Satisfied Customers Are Our Best Recommendation

Lucyna Olborska, director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA), talks to the *Voice*.

You have been the director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation since Aug. 1. What are your priorities in this job?

My primary objective is to meet the expectations of our customers. We now have more than 1,500 customers, and satisfied customers are the best recommendation for any organization. They are objective proof that an organization is efficient and that its management system is effective. Our strategic goal is to ensure the satisfaction of all organizations accredited by the Polish Centre for Accreditation, and in order to accomplish that, we have been using management system tools that streamline the work of the Polish Centre for Accreditation.

What tools are these?

One is a customer satisfaction questionnaire with questions about the performance of the Polish Centre for Accreditation's staff and that of our assessors, who assess the organizations we accredit. The first questionnaire has been summed up and the findings have allowed us to identify areas that we need to work harder on. We have also been able to determine the changes that we need to make to the Polish Centre for Accreditation's management system so that our customers can be fully satisfied with what we do.

We have also followed up on a request to enable the revision of the Polish Centre for Accreditation's internal documents by interested parties. Draft documents are now published on our website at www.pca.gov.pl and everyone is welcome to submit their remarks.

PCA experts take part in the work of various international organizations. How do you assess this aspect of the Centre's work?

When I was appointed director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation, I received a letter of congratulation from Thomas Facklam, the chairman of the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA), which brings together national accreditation bodies. He told me that, considering the experience of countries where politics determined the choice of local accreditation body directors, he welcomed the fact that the Polish economy minister had selected somebody with competence and experience in accreditation. He added he was looking forward to working with me and Polish Centre for Accreditation experts.

FACTFILE

Lucyna Olborska
Director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation

Olborska was appointed director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation by the economy minister Aug. 1, 2015 following a recruitment and selection process.

From 2005 to 2008, Olborska headed the Polish Centre for Accreditation's Department of Auditor Development; in 2009 she became deputy director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation and manager of the Accreditation Office. On April 1, 2015 she took over as acting director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation.

Olborska represents the Polish Centre for Accreditation in international organizations including the EA Multilateral Agreement Council, the EA MAC Management Group, the EA MAC Working Group for Training, the IAF Multilateral Recognition Agreement Committee, and the ILAC Arrangement Committee. She has been an evaluator for the European Co-operation for Accreditation since 2005.

The international environment in which the Polish Centre for Accreditation operates is very important because we are obligated to keep abreast of any changes in requirements that signatories of multilateral agreements have to fulfill. And since PCA representatives are involved in international committees and task forces, we also have an influence on how the requirements change and to what extent. We need to make sure that no changes are proposed that could harm the Polish conformity assessment system.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation operates in a rapidly changing legal environment, both in Poland and internationally. All accreditation standards for certification have recently been amended. For example, Sept. 15 marked the end of a transition period for the PN-EN ISO/IEC 17065:2013-03 standard, which sets out requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services. By that date, the Polish Centre for Accreditation had to reassess over 80 certification bodies it had accredited, in order to make sure they conformed with the updated standard. The transition period for the standard was two-and-a-half years, but its Polish version was not released until September last year, so we only had 12 months for the transition. Reassessing all the certification bodies by Sept. 15 was a tremendous challenge for the Polish Centre for Accreditation. I'm glad to be able to say that we rose to the challenge, and I would like to thank all Polish Centre for Accreditation employees who were tasked with this job.

You mentioned that Polish Centre for Accreditation experts are part of the European Co-operation for Accreditation's committees and task forces. What have the experts been working on lately?

The "hottest" issue to be discussed within the European Co-operation for Accreditation at the moment is the European Commission's recommendation to standardize accreditation evaluation procedures used in notification-related decisions. A task force has been appointed to draft a document setting out a procedure that will subsequently be used by all accreditation bodies. The task force will first devise a procedure to standardize the approach to assessment with regard to directives contained in the New Legislative Framework (NLF). Evaluation under these directives is an urgent issue because the renotification process with regard to most NLF directives has to be completed by April next year.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation is open and waiting for accreditation applications from each notified body, so that accreditation procedures for New Legislative Framework directives can begin as soon as possible. To this end, we have met with the heads of the Economy Ministry's Department of Economic Security and Department of Innovation and Industry to jointly decide how the Polish Centre for Accreditation should perform assessment to make notification procedures take as little time as possible.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation thoroughly assesses its customers on an annual basis. But who audits the Polish Centre for Accreditation and how often does this happen?

Over the almost 15 years that we have been around, the Polish Centre for Accreditation has been audited by probably every auditing and inspection authority in Poland, from the central auditing office (NIK) to the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau (CBA). When it comes to the international aspect of our work, every national accreditation body that has signed the European Co-operation for Accreditation Multilateral Agreement (EA MLA) is subject to mandatory evaluation every four years. The Polish Centre for Accreditation is scheduled for evaluation in April next year. We have a roadmap for all changes and improvements we have planned for the Polish Centre for Accreditation's management system and even if we do not complete the process before the evaluation begins, evaluators from the European Co-operation for Accreditation will know that all of that is being done.

Let me add that the European Co-operation for Accreditation has very rigorous evaluation procedures. For one week, a team of eight to 10 evaluators will be checking all areas of our accreditation work. I hope the evaluation will be as successful as the previous one in April 2012, after which the European Co-operation for Accreditation Multilateral Agreement Council (EA MAC) decided the Polish Centre for Accreditation should retain its status as a European Co-operation for Accreditation Multilateral Agreement signatory in all areas that we are active in.

PCA—ESSENTIAL FACTS

The Polish Centre for Accreditation is the national accreditation body authorized to accredit conformity assessment bodies on the basis of the Act of Parliament of Aug. 30, 2002, on the conformity assessment system (Official Journal of 2014, item 1645.)

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)

Ts/015515