



# **Cross Frontier Accreditation – Principles for Avoiding Duplication**

**ILAC- G21:2002**

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## **PREAMBLE**

The ILAC General Assembly 2001 endorsed the guidance document "Cross-frontier accreditation principles for avoiding duplication" as a code of good practice for ILAC member bodies (ILAC Decision GA 5.19). This publication is compatible with the relevant WTO/TBT requirements and takes into account other views in a pragmatic, logical, sensible and constructive way.

The document was published additionally in the ILAC News March 2002.

## **PURPOSE**

The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement is designed to ensure that test reports and calibration certificates issued by accredited laboratories will be accepted worldwide.

ILAC's objective is to offer this to the market so that duplicate accreditations will no longer be necessary.

Regional economic communities like the European Community and many other countries do not want to have competition among accreditors, because it might threaten impartiality and sound work. On the other hand protecting accreditation bodies from competition violates agreed and signed obligations of WTO member states.

This ILAC approach will serve to strengthen the international network of laboratory accreditation bodies provided through ILAC and will assist the WTO/TBT objective of facilitating international trade by removing technical barriers to trade through mutual recognition between the nationally based conformity assessment systems.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

The 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ILAC Accreditation Policy Committee in February 2001 agreed to establish a task force to prepare a new paper on cross-frontier accreditation. The task force was headed by Juichi Nagano and Roger Brockway. The developed paper was amended and agreed at the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ILAC Accreditation Policy Committee October 2001.

The ILAC Executive Committee confirmed in the Vancouver meeting in May 2002 to publish the paper as a formal ILAC document in the G-series.

## **CROSS-FRONTIER ACCREDITATION PRINCIPLES FOR AVOIDING DUPLICATION**

ILAC is the international forum for laboratory accreditation bodies. The ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement is designed to ensure that test reports and calibration certificates issued by accredited laboratories under their defined scopes of accreditation will be accepted worldwide.

For this to be achieved, the accreditation bodies operate as a network, each providing an equivalent accreditation service. This is assured by the ILAC peer evaluation.

The signatories to the ILAC Arrangement normally operate from a national base, providing laboratory accreditation for their home market. The effect of the Arrangement, based on the ILAC peer evaluation, is that the accredited laboratories should receive recognition from the whole global market for the test reports and calibration certificates that they issue under their scopes of accreditation.

Accreditation bodies may have published policies limiting the scope of the accreditation service they offer, which may include geographic limitations. In which case, so long as they are consistent in the application of these policies and have not been successfully challenged, they may decline to accept applications from outside their defined customer base.

There are however situations where laboratories will seek more than one accreditation, or a “foreign” accreditation, and it is their right to do so. Only when all countries or economies have accreditation bodies that are members of the ILAC Arrangement and when the user market has fully recognised and accepted the mutual recognition behind the Arrangement will this cease to be required. ILAC’s objective is to offer this to the market so that duplicate accreditations will no longer be necessary.

Reasons why a laboratory may seek accreditation from bodies outside its own country include:

- The local accreditation body/bodies do(es) not offer the required scope
- The local accreditation body/bodies is/are not a signatory/signatories to the Arrangement
- There is no local accreditation body
- Its clients demand a specific accreditation and will not be persuaded to accept an equivalent

It is part of a chain of laboratories with a single owner who wants all the laboratories to have the same accreditation and who is not willing to work with the ILAC Arrangement partners.

In these and similar circumstances, an ILAC Arrangement signatory, if asked to provide accreditation to a laboratory outside its country or economy, may respond positively (but see 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph above). However it should take the following steps before accepting the contract:

If there is an ILAC Arrangement signatory/signatories covering the scope of the required accreditation in the country or economy of the applicant, it should:

- enquire whether the applicant is aware of the local accreditation body/bodies,
- suggest that the accreditation could be more economically performed by a local body,
- point out the equivalence of the local accreditation demonstrated through the ILAC Arrangement.

Only if the applicant still persists in requiring its accreditation should it proceed, in which case it should request the applicant to be allowed to inform the local accreditation body/bodies that it will be undertaking the work, to explain the circumstances, and to invite any relevant local accreditation body to be an observer at the assessment. It may also suggest that a joint accreditation be offered by it and a local accreditation body.

If there is an ILAC member accreditation body/bodies in the country or economy of the applicant that is not an ILAC signatory for the scope, it should enquire whether the applicant would be prepared to have any relevant local accreditation body informed of the application with the option of

- observing the assessment for experience
- providing a team member or members to the accreditation body's assessment team, or
- performing a joint assessment with the objective of dual accreditation.

In all these cases, the objective of eventual handover of the accreditation to the relevant local accreditation body should be borne in mind, either when that body joins the ILAC Arrangement for the scope, or when the applicant laboratory may choose.

This approach will serve to strengthen the international network of laboratory accreditation bodies provided through ILAC.

This in turn will assist the WTO/TBT objective of facilitating international trade by removing technical barriers to trade through mutual recognition between the nationally based conformity assessment systems.