

EXTERNAL EVALUATION - SHORT REPORT

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Technical assessor: Not applicable

Digital Transformation in Accreditation in the Asia-Pacific Region (ADAPT)



Country/Region:	Asia
Project number:	2018.2021.6
Project term:	01. May 2022 - 30. April 2026
Lead executing agency:	PTB – National Metrology Institute of Germany
Executing agency:	Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC)
PTB Section:	PTB Section Q.32
PTB Project Coordinator:	Lukas Nagel
Date:	30. June 2026

This evaluation is an independent assessment. Its contents reflect the evaluator's opinion which is not necessarily equivalent to PTB's view.

List of abbreviations

AB	Accreditation body
APAC	Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation
ADAPT	Digital Transformation in Accreditation in the Asia-Pacific Region
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
OEDC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee

1. Executive summary of the project

Subject of this evaluation is the project Digital Transformation in Accreditation in the Asia Pacific Region (ADAPT), implemented by PTB's development cooperation department Q.3 in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC). It covers the entire Asia-Pacific region. Its volume is 1,090,000 Euro, funded by the German government's development ministry BMZ. The project period is May 2022 - April 2026. The evaluation was commissioned by PTB.

Implementation partners are APAC and its members. Target beneficiaries are (a) clients of APAC members, e. g. conformity assessment bodies such as testing and calibration laboratories, certification bodies, medical laboratories and inspection bodies, particularly in developing economies and (b) the regional network APAC. Users of accredited services of the quality infrastructure in the region, e. g. customers of conformity assessment bodies, regulators, and businesses, are indirect beneficiaries. Measures are targeted at the accreditation bodies as members and the APAC network itself.

The project has the objective (outcome level): "APAC and its developing economy members have expanded their digital services and processes." This is to be achieved by three general outputs:

1. Regarding information and capacity: "APAC and its developing economy members are able to take informed decisions on digitalisation-related matters."
2. Regarding the digital capacity of the APAC secretariat and network itself: "APAC increasingly develops digital formats to improve services and to collaborate with its members."
3. Regarding the digital capacity of APAC members from developing economies: "The capacities of developing economy accreditation bodies for providing digital services are strengthened."

2. Evaluation of the project

The evaluation was conducted from February to June 2026 through 25 online interviews and document review by a single evaluator. The evaluation serves internal learning of PTB and partners and accountability to the German government that funded the project.

The six OECD/DAC criteria were used as an evaluation basis for this evaluation:

- Relevance: Is the project doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the project fit?
- Effectiveness: Is the project achieving its objectives?
- Impact (higher-level development results): What difference does the project make?
- Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
- Sustainability: Will the results last?

A project specific question was addressed: How can it, in the face of the ending of the PTB-APAC cooperation, be assured that the cooperation results can be further utilised?

The following marking scale was used for the evaluation:

1	2	3	4	5	6
very successful	successful	successful to a limited extent	rather unsuccessful	mainly unsuccessful	entirely unsuccessful

Overall, the project received the mark: 1.4

Relevance

The project is in line with the priorities of APAC and many of its members, and compatible with BMZ's Asia and digitalisation strategies. The context is well considered in the design. Project target groups are APAC and its members from developing economies, particularly least developed countries. The intervention assists accreditation bodies to provide digitally more efficient access to accreditation. It also meets the needs and capacities

of APAC and many accreditation bodies from developing economies. The combination of awareness building, capacity building and implementation of selected digitalisation projects was technically, organisationally and financially realistic. Not all initial plans could be implemented as planned. The project response to changes was highly appropriate.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 1

Coherence

Opportunities for cooperation occurred mainly with other PTB projects as no other donors were active in the field. These opportunities were used well, leading to increased effects and synergies. After sensitising APAC and members, the project intensively supported the partner's own efforts.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 1

Effectiveness

The project has achieved far more than 100% of its module indicators at outcome level. APAC has institutionalised more approaches than planned. Usefulness for members has been confirmed. Implementation of digitalisation projects by member accreditation bodies is much higher than expected.

The inputs were delivered as planned. The outputs were achieved, overachieved or in case of the planned APAC digital management platform sufficient progress was achieved to allow for continuation. The project has thus contributed substantially to achieving the objective. Target groups benefited significantly.

The project has been well steered and implemented according to Capacity Works criteria. An unintended positive effect was that staff members of digitally more-developed accreditation bodies have developed a better understanding of the challenges that accreditation bodies from developing economies may confront when attempting to digitalise their accreditation systems. No negative effects were identified.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 1.5

Efficiency

There are no indications that outputs or outcomes could have been delivered using fewer resources or that more or better outputs could have been achieved had the funds been spent differently. Rather, the project was in some ways very cost-efficient in involving the competencies of partners.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 2

Impact (higher-level development results)

The project contributed to Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 9. As the process of digitalisation gained traction during the 4-year project period, more accreditation bodies than expected embarked on digitalisation projects.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 1.5

