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COORDINATING UNIT FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

WORKING PARTY ON TECHNICAL HARMONIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION POLICIES

WORKING PARTY ON INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Expert Meeting on Best Practice in the Creation of Quality Assurance Systems for Enhancing Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Geneva, 25-26 October 2001

INFORMATION NOTICE No. 2

1. This Information Notice contains details concerning the organization of, and participation in, the Expert Meeting on Best Practice in the Creation of Quality Assurance Systems for Enhancing Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to be held in Geneva on 25-26 October 2001 at the Palais des Nations. The Expert Meeting will be organized by the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities in cooperation with the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) and the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8).

Scope and purpose of the Expert Meeting

2. On the current world market, both manufacturers and consumers require both guarantees for the quality of products and services. Now it is no longer sufficient to provide products and services that conform with certain standards, but all manufacturers and service organizations need to demonstrate their capability to provide a continuous quality of their products and services. This is why all businesses and public organizations need to set up quality systems enabling them to guarantee that required quality is obtained at appropriate cost, taking into consideration ecological concerns. Secondly, customers including public authorities - e.g. in the field of healthcare - need to know whether the quality systems of manufacturers and service companies provide the necessary assurance concerning the quality of products and services.

3. The economic globalization has a dual impact on SMEs. For some, it provides new opportunities for expansion and growth through increased international marketing possibilities. These are able to adapt and become internationally competitive. For the majority, however, globalization is an inward process that brings competitive challenges and threats. For those SMEs globalization brings risks due to which they are unlikely to survive in their present form without improving quality, competitiveness and management practices.

4. The Expert Meeting on Best Practice in the Creation of Quality Assurance Systems for Enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs will be organized by the UNECE and is the fourth in a series of such meetings following the success of the Expert Meeting on Best Practice in Financing SMEs held on 14-15 May 1998, the Expert Meeting in Business Incubation on 3-4 June 1999 and the Best Practice in Business Advisory, Counselling and Information Services on 2-4 November 2000 in Geneva. All these Expert Meetings have concluded that such meetings are very useful and important for the exchange of best practices in supporting SMEs and should be carried out on a regular basis.

5. The Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) at its tenth session in November 2000, expressed its interest in receiving more information on practical problems faced by private operators in the ECE region related to the implementation and use of quality and environmental management standards. Such information might help governmental bodies responsible for standardization policies to introduce best international practices which will allow to create more awareness and wider dissemination of ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 standards.

6. Quality management, quality assurance and quality control, accreditation and certification, quality marks and labels, standardisation, metrology, etc. are often considered as technical barriers for trade, especially as regards international competitiveness and globalization.

7. Quality represents a new strategic philosophy of enterprise management, based on an overall commitment of the management and employees towards customers' satisfaction and continuous improvement of products, production and services. Quality is an integral part of international competitiveness. The certification of quality systems constitutes for enterprises, in particular for SMEs, an important way of assuring that they fulfil the requirements in the newly born market economies, as well as within the framework of the internal market of the European Union and other advanced markets.

8. The use of ISO 9001:2000, ISO 9004:2000 and ISO 14000 standards by enterprises can be regarded as a first step towards the improvement of business performance and in assisting enterprises to move towards total quality management (TQM).

9. Governments are responsible for the development of national quality policies and support systems providing assistance to all enterprises to understand the principles of quality and develop quality consciousness in business behaviour leading to the satisfaction of their customers, thus assuring the survival and development of companies within the conditions of market economies. Nationwide and regional Quality Award Systems could recognize and encourage the achievement of excellent enterprises with quality management as a way to develop the best strategies to improve their competitiveness.

10. The Expert Meeting will allow government representatives in the field of entrepreneurship and SME policy, standardization and quality, entrepreneurs, SME business support institutions, quality consultants and auditing organizations as well as academicians dealing with standardization, quality control and assurance systems, for strengthening and increasing the competitiveness of enterprises both in advanced market economies and in emerging and transition economies to learn about the latest orientations in quality assurance systems world-wide, including the countries of the European Union, United States of America, advanced emerging and transition economies, and also to share experiences and establish new contacts with officials, experts and colleagues in other countries.

11. • How do the Governments of the European Union, the accession countries, North America and the Commonwealth of Independent States work out promotion policies towards excellence?

• Why is the use of quality management a major tool to increase competitiveness of enterprises? What are social aspects of quality?

• What initiatives exist and what actions are envisaged in the UNECE member States concerning quality in small and medium-sized enterprises?

• What kind of legal and financial framework is necessary for the creation of an environment in which SMEs can best pursue their activities?

• What is the role of quality in various countries of the ECE region and how can they cooperate in order to develop mutual recognition systems among the member States?

• What is the Excellent Quality Model in Europe?

• How to motivate SMEs to take responsibility for and commit themselves to the development of human capital as well as to the creation of well-being in the modern society?

The Expert Meeting on Best Practice in the Creation of Quality Assurance System to Enhance the Competitiveness of SMEs will respond to these and other questions.

