

SEE QI Newsletter 9

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 globally. 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.

Dear readers of the SEE QI Newsletter,

this is the 9th and, unfortunately, last edition of our SEE QI Fund Newsletter. The project will end later this year and most of the SEE QI projects have already been finished as planned and reported upon. Despite the fact that the project is terminated earlier than originally planned, we believe that it was very successful and innovative, particularly due to the quick and flexible response to the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SEE QI Fund's success stems from the highly motivated and hard-working partners, colleagues, collaborators and regional and international experts who have contributed to it. We would like to thank them once again for their contributions and commitment and wish them all the best in the future. To end this series of newsletters, we give the last word to our project partners from the WB6 region. Please read their testimonials further below.

The SEE QI project team

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1. Interview with Corinna Weigelt, Head of Section Europe and CIS, PTB

After 15 years of cooperation, PTB's implementation of technical assistance projects with countries from the WB6 region will soon come to an end. The Head of PTB's Section in charge of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Ms Corinna Weigelt, reflects on the achievements of this cooperation, and the SEE QI Fund, in specific.

Looking back at the 3.5 years of the SEE QI Fund implementation, in what ways did the SEE QI Fund differ from a standard project design? What results and impacts stood out to you in particular?

What stood out in particular has been the fact that the project was designed in a way that was tailored to our partners' needs, which enabled them to be in the driver's seat and take initiative. Moreover, the project supported those who actually wanted to make changes while working together with peers, learning from and contributing to local experiences. Therefore, the project had a strong peer-to-peer character. Another advantage has been the flexible mode of implementation, which made it easier to react to external changes. The SEE QI 8 project (WB6 response to COVID-19), for instance, is an example of the project's quick responsiveness. Generally, the SEE QI Fund was innovative in various ways. There was an agile transition to virtual communication including trainings with regard to the pandemic circumstances.

After 15 years PTB's collaboration with South East Europe will come to an end. Why?

Originally, the SEE QI Fund was designed as a long-term project. However, during its implementation, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) finalized an internal restructuring process (BMZ 2030) with a new definition of priorities and a new designation of partner countries and regions. In the context of this process, which reduced the number of partner countries and narrowed the scope of priorities, a continuation of the SEE QI Fund was not approved. At the same time, after 15 years of cooperation with countries in the region, we have noted that many of the QI institutions have steadily grown into equal partners in European QI networks and professional associations (e.g. EURAMET, EA) without the need



for support from technical assistance projects. We are optimistic that this will continue to be the case for most WB6 partners.

What overall impact did PTB make in South East Europe?

Overall, PTB contributed to many changes and improvements at technical level. A more intensive bilateral cooperation with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia has deepened and broadened the portfolio of internationally recognized QI services in these countries. The main impact, however, has been the creation of trust between colleagues from the WB6 countries, which, particularly in the early years of the cooperation, was a precondition for the later creation of professional networks and partnerships.

As Head of Section you are responsible for the PTB projects in other countries as well. What can these projects learn from the PTB-SEE collaboration?

Some of the topics and approaches from the SEE QI Fund may be applied to other countries and regions as well. Good relations within the region and with neighbouring countries could be created by inviting experts from the "wider circle" to the "inner circle" project activities. Lastly, a demand-driven fund structure could be applied in other projects as well, especially in those that operate on a regional level. Furthermore, experienced colleagues and experts from the WB6 region may be invited to share their knowledge and experience with networks in other regions.

