

ILAC MRA expanded to include inspection

The scope of the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) was extended to include the accreditation of inspection bodies on 24 October 2012, at the annual ILAC/IAF meetings held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Thirty-nine accreditation bodies from thirty-nine economies became the inaugural signatories (www.ilac.org/ilacarrangement) to the ILAC MRA for the accreditation of inspection bodies.

As with the accreditation of laboratories, the ILAC MRA for inspection is based on the recognition of the mutual recognition arrangements for inspection that have been established and evaluated in the three recognised regional cooperation bodies of ILAC, namely APLAC (www.aplac.org), EA (www.european-accreditation.org) and IAAC (www.iaac.org.mx).

Accredited once, accepted everywhere!

The accreditation bodies that are signatories to the ILAC MRA for inspection, use the international standard ISO/IEC 17020 *Conformity assessment – Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection* to accredit the inspection bodies. This ensures a uniform approach to assessing inspection body competence.

This consistency allows economies to establish cross-border agreements, based on mutual evaluation and acceptance of each other's inspection body accreditation systems. Such international agreements, called mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs), are crucial in enabling the acceptance of inspection reports and / or certificates and therefore facilitating the acceptance of goods and services between economies.

Each signatory to the ILAC MRA recognises the accreditation and results of an inspection body accredited by another signatory, as if it were one of its own accredited inspection bodies.

Background - What is inspection?

Inspection is an essential part of ensuring that many items in use daily by the public meet specific requirements including safety aspects. Products, processes and services that may be inspected include: food production; meat and dairy products; domestic appliances and toys; mechanical equipment; medical equipment; offshore structures for oil and gas exploration and production; bio-security; forensic investigations; technical installations such as power plants (conventional and nuclear) and wind turbines; and transport systems for instance ships, railways, trucks, cars, planes and space vehicles.

Inspection services are provided by both large multinational organisations, and a growing number of smaller local specialist bodies. In 2011, inspection activities were carried out by thousands of companies, generating €200 billion revenue a year and employing over 600,000 employees world-wide (Source: Industrial Capital Strategies LLC).

The influence and use of inspection will continue to grow across a number of sectors due to the:

- Introduction of new regulations, for example energy efficiency in construction;
- Globalisation of international standards;

- Increased outsourcing of inspection and verification services allowing companies to reduce their costs and focus on core activities;
- Improved risk awareness and focus on risk prevention;
- International movement of manufacturing processes,;
- Rise in innovation, and increased product diversity and sophistication; and
- Emerging markets and the need for exported goods to comply with pre-determined standards.

The increased recognition and confidence in inspection can be seen in the agreements signed with the World Trade Organization (WTO). These allow inspection bodies to engage in certain control services for governments, with WTO approval.

Benefits of accreditation

Whatever their size, a growing number of organisations that provide inspection services have chosen accreditation in order to better serve industry, the local market and global economy.

Accreditation is a formal means of determining the competence and impartiality of an inspection body to perform specific types of inspection. Accreditation provides a ready means for customers to identify and select reliable inspection services, suitable for their needs.

Accreditation is established as a means to minimize risk, avoid expensive re-inspection, enhance customer's confidence, and improve acceptability of goods locally and internationally, thereby facilitating trade and economic growth.

For organisations, accredited inspection helps by enhancing performance, safety and competitiveness. This brings added value to product reputation and aids the sustainability of business.

For consumers and citizens, high standards of inspection ensure safe work equipment and protect consumers, workers and manufacturers by reducing the risk of accidents.

For government and regulators, it provides confidence that the results produced by inspection bodies are accurate, reliable and impartial. It is how authorities and governments are able to make informed decisions regarding the protection of the health, security and welfare of consumers, the public and the environment.

Accreditation Symbol

Accredited inspection bodies are authorised to issue inspection reports and / or certificates bearing a symbol or endorsement of the accreditation body indicating their accreditation. Users of inspection services should also check with the inspection body to confirm that specific inspections are covered by their accreditation. This is normally specified in the accreditation certificate or scope of accreditation document, available on request from either the inspection body or accreditation body.

SANAS will inform the Accredited Inspection Bodies once a go-ahead to issue sub-license agreements for the use of the ILAC logo in conjunction with the SANAS Inspection Symbol is received.

Inaugural Signatories to the ILAC Arrangement for the accreditation of inspection bodies:

- National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA), Australia
- Akkreditierung Austria, Austria
- China National Accreditation Service for Conformity Assessment (CNAS), People's Republic of China
- Ente Costarricense de Acreditacion (ECA), Costa Rica
- Croatian Accreditation Agency (HAA), Croatia
- Czech Accreditation Institute (CAI), Czech Republic
- Danish Accreditation (DANAK), Denmark
- Organismo De Acreditacion Ecuatoriano (OAE), Ecuador
- Finnish Accreditation Service (FINAS), Finland
- Comite Francais d'Accreditation (COFRAC), France
- Deutsche Akkreditierungsstelle GmbH (DakKS), Germany
- Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS), Hong Kong, China
- Hungarian Accreditation Board (NAT), Hungary
- National Accreditation Body of Indonesia (KAN), Indonesia
- Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB), Ireland
- Israel Laboratory Accreditation Board (ISRAC), Israel
- Japan Accreditation Board (JAB), Japan
- Office Luxembourgeois d'Accreditation et de Surveillance (OLAS), Luxembourg
- entidad mexicana de acreditacion a.c. (ema), Mexico
- Dutch Accreditation Council (RvA), The Netherlands
- International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ), New Zealand
- Norsk Akkreditering (NA), Norway
- Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA), Poland
- Instituto Português de Acreditação (IPAC), Portugal
- Accreditation Board of Serbia (ATS), Serbia
- Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC), Singapore
- Slovak National Accreditation Service (SNAS), Slovakia
- Slovenian Accreditation (SA), Slovenia
- **South African National Accreditation System (SANAS), South Africa**
- Entidad Nacional de Acreditacion (ENAC), Spain
- Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC), Sweden
- Taiwan Accreditation Foundation (TAF), Chinese Taipei
- National Standardization Council of Thailand – Office of the National Accreditation Council
(NSC-ONAC), Thailand
- IARM, The Accreditation Institute of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Turkish Accreditation Agency (TURKAK), Turkey
- Dubai Municipality – Accreditation Department (DAC), United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), United Kingdom
- American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA), USA
- Bureau of Accreditation (BOA), Vietnam