

Accreditation - quo vadis?

After 10 to 15 years of accreditation experience EUROLAB conducted a survey in Europe in 2001/2002 on satisfaction of accredited laboratories with the accreditation bodies and accreditation procedures. The results of this survey are summarized in the Technical Report 2/2002, which can be downloaded from the EUROLAB-Website (www.eurolab.org).

Furthermore, the results of the survey conducted in Germany - in which more than 300 laboratories took part - are represented by EUROLAB-D in a further Technical Report published as a part of the EUROLAB-D Annual Report 2002. This Report is available on the Website of EUROLAB-D (www.eurolab-d.bam.de).

Based on this survey, the laboratories and the German accreditation bodies should discuss their wishes and perceptions of how to improve the accreditation systems and procedures. The German Accreditation Council (DAR) and EUROLAB-Germany invited to a discussion meeting on 3rd September 2003 at the BAM, Berlin. The discussions should provide opportunity to all parties concerned to represent their perceptions and positions and to become familiar with those of the other parties.

Which positions are represented by EUROLAB-D and by the European umbrella organisation EUROLAB aisbl? The last-mentioned organisation argued in a position paper recently agreed upon for the role and position of accreditation against a "free competition" among the accreditation bodies. In fact, the establishment of nationally recognised accreditation bodies both operating in the mandatory and voluntary area is being favoured. Accreditation shall make up the last level of conformity assessment; an accreditation of the accreditors would lead to an endless chain. However, a series of conditions in view of status and operation of the accreditation bodies shall be fulfilled so as to compensate the disadvantages of a missing competition.

The so-called PLG, the permanent liaison group between EA, EUROLAB and EURACHEM, has been having discussions on how to improve the procedures applied in accreditation of multidisciplinary and multifunctional organisations. As the topic is on the agenda of the programme the discussion event on 3rd September 2003 may possibly contribute ideas. In any case, EUROLAB-Germany is prepared to bring the views of the participants on this topic into the PLG.

In Germany there are presently discussions on a possible re-organisation/re-structuring of the German accreditation system. Among others, the enactment of an accreditation law is considered in Germany, as it already exists e.g. in Austria and Switzerland. EUROLAB-Germany turned to the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA) and to the DAR in this matter and expressed in several letters that the accredited bodies would appreciate an improvement of the system, if the below mentioned conditions were considered.

It is of particular importance that the mandatory and the voluntary areas harmonise their approach in accreditation so that multiple efforts and accreditations would be reduced for the accredited bodies and possibly completely removed for the long term.

The parties concerned shall be involved in the discussions, i.e. the industry and the authorities as users of the accreditation and of course the accredited bodies as parties concerned indirectly. In the past the latter mentioned invested not insignificant sums of money in their accreditation and therefore rely on the fact that these investments pay for themselves in the long run.

In case of a possible re-structuring, it is to be considered that the existing structures, in particular the DAR with its integration in the European and international organisations EA, ILAC and IAF, are being kept functional until the modified structures have been definitely agreed and are able to work. A transition shall be realised smoothly. It is of vital interest for the accredited conformity assessment bodies that the DAR ensures a further use of the Federal Eagle on the accreditation certificates. This possibility should be ensured in future, too, as in many other countries the accreditation bodies may also use the respective governmental emblem.

Generally, the accreditation bodies can be required:

- not to work profit-oriented,
- not to compete with conformity assessment bodies,
- meet the requirements of the European and international accreditation organisations (EA, ILAC, IAF), so as to ensure a worldwide recognition of accreditation,
- to reach a recognition of their accreditations by governmental bodies, so that an additional testing of competence would not be necessary,
- that the parties concerned by accreditation, i.e. the conformity assessment bodies, the industry and the authorities, participate in an establishment of strategy in the form of an advisory board or the like,
- to work customer-oriented, i.e. above all to work cost-efficient and relevant to present times.



**DAR / EUROLAB-D Discussion Event
between accreditation bodies and accredited organisations
on 3rd September 2003 at BAM, Berlin**

- 10:30 h **Welcome**
- 10:40 h **Survey on satisfaction of accredited organisations - Expectations and benefit**
Dr. Anita Schmidt, EUROLAB aisbl Secretariat
- 11:05 h **Differences between recognitions in the mandatory and accreditations in the voluntary area**
Dieter Penning, Regulatory Authority for Telecommunications and Post (RegTP)
- 11:30 h **Cooperation in the field of environment**
Dr. August Thormann, Hess Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Forest
- 11:55 h **Coffee break**
- 12:15 h **FDIS/ISO/IEC 17011 - Changes in assessment**
Dr. Monika Wloka, German Accreditation Council
- 12:40 h **Expectations to accreditation of multidisciplinary and multifunctional organisations**
Dr. Wolfgang Kreinberg, TÜV Product Service
- 13:05 h **Lunch break**
- 14:00 h **Working Groups on the following issues:**
- Expectations of laboratories and certification bodies to a further development of a German accreditation system
 - Cooperation between accreditation bodies
 - Participation in interlaboratory comparison tests within the frame of accreditation
- 16:00 h **Report from the Working Groups and final discussions**
- 17:00 h **Closure of the Meeting**