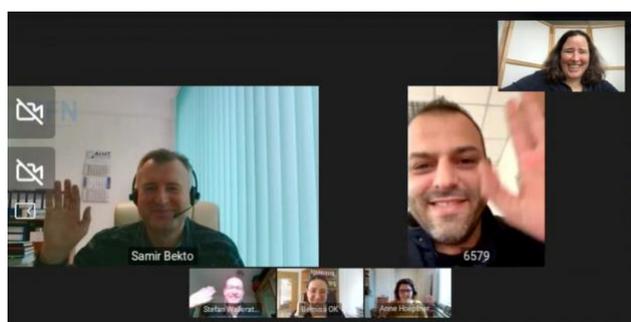
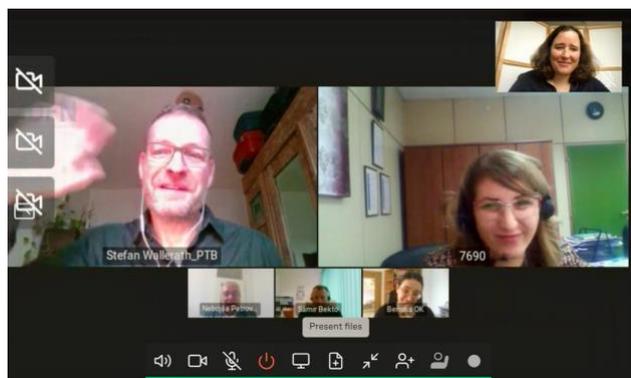
2. Closing Meeting of the SEE QI Fund Consultative Committee

PTB invited the SEE QI Fund Consultative Committee (CC), composed of representatives from the political level (usually the Ministries of Economy of the WB6 countries), for the last time on January 27, 2022.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last in-person meeting of the CC took place in June 2019 in Ohrid, North Macedonia. Since then, all bi-annual CC meetings had to be held virtually via a videoconference platform.

Despite the disadvantage of not being able to interact in person and get to know and work with each other, the virtual meetings have the invaluable advantage of saving a significant amount of time for each participant. In addition, other stakeholders may participate in parts of the CC meeting: The WB6 project coordinators of different SEE QI projects reported on the achievements and challenges of their respective projects.

Unfortunately, the last CC meeting was also the farewell event for all project collaborators. CC members and project coordinators received small farewell gifts from PTB as a token of appreciation and a reminder of their cooperation with PTB.



3. Testimonials from the SEE QI Fund's partners

Over the timespan of almost four years, the SEE QI Fund's project team cooperated with many partners. The creation and maintenance of networks and partnerships has been a crucial impact which was achieved despite restrictions due to the pandemic. Without its partners the SEE QI Fund could not have achieved the same results as it has. In their testimonials, the SEE QI Fund's partners share their perspective on the cooperation and partnership.

SEE QI 1 Interlaboratory Comparison (ILC) Small Volumes



"The participation in this project allowed the Institute of Metrology of Bosnia and Herzegovina to establish the internationally recognized laboratory for calibration of small volumes, i.e. laboratory glassware and piston

operating apparatus. The increased demand from calibration, testing, medical and pharmaceutical laboratories for reliable calibration of small volumes was already evident but, recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these calibration services even more important. Another significant outcome of the project was establishing a relationship with WB6 experts and professionals working in this area."
– *Ernad Borovac, Institute of Metrology, BiH*

SEE QI 2 Organic Production Roadmap

"Through workshops and webinars over the course of the project, our team received a lot of very useful information and practical instructions for compliance with the new EU Regulation 2018/848 on organic production as a certification body from a third country. The support of experts through the project and the excellent cooperation with all project participants are invaluable for the further development of our certification system. All workshops and webinars were organized outstandingly, especially the study trip and workshop in Germany, which we had the opportunity to attend in person." – *Bojana Ivignjević, Organic Control System OCS, Serbia*



SEE QI 3 National Normative Aspects (NNA) to EN 50341-1



“Within this project, we have taken a step forward in keeping up with European countries which published the National Normative Aspect for overhead electrical lines standard. In addition, the project has provided the setup of the hydrometeorological icing maps for BiH, which are of great importance in this field, having in mind extreme weather conditions that can occur in our country and make a significant impact on power grid. Also, I must mention that we had an excellent cooperation, both with regional institutions and between our institutions which participated in this project.” – *Zvezdan Šehovac, Institute for Standardization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, BiH*

“The working group is very useful because in working with colleagues from the region who have the same previous practice and regulations in the field of overhead line design, the adoption of new approaches in overhead line design has been significantly facilitated. The development of NNA is an extremely extensive and time-consuming process and will certainly not be completed for some time, but the joint work of the countries of the region certainly contributes to the quality and speed of NNA development.” – *Ivana Vlahović, Institute for Standardization of Montenegro, Montenegro*



