

## TCQA Annual Report 2009

### Mandate of the TCQA

The original mandate of the TCQA which was approved in 1999 was revised. As the members felt that calibration activities should also be covered by the TCQA its name was changed into "EUROLAB Technical Committee for Quality Assurance in testing and calibration (TCQA)". The revisions with regard to the content of the mandate concerned the inclusion of economic issues concerning laboratory related conformity assessment activities and the request of EUROLAB Technical Committees to have a say in nominating EUROLAB representatives for ISO CASCO Working Groups.

### Members

Several new members joined the TCQA during the past year. Greece is now represented by Pericles Agathonos from Hellaslab. Magnus Holmgren replaced Per-Erik Petersson from Sweden. Álvaro Silva Ribeiro from Portugal joined the committee as well as José Luis Sánchez Alvarez-Campana and Irache Visiers from Spain, Omar Güzel from Turkey and Ewa Bulska and Andrzej Brzyski from Poland.

The committee now comprises 19 members from 13 countries. Two meetings were convened, i.e. on 31 March 2009 in Madrid and on 2 November 2009 in Prague.

### Cook Book and other documents

The Cook Book document on internal audits (mainly addressed to laboratories) was finalised and put on the EUROLAB website. It was agreed to draw up a second document, namely on the planning and reporting of internal audits which will be addressed preferably to the auditors. Suggestions for further documents were made

- on the electronic reporting of data,
- on preventive and corrective actions in connection with internal audits,
- on using EXCEL sheets in quality management,
- on checking the trueness of analytical results by comparing them with results obtained by the use of reference materials,
- on the evaluation of PT results.

The reading list on the use of measurement uncertainty data for conformity assessment was compiled and will be included in the EUROLAB website.

### Accreditation with flexible scope – EUROLAB inquiry and Workshop

Earlier in 2009 a short inquiry about the application of accreditation with flexible scopes among the TCQA members had revealed that there existed great differences in the EUROLAB member countries. As a result a more comprehensive questionnaire was developed by the TCQA in July and was addressed to all EUROLAB member states to get a more precise idea of the current situation and to identify the key issues and problems encountered. Meanwhile 23 countries have returned completed questionnaires. In brief this survey revealed that



*Laboratory and conformity assessment services supporting European technology and trade*

---

#### TCQA Secretariat

BAM Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing  
Unter den Eichen 87  
12205 Berlin Germany

Telephone: ++49 30 8104 3762  
Telefax: ++49 30 8104 4628  
E-mail: eurolab@bam.de

#### Registered office

**EUROLAB c/o CEOC**  
Rue du Commerce 20 - 22  
B-1000, Brussels

- accreditation with flexible scope is today offered by the majority of the EA members,
- the associated internal and external cost increases are in many cases moderate,
- the laboratory community is relatively satisfied with the current development although in several countries experience is still rather limited,
- the responding EUROLAB organisations expressed their view that extending the concept to other areas of conformity assessment, e.g. calibration, inspection and certification of products is feasible and desirable.

The preliminary results of this inquiry were presented during the 2<sup>nd</sup> EUROLAB Workshop on Accreditation with Flexible Scope – Needs, Current Situation and Future Developments which was organised by the TCQA at the Technical and Test Institute for Construction in Prague on 4 November 2009 and sponsored by EUROLAB-Cz. The workshop was attended by over 50 participants representing 18 European countries, from numerous conformity assessment bodies, various industries and 8 accreditation bodies.

On the accreditation side, two very interesting presentations from the Czech Accreditation Institute (CAI) and the Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS) presented the developments and good practices at EA level. The leading role of the EA Laboratory Committee (LC) in the discussion and harmonisation of laboratory accreditation with flexible scope was highlighted. From an inquiry performed by the EA LC on the use of flexible scopes in the environmental field a draft on good practices in the expression of these scopes including examples was derived.

The practical experiences of laboratories were presented by representatives of a Swiss EMC laboratory, a French calibration laboratory and a Polish chemical laboratory. They underlined the necessity for flexibility in order to minimise the risk of not satisfying the customers' needs. Potential improvements which were mentioned concerned

- the description of flexible scopes in databases of the national accreditation body or on the website of the accredited organisation itself,
- the harmonisation of the accreditation rules at the European level,
- the degree of scope specification.

Two presentations addressed the accreditation of notified bodies against the background of the new European legislative framework for the marketing of products. If accreditation should be used as a means for competence assessment for notified bodies the scope of accreditation must be defined flexibly. It was concluded that

- the relation between the scope of accreditation and the scope of notification should be unambiguous,
- the direct reference to harmonised product standards might be possible for some directives but would be entirely unfeasible for others which are supported by hundreds of standards.

Within their scope of notification notified bodies must be able to assess all types of products against the general criteria stipulated in the respective directive irrespective of the existence of harmonised standards. It would mean a severe competitive disadvantage for a producer if an innovative product could not be put on the market because no notified body is accredited for testing and assessing it.

During the plenary discussion it was highlighted that accreditation bodies used different ways of expressing scopes of accreditation with various degrees of flexibility. All parties agreed that a classification of accredited laboratories would be undesirable.

The proceedings of the workshop with all presentations are available from the EUROLAB website ([www.eurolab.org](http://www.eurolab.org)).



## Other activities

The agenda of a TCQA meeting comprises some regular topics, e.g. concerning accreditation, standardisation and information from international organisations. During the two meetings in 2009 among others the following subjects were addressed:

- comments of TCQA on the draft EEE-PT paper on the frequency of participation in proficiency testing activities,
- cross frontier accreditation against the background of the European Regulation on Accreditation (EG 765/2008),
- relations of EUROLAB with Notified Bodies,
- involvement of EUROLAB and TCQA in standardisation activities of ISO CASCO,
- potential revision of ISO/IEC 17025:2005.

Concerning the latter TCQA spoke against a revision and advocated keeping the standard unchanged.

On 10 December 2009 EUROLAB organised a meeting in Brussels on behalf of TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument managed by the Directorate-General Enlargement of the European Commission) with active participation of some TCQA members (Guy Jacques, Jiri Sobola and Lorens Sibbesen). The latter gave a presentation on *EUROLAB TCQA – working for reliable test results*.

## Future priorities of the TCQA

At the Prague meeting a brainstorming discussion on future priorities of the committee was launched and the following items were identified:

- continue the Cook Book series,
- organise workshops and training courses not only at the international level but also in the EUROLAB member states using the expertise of TCQA lecturers or accreditation bodies,
- open a Discussion Forum or a Chat Area on the EUROLAB website,
- carry out regular inquiries on problems encountered with accreditation bodies (e.g. PT participation in ILCs, collection of strange non-compliances etc.),
- discussing of problems with accreditation bodies at national or European level,
- explain quality-related issues to clients of laboratories,
- economic issues: how can accreditation costs charged in the different European countries be made more transparent?
- provide more detailed information on work carried out in other technical committees and working groups related to our activities to all members to be able to react quickly to upcoming problems, possibly also by setting up temporary task forces,
- examine the idea of establishing a joint working group of EFNDT, CEOC and EUROLAB on the accreditation of NDT laboratories.

## For consideration

The TCQA and the EUROLAB General Assembly should consider whether a workshop on technical issues of quality assurance could be organised, e.g. in connection with the coming National Members Meeting in 2010.

Manfred Golze