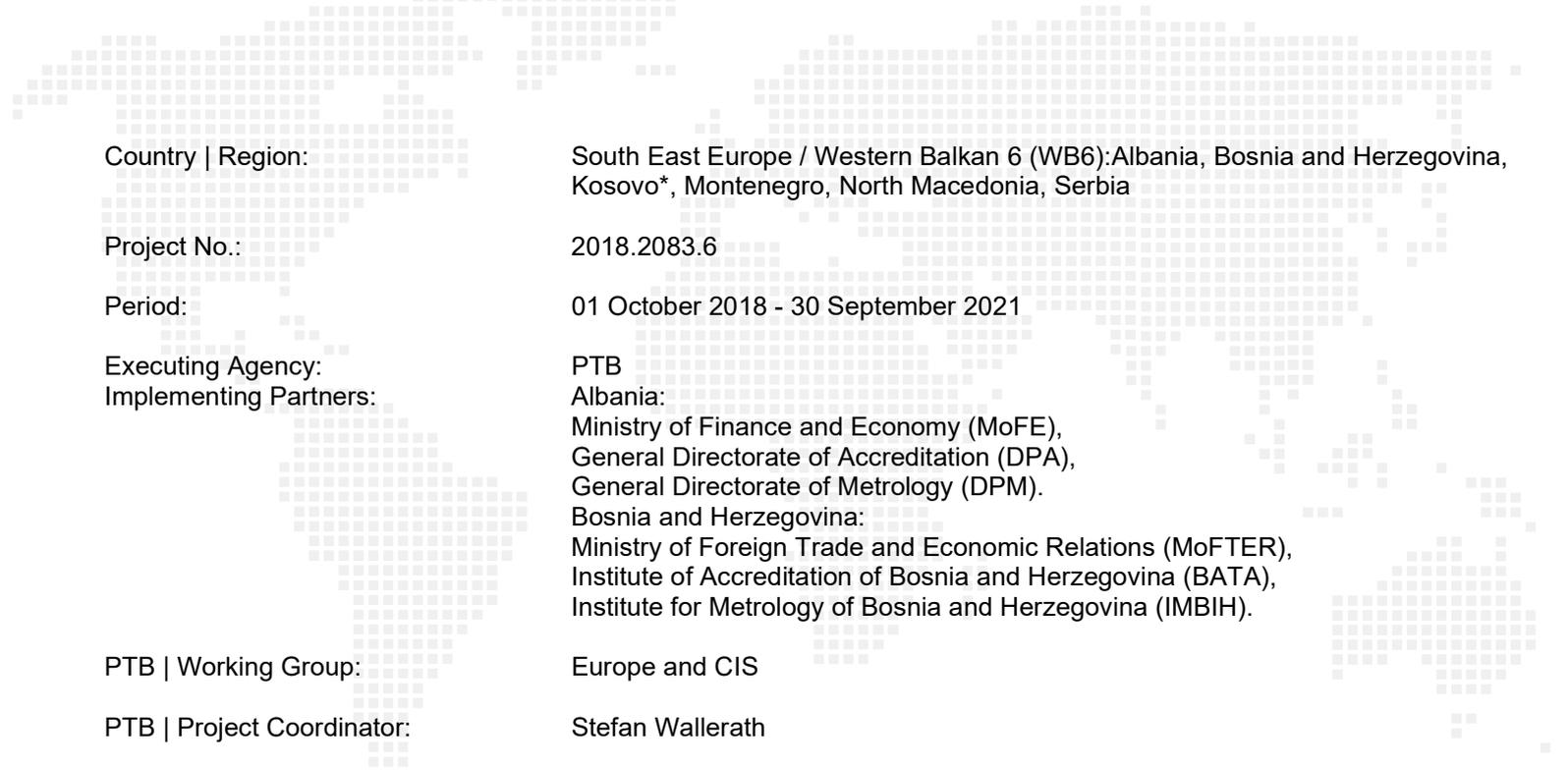


EXTERNAL EVALUATION – SHORT REPORT

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Regional Consultancy Fund Quality Infrastructure, South East Europe



Country Region:	South East Europe / Western Balkan 6 (WB6):Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia
Project No.:	2018.2083.6
Period:	01 October 2018 - 30 September 2021
Executing Agency:	PTB
Implementing Partners:	Albania: Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE), General Directorate of Accreditation (DPA), General Directorate of Metrology (DPM). Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER), Institute of Accreditation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BATA), Institute for Metrology of Bosnia and Herzegovina (IMBIH).
PTB Working Group:	Europe and CIS
PTB Project Coordinator:	Stefan Wallerath
Date:	28.09.2020

This is an independent evaluation. The contents represent the view of the evaluator and cannot be taken to reflect the views of PTB.

