

ISO 17011 and the Multi-lateral Agreements (MLAs)

IS-14

ISO 17011: “*General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*”.

This standard specifies the requirements for the operation of accreditation bodies (ABs) in the assessment and accreditation of conformity assessment bodies (CABs).

CABs are organisations providing the following conformity assessment services: testing, calibration, inspection, management system certification, certification of products and personnel.

The standard specifies a number of key structural and operational features of an AB such as defining legal responsibility and structure; requirements for impartiality and confidentiality; specifying financial and liability arrangements and clearly defining the scope of its accreditation activities.

ISO 17011 also requires key elements of a quality management system to be in place such as audits, management review, document control, complaints, non-conformities and corrective/preventive actions.

An accreditation body is required to have documented procedures for the assessment, surveillance and re-assessment of applicant and accredited CABs as well as procedures for extending scopes, describing the decision making process and use of the ABs accreditation mark. It lays down obligations of the AB toward its CABs and also the responsibilities of applicant and accredited CABs.

Multi-lateral agreements (MLA)

The MLA is an agreement signed between the European Co-operation for Accreditation (EA) accreditation body members to recognise the equivalence, reliability and therefore acceptance of accredited certifications, inspections, calibration certificates and test reports across Europe. Presently there is an MLA for testing, calibration, inspection, certification of management systems, products and persons.

The MLA eliminates the need for suppliers of products or services to be certified in each country where they sell their products or services, and therefore provides a means for goods and services to cross boundaries in Europe and throughout the world.

It delivers confidence in the service supplied by accredited laboratories, inspection and certification bodies, thereby providing the framework for goods and services to cross borders in Europe and throughout the world, acting as a "passport for trade".

The EA MLA is recognised at worldwide level through the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operation (ILAC) and it is through this mechanism that European ABs attain international recognition for their accredited CABs.

The EA MLA is maintained through a robust peer evaluation system. These on site evaluations confirm the ABs continued compliance to the internationally accepted criteria. AN accreditation body is evaluated against ISO 17011, applicable EA, IAF and ILAC documents and is overseen by the EU Commission, the EA advisory board and the national authorities.

INAB has undergone several successful peer evaluations and is signatory to the following MLAs:

EA:

- Testing, ISO 17025 and ISO 15189
- Calibration, ISO 17025
- Management systems certification, ISO 17021
- Product certification, EN 45011
- Inspection, ISO 17020

IAF

- Management systems certification, ISO 17021
- Product certification, EN 45011

ILAC

- Testing, ISO 17025 and ISO 15189
- Calibration, ISO 17025

Further information may be obtained at www.inab.ie and www.european-accreditation.org