

# PCA—Challenges of Accreditation

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 last year in November. Among those taking part in the discussion, which was moderated by Andrzej Jonas, editor-in-chief of *The Warsaw Voice*, was Eugeniusz W. Roguski, Ph.D., director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA).

In an introduction to the discussion, Jonas cited data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) concerning the Polish economy's performance in the first three quarters of 2013. He said at the time that Poland owed almost half of its GDP growth to Polish companies selling more goods and services abroad. In other words, according to Jonas, 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.

The January issue of *The Warsaw Voice* (1/2014) included an extensive report on the conference, published under the title "Accreditation Removes Barriers." Roguski told the meeting, "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."

The full article is available on the PCA website at [www.pca.gov.pl](http://www.pca.gov.pl).

This year key Polish and international figures from the worlds of finance and business and politics as well as government officials and representatives from institutions playing a key role in the development of markets will meet again at the 7th Warsaw Economic Hub conference, to be held Dec. 10, 2014 at the Warsaw Stock Exchange building under the title "Challenges for Poland and Central and Eastern Europe in a Changing International Situation: 2015 and Beyond." An article focusing on the conformity assessment system, the PCA and its role in the Polish economy, and on the challenges that the PCA will face in the coming years, will appear in the

December issue of the *Voice* that will be handed out to the participants of the 7th WEH conference. The article is expected to reach a broad and influential circle of readers with information about these topics, thus contributing to an even wider use of accreditation with a view to further increasing the efficiency of the Polish economy.

The PCA's activities are regulated by a law on the conformity assessment system that determines the objectives of the conformity assessment system:

- 1) eliminating risks posed by products to users and consumers as well as to property, as well as environmental risks;
- 2) removing technical barriers to trade and facilitating international trade;
- 3) creating conditions for a fair assessment of products and production processes by competent and independent entities."

Every aspect of daily life is governed by certain standards, mandatory or voluntary. These concern, among other things, the quality and safety of food, occupational safety, safety at home, information security, safety in terms of industrial products and environmental protection. Safety is inextricably linked to trust. Organizations directly or indirectly responsible for ensuring public security use accredited results that raise confidence in terms of the decisions made on their basis. Since these activities require appropriate skills and their use in practice, accreditation is the best, proven way of demonstrating such knowledge and competence.

In Poland, accreditation is handled by the Polish Centre for Accreditation, which is authorized to do so under the law on the conformity assessment system as the only Polish accreditation body under Regulation (EC) no. 765/2008. The PCA accredits testing laboratories (1,198 active accreditations), medical



laboratories (8) and calibration laboratories (111); product certification bodies (77), management systems (35) and persons (14); inspection bodies (13); EMAS environmental verifiers (8), verifiers of annual reports on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (8); organizers of proficiency testing (5 active accreditations).

These accreditations cover virtually all spheres of social and economic life: from the accreditation of forensic laboratories examining traces left at a crime scene as well as medical laboratories, through the accreditation of laboratories testing toys, sports and recreation equipment, building materials, medical devices; accreditation of certification bodies for forestry, organic farming, and foodstuffs—almost all products that are subject to trade as commodities. The PCA keeps expanding its range of operations to include new areas, both regulated and voluntary, in response to market demand and the needs of the public administration.

Accreditation processes are handled at the PCA by the Laboratory Accreditation Department, which includes four teams: 1) a team for the calibration and testing of environmental emissions; 2) a team for testing food and health; 3) a team for physical, mechanical and functional testing; 4) a team for testing water, sewage and fuels; and by the Department for the Accreditation of Certification and Inspection Bodies, which deals with practically all sectors of the economy, including agriculture and food produc-

tion, production of building materials, furniture, machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, and hi-tech medical devices. Accredited inspections check the quality of coal and other solid, liquid or gaseous fuels, as well as the quality of cereals and foodstuffs. Sanitary and environmental health inspectors oversee the protection of the environment, including the recycling of industrial by-products and waste into recyclable materials; recycling of construction waste into building materials; separation and sorting of solid waste and recovery of raw materials; recycling of batteries and chemicals. Moreover, inspectors oversee sectors especially important for economic development and environmental protection:

- 1) production of electricity and heat from renewable energy sources: wind, water, geothermal sources, biomass, solar power, biogas;
- 2) the use of energy from waste: third-generation fuel, efficient combustion technologies;
- 3) energy-efficient technologies, micro-turbines, hydrogen and fuel cells, heat pumps, heat and power cogeneration, energy storage and recovery.

Also, Polish verifiers of annual reports on greenhouse gas emissions—who play an important role in the European emissions allowance trading system—must have certificates of accreditation from the PCA.

The PCA operates within the global accreditation system, which is divided into regions. In Europe, the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) brings together accreditation bodies providing accreditation in all areas related to conformity assessment, including research, calibration, inspection, certification and verification. At the global level accreditation has been divided into: the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), an organization bringing together leading accreditation bodies providing accreditation of laboratories and inspection bodies, and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), which brings together accreditation bodies responsible for accreditation in the area of certification. The decisions and priorities of these organizations as well as their development underline the essence of accreditation provided by national accreditation bodies in Europe and worldwide.

Since 2001, that is since its inception, the Polish Centre for Accreditation has been a full member of international associations of accreditation bodies: the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), and International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). Working with these bodies, the PCA has signed the Multilateral Agreements in all the areas covered by these agreements. The Polish Centre for Accreditation is also a member of the Forum for Accreditation and Licensing Bodies (FALB), a European organization of accreditation bodies dealing with the accreditation of EMAS verifiers.

The free movement of goods and services is now one of the factors boosting economic growth in Europe and elsewhere. This has become possible thanks to the international regulations and standards that make up a single conformity assessment system and contribute to removing technical barriers to trade.

Poland, as a member of the European Union, is obligated to transpose European Commission directives and regulations into national law. In the near future the PCA will face a major challenge based on the need to develop accreditation programs for 30 directives.

Polish regulators have been making an increasing use of accreditation in recent years. Over the past five years, the PCA has developed a total of 31 accreditation programs, most of them for the needs of public administration bodies. The PCA is signing a growing number of bilateral and sometimes trilateral agreements. The implementation of the conformity assessment system makes it possible to enhance supervision in a specific area. In the rail sector, the PCA signed an agreement with the Office of Rail Transport (UTK) in July last year on cooperation in the evaluation and supervision of accredited bodies for the purposes of authorization and notification in compliance with Directive 2008/57/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the interoperability of the rail system within the Community. Both institutions undertook to provide each other with the results of evaluations, audits and inspections carried out by them in bodies seeking accreditation and in already accredited bodies.

Meanwhile, a joint statement by the Polish Centre for Accreditation and the



#### 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](http://www.pca.gov.pl))

Office for the Technical Supervision of Transport of April 24, 2014, reads that bodies seeking authorization to issue official clearance and approval decisions in the transportation sector must obtain accreditation, confirmed by a certificate of accreditation, from the PCA, as one of the conditions for obtaining such a status.

Soon the PCA will sign an agreement with the Ministry of Economy related to 18 EU directives. Also awaiting signature is a trilateral agreement between the PCA, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the UTK.