



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Interview with Peter Mason, National Measurement Office (NMO), 18 June 2014

1. A Foreign Office official spoke to Peter Mason on 18 June. The focus of the discussion was the work done by the NMO in accession or new Member State countries to help them reach requisite EU standards in metrology, and the benefit this work can have to the UK.
2. Mr Mason began by noting that the NMO had worked with a number of accession countries or new Member States on metrology issues, including Macedonia and Montenegro. Establishing strong relationships with officials from these countries was a win-win scenario, with both the UK and accession countries benefiting from the relationships that developed.
3. For the accession country, NMO-run projects (often funded through TAIEX) were an essential way to raise capacity in areas needed to meet conditionality criteria and the *acquis* – essential for eventual enlargement. Support from the UK, widely recognised as a global leader on metrology, was highly valued. Aside from the political objective of meeting EU regulations, the successful introduction of reliable measuring instruments (covering everything from accurate petrol pumps to equipment to measure the extraction of minerals from the ground) was essential for consumer confidence and economic credibility. It also had a knock-on effect in other areas, such as trade, health and the environment.
4. Aside from the immediate commercial benefits to the NMO, there were wider benefits for the UK, too. With NMO standards and practices being introduced to accession countries, it was also more likely that they would purchase UK manufactured measuring instruments. Another benefit was the development of wider political relationships which helped when the UK was looking for support on regulatory issues. This support could be found on some issues in the International Organisation of Legal Metrology (OIML - of which Mr Mason was elected President) and has allowed the UK to take a leading role in this organisation. The early work the NMO did in accession countries was the first stage in the forging of strong relationships with other administrations.
5. Mr Mason concluded that working with accession countries in this field had a clear impact on the UK's national interest, both in terms of prosperity, but also in terms of building wider bilateral relations which could help further UK objectives in regulatory and trade policy forums. It was also encouraging that the UK was working hard in this area now, having recognised that a similar opportunity was missed after the 'big bang' enlargement of the EU in 2004.