

Upgrading Quality Infrastructure in Africa

Supporting intra-African trade and the African Continental Free Trade Area

Background

Much has been said about the vast potential of enhancing intra-African trade to further sustainable economic development on the continent. The implementation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will be great steps towards reaching this potential. Among the key building blocks to the successful implementation of any trade agreement is the question of technical barriers to trade (TBT). On the one hand, barriers that have no justification in terms of consumer, health and environmental protection need to be lifted. On the other hand, a well-developed quality infrastructure at the national, regional and continental level is needed to foster compliance with the various quality criteria that are necessary to ensure free, fair and safe trade and thus realize the advantages of a free trade area.

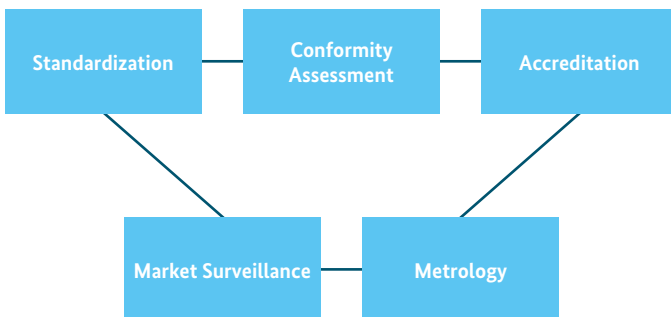


Figure 1: Elements of quality infrastructure

Our approach

In the 1991 Abuja Treaty, the Treaty Establishing the African Union, the need for a common policy on standardization and measurement systems is explicitly mentioned. This is the basis for the establishment of the Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI), which happened in 2013. PAQI is comprised of the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC), the Intra-Africa Metrology System (AFRIMETS), the African Electro-technical Standardisation Commission (AFSEC) and the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO).

Through a multi-level approach, PTB supports the efforts of the African Union, its Member States, the AfCFTA Secretariat and PAQI to coordinate important quality infrastructure

Project name	Upgrading of Quality Infrastructure in Africa
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Lead executing agency	Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB)
Political partners	African Union Commission (AUC), AfCFTA Secretariat
Implementation partners	Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI), regional and national quality infrastructure institutions
Budget	EUR 12.9 million (including a separate component on pharmaceuticals)
Duration	09/2019 – 08/2024

elements throughout the entire continent and internationally. Strategic advice is rendered to the African Union Commission (AUC) to coordinate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). For this reason, there is also very close technical cooperation with the AfCFTA Secretariat. Awareness creation for quality infrastructure as a crosscutting topic is continued, and the PAQI organizations are supported to fulfil the requirements arising from AfCFTA Annex 6 (Technical Barriers to Trade). Technical consultancy is provided to develop pan-African approaches for the harmonization and approximation of standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment, ensuring the participation of the regional economic communities to support an effective and efficient implementation of the AfCFTA. The methodical approach is based on different concepts of capacity building including virtual and practical formats, organizational development and policy advice.

In cooperation with:



