

# EXTERNAL EVALUATION – Short Report

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Technische/r Gutachter\*in: -

Building up a regional quality infrastructure in the ECOWAS region



Country   Region:	ECOWAS region
Project number:	2009.2269.0
Implementation period:	10.2010 – 12.2015
Executing agency:	ECOWAS commission
Implementing partner:	National metrology institutes
PTB   Working Group:	Q.55 Subsahara Africa
PTB   Project coordinator:	Florian Paffenholz
Date:	September 2015

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt.

**List of Abbreviations**

<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>ECOQUAL</b>	ECOWAS Quality Policy
<b>MSTQ</b>	Metrology, Standards, Testing and Quality management
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PTB</b>	Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt
<b>QI</b>	Quality infrastructure
<b>SPS</b>	Sanitary and Phytosanitary (measures)
<b>TBT</b>	Technical Barriers to Trade
<b>WACIP</b>	West Africa Common Industrial Policy
<b>WAEMU</b>	West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA in French)
<b>WAQS</b>	West African Quality System
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation

## 1. Project Description

The project “Building up a regional quality infrastructure in the ECOWAS region” started in late 2010 and is culminating in December 2015. The project is part of the development program “Advising the ECOWAS commission in strengthening the economic and political integration within ECOWAS”. Its long-term objective strives for the coordinated and demand-oriented development of metrology services in the ECOWAS region, favouring a division of labour between national metrology systems. This responds to ECOWAS’ need to harmonize standards and technical regulations in order to promote regional trade, protect consumers as well as the environment. At the same time only through the compliance with EU standards and regulations the access to the European markets is possible. ECOWAS Quality Policy, adopted in 2012, states that national systems do not yet ensure that measurements in trade, commerce, industry, science and technology operate with the necessary accuracy and reliability. Against this backdrop, the development initiative was conceived along a regional approach with the ECOWAS commission being the political partner and one of the implementing organisations together with national metrology institutions of the ECOWAS member states<sup>1</sup>. Shared learning, mutual assistance in quality infrastructure (QI) development, harmonization and synchronisation of relevant QI aspects together with the development of cross-border metrology services are the basic elements which characterize the project approach. Different reasons led to a severe delay in the roll-out of the project which began to unfold the activities planned since 2011 only in 2015. Due to this situation and the approaching end of the project phase (12/2015) an external evaluation was realised in August/September 2015 in order to revise the results achieved, identify relevant learning points and contribute to the clarification whether the project should be continued under the given circumstances.

## 2. Assessment of the project

The project has experienced serious roll-out problems over several years. Only few months before the evaluation mission, the project shifted into normal implementation speed. This affected severely the achievements of the project and is thus reflected in its overall qualification, which attributes the project a “not satisfactory” performance with respect to the DAC-criteria. Also the assessment of the management success factors (strategy, cooperation, steering, processes, innovation&learning) was affected through the implementation delay, as there was relatively little substance to be evaluated. There is therefore a lot of room for development which can only be filled through concrete implementation in an eventual follow up project, in which fundamental approaches and instruments will have to be put into place (e.g. M&E-system, functioning steering structures, knowledge management, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Member countries making up ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo

## Results

### *Status of the change process*

When evaluating the status of the change process generated by the project, the focus lies on the DAC-criteria effectiveness, impact and sustainability. As the project had experienced an extreme delay in the roll-out of its activities, it was not possible to accomplish any of the established indicators. The severe delay in implementation and thus in achievement led to the evaluation of the criterion effectiveness as “not satisfactory”, which consequently caused the downgrade to the overall performance to the same rating. Due to the limitations in implementation and the particularly long maturing times of project products in the field of metrology, the criterion impact could only be judged on the basis of its impact hypotheses. From this point of view it could be realistically assumed that the deliverables intended by the project would have contributed to overarching impacts like e.g. competitiveness, increase in intraregional trade and regional integration, access to new international markets, increase in attractiveness for foreign investments, growth and ultimately poverty reduction. Because of the lack of implementation the impact contribution of the project could only be qualified from its hypothetical point of view and was thus assessed as “satisfactory”. Very similar the criterion sustainability could be evaluated exclusively from a conceptual perspective. The main characteristics of the approach (e.g. cross border services, division of labour between countries, public sector partner focus on capacity development) were targeted towards producing durable changes in the performance capability of the executing agency and implementing organisations. Within these limitations of observation the project’s sustainability was qualified as “satisfactory”.

