

SEE QI Newsletter 4

Regional Consultancy Fund for Quality Infrastructure (QI) in South East Europe (SEE)

The SEE QI Fund is a demand-driven project implemented by the German national metrology institute, Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB). It supports initiatives that foster the increased recognition of QI services in the Western Balkan (WB6) countries and thus facilitates their integration into the European Union (EU) common market and other markets. This newsletter provides updates on recent developments in the SEE QI Fund and the ongoing SEE QI Projects with the aim of motivating QI-stakeholders to take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of regional cooperation in this field.

1. INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF THE TWO PROJECT COORDINATORS OF THE SEE QI PROJECT ON ACCREDITATION

The SEE QI Project 6 on accreditation started in April 2020 despite the COVID-19 outbreak. The project aims to enable WB6 national accreditation bodies (NAB) to implement, on market demand, accreditation schemes in compliance with European Accreditation (EA). It covers exchange of experience between WB6 NAB, the development/extension of accreditation schemes as well as accreditation in selected regulated areas. The project is coordinated by Ms Jasna Stojanović from the Accreditation Body of Serbia (ATS) and Mr Dejan Stojkovski from the Institute for Accreditation of the Republic of North Macedonia (IARNM).

What motivated you to apply for a new regional WB6 project under the SEE QI Fund?

Recently, we have had significant changes in standards defining both the work of accreditation bodies and conformity assessment bodies (e.g. ISO / IEC 17011, ISO / IEC 17025, etc). A need for harmonization of accreditation practices at the global level and thus at the regional level has presented itself, primarily taking the requirements and needs of the market, legislators, and stakeholders into consideration. All the Western Balkans (WB6) countries are in need, and I would say they also



Jasna Stojanović

have an imperative to encourage the integration of the WB6 countries into the European Union (EU) common market as well as other markets, which has been made easier by the QI services increased recognition.

You were an active member of the previous ten-year long cooperation between South East European

NAB and PTB. How did you build on this experience when developing the new cooperation project?

Yes, I had the privilege to participate in previous regional and bilateral projects implemented by PTB. In my opinion, the cooperation with the experts within the project, as well as with other regional NAB, was excellent. The projects were well prepared and tailored to meet the needs of the NAB. On the other hand, they were flexible enough. Additionally, a feature of previous PTB projects was that the project defined various methodological activities such as training sessions, counselling, exchange of experiences, observation of evaluation/assessment, development of new accreditation schemes involving stakeholders, regulators, ABs and CABs staff, assessors and technical experts. It was a good regional synergy that had been developing over time and I think it was quite natural to continue it.

Your project was finalized and approved in middle of the COVID-19 lockdown. How has the COVID-19 crisis affected the project activities so far? Did you have to make adjustments to the planned approach or activities and if so, what are they?

We are currently in the adjustments' "fine-tuning" process together with Mr. Stefan Wallerath to continue the planned project realization dynamic using new communication techniques and holding meetings and training sessions taking travel restrictions in the near future into consideration. At the same time, this is the right time to favour and apply, when necessary, electronic communication techniques and networks. The same goes for the remote assessment techniques in the NAB' work.

Which field of cooperation are you personally looking forward to within the next few months?

In my point of view, the biggest challenge, in addition to the accreditation schemes' development process, is the exchange of experiences, and/or discussions with colleagues from WB6 countries' accreditation bodies together with engaged experts and colleagues from other EU ABs, who are lecturers and moderators. I think this is the best way to achieve harmonization and continue enhancing our skills, upgrading our competencies and increasing our knowledge regarding accreditation-related activities.

2. EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE BETWEEN WB6 ACCREDITATION BODIES

One of the last face-to-face events organised by the SEE QI Fund before the COVID-19 lockdown was the meeting of WB6 NAB representatives in Tirana, Albania on February 17-19, 2020.

The first part of the workshop consisted of a lively and intensive exchange of experience on the status of implementation of the new requirements of ISO 17011:2017. It was inspired by a detailed presentation by the Quality Manager of the German NAB (DAkkS) on how DAkkS deals with the risk to impartiality and how it set up a risk-based approach for its assessment policy and procedure. This was compared with the WB6 NAB's own experiences with the implementation of the risk-based approach.

The second part of the workshop explored the need and potential of a future SEE QI capacity-building project on regional cooperation in accreditation. A draft action plan was elaborated aiming to harmonize the WB6 NAB accreditation practices within the WB6 region and with other EA NAB outside the region. After the workshop, the draft SEE QI project application was circulated and approved by all six WB6 NAB as well as by PTB.

During the Covid-19 lockdown the teams intend to switch some of the activities to webinars / e-conferences. They currently consider to extend the action plan by adding a virtual exchange of experience regarding the implementation of remote assessments.



Meeting of WB6 NAB representatives in Tirana, Albania

3. INVITATION TO THE WB6 E-CONFERENCE ON MARKET SURVEILLANCE

A WB6 conference on the new EU regulations (EU) 2019/1020 and (EU) 2019/515 on market surveillance had been scheduled for mid-March 2020 in Montenegro. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it had to be cancelled on short notice and will now be replaced by an e-conference taking place on May 27-28 online.

