

SEE QI Newsletter 5

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 external evaluators of the SEE QI Fund

PTB decided to commission an external evaluation of the SEE QI Fund in Summer 2020 so that the recommendations can be considered in the remaining lifetime of the project and in a potential follow-up phase beyond 09/2021. Conducting an external project evaluation is a standard procedure in PTB International Cooperation whose aim is to contribute to individual and institutional learning as well as to accountability towards the funding ministry BMZ. The evaluation team was composed of Ms Petra Voionmaa, consultant on trade and sustainable economic development, and Mr Borut Matkovic, consultant specialised in quality infrastructure.

Because of Covid-19, the evaluation had to be conducted remotely. How did this affect the evaluation process and data quality, Ms Voionmaa?

We indeed had planned to travel to some countries but ended up doing the interviews through virtual means only. This was challenging because we had to fully rely on audio / video calls, without experiencing the country context in person. Also the extent to which we could interact more profoundly, e.g. through non-verbal communication, with partners was limited. But let's not forget that not travelling means saving resources in terms of time, money and CO2 emissions. I believe that the data gathered was sufficiently good to get a



Petra Voionmaa

comprehensive idea of the project and to assess it on that basis. Maybe there is even something to learn for future evaluations. Remote evaluations can be a good option also in post-Covid times.

Could you please give an overview of the main results of the evaluation?

The results of the evaluation are very positive. The project seems to be well on its way to reaching its objectives. Factors which have been decisive for the good results include the tight accompaniment of

SEE QI funds by the PTB team and the high degree of ownership by partners. Generally speaking, the SEE QI fund with its demand-driven and flexible procedures appears to be highly appreciated by partners. The final impact of the project will, however, depend on how the SEE QI projects will advance over the coming months. While the situation looks promising, they will require sufficient backing from the political level as well as from the hierarchy of QI institutions to be successfully completed.

What are your recommendations: how could the SEE QI Fund improve its work in the future?

To facilitate the success of SEE QI Fund projects, the members of the Western Balkans Consultative Committee should play an even more active role, e.g. by emphasizing their relevance to colleagues from relevant ministries and the management teams of QI institutions. It will also be important that SEE QI projects fully adopt remote working modes since Covid-19 is unfortunately likely to dominate our working modes for months to come. It is recommended to the PTB project team to accompany SEE QI projects closely and offer support, in particular, for digital exchanges.

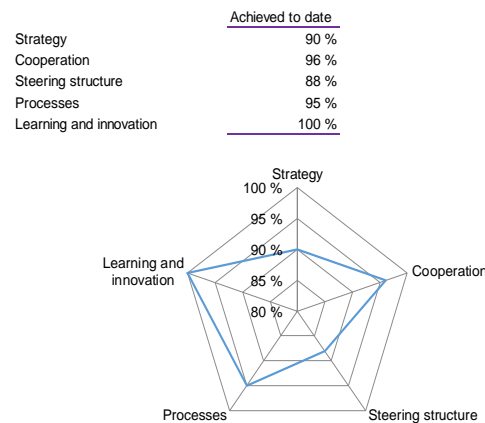
What are some interesting features of the SEE QI Fund that could serve as best practice for other cooperation activities in the Western Balkans or other regions?

Its demand-led nature not only seems to be in line with partner preferences but also offers the PTB project the possibility to capture the “energy” for regional cooperation flexibly in whichever areas of QI it develops. The risk is that this leads to a “Christmas tree” of topics – hence to a wide range of topics – which can be challenging for a project to manage. However, if the aim is to support regional cooperation, this flexible approach can be very valuable and worthwhile to consider also for PTB projects in other regions.

2. SEE QI Consultative Committee discussion on SEE QI Projects and the SEE QI Fund evaluation

During the second meeting of the SEE QI Fund’s Consultative Committee (CC), which was held virtually via videoconference on 9-10 July 2020, SEE QI project coordinators presented the current state of ongoing projects as well as possible synergies between the SEE QI projects and current political reforms.

The meeting was also used to present and validate the preliminary SEE QI Fund evaluation results with the CC members.



DAC evaluation criteria

Criterion	Criterion assessment
1. Relevance	1.0
2. Effectiveness	2.0
3. Efficiency	1.3
4. Impact	1.0
5. Sustainability	1.5
Global assessment	1.4

The summary of the final evaluation report can be found on the [SEE QI website](#).