List of abbreviations

BATA	Institute of Accreditation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development <i>(Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)</i>
CC	Consultative Committee
CMC	Calibration and measurement capabilities
DPA	General Directorate of Accreditation, Albania
DPM	General Directorate of Metrology, Albania
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
IMBIH	Institute for Metrology of Bosnia and Herzegovina
QI	Quality Infrastructure
MoFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy, Albania
MoFTER	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, BiH
NAB	National Accreditation Body
NMI	National Metrology Institute
PT	Proficiency testing
SEE	South East Europe
WB6	Western Balkan 6: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

1. Project Description

The PTB project “Regional Consultancy Fund Quality Infrastructure, South East Europe (SEE)” is the subject of this evaluation. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ*) with a budget of 1,200,000 EUR.

WB6 countries do not yet fully have the capacities to provide the Quality Infrastructure (QI) services which are necessary for the free movement of goods within the framework of the EU approximation process. The project aims at addressing this core problem. Hence, its objective is “The integration of Western Balkan 6 (WB6) countries into the EU common market and other markets is facilitated by an increased international recognition of QI services”. Target groups are users of QI services, hence conformity assessment bodies, companies and consumers.

Project interventions are grouped under four outputs:

Output 1: The structure of the regional consultancy fund is established and operational.

Output 2: The range of QI services is extended by making use of regional synergies and networks.

Output 3: Capacity in the areas of accreditation and metrology is built in BiH.

Output 4: Capacity in the areas of accreditation and metrology is built in Albania.

Contrary to what its title might suggest, the project does not exclusively operate at the regional level: While it is made up of a demand-led regional consultancy fund open to all WB6 countries in Output 1 and 2 - the so-called SEE QI fund -, it supports Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Albania bilaterally in the areas of accreditation and metrology in Output 3 and 4.

Due to the regional context in which it operates, the project has no political partner at regional level. It cooperates with various QI institutions through the SEE QI fund in a demand-led manner. Furthermore, in Albania and BiH it has the following implementation partners:

- Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE), Albania
- General Directorate of Accreditation (DPA), Albania
- General Directorate of Metrology (DPM), Albania
- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER), BiH
- Institute of Accreditation of BiH (BATA)
- Institute for Metrology of BiH (IMBIH)

2. Assessment of the project

The evaluation covers the period between the start of the project (October 2018) until the time of the evaluation mission (June/July 2020), with a projection of the likely impact until the end of the implementation period. Its objective is to contribute to the project’s accountability towards BMZ as funding party and to facilitate learning from the experiences gained during project implementation. The results of the evaluation will inform the implementation of the ongoing project as well as the design of future similar projects.

The evaluation methods used were a systematic review of project-related documents followed by 28 remote interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. Onsite face-to-face interviews had originally been foreseen. Due to Covid-19, it was, however, decided to conduct interviews virtually through web conferencing tools. The evaluators could gain a good insight into the project through the data which was either available in documents or collected in interviews.

The SEE QI fund is an instrument which so far has rarely been used by PTB. As such, it is of special interest for this evaluation which, therefore, puts special attention on the assessment of Outputs 1 and 2 and, hence, on the set-up and functioning of the fund.

2.1 Status of the change process

Five OECD/DAC criteria serve as basis for assessing the status of the change process:

- Relevance: Is the project doing the right things?
- Effectiveness: Is the project achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
- Impact: What difference does the project make?
- Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

The following grading scheme is applied:

1	2	3	4	5	6
highly successful	successful	moderately successful	moderately unsuccessful	unsuccessful	highly unsuccessful

Relevance

The SEE QI fund was designed as a demand-led instrument through which regional collaboration among QI institutions can be supported in line with their own initiatives and ambitions, and hence in a sustainable way. During the evaluation interviews, several representatives from QI institutions and ministries pointed out that the SEE QI fund was the first development cooperation project in which they could define their support themselves according to their needs.

