

Databases for proficiency testing schemes and certified reference materials - EPTIS and COMAR

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Last year I heard the word commodity in conjunction with PT for the first time. Sure, the PT scene is changing rapidly. PT providers merge, hybrids of PT and RM appear and closed ecosystems squeeze independent providers out of the market. But I had always regarded the operation of PT a challenge that needed some attention and metrological insight, and the word commodity felt like a paradigm change had taken place.

The RM market is very much comparable to the PT market but larger. Its growth is impressive and extensive company and reseller portfolios suggest that availability of reference materials is no longer an issue. Many materials seem to have become true commodities indeed, and this segment of the market is very profitable.

And yet, the world hasn't changed that much. RM and PT commodities only serve simple calibrations and routine measurements. All the other instances where some attention and metrological insight still matter didn't go away. Analytical challenges keep coming, regulation keeps changing, new economies keep entering the scene, uncertainty estimation keeps the labs busy.

But it may be difficult to find the PTs and RMs intended for those applications among the bulk of a commodity market. EPTIS (a database for PT schemes) and the new COMAR (a database for CRMs) aim to bring such valuable and challenging non-routine resources to the fore.