



# EA MLA REPORT 2019

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# FOREWORD



The EA Multilateral Agreement (MLA), signed so far by 43 EA Members, carried on growing and extending during 2019, when, notably, EA welcomed a new signatory – our special congratulations to EGAC, the national accreditation body of Egypt.

Since 2017 EA paved the way for expanding the scope of the EA MLA for Reference Materials Producers (RMP) according to EN ISO 17034. After the first peer evaluations and the first members recognised as successfully evaluated during 2018, the EA MLA could be launched for this scope in May 2019 with the first seven EA MLA signatories for RMP.

Last November the General Assembly decided to extend the EA MLA under “Validation and Verification” to include new EN ISO/IEC 17029: *Conformity Assessment – General Principles and Requirements for Validation and Verification Bodies* as new EA MLA Level 3 standard. Something that brings quite interesting technical challenges that we need to address and start to operationalise during 2020.

During 2019, EA succeeded in keeping a cruising speed to manage and improve the peer evaluation process. Since a significant number of trainee team members could be assigned to peer evaluations – our thanks to the peer-evaluation teams and to the hosting national accreditation bodies – there was no need for EA to organise a newcomer training session in 2019 to boost EA’s pool of evaluators. Training efforts were focused in refresher sessions including one for team leaders and deputy team leaders, which was particularly important considering the on-going EN ISO/IEC 17011 transition.

With a total number of EA evaluators similar to the one last year, EA carried out less peer evaluations in 2019. Indeed, the total number of man-days allocated to the peer evaluations performed in 2019 decreased by about 30% compared to the previous year.

Peer evaluations against the revised EN ISO/IEC 17011 have been progressing quite well in 2019, when about one third of EA MLA signatories have already made successfully the transition from previous version of the standard. The decisions regarding the other EA MLA signatories’ transition need to be done until November 2020.

EA has also increased its recognition of MRA scopes in ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation). The formal decision on EA’s peer evaluation by ILAC in favour of the extension of its MRA signatory status to accreditation of proficiency testing providers (PTP) was made in May 2019, when EA has become the first regional co-operation body member of the ILAC MRA for accreditation of PTP against ISO/IEC 17043.

Lastly, the full re-evaluation of EA by ILAC and IAF (International Accreditation Forum), which includes the scope extension for RMP, ended in May 2019 with the evaluation of the EA MLA Council’s decision-making process during its meeting in Reykjavik. The overall outcome revealed no non-conformity and only one concern that has been closed.

The strongest commitment of all those involved in the EA MLA system, i.e. members of the EA MAC and its Management Group, peer evaluation teams and trainers, and especially the MAC Secretariat, made the progress achieved in 2019 possible. I am very grateful for their outstanding contribution to maintaining the EA MLA as a sustainable mechanism for ensuring both European and international reliable equivalence and mutual acceptance of certificates and reports issued by accredited conformity assessment bodies.

We have substantial challenges in front of us. The COVID-19 outbreak will most likely add an economic crisis to the human tragedy that we are living. It will certainly have an impact in the conformity assessment infrastructure. Strong but also flexible accreditation and peer-evaluation systems are vital to maintain the confidence in the public service that we provide.

**Paulo Tavares (IPAC)**  
**Chair of the EA Multilateral Agreement Council**

# 1 - INTRODUCTION

The EA Multilateral Agreement (EA MLA) report provides information on the signatories to the EA MLA, as well as an overview of the key activities completed in 2019 to further develop the coverage of the EA MLA and to strengthen the operation of the EA peer evaluation system, including management of EA evaluators.

The main objective of peer evaluation activities is to evaluate the ongoing compliance of national accreditation bodies (NABs) with the internationally-agreed requirements, as well as to ensure that regulators, stakeholders and the business community can have confidence in the certificates and reports issued by accredited conformity assessment bodies (CABs) under the EA MLA.

According to article 14 of Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 '*Setting out the requirements for accreditation*', EA has been recognised by the European Commission (EC) to operate the peer evaluation system of national accreditation bodies.

Initially signed by the parties on 1 April 2009, the *General Guidelines for Cooperation between the European co-operation for Accreditation and the European Commission, the European Free Trade Association and the Competent National Authorities* aim to widen and strengthen the co-operation in order to reflect the developments in policy and legislation, and to stabilise the position of accreditation, accreditation bodies in EU and EFTA Member States and EA with the view to prepare a successful implementation of Regulation (EC) No 765/2008. On 13 December 2018, the third Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) was signed with the European Commission for the period 2019-2022; a similar agreement was signed with EFTA in April 2019.

Following article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 765/2008, national authorities shall recognise the equivalence of services delivered by national accreditation bodies which have successfully undergone peer evaluation by EA. Furthermore, national authorities shall accept the reports and certificates issued by the conformity assessment bodies accredited by the national accreditation bodies that are EA MLA signatories.

EA and its member national accreditation bodies invest significant efforts and resources to maintain the integrity and robustness of the EA MLA through a rigorous peer evaluation process. The purpose of on-site evaluations is to verify that EA MLA signatories still comply with the provisions set out in Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 and the internationally-agreed criteria for accreditation bodies.

