



Accreditation in Europe
*Facilitating regulatory compliance
and international trade*

All countries, and all market sectors, have seen an increase in the number of technical regulations, standards, testing and certification procedures. Generally, these are introduced to meet the requirements of quality and safety that consumers, businesses, and regulators expect of goods and services.

What is accreditation?

The increasing number of specified standards has seen a corresponding growth in the number of organisations providing third party evaluation of compliance with these standards.

The accreditation process determines **the technical competence of organisations that offer testing, examination, verification, inspection, calibration, reference materials production, proficiency testing program provision and certification services (collectively known as conformity assessment)**. Accreditation operates in the public interest across all market sectors, providing a transparent and impartial assessment of these services against internationally recognised standards and other national or sectoral requirements.

Together, conformity assessment and accreditation are important parts of a nation's quality infrastructure, along with metrology and standardisation. They build **confidence that goods and services, processes, management systems and the work of individuals comply with national and international standards and regulations**. They also assist in the risk-management and decision-making of manufacturers, regulators, and consumers.



Who benefits from accreditation?

For businesses, accurate calibration, measurement and testing, performed in accordance with best practice, can limit errors and product failure, help control production costs and contribute to an innovative environment. Accreditation is therefore an essential tool for decision-making, risk management and supplier selection. It can also provide a competitive advantage in domestic markets through access to public sector contracts, and also overseas with greater acceptance in export markets.

For consumers, accreditation helps to increase access to goods and services of consistent, recognized and reliable quality, and safety, and make informed choices.

For national governments and regulators, accreditation is the preferred mechanism for identifying competent bodies to implement government policies and regulations aimed at safeguarding the public and building public confidence in activities that impact on such fields as health, welfare, security, the environment, education, and financial services.



Accreditation is an on-going process of assessment of a conformity assessment body to ensure that its performance is impartial, technically competent, up to the required standard, appropriately resourced, and can be sustained in the long term. These are all vital attributes of testing, examination, calibration, verification, inspection and certification.

The importance of accreditation - Some examples

Climate and Environment

- **EU Green Deal.** The EU Emission Trading System (ETS) is a cornerstone of the EU's policy to combat climate change and its key tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively. It is key for the EU ETS that the emission reports submitted by industrial installations and aircraft operators are accurate.
- **Improving environmental management.** It is increasingly important for businesses to show that they are implementing an effective environmental management system that delivers the benefits not only of improved environmental performance but also of better management and improved regulatory compliance.

Safety and security

- **Product safety.** To ensure the free movement of goods within the EU market, and to set high safety standards for consumers and the protection of the environment, manufacturers shall demonstrate that the requirements set out in EU legislations are met.
- **Telecommunications security.** The electronic transfer of information and data includes much that is sensitive for personal, commercial or financial reasons. Telecommunications service providers must be able to demonstrate the integrity and confidentiality of their information security management systems.
- **Crime scene investigation.** To avoid unnecessary additional costs to all parties within the criminal justice system, let alone miscarriages of justice, it is vital that the examination of crime scenes and the collection and analysis of evidence are carried out correctly and to the highest standards to maintain the integrity of the materials being collected and their chain of custody.

Farming and food

- **Ensuring the safety and authenticity of food.** Consumer confidence not only in the safety of food but also in information about the environmental impact and trading ethics of food production and supply can only be gained through the appropriate application of food safety management systems, supported by credible testing and inspection regimes.

Health and welfare

- **Supply of clean drinking water.** Laboratory analysis of samples of drinking water and the associated reporting of the results must meet regulatory requirements in order that decisions about public health issues are based on the best and most accurate information possible.
- **Guaranteeing the compliance to standards and quality of face masks.** Due to the coronavirus outbreak, there is a huge demand for masks, and it is important to ensure that appropriate masks ensuring adequate protection are swiftly made available to those who need it most. But the masks shall be tested to ensure that the requirements set out in European Standards are met. Tests of masks are performed by accredited laboratories.



