

INTERNATIONAL ELECTROTECHNICAL COMMISSION

IEC SCHEME FOR CERTIFICATION TO STANDARDS FOR SAFETY OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT FOR EXPLOSIVE ATMOSPHERES (IECEX SCHEME)

Ex Management Committee, ExMC

ILAC Operational Document

Introduction

This ILAC Operational Document is submitted to the ExMC for information purposes for discussion under agenda item 9 of the 2000 ExMC Meeting to be held in Braunschweig. Refer ExMC/56/DA, Draft Agenda.

COVER

**ILAC Mutual Recognition
Arrangement
(Arrangement):
Policy Statement**

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ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Policy Statement

1. THE OBJECTIVE

1.1 ILAC's central role in the development, and on-going operation, of a recognition arrangement for laboratories among accreditation bodies recognised in their own economies is highlighted in the ILAC Memorandum of Understanding.

1.2 ILAC's objective in developing and maintaining a mutual recognition arrangement (Arrangement) between recognised accreditation bodies is to assist the removal of technical barriers to trade by putting in place a world network of mutual recognition of accreditation body and laboratory competence which is transparently operating to recognised international standards. The current standards in question are:

- ♦ ISO/IEC Guide 58 (and future versions thereof)
- ♦ ISO/IEC 17025, December 1999 (and future versions thereof)

Stakeholders must have confidence in validity of data reported in test reports and calibration certificates issued by the laboratories accredited by the signatories of this Arrangement. Full mutuality will be an essential requirement : that is that all signatory bodies recognise the technical competence of laboratories accredited by all other signatories, and promote the acceptance of the equivalence of test reports and calibration certificates issued by their accredited laboratories.

1.3 In particular, ILAC requires that:

- ♦ Arrangement signatory accreditation bodies are operating fully in accordance with ISO/IEC Guide 58 (and future versions thereof) and applying them in a mutually consistent manner;
- ♦ laboratories accredited by these signatory bodies are operating fully in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025, December 1999 (and future versions thereof) as well as any ILAC Guidance on their application;
- ♦ traceability of measurement to international standards is appropriate to support the testing and calibration services being accredited;

- ♦ adequate proficiency testing activity is undertaken.
- ♦ applicants for the Arrangement are Full Members of ILAC who are prepared to pay appropriate fees.

ILAC shall implement procedures to ensure that these requirements are met and maintained by all signatory members.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE ARRANGEMENT

ILAC bases the operation of its Arrangement on the following fundamental premises:

- ♦ ILAC maintains a light but authoritative role in directing the Arrangement while devolving most action to its Regional Co-operation Body Members;
- ♦ there will eventually exist multiple Regional Co-operation Body Members each competent to manage Arrangement activity within its territory;
- ♦ in relation to its Arrangement, ILAC operates at the technical, rather than the political level. That is, that it will put in place a means whereby any ILAC Full Member Body may be evaluated against the agreed criteria and, if found in conformity with these, admitted to the ILAC Arrangement. This admission, and its subsequent continuance, suspension or exclusion, is solely on the basis of the evaluation of its competence conducted in accordance with ILAC's published evaluation procedures;
- ♦ authority in relation to the Arrangement rests with the signatory accreditation bodies which, in turn, form the peer group responsible for the evaluation of applicant members and for decision on their admission to the Arrangement and, in the final analysis, each signatory is responsible for the competence of their accredited laboratories recognised by the Arrangement.



3. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ARRANGEMENT

3.1 The ILAC General Assembly is the approving authority for policies regarding the operation of the Arrangement and the evaluation procedures employed.

3.2 The ILAC Arrangement Council is the body responsible for decision making regarding signatory status of the Arrangement. The Arrangement Council is composed of the Full Members of ILAC and is chaired by the Chair person of ILAC (See Fig1). Meetings of the Council are convened alongside the annual ILAC General Assembly. While the number of signatories of the Arrangement is less than 50% of the Full Membership of ILAC, voting on Arrangement decisions is restricted to the signatories. Once the 50% figure is exceeded, voting will be opened to the full membership of the Arrangement Council.

3.3 The ILAC Arrangement Management Committee is responsible for day to day management of the evaluation processes, of monitoring the performance of signatories and of co-ordinating the approach to the selection, training and monitoring of evaluators and making recommendations to the Arrangement Council.

