



Enabling Quality Infrastructure for Competitiveness

A conducive infrastructure that assures the quality of products and services is a critical enabler for firms to access and compete in domestic and foreign markets, therefore broadening their trade and investment opportunities and boosting their productivity and innovation.

Context

Quality Infrastructure (QI) denotes the ecosystem of public and private institutions as well as legal and regulatory frameworks and practices that establish and implement standardization, accreditation, metrology, conformity assessment (primarily testing and certification), and market surveillance. Through these quality assurance services, QI offers proof that products and services adhere to mandatory technical regulations and voluntary standards. Standards define how products, processes, and people interact with each other, creating a common “technical language” that establishes trust between business partners and consumers.

A modern quality infrastructure serves the needs of both businesses and consumers. For firms, a well-functioning QI can reduce the costs of doing business, enhance technology upgrade, and increase trade and investment opportunities. For consumers, it helps assure the compliance with safety and health requirements.

As countries strive to leverage the benefits of trade and investment for economic growth, governments must put in place policies to harmonize quality requirements with their trade partners and reduce technical barriers to trade. In order to access more advanced markets and integrate into more sophisticated global value chains, developing economies need to support domestic firms in upgrading the quality of their outputs. Firm capabilities to produce higher quality products and services will also help attract cross-border investments, especially those targeting the production of products and services, which could then compete globally.

What We Offer

We help governments develop modern and efficient quality systems that help producers increase the quality of their products and services to compete domestically and globally. We start from helping our clients identify key gaps in their quality infrastructure through a market assessment, which analyzes the existing supply and potential demand for quality assurance services, and suggest reform recommendations based on good international practices to meet such demand. We also provide implementation support for these reforms, tailoring them to specific country conditions.

Our work primarily focuses on Reform Implementation Support and Knowledge Sharing.

Reform Implementation Support helps our clients develop the policies and physical infrastructure needed to supply quality assurance services, while also seeking to stimulate demand these services by:

- Carrying out QI diagnostic and Gap Assessments;
- Supporting quality policy development and dialogue, including dissemination of information and awareness raising;
- Reforming QI legal and institutional framework, including capacity building;
- Developing competent quality assurance service providers (national or regional);
- Streamlining technical regulations and standards and harmonizing them with target markets;
- Complying with industry standards to attract FDI and increase GVC participation;
- Fostering innovation and technology upgrade to meet high-quality standards.

Knowledge Sharing

- Promoting good practices of openness, transparency, impartiality, effectiveness, and relevance
- Conducting peer-to-peer learning events, trainings and workshops
- Leveraging global knowledge with regional and international counterparts

Publications

- Harnessing Quality for Global Competitiveness in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- The National Quality Infrastructure: Tool for Competitiveness, Trade, and Social Well-Being
- The National Quality Infrastructure Policy Brief
- QI Diagnostic and reform toolkit (forthcoming)
- QI case Studies

Our Partners

Fostering international partnerships helps us increase the impact of our work by offering more comprehensive reform solutions and expertise to our clients. Our partners include:

- United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- International Organization for Standardization
- National Metrology Institute, Germany
- Office for Product Safety and Standards, the United Kingdom

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Our Work in Action

The Kyrgyz Republic embarked on an ambitious plan for reforming and modernizing its quality infrastructure to reap the benefits of WTO accession and integration. Working with the WBG, the Kyrgyz government harmonized its national standards system with international standards that resulted in reducing the number of mandatory standards to 100 (down from 22,000). In addition, the project helped establish a new independent accreditation agency that received international recognition in order to accredit local testing and calibration laboratories. As a result, the country significantly improved its capacity to deliver QI services and reduced compliance costs for businesses.

A project in **Peru**, supported by the WBG, helped multiple laboratories, which test and certify agricultural products become accredited by internationally recognized entity and thus acceptable to foreign buyers and investors. This contributed to a four-fold increase in total exports, doubling of non-traditional exports, and a 50 percent increase in the number of exporting SMEs.

In **Ukraine**, the WBG, through development policy lending and complementing advisory services, helped the country broaden access to the EU markets by aligning national regulations with the EU rules. The multi-sectorial lending operation triggered QI policy reforms focusing on food safety standards. The advisory project helped the Government develop a modern food safety law harmonized with EU rules, so the producers could export their products to the EU. At the same time, the project delivered a comprehensive capacity building program for farmers, producers, distributors, and inspectors helping them compile with food safety requirements. Most notably, these reforms opened access for the poultry and dairy products and increased their export by 80 percent. Additionally, the conformity with EU standards also enabled access to the Chinese dairy market for Ukrainian products.