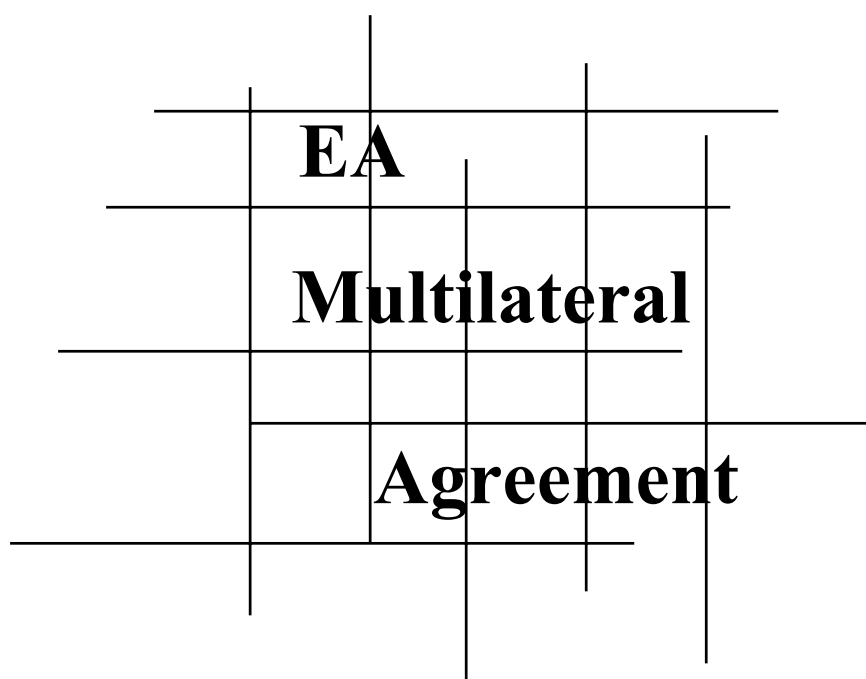




**Publication
Reference**

EA-01/06



PURPOSE

This document sets out the terms of the EA Multilateral Agreement, under which the signatories recognise the equivalence of each other's schemes. Signature sheets signed by the authorised representatives of the Accreditation Bodies that operate nationally recognised accreditation schemes within the fields of calibration laboratories, testing laboratories, certification bodies for products, quality systems, personnel, environmental management systems and inspection bodies are managed separately and are available at the EA secretariat. The list of signatories are maintained on the EA web site as well as in document EA-1/08. This new version will be enforced on the date of publication. The EA-1/06 is an "EA-MLA Procedure document".

Authorship

This document has been prepared by the EA MLA Committee.

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

For further information about this publication, contact your national member of EA or the Chairman of the EA MLA Committee.

Please check our website for up-to-date information at <http://www.european-accreditation.org>.

Category: 1. MLA Procedure Document

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INTRODUCTION

The European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) denotes the collaboration of Nationally Recognised Accreditation Bodies that conduct and administer accreditation systems of e.g. certification bodies, calibration laboratories, testing laboratories and inspection bodies. The Nationally Recognised Accreditation Bodies shall be established in one of the Member States of the European Union or the European Free Trade Association and are hereinafter referred to as Accreditation Bodies.

The criteria for the operation of accredited organisations and for the operation of the Accreditation Bodies are specified in the relevant European standards, published in the EN 45000 series of standards, or other internationally recognised normative documents, and supplemented by EA application documents, if necessary.

The cooperation of the Accreditation Bodies is based on the Articles of Association dated June 2000 and the Bylaws dated March 2003. An on-going programme of cooperation has been set up which is aimed at developing and maintaining Multilateral Agreements, based on mutual confidence, that accepts

- the equivalence of the operation of the accreditation systems administered by EA Members;
- that the certificates and reports issued by organisations accredited by EA Members are equally reliable.

The principal elements of the programme to establish mutual confidence are:

- exchange of information on the development and operation of the Accreditation Schemes;
- participation in the work and decision making of the EA General Assembly and EA Committees where applicable;
- exchange of personnel taking part in assessment, re-assessment or surveillance visits to organisations;
- participation in an evaluation and re-evaluation programme based on periodical visits to EA Members that are Signatories or are requesting to become Signatories to this Agreement;
- participation in EA and other international interlaboratory comparisons and proficiency testing programmes, where applicable;
- participation in the work of EA Expert Group and technical Task Forces held to discuss the results of the interlaboratory comparisons and proficiency testing and problems arising in various fields of measurement and testing, where applicable;
- general cooperation with other EA Members.