Maintaining a sound and reliable evaluation system also requires that EA supports the further improvement of EA's pool of evaluators through both newcomer and refresher training sessions. Many trainee team members were assigned to peer evaluations in 2019.

## 2 - THE EA MLA

The EA MLA is an agreement signed between national accreditation bodies – Full and Associate Members of EA which are successfully peer evaluated – to recognise the equivalence, reliability and therefore acceptance by the European market of certification, verification, inspection and calibration certificates and test reports issued by accredited conformity assessment bodies.

EA Associate Members are eligible to enter into a Bilateral Agreement with EA signatories of the EA MLA with the aim of establishing mutual confidence in the respective accreditation systems and in their accredited attestations of conformity. EA Associate Members shall comply with the same requirements as Full Members when signing the EA Multilateral Agreement. EA MLA signatories apply the international standards for accreditation of conformity assessment bodies in a harmonised way and the services delivered by those national accreditation bodies are equivalent. Therefore, the marketplace can have confidence in activities of EA MLA signatories and their accredited conformity assessment bodies.

The EA MLA provides the European market with a network of conformity assessment bodies that are competent within their scope of accreditation to issue reliable and credible statements of conformity for products and services, thereby reducing costs and adding value to business and consumers. This contributes to the freedom of trade by eliminating technical barriers.



## 3 - SCOPE OF THE EA MLA

The EA MLA covers the following activities and standards:

Accreditation of	Scope/Activity (Level 2)	Standards (Level 3)
Laboratories	Testing and Medical Examinations Calibration	EN ISO/IEC 17025 EN ISO 15189 EN ISO/IEC 17025
Certification Bodies	Certification of Products Certification of Persons Certification of Management Systems	EN ISO/IEC 17065 EN ISO/IEC 17024 EN ISO/IEC 17021-1
GHG Validation and Verification Bodies	Validation and Verification	EN ISO 14065 EN ISO/IEC 17029*
Inspection Bodies	Inspection	EN ISO/IEC 17020
Proficiency Testing Providers (PTP)	Proficiency Testing	EN ISO/IEC 17043
Reference Material Producers (RMP)	Reference Materials	EN ISO 17034

\* The EA MLA for EN ISO/IEC 17029 has not been implemented yet.

During 2019, EA Members delivered nearly 37,000 accreditations under the scopes for which they have signed the EA MLA, representing a 4.5% increase compared to 2018.

*Numbers of accreditation certificates issued under the EA MLA since 2017*

Type of accreditation	2017	2018	2019
Calibration	3,142	3,094	3,194
Testing	18,804	18,530	19,146
Medical Examinations	3,616	3,896	3,936
Products Certification	1,845	1,896	2,012
Management Systems Certification	1,365	1,367	1,461
Persons Certification	573	644	713
GHG Validation & Verification	145	142	156
Inspection	5,425	5,528	6,000
Proficiency Testing Providers (PTP)	193	179	200
Reference Material Producers (RMP)*	-	-	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,108</b>	<b>35,276</b>	<b>36,856</b>

\* The EA MLA for Reference Material Producers has been launched in 2019.



## 4 - SIGNATORIES OF THE EA MLA

Accreditation bodies are accepted under the EA MLA only after stringent evaluation of their operations and activities.

The evaluation is conducted by a peer evaluation team entrusted with the task to determine accreditation bodies' compliance with the requirements laid down in:

- Regulation (EC) No 765/2008;
- ISO/IEC 17011, the internationally-accepted standard for accreditation bodies;
- the relevant standard for conformity assessment bodies including any additional requirements, e.g. those covered in relevant EA and IAF/ILAC documents as well as those set out by the European Commission in relevant sector-based legislations.

A list of EA MLA signatories (on 31 December 2019) is given in Annexes 1 and 2. For the latest information, please visit the [EA website](#).

### 1 - EA FULL MEMBERS

Out of 36 EA Full Members, 34 have signed the MLA.

The number of Full Member signatories for each scope of the EA Multilateral Agreement remains stable compared to 2018, with a slight increase in the number of signatories for “GHG Validation & Verification” and “Proficiency Testing Providers”. First 8 NABs have also signed for the scope of reference material producers, for which the EA MLA has been launched in May 2019.

*Numbers of EA Full Member signatories to the EA MLA*

Type of accreditation	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Calibration	32	33	33	33	33
Testing	33	34	34	34	34
Medical Examinations	31	31	31	31	32
Inspection	32	32	33	34	34
Management Systems Certification	29	30	30	32	32
Products Certification	31	31	31	31	31
Persons Certification	27	28	28	28	28
GHG Validation and Verification	24	25	24	24	25
Proficiency Testing Providers*	-	-	15	16	18
Reference Material Producers**	-	-	-	-	8

\* The EA MLA for Proficiency Testing Providers has been launched in 2017.

\*\* The EA MLA for Reference Material Producers has been launched in 2019.

# 4 - SIGNATORIES OF THE EA MLA

## 2 - EA ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Out of 14 EA Associate Members, 9 have signed the EA MLA. EGAC, the national accreditation body of Egypt, is the last one to have become an EA MLA signatory in May 2019.

