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COORDINATING UNIT FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Expert Meeting on Best Practice in the Creation of  
Quality Assurances Systems for Enhancing Competitiveness  
of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Geneva, 25-26 October 2001

**CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT**

**Quality Policy Issues**

This paper has been submitted by the State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Certification of Belarus.

It contains information on Belarus' national quality policies.

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### **Efforts to enhance product quality in the Republic of Belarus**

The Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to enhancing the quality of products and services as a means of raising the Belarusian population's standard of living.

Nowadays consumers have a wide range of products to choose from, but unfortunately attractive and aesthetically-pleasing packaging is not always an indicator of good quality. Quite often buyers must contend with imitation goods.

The proliferation of imitations of well-known brands inhibits the development of the market. Counterfeit goods cause considerable economic and social harm. Efforts to protect the market from imitation goods are essential because many goods are not subject to certification testing in the Republic of Belarus or other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). For example, 88,400 bottles of alcoholic drinks, 255 tonnes of vegetable oil, and 350,000 cans of food were barred from sale to the public in 2000. As a rule, these items are imported.

Belarus attaches great importance to enhancing the quality of domestic production. The President has promulgated a Decree aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of domestic production and holding manufacturers, suppliers and retailers accountable for the quality of goods, work and services.

This Decree specifies the principal spheres of activity of all economic entities and of the bodies responsible for enhancement of the competitiveness and quality of products, work and services.

Because managers of enterprises deal with these issues at first hand, a product liability clause must now be inserted in all contracts concluded with them.

To increase the accountability of manufacturers, retailers, and suppliers offering substandard goods and services, the product liability of economic entities has been tightened up.

These measures have prompted all levels of management to look very carefully at quality-related issues.

A national quality programme covering the period 1998-2000 was adopted in 1999 to coordinate the efforts of all State administration and industry bodies on quality issues.

The implementation of the national quality programme has facilitated Belarusian participation as an equal partner in the system of international trade between the European Union, the CIS and other States, while satisfying consumer demand for high-quality goods, work and services.

Work is currently under way to implement the national quality programme for the period 2001-2003, which has been formulated in accordance with a Presidential Order and approved by decision of the Belarusian Council of Ministers.

The programme envisages action in the following areas:

- Improvement of legal regulation;
- Improvement in forms and methods of quality management;
- Scientific and technical aspects of quality assurance;
- Normative and information-technology aspects of quality assurance;
- Certification;
- Staff training.

Several statutes designed to tighten up product liability and encourage production of competitive goods have been drafted and adopted within the framework of the quality programme.

The raft of measures comprising the national quality programme has facilitated the establishment in Belarus of computerized databanks and databases containing pertinent normative documents such as the international standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the Inter-State Economic Committee (IEC), European standards and standards of the leading European countries.

The quality programme emphasizes the introduction in Belarus of the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 series quality standards and the certification of quality systems and environmental management systems.

The number of Belarusian enterprises which have certified their quality systems doubles every year.

Forty domestic and three foreign consulting firms exist to help enterprises establish ISO 9000-compliant quality systems.

In order to stop unqualified consultants from practising in Belarus, consulting firms must register with the national agency for certification and accreditation.

In accordance with the national quality programme, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the Belarusian State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Certification (Gosstandart) have developed a corpus of organizational and advisory material and normative instruments to ensure ISO 14000 certification of environmental management systems in Belarus.

As part of the national certification system, Belarus has developed an environmental certification subsystem.

The Government's award for quality achievement was instituted in 1999. The award itself and the criteria for choosing recipients are modelled on the European Quality Award.

In 1999-2000 the award was conferred on 21 enterprises from different sectors of industry.

All recipients are presented with a certificate and an award symbol by the Belarusian Prime Minister.

Since 1999 the awards have been conferred at a special ceremony in November to mark World Quality Day.

Award-winners have the right to display the logo of the award on their products.

With a view to eliminating the technical barriers to trade between CIS countries, the Inter-State Council on Standardization, Metrology and Certification and Gosstandart of Belarus have crafted a reciprocal Recognition Agreement for quality systems certification, allowing reciprocal recognition of ISO 9000 quality system certificates issued through CIS countries' national certification systems in respect of products manufactured in these States.

Pursuant to an initiative launched by Gosstandart of Belarus, work is under way to designate coordinated groups of products with a view to instituting a "standard mark" confirming that a particular item meets normative requirements in the territory of the CIS.

The national certification system of the Republic of Belarus uses the models adopted by ISO supplemented by the use of a manufacturer's (supplier's) conformity declaration, taking into account the modular approach to conformity assessment employed in the European Union. When an enterprise uses a certified quality system that conforms to ISO 9000 standards, the certification model applied dispenses with additional certification tests and stipulates merely a declaration of conformity with attached documentation.

In order to harmonize its quality-related activities with developing trends in Europe, Gosstandart of Belarus became a full member of the European Organization for Quality (EOQ) in 2000.

Belarus has experts who have undergone EOQ training and hold EOQ quality management and auditing certificates.

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