

■ Editorial



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Thoughts for the future

It is always wise to look ahead, but difficult to look further than you can see, Knut Birkeland (CIML Immediate Past-President) used to say, quoting Winston Churchill.

From this point of view, the OIML Seminar ***‘What Will Legal Metrology Be In 2020’*** organized by the BIML in September 2002 in conjunction with the 37th CIML Meeting, may constitute either a far-sighted attempt to help the OIML cope successfully with the rapid (and sometimes erratic) changes in our world, or just an agreeable game of prediction without any real consequences since, after all, many of us will be out of the legal metrology circuit within eighteen years.

The fact that I have accepted with pleasure the responsibility of chairing this Seminar shows that I do not consider 2020 as being *‘further than we can see’*. Legal metrology is, just as measurement standards are, a rather stable activity: it would be a nonsense to change legal metrology requirements too frequently, obliging instrument manufacturers to permanently adapt their production to these changing regulations. On the other hand, legal metrology must constitute a general framework specifying the essential metrological performance of measuring instruments subject to legal control, within which manufacturers may develop new designs, new measurement methods, and commercialize - over appropriate periods of time - instruments that meet the essential requirements.

As clearly shown by the Seminar program, legal metrology and the OIML will face a number of developments during the next ten or twenty years, including:

- technological progress with the development of ‘intelligent’ instruments that are able to detect and compensate for their own inaccuracies;
- worldwide and regional politico-administrative changes with an increasing globalization of our world and, in parallel, an accelerated development of regional integration;
- financial restrictions on public budgets;
- the need for efficient consumer protection;
- the use of manufacturers’ quality systems; and
- participation in the establishment of a global measurement system, while facing the need for ensuring measurement reliability in an increasing number of human activities.

Because of printing deadlines, I am writing this *Editorial* some weeks before the Seminar takes place - to be precise, at the beginning of August. Let me, however, try to make a rather short-term prediction and repeat my conviction that the output of this event, as a continuation of the planning exercises carried out in the past, will constitute an appropriate basis for the adaptation of the OIML and of legal metrology, at both national and regional levels, to the requirements of our changing world. ■