The number of Associate Member signatories for each scope of the EA Multilateral Agreement remains stable compared to 2018, with a slight increase in medical examinations. A first Associate Member (EGAC) has also signed for the “Proficiency Testing Providers” scope.

*Numbers of EA Associate Member signatories to the EA MLA*

Type of accreditation	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Calibration	4	4	7	8	8
Testing	4	4	7	8	8
Medical Examinations	1	1	2	2	3
Inspection	4	4	7	7	7
Management Systems Certification	2	2	3	4	4
Products Certification	1	1	3	4	4
Persons Certification	1	1	2	3	3
GHG Validation & Verification	0	0	0	0	0
Proficiency Testing Providers*	-	-	0	0	1
Reference Material Producers**	-	-	-	-	0

\* The EA MLA for Proficiency Testing Providers has been launched in 2017.

\*\* The EA MLA for Reference Materials Producers has been launched in 2019.

*Map of EA MLA and BLA signatories in December 2019*





## 5 - OPERATION OF THE EA MLA COUNCIL

The EA MLA Council is responsible for the effective and impartial management and monitoring of the peer evaluation process. It is the decision-making body for acceptance of national accreditation bodies' entering into the Multilateral Agreement (MLA) and Bilateral Agreement (BLA) of EA.

### EA MLA Council (MAC)

The MAC is composed of one representative from each EA Full Member and Associate Member, one observer from the EA Advisory Board and one observer from the European Commission. Since 2015, all EA MLA/BLA signatories have the voting right within the EA MAC on peer evaluations and MLA signatory status.

In 2019, the EA MAC was chaired by Paulo Tavares from IPAC (Portugal) and vice-chaired by Karine Vincent from COFRAC (France).

In 2019, the EA MAC held two meetings on 8-9 May in Reykjavik, Iceland, and on 2-3 October in Vilnius, Lithuania.



*EA Multilateral Agreement Council (MAC) meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania.*

### EA MAC Management Group (MG)

The MAC MG is composed of 12 members from different NABs who were elected by the MAC members. The task of the Management Group is to achieve a more effective management and harmonization of the peer evaluations and operations of the MAC, including meetings.

In 2019, the MAC MG held two face-to-face meetings the day before MAC meetings, i.e. on 7 May in Reykjavik, Iceland and on 1 October in Vilnius, Lithuania. In addition, the MAC MG had 8 web meetings in 2019.

# 5 - OPERATION OF THE EA MLA COUNCIL

## EA MAC Secretariat

The MAC Secretariat is responsible for the daily management of the peer evaluations, including peer evaluators, and the organisation of MAC and MAC MG meetings.



Daniela Ionescu is responsible for managing the EA MAC Secretariat.



Sandy Adonel is responsible at the Secretariat for the training and monitoring of EA evaluators in application of EA-2/02: *EA Procedure for the Evaluation of a National Accreditation Body*.

## Decisions made by the EA MAC

### Decisions in May 2019:

NAH, the Hungarian NAB, became an EA MLA signatory in the field of proficiency testing providers.

SA, the Slovenian NAB, became an EA MLA signatory in the field of medical examinations.

SNAS, the Slovakian NAB, became an EA MLA signatory in the field of proficiency testing providers.

TURKAK, the Turkish NAB, became an EA MLA signatory in the field of GHG validation and verification.

After RvA, the Dutch NAB, and UKAS, the UK NAB, in October 2018, ACCREDIA, the Italian NAB, CAI, the Czech NAB, ENAC, the Spanish NAB, INAB, the Irish NAB, and TURKAK were confirmed by the MAC in May 2019 that they complied with all relevant requirements to become EA MLA signatories in the field of reference material producers, for which the EA MLA has been successfully launched in May 2019.

EGAC, the Egyptian NAB, became an EA BLA signatory in the field of proficiency testing providers, thus becoming the first Associate Member to sign for this scope.

ACCREDIA, BELAC, the Belgian NAB, CAI and ENAC remained EA MLA signatories in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, inspection, proficiency testing providers, certification of persons, certification of products, certification of management systems and GHG validation and verification.

## 5 - OPERATION OF THE EA MLA COUNCIL

INAB remained an EA MLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, inspection, certification of products and certification of management systems.

ISRAC, the Israeli NAB, remained an EA BLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, and inspection.

NAB-MALTA, the Malta NAB, remained an EA MLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing and inspection.

NAH remained an EA MLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, inspection, certification of persons, certification of management systems, and GHG validation and verification.

SA remained an EA MLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing, inspection, certification of persons, certification of products, certification of management systems, and GHG validation and verification.

SNAS remained an EA MLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, inspection, certification of persons, certification of products, certification of management systems, and GHG validation and verification.

TUNAC, the Tunisian NAB, remained an EA BLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing, inspection and certification of management systems.

### Decisions in October 2019:

DAkKS, the German NAB, became an EA MLA signatory in the field of reference material producers according to ISO 17034, thus becoming the eighth Full Member to sign for this new EA MLA scope.

GAC, the Georgian NAB, became an EA BLA signatory in the field of medical examinations according to ISO 15189.

