

Serbia

Support of the Quality Infrastructure in Serbia,

PN 2011.2184.7

**Evaluation
Short Report**

July 2013

Short Report on the evaluation of the project “Support of the Quality Infrastructure in Serbia”

1. The “Support of the Quality Infrastructure in Serbia” project, PN 2011.2184.7, implemented by the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB), was evaluated between April and June 2013. The evaluation’s objective was the assessment of the project’s results and the elaboration of recommendations for a follow-up project.
2. After a preparatory meeting held at the PTB an inception report was elaborated and transmitted to the project partners in Serbia at the beginning of May. The evaluator interviewed short-term experts assigned to the project by telephone before visiting Belgrade between 3 and 8 June, where consultations were held with representatives of all participating institutions, the members of staff of the GIZ-supported ACCESS Programme as well as the evaluators of the progress review of ACCESS, which was carried out during the same period.
3. Serbia lost a large part of its economic potential during the 90s. Since then, the country recorded an average annual economic growth rate of 3.7 percent. Investments into the automotive, steel and construction industries, the food sector and IT created jobs; the high unemployment rate of presently 20.4 percent remains a challenge, though.
4. Serbia has been a candidate for EU-membership since 2012. From 2009, being a potential membership candidate, the country had started to implement the EU’s *acquis communautaire*, of which quality infrastructure (QI) is an essential part. The elections in May 2012 and the formation of a new government slowed down the implementation of EU directives; however, bills for the harmonization with EU directives have already been passed. Accreditation of conformity assessment bodies (CABs) is an important task of alignment of the Serbian QI. Without appropriate conformity assessment and other QI services the competitive potential of the Serbian industry, in particular, SMEs, cannot be fully exploited.
5. Several donors support the economic development of Serbia, including the development of QI. Important are the IPA-programmes of the EU and the BMZ financed ACCESS Programme, implemented by GIZ, which includes components for the enhancement of competitiveness of SMEs and in particular the development of QI.
6. The project objective reads: “The Serbian Quality Infrastructure is aligned with international practice and the requirements of the EU in the areas of accreditation and metrology”. The project does not interact directly with the target group (industry / SMEs); however, the QI component of ACCESS, into which it is embedded, provides the required link with the target group. This link is implicitly also contained in the objectives of aligning the Serbian QI with EU-requirements and in the linkage to international practice.
7. The objective’s achievement indicators relate to: (i) the passing by parliament of EU-directives on pre-packages, measuring instruments (MID) and non-autonomous weighing

instruments (NAWI), (ii) a strategic document for the re-alignment of legal metrology, (iii) procedural instructions and process descriptions for the accreditation of so-called notified bodies at ATS (the Accreditation Body of Serbia) and to (iv) inputs for metrology and accreditation into the national QI strategy.

8. Although the elections of 2012 caused delays that the project could not influence, passing of directives will be accomplished at the end of the project term. The strategic document for the realignment of legal metrology is entailed in the inputs to the national QI-strategy, which are already available. The national QI-strategy will provide the basis for the alignment of the Serbian QI. Internal procedural instructions and process descriptions for the accreditation of notified bodies are available at ATS. ATS was also advised with regard to the process of international recognition and achieved international recognition for 4 accreditation fields after passing a peer-evaluation of the European Cooperation for Accreditation (EA). This is a significant milestone in the process of approximation to international practice and the requirements of the EU.
9. The evaluation confirms that all planned results have been fulfilled or even over-fulfilled. The participating institutions have taken full ownership of the project objective. The project follows a clear direction in line with agreed plans, but is flexible in its implementation and responsive to urgent requirements. The close link with the ACCESS Programme supports effectiveness. **Effectiveness** is assessed as very good.
10. Discussions during the evaluation confirmed that progress with regard to **impacts** has been made (such as enhanced framework conditions for the competitiveness of Serbian SMEs, improved conditions for trade and increased consumer protection) and that a good foundation for further progress has been laid. Study trips as well as the project's training measures increased the professional self-confidence of institutional staff and enhanced their competence of judgement. A relatively small project can hardly achieve quantitatively measurable impacts. The observed impacts correspond to the expectations and are assessed as good.
11. The project partners are fully committed towards the objective of EU-compatibility. High levels of ownership ensure that a secure foundation for the **sustainability** of projects results is present. Thanks to the available qualifications and competences, the absorption capacity for transferred knowledge and methods is high. The projects sustainability is underpinned by growing demand for QI-services. It is, however, affected by actual budget restrictions. Sustainability is still assessed as better than good.

