

EA Stakeholders' Expectations towards Accreditation and EA

Stakeholders in European accreditation can be split into three groups, also reflecting the respective colleges in the European co-operation for Accreditation Advisory Board (EAAB):

1. Direct customers (i.e. conformity assessment bodies, hereafter called "CABs");
2. Indirect customers (e.g. manufacturers getting products certified);
3. National authorities.

It is understood that many expectations result from Regulation (EC) 765/2008 and, as such, are mandatory. National accreditation bodies (hereafter called "NABs") and EA shall operate in accordance with this Regulation.

Common expectations of all stakeholders

All stakeholders expect accreditation to deliver **transparency** and **confidence** in the **competence** and **integrity** of the conformity assessment infrastructure and the conformity assessment results.

In addition to its important role in facilitating trade and business in Europe, accreditation has a specific role in support of Regulation and should provide a single source of assessment of CABs with regard to the safeguard of public protection issues, such as product safety, legal metrology and environmental integrity.

To be able to fulfil these roles:

- Accreditation should support conformity assessment in the Community, in both the voluntary and regulatory areas, in accordance with Regulation (EC) 765/2008 and given the referential position of accreditation in Decision (EC) 768/2008.
- Accreditation should promote the competitiveness of the European conformity assessment infrastructure and of European business and industry in the global market. Accreditation should avoid duplication of assessments at all levels and should be delivered at reasonable cost and in reasonable time.
- From a technical point of view, accreditation should constitute the last level of conformity assessment, i.e. no "accreditation of accreditors". Accreditation should create added value and ensure that the conformity assessment infrastructure is kept lean and efficient.
- Accreditation should provide for consistency in the (high) level of competence of accredited CABs, on the basis of the relevant harmonised standards. Supply and procurement of products and services are becoming ever more international. Users should have confidence that an accredited CAB will perform to a specified standard or common expectation irrespective of the location or accreditation body.
- Accreditation has to be a non-profit activity, free from commercial interest. Competition between accreditors may put undue pressure on bodies leading to the devaluation of accreditation.

1. Direct customers

The conformity assessment bodies (CABs) are seeking:

- a competent and effective accreditation service,
- that assures global acceptance of accredited results
- at reasonable conditions without unnecessary burdens and costs for CABs and their customers.

CABs expect EA:

- to define and implement ways of delivering a truly Europe-wide accreditation, making use of its network of NABs, but not requiring CABs to undergo the same assessments in different European countries;
- to facilitate communication among NABs receiving applications for accreditation under sectoral schemes to the effect that applicants will be speedily directed to competent sources of assessment within the EA network;
- to work with CABs in the detection and countering of counterfeit accreditation and certification marks.

Particular identified expectations are as follows:

Confidence:

- The accreditation process should focus on technical competence, the personnel and processes of CABs, as well as results.
- Accreditation bodies and their assessors should have the required competence to cover their scope of accreditation.
- There should be surveillance of the use of accreditation symbols in the market place.
- Accreditation symbols should not be allowed to be used on products.
- Accreditation bodies should promote the added value of accreditation to the wider market.
- Accreditation bodies should not compete with CABs (e.g. should not offer certification services).
- Accreditation should result in the widespread acceptance of the results of accredited CABs.

Consistency:

- There should be consistency between accreditation bodies and between assessors by performing adequate peer evaluations.
- There should be a consistent application of requirements for CABs stipulated in harmonised standards and EU Directives and Regulations through harmonized implementation avoiding country specific requirements.
- Accreditation bodies should facilitate the assessment of multi-site CABs, including cross-border, and witnessing activities at clients of CABs.
- Accreditation should deliver a level playing field for CABs.

Cost:

- Accreditation bodies should avoid multiple assessment of CABs.
- Accreditation should deliver a cost-effective and rapid service, with reductions in the wide variations in accreditation charges currently practised.
- There should be a flexible, market-orientated attitude to definition of scope, especially in new sectors and technologies.
- Accreditation should facilitate obtaining notification under EU Directives and Regulations and Government approval generally.
- Accreditation bodies should optimise the accreditation of multi-site, multi-function, multi-disciplinary CABs.

2. Indirect customers

The prime expectation of business, industry, consumers and other end-users is that accreditation should lead to “one-stop assessment/testing”, with the accredited conformity assessment results being accepted internationally and across all purchasers, at reasonable cost.

Particular identified expectations are:

Confidence:

- Accreditation should deliver confidence in the integrity, impartiality and technical competence of CABs.
- Accreditation should support regulatory conformity assessment and should strive to become the reference tool for regulators to ensure wider use and acceptance of accredited conformity assessment by governments.
- It should create a level playing field for CABs.
- It should support international trade. Mutual recognition should lead to reference to accreditation being sufficient to comply with Treaty requirements.
- It should provide the basis for acceptance of accreditation certificates and of accredited conformity assessment results in the market place, including for reciprocal acceptance of certificates and conformity assessment results in third countries.
- Accreditation should enhance the confidence of consumers and end-users in conformity assessment results.
- Accreditation should reflect market relevance and relate to the real needs of business.
- Accreditation bodies should provide full and updated information on accredited conformity assessment services available to business.

Consistency:

- Accreditation should bring the regulated and voluntary spheres together.

3. National Authorities

The Member States, as stakeholders, have primarily focused on supporting the implementation of the single market. Although most could be expected to sign up to the wider objectives identified above as to EA shall operate in accordance with the Regulation (EC) 765/2008 and regarding the common expectations of all stakeholders, their particular expectations were identified as follows:

Confidence:

- Accreditation should support EU and national legislations.
- Accreditation should ensure the competence and reliability of CABs.
- Accreditation should support the notification of CABs under the EU legislation.
- Accreditation should ensure that activities delegated by authorities to CABs are reliable and efficient.
- Accreditation should ensure transparency throughout the process.
- Accreditation should have wide stakeholders' involvement.

Consistency:

- Approaches to accreditation in the regulatory area should be harmonised.