DAkKS remained an EA MLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, inspection, proficiency testing providers, certification of persons, certification of products, certification of management systems and GHG validation and verification.

ALGERAC, the Algerian NAB, remained an EA BLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing and inspection.

GAC remained an EA BLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing, inspection, certification of persons and certification of products.

MOLDAC, the Moldavian NAB, remained an EA BLA signatory in the fields of calibration, testing including medical examinations, inspection, certification of products and certification of management systems.

# 6 - EA PEER EVALUATION PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

The reliability of the EA MLA is maintained through a robust peer evaluation process, whose main objectives are to evaluate the ongoing compliance of EA NABs to the internationally-agreed requirements, and to ensure that regulators, stakeholders and the business community can have confidence in those certificates and reports issued by conformity assessment bodies accredited by EA Members having signed the EA MLA.

## 1 - PEER EVALUATION PROCESS

The EA peer evaluation process is carried out in accordance with EA-2/02 M:2019 *EA Procedure for the evaluation of a National Accreditation Body*.

The national accreditation body applies for MLA signatory status, specifying the scope for which it applies.

The MLA Council (MAC) Secretariat reviews the application documents and appoints a peer evaluation team composed of a Team Leader, a Deputy Team Leader, Team Members and Trainees.

This peer evaluation team performs the document review (management system documentation, statistical information on the NAB's activities, a self-assessment report performed by the NAB, information from the previous peer evaluation, etc.). Where applicable, a pre-evaluation is conducted. Then, the team carries out the on-site evaluation, which combines evaluation of the management system at the NAB's office and observation of assessments carried out by the NAB. At the end of the evaluation, the team drafts the evaluation report. Findings are agreed upon with the NAB at a closing meeting.

A task force group appointed by the MAC Management Group makes a careful study of the evaluation report in order to provide the MAC with a recommendation on the result of the peer evaluation. At its meetings or by electronic means, the MAC makes a final decision, which is reflected in relevant EA publications and on the EA website.

The European Commission attends MAC meetings and NABs are encouraged to invite national authorities to observe EA peer evaluations.

## 2 - PEER EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

A total of **16 peer evaluations** were performed during 2019, consisting of:

- 1 re-evaluation with scope extension to medical examinations: NAAU (Ukraine);
- 1 re-evaluation with scope extension to GHG validation and verification and RMP accreditation: TURKAK (Turkey);
- 1 re-evaluation with scope extension to inspection, medical examinations and PTP accreditation: BSCA (Belarus);
- second part of 2 re-evaluations: DAKKS (Germany), GAC (Georgia);
- 8 re-evaluations: ALGERAC (Algeria), ESYD (Greece), FINAS (Finland), HAA (Croatia), IPAC (Portugal), OLAS (Luxembourg), MOLDAC (Republic of Moldova), SAS (Switzerland);
- 3 follow-up evaluations: DPA (Albania), CYS-CYSAB (Cyprus), NAH (Hungary).

## 6 - EA PEER EVALUATION PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

### EA peer evaluation activities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total numbers of evaluations performed <sup>1</sup>	10	19	18	18	<b>16</b>
Total numbers of reports discussed <sup>2</sup>	10	9	21	14	<b>17</b>
Total man-days for evaluation	583	1,138	1,080	1,393	<b>935</b>
Extraordinary evaluations on-site	0	1	2	0	<b>3</b>
Suspension	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Initial evaluations, re-evaluations with or without scope extensions and extraordinary evaluations (performed on-site in the specific year).

<sup>2</sup> Reports of evaluations, but not necessarily conducted in the specific year.

In 2019, the evaluation teams reported a total of 71 non-conformities, 170 concerns and 125 comments.

By the end of 2019, 8 peer re-evaluations and 3 extraordinary evaluations of NABs were in progress to be completed in 2020, when 13 other NABs are planned to be peer evaluated.

# 7 - EA PEER EVALUATORS

EA peer evaluators are highly qualified and experienced accreditation body staff members who attend training programs on a frequent and regular basis. Peer evaluators' performance is regularly reviewed by the MAC Secretariat. They can be mandated for peer evaluation at the ILAC or IAF levels.

## 1 - NUMBER OF EVALUATORS

By end of December 2019, a total number of 177 evaluators (including trainees) are authorised to perform peer evaluations on behalf of EA, i.e. acknowledged for having all technical competences to perform EA peer evaluations under specific accreditation scopes.

The total number of EA evaluators slightly decreased by 3% in comparison with 2018, because 9 evaluators retired or resigned in 2019 while no newcomer training session was organised. Thus no evaluator has been authorised for the first time; 57 evaluators have been re-approved for a period of three years.