It is regrettable that WB6 and German experts cannot meet in person. On the other hand, the e-conference format has the advantage of being accessible to a broader range of participants, namely all interested inspectors from WB6 countries and even Eastern Partnership countries.

The streamed classroom training will be held by Mr Joachim Geiss from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), who was involved in the negotiation of the new regulation (EU) 2019/1020, as well as Mr Johann Dietrich, former inspector of the Central Office of the Federal States for Safety Engineering (ZLS). After the training, the inspectors, regulators and members of the WB6 network for dangerous goods will split in workshops to discuss in greater detail with the trainers how to transpose and implement the new regulations in their countries.

Those interested in joining the e-conference can contact see@ptb.de to get further information and access to the streamed training.



Johann Dietrich during a presentation

4. WEBINAR ON REMOTE ORGANIC CONTROL AUDITS IN TIMES OF LOCKDOWN

On May 6, 2020, a 2.5 hour webinar on remote audits in the organic sector was conducted in the framework of the SEE QI Project 2 on the adjustment of certification programmes in organic production to the modified EU regulation 2018/848.

More than twenty participants from different WB6 certification bodies and one accreditation body attended the webinar with Jochen Neuendorff (GfRS) and Tom Nizet (AUTHENT) on challenges and solutions to implementation of remote verification of compliance. Participants shared experiences of remote inspection techniques and protection of staff. They learned from each other how to overcome the challenges of limited travelling possibilities and on-site interaction with operators, e.g. by better analysis of available information in preparation for the audit.

Practical information and examples of what is done already (cross checks, trace-backs) and what might be done in the future (e.g. by using drones) were discussed. In the feedback round, all participants agreed that in these times, there is a need for more intensive cooperation between stakeholders in the organic control system in the Balkans: may this webinar be another step in that direction!

5. RESPONSE OF THE PTB INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DEPARTMENT TO COVID-19

When the Corona virus started spreading in Germany at an alarming speed and with serious consequences, the country, including PTB, put in place stringent lockdown measures. As a direct result, international and local activities were cancelled or rescheduled. The PTB management has set up a crisis committee in order to be able to react quickly in an emergency and implement new measures at any given point.

PTB remained open but most staff in the international cooperation department 9.3 have been working from home since then. Where possible, PTB is introducing digital tools to further implement activities in a remote way. At the same time, the period during which travel is paused can be productively used to focus project work on more

conceptual questions. This work can take the form of virtual consultations or in carrying out studies, etc. PTB invites all partners to share ideas and discuss them with the project coordinators.

In the case of the SEE QI Fund, please turn to Mr Stefan Wallerath. Most importantly, we wish everyone strength during the ongoing pandemic and above all health for you and your loved ones.

6. THREE NEW SEE QI PROJECTS APPROVED

Over the last months, three project proposals have been submitted by WB6 NAB as well as WB6 national metrology institutes.

All of them have been approved by PTB, even though the start of their implementation might be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. More details on the objectives, scope and participants of the respective projects can be found [here](#).

Annex: Overview of ongoing SEE QI Projects

Name	Coordinator	Timeframe	Objective
1. Interlaboratory comparison for small volumes		Finalised	
2. Adjustment of certification programs in organic production to the modified EU legal basis 2018/848	Mersida Musabegović/ Organska Kontrola, BiH	10/2019- 09/2021	SEE certification bodies acquire competence about the new EU Regulation 2018/848 and are able to implement the changes required and know how to work with the new list of compliant CBs.
3. National normative aspects (NNA) for standardization of overhead electrical lines	Tatjana Bojanic / Institute for Standardization, Serbia	09/2019- 08/2021	Standardisation institutes and technical experts develop specifications for a regionally harmonized draft NNA document for overhead electrical lines (EN 50341-1 09/2019-08/2021).
4. New EU legislation on market surveillance	Samir Bekto / Market Surveillance Agency, BiH	10/2019- 06/2021	Market surveillance authorities build capacity and exchange knowledge on the safety requirements resulting from newest horizontal and vertical EU legislation: Regulation (EU) 2019/1020, Regulation (EU) 2019/515, Regulation (EU) 2016/425 on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC.
5. Metrology for medical devices	Beti Vukovajac/ Bureau of Metrology/ North Macedonia	04/2020- 03/2021	The capacities of NMIs for calibration / verification / control of the most relevant types of medical devices with measuring function in WB6 countries are strengthened
6. Capacity building for harmonization of accreditation activities with the European rules in selected areas	Jasna Stojanovic/ Accreditation Body of Serbia (ATS) Dejan Stojkovski, Institute for Accreditation of the Republic of North Macedonia (IARNM)	04/2020- 09/2021	WB6 region implements, on market demand, accreditation schemes (policies, requirements, procedures) in compliance with the practices of the national accreditation bodies that are members of EA.
7. Capacity building for the implementation of interlaboratory comparisons (ILC) and proficiency tests (PT)	Stilian Habibi/ National Metrology Institute DPM/ Albania	04/2020- 06/2021	The goal of the project is to support the applying NMIs in gaining knowledge on the ISO 17043:2010 standard requirements and enable them to develop competence in the complementary operation of ILC/PT schemes at national and regional level

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