Sustainability

APAC has the institutional, human and financial resources and the willingness to ensure that the positive results are continued. Amongst accreditation bodies, there are those with good business, enough financial resources and human capacity to sustain the digital structures, and there are others with less business and less income. APAC and large accreditation bodies have substantial capacity to continue, more than smaller ones. The ADAPT project contributed crucially through sensitisation, capacity building and facilitating positive

examples to the capacity for continuation. The resources developed are also available to the weaker accreditation bodies. It can be expected that many results will remain for a long time.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 1.3

3. Learning processes and experiences

The mentoring process showed that some APAC members from developing economies have severe difficulties implementing digitalisation projects. One reason was that some had little idea of what was to be achieved. While the Self-Assessment Matrix was helpful, an interview partner requested a manual on digitalisation that would be important for “junior accreditation bodies in digitalisation” that goes beyond self-assessment and gives a guideline what to consider when starting to digitalise processes.

Mentoring, where it found resonance amongst the mentees who actually implemented a digitalisation process, could mean a complex accompaniment. The mentors needed to bring together multiple competencies from their own organisation. While the mentors had volunteered to mentor, other staff members of their organisation had not. One interview partner, who managed such a process in the mentoring role, said it might have been easier for them had there been some incentives. He was not specific in what incentives he meant, and he might have meant financial incentives. But non-financial incentives like the involvement in training or contribution to courses could also be explored.

Of those mentees who have implemented digitalisation during their time of mentoring, some had their own funds or acquired external funding through other sources for the digitalisation project. Other mentoring processes brought little results, partly because of a lack of funding. Funding that PTB could provide was limited. If an organisation had not started the digitalisation process already, mentoring could help to clarify needs, but it would be difficult to contribute to the implementation of a digitalisation project during the project period.

The project shows that in a field where there is dynamism in the sector, a sense of urgency and where small steps are possible, a regional project can further cooperation (regional structures are essential for the international quality infrastructure) and get a broad spread with limited investment.

To say what knowledge gained could be transferred to other PTB projects might be a bit preposterous – for an evaluator who has limited knowledge of these other projects. Certainly, very successful for a regional project was the concept to create three committees: the Project Steering Committee, the project-related digitalisation working group (that served for reflection, but also largely organised webinars) and the Digitalisation Network as a structure within APAC that can last beyond project end.

Capacity building in ADAPT happened largely through online webinars and meetings, and also mentoring was mostly online, with few exceptions, the most important of which was the training course in Bangkok in March 2026. Feedback from interview partners was that more encounter and exposure would have been helpful, particularly for those who have not yet had much experience in digitalising their accreditation processes.

Regarding the specific evaluation question of PTB for this project, the evaluation concludes that APAC is determined to maintain what was achieved. Structures are there to continue the process of digitalisation of members. In exchange with other regional accreditation bodies, APAC might gain further ideas on how to promote particularly the accreditation bodies that are less digitally developed, and APAC could facilitate exchange. And it might acquire funding from other donors to support this process which needs external support for developing economy accreditation bodies that either depend on government funding or have too little business to finance digitalisation from their own income.

4. Recommendations

Recommendations to the partners:

- 1 APAC should consider developing a manual on digitalisation.

- 2 When APAC has implemented its own Digital Management Platform, it seems meaningful to make an extra effort in training members that are less digitally advanced to use the platform. It is recommended that APAC consider using this process of platform induction to also sensitise member and associated accreditation bodies for the potential of such platforms for their own processes.
- 3 The webinars got good response and feedback, and they were largely organised with APAC members' own resources. It is recommended that APAC consider encouraging the Digitalisation Network or the Capacity Building Committee, or both in cooperation, to also conduct or facilitate a broader webinar series.

Recommendations to the project team:

The ADAPT project has ended and there will be no follow-on project. Therefore, recommendations to the project team are limited here to remaining follow-on activities. Other recommendations, relating to lessons learned from the project, are addressed to group Q.3.

- 4 Some partners and former staff members of partners were genuinely interested in the evaluation results. It is recommended that the project team consider sending the link to the evaluation report to all interview partners as soon as it is published on the PTB website.

Recommendations to the International Cooperation Department (Q.3):

- 5 After the ADAPT project had been started, PTB has developed a digital strategy. This strategy builds on the experience of more digitalisation projects and should be followed in future projects. Digital experts should be involved to ensure client capability for digital projects within PTB Q.3 and within the partner organisation(s).
- 6 Some interview partners felt that more encounter and exposure would have been helpful, particularly for those who have not yet had much experience in digitalising their accreditation processes. It is recommended that PTB consider in future regional projects more exposure and on-site encounter.
- 7 Mentoring could mean a complex accompaniment. The mentors might need to bring together multiple competencies from their own organisation. It is recommended that PTB consider for future mentoring programmes to offer incentives that are not necessarily financial.
- 8 If an organisation has not started the digitalisation process already, mentoring can help to clarify needs, but it will be difficult to contribute to the implementation of a digitalisation project. It is recommended to consider this in future projects.
- 9 Regional projects have strong points in certain contexts, e. g. when there is a general understanding that change needs to come and first steps are not too difficult. For such cases, PTB should continue suggesting regional projects to BMZ.