### Number of evaluators per qualification

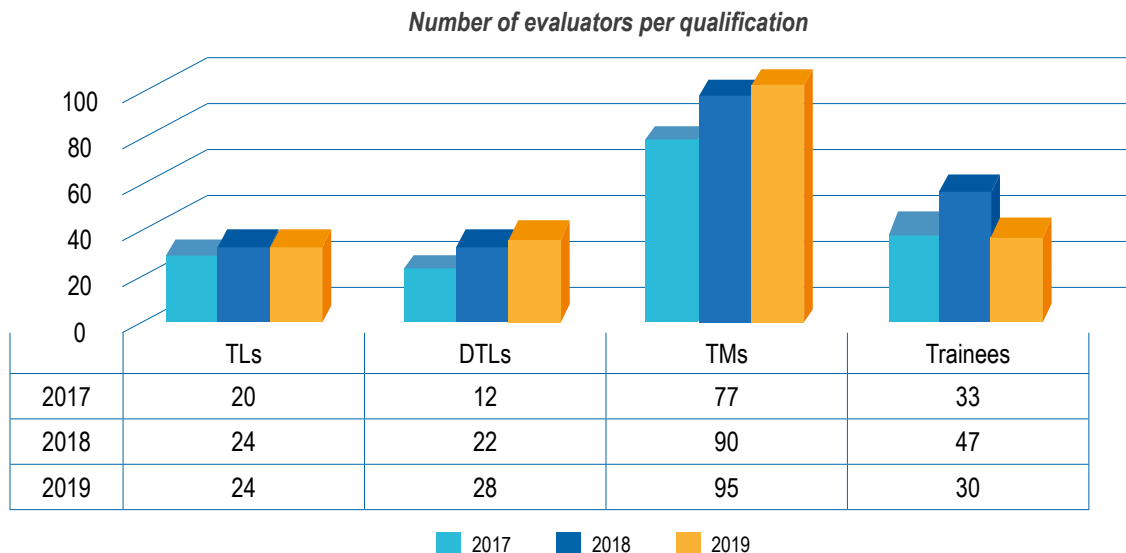
By end of December 2019, the 177 authorised evaluators are broken down as follows:

- 30 Trainee Team Members (- 36% compared to 2018)
- 95 Team Members (TMs) (+ 6% compared to 2018)
- 28 Deputy Team Leaders (DTLs) (+ 27% compared to 2018)
- 24 Team Leaders (TLs) (identical to 2018)

The fall in the number of Trainee Team Members is a result of the absence of newcomer training in 2019. Indeed two newcomer training sessions had been organised in 2018 when the evaluator resources had been considerably improved.

Regarding evaluators' upgrading based on their performance during peer evaluations, 11 evaluators were upgraded as Team Members and 6 others as Deputy Team Leaders. No evaluator was upgraded as Team Leader.

The MAC Secretariat appointed a total of 105 evaluators (16 Team Leaders and 89 Team Members, among which 16 trainees) who spent 935 man-days to carry out the 16 peer evaluations totalised in 2019.