A relatively diverse range of topics have been covered in SEE QI projects so far:

- SEE QI project 1: Interlaboratory comparison in small volume calibrations
- SEE QI project 2: Best practices in Organic production: Roadmap for the implementation of EU regulation (EU) 2018/848
- SEE QI project 3: Standardization: National Normative Aspects to EN 50341-1 Overhead electrical lines
- SEE QI project 4: New EU Legislation on Market Surveillance
- SEE QI project 5: Metrology for Medical Devices
- SEE QI project 6: Accreditation: Compliance with EA best practices
- SEE QI project 7: Capacity Building for interlaboratory comparisons and proficiency testing (PT)

All these SEE QI projects seem to address current needs of QI institutions.

In BiH, a relatively wide range of laboratories of IMBIH, the Bosnian National Metrology Institute (NMI), were supported (e.g. mass, volume, pressure, electrical, ionizing radiation, temperature). While it is difficult to assess the relevance of, and demand for, these chosen intervention areas, the PTB project team appears to have exercised due caution in their selection. Support for BATA, the Bosnian National Accreditation Body (NAB), focused on accreditation of products and the - during the Covid-19 pandemic highly relevant - accreditation of medical labs which appears to be a good choice.

Before the start of the PTB project, DPM, the Albanian NMI, had run into problems as a result of which their Calibration and Measurement Capabilities (CMCs) in mass had been greyed. PTB support for DPM came, hence, just in time. The areas supported in accreditation - new ISO/IEC 17011:2017, accreditation of persons and accreditation of calibration services – seem to be in line with needs.

In addition, by adding Covid-19 related topics (e.g. remote audits in times of lock-down; market surveillance of equipment related to Covid-19; verification/calibration of medical devices related to Covid-19), the project managed to remain relevant despite the changed circumstances.

The project's objective is in line with partner country strategies and with the priorities of German development cooperation.

The relevance of the project is rated highly successful (1.0).

Effectiveness

The result matrix is realistic in the sense that the interventions at output level can be expected to lead to the fulfilment of the indicators at outcome level and the project's objective. One exception is the highly ambitious outcome indicator 1 (see below) which should rather be located at a higher impact level, such as that of the German development cooperation programme "Sustainable economic development in the countries of the Western Balkans", into which this project is embedded,. Furthermore, the project objective incorporates a double-goal since it not only aims at the international recognition of QI services but also at a positive effect of this international recognition on integration in the EU and other markets. Apart from that, the quality of the result matrix is good.

<i>Outcome indicator</i>	<i>Justification</i>
1. EU progress reports attest at least 4 out of the 6 WB6 countries a continuous development (at least "moderately prepared") referring to chapter 1 "free movement of goods".	In the latest EU progress report (2019), Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia are assessed as "moderately prepared". The evaluation team cannot predict reliably whether a fourth country (most likely Albania, if any) will be assessed as "moderately prepared" by the end of the project since the project's influence on the outcome of the grading of the progress report is too small, with too many external factors influencing the EU's assessment. Expected degree of fulfilment: --
2. At least 2 new regional QI-services are offered or regionally harmonised documents agreed upon annually from 2020 on (target value: 4).	With a regional guideline for the implementation of the new EU Directive on organic production (SEE QI project 2), one regional output has been produced so far. Four other regional outputs are planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEE QI project 3: regional blueprint of national normative aspects for overhead electrical lines; • SEE QI project 4: common checklists for market surveillance of machinery and of personal protective equipment; • SEE QI project 5: splitting of the fields of calibration for different medical devices among five countries; • SEE QI project 7: strengthening of NMI capacities as PT providers in different, complementary fields. Expected degree of fulfilment: 100%
3. The international recognition of new calibration services is extended in 2 supported countries by at least 2 measurands each	Fulfilled in Albania with un-greying of CMCs for mass and newly approved CMCs for volume measurements. Not yet fulfilled in BiH, but application for CMCs in small volume was submitted. Expected degree of fulfilment: 85%
4. The international recognition of at least 1 additional accreditation service (EA MLA/BLAs) is requested in 2 supported countries.	Fulfilled in Albania with international recognition for certifications of persons. Not yet fulfilled in BiH. Unclear whether recognition of one of the accreditation areas supported (products and medical labs) will be requested in time. Expected degree of fulfilment: 85%

The effectiveness of the project is rated successful (2.0).

