

A portrait of a woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark leather jacket over a dark top. She is standing with her hands on her hips, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a plain, light grey color.

The director of the Polish  
Centre for Accreditation  
**LUCYNA OLBORSKA** talks  
to “Polish Market’s” Ewelina  
Janczylik-Foryś.

# ACCREDITATION - TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION

**PM We last spoke in October 2018. What has changed since then?**

We live at a time when change is part and parcel of the surrounding reality, in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres. To a certain extent, accreditation influences and regulates issues related to each of these spheres, but its impact on the economy is the greatest. As a tool, accreditation is designed to respond to change, in order to ensure liquidity, transparency and to minimise risk in international trade and the exchange of services. It is indispensable to make the right decisions.

**PM How many new accreditations have been granted over the past year?**

In 2018, we granted 50 new accreditations and we processed 1,340 applications to update the scope of an existing accreditation, which means that almost each our client submitted an application.

**PM What are your plans for this year?**

We started 2019 with a plan to promote the idea of accreditation among business communities. It is not a random step, but it stems from a newly adopted communication strategy, which is in reaction to changes which are currently taking place. This strategy is directly linked with the steadily growing role of accreditation in international trade, and changes in the structure of international co-operation concerning the flow of goods and services. It is not a coincidence that this year's World Accreditation Day was celebrated under the motto "Accreditation - added value in the supply chain," which is closely associated with global trade. In the macroeconomic dimension, the escalating trade war between the United States and China has many implications. One of the most positive developments is the increase in imports from the European Union to China. When it comes to the EU, this year's round anniversary of Poland's accession to the European Union provides a good reason to highlight the values of jointly developed standards, which during the past 15 years

of operation within the single market, have contributed to this country's growth.

**PM Is there anything which is likely to increase the role of accreditation in trade this year?**

In my opinion, a unique and unprecedented fact is the finalisation of negotiations on a trade agreement between the EU and the South American Mercosur organisation (Mercado Común del Sur). This agreement practically means the abolition of trade barriers for over 800 million people. It is the most significant deal in terms of the value of abolished excise duties to have been concluded by the EU. In view of such global processes, the role of accreditation keeps growing. It is a guarantee of making correct and informed decisions in a complex and increasingly interdependent economic reality.

**PM Does accreditation give individual companies a competitive advantage?**

The accreditation system creates a universal regulatory framework which positively affects international trade, and occupies an important position among a company's intangible assets. Even though the accreditation system is not directly part of a company's intangible assets (such as a brand and social capital), it does have a significant impact on their final shape and further functioning. Basically, the role of accreditation in a company's operation can be best described by using a quote from a seasoned tennis player. In one of the interviews he was asked what makes him the best. He answered that the idea is not to run toward where the ball is right now, but toward where it's going to be in a moment. Accreditation plays the role of forward thinking. It fits into and complements the entire business strategy. It allows you to anticipate situations in which business processes are likely to occur, and to prevent possible risks at the planning stage.

**PM So accreditation is a form of strategic response to potential threats, isn't it?**

That's right. In a way, accreditation allows an organisation to avoid the trial-and-error approach. It enables it to use a range of proven standards which show how to eliminate potential threats at the planning stage. Accreditation is thus an excellent form of crisis management because it prevents crises from arising. The system of standards strictly connected with accreditation is indispensable for the development of the organisation in virtually all economic sectors. Certain standards regulate not only the functioning of a given corporate structure, but also create a competitive advantage, while strengthening the brand of a given product or organisation. The application of standards also has a strictly economic dimension, for example, through the reduction of transaction costs, or through the forging of links which contribute to higher production efficiency.

**PM What advantages does accreditation offer the consumer?**

The accreditation of entities which assess compliance with standards in testing, calibration, inspection and certification of products, processes and services, is now widely used as a basic tool to build trust regarding the safety and quality of products and services. A reliable company is keen to obtain external confirmations of the quality and safety of its products and services, to be able to assure potential clients that they meet all required standards. In a nutshell, accreditation eliminates risk in each consumer's decision-making process. It serves as a guarantee of the quality of products and services.