3. Market surveillance of personal protective equipment

Among the many challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic is the question of ensuring both the quantity and quality of protective masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE), which are currently flooding the markets.

The SEE QI Fund responded to an ad-hoc request from a Western Balkans (WB6) partner to organise an exchange of experience on the topic of market surveillance (MS) of PPE used against Covid-19. Fourteen market surveillance inspectors from all WB6 countries and one EU expert participated in a half-day online meeting on July 15, 2020.

The shared information has been of crucial importance to raise the inspectors' awareness on common urgent issues in the Covid-19 pandemic, to enable them to detect fake or problematic products and thereby to protect the health and potentially save lives of medical professionals or others.



Two months later, during an e-training on September 28 and 29, 2020, market surveillance inspectors deepened their understanding of the legislative framework for market surveillance of PPE.

The trainer Ante Fuzul presented the content of the new Regulation (EU) 2016/425 on PPE and its differences to previous/ parallel EU legislation and guidelines; he also offered suggestions how to effectively implement this legislative framework in South East Europe. He shared valuable experience from his 13-year-long career as a market inspector in Croatia: from very technical information to non-technical advice on handling relations with producers and customs officials and prioritization of scarce budget resources for market inspection, among others.

Experts from BiH, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo also shared with their peers from WB6 countries their own best practices in fields such as hearing protectors or protective masks.

Inspectors from Kosovo and Montenegro reported how they used information from the previous exchange of experience on Covid-19 to detect falsified certificates and withdraw unsafe masks from their own markets in the framework of national campaigns.

4. Progress in standardization work for overhead electrical lines

The regional ad-hoc working group on the development of National Normative Aspects (NNA) related to the European Standard EN 50341 made considerable progress, despite inability to hold in-person regional meetings due to the continuous restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The different sub-groups presented the progress of their work in two regional video conferences on June 23, 2020 and September 22, 2020. Approximately 30 experts from the Western Balkans as well as two SEE QI Fund experts from Austria and Slovenia, Herbert Lugschitz and Kresimir Bakic, participated in the two events. An important milestone towards the development of the NNA was the development of wind and ice load maps, which were modelled based on freely available hydrometeorological data for Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Despite the limitations imposed by regional travel restrictions, the group is confident that it will be able to finalize the work required for a first draft of the regional NNA document by early 2021.

5. “How to effectively host virtual meetings” for SEE QI staff

The SEE QI team offers a practical training on hosting and running effective virtual meetings to enable staff from SEE QI institutions to continue their SEE QI projects, their technical committee work or other cooperation activities despite Covid-19.

Through the e-training “How to effectively host a virtual meeting” the trainer Suzana Lange shares valuable experiences gathered by the SEE QI team while piloting various virtual events since the Covid-19 outbreak: from small management meetings to e-trainings to large-scale virtual conferences.

In the first pilot run on October 9, 2020, 14 participants from various Western Balkan QI institutions received training on new concepts and methods and acquired new skills for organising and conducting productive online meetings. Topics such as preparation, implementation, evaluation and follow-up of online meetings were covered. A focus was put on methods and tools to interact with participants in virtual settings. The participants discussed specific challenges of virtual meetings in break-out rooms, shared their experience and tested polls and feedback tools.

The next e-training will be offered on November 12 (10am – 1pm). Members from all SEE QI institutions are invited to participate.

Please contact see@ptb.de to register, if you are interested.

6. The PTB Corona Taskforce inspires a new SEE QI project on Covid-19

The members of the SEE QI Consultative Committee will meet virtually on November 5, 2020 to jointly develop a cross-institutional SEE QI project aiming to enable SEE QI institutions to better respond to Covid-19 challenges. Possible activities might address the mitigation of economic consequences of Covid-19, the improvement of health-related services and building up capacities for digital work and cooperation.

This SEE QI project proposal is inspired by the work of the Corona Taskforce of the PTB International Cooperation Department. The Taskforce brings together PTB staff members and external experts from different fields. Over the past months, they discussed and developed concepts that contribute to lessening the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in partner countries by strengthening their national quality infrastructure. Another aim is to develop ideas on how virtual work processes can be improved in a general sense and how PTB participation in different projects can take place virtually.

Preliminary results can be found on the website: <https://www.covid19.ptb.de>



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
8. QI response to Covid-19 challenges	Mile Mitrovic, Ministry of Economy, Serbia	in preparation	

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