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QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES IN POLAND

This document was prepared by the Polish Committee for Standardization. It contains information on national quality promotion programmes, quality awards, use of quality management standards and related activities.

It is presented for information to delegates and, apart from minor editorial changes, is reproduced in the form it was received by the secretariat.

1. In the face of challenges related to Poland's accession to the European Union and with new trends in the world economy (globalization, rapid development of IT technologies and techniques), how Polish businesspersons and entrepreneurs adjust to the changes taking place on the market, and especially how quickly they implement new technological, organizational, and managerial solutions, will be of crucial importance for the country's competitiveness.
2. One of the most significant components of modern business strategies enabling companies to adjust to radically changing economic conditions and to increase their flexibility, effectiveness and competitiveness is quality. This includes not only products and services but also management, organisation, labour and environment. The constant improvement of activities, as well as a client-oriented approach in times when products and services are expected not only to be better and better but also innovative, environmentally friendly and cheap, constitute the key to further development and survival.
3. Current trends in the economy are not only favourable to increasing the importance and role of quality in the strategies of companies but almost force quality-oriented policies upon them.
4. The European Union included ISO 9000 standards within its activities aimed at eliminating barriers to free movement of goods and the construction of the Single European Market.
5. Poland has no legislation directly referring to quality. However, one can talk about the quality infrastructure (including standardization, conformity assessment, metrology) the activities of which are regulated by acts of parliament and executive acts related to these. The quality policy itself constitutes a part of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Economy and Labour. However, many initiatives in this area have been left to NGOs – chambers of commerce, clubs, centres of excellence, branch associations, etc. The necessity to adapt the economy to the requirements of the competitive European and world markets has become the basis for the Ministry of Industry and Trade to embark on intensive informational, educational, and promotional activities related to quality standards, i.e. ISO 9000 and EN 45000 series of standards.
6. The first Quality Promotion Programme [Program Promocji Jakości (PPJ)] began in 1992. It aimed at promoting a comprehensive approach to quality, consistent with international standards, in companies and R&D bodies, as well as at promoting accreditation and certification systems. Initiatives aimed at promoting a comprehensive approach to activities that have an effect on nature and the environment, and activities related to occupational safety, were gradually included in the programme.
7. The main objective of the Quality Promotion Programme for 2003-2006 is to promote modern management systems that have an impact on quality (PN-EN ISO 9000) the environment (PN-EN ISO 14000) and occupational safety (PN-N-18000), and also quality-based management strategies such as TQM and Excellence Model EFQM.
8. These objectives are met through:
 - Disseminating information on the benefits of implementing management systems that comply with the requirements of international standards;
 - Providing access to information that facilitates the design, implementation and maintenance of management systems, as well as their certification;
 - Initiating and supporting activities necessary for particular sectors or enterprises;
 - Disseminating information on accreditation and certification systems;
 - Promoting entities having certified management schemes.

