



PLG workshop 2007
Accreditation
a tool to develop competence (?)


“Challenges and opportunities
of independent CABs
in the new environment”

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PLG workshop 2007 - Berlin - 20
September 2007

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General content of the presentation

- ◆ What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?
- ◆ Is there a role for independent third parties in this new arena ?
- ◆ The competence issue
- ◆ Some possible relations between competence and accreditation



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1. What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?

The evolution to globalisation of all types of markets and privatisation of public activities

- ◆ 1985 : New Approach – Standardisation : privatisation of the technical aspects related to the elaboration of regulations.
- ◆ 1989 : Global Approach – Accreditation : privatisation of the technical aspects related to the designation of conformity assessment bodies.
- ◆ 1990's : International MRA's : Tested once, certified once, accepted everywhere (not really a success)



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1. What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?

The evolution to globalisation of all types of markets and privatisation of public activities

- ◆ 1990's : Progressive reduction of the mandatory involvement of independent third parties – supplier's declaration of conformity is the "preferred way"
- ◆ 2004 : Launching of the "Review of the New Approach" - improvements to accreditation and surveillance of the market. The review is to be finalised in 2008....2009.
- ◆ 2006 : Better Regulation includes co-regulation and self-regulation . Some standards developed at international level can fulfil the needs of Society (Example : introduction of environmental requirements in products specifications) – it is the privatisation of the regulation concept itself

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1. What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?

The messages to the notified bodies could be more positive. During the revision of the machinery directive the Commission wrote

“Key amendments proposed by the European Parliament in the first reading, such as the introduction of self-certification, via a manufacturer’s declaration of conformity, instead of third-party certification for machines presenting a higher level of risk in the case of full application of harmonized standards and the strengthening of the requirements on notified bodies are present in the common position.”

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1. What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?

The messages to the notified bodies could be more positive.

Seen from the notified bodies side, the message could be reformulated as such

- Dear notified bodies, you are a necessary burden. In order to help you to give more confidence, we will be obliged to put on your shoulders additional requirements and costs.

BUT THERE IS A COMPENSATION

- We will also take care to reduce your activities as much as possible.



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1. What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?

New Approach consequences for third parties

- ◆ In several cases the deletion of duty of national duplication of testing/inspection led to difficult situations for some laboratories at local level.
- ◆ The vanishing of borders creates a significant need for a common level playing field for CABs (Conformity Assessment Bodies)
- ◆ On the other hand the New Approach brings new opportunities by creating new needs for third party assessment, for instance in the railway sector.

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1. What is changing in the environment of independent CABs ?

Globalisation and Better regulation consequences for third parties

- ◆ “Cutting the red tape” : the aim is to reduce the burden for industry and specially SME’s. Third parties can be considered as a part of the red tape
- ◆ “Better regulation” might be a dangerous game if the economic operators do not care about the “voluntary” requirements of co-regulation and have no problem to do so because there is no market surveillance.
- ◆ One of the effects of globalisation is a delocalised management more and more focused on price (minimum requirement)

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2. Is there a role for independent third parties in this new arena ?

YES

- ◆ There are more and more questions on the legitimacy of standardization as a regulatory tool : all stakeholders are not represented and/or active and/or competent
- ◆ Due to the global privatization concept, there are less and less technical experts available on some issues
- ◆ Due to the evolution of their role, the public authorities have less internal technical experience : they will need support of independent experts.
- ◆ The general tendency of outsourcing in industry induces request for credible external regulatory support

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2. Is there a role for independent third parties in this new arena ?

BUT

- ◆ Some of the actors show an image of low and declining competence in a more and more complex regulatory and technical environment. This is not good for the global image of Third party Conformity Assessment
- ◆ Standards are not always written by people who understand the issues, this makes them difficult to apply in real life.
- ◆ Some traditional activities of the independent laboratories and inspection bodies are tired and comoditised.
- ◆ Increase of competition between CAB's could lead to lowering of the technical level of the assessment

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2. Is there a role for independent third parties in this new arena ?

SOME IDEAS

- ◆ Our complex activities rest on two pillars of fame : competence and independence. Competence is (should be) obvious and identifiable. Independence is something quite different. It is unique, it is intangible, fragile and if you loose it you cannot regain it.
- ◆ Passive test reports based on outdated regulations are as useful as a 80 years old road map.
- ◆ Why is it so difficult to define and to implement the so called “functional approach” for the CABs ?

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3. The competence issue

◆ Challenges for the personnel

- It is very nice to say that there could be more value in risk analysis than in routine testing/inspection : but the basic skills are different (not necessarily the same competencies)
- Need to create positive motivation for change : “Motivation occurs when people perceive that the price for maintaining the status quo is higher than the price of change”

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3. The competence issue

◆ Challenges for the organisation

- Added value induces the need for knowledge management (sharing of best practices between the technicians...) . “There is no knowledge without people and there are no people without culture... The number one question about culture is trust”.
- Before trying to find how to do, it is important to know what has to be done.

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4. Some possible relations between competence and accreditation

Up till now many proficiency testing activities have not shown a difference in performance of accredited and non accredited laboratories, which automatically leads to the question whether the present accreditation process focuses on the right things. **CAN A BETTER RESULT BE ACHIEVED BY DOING JUST A FEW THINGS VERY WELL AND FORGET THE LESS IMPORTANT ISSUES ?**

Eurolab strategy update – 2002

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4. Some possible relations between competence and accreditation

- For accreditation bodies, a high level of (harmonised) expertise is needed to assess demonstrated competence **FIT FOR THE INTENDED PURPOSE**.
- When the rules and the objects of conformity assessment are changing rapidly, accreditation might mainly be a demonstration of capacity of the laboratory to adapt itself to the situation and to provide reliable test results.

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Thank you

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