Impact

For measuring higher-order impacts, the indicators of the German development cooperation programme “Sustainable economic development in the countries of the Western Balkans” can serve as benchmark. One of its indicators requires an improvement of the Worldbank “Trading Across Borders” index. The project will not be able to contribute substantially to the reduction of time and cost of export and import procedures which are at the core of this index. Yet, it is likely to have an indirect impact by strengthening of QI systems and, hence, the ability to participate in international trade. By contrast, the project is likely to have a positive, direct impact on the second relevant indicator of the programme, namely that on the OECD SME Policy Index. This index assesses, among others, the capacities of QI institutions and their alignment with international and European QI systems which is at the core of this project.

How big these larger-scale impacts will be is left to be seen and will depend on how well the SEE QI projects will advance over the coming year. This, in turn, will not only depend on internal factors (e.g. motivation of beneficiaries, efforts of the SEE QI project coordinators, support from the PTB project team) but also on external factors and, among others, on challenges related to Covid-19. Yet, the situation looks promising so far. SEE QI fund projects have succeeded in stimulating regional exchange and mutual learning at the technical level. Two projects might even result in some form of complementary division of labour (SEE QI project 5 and 7, see above under “effectiveness”, indicator 2) Such ambitious initiatives are likely to fall short of expectations without the backing from the hierarchy of QI institutions and from the political level. With four out of the six members of the project’s steering committee - the Consultative Committee (CC) - coming from ministries of economic affairs, the set-up of the project actually factors in the necessity to involve the political level. This increases the chance that SEE QI projects will indeed have larger-scale impacts.

In Albania, the improvement of the quality management system at DPM, which led to an un-greying of CMCs on mass, was a major achievement. The impact of bilateral activities in BiH is more difficult to estimate since they have not yet produced clear results. However, since partners in BiH seem to have a high degree of motivation and capacities, additional services in metrology and accreditation are likely to be created. The ultimate impact will then depend on the actual use of these services.

The impact of the project is rated very successful (1.0).

Efficiency

A very small staff team has been involved in implementing the project. Valuable partner contributions were received, especially through the in-kind efforts of SEE QI project coordinators. These coordinators were chosen by beneficiaries at the start of each SEE QI project. Their task has been to develop a draft project idea and to coordinate all stakeholders involved from the beneficiary side. Many of them have been contributing much time to this task and, in many cases, managed to gather their peers around a topic in a way which the PTB project team could hardly have done itself. They have, overall, played an extremely valuable role in the SEE QI projects.

A large amount of activities – both within the bilateral outputs as well as in the SEE QI projects – was carried out with the (limited) amount of budget. The project has coordinated its activities well with other projects, for example with the bilateral PTB project in Serbia and the GIZ project “Open regional fund on foreign trade” in SEE. The project cooperated to some extent with bilateral QI-related EU Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) projects, for example in Montenegro. By contrast, in other cases, topics in which stakeholders were trained at the regional level through the PTB project were also covered in bilateral EU IPA projects. While a certain overlap between regional and national levels can and should certainly not be avoided, being aware of these overlaps would be important. It is not clear whether this has always been the case.

Activities were performed in due time. Ongoing activities have encountered delays due to Covid-19. The project responded to this by quickly adapting to digital communication tools.

The efficiency of the project is rated very successful (1.3).

Sustainability

It cannot yet be estimated whether SEE QI projects will reach their expected results and be able to sustain them over time. Yet, the high ownership among most stakeholders combined with its demand-led nature improves the chances that this will actually happen. Furthermore, changes to the national regulatory framework are likely to remain in place, and improved practices can be expected to be mainstreamed into partner systems. Networks created among peers within the region and with well positioned international experts seem to be relevant enough to continue to exist in some form after the end of this project.

