

1. EA membership

EA now brings together 34 full member AB's and 2 associate members representing 34 European countries. HAA, the Croatian Accreditation Body, was accepted as a full member following the decision by the European Council to accept Croatia as a candidate country. With JAC, the Jordanian Accreditation Commission, signing a contract of cooperation in November, EA has developed 16 such contracts out of which 9 have entered into a bilateral agreement. Out of the 32 full member countries, 18 have signed for all scopes, 6 have signed for only part of the scopes and 8 have not yet signed the EA MLA.

2. EA and its relations to the European accreditation policy

Discussions are continuing with the European Commission (DG Enterprise and Industry) in the framework of the Revision of the New Approach. The Commission's view of the future status of accreditation is becoming much clearer. According to the Commission's proposal, accreditation will be defined as a **service of general interest** representing the last authoritative level of control of the conformity assessment services delivered in both voluntary and mandatory spheres. Accreditation should be provided at national level on the basis of appropriate recognition and empowerment by the competent Public Authorities, in a competent, transparent, independent and impartial way, with full accountability towards all the interested parties, as a non-profit activity and without competition ("European way of accreditation"). It is also proposed that EA should be given a formal authority, backed by the European institutions. EA will sign specific agreements with the Commission and EFTA to reflect its new role and mission in the future revised European framework for conformity assessment.

3. EA Secretariat

As decided by the General Assembly, the permanent secretariat of EA, made up of Marga Zaffe, MAC secretariat, Bénédicte Ziemann and Martine Blum, central secretariat, started its operations on the very first days of the New Year.

A comprehensive secretariat management system is being developed.

The EA logo has been registered as a European individual mark.

4. EA Executive Committee

The new Executive Committee met for the first time since the elections in June 2005 on January 18th and 19th in Brussels. A second meeting took place on March 29th and 30th in Böras (Sweden). Paying tribute to the work achieved by the previous team, the Executive agreed on key priorities for the next 6 months. The key issues for the next future include the development of relations with the European Commission and the establishment of effective relations with ILAC and IAF and other regional organizations. A list of liaison persons has been approved and published. The secretariat is elaborating on how to make available to the EA community all useful information relating to the liaison activities developed with these organizations.

Reflections continue about changing the format, contents and schedule of the General Assembly meetings. Members expressed the need to combine the General Assembly meetings with policy and strategy-oriented workshops. The issue will be reviewed at the next General Assembly in June.

The new EA Chair and Vice Chair started a programme of visits to all EA members to be completed within the first months of 2006. These consultations will enable to obtain useful indication on how to arrange the work of EA to fulfil at best the needs and expectations of the members. A report on this initiative will be delivered at the General Assembly in June.

Cooperation with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

A meeting took place in Brussels on March 3 with representatives from the EASA, EAQG and EA. It had been organised upon request of the European agency.

EASA develops and maintains rules and criteria for approval of products and design in the field of aviation. To avoid the multiplication of controls and certification, industry is approaching the Agency to promote the setting up of a third party certification scheme. EASA needs to be demonstrated that the proposed certification scheme, although being participated by the industry (sector scheme), provides the necessary guarantees of independence and impartiality.

As a result of the discussion at the meeting, EASA recognized that a scheme operated under EA MLA accreditation will fulfil the EASA expectations, both in terms of technical effectiveness and absence of undue influences. Therefore future collaboration will develop between EA and the EASA. Recognizing that the aviation industry operates worldwide, EA, EASA and the industry representatives at the meeting agreed that there was a real need for explaining and promoting the European system at the international level. A common presentation will be made at the next US EU International Safety Conference planned to take place on June 6 to 8 in Portland (USA).

In view of the April meeting of the EA Advisory Board, the Executive Committee is revising the EA procedure for complaints and appeals. The EAAB members will be reported on the outcome of the very good work achieved by the MLA committee task force on Cross Frontier accreditation. The task force drafted a policy which was submitted to the MLA Committee (MAC) at its meeting in April. Reflections are in progress with the MAC about the design of a specific information system for recording, updating and making available relevant information about sector schemes.

EA Database for Accredited Bodies

The project management group met in Salzburg on March 22nd.

The simplified calibration scope is now fully operational. Data for calibration labs accredited by CAI (Czech Republic) are now published on the web site.

A proposal for an EA testing scope was agreed by the group. It takes into account the recommendations made by the Laboratory Committee. The scope shall now be evaluated by the management group members. If agreed, the scope could be implemented before the end of the year.

Proposals for two EA scopes for management systems certification and certification of persons were also put forward and have been submitted to the EA Certification Committee for advice.

Finally a full text search was successfully tested and will be implemented shortly.

More information available at <http://db.european-accreditation.org>

5. Communications and Publications Committee: report on the last meeting held on March 23-24

The Committee continued the review of the EA web site. A few proposals for improvement were considered and have been implemented, in particular concerning navigation on the Publications page.

The Committee also discussed in detail the proposed revision of EA 3/01 Conditions for use of accreditation marks and the procedure for publication of ILAC and IAF documents. In application of EA 2/12 Procedure for the development and approval of EA guidance documents and adoption of ILAC/IAF documents, it was agreed to create a link to the ILAC and IAF documents directly from the EA web site and to stop maintaining a parallel list in EA.

The Committee re-confirmed that the documents of the 10-series for calibration would no longer be available from the EA web site since they are available on Euromet web site. A direct link to Euromet web site has been activated.

The Committee decided to draft rules for use of the EA logo based on the existing ILAC rules and continued its work on the creation of a press kit.