12. The aims of the Meeting are the following:

- (i) to exchange experience in UNECE member States on the various ways and approaches towards quality and quality management, especially for SMEs;
- (ii) to learn how to develop national supportive quality policies, initiatives/programmes and actions to increase the quality consciousness of SMEs in order to enhance their competitiveness;
- (iii) to understand the role of the creation of quality award schemes to raise awareness about quality; and
- (iv) to exchange experiences of SMEs in quality systems.

Venue

13. The Expert Meeting will take place at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on 25-26 October 2001.

Preliminary events

14. The UNECE organizes the First UNECE Forum of Women-Entrepreneurs aiming at assisting member States in eliminating barriers to the development of women-headed businesses. For details of the aims and programme, please see UNECE document OPA/AC.21/1 dated 3 August 2001.

15. The UNECE in cooperation with the Governments of Poland and the Republic of Belarus, the Permanent Missions of Poland and Belarus to the United Nations Office at Geneva, is organizing a Forum on Best Practice in the Development of Entrepreneurship and SMEs in Countries in Transition: The Polish Experience on Tuesday, 23 October 2001, and a Forum on Best Practice in the Development of Entrepreneurship and SMEs in Countries in Transition: The Belarusian Experience on Wednesday, 24 October 2001, also at the Palais des Nations.

16. The main objective of these Forums is to discuss the transition experiences of Belarus and Poland in the field of SME development with a special focus on national policies, promoting support infrastructure, financial issues, business incubation and science parks, and others. High-level government and business officers from Belarus and Poland will make presentations on the topics and international experts from the European Commission and associated accession countries will comment.

Following event

17. The eleventh session of the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6) will be organized after the Expert Meeting on 29-31 October 2001 also at the Palais des Nations. Interested delegates are kindly invited to take part in this session. Information on the Working Party can be obtained from the document TRADE/WP.6/2001/1 or at the following web address: [http:// www.unece.org/trade/stdpol](http://www.unece.org/trade/stdpol) or from the secretariate: Mr. Serguei Kouzmine, Secretary of WP.6 (tel.: (+4122) 917 27 71 and fax: (+4122) 917 04 79, respectively; e-mail: serguei.kouzmine@unece.org).

Participation

18. Participation in the Expert Meeting is open to all interested persons from the UNECE member States, and, under the relevant articles of the terms of reference of the Commission, to representatives of other member States of the United Nations as well as to representatives of specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Representatives of government authorities (SME national focal points, standardization and accreditation bodies), entrepreneurs, representatives of SMEs, quality consultants and auditing firms, universities, and independent experts may also participate at their own expense.

19. Participants should cover cost of travel and hotel accommodation, etc. at their own expenses. There is no registration fee for this event. Documentation and other material are provided at no cost by the United Nations.

20. All participants should be in possession of valid passports or national identity cards, with, if necessary, entry visas which may be obtained from the diplomatic representation of Switzerland in the participants' home countries.

Proceedings, documentation and registration

21. The Expert Meeting will be held in English, French and Russian. The discussion will be lead by a Chairman who will introduce the themes, animate the discussion and summarize the deliberations on each theme.

22. The Expert Meeting will create an ad hoc group of experts whose task will be the elaboration of conclusions and recommendations. As one of the follow-ups to the meeting, the results of the discussions will be presented to the session of an UNECE inter-governmental group of experts representing national standards-setting bodies, regional and international standardization organizations.

23. Registration of the participants should be sent, preferably by telefax, not later than 5 October 2001 to the address indicated below, using the attached Registration Form.

24. All questions concerning the Expert Meeting should be addressed to:

Mr. Antal Szabó, Regional Adviser
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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations - Office 440
CH-1211 Geneva 10
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E-mail: Antal.szabo@unece.org

REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES: Access to the Palais des Nations

Security measures have been strengthened at the Palais des Nations and delegates attending meetings are required to have badges issued by the Security Unit and bearing their names, which will give access to Palais grounds. Delegates are invited to complete the attached **Conference Registration Form** and send it to the secretariat by fax (+41 22 917 01 78). Once in Geneva, delegates will be required to proceed with the original of the form to the Security Section situated at the **Villa Les Feuillantines** (as indicated on the attached map, opening hours: 08:00 a.m.-05:00 p.m.), where the entrance badges will be awaiting. Delegates should plan on about an hour to obtain the badge and reach the meeting room..