In Albania, the supported metrology and accreditation services seem to be in demand by industry and conformity assessment bodies and, hence, are likely to be offered sustainably. The same is probably true for accreditation services in BiH. As to metrology services in BiH, demand for calibrations in small volume from testing, medical and pharmaceutical laboratories is, according to an interviewee from the IMBiH, growing. Whether the other areas and extended scopes supported (volume, pressure, electrical, ionizing radiation, and temperature) are in demand and will lead to sustainable results, remains to be seen.

The project responded well to sustainability risks. It supported its partners intensively in project formulation and implementation, e.g. through the organisation of workshops during which the exact project outline and a work plan were discussed with all partners involved. This facilitated interaction was important for forging a common understanding among beneficiaries and for “onboarding” them which would be difficult to achieve through coordination by e-mail only.

The sustainability of the project is rated very successful (1.5).

2.2 Success factors for the observed results and change processes

The evaluation assessed the project also in terms of the five Capacity WORKS success factors Strategy, Cooperation, Steering Structure, Processes, and Learning and Innovation. These success factors were defined within German development cooperation as part of its “Capacity WORKS” tool for managing the implementation of development projects. They are graded on a scale from 0% (not fulfilled) to 100% (fully fulfilled).

Strategy

The strategy of the project is characterised by its “hybrid” set-up which does not only include the SEE QI fund but also two bilateral outputs. This set-up resulted from funding decisions of BMZ and less so from conceptual, strategic considerations. More synergies between the regional and bilateral levels might have been harnessed, if interlinkages had been factored in from the start.

The QI SEE fund proved to be an excellent strategy for stimulating regional cooperation at the technical level. Partners seem very well informed about that part of the project which is relevant for them. However, not all stakeholders operating at the interface of the SEE QI fund and bilateral outputs seem aware of the whole picture: While CC representatives from BiH and Albania are fully informed about the SEE QI fund, they have not been directly involved in the bilateral outputs.

The project strategy has taken into account relevant potentials and challenges related to QI in SEE. It was very well implemented. Crucial to this success has been the PTB project coordinator who has acted with the diplomatic skills required for implementing a regional project in SEE.

Level of achievement: 90%

Cooperation

The project partners have been clearly defined in the bilateral outputs and were naturally left more open in the SEE QI fund. The group of core beneficiaries of the SEE QI fund were QI institutions such as NMI, NAB or standardisation bodies. They typically initiated the projects and wrote the project proposals. However, the PTB project team encouraged them to open up the SEE QI projects to other relevant other stakeholders, e.g. ministries or other regulatory bodies. This holistic approach ensured the inclusion of the right stakeholders from inside and outside the core fields of QI.

The involvement of CC members in the SEE QI project proposal process ensured that the limits of the SEE QI projects were well defined, for example through the joint definition of funding criteria. The partner-driven approach of the SEE QI fund resulted in bigger responsibilities being taken over by partners, especially by SEE QI project coordinators but also by CC members.

While political divides could not always be overcome, possible tensions among countries were taken into account. For example, when selecting an event venue, the project team tried to ensure that the location was politically acceptable to all.

Level of achievement: 96%

Steering structure

The steering structure reflects the segregated strategy of the project: While the CC deals with issues related to the SEE QI fund only, the bilateral outputs 3 and 4 are steered directly in informal exchanges with implementing partners. Overall, the complexity of this structure seems appropriate but shows some weakness in terms of interlinkages among the outputs.

The most important role of CC members has been that of focal point for national QI institutions. They promote the fund towards relevant national stakeholders and, on the request of the PTB team, identify relevant institutions who might be interested in joining SEE QI projects. CC members have performed this role well and, by doing so, contributed to the success of the SEE QI fund.

