



Joint IAF-ILAC-ISO Communiqué

ISO and IEC standard for "one-stop accreditation" to boost cross-border trade

A new International Standard aims to harmonize requirements worldwide for organizations that assess the competence of "conformity assessment" bodies.

It will provide a global benchmark for "accreditations bodies" to ensure that they operate in a consistent, comparable and reliable manner worldwide, thereby providing confidence to purchasers and regulators and facilitating cross-border trade.

Conformity assessment bodies (CABs) check that products, materials, services, systems or people measure up to the specifications laid out in a relevant standard. A lack of confidence in their competence to perform these tasks may result in redundant, costly and time-consuming assessments by different accreditation bodies in different countries. Such costs could be drastically reduced if a CAB could be assessed once and the results accepted globally. This process is known as a "one-stop accreditation".

ISO/IEC 17011:2004, *Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*, sets out a uniform set of requirements for bodies that verify the activities of conformity assessment bodies – from testing, inspection, management system certification to personnel certification, product certification and calibration.

It will also prove useful in the peer evaluation process for mutual recognition arrangements between accreditation bodies which will allow the contracting parties to recognize the results of each other's inspections, testing, certification or accreditation for goods and services traded internationally.

"An adequate accreditation system should provide confidence to the purchaser and regulators and, in so doing, facilitate cross-border trade," said Mario Wittner, Chair of ISO Committee on conformity assessment (CASCO). "The new standard will have an important impact on the operations of the accreditation bodies as well as on the thousands and thousands of laboratories and certification and inspection bodies across the world."

The standard's potential for facilitating cross-border trade is witnessed by its recent adoption by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) as the base set of requirements for their national and regional members.

Chair of IAF Dr. Thomas Facklam explains its significance: "ISO/IEC 17011:2004 is the result of several years of difficult work that successfully combines into one standard several previous documents related to accreditation bodies. This one-stop accreditation standard will now provide a strong basis for future accreditation practice, and help enhance the reputation of accreditation as a central mechanism for establishing the competence and recognition of conformity assessment results on a global basis."

According to the Chair of ILAC Mr. Daniel Pierre, ISO/IEC 17011:2004 is also important for emerging accreditation activities in economies in transition and developing countries. "The standard establishes clear requirements for the structure, management and functions of



existing and future accreditation bodies, and should be taken into account within international donor programmes, mutual recognition agreements and by accreditation bodies themselves."

ISO/IEC 17011:2004 replaces three sets of overlapping requirements for the same attributes: ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993 (laboratories), ISO/IEC Guide 61:1996 (certification bodies) and ISO/IEC TR 17010:1998 (inspection bodies).

ISO/IEC 17011:2004, *Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*, costs 97 Swiss francs and is available from ISO national member institutes and from ISO Central Secretariat (sales@iso.org). The new standard was developed by CASCO's working group WG 18, *Accreditation*, in partnership with the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission).