Accreditation as a Tool

Public safety as we know it denotes food safety, product safety, occupational safety, environmental protection, safe utilization of technical devices and the safety of information. In all instances, the way to ensure public safety is to make sure that goods and services that are put on the market conform with applicable standards, specifications and legal regulations.

The ever growing expectations of consumers, enterprises and regulatory authorities have prompted a rise in the number of both mandatory and voluntary technical requirements, standards and procedures pertaining to testing, inspection and certification. The trend is there in all countries and on all market sectors. To a growing extent, measures aimed at ensuring public safety have involved accredited conformity assessment bodies such as inspection bodies, organizations that certify products and persons, management system certification bodies, testing, medical and calibration laboratories. Conformity assessment bodies also include greenhouse gas emission verifiers and Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) verifiers.

Safety is inseparably linked to trust and so it is crucial that the public has trust in organizations that are directly or indirectly responsible for public safety in all aspects of it. Conformity assessment bodies need to work hard to earn people's trust. Public safety improves when there is solid evidence that a given organization is competent in what it does, and accreditation is where such evidence comes from. Accreditation is an impartial way of confirming the competence of conformity assessment bodies.

Accreditation is vital to public safety, not least because it facilitates trade on both national and international markets. Globalization gives the public access to a wide range of goods and services from practically every country on the planet. However, people's demand for goods and services can only be appropriately satisfied when human and environmental safety standards are observed. To this end, European and global organizations of accreditation centers have joined forces in an effort to standardize evaluation criteria worldwide. The only way to guarantee that a producer or service provider can be trusted is through accreditation based on an unbiased assessment of conformity with international standards. Such accreditation can be the decisive factor when a partner in one country seeks a contractor or service provider in another. Accreditation by a conformity assessment body is increasingly a prerequisite for businesses applying for contracts through bidding procedures. Thanks to international standardization, accreditation makes sure that standards and regulations are applied in a uniform fashion, so that the safety of goods and services is guaranteed while barriers to the global exchange of

FACTFILE

LUCYNA OLBORSKA

Director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation

Lucyna 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.

Lucyna Olborska represents the Polish Centre for Accreditation in international organizations including the EA Executive Commitee, the EA Multilateral Agreement Council, the EA MAC Management Group, 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.

to Ensure Public Safety

goods and services can be gradually removed. Products or services certified by an accredited conformity assessment center are ones that buyers know they can trust.

Accreditation of conformity assessment bodies in Poland is handled by the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA), which both accredits and inspects such organizations. The center has so far issued accreditations to over 1,500 Polish organizations and institutions involved in the assessment of products and services marketed in Poland and abroad.

The Polish Centre for Accreditation operates on the basis of the Polish law of April 13, 2016 on conformity assessment and market supervision systems. It is also subject to European law, specifically Regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as well as a number of international standards and guidelines. The center's mission is to foster economic growth in Poland by removing technical barriers in trade while making sure that public interest is protected. Accreditation procedures conducted by the Polish Centre for Accreditation ensure that all citizens can have full confidence in the results of compliance checks carried out by accredited institutions and that way, the center helps enhance public safety.

One of the key criteria that each national accreditation body, including the Polish Centre for Accreditation, must meet is that it cannot give in to any influence or pressure. There can be no doubt that its accreditation certificates are entirely based on unbiased competence assessment. Like all other national accreditation bodies in Europe, the Polish Centre for Accreditation is thoroughly audited in this respect. A team of evaluators from other European accreditation bodies is assembled every four years to check whether a given accreditation body complies with the ISO/IEC 17011 international requirements for accreditation bodies, requirements laid out in Regulation (EC) No. 765/2008 and guidelines named by international organizations. Having met all these requirements, the Polish Centre for Accreditation has been able to become a signatory of multilateral agreements as part of the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA MLA), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF MLA), and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC MRA).

EA MLA is an agreement signed by accreditation bodies that are full members of the European Accreditation association. The signatories acknowledge that their respective accreditation systems are equivalent and mutually recognized. As a result, certificates and reports issued by the signatories are equally trustworthy, so that producers and service providers do not need to seek accredited certification and inspection bodies or labs in each EU member state to which they want to bring their goods and services. The EA MLA agreement is further recognized by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). Consequently, all EA MLA signatories are acknowledged worldwide thanks to multilateral agreements under which IAF and ILAC recognize each other. Based on the agreements, the signatories are also entitled to use ILAC/IAF MRA/MLA marks.

Multilateral international agreements have turned accreditation into a catalyst for economies. Accreditation helps businesses explore markets in other countries while national governments know that accredited goods and services meet a range of standards and requirements. As the underpinning of conformity assessment systems, accreditation can help liberalize regulations and remove administrative barriers that hinder business for many companies.

Lucyna Olborska,
director of the Polish Centre for Accreditation

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 April 13, 2016, on the conformity assessment systems and market surveillance (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 542).

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)
✓ FALB (Forum of Accreditation and Licencing Bodies)

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

25/0030/16