In addition to their role as focal points, CC members have been involved in the project approval process: They have had the opportunity to comment – but not to veto – project proposals before they are submitted to PTB for approval. This has allowed them to verify, for example, whether SEE QI projects are in line with their political priorities. Yet, it turned out that they have so far been hesitant to submit comments. From the evaluation interviews it appears that they do not feel fully comfortable with this task since they believe that their national QI institutions - who are usually involved in drafting the proposals - have more technical knowledge. The fact that they do not want to criticise their national institutions vis-à-vis an international agency might also play a role. Still, CC members seem to have discussed intensively ongoing and possible future projects during CC meetings and are very much aware of - and in most cases committed to - their content. Overall, the CC provided very valuable impulses to attain the objectives of the project.

Level of achievement: 88%

Processes

On-going processes of the partner system were either already well known from regional and bilateral predecessor projects (e.g. especially for metrology and accreditation related topics) or analysed with input from other projects or PTB-contracted experts.

The main process newly established is the SEE QI fund. Its procedures are very lean and simple. The form for applying for a SEE QI project indicates that the length of the completed form should not exceed five pages. In practice, project proposals were not much longer than that. Furthermore, not many project details have to be set out at that stage. Instead they are defined in more detail with support from the PTB project team at a subsequent stage. This agile way of formulating SEE QI projects has worked well so far.

Communication between the PTB project team and partners was generally very good. In the case of the SEE QI fund, various communication and promotion tools have been employed, e.g. a newsletter and a website with a members-only area. Generally speaking, the project team seems to have had very good working relations with all its partners who have highly appreciated the expertise provided and, in the case of the SEE QI fund, the demand-led way in which the project has been implemented.

Level of achievement: 95%

Learning and innovation

While each SEE QI project aims at increasing the technical capacities related to a specific QI topic, the PTB project team realised early on that their support to beneficiaries for project preparation and management is equally crucial. The project offered such support comprehensively. During the evaluation interviews, SEE QI stakeholders emphasised that kick-off workshops organised by PTB at the start of SEE QI project implementation proved to be very important because they provide the occasion for in-depth exchanges with the other SEE QI project participants.

Numerous innovations were successfully introduced. The SEE QI fund itself is an innovative instrument. Furthermore, through the fund and in the bilateral outputs, the range of QI services provided has been extended, resulting in innovations for the countries concerned. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, urgent new topics were covered.

Lessons learned have been collected as part of the results-based monitoring system and through this (early) evaluation.

Level of achievement: 100%

3. Learning processes and learning experience

The setting up and management of the SEE QI fund has been an important and, so far, successful learning process. The insights from this learning process – for example that the high degree of micro-management required for successfully accompanying SEE QI projects has resulted in a high workload for the PTB project team (see also recommendations below) - can be valuable for other PTB projects which consider setting up a fund.

4. Recommendations

Recommendations to partners

While the SEE QI projects look promising, their success is not guaranteed. They require, among others, **sufficient political backing, in particular for implementing the complementary regional provision of QI services** as envisioned in SEE QI projects 5 and 7. Hence, it is important that CC members facilitate the success of SEE QI projects by pointing out their relevance to colleagues from the management of QI institutions and from relevant ministries.

There is a risk that not all synergies from cooperating with EU projects have been used and overlaps avoided (see Chapter 2.1 on Efficiency). Hence, partners involved in the SEE QI fund – both at the level of CC or within SEE QI project - should **keep an eye on ongoing national EU IPA support and use the SEE QI fund to complement them with a regional perspective**.

Due to Covid-19, day-to-day exchanges among the beneficiaries of SEE QI project will probably have to be carried out remotely for some time to come. Therefore, it is recommended that SEE QI project beneficiaries **restructure their projects in order to be able to fully adapt remote working modes**, if the Covid-19 situation so requires. Moreover, ensure that SEE QI projects remain relevant to participating institutions by **further refocusing their content towards Covid-19 related topics** (e.g. market surveillance of respiratory masks).

Recommendations to the project team

The SEE QI projects approved so far cover a broad range of topics. All these QI topics are different, and so are the potentials of these SEE QI projects to stimulate regional outputs. Therefore, it is recommended to continue the current strategy of **encouraging SEE QI project partners to produce regional outputs, provided this really is relevant for achieving EU approximation**. In other words, do not make the production of regional outputs a condition for all SEE QI projects. The strengthening of capacities through the provision of parallel capacity building (without a regional output) can be a worthwhile goal as such.

