ACCREDITATION:
A BRIEFING FOR GOVERNMENTS AND REGULATORS

EUROPEAN ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is continuously gaining recognition as an important technical tool in the delivery of objectives across an increasing range of policy areas, including for maintaining public confidence.

The accreditation process determines, in the public interest, the technical competence and integrity of organisations offering testing, proficiency testing provision, examination, validation and verification, inspection, calibration and certification (often known collectively as evaluation services or conformity assessment services).

Accreditation, which operates across all market sectors, provides an **impartial assessment against internationally recognised standards**.

It offers a single, transparent and repeatable approach which:

- is voluntarily embraced by business;
- reduces the need for central and regional government to employ its own specialist assessment personnel;
- builds business and consumer confidence.

The process of accreditation provides a **cost-effective means of delivering public services** which:

- are reliable, high quality and safe;
- support regulatory compliance;
- imply lower administrative burdens and bureaucracy.

The **EU Regulation (EC) No 765/2008**, which provides a legal framework for the provision of accreditation services across Europe, has been developed against the background of a growing recognition of the importance of accreditation to the EU's economic infrastructure. The Regulation covers the operation of accreditation in support of voluntary conformity assessment as well as conformity assessment required by legislation. Under this Regulation, accreditation, when carried out against the recognised harmonised standards, is regarded as a public authority activity and EU Member States will be required to appoint a single national accreditation body for these activities. The national accreditation body can be a public or private organisation but, regardless of its status, it will be regarded as carrying out a public authority activity.
The main aims of the Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 are to reinforce the status of accreditation, improve consistency of the accreditation services offered and, ultimately, to increase confidence in accreditation as a tool for government and regulators.
This legal framework identifies **European co-operation for Accreditation (EA)** as an important association and defines its responsibilities and obligations.

Delivering confidence for EU ETS Verification Accreditation

EA has worked closely with the Directorate-General Climate Action (DG CLIMA) of the European Commission (EC) to implement accreditation according to EN ISO 14065 and Commission Regulation (EU) N° 600/2012 for the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS), namely greenhouse gas verification. The main activities of the EA-EC cooperation consisted of:

- Peer-evaluating policies and procedures established by EA NABs for accreditation of verifiers against EN ISO 14065, the Regulation, the related guidelines provided by DG CLIMA and EA-6/03 M : 2013 EA Document for recognition of Verifiers under the EU ETS Directive and any additional criteria being defined (in advance of subsequent revision of EA-6/03);
- Training EA peer-evaluators for NAB accreditation of EU ETS verifiers;
- Establishing an EA-EU ETS Network of experts on EN ISO 14065 and the Regulation;
- Setting up national databases for publication of accredited verifiers: EA National Accreditation Bodies providing accreditation of EU ETS verifiers set up a national database of accredited verifiers to allow public access to information (data and scope) on verifiers accredited by each EA NAB.

What is the difference between Accreditation and Certification?

Certification represents a written assurance by a third party of the conformity of a product, process or service to specified requirements. Accreditation, on the other hand, is the formal recognition by an authoritative body of competence to work to specified standards.

The key differences between accreditation and certification are embodied in a European Regulation (EC) No 765/2008, which provides a legal harmonised framework for the provision of accreditation services across Europe.Under the Regulation, the main differences between accreditation and certification are that:

- accreditation will operate within a legal framework.
- accreditation, when carried out against the recognised harmonised standards, is regarded as a public authority activity.
- accreditation operates on a not-for-profit basis and is completely independent from commercial motivations. It will not compete with either other accreditation bodies nor conformity assessment bodies.
- accreditation is independent and impartial.
- accreditation bodies are not involved in conformity assessment activities.

Whereas accreditation is forwarded on the activities conducted by conformity assessment bodies, certification refers to manufacturers. Specifically, certification deals with products and services provided by manufacturers or the way the production or service provision is managed.Therefore accreditation shall provide confidence in certification.

When it comes to testing or measurement services, one of the most important considerations must be that the services in question should give accurate and reliable results. For accreditation against EN ISO/IEC 17025, the emphasis is to establish the technical competence of a laboratory for a defined set of tests, measurements or calibrations. The standard also covers competence requirements for a laboratory providing opinions and interpretations of its test data where this is required.

Certification against a generic management systems standard such as ISO 9001 is applicable to all organisations irrespective of type, size or product or service provided. The emphasis is to establish an organisation's compliance with requirements for a quality management system, and as such certification should not be interpreted to mean that it demonstrates the technical competence of an organisation to produce valid data or results.

Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Regulation : reducing emissions from the shipping sector

The EU is calling for a global approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping – a large and growing source of emissions. As a first step, large ships using EU ports will be from 2018 required to report their verified annual emissions and other relevant information. The scheme consists of 3 consecutive steps:

- Monitoring, reporting and verification of CO2 emissions from large ships using EU ports
- Greenhouse gas reduction targets for the maritime transport sector
- Further measures, including market-based measures, in the medium to long term.

Accreditation issues were presented, discussed and experiences shared, based on the Delegated Regulation 2016/2072 and the relevant issues from the work in the European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) subgroup on verification and accreditation – e.g. the role of NABs and verifiers in the MRV, how accreditation can be granted to verifiers in time during the initial phase, and how verifiers and companies should deal with the situation in which accreditation is suspended or withdrawn close to the planned issuing date of the Document of Compliance (DOC) by the verifier.

The guidance/best practices documents have been elaborated with support of EA.

How does accreditation guarantee national and international standards are delivered?

Accreditation is based on demonstrating compliance with specified requirements for competence, independence and impartiality:

- **Competence:** the experience and technical skills of the staff in the accredited or applicant body are verified by qualified assessors with relevant expertise and specialised knowledge;
- **Independence:** accredited bodies that grant certificates or issue tests reports for instance shall show independence from the organisations to which their services are provided;
- **Impartiality:** accredited bodies shall show absence of or proper management of conflicts of interest with the client to whom they provide services.

National Accreditation Bodies with Government recognition operate to internationally recognised standards and are themselves regularly reviewed by their international peers.

Accreditation means that standards are willingly embraced rather than externally enforced, an approach preferred by business.

By relying on accreditation, regulators and governments obtain a third party, independent, and competent evaluation providing objective results to support sound decisions in regulations, public procurement or delivery of products and service onto the market.

The peer evaluation process

EA has been recognised by the European Commission according to Article 14 of Regulation (EC) nº 765/2008 «Setting out the requirements for accreditation and market surveillance relating to the marketing of products and repealing Regulation (EEC) 339/93» to operate the peer evaluation system of national accreditation bodies in Europe.

The Multilateral Agreement (MLA) between the EA accreditation body members creates mutual confidence in, and acceptance of, accredited certifications, inspections, calibration certificates and test reports. The MLA eliminates the need for supplies of products or services to be certified in each country where they are sold. Therefore, it provides a mean for goods and services to cross boundaries in Europe and throughout the world thanks to the recognition at international level by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

The robustness of the EA MLA is maintained through a **strong peer evaluation process**. The purpose of these rigorous on-site evaluations is to verify the Accreditation Body signatories' continuing conformity with the internationally accepted criteria. The Accreditation Body is evaluated against the international standard EN ISO/IEC 17011, other related criteria such as application documents from EA, ILAC or IAF, and applicable criteria on behalf of European or National Regulators and industrial schemes.

The EA peer evaluation team will carry out a full assessment of the headquarters, including quality systems, processes and records. It also includes a number of on-site witnessing of Accreditation Body assessment teams during client assessments and surveillance visits for all schemes. **The MLA process is overseen by the European Commission, the EA Advisory Board and the national authorities.**

European co-operation for Accreditation as the official guardian of the European accreditation infrastructure

The single European market allows the free movement of goods, services and personnel within the European Union. This free trade presupposes confidence in the product or service being offered and can only be effective upon elimination of technical barriers to trade. The European Commission recognises accreditation as the preferred mechanism for the elimination of technical barriers to trade and has stated

"Accreditation is essential for the correct operation of a transparent and quality-oriented market".

EA has the mission to ensure confidence in accredited conformity assessments results through harmonized operation of accreditation activities in support of European and global economies.
The role of EA is defined by three dimensions:

- **Strategic** by developing accreditation to facilitate the market for conformity assessment services in close cooperation with European regulators, stakeholders and other interested parties;
- **Operational** in cooperating with regulators, stakeholders and other interested parties, including its members – the national accreditation bodies – in managing accreditation in specific sectors or areas to ensure that the parties have a common understanding and approach to the accreditation criteria in order to arrive at trustworthy attestations of conformity;
- **Supportive** for its members to all issues regarding accreditation and conformity assessment.

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