**PM Could you give some practical examples?**

To illustrate the importance of accreditation, let me quote an example of accredited laboratories which check water quality. Thanks to the accreditation of such laboratories, everyone who uses tap water to drink or take a bath, or takes a dip in a swimming pool, can be certain that the information regarding water quality provided by the supplier is correct.

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WHILE STRENGTHENING  
THE BRAND OF  
A GIVEN PRODUCT  
OR ORGANISATION.



**PM Does accreditation work across the board?**

Absolutely. It is worth noting that one of the key advantages of the compliance and accreditation system is that they can be used in almost every industrial sector and business context - from food safety to environmental safety, construction to processes related to the functioning of the supply chain. There are currently thousands of different compliance assessment standards which are subject to accreditation. In a number of industries, accreditation is a legal requirement, which means that the use of "voluntary standards" becomes the norm. Standards are necessary for the development of organisations in virtually all sectors of the economy. They regulate not only the way it functions, but also give it a competitive edge and strengthen the brand of a given product or organisation. Accreditation is, essentially, an indispensable tool which enables safe and confident navigation through the increasingly complex spheres of our lives as consumers. In other words, through accreditation, we can make informed choices which, as we know, are the basis for the functioning of a consumer culture, which is now present virtually everywhere.

**PM Is an accreditation granted by the Polish Centre for Accreditation valid in the international market?**

At numerous expert panels in which I have the opportunity to present the advantages of accreditation, I emphasise that only an accredited compliance assessment is in practice widely recognised all over the world, and forms the basis for the free flow of goods and services in the market sphere. What's more, you cannot overestimate the fact that the international accreditation system is a complete system from the point of view of achieving the goals you have set for yourself.

**PM Are accreditation bodies objective on a global scale?**

Of course, they are. Accreditation activities are carried out by accreditation bodies with impartiality and independence. Accreditation bodies do not compete with the conformity assessment bodies and, in principle, do not compete with each other. The activities of accreditation bodies are harmonised through their regular stringent evaluations by international regional accreditation organisations, like for example the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA). The activities of regional accreditation organisations are also subject to harmonisation and evaluation by relevant organisations which operate on a global scale - the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). In macro terms, some 80% of trade activities involves elements of testing, calibration, inspection and certification activities, so a PCA accreditation is binding in most countries which are signatories to international agreements concluded within the framework of EA, IAF and ILAC.

**PM What are the prospects for accreditation in view of economic changes which are now taking place all over the world?**

Following the signing of the CETA free trade agreement with Canada in 2016 and a similar agreement with Japan in 2018, the European Union is now in the forefront of strengthening economic co-operation on a global scale. As opportunities and benefits stemming from free trade grow, one of the clear signs of the increasing role of accreditation is a tripartite agreement between the EU, EFTA and EA, which was signed on April 10, 2019. The purpose of the agreement is to actively support policies

and regulations which enhance free trade within the European Union by, among others, developing co-operation in the field of accreditation. In the coming years, EA members intend to develop the format of the agreement, and thus the role of accreditation as the main tool of enhancing trade.

**PM Do you have plans to strengthen your relationship with the business environment?**

We are planning to further strengthen our co-operation with business. We are already involved in it through the expert platform of the Entrepreneur's Vademecum, which was implemented at the beginning of the year. The umbrella campaign Entrepreneur's Vademecum serves to present the advantages of accreditation in particular business areas. In the next stage, we have plans to invite business representatives to jointly work with us on the subject matter of the Vademecum, so that it fully meets the needs of entrepreneurs, and opens up fields for joint dialogue, and in the next stage, for the continued modernisation of the accreditation system. I am convinced that it is a solid foundation to develop closer relations with entrepreneurs. Besides, in June this year, in conjunction with the Polish Committee for Standardisation and the Central Office of Measures, we organised the first Polish conference on reference materials, a tool which enables the calibration of measurement systems and devices used in process lines. What are our further plans? We definitely wish to carry on the development of the accreditation system. We are hoping to involve other regulators and entrepreneurs, to strengthen the system of standards which allow us all to make flawless decisions, and thus contribute to building a better world for future generations.