This document sets out the terms of the Multilateral Agreement and contains the signatures of the authorised representatives of the Accreditation Bodies that operate Nationally Recognised Accreditation Schemes, hereafter referred to as Schemes. The Accreditation Bodies on behalf of which the Multilateral Agreement is signed are the Signatories to the Multilateral Agreement.

A Scheme may comprise accreditation of one or more types of activities as defined in EA-1/08 EA multi and bilateral agreements signatories. The extent of the Scheme of each of the Signatories under this Agreement is also stated in EA-1/08. Signatures sheets materialise that members are signatories to the EA MLA. They are maintained at the EA secretariat.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT

- 1 This Agreement is based on the results of the evaluations carried out in accordance with the EA procedure.
- 2 The parties entering this Agreement are the Accreditation Bodies in each country on behalf of which the Agreement was signed.
- 3 EA MLA members shall not in any way market or promote their accreditation services in another EA Member country. This will not prevent an AB from providing accreditation services if requested by a CAB or AB, taking into account the principles of the Cross Frontier Policy
- 4 On the basis of the equivalence of the operation of the Schemes operated by the Signatories and hereby declared, each Signatory to this Agreement will:
 - (I) accept the other Schemes operated by the other Signatories as equivalent to its own Scheme(s);
 - (II) recognise as being equally reliable the certificates and/or reports from the organisations accredited by the Signatories under their equivalent Schemes;
 - (III) recommend and promote the acceptance of certificates and/or reports from the organisations accredited by the Signatories under their Scheme(s) by all users in countries of the Signatories;
 - (IV) investigate all complaints initiated by a Signatory resulting from certificates and/or reports issued by an accredited organisation of its own Scheme(s);
 - (V) notify all other Signatories and the MLA secretariat as soon as possible of any significant changes that have occurred or will occur in its status or in the operational practices of its Scheme(s);
 - (VI) operate according to the criteria specified in the relevant European Standards, published in the EN 45000 series of standards, or other internationally recognised normative documents, supplemented by EA application documents, if necessary.
 - (VII) will nominate and commit itself to providing a number of peer evaluators in proportion to its size and to the need of the MLA committee as agreed annually in the MLA committee meeting.
 - (VIII) will commit itself to participate in training and retraining of evaluators as appropriate.
- 5 An EA member may refer at any time to its signatory status of the MLA. If the member is not a signatory to all MLA schemes, it shall specify to which MLA it is signatory.

- 6 If, in accordance with the procedures set out in EA documentation, it is agreed that a further Accreditation Body will participate in the Agreement covering the scheme, a new signature sheet shall be signed by the new Accreditation Body and duly authorized by the Chairman of the MLA committee. The new Signatory shall be added to EA-1/08 and the list of MLA signatories available on the EA-website. An analogous rule shall apply if it is agreed that a Signatory may extend its Scheme(s).
- 7 If a Signatory, for any reason whatsoever, has to withdraw from this Agreement or to reduce the extent of its Scheme(s), the other Signatories shall be notified in writing not later than three months in advance of withdrawing or reducing. Upon withdrawal of a Signatory or reducing the extent of its Scheme(s), EA-1/08 and the list available on the EA web site shall be amended accordingly.
- 8 This Agreement supersedes any previous Multilateral or Bilateral Agreements, which may exist between the Signatories.
- 9 Any amendment of the text of this Agreement shall be made in accordance with the rules of procedure established by EA.
- 10 In the event of an appeal the matter shall be dealt with in accordance with procedure EA-1/04-S3
- 11 It is recognised and accepted by each of the Signatories that this Agreement does not create any rights, liabilities or obligations that would have binding effect in national, international or European Community law.
- 12 The first MLA has been signed on 1 December 1989 in the field of calibration (WECC), on 13 May 1992 in the field of testing (WELAC), and on 21 November 1994 in the field of certification (EAC).
- 13 This agreement consists of three pages. It has come first into force on 27 November 1997. Amendments were accepted in June 2003