Regard the journey of SEE QI projects as part of their goal. Your support for project preparation and management has been very much valued by partners and was essential for bringing the projects on a good course. To ensure that SEE QI projects realise their goals even under challenging Covid-19 circumstances, **continue to accompany them tightly** and offer support in particular for organising and holding regular digital exchanges among project beneficiaries.

When doing so, **make (even more) use of consultants** to keep the workload associated with supporting the implementation of (currently) six ongoing SEE QI projects manageable for the PTB project coordinator. While the budget allocated to the SEE QI fund seems appropriate in relation to partner needs and their absorption capacity, the personal resources dedicated to managing the implementation of the SEE QI fund appear too limited. More project staff (e.g. a full-time PTB project coordinator position) should be foreseen for a possible follow-up SEE QI fund project.

The CC appears to have worked well so far, even though its members might not have actively submitted comments to project proposals. CC members seem to appreciate being kept informed about ongoing SEE QI projects and willing to actively engage in the process if needed, e.g. by identifying relevant national stakeholders. Their role might become even more crucial during the rest of the project period, when SEE QI project will have to be brought to a successful end. **Hence, continue to keep CC members involved in and informed about the different SEE QI projects, without insisting on their active involvement in the project approval process.**

Strengthen the interlinkage between the SEE QI fund and the bilateral outputs, even though such an “integrated” approach was not the intention of the original project set-up. For example, systematically involve PTB consultants working in bilateral outputs into SEE QI funds.

Design an exit strategy for the bilateral outputs since it appears that further support for metrology and accreditation will no longer be needed after the successful accomplishment of this project.

For the identification of additional SEE QI projects and for a possible follow-up SEE QI fund project, keep in mind the following:

Keep the requirement that SEE QI project ought to have a link to “Chapter 1: Free movement of goods” unchanged, without for example extending it to “Chapter 11: Agriculture and rural development”. Chapter 1 appears appropriate in terms of topics included - hence wide enough to cover a broad range of relevant areas (metrology, accreditation, technical regulations, market surveillance) but at the same time sufficiently small to be still manageable (e.g. in terms of organising international experts for the particular topic). In addition, it appears to be in line with PTB core competencies.

By contrast, within “Chapter 1: Free movement of goods”, keep the focus on *all* QI-related issues unchanged - without narrowing it down - to be able to flexibly respond to partner demand. However, the impact of the projects in terms of EU approximation could be increased by prioritising issues related to the EU accession process. **The recommendations of EU progress report or of the OECD SME Policy Survey could be as source of inspiration** for new SEE QI projects. While these recommendations are generally formulated at a rather abstract level, they could serve as overall guidelines for the direction of new SEE QI projects. By contrast, **do not push too much the idea of conducting studies on economic sectors or value chains**, as required in output indicator 2.1. At this

point in time, when a good number of project proposals has already been approved, such studies would not appear well-timed. Also, CC members have so far not shown much enthusiasm for them.

Continue to encourage all WB6 partners to participate in SEE QI projects with a view to not leaving anybody behind. **However, accept also smaller formations** of countries that would like to engage in more ambitious forms of regional collaboration (e.g. in a complementary, regional provision of QI services). Such “variable geometry” in which some countries remain outside certain initiatives could ensure that all stakeholders are fully motivated. This could, hence, facilitate the successful completion of SEE QI projects.

Keep the number of additional SEE QI projects low. Focus instead on the successful completion of those which were already approved.

Recommendations to PTB's "International Cooperation" department

Support the use of consultancy funds in other regional projects based on the positive experiences gained within this project. If BMZ decide to commission another regional SEE project, it would be recommended to integrate all bilateral activities in SEE into the SEE QI fund model (possibly also stand-alone PTB bilateral projects like the one in Serbia). This could be done either through a fully regional project without separate bilateral outputs or - as is the case in the current project - through another “hybrid” model combining regional and bilateral outputs. If the latter approach was chosen, the bilateral outputs should, however, not again be designed as bilateral “silos” but should be strongly interlinked with the regional output. This would require that bilateral interventions were not (exclusively) agreed with the bilateral partners but that they instead emerge to some extent from the topics covered at the regional level.