



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Survey on the impact of UNODC assistance in the Scientific and Forensic Field

2011

Background

The UNODC Laboratory and forensic science services programme seeks to ensure that Member States have access to, and use quality forensic science services in their fight against drugs, crime and terrorism. A substantial proportion of this service is delivered directly from the Laboratory and Scientific Section (LSS) in Vienna to a large number of institutions in Member States worldwide comprising drug analysis and forensic science laboratories, criminal justice system and law enforcement authorities and regulatory and Health authorities.

As part of its commitment towards continuous improvement, UNODC/LSS carries out a survey on an annual basis to assess the impact/relevance of technical assistance activities provided. Lessons learned and comments received from respondents to these surveys are subsequently built into the implementation strategy of UNODC Laboratory and forensic science services.

The main areas covered by the survey in 2011 are the International Collaborative Exercises (ICE) programme; provision of drug/precursor reference standards to laboratories; provision of drug and precursor field testing kits and the development and dissemination of best practices manuals and guidelines.

The 2011 survey was conducted in May 2012 and responses were received from 138 institutions in over 61 Member States. This represents an increase in the number of participants of 35% compared with the survey conducted in 2010.

A summary of the survey responses received are given below.

ICE Programme

The UNODC ICE programme allows drug testing laboratories from both developing and developed countries to continuously monitor their performance on a global scale. Two rounds are offered per year with options for participation in the analysis of drugs in Seized Materials (SM) and/or in Biological Specimens (BS, specifically urine). Of the 138 survey respondents, 85.5% (118) indicated that their laboratory had participated in ICE.

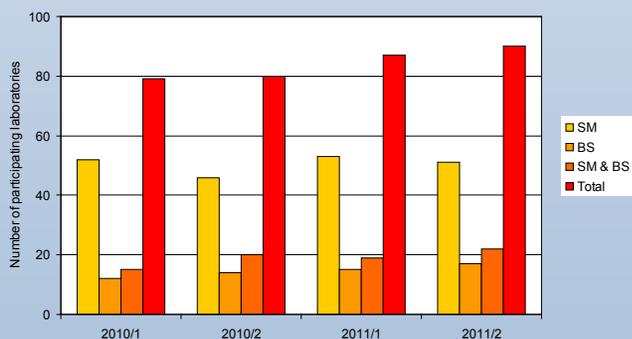


Figure 1: Participation of survey respondents in the ICE Programme in 2010 and 2011.

Figure 1 shows that over the past four rounds of this programme, a continual increase in the total number of participants was observed. A similar increasing trend was also observed in the number of laboratories choosing to analyse both seized materials and biological specimens.

The impact of the ICE Programme on work done in the laboratories was assessed as either very good or good by 93.4% of participants in 2011 (Figure 2) compared to 91.4% in the 2010 survey.

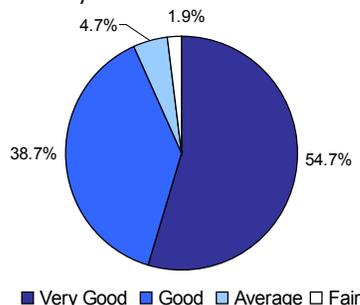


Figure 2: Assessment by participants of the impact of the UNODC ICE Programme on work done in the laboratory.

The information presented in Figure 3 shows the rating of various aspects of the ICE programme from the overall quality of service to the submission of test results.

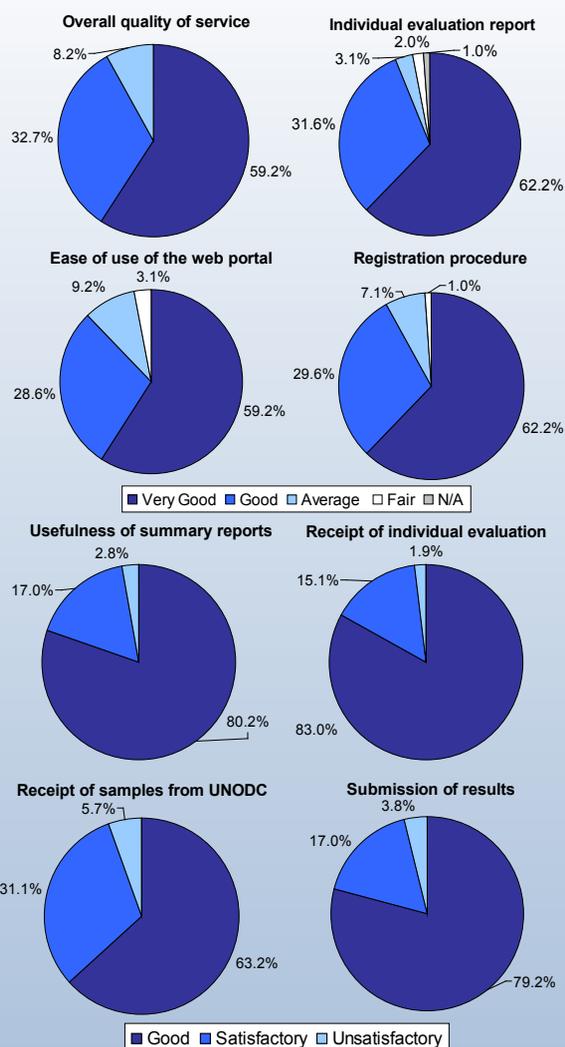


Figure 3: Ratings of various aspects of the ICE Programme by participants in 2011.