Commerce

- **Removing technical barriers to trade.** Access to new markets is made easier because of the international recognition of accreditation and the equivalence and reliability of conformity assessment services. Once tested or certified by an accredited conformity assessment body, products and services may be exported without the need for re-testing or re-certification for each new market. In 2016, a bilateral cooperation agreement has been signed by EA and the Standards Council of Canada to enable the implementation of the Conformity Assessment Protocol provided for in the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), allowing for the mutual acceptance by Canada and the EU of conformity assessment results delivered by each other's recognized bodies. This will help trade and open doors for EU and Canadian companies.

The EA Multilateral Agreement (EA MLA) is a signed agreement between EA National Accreditation Body members to recognize and accept the equivalence and reliability of their individual accreditation services and thus the certificates and reports issued by the organizations they accredit (conformity assessment results).

The EA MLA exists to reduce barriers to trade

The EA MLA is in line with the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade which strongly encourages countries to recognize the conformity assessment results of other countries.

National Accreditation Bodies are admitted to the MLA only after stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation team to determine continued compliance with [Regulation \(EC\) No 765/2008](#), ISO/IEC 17011, the internationally recognized standard for accreditation bodies, and the relevant (harmonised) standards for accreditation.

Market confidence in the EA MLA and the conformity assessment results provided by organizations accredited by EA MLA signatories **supports the free movement of goods and services in Europe and the rest of the world. The EA MLA acts as a 'passport for trade'** through elimination of the need for products and services to be re-tested, re-calibrated, re-inspected or re-certified in each country into which they are imported and sold.

The EA MLA is recognized at international level by the [International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation \(ILAC\)](#), and the [International Accreditation Forum \(IAF\)](#). Reports or certificates provided by organizations accredited by EA MLA signatories are also recognized by the signatories of the ILAC and IAF multilateral agreements.

Accreditation	Standards
Laboratories Testing and Medical examinations	ISO/IEC 17025 ISO 15189
Laboratories Calibration	ISO/IEC 17025
Certification Bodies Product certification	ISO/IEC 17065
Certification Bodies Certification of persons	ISO/IEC 17024
Certification Bodies Management systems certification	ISO/IEC 17021
Inspection Inspection	ISO/IEC 17020
Validation and verification Validation and verification	EN/ISO 14065
Proficiency Testing Providers Proficiency Testing Provision	EN ISO/IEC 17043
Reference Material Producers Production of Reference Materials	EN ISO/IEC 17034



The European co-operation for Accreditation is an association of national accreditation bodies in Europe, set up in 1997, that are officially recognized by their national Governments to assess and accredit - against international standards - organizations that carry out conformity assessment services.

About EA

The importance of accreditation has been further reinforced following the implementation of the [Regulation \(EC\) No 765/2008](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 setting out the requirements for accreditation and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 339/93 (hereinafter Regulation 765/2008) which, for the first time, provides a legal framework for the provision of accreditation services across Europe. This legal framework recognises the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) as the European Accreditation Infrastructure and defines its responsibilities and obligations.

Moreover, since 1 January 2010, it has been a requirement that every EEA Member Country shall formally appoint a single National Accreditation Body (NAB) to be the sole provider of accreditation services for that country. Each National Accreditation Body works in the public's interest, ensuring that organizations supplying conformity assessment services such as testing, examination, verification, inspection, calibration, and certification are competent to do so.

In this way, one can trust that the certificates and reports issued comply with mandatory or voluntary national, regional, or international standards and requirements, and support the provision of products, processes, and services across economic activities.

OUR MISSION

Ensure confidence in accredited conformity assessments results through harmonized operation of accreditation activities in support of European and global economies.

The *EA Strategy 2025* defines EA's vision as being "a reference in the world for accreditation that enables an open and global market for competitive business and providing reassurance to consumers in a sustainable society".

To achieve EA's vision, 3 strategic objectives are set out in the Strategy:

- Good governance to deliver consistent and sustainable results;
- Close cooperation with regulators and stakeholders to strengthen accreditation at the European and international level;
- Continue to develop accreditation to support innovation and growth in existing and new areas.

EA MEMBERSHIP

Members of EA (49 members) are the NABs from EU and EFTA member states, candidate countries for EU or EFTA membership, member states of the Council of Europe and countries identified by the EU in the European Commission's European Neighbourhood Policy as countries of particular importance.

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