

The Benefits of Accreditation

Eugeniusz W. Roguski,
director of the Polish Centre
for Accreditation,
talks to Andrzej Jonas.

■ The British have calculated that the operations of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) brings the British economy more than 600 million pounds a year. How does the Polish economy benefit from the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA)?

Britain is the first country in the world to attempt to translate the work of its accreditation body into hard cash. *The Economics of Accreditation*, a report published this March, and which is unique, on the research of a group of scientists from the University of London, discusses the role and importance of the UKAS for the British economy in great depth.

I think this is a very interesting study and wonder if we shouldn't try to compile a similar report showing how and to what extent the operations of the PCA contribute to economic growth. Let me give you an example: the PCA as the signatory of multilateral international agreements certainly plays a role in that exporters don't encounter barriers hampering their operations on international markets, given that exports are, after all, the driving force of our economy. There are also other areas where accreditation plays a stimulating role.

■ I'm sure researchers from the Warsaw School of Economics would handle such a task just as



well as their peers from the University of London. The British report was supported by two government ministries. What is the PCA's cooperation with the Polish administration like?

The past year or so has been the most intensive period in the PCA's cooperation with government administration bodies in terms of using accreditation to meet needs related to the authorization and notification of conformity assessment bodies. Under European law (Regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council), every country has the right to choose its own path: either using authorized and then notified bodies for assessing competence—i.e. accreditation, in which case everything is clear, or choosing a different instrument but then having to prove to the European Commission that the chosen method is no worse than accreditation.

Poland has decided to use accreditation for notification purposes, as set down in the amendments to the law on the conformity assessment system, consequently resulting in very lively cooperation between the PCA and the relevant authorizing bodies for individual directives. This cooperation involves series of bilateral, sometimes trilateral meetings, but sometimes also the appointment of joint working groups tasked with reaching a consensus on two fundamental issues: the scope of accreditation to be granted and the means of evaluating the competence of conformity assessment bodies. Never in the PCA's history has cooperation with the government administration been as good as it is now. I am very happy that finally a well-tested accreditation tool is being used successfully by the majority of the public administration's authorizing bodies.



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■ *The Warsaw Voice* has reported on the PCA's role in the successful exports of Polish food, especially meat and meat products...

The European Union attaches great importance to promoting its Quality Policy among the member states, with the aim of producing and supplying the market with foodstuffs of the highest quality, including pork, beef and poultry.

This is why, at the request of the Union of Meat Industry Producers and Employers (UPEMI) and the Polish Association of Beef Cattle Producers (PZPBM), the PCA appointed two specialist Technical Committees, for Quality Assurance for Food Products (QAFP) and for the Quality Meat Program (QMP). The work of these Committees involved representatives from all the interested parties: cattle, pig and poultry farmers, consumers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the PCA, and yielded two documents on which the accreditation process is based.

Accreditation of certification bodies within the QAFP and QMP systems confirms compliance with the fundamental document—the PN-EN 45011 standard—and the QAFP and QMP requirements.

Consumers buying goods marked with the QAFP and QMP symbols—which means they hold certificates from certification bodies accredited by the PCA—can be sure they have spent their money on products of the highest quality.

Producers of such foods, on the other hand, thanks to the multilateral international agreements signed by the PCA, can be sure that practically all world markets are open to them.

■ **As the director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation, what does “quality” mean to you?**

In my professional circle “quality” has a slightly different, narrower meaning. In the world of accreditation and certification we say a product is “not worse than.” I don't say it is good but say it is safe to use. For me, high quality means fulfilling certain requirements. Beyond that is where the role of consumer organizations begins. Germany is the perfect example of a developed consumer market. These two worlds collaborate very well over there. First comes the conformity assessment system that allows the sale of products that are not hazardous and do not mislead customers. Additionally they have very well-developed consumer organizations that run almost a quality ranking list. This is a typical consumer market. In Poland, we have a producer market. Producers decide what they sell on the market.

■ **What is the reason for this difference?**

It's a lack of awareness. In the West, customers demand quality. In Poland, we have two areas in the conformity assessment system: the area regulated by law and the voluntary area. We grant accreditation to bodies from both these areas. Polish people, contrary to well-developed democracies, expect too much of the government, which is evident from the fact that the PCA grants accreditation to laboratories and certification bodies mainly in the areas regulated by law. In Western Europe, on the other hand, the proportions are the opposite: the voluntary area dominates, a situation that is enforced by very strong consumer organizations. Looking at the volume of goods purchased in Poland, Polish consumers are a huge force. However, their strength is not utilized properly to stimulate the continual improvement of the quality of goods produced and services provided.



PCA—ESSENTIAL FACTS

The Polish Centre for Accreditation is the national accreditation body authorized to accredit certification and inspection bodies, testing and calibration laboratories and other entities conducting conformity assessments and verifications on the basis of the Act of Parliament of Aug. 30, 2002, on the conformity assessment system (Official Journal of 2010, No. 138, item 935 with changes, and of 2011, No. 102, item 586).

According to Regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 9, 2008, setting out the requirements for accreditation and market surveillance relating to the marketing of products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No. 339/93, the Polish Centre for Accreditation has been appointed as the only national accreditation body in the light of the above Regulation.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation was established on Jan. 1, 2001.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation takes part in the work of international organizations in the field of accreditation. The PCA is a member of the:

- ✓ IAF (International Accreditation Forum, Inc.)
- ✓ ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation)
- ✓ EA (European co-operation for Accreditation)

(more information at: www.pca.gov.pl)

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