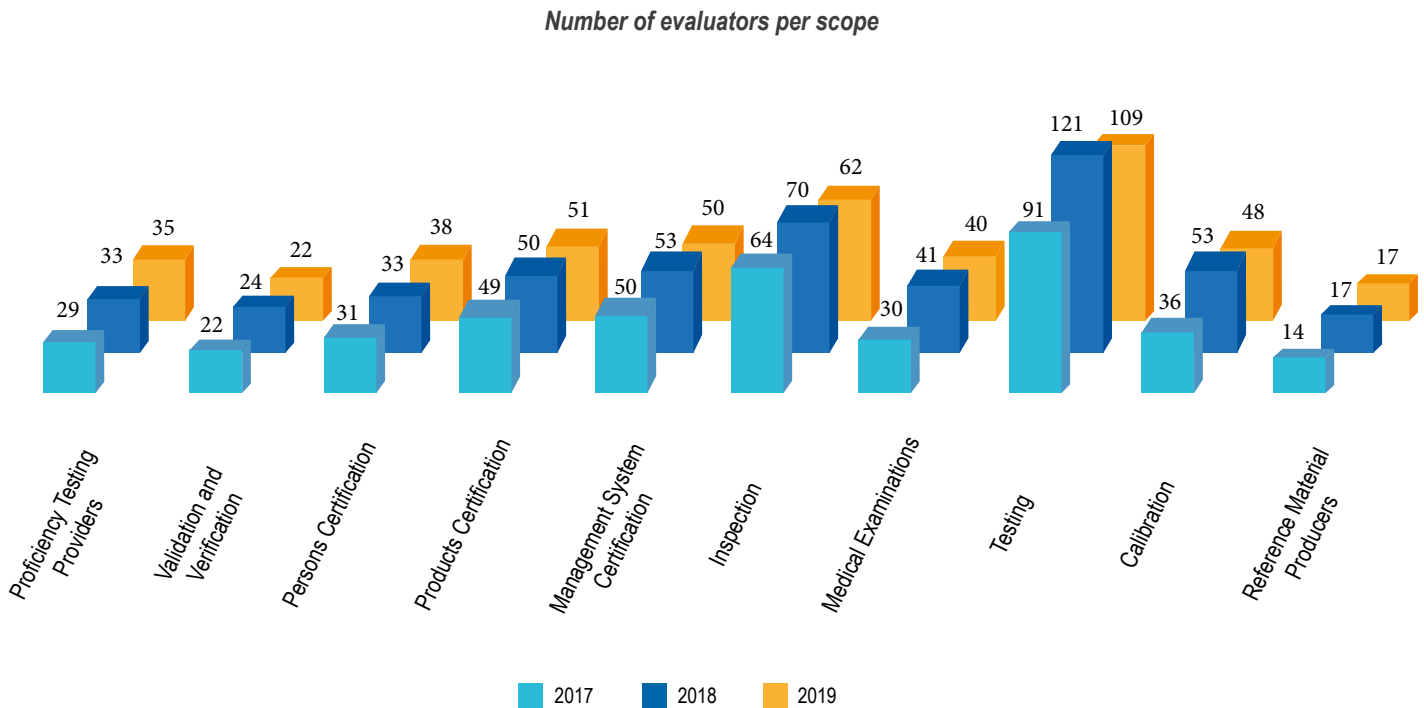


# 7 - EA PEER EVALUATORS

## Number of evaluators per scope

In the table below, the number of evaluators includes altogether trainee TMs, TMs, DTLs and TLs competent for each scope, knowing that one evaluator can be competent for several scopes.

The table shows that the scope of testing gets a far much larger number of competent evaluators.



## Number of evaluators per NAB

In December 2017, nearly half of NABs had been identified as having few or no peer evaluators. Those NABs were contacted in priority so as to support them to send candidates to the newcomer training sessions in 2018 and to increase their numbers of EA evaluators.

Two years later, the overall situation has much improved. By the end of 2019:

- 4 NABs have still no evaluator;
- 23 NABs have 1 to 4 evaluators;
- 10 NABs have 5 to 8 evaluators;
- 5 NABs have 9 to 11 evaluators.

# 7 - EA PEER EVALUATORS

## 2 - TRAINING OF PEER EVALUATORS

The issue of evaluator resource is still a priority issue on the MAC agenda. In order to support the further improvement of EA's pool of evaluators for a busy peer evaluation program, two refresher training sessions as mentioned below took place in 2019.

The two newcomer training sessions organised in June 2018 had significantly increased the number of new evaluators and many Trainee Team Members were assigned to peer evaluations in 2019. Therefore, no newcomer training session was organised in 2019 in order to invite at first these new evaluators to join EA peer evaluations.

### Refresher training sessions

The first refresher training session aimed at Team Leaders and Deputy Team Leaders was held on 18-19 June 2019 in Brussels, hosted by BELAC, the Belgian NAB. The training was led by Paulo Tavares (IPAC, Portugal), the EA MAC Chair, Ed Wieles (RvA, The Netherlands) and Varpu Rantanen (FINAS, Finland). Gabriel Zrenner (DAkKS, Germany), the Chair of the EA Horizontal Harmonisation Committee (HHC), contributed as a trainer to the second day of the training, which gathered 27 participants from 18 EA NABs.

The second refresher training session mainly dedicated to proficiency testing providers and person certification took place on 12-13 December 2019 near Paris. About 30 participants attended this session, which also focused on general issues related to other scopes (testing, inspection, e.g.) in order to allow a number of Deputy Team Leaders and Team Members to boost their experience with peer evaluation issues. The trainers were Anna Stefanidou (ESYD, Greece), Tuija Sinervo (FINAS, Finland), Ian Ronksley (UKAS, UK) and Daniela Ionescu, the EA MAC Secretary.

### Training on RMP accreditation

Further to the launching of the EA MLA for this scope in May 2019, a training organised by the EA Laboratory Committee on accreditation of reference material producers (RMP) against ISO 17034 took place near Paris on 13-14 November 2019. 22 participants attended the event whose trainers were Jeff Ruddle (UKAS, UK) and Henk Deckers (RvA, The Netherlands).

## 1 - IMPROVING THE EA PEER EVALUATION PROCESS

The EA peer evaluation process is under ongoing review by EA internal auditors and ILAC/IAF peer evaluators as part of the evaluation program for regional cooperation.

### MAC project on reengineering the peer evaluation system

The EA peer evaluation process is under continuous review. Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 reinforces the role of EA and its peer evaluation role in both voluntary and regulated sectors. EA shall support and harmonize the implementation of stringent rules to achieve consistency throughout Europe, as well as greater transparency and acceptability to all, including national authorities. The peer evaluation process is also further strengthened to accommodate the specific needs of regulatory fields in order to raise the reassurance of regulators and stakeholders that accreditation bodies' technical competence is thoroughly assessed.

The MAC project to reengineer the peer evaluation system, one of the key actions of the *EA Strategy 2025*, has been much progressing in 2019 and is nearing its goal. The EA MAC Management Group (MG) presented a consolidated document on re-engineering, based on final reports of 9 Task Force Groups (TFG) appointed in 2017, at the MAC meeting held in May 2019, when the following conclusions have been reached:

- the MAC needs to go digital in order to improve its efficiency for (simple) decision-making;
- the MAC needs to concentrate mainly on its responsibilities as the decision-making body on MLA-related issues, leaving the administration of the peer evaluation process to the professional umbrella of the MAC Secretariat;
- the on-site peer evaluations need increased flexibility without creating any discrimination concerns. The success of both accreditation and the MLA have led to larger peer evaluation teams, which become difficult to manage and sometimes disproportionate compared to the size of the NAB under peer evaluation;
- a fast-track consulting mechanism with the technical infrastructure (i.e. technical committees) is presumably needed in certain technically challenging circumstances;
- a better balance is needed between technical and managerial competences inside the peer evaluation teams, i.e. peer evaluations require good knowledge of the challenges of NAB management.

