

# **THE WEST AFRICA QUALITY PROGRAMME**

## **BACKGROUND**

Following a successful first phase from 2001 to 2005, the second phase of the West Africa Quality Programme (WAQP) was launched in 2007 for a period of 5 years. The aim was to strengthen regional economic integration and trade by creating an environment that facilitates compliance with international trade rules and technical regulations. Through the programme, tangible results were achieved: a regional quality policy as well as some national quality policies were adopted, a regional quality infrastructure scheme was established, regional standards were adopted, 21 testing calibration laboratories were accredited as per ISO/IEC 17025 standards, 20 enterprises were certified as per ISO 9001 and ISO 22000 standards, metrology laboratories were equipped, and more than 4,000 staff members of laboratories, inspection bodies and private companies were trained.

In order to deepen regional integration and to consolidate the implementation of the quality infrastructure, it was decided to further support the region by initiating the West Africa Quality System Programme.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Maintain, strengthen and specialize are the bywords of the West Africa Quality System Programme. It will build on the recently adopted quality policy of ECOWAS, and will support the ECOWAS Commission and the 16 West African countries in strengthening their quality infrastructure for greater effectiveness, leading to enhanced competitiveness and better intra- and inter-regional trade participation. Finally, the programme will bolster the creation of quality centers of excellence and networks of specialized quality institutions such as laboratories and conformity assessment bodies to provide efficient services to local and exporting companies. Consumers, for their part, will enjoy more protection and economic development will be sustainably promoted.

## COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

- **Quality policy:** Harmonization of national quality policies with the regional policy, adoption of a law on consumer information, and protection and establishment of a financial mechanism to sustain the West Africa Quality Infrastructure.
- **Standardization:** Support of the regional standards harmonization mechanism (ECOSHAM), adoption of further regional standards and strengthening of the national standard bodies.
- **Accreditation:** Establishment of a regional accreditation system.
- **Certification:** Establishment of a regional product certification system.
- **Metrology:** Establishment of a regional metrology and calibration system.
- **Conformity assessment:** Strengthening of conformity assessment bodies and services
- **Quality culture:** Creation and strengthening of quality centers of excellence and awareness of the quality culture in the private sector, establishment of national and ECOWAS quality awards and establishment of a regional database on quality.

## FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The next phase of the West Africa Quality System Programme is supported by a grant of EUR 12 million from the European Union. The implementation is being carried out with the assistance of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). UNIDO is the specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sustainability.