12. The project supports the development of EU-compatible QI in Serbia. Associated improvements are fully in line with the development goals of Serbia and with the principles of Germany's development cooperation. They also correspond to the requirements and interests of the target groups, i.e. consumers and industry. This enhances economic development. The project's **relevance** is therefore very high.
13. Doing without resident experts or permanent project structures benefits **efficiency** of project implementation. The limited project budget flows as much as possible into direct support measures, which experts of high professional competence carry out upon project partners' requests. The cooperation with the regional PTB-project "Support of the regional cooperation of South-East European countries in the area of QI", with ACCESS and with the IPA-Programme of the EU facilitates efficient project implementation, so does the high professionalism of partners. Efficiency is assessed as very good.
14. The projects **strategy** was agreed upon with the political partners. It is fully aligned with Serbia's various development strategies. The project's participation in the development of the national QI-strategy leads to a high level of alignment of project strategies with partner strategies. Capacity development is a core and integral part of the project strategy. All activities are directed towards knowledge transfer.
15. The **cooperation** with the ACCESS Programme is oriented towards making use of synergies. Information exchange is regular and comprehensive. Cooperation with other donors is related to QI topics. The project supports institutional cooperation by way of facilitating joint training measures for participants of different QI institutions.
16. The project does not have a specific **steering structure**. Overall steering is ensured through regular meetings with the MoFE, while steering at operational levels takes place through regular consultations with DMDM and ATS. Cooperation and processes that are required for the approximation of QI to international practice and the directives of the EU are inherent to the international QI system.
17. **Processes** within partner organisations are taking place efficiently. The optimization of such processes is not part of the project's objective, which is the capacity development of staff and organisations with regard to professional aspects. Processes of the delivery of results take place at institutional levels and include measures to improve the performance of QI institutions.
18. **Learning and innovation** is being supported by way of extensive documentation of all project outputs and the exchange of experience with ACCESS. Partners are establishing and extending regional and international cooperation at institutional levels. For QI, this is an

important area of learning and gaining experience, which the project supports. The new approach directives of the EU constitute an area of continuous learning; for the Serbian private sector the directives represent a field of innovation. The project supports this process of learning and innovation competently.

19. The following **lessons learned** can be derived from the project:

- a) The embedding of the PTB-supported project into the ACCESS Programme has proved of value, because the division of work facilitates reciprocal concentration on professional aspects, aids efficient project implementation in organisational terms and because visibility and awareness building for QI gain in the context of economic development.
- b) The institutional “chemistry” between a relatively well-developed QI system in Serbia and the PTB facilitates a particularly high effectiveness of project implementation. Partners know what they can demand from the other in terms of contributions and what type of support they can expect.
- c) The clear definition of the objective (EU-compatibility) leads to clearly defined contributions of both partners to achieving this objective, because it is tangible. The lesson learned would be that in cases where a clear goal definition is not possible, milestones should be defined, which fulfil the quality requirement of tangibility.
- d) Coordination with other donors in view of a relatively short time horizon requires flexibility and swift action. The project understood very well how to do this for the benefit of partners.

20. Basing on the analysis and assessment in the previous chapters the implementation of a follow-up project of 3 years duration is recommended.

21. The follow-up project will not yet lead to a conclusion in the sense of achieving EU compatibility of QI in Serbia. This can be expected approximately 2 years after the conclusion of the follow-up project, provided further support will be made available.

22. The follow-up project should focus on continued support measures in the areas of metrology and accreditation. The milestones of a plan of operations to be developed should strategically be directed towards an exit from support during a final project to be implemented afterwards. The project should include a monitoring system for the desired direct impacts.

23. 200,000 EUR have already being committed for the follow-up project. This amount should be used to prepare DMDM (the Serbian metrology institute) for accreditation as notified body, to qualify ATS to accredit conformity assessment bodies (CABs) as notified bodies and to support ATS in strengthening and expanding its status as signatory of reciprocal recognition agreements (MLA) in the framework of the European Cooperation for Accreditation (EA).

24. However, the demand for support is higher. Discussions with the MoFE, DMDM and ATS as well as with short-term experts suggest that additional activities will be necessary in order to reach the objective of the follow-up project with regard to timely EU compatibility. Additional activities would qualify DMDM to carry out market surveillance for measuring instruments, while the support of ATS could be extended towards the qualification for additional accreditation areas and further EA-MLAs. 300,000 EUR would be required for such additional activities.

25. The following project objective has been proposed for the follow-up project:

“The quality infrastructure of Serbia has made significant progress with regard to EU-compatibility”.

26. Proposed indicator refer to:

- improved business prospects for the CABs to be accredited through ATS,
- expanded recognition of ATS through EA-MLAs,
- the qualification of ATS to accredit CABs as notified bodies, and
- the successful preparation of DMDM to become notified body.

27. Should the funds be increased, indicators would, in addition, measure the improvement of the business potential of SMEs which rely to a high degree on a performing QI, increased target values for EA-MLAs and accreditation competencies of ATS, as well as the qualification of DMDM for market surveillance of measuring instruments.