



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

TRADE/WP.6/2000/13  
21 September 2000

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND  
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Working Party on Technical Harmonization and  
Standardization Policies

Tenth session, 6-8 November 2000  
Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda

**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' experience in introducing and using quality policies.

This document is presented for information to delegates. It is reproduced in the form in which it was received by the secretariat.

Arrangements for improving product quality in Belarus

Belarus attaches great importance to improvement of the quality of products and services as a means of raising the population's level of living.

There exists a Decree of the President of the Republic on improving the competitiveness of Belarusian products and making manufacturers, suppliers and vendors more accountable for the quality of products, work and services.

This Decree defines the main lines of activity by economic entities and government bodies regarding improvement of the competitiveness and quality of products, work and services.

In view of the special and direct role that heads of enterprises can play in achieving such improvement, contracts with such persons must include a mention of their responsibility for, as appropriate, the quality of the products they make or sell or of the services or types of work they perform.

Economic entities' financial liability for the production and sale of poor-quality products or services has been increased in order to make manufacturers, offenders and suppliers feel more accountable for what they do.

All this has forced managers at all levels to pay very serious attention to questions of quality.

Coordination of the quality-related activities of the authorities and industry has been assured by the adoption in 1998 of a State programme entitled "Quality" covering the period 1998-2000.

The programme provides for measures in the following areas:

Improvement of legal regulation;

Improvement of the forms and methods of quality management;

Use of science and technology in quality assurance;

Standardization and information in support of quality assurance;

Certification;

Training of personnel.

In addition, a number of legislative instruments aimed at increasing accountability for the manufacture or sale of unsafe or poor-quality products and promoting the production of competitive products have been adopted under this programme.

The wide range of measures under the State programme has prompted the establishment of computerized databases and banks containing normative instruments, including ISO and IEC standards and standards from the European Union and major European States.

The programme pays considerable attention to the introduction in Belarus of ISO series 9000 and ISO series 14000 standards, as well as to the certification of quality systems and environmental management systems.

There is an Environmental Certification subsystem within the National Certification System.

A Government Prize for progress in the sphere of quality was established in 1999. The model for the Prize and the criteria for selecting Prize winners have been harmonized with the model for the European Quality Prize.

In 1999, the Prize winners were six enterprises from a variety of sectors of industry.

Each of the winners received their certificate and Prize symbol from the Prime Minister.

The awards were handed over at a special ceremony held in November 1999 to mark World Quality Day.

All the Prize winners were given the right to mark their products with the Prize emblem.

There will be another competition for the Prize this year (2000) and the award ceremony will be timed to coincide with World Quality Day.

With a view to harmonizing its quality-related activities with the trends in Europe, Gosstandart this year became a full member of the European Quality Organization (EQO).

Belarus has specialists who have been trained in the EQO scheme and attained the status of EQO-certified quality managers and quality auditors.

In view of the Quality programme's effectiveness in protecting the Belarusian market against poor and unsafe goods and improving Belarusian products' competitiveness, the President of the Republic has ordered the elaboration of the second phase of the programme, covering the period 2001-2003. That work is now in hand.

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