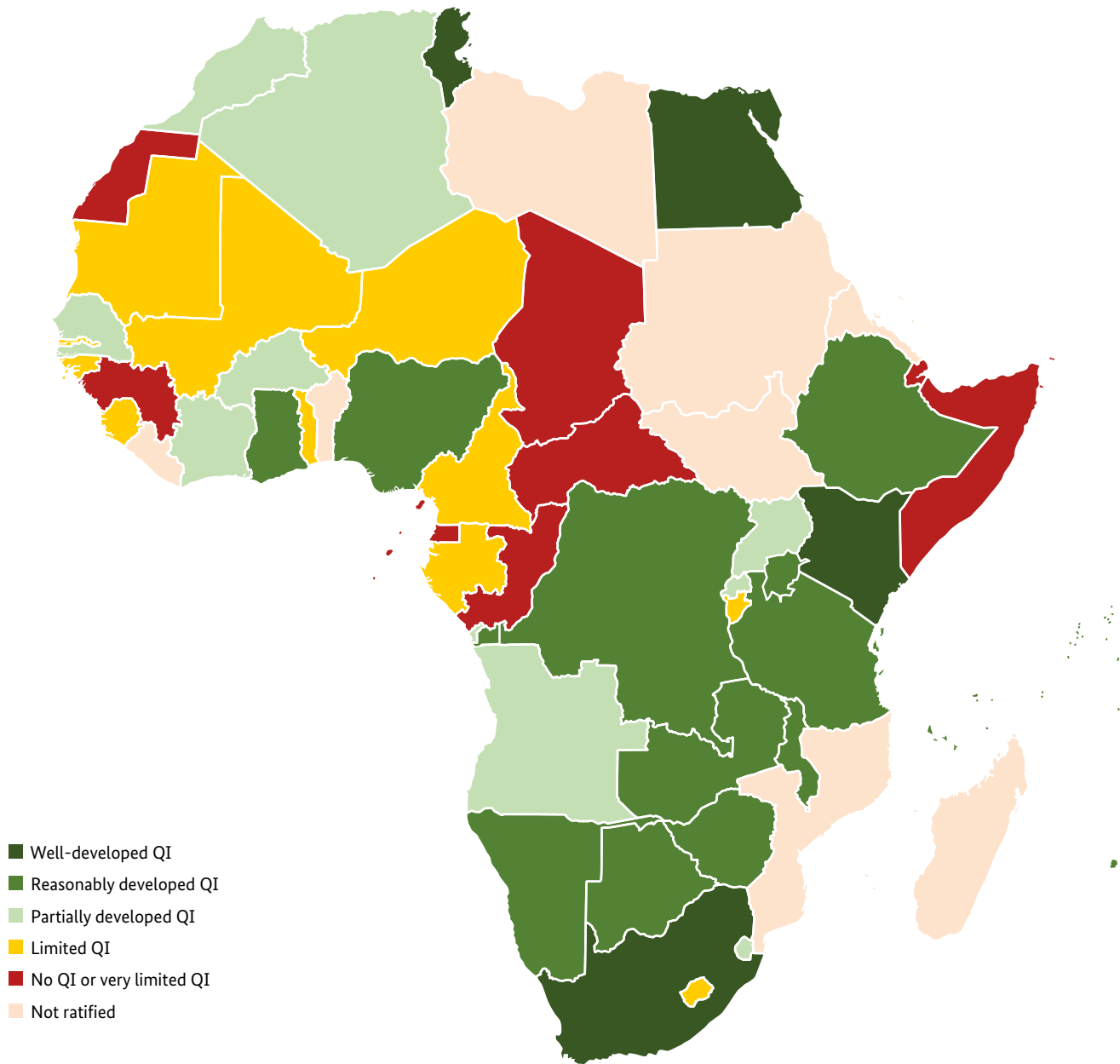
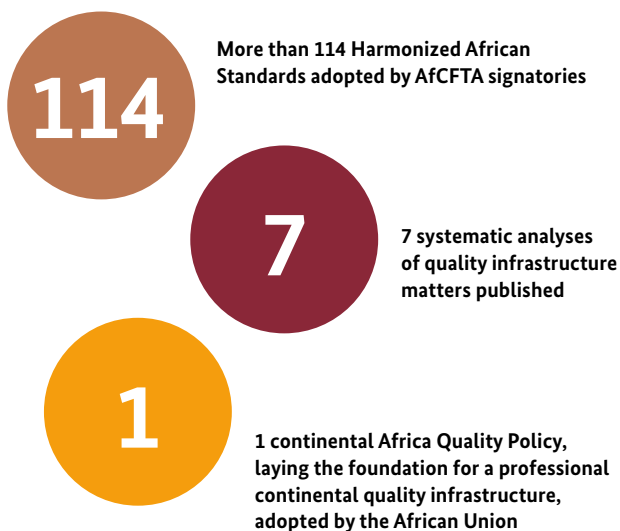


Figure 2: PAQI TBT Index scores (2020) for AfCFTA ratifiers



Objective and components

The objective is for the Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI) to support Africa's economic integration. The project operates in a demand-driven logic and covers three output areas in this regard:

- Enhanced capabilities to implement the AfCFTA Annex on technical barriers to trade (TBT)
- Consolidation of the African continental quality infrastructure system
- Development and use of quality assurance tools

Partner structure at the continental level

The political partner of the project is the African Union Commission (AUC). It cooperates directly with the Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (ETTİM). Another key partner is the AfCFTA Secretariat in Accra, Ghana. As an independent organ of the AU, it is responsible for the negotiations and implementation of the AfCFTA. The implementation partners are PAQI and its pillars AFRAC, AFRIMETS, AFSEC and ARSO, as well as regional and national quality infrastructure institutions and bodies. Furthermore, the project cooperates with relevant international and sectoral institutions, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

Key challenges

A well-developed quality infrastructure is a complex network. It must be developed based on the needs of industries, consumers and traders and function both coherently and like clockwork.