The Committee maintains active liaison with the ILAC Marketing and Communication Committee and the new IAF Communications and Marketing Committee. The EA CPC is represented in the two committees.

6. Inspection Committee: report on the last meeting held on March 8

- **Revision of EA 5 / 02 EA guidance on the application of EN 45004 (ISO/IEC 17020) in recurrent inspections of motor vehicles**

It was agreed to set up a WG in charge of revising the document according to EA ILAC IAF A4. The WG will comprise representatives of EA and CITA and will be convened by Sigurlinni Sigurinnason (ISAC, Iceland). The revised draft should be submitted to the Inspection Committee at the next meeting in October

- **Guidance to ISO/IEC 17011 7.5.7 and 7.5.8**

The Committee discussed the proposals from the JWG on Inspection concerning the interpretation of ISO 17011. It developed and agreed on a statement to be forwarded to the joint Committee concerning key activities and witness inspections (1).

- **Joint Working Group on Inspection: proposal for an MLA text for inspection**

The Committee was presented the JWGI proposal for the IAF/ILAC MLMRA on Inspection. Members of the committee were invited to send their comment on the draft to the Committee chair by the end of March.

- **New tasks for the Inspection Committee**

The Committee discussed its role and mission for the future, in light of the expected changes to come at the European level. No doubt that the Committee will have a role to play since the role of accreditation and EA in the notification process will be reinforced. It was recognized that in EA, although inspection accreditation mainly concerns the regulated area (European and national regulations), there are also a lot of activities in the voluntary area.

The members agreed on a list of key topics to be addressed by the Committee at its next meetings: expression of accreditation scopes for the purpose of notification to directives, review of European (SOGS) guidance documents for notification, discussion on technical issues arising from peer reviews in view of harmonization, guidance for multi-site assessments.

It was also agreed that a mechanism should be put in place in order to identify such topics.

- **Definition of scopes of inspection bodies in the mandatory area**

The Committee discussed the first proposal for the expression of accreditation scopes for the purpose of notification to directives submitted by the WG. Five items have been identified at this stage. It was agreed that the proposal needed to be further developed. A revised proposal will be submitted to the EA Advisory Board in April.

(1) Key activities are defined in ISO/IEC 17011 par. 7.5.7 and the relating note. In inspection the decisions on the result of the conformity assessment are often made by the inspector on site and form part of the inspection itself. Therefore it is not an appropriate key activity as defined in this note.

In this case the inputs to the inspection process leading to the decision on the result of the conformity assessment are e.g. selection and monitoring of competent inspectors and provision of appropriate tools.

In the inspection field the note to 7.5.7 should be understood as follows:

Key activities include: policy formulation, process and/or procedure development, process of initial selection of inspectors and, as appropriate, contract review, planning conformity assessments, review and approval of conformity assessments.

The planning of witnessing inspectors should be carried out according to 7.7.3 taking into account the complexity and risk of the inspections concerned using appropriate assessment techniques (e.g. observing inspections, interviewing inspectors, post inspections etc.).

7. Certification committee: report on the last meeting held on March 7-8

For the first time and in response to a request made by some of its members, the Committee held a half day meeting to which only accreditation bodies representatives were invited. The discussion proved fruitful since it was decided to maintain such meetings in the future with the aim to improving preparation and effectiveness of the Committee open sessions. However it was agreed that the list of items to be discussed should be prepared in a better way in advance of the meetings.

Three key issues were identified as a result of a voting among the participants and discussed: policy for cross frontier, guidance on the application of standards used for accreditation and policy for sector schemes.

At its meeting on the second day (full session) the Committee considered in details the agenda for the IAF Technical Committee meeting.

Guidance to ISO 19011 was discussed and members agreed that guidance concerning assessors (auditors) and assessment (auditing) should be covered separately in the documents concerning the AB's and the CB's that is to say in the guidance to ISO/IEC 17011 and ISO 17021 Part 2.

The Committee commented also the proposed guidance to ISO/IEC 17011.

The following documents are being revised and should be published soon by EA :

- EA 7/01 (IAF GD2 to be implemented by 15 December 2006)
- EA 7/02 for multi-sites (IAF GD6)
- EA 6/02 (surveillance and re-certification)

The CC decided to develop the following new work items:

- Guidance to accreditation of certification of Food Safety Management Systems (ISO 22000)
- Generic principles for combined audits
- Guidance to accreditation of certification of Information Security Management Systems (ISO 27001) (in cooperation with IAF)

Finally the Committee recommended that EA should publish the IAF EA White paper on the relation between ISO 14001 certifications and Regulatory Compliance as an information document. The EA Advisory Board will be submitted the proposal at its meeting in April.

Regarding scoring systems in the food sector, the Committee confirmed that scoring is fully compatible with ISO guide 65.

The Committee agreed that a guidance document was not needed in the field of accreditation of QMS certification in Health Care. It recognized the work achieved by the WG on Health care and decided it was no longer justified to maintain the WG in the future.

2006 Meetings

Executive Committee	6 June, Riga 4-5 September, Rome 17 October, Istanbul
EA Advisory Board	27 April, Brussels 15 September, Brussels
Certification Committee	10-11 October, Bled (Slovenia)
Communications and Publications Committee	7-8 September, Bucharest
Inspection Committee	9 October, Bled (Slovenia)
Laboratory Committee	12-13 September, Paris
PLG	13-14 September, Paris
MLA Committee	5-6 October, Brussels
General Assembly	7-8 June, Riga 18-19 October, Istanbul