Within the ICE programme, an electronic portal can be used for the collection of analytical results from participating laboratories. The portal greatly facilitates the evaluation of all participant results and the results of the survey in both 2010 and 2011 indicated that 95% of participants made use of this system.

Reference Materials

Reference materials of substances under international control are provided to all laboratories participating in the ICE Programme biennially and also to laboratories based on specific needs and requests. This is an important aspect of LSS activities and in 2011 a total of 2326 reference material samples were provided to 105 laboratories. Figure 4 shows the range of areas in which these reference materials are used by recipients.

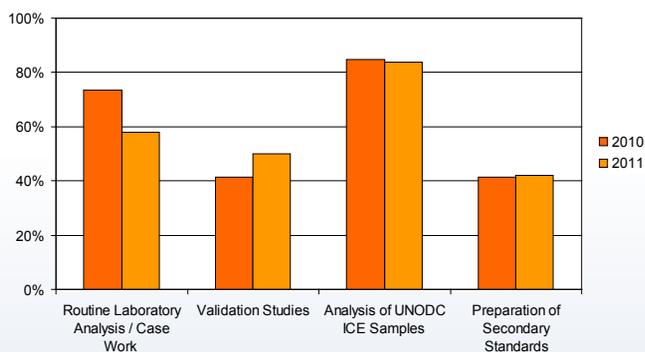


Figure 4: Purposes for which the reference materials supplied by the UNODC/LSS are used by laboratories participating in the ICE Programme (2010/2011).

Drug and Precursor Field Testing Kits

UNODC supplies institutions in Member States with drug and/or precursor field testing kits. In 2011, a total of 462 drug and precursor field testing kits were provided to 10 Member States.

16 institutions who received these test kits participated in the survey. Figures 5 and 6 show that 78.6 % of respondents rated the kits very good or good and 78.5% of respondents use the kits regularly or often.

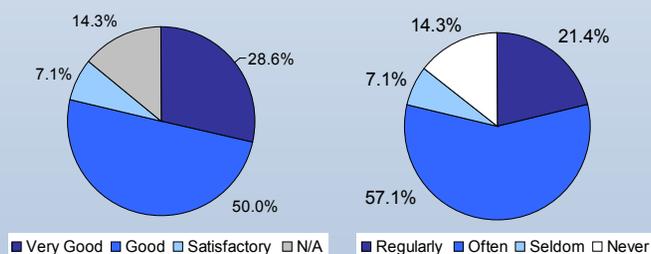


Figure 5: The usefulness of the drug and/or precursor field testing kits in the operational work of laboratories.

Figure 6: The regularity of use for the drug and/or precursor field testing kits received by laboratories.

UNODC Publications (guidelines and manuals)

In 2011, 83.3% of survey participants indicated that they used UNODC publications (guidelines and manuals) in their work and 92.7% of participants rated the usefulness of the UNODC publications as very good or good (Figure 7). The majority of these institutions obtained the publications either via the internet (90.5%) or by post (62.1%).

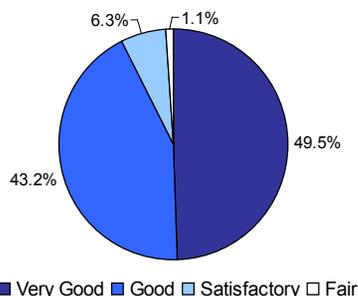


Figure 7: Rating of the usefulness of the UNODC publications received in the work of participating laboratories.

Additional Comments

Participants in the 2011 survey were requested to provide additional comments in order to assist UNODC in improving the services it provides to institutions in Member States. One area which continues to cause difficulties for ICE participants is the local procedure for obtaining import certification for the ICE test samples with 8.5% of survey respondents rating this procedure unsatisfactory, an increase from 4.9% in 2010. 17% of those respondents who provided additional comments requested reference materials for new emerging substances and an equivalent number requested information on training opportunities and publications. Some participants also reported difficulties in receiving test samples from UNODC and in the use of the new online portal for the submission of test results. UNODC will reply to each of the comments of participants and issues raised will be addressed in order to improve the quality of UNODC Laboratory and forensic science services. UNODC would like to express its gratitude to all survey respondents.

Acknowledgements

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