SEE QI 4 New EU legislation on Market Surveillance



“The project supported useful ideas and contributed to the realization of constructive cooperation. This has provided key results in terms of acquiring knowledge and completing the necessary documentation and analytical materials that will contribute to a higher level of harmonization of the horizontal legal framework for market surveillance with EU Regulation (EU) 2019/1020. In the operational part

of the project, inspectors were provided with useful tools (checklists, sampling and risk assessment procedures) for the implementation of the Machinery Directive and the Personal Protective Equipment Regulation.” – *Vera Despotović, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, Serbia*

“One of the highlights of the project in my opinion were the processes of testing and sending samples to an accredited laboratory. Another highlight has been the speed of the project’s reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing activities that help the business community to mitigate the pandemic consequences. Also, the ability of the entire PTB project team to switch and adapt the initially foreseen joint plans, activities and communication to the new reality that was imposed by Covid-19 has been beneficial. The quality of the cooperation was excellent. To me it felt like being one of the members of a family where I can address and communicate every issue, even on a daily basis, with members of the project and colleagues from the region.” – *Artan Demolli, Market Inspectorate, Kosovo*



SEE QI 5 Metrology for medical devices



“The calibrator for infrared thermometers provided by PTB to the Bureau of Metrology has simple and clear operations. Its use is straightforward since PTB also provided useful literature and online tutorials by the manufacturer.” – *Olgica Petrusova, Bureau of Metrology, North Macedonia*

SEE QI 6 Harmonization of accreditation with European rules



“The project was based on the needs of national accreditation bodies of Western Balkan countries for the harmonisation of accreditation practices at regional level, always in compliance with European Accreditation (EA)

rules and principles and EA National Accreditation Bodies’ (NAB) experience outside the region. The project responded to the expectations of NABs, ensuring the accomplishment of our initial objectives. It was coordinated by representatives of the six NABs. Each NAB had its local coordinator which increased the cooperation between them. Different methodologies, e.g. trainings, workshops, exchanges of experience, development of new scheme of accreditation, were used. The project was very flexible especially given that it was finalised and implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.” – *Ardita Mele, General Directorate of Accreditation, DPA, Albania*

SEE QI 7 ISO 17043 capacity building

“The SEE QI 7 project helped us to gain knowledge of the ISO 17043:2010 standard requirements through training events organized during the first phase of the project.

Furthermore, this project helped us to develop some technical competence in organizing ILC/PT schemes at national level. So, together with a project consultant, DPM successfully organized a national PT scheme for testing of active energy meters with the participation of three laboratories in the country. Of course, we at DPM intend to continue to disseminate this knowledge within our institution and at national level and to organize ILC /PT schemes based on the country’s



needs, on a permanent basis. Personally, I would like to recognize the very good cooperation in the project. Unfortunately, the particular situation due to COVID-19 restrictions made the realization of ILC/PT schemes at regional level rather difficult.” – *Stilian Habibi, Directorate for Metrology, DPM, Albania*

SEE QI 8 WB6 Response to COVID-19



“SEE QI 8 was a well-conceived project and through three different modules it addressed topics that responded to the real needs of the business community and QI institutions in the WB6 region. ISRSM is very pleased

with the quality of the cooperation and grateful for having had the opportunity to participate and contribute to the concept of “Training of Trainers on Business Resilience Standards” and the e-trainings on virtual collaboration. Even though the topics mainly addressed the current pandemic situation, they will remain without a doubt relevant and applicable in the future as well.” – *Goran Pletvarski, ISRSM, North Macedonia*

“The Training of Trainers on Business Resilience Standards was very interactive and it covered a number of standards and best practices. It also gave the participants the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences from various industries and backgrounds. The trainers were professional and the participants were team players and willing to cooperate. I learned a lot from each session and I changed my mindset with regard to my approach to business.” – *Gazmir Hapçiu, trained expert in Business Resilience, Kosovo*



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