups. ICT information The NCA's survey at the courts shows that there is a need to strengthen the User Centre and the Lovisa user support with information on the status and content of new deliveries. In addition, the survey indicates that there is a need to strengthen the information to the employees of the courts, with a special emphasis on the status of the ongoing ICT projects, but also the content of the future Lovisa deliveries, timing of downtime, etc.	
PROPOSED MEASURES	Courts	Norwegian Courts Administration
	Land Consolidation ■ Publish decisions on own website /access to archive from the court's website, cf. action item on media ■ Evaluate the need for information on own website	Land Consolidation ■ Prepare and publish information on the website that shows the competence of the land consolidation courts ● Specific examples on different types of cases and judicial means ■ Prepare an electronic circular for new attorneys ■ Establish own tabs for attorneys, parties and lay judges on jordskifte.no ■ Add link to the Norwegian Mapping ■ Authority's map access solution seeiendom.no on jordskifte.no

	Digital information material ■ Digital information material that is available, is presented to the court's users ICT information ■ Operations coordinators must keep up-to-date regarding information from ICT, as well as make sure the courts are prepared for new deliveries in Lovisa ■ The individual courts must evaluate whether operations coordinators are to establish local routines for distribution of information linked to ICT	Digital information material ■ Prepare relevant information for prioritised user groups ■ Evaluate the possibility of using new digital information tools aimed at relevant user groups ICT information ■ Establish own information channel on the Intranet for the status and content of new deliveries, as well as delivery date ■ Strengthen routines for information to the User Centre and Lovisa user support, to ensure they are always up-to-date regarding the status and content of new deliveries ■ Evaluate whether the preceding item is also relevant for local user support in the courts
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