



***Publication
Reference***

EA-INF/14: 2015

Communication with The European Commission And its DG's

PURPOSE

This document gives information on the communication channels between EA and the European Commission, regarding the political and technical issues, according to EA's co-ordinating role, as defined in The Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council. This publication also exposes the financing of these communication activities.

Authorship

The publication has been written by the EA Executive Secretary.

Official language

The text may be translated into other languages as required. The English language version remains the definitive version.

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Further information

This document is to be considered in relation with EA-1/15.

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Category: Information and promotional documents

Date of endorsement : 23rd September 2015

Date of implementation : Immediate

Transitional period : None

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council setting out the requirements for accreditation and market surveillance. It introduces the legal framework for accreditation and imposes obligations on national accreditation bodies (NABs), Member States and the European Commission. Further, the Regulation sets out the responsibilities and co-ordinating role of the European co-operation for Accreditation.

The Regulation is underpinned by the General Guidelines for the cooperation between EA, the European Commission (EC), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the Competent National Authorities. They are intended to widen and strengthen the co-operation in order to reflect the developments in policy and legislation, such as the adoption of the Regulation on accreditation and to stabilize the position of accreditation.

According to the Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 and the General Guidelines EA and its members have to meet several requirements and expectations. Many of them are dedicated in some way or the other to a closer cooperation between the parties involved. These include, inter alia:

- cooperate with the European Commission, EFTA and the competent national authorities in the development and implementation of Community and EFTA programmes of technical assistance and cooperation with third countries,
- promote, in close cooperation with EU/EFTA Member States national public authorities, the use of accreditation in new sectors and fields of activity where the potential of accreditation has not yet been fully exploited, in particular in the regulated areas,
- answer technical issues or provide necessary expertise on an ad hoc basis in developing specific arrangements to support Community initiatives,
- be responsive towards the European Commission and EFTA as well as the Member States' national authorities with regard to activities related to Community competencies,
- guarantee regular provision of information to the national authorities and conformity assessment bodies.

EA has recognized the importance of a close and sustainable cooperation with the EC and its DG's as well as with the national public authorities. Therefore, it is one of the key issues in the EA Strategy Objectives and the EA Plan. On the other hand the EA Plan is part of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) signed by the EC, EFTA and EA.

The general objective in regard of cooperation with the EC can be summarized as "Increase and widen EA's cooperation with the European Commission". This objective is underpinned by various activities for instance laid down in the annual EA Work Programmes.

The cooperation with the national public authorities is primarily the task of the NABs. Nevertheless, it is part of EA's remit to assist its members and the European Commission in this regard.

2. COMMUNICATION WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND ITS DG'S

Within the European Commission DG GROW Unit C/1 is accountable for the Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 and its implementation. Furthermore, EA is under the auspices of Unit C/1 and this Unit supervises the implementation of the FPA.

EA has also bilateral communication with a number of DG's mainly for discussion of specific legislative initiatives or for discussion of actual issues in fields where accreditation is used in legislation in force. These bilateral contacts are normally for discussion of sector specific issues and requirements under the responsibility of units within the DGs. These contacts are usually not appropriate to deal with overall issues on accreditation and the European accreditation system.

The challenge for EA is on one hand to maintain and enhance the existing communication and to develop new communication channels on the other hand in order to be able to provide the necessary assistance to the EC hence accreditation and conformity assessment will be used according the Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 and the corresponding EA rules.

In order to ensure close and efficient cooperation with the EC a defined structure and process as well as its monitoring is needed. This process shall include the following:

- Communication channels/contacts with the EC for political issues
- Communication channels/contacts with the EC for technical issues
- Reporting and monitoring

The EA Chair takes responsibility for ensuring efficient and coherent cooperation with the European Commission.

For any communication activity with the EC EA-1/21 A shall be taken into consideration.

2.1. Communication channels/contacts with the EC for political issues

DG GROW is the key communication channel to the European Commission. DG GROW has set-up an Inter-Service Steering Group for Accreditation, whose purpose is to inform other DG's on the implementation process of Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 and provide information on the use of accreditation as a legislative instrument.

EA is invited to participate in Steering Group meetings and the forum is appropriate for sharing experience across DG's on actual and potential use of the accreditation system and for EA to provide information on accreditation and the operation of the European Accreditation System. Hence, the Steering Group meetings are an important platform for EA to get in contact with other relevant DG's.

Therefore, EA representatives will participate at the Inter-Service Steering Group as well as the IMP (Expert Group on the Internal Market for Product) meetings.

In order to maintain and to enhance the cooperation with DG GROW regular bilateral meetings are envisaged.

The EA Chair, EA Vice-Chair and Executive Secretary are the key contact persons for political issues in regard to the EC, notably for EC high-level officials.

In addition to that, the Executive Secretary is in charge of:

- First contact point for the EC,
- Coordinating the cooperation with the EC,
- Regular meetings with the EC and its DG's,
- Supporting the (technical) EA contact persons, if needed,
- Reporting to the EA Chair, Executive Committee and General Assembly about cooperation with the European Commission.

2.2. Communication channels/contacts with the EC for technical issues

In general, the Technical Committees are in charge for the communication with the EC and its DG's regarding technical issues.

The TC Chair in question appoints the technical contact persons. She/He maintains a list of appointed contact persons.

The EA contact persons shall be employees of NABs and deeply involved in the technical issues in question. Usually they are members of one of the relevant EA Technical Committees and/or dedicated Working Groups.

The appointed EA (technical) contact persons are responsible for:

- Maintaining close cooperation with the EC Unit in question,
- Providing the EC the information and (technical support) requested,
- Using and disseminating the EA publications, including EA brochures dedicated to the EC and Regulators,
- Informing the EA Secretariat and/or TC Chair about assistance needed, and giving feedback to Secr/CPC about new needs in terms of brochures,
- Reporting about the ongoing activity, including providing of relevant documents,
- Maintaining the communication by contacting the EC contact person on a regular basis, even if no activities are in progress,
- Informing about changes of EC contact persons.

EA-1/21 A shall be taken into consideration, notably Paragraph 3, 4 and Appendix A.

EA experts for short-term activities, like unexpected meetings and workshops or responses to new (technical) documents, shall be nominated by the Executive Secretary with prior consultation of the relevant TC Chair.

2.3. Reporting and monitoring

Every EA contact person shall provide reports as follows:

- Brief meeting report according EA-1/21 A, Paragraph 5 and Appendix C
- Brief annual report about communication activities and their results, unless it is a matter of a short-term activity.

The reports shall be conveyed to the EA Secretariat and the relevant TC Chair.

3. FINANCING OF THE COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES TOWARDS THE EC

In general, the Operating Grant covers communication activities towards the EC. That means that the EA contact persons involved are usually compensated for its activities according EA-1/20-S1.

Communication activities with the European Commission shall be included in the annual Work Programmes in order to be able to consider these activities in the EA annual budget accordingly.

Before EA contact persons are nominated for new unpredictable communication activities the Executive Secretary has to ensure that the activity in question may be covered by the EA budget, in general in consultation with the EA Treasurer.

The EA Treasurer and the Secretariat shall be informed about new activities, hence these activities may be incorporated in the actual Forecast and the Secretariat may issue the mandates according EA-1/20-S1 to the EA contact persons in question.