

EURAMET Developing its New Role in European Metrology

Plática Plenaria

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ABSTRACT

With the objective to provide for a better coordination of the work of the National Metrology Institutes (NMI) some two or three decades ago the establishment of Regional Metrology Organisations (RMO) started. Although the cooperation within the RMOs was informal and without binding obligations, it turned out to be extremely successful in order to bring metrologists within the region together, to provide mutual technical support and advise, to coordinate the provision of traceability to the SI units, to organise inter-comparisons and to cooperate in research and development projects (R&D).

In the framework of the upcoming globalisation and the various approaches for regional economical integration all over the world, the RMOs became the key players for the international recognition of the national measurement standards and the calibration and measurement capabilities (CMC) offered from the NMIs to industry and other users in their country. A Mutual Recognition Arrangement (CIPM MRA) was signed in 1999 by the directors of 38 NMIs and 2 international organisation. In the meantime NMIs from 72 countries and 2 international organisations are participating in this arrangement.

But the cooperation within the CIPM MRA is not the only new challenge which the RMOs are facing. The importance of metrology is continuously growing: in the traditional fields of metrology industry is demanding wider measurement ranges and lower uncertainties, new fields of technology, like nano or biotechnology, are developing and require metrology support, and in many areas which are not new by themselves, like chemistry or clinical analysis, traceable measurements are becoming more and more relevant. New or improved metrology techniques need to be developed, requiring additional resources for R&D, whereas the budgets of the NMIs as the key providers of R&D in metrology are generally not growing. One solution may be a more efficient use of the available resources by a closer cooperation and coordination of the research activities of the NMIs and searching for regional rather than national solutions.

But not only on the “top-level” of scientific metrology is a closer cooperation needed. The growing participation of emerging economies in the global markets goes along with the need for these countries to demonstrate the conformity of the products produced by their industry with standards and requirements of their customers. The establishment of a functioning and internationally recognised national quality infrastructure, with metrology forming an essential part of it, is crucial for these countries. The RMOs are recognising this responsibility, organising advisory support and the exchange of experience among their members and searching for a harmonised metrology infrastructure in their region.

In view of these grand challenges the European NMIs decided to give their cooperation a more formal basis. In January 2007 the “European Association of National Metrology Institutes – EURAMET e.V.”, was established as a registered non-profit association under German law. It substitutes the former collaboration of European NMIs in EUROMET, which was based on a Memorandum of Understanding.

Being now a legal entity has a couple of advantages for EURAMET:

- EURAMET holds an own budget which facilitates the operation of a permanent secretariat with growing responsibilities and improving the continuity and sustainability of the work of EURAMET in general
- It improves the visibility of EURAMET to decision makers in politics and the stakeholder community.
- It opens the possibility for contracts with third parties and to accept additional financing.

- It enhances the commitment and the binding character in the cooperation between the member NMIs in general.

The presentation will outline how EURAMET within this new legal framework tries to give answers and find solutions to the actual challenges. As one of its major activities, the development of a European Metrology Research Programme (EMRP) and its implementation, co-funded by national resources and contributions of the European Union, will be described, which can possibly inspire other RMOs to look for similar ways of coordinating R&D in metrology in their region.