- Staff in quality infrastructure institutions need profound technical capacities, e.g., in the areas of testing, calibration and standardization.
- Quality infrastructure institutions need to be more aware of the private sector's needs and systematically work towards meeting these.
- At the political level and in the relevant public institutions, awareness on the necessity and required scope of quality infrastructure is fundamental in order to ensure adequate financing of the relevant bodies.

- A risk lies in the development of parallel, non-coherent systems across sectors or economies, as these cause additional costs for trading partners and, ultimately, African consumers.

Key benefits

The project's activities contribute to a systemic and sustainable quality infrastructure network that interlinks the national, regional and continental levels. The project reacts directly to the needs of different sectors and quality infrastructure dimensions. Where appropriate, new services and standards are developed which directly benefit the private sector. Continentally coordinated technical regulations protect consumers and ease intra-African trade. The cooperation among the relevant political and technical bodies is promoted through institutionalized exchange and improved coordination. All taken together, the activities lead to a reduction of technical barriers to trade and thus sustainable economic growth through enhanced intra-African trade. In effect, they also contribute to protection of consumers, good governance and human, animal and plant health.

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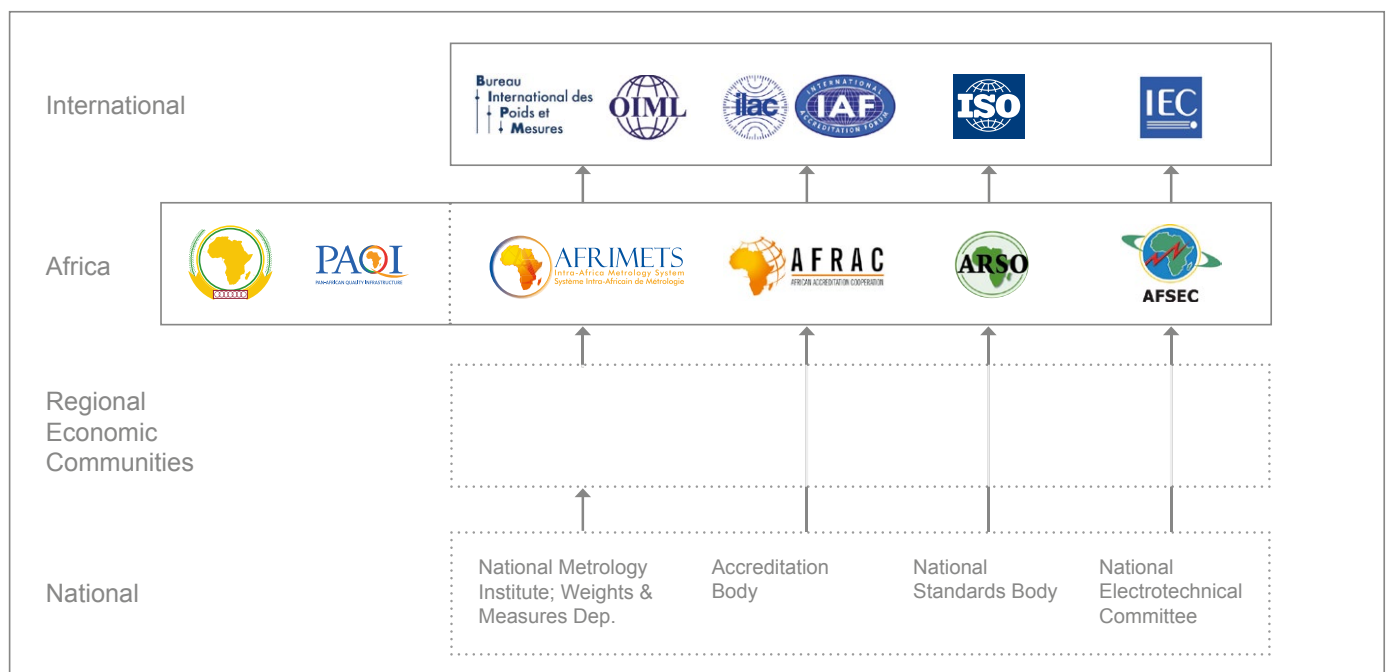


Figure 3: Cooperation landscape for quality infrastructure in Africa