### *Causes and success factors for the observed results and change processes*

Within the causes and success factors for the observed results and change processes the DAC-criteria relevance and efficiency, as well as the management factors strategy, cooperation, steering, processes and learning & innovation were assessed. The project’s alignment with regional and national policies, the needs expressed by the partner organisations and the target groups (primarily the sector of small and medium enterprises) as well as BMZ’ development priorities attest its high relevance (rated as “very good”). Both, PTB’s regional implementation approach as well as its traditional personnel policy of long distance coaching and coordination offer a high degree of efficiency in the use of resources, particularly with respect to shared capacity development activities and cross border technical advisory. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that there is a tangible risk that the heterogeneity between the countries and the insufficient regional presence of PTB may have backfired on the criteria of effectivity and sustainability. Until the moment of the evaluation mission, the development of the factor cooperation with other development initiatives was still

limited and had more of a complementary character. The restricted number of activities realised before the mission did not allow a more general assessment. Based on the given activities the efficiency of the project was thus qualified as “good”. Within the spread of success factors, only the factor strategy had reached a certain level of development through the basic project concept expressed in the offer to BMZ, while all other management factors had hardly unfolded because of the late roll-out of the project. Their development is a *conditio-sine-qua-non* in a prolonged or future new project in order to ensure its success.

### **3. Learning processes and learning experience**

As the roll-out of the project set in very late, no innovation of any kind could be identified through the evaluation mission. With respect to lessons learnt, projects living through times of crisis are an ideal platform for institutional learning. To document the learning aspects and institutionally anchor the related conclusions within PTB is still an outstanding process which needs to be undertaken. From the mission’s perspective worthwhile learning processes are eminent with regard to the initial institutional matchmaking (PTB/ECOWAS) and project genesis, cooperation management, ownership building, project steering and leadership.

### **4. Recommendations**

The prolonged stagnation in the project implementation had led to serious questioning with respect to its continuation. The evaluation mission comes to the conclusion to suggest the prolongation of the project, be it in an extended project phase or within the set-up of a follow-up project. The main reasons are: a) continued relevance of the project contents for partners and target groups, b) a favourable evolution of conditions directly related to the project context and c) openness of all stakeholders involved toward the lessons to be learnt from the experience made, allowing fundamental and feasible changes in the management of the initiative.

The recommendations made refer primarily to a possible follow-up project.

- In terms of strategy needs to be clarified whether the project should be pursued under a regional or a multi-country approach. Either orientation decisively impacts on the objectives, contents and implementation modalities. An implementation strategy should be explicitly formulated for the project’s roll-out based on a concrete vision describing the regional metrology development to be achieved within a medium to long term time span. Within the visioning context it is suggested that the project contribute to the design of a regional metrology strategy, complementing and bringing alive the given ECOWAS quality structure policy. On a general level it is advised to foster the strategy-building competencies of relevant national and regional institutions in order to improve their responses to the development of the political, social, economic and ecological context.

- In a regional project cooperation management is one of the most essential success factors. In order to mould the relations with partner organisations actively and in the direction of the given objectives, the formulation of a cooperation strategy in participation with national QI-representatives is suggested. Cooperation should be sought more pro-actively with other relevant directorates of the ECOWAS structure as well as with GIZ. To push the regional dimension of metrology more tangibly, setting up a regional metrology platform should be taken into consideration. The platform can play a decisive role in fostering cross-border services in metrology and spur the gradual development of a regional culture for cooperation.
- With respect to steering, there is a clear necessity to increase the presence of PTB in the region, both in terms of technical and managerial capacities. Absolutely crucial is the revise of the currently given government architecture. The government architecture is no stand-alone value, and must be molded according to the implementing strategy. A stakeholder analysis could deliver the necessary clarity with respect to open and hidden institutional interests, competencies and development needs of the partner institutions.
- In a newly set up project several fundamental processes require to be established, the M&E-processes being one of them. The approach developed should be as participative as possible, not only to increase ownership, but to use this support process for capacity building in M&E. The same accounts for the respective processes in knowledge management. This becomes essential as the gradual set-up of a QI system operating across borders is based on exchange of information, joint learning and sharing of good practice. Cross border cooperation is of such relevance that the development of a cooperation culture and cooperation competencies should not be left to opportunities given through shared M&E and knowledge management. It merits being a conscious line of work of its own as a “technical core process for regional system building” in order to bring about sustainable changes.
- Concerning the factor learning&innovation it is suggested to invest in the systematization of the most relevant lessons learnt from the current phase, particularly because the project did not meet the original expectations in implementation. It even seems advisable that this processing should also integrate lessons learnt from the predecessor of the ECOWAS project, the WAEMU initiative, to the degree where relevant conclusions can be drawn for the widened regional approach. There would be need to set up a functioning knowledge management system.



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