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

(Palais des Nations, Geneva)

Thursday, 25 October 2001

09.00-10.00 Registration of participants

OPENING SESSION

10.00-10.05 Welcoming address: Enterprise development - a new programme of the UNECE

Ms. Larissa Kapitsa, Chief of the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities (UNECE)

10.05-10.10 Enterprise competitiveness and quality

Mr. Antal Szabó, Regional Adviser on Entrepreneurship and SMEs (UNECE)

10.10-10.15 Activities of the UNECE and the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies in promoting conformity assessment procedures and trade facilitation

Mr. Sergui Kouzmin, Secretary of the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (UNECE)

QUALITY - TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES

Key-note presentations

10.15- Orientation and future development of the standardization and conformity assessment in the field of quality to improve international competitiveness of enterprises

Mr. Lawrence D. Eicher, Assistant Secretary-General (International Organization for Standardization - ISO)

Total quality management based on sustainability

Mr. Paul Efmorfidis, Managing Director (COCO-MAT company, Xanthi, Greece, Finalist of the European Quality Award 2000 competition)

Creating and enabling supporting infrastructure to promote quality consciousness - Experience of Hungary

Ms. Karolina Sugár, Managing Director (Hungarian Quality Development Centre for Industry and Trade, Hungary)

12.40-13.00 Question and answer session

13.00-15.00 LUNCH

NATIONAL POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICE MODELS

15.00- Quality promotion and its perspectives in Estonia

Ms. Signe Ratso, Deputy Secretary-General (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Estonia)

Development of quality systems to improve competitiveness of small businesses in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. Valery Koreshkov, President (State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Certification, and Euro-Asian Council for Standardization, Metrology and Certification - EASC, Republic of Belarus)

Best practice in the creation of quality assurance systems for SMEs in Poland

Ms. Dorota Złotkiewicz, President of the Board (Quality Management Centre, Subsidy of Lublin Development Foundation, Poland)

Development of small businesses through integration in the European Accreditation System

Ms. Nadezhda Volkova, Director (Research and Training Centre "Testing & Diagnostics", Russian Federation)

How Slovenia promotes the creation of quality systems for SMEs

Ms. Zdenka Kovarf, Managing Director (Small Business Development Centre, Slovenia)

The standardization and quality support system in Ukraine with special

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Ms. Marta Oleksiv, Senior Researcher (Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting, Issues of Standardization and Certification, Ukraine)

17.30-18.00 Question and answer session

Friday, 26 October 2001

EXPERIENCES OF SMEs, CONSULTING, AUDITING COMPANIES AND NGOs

10.00-

A case study: Zahnartzpraxis

Mr. Roger Harr, Dentist (Prize Winner of the European Quality Award 2000 competition, Zahnartzpraxis, Switzerland)

Finnish experience in quality improvement of SMEs: The 4 step model to achieve excellent business for SMEs

Mr. Jussi Moisio, Managing Director (Qualitas Fennika Oy, Finland)

Quality assurance system at the Burton-Apta Kft

Mr. József Megyeri, Quality Manager (Burton-Apta Refractory Manufacturing Ltd., Hungary)

The role of Euro Info Centres in promoting quality consciousness: The Italian case

Ms. Nicoletta Marchsiandi, Information Officer (EURO INFO CENTRE IT-375, Camera di commercio di Torino, Italy)

Quality system of the PASMATEX S.A.

Ms. Maria Grapini, Managing Director (PASMATEX, Romania)

The KONYEÖR's quality system

Mr. Murat Erkan, Mechanical Engineer and Quality Expert (KONVEYÖR Sanayi Ltd., Turkey)

Implementation of quality assurance systems at SMEs: Experience of a leading Hungarian quality consulting company

Ms. Zsuzsa Haiman, Director, and Mr. Levente Kovács, Lead Auditor (QUALIPROD Quality and Technical Consulting Ltd., Hungary)

Problems and practices in the creation of quality management systems and their certification in Russian enterprises

Mr. Iurij Egorov, Director (Russian Centre for Testing and Certification - ROSTEST-MOSCOW, Russian Federation)

Development of a quality assurance system at a medium-sized Slovak printing house

Mr. Michael Párkány, Director (DIGART, Switzerland)

Public-private dialogue on standardization in SMEs: Unrealized potentials

Prof. Lidia Shokina, Secretary (Committee on Sustainable Development and Ecology, Chamber of Trade and Industry of the Russian Federation)

-13.00 Social dimension of quality

Ms. Katarina Jagić, President (Small and Medium Enterprise Association, Croatia)

13.00-15.00 LUNCH

15.00-17.30 ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON THE PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS OF CREATION OF QUALITY SYSTEMS IN ORDER TO PREPARE SMEs TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE GLOBALIZATION AND MARKET ECONOMY REQUIREMENTS

Facilitators:

Mr. Andrzej Kidyba, President of Board (Lublin Development Foundation, Poland)

Prof. Lidia Shokina, Secretary (Committee on Sustainable Development and Economy, Chamber of Trade and Industry of the Russian Federation)

Representative (Société Générale de Surveillance - SGS, Switzerland)

Mr. David Hutchins, Chairman and Founder (David Hutchins International Ltd., United Kingdom)

Mr. Shyam Gujadhur, Senior Adviser on Export Quality Management (International Trade Centre, Division of Trade Support Services, Switzerland)

M. Ricardo Pinto or Mr. Jonathan Brooks (OECD)

Mr. Otto Loesener, Senior Adviser (Quality, Standardization and Metrology Branch, UNIDO)

Mr. Guriqbal Singh Jaiya, Deputy Director (SMEs Division, World Intellectual Property Organization)

Mr. Antal Szabó, Regional Adviser on Entrepreneurship and SMEs (UNECE)



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

Conference Registration Form**Please Print**

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