4. THE OPERATION OF THE ARRANGEMENT

The principles of operation of the Arrangement are:

- ♦ the ILAC Arrangement will be developed through the linking and strengthening of the existing regional Arrangements whilst encouraging the development of new regional structures;
- ♦ ILAC will peer-evaluate its Regional Co-operation Body Members to establish their competence in management of Arrangements and formally “recognise” this competence;
- ♦ ILAC will delegate authority to its “recognised” Regional Co-operation Body Members for the evaluation and re-evaluation of its member accreditation bodies for ILAC purposes;

- ♦ Regional Co-operation Body Members are expected to undertake the evaluation and re-evaluation of their own member bodies;
- ♦ Regional Co-operation Body Members are under no obligation to admit to their membership (whose admission criteria may include other elements), bodies which are not member bodies of that Regional Co-operation Body but which may be geographically close to the region and may have been, for convenience, evaluated for Arrangement purposes by that Regional Co-operation Body Member as ILAC’s agent;
- ♦ ILAC will delegate to its “recognised” Regional Co-operation Body Members the detailed decision making regarding admission of member bodies of that Regional Co-operation Body to, and continuing membership of, the Arrangement.;
- ♦ decisions regarding the “recognition” of Regional Co-operation Body Members and endorsement of Regional Co-operation Body’s decisions regarding their own member bodies (by means of endorsement of a summary annual report) will be taken by the Arrangement Council in the light of advice from the Arrangement Management Committee;
- ♦ decisions taken by the Arrangement Council relating to signatory status should preferably be taken by consensus. In the event of a vote being necessary in a council meeting, decisions shall be carried by a 75% majority of those present and voting;
- ♦ to permit the membership to the Arrangement of Member Accreditation Bodies which are not as yet part of a recognised region or of Member Accreditation Bodies whose regional body has not yet been formally recognised, ILAC will accept applications from such unaffiliated countries. In such cases, ILAC would normally invite one of its “recognised” regions to undertake the evaluation of such

applicants and to present an evaluation report via the Arrangement Management Committee to the Arrangement Council for decision;

- ♦ unaffiliated accreditation bodies may only apply for membership of the Arrangement to ILAC itself and may not apply for membership of the Arrangement through a regional body of their choice;

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 ILAC will commence the implementation of its Arrangement using the five documents which have been approved by the General Assembly namely :

- ♦ *ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Requirements for Evaluation of Accreditation Bodies;*
- ♦ *The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Procedures for the Evaluation of Regional Co-operation Bodies for the Purpose of Recognition;*
- ♦ *The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Text of the Arrangement;*
- ♦ *The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Terms of Reference and Composition of the Arrangement Management Committee;*
- ♦ *The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (Arrangement): Policy Statement.*

5.2 ILAC is conscious of the need to develop and improve these evaluation procedures in the medium term in the light of experience and will actively monitor evaluation of accreditation bodies and of Regional Co-operation Body Members to achieve this. To this end it will also take note of regional initiatives, and introduce international initiatives as necessary, to improve the evaluation process and assume the role of incorporating consequent recommendations for improvement into its internationally harmonised evaluation procedure documents mentioned in paragraph 5.1.

5.3 It has been a basic principle of mutual recognition in the laboratory accreditation community that mutual recognition arrangements are based on broad equivalence of competence and not on identical implementation. Nevertheless, within the regional mutual recognition arrangements, the use of application documents has been beneficial in providing non-mandatory, supplementary information to the standards in relation to certain applications and their use has assisted and promoted consistency of operation of arrangement signatory bodies. ILAC, in relation to its operation of its Arrangement, is conscious of its need to provide its members with additional internationally harmonised guidance documents based on the best of existing regional documents and practice.

6. ADVERSE DECISIONS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

6.1 In the event that an applicant or signatory to the Arrangement fails to satisfy the Arrangement Council as to its compliance with relevant rules and procedures, the Arrangement Council will place the signatory on notice to take remedial action.

6.2 Every effort will be made to encourage the affected signatory to return to compliance. To assist with this, the signatory shall provide an action plan to address its non-compliance in an agreed time-scale.

6.3 The case of a signatory body, which has been placed on notice to take such remedial action, shall be reviewed at the end of the agreed period. At this point the scope of the signatory will either be maintained or reduced. Ultimately, if the scope is reduced to zero, signatory status is withdrawn.

6.4 If the affected accreditation body does not accept the findings or decision of the Arrangement Council, it shall have the right to appeal to an Appeals Panel, appointed by the ILAC Chair, consisting of an independent Chairperson and two impartial Full members of ILAC and two ILAC evaluators drawn from outside the Regional Co-operation Body in question and who have not been involved in the evaluation.



Figure 1
ILAC COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