9. The programme should produce the following results:
- Polish companies will have adapted to the requirements of the European Union;
 - Increased competitiveness of Polish enterprises on domestic, European, and global markets;
 - Creation of conditions for the sustainable development of the economy;
 - Promotion of a homogeneous accreditation and certification system compliant with that of the European Union.
10. The major participants in the Quality Promotion Programme are economic entities themselves. They are expected to be able to meet the challenges of a competitive free market regardless of their size and the type of activity they engage in, be it the production of goods, or provision of services.
11. The following are the main organizations that play an important role in promoting quality and motivating managers to apply modern quality-based management strategies, taking into account environmental considerations: the Polish and Regional Quality Award Committees [Komitety Polskiej Nagrody Jakości i Regionalnych Nagród Jakości], the Polish ISO 9000 Forum Club [Klub Polskie Forum ISO 9000] and Polish ISO 14000 Forum Club [Klub Polskie Forum ISO 14000].
12. Professional institutions such as the Polish Centre for Accreditation and the Polish Committee for Standardization also have a significant role to play in developing or adapting appropriate tools and promoting them throughout the economy.
13. In promoting quality-related information and creating a quality culture, there is also a role for local governments, chambers of commerce and industry, schools of higher education, consumer organizations, and trade unions.
14. Quality-based business strategies, if they are to increase competitiveness, must remain within the competence of the economic entities themselves, but with official public authorities retaining their very important role, i.e. guaranteeing a legal, political, and economic environment that is favourable to competitive economic growth. By setting the direction and providing a framework for a variety of initiatives, and by undertaking quality-promoting activities, public authorities can help create this quality culture. Territorial, self-governing bodies, especially those in the provinces, also can, and maybe even should, play a significant role in implementing the Quality Promotion Programme – particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises
15. In promoting quality and giving it its proper importance, public authorities can act as competitiveness “catalysts”. They can also ensure the coherence of activities at local, regional and national levels, as well as intersectoral cohesion, and closer integration of industrial, environment, social and regional policies.
16. The objective of the Quality Promotion Programme - i.e. promoting knowledge related to management systems that are compliant with the requirements of the PN-EN ISO 9000 (quality), PN-EN ISO 14000 (environment) and PN-N-18000 (occupational safety) standards will be reached in particular by means of the following activities:
- Involving territorial self-governing bodies and regional economic organizations in activities for promoting quality, including cooperation with the Province Marshall Offices;
 - Running the Quality Promotion Programme website, hosted on the portal of the Ministry of Economy and Labour (<http://ppj.mg.gov.pl>);

- Providing access to materials facilitating the design and implementation of these management systems;
- National register of entities having certified management systems;
- Cooperation with organizations dealing with the issues of quality, such as the Polish ISO 9000 Forum Club and the Polish ISO 14000 Forum Club.

17. A significant role in promoting a quality-focused approach in the economy has been played by the Polish Quality Award [Polska Nagroda Jakosci], which is given for implementing TQM philosophy. The model for the Polish Quality Award [Polska Nagroda Jakosci] was drawn up by a team of specialists from the National Chamber of Commerce [Krajowa Izba Gospodarcza] and based on the concept of the European Quality Award. The Award was established in 1995 by the National Chamber of Commerce "Poland Now" Foundation [Fundacja Teraz Polska] and Polish Centre for Testing and Certification [Polskie Centrum Badan i Certyfikacji]. It is managed by the Polish Quality Award Committee [Komitet Polskiej Nagrody Jakosci].

18. The awards are divided into three categories: team awards, individual awards and honour awards. Team awards are given to companies which through implementing TQM – management through quality – brought more satisfaction to clients, their own employees and employees of other cooperating companies, thereby significantly improving the quality of labour, processes, systems, services and achieving market success. Individual awards are given to persons who made significant and distinctive contributions to work on drawing up TQM theories in Poland or designing a TQM system in a company, or conducted training related to these issues. Honour awards are given to people or teams for special merits in quality development in Poland. Apart from the awards themselves, there is also the possibility of receiving "marks of honour" in all categories.

19. The success of the Polish Quality Award (presented for the eighth time now) was a starting point for establishing regional quality awards, of which there are currently 14 on the provincial level.

20. Among other non-governmental initiatives, some publishing and promotional activities in quality deserve attention. To give an example, one should mention the monthly "Problemy Jakosci" [Quality Issues] published by the Association of Technical Organisations NOT [Stowarzyszenie Organizacji Technicznych NOT], or the quarterly "ABC Jakosci" [Quality ABC], published by the Polish Centre for Testing and Certification, and the publishing and educational activities of the Polish ISO 9000 Forum Club [Klub Polskie Forum ISO 9000].

21. It can be concluded from the above examples that quality-related issues in Poland enjoy a broad social response. Governmental and local administrative bodies, rather than impose any modes of implementation, have adopted the role of supporter and coordinator.