After the final agreement by the MAC, some of those changes can be put in place almost immediately; others will be effective within a reasonable timeframe. The major benefit will be a flexible and faster peer evaluation process. The MAC Secretariat will play a key role not only in the management of peer evaluations, but also in undertaking part of the activities carried out by the MAC Management Group.

Besides the MAC MG prepared a few papers defining the competences for carrying out peer evaluation and the head office's preliminary observation, the criteria for MAC members, as well as the respective tasks of the MAC Secretariat and the MAC TFG assigned to review the evaluation reports. Further to a commenting period, decision papers will be elaborated on for the MAC meeting in April 2020 concerning:

- the implementation of a mechanism to collect feedback and previously learned lessons in order to keep peer evaluators and MAC members updated on issues raised, and their resolution to prevent issues reoccurring;
- the introduction of an online decision-making process for cases where there are no open or contentious/difficult issues.

Furthermore, a new TFG composed of Team Leaders, Team Members, representatives of NABs and the MAC Secretary, was set up to develop a guidance on peer evaluation effort, taking into account a risk-based approach.

## 2 - DEVELOPMENT OF THE EA MLA

### Extension of the EA MLA to ISO/IEC 17029

Following IAF Resolution 2019-25, the EA General Assembly in November 2019 endorsed the extension of the EA MLA under the Level 2 “Validation and Verification” to ISO/IEC 17029:2019 *Conformity Assessment - General Principles and Requirements for Validation and Verification Bodies* as new EA MLA Level 3 standard in accordance with EA-1/06: *EA Multilateral Agreement. Criteria for signing. Policy and procedures for development*.

A train-the-trainer workshop on ISO/IEC 17029 gathered 40 representatives from EA NABs near Paris on 28 November 2019. The trainers were Nathalie Savéant (COFRAC, France) and Stefanie Vehring (VdTÜV, Germany).

## 3 - INCREASED VISIBILITY OF THE EA MLA

EA has been working on having an EA MLA mark for the purpose of identifying EA MLA signatories and their accredited CABs. In 2019, different options of the mark itself were fine-tuned by the EA Secretariat and the Communications and Publications Committee (CPC) which, together with the EA Executive Committee, elaborated on the message to be conveyed by the EA MLA mark. Four agreed options of the EA MLA mark were finally submitted to the EA General Assembly in November 2019, when EA Members selected their preferred EA MLA mark.

The EA Executive Committee is mandated to proceed with the formal registration of the EA MLA mark, whereas the Horizontal Harmonisation Committee (HHC) is defining the rules for use of the EA MLA mark, which will be annexed to EA-3/01: *Use of Accreditation Marks and Reference to MLA Signatory Status*.

## 4 - MANAGEMENT OF TRANSITIONS OF STANDARDS

EA's process for the management of transitions of standards and ILAC/IAF documents was finalised in 2017 with the completion of a full set of rules.

### Implementation and monitoring of ISO/IEC 17011 transition period

The revised internationally-accepted standard ISO/IEC 17011:2017 *Conformity assessment - Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies* has been published in November 2017. The peer evaluations done as from 1 July 2018 are performed according to the new standard.

## 8 - IMPROVEMENT OF THE EA MLA AND PEER EVALUATION PROCESS

By the end of December 2019, the EA MAC confirmed that the following 13 NABs successfully made the transition from ISO/IEC 17011:2004 to ISO/IEC 17011:2017:

- ACCREDIA, the Italian NAB;
- ALGERAC, the Algerian NAB;
- BELAC, the Belgian NAB;
- CAI, the Czech NAB;
- ENAC, the Spanish NAB;
- GAC, the Georgian NAB;
- INAB, the Irish NAB;
- ISRAC, the Israeli NAB;
- MOLDAC, the Moldavian NAB;
- SNAS, the Slovakian NAB;
- TUNAC, the Tunisian NAB;
- TURKAK, the Turkish NAB;
- UKAS, the UK NAB.

The decisions concerning the other 30 EA MLA signatories for demonstrating compliance with the requirements of new ISO/IEC 17011 (either by on-site evaluation or document review) are to be made prior to November 2020.

### 5 - PEER EVALUATIONS WITH POTENTIAL SECURITY RISKS FOR EVALUATORS

A task force group within the EA MAC was established in 2017 to make proposals upon which the legal aspects related to EA's responsibilities towards evaluators' security and safety when they are assigned for peer evaluations in higher-risk third countries should be analysed.

In the light of recommendations by the EA legal adviser, and after joint consideration with the EA Executive Committee, the EA MLA Council endorsed in October 2018 a new work item proposal for the revision of EA-2/02: *EA Procedure for the evaluation of a National Accreditation Body*. The revised document that includes provisions related to the respective responsibilities of EA and NABs for the peer evaluators carrying out peer evaluations in (third) countries with security problems was published in July 2019.

