

Accreditation Removes

Accreditation and certification were among the topics of a panel discussion entitled *Polish Exports: Rapid Growth and Future Prospects* held during the sixth Warsaw Economic Hub conference Nov. 27. The main panelists were Jaroslaw Beldowski, vice president of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego; Eugeniusz W. Roguski, director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation; Marek Sypek, president of the management board of Agros Nova; and Waldemar Guba, deputy director of the EU and international cooperation department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The discussion was moderated by Andrzej Jonas, editor-in-chief of *The Warsaw Voice*.



From left: Jaroslaw Beldowski, Eugeniusz W. Roguski, Marek Sypek and Waldemar Guba

By way of introduction, Jonas cited data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) concerning the Polish economy's performance in the first three quarters of 2013. He added that Poland owed almost half of its GDP growth to Polish companies selling more goods and services abroad. In other words, exports have become the main driver of the Polish economy, while one of the key factors that have caused Polish exports to increase is the work of the Polish Centre for Accreditation.

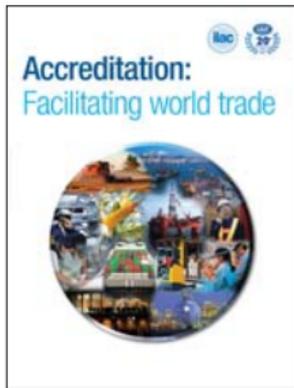
Jonas asked Roguski, the director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation, to explain to the discussion participants how accredited certification had made life easier for Polish exporters and opened borders for Polish goods and services in Europe and around the world.

Roguski started by presenting the motto of World Accreditation Day

2013 — "Accreditation: Facilitating World Trade," (pictured right) printed on the front page of a pamphlet published by ILAC and IAF, two worldwide associations of national accreditation bodies. In their publication, ILAC and IAF highlight the crucial role that accreditation plays in facilitating trade on national and international markets. Globalization has enabled access to a wide range of goods and services from practically all countries around the world, but the problem is making sure that safety and environmental standards are observed while the demand for such goods and services is being satisfied. Safety issues are the realm of a host of institutions, organizations and companies that deal with conformity assessment, from testing laboratories and calibration laboratories to inspection bodies, to bodies that verify reports on, for example, greenhouse gas emissions, to certification bodies that issue docu-

ments allowing products and services to be put on the market.

Consumers, businesses and regulatory agencies have growing expecta-



Barriers

tions, causing the number of voluntary and mandatory technical requirements, standards and procedures regarding testing, inspection and certification to increase in all countries and in all sectors of the market. Addressing this problem, associations of accreditation bodies in Europe and other parts of the world are seeking to harmonize conformity assessment criteria globally. That way, a certificate from an accreditation body, such as the Polish Centre for Accreditation, is a guarantee of quality for buyers of products and services. In Poland, the Polish Centre for Accreditation has accredited over 1,500 bodies that are involved in testing of products and services in Poland and on foreign markets. Such institutions and companies have almost 30,000 employees whose annual salaries total z.l.1 billion. However, there needs to be an authority to verify whether such staff have appropriate qualifications and skills to do their job—the Polish Centre for Accreditation is that authority in Poland. It issues certificates of accreditation authorizing institutions and companies to conduct conformity assessment and then, once a year at least, it checks whether everything is in order. The legal basis for the Polish Centre for Accreditation is the Polish law on the conformity assessment system and EU regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The Polish Centre for Accreditation is a public institution and as such, it is bound by certain limitations with regards to employment and salaries, even though it is financially self-sufficient and gets no funds from the government.

One of the main criteria the Polish Centre for Accreditation and any other national accreditation body needs to meet is to be impartial to any kind of pressure and lobbying. It has to be perfectly clear that an accreditation certificate has been issued “by the book,” that is, following impartial assessment of competences and not on any other

grounds. To make sure this is the case, every four years a team of experts from other European accreditation bodies conducts an audit at the Polish Centre for Accreditation.

Accredited certification based on impartial assessment of whether international standards have been met is the only guarantee that a producer or a service provider is trustworthy. Such certification could be crucial to a foreign partner in deciding whether to start working with a Polish company. Certification is also becoming a prerequisite for applying for contracts through bidding procedures. Through internationally harmonized requirements, accreditation enables uniform interpretation of standards and regulations so these no longer obstruct global exchange of goods and services. Thanks to multilateral international agreements, accreditation gives a boost to national economies by making it easier for businesses to enter and expand on foreign markets.

One more major advantage of accreditation is that multilateral agreements are an international guarantee for governments that standards and other requirements are met. As a result, accreditation, which underpins the system of conformity assessment, can help liberalize regulations and remove administrative barriers that hinder operations for many businesses.

According to Roguski, accreditation should be evaluated in terms of the bottom line in order to be fully appreciated. In March last year, researchers from the University of London published a report entitled *The Economics of Accreditation*, in which they discuss the importance of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). The report details the benefits for the British economy arising from the work of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service—in monetary terms more than £600 million a year. Britain was the first country to estimate how much the work of its accreditation body was worth in pounds and pence.

A similar report was released in October in Germany. Germany's DAkkS is the largest accreditation body in Europe and the figures contained in the report reflect this. The economic benefits generated by DAkkS are estimated at 8.6 billion



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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 cooperation for Accreditation)

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

euros, of which exports account for almost 2.8 billion euros.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation is the fourth largest accreditation body in the EU, according to Roguski. “I wonder if Polish researchers will, like those in Germany and Britain, be interested in calculating the extent to which the Polish Centre for Accreditation and all conformity assessment bodies contribute to the growth of the Polish economy,” said Roguski. “That would paint a fuller picture of factors that stimulate the Polish economy.”