Authors' reply to the comment on "Assessing publicly financed metrology expenditure against economic parameters"

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The authors would like to thank P. Klenovsky for his comments [1] on their article [2], and are pleased to further clarify some issues. It would be a misunderstanding to see the article [2] as a paper on CMCs. The rationale of the paper was to bring the discussion on *public financing of metrology activities* into the public sphere, so that an open exchange of ideas can take place. Particularly, funding bodies ought to benefit from this, as they traditionally experience these matters as highly technical and complex.

We do agree that of course there is a certain risk associated to any open debate but the statement of P. Klenovsky that this is "*potentially very harmful for the operation of the NMIs*" we found unnecessarily alarming. We would argue that in the long run the opposite actually holds. When one can easily explain the needs for public spending in metrology, then its vulnerability decreases. This is particularly important as the role of NMIs is not defined explicitly in European legislation and public resources are likely to become scarcer.

As far as the methodology is concerned, we believe there is some mistake in P. Klenovsky's letter, as the budget data were taken from iMERA report D1.1 (overview of the metrology landscape; public report status). Moreover, the authors did explain the limitations of their approach of using the CMC as a proxy (p363 of their publication). The authors agree with P. Klenovsky that it is of course true that countries with lower GDP/capita (thus lower cost and salary levels) can indeed produce more CMCs for the same amount of money. But the question is: how justifiable is it to produce these particular CMCs? We

agree that the rationale "more CMCs for same amount of money" might be correct from an NMI point of view (e.g. strengthen the esteem of an organisation vis-à-vis its peers), but then this rationale might not correspond to the one of the funding body, assuming they would understand the matter fully. So the real issue is whether there is a need to have certain CMCs other than for technical or internal reasons (e.g. having the CMC because the technical capability is at hand for historic reasons and not because of the actual needs of a contemporary society). Furthermore, public funding is mainly about research, and in that context public funding for so-called maintenance of CMCs is more problematic.

In the long run, economic considerations and considerations linked to a national metrology strategy are bound to play an increasingly more important role in more countries. Thus, funding bodies will attach greater importance to needs analysis and prioritisation of metrological activities. This was also one of the conclusions of a workshop organised in Ljubljana in October 2005 under iMERA.

As for the reviewers of the paper, we would like to sincerely thank them for a thorough review, which resulted in a lot of comments. We have studied them carefully and significantly improved the paper, which is the reason for the paper being accepted only on 6 May 2009, while being submitted on 22 September 2008.

References

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