## 9 - COOPERATION WITH IAF/ILAC: PEER EVALUATION OF EA

EA is a regional cooperation body recognised by IAF and ILAC: the EA MLA is recognised by both organisations and covered by their respective arrangements. In concrete terms, a test report or certificate accredited by an EA MLA signatory is recognised by the signatories to the IAF and ILAC multilateral agreements. The EA MLA acts as a world-wide passport to trade.

### 1 - EXTENSION OF EA'S MRA SIGNATORY STATUS TO PTP

Following a successful evaluation performed in 2017, the formal decision on EA's peer evaluation by ILAC for extension of its MRA (Mutual Recognition Arrangement) signatory status to accreditation of proficiency testing providers using ISO/IEC 17043 has been made in May 2019. Accordingly, EA is now recognised by ILAC as the first regional co-operation body member of the ILAC MRA for accreditation of PTP against ISO/IEC 17043.

By end of 2019, 19 EA NABs are signatories to the ILAC MRA for PTP.

### 2 - EXTENSION OF EA'S MRA SIGNATORY STATUS TO RMP

EA's application to ILAC for extending the signatory status of EA as a recognised region for the scope "Reference Material Producers – ISO 17034", as agreed at the EA General Assembly in May 2017, was accepted by the ILAC Arrangement Management Committee (AMC) in January 2018.

The RMP scope extension has been covered by ILAC during EA's full re-evaluation in 2018 and 2019 – see section 3 below.

### 3 - FULL RE-EVALUATION OF EA BY IAF/ILAC

The full re-evaluation of EA by IAF and ILAC, which includes the scope extension for RMP, started with witnessing activities in INAB, the Irish NAB, and ACCREDIA, the Italian NAB, in 2018. The IAF/ILAC team carried on with the re-evaluation by visiting the EA Secretariat in December 2018. The re-evaluation ended in May 2019 when the decision-making process of the EA MLA Council was finally evaluated during its meeting.

The outcome of EA's IAF/ILAC re-evaluation is fine: there was no conformity and only one concern that has been closed. The report on the re-evaluation of EA is still being reviewed at IAF/ILAC level.



# ANNEX 1 - EA MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT SIGNATORIES (31 DECEMBER 2019)

	CALIBRATION LABORATORIES	TESTING LABORATORIES	MEDICAL LABORATORIES	INSPECTION BODIES	CERTIFICATION BODIES - PRODUCTS	CERTIFICATION BODIES - MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	CERTIFICATION BODIES - PERSONS	VALIDATION & VERIFICATION BODIES	PROFICIENCY TESTING PROVIDERS	REFERENCE MATERIAL PRODUCERS
ALBANIA - DPA		√		√		√				
AUSTRIA - AA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
BELGIUM - BELAC	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
BULGARIA - BAS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
CROATIA - HAA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
CYPRUS - CYS	√	√	√	√						
CZECH REPUBLIC - CAI	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐
DENMARK - DANAK	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
ESTONIA - EAK	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
FINLAND - FINAS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
FRANCE - COFRAC	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
GERMANY - DAkkS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐
GREECE - ESYD	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
HUNGARY - NAH	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐	
IRELAND - INAB	√	√	√	√	√	√				☐
ITALY - ACCREDIA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐
LATVIA - LATAK	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
LITHUANIA - LA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
LUXEMBURG - OLAS	√	√	√	√	√	√				
MALTA - NAB-MALTA	√	√		√						
NORWAY - NA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
POLAND - PCA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
PORTUGAL - IPAC	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		
REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA - IARNM	√	√	√	√	√	√				
ROMANIA - RENAR	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
SERBIA - ATS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
SLOVAKIA - SNAS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐	
SLOVENIA - SA	√	√	☐	√	√	√	√	√		
SPAIN - ENAC	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐
SWEDEN - SWE-DAC	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
SWITZERLAND - SAS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			
NETHERLANDS - RvA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐
TURKEY - TURKAK	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐	√	☐
UNITED KINGDOM - UKAS	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	☐

# ANNEX 2 - EA BILATERAL AGREEMENT SIGNATORIES (31 DECEMBER 2019)

	CALIBRATION LABORATORIES	TESTING LABORATORIES	MEDICAL LABORATORIES	INSPECTION BODIES	CERTIFICATION BODIES - PRODUCTS	CERTIFICATION BODIES - MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	CERTIFICATION BODIES - PERSONS	VALIDATION & VERIFICATION BODIES	PROFICIENCY TESTING PROVIDERS	REFERENCE MATERIAL PRODUCERS
ALGERIA - ALGERAC	√	√		√						
BELARUS - BSCA	√	√			√	√	√			
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA - BATA	√	√		√						
EGYPT - EGAC									☐	
GEORGIA - GAC	√	√	☐	√	√		√			
ISRAEL - ISRAC	√	√	√	√						
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA - MOLDAC	√	√	√	√	√	√				
UKRAINE - NAAU	√	√		√	√	√	√			
TUNISIA - TUNAC	√	√		√		√				

☐ Signatory in 2019



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