

ILAC MRA extended to include the accreditation of inspection bodies

As many of you are aware, the ILAC MRA was extended to include the accreditation of inspection bodies at the annual ILAC/IAF meetings held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil last month.

The ILAC MCC has prepared a press release for your use in promoting this significant milestone. It is available from the ILAC website at <https://www.ilac.org/ilacarrangement.html>. In addition, the ILAC MCC has also published the 4 new brochures listed below, relating to inspection body accreditation. These are available from https://ilac.org/prom_brochure.html

- Why become an accredited inspection body ?
- Why use an accredited inspection body ?

- How does using an accredited inspection body benefit government and regulators ?
- How do I gain confidence in an Inspection Body? Do they need ISO 9001 certification or ISO/IEC 17020 accreditation ?

Also, the photos from the signing ceremony held at the Gala Dinner in Rio de Janeiro are now available from the Conference website. They are in the 6 files labelled 'Photos Gala Dinner Oct 25 2012 (Cert ILAC)'.

(The password is: D0c4ment)

Congratulations to the inaugural signatories to the ILAC MRA for inspection!

Published by ILAC Secretariat

Scanned Signatures

SANAS has been asked on numerous occasions if laboratories and facilities can make use of electronic signatures. This has been exacerbated by the fact that a number of laboratories have been using 'scanned signatures' in place of handwritten signatures on test reports and calibration certificates. This situation prompted a review of the relevant legislation, standards and applicable regulations in order to formulate SANAS Policy in this regard.

The following documents were reviewed

- The International Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005;
- The Accreditation Act, Act 19 of 2006;
- The Electronic communications Act, Act 25 of 2002;
- The regulations issued in terms of the Electronic communications Act.

The International Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005 requires that the test report or calibration certificate include the signature - or equivalent identification of the person or persons authorizing the test report or calibration

certificate. As the standard makes provision for 'equivalent identification' we can therefore conclude that the standard itself does not exclude the use of electronic signatures.

The Accreditation Act, Act 19 of 2006 provides for a certificate issued by an accredited body (AB) and signed by a person deemed by SANAS as competent, to be accepted as evidence of the facts contained therein. The accreditation act therefore does not specify the form that the signature must take.

Section 13 of the Electronic communications Act, Act 25 of 2002 states that 'Where the signature of a person is required by law and such law does not specify the type of signature, that requirement in relation to a data message is met only if an advanced electronic signature is used'.

The Act has defined an "advanced electronic signature" as an electronic signature which results from a process which has been accredited by the Authority as provided for in Section 37, the Act further defines "authentication products or services" as products or services designed to identify the holder of an electronic signature or other persons.



An “authentication service provider” is a person whose authentication products have been accredited by the Accreditation Authority established under section 37 and recognized under section 40. Section 37 of the act states that the ‘Accreditation Authority’ namely the Director General (DG) of the Department of Communications, may accredit authentication products and services in Support of advanced electronic signatures.

The DG of the Department of Communications has established a body known as the ‘South African Accreditation Authority’ to manage the accreditation of ‘authentication service providers’ and published regulations in June 2007 to manage the process.

The requirements to be applied by authentication service providers for the issuing of electronic signatures include:

- A unique link to the user,
- capable of identifying the user,
- created using means that can be maintained under the sole control of the user,
- linked to the data message in such a manner that any

subsequent change to the data or message is detectable,

- based on a face to face identification of the user. See section 38 of Act 25 of 2002.

The web page of the South African Accreditation Authority (www.saaa.gov.za) has listed a single organization as accredited to provide these products, and their product is described as ‘an advanced electronic signature solution based on a high assurance digital certificate compatible with any product or service supporting the X.509 digital certificate usage.

In conclusion, electronic signatures are therefore permitted on Certificates and Reports issued by SANAS accredited facilities issued by electronic means, provided they are ‘Advanced Electronic Signatures’, and that the provider of the ‘authentication products and services’ is accredited by the ‘South African Accreditation Authority’. The use of a ‘Scanned’ signature does not meet the requirements for advanced electronic signatures and are therefore not permitted.
Prepared by Neville Tayler

Transition Period: IEC 17020: 2012 Conformity Assessment - requirements for the operation of various types of inspection bodies performing inspection:

As agreed by the ILAC membership in the ballot ‘Rationale for the proposed Period for Transition to ISO/IEC 17020:2012’ conducted in July 2012, the transition period for the implementation of ISO/IEC 17020: 2012 Conformity Assessment - Requirements for the operation of various types of Inspection bodies performing inspection will expire on 1 March 2015. At this time, all accreditation Certificates issued (as described and defined in ISO/IEC 17011) must reference the 2012 edition of ISO/IEC17020. Compliance will be determined during normal surveillance or reassessment activities or as a separate activity.

In this regard SANAS published their 17020 Transition Policy (Rev 02) with a target date of 01 March 2015 for finalisation of the process. Please see the SANAS website www.sanas.co.za “Announcements”-page for details.

Accredited Inspection Bodies were required to submit their Transition Action Plans by 01 October 2012 (refer to the Transition Policy). Facilities that have not done so are in the process of being issued with non-conformances. Failure to submit satisfactory corrective actions may lead to the suspension of the accreditation of these facilities.

All inspection documents (R&TR), forms and checklists have been updated to reflect ISO/IEC 17020: 2012 and Inspection Bodies should familiarise themselves with the updated documents. Please see the SANAS website www.sanas.co.za “Publications”-page for details.

After 1 March 2015, inspection bodies accredited to the previous version of ISO/IEC 17020 will not be recognised under the ILAC Arrangement.

Prepared by Linda Grundlingh

