How does Accredited Certification benefit Regulators?

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Government bodies and Regulators are constantly called upon to make decisions related to:

- Protecting the health and welfare of consumers and the public
- Protecting the environment
- Developing new regulations and requirements
- Measuring compliance with regulatory and legal requirements
- Allocating resources, both technical and financial

Governments, and the citizens they protect, are increasingly moving towards zero risk tolerance. Regulators are introducing stricter, and more comprehensive regulations and reporting requirements. In turn, businesses are required more and more to demonstrate legal and regulatory compliance.

Most countries have rules and regulations related to safety and performance of various goods and services. There are greater requirements regarding environmental performance, from recycling to packaging to energy consumption. Compliance with regulations is therefore no longer initially meeting specifications; it can also relate to the life cycle of a product.

Accredited certification is used to assess conformity against a standard, a code of practice or regulatory requirements. Regulators can set overall policy requirements or detailed technical requirements and rely on accredited organisations to ensure compliance. Compliance is demonstrated by the award of a certificate or a mark.

Accreditation is the independent evaluation of certification bodies against recognised standards to ensure impartiality, competence and consistency.

Regulators are increasingly relying on an independent third party declaration of compliance to support regulatory enforcement and monitoring activities as they demonstrate compliance with legislation and performance against industry benchmarks and performance indicators.

As major procurers of goods and services, more and more governments are relying on accredited certification to make informed buying decisions. Only IAF recognised certification provides confidence that suppliers have appropriate controls in place to meet specific requirements.

The Benefits of using Accredited Certification

Using accredited certification benefits Government and Regulators by:

- Allowing Regulators to set overall policy requirements or detailed technical requirements yet rely on the IAF recognised accredited organisations to evaluate compliance

- Reducing uncertainties associated with decisions that affect the protection of human health and the environment

- Removing the need for Regulatory authorities to employ their own audit personnel, and eliminating duplicate audits

- Increasing public confidence because accreditation is a recognisable way of demonstrating conformity

- Providing confidence on which to base public sector procurement decisions

- Use of IAF recognised accreditation also facilitates trade and economic growth. The accreditation process relies on a uniform approach to determining certification body competence – an approach that has been accepted and implemented across many borders. The use of the IAF MLA Mark demonstrates that the outcomes can be viewed as equivalent. This reduces costs and eases exports and imports as it reduces or eliminates the need for re-certification in another country.

Accreditation in support of Regulation

Accreditation used to be seen as predominantly a voluntary activity; however, in many economies, accreditation has become widely embraced by Governments and has become "mandatory" in many regulated areas, as more and more Governments and regulatory authorities appreciate the benefits that accreditation brings in meeting their responsibilities and to safeguard the public.

For example, in the Asia-Pacific region, ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) with its ten member States, has included accreditation in the ASEAN sectoral Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for electrical and electronic equipment as a means of meeting the mandatory requirements of each member and to facilitate the implementation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

In Europe, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament have agreed on a Regulation that provides a legal framework for the provision of accreditation services across Europe. The Regulation covers the operation of accreditation in support of voluntary conformity assessment as well as conformity assessment required by legislation. The Regulation recognises the benefits of accreditation by legislating that accreditation be used as a means to show compliance with mandatory requirements. The Regulation also recognises the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) as the co-ordinating organisation for the national European accreditation infrastructure.

In the US, the White House issued a revised OMB Circular No. A-119 which establishes policies on the Federal use and development of voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment activities. The circular is intended to promote the consistent use of accreditation by regulatory agencies.

The mainstream acceptance of accreditation by pan-regional bodies, and domestic regulators within individual Governments also helps member governments of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to meet their responsibilities of the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (TBT Agreement). The TBT agreement itself (6.1.1) identifies accreditation as a means for central Governments to recognise and have confidence in conformity assessment bodies in the exporting members economy.

How does Accreditation work?

Accreditation is generally provided by one accreditation body within a country. In some developing economies without established accreditation bodies, certification bodies may have to seek accreditation from an established accreditation body in another country.

Assessors from the accreditation body conduct a thorough evaluation of the certification body's processes, staff and management. Organisations are assessed against specific international standards, ISO/IEC 17021- 1: *"Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems"*, or ISO/IEC 17024 *"Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons"*, ISO 14065 *"Greenhouse gases – Requirements for greenhouse gas validation and verification bodies for use in accreditation or other forms of recognition"* or ISO/IEC 17065 *"Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services"*.

Accredited organisations are regularly re-examined to ensure that they maintain high standards of technical expertise. Government representatives, at their option, are welcome and often do take part in on-going assessments in order to maintain their confidence in the accreditation system.

How do I find an Accredited Organisation?

To find out if your country has an accreditation body, visit the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) website at **www.iaf.nu** and use the IAF MLA members & signatories list to identify an accreditation body in your country or region.

Accreditation bodies in most countries publish lists or directories of the organisations they have accredited, which often include contact details and scopes.

**Certified Once
Accepted Everywhere**

More information about the IAF and accreditation

The International Accreditation Forum (IAF) is a global association of accreditation bodies, certification body associations and other organisations involved in conformity assessment activities in a variety of fields including management systems, products and personnel.

IAF members work together on a worldwide basis to achieve common trade facilitation objectives by developing the principles and practices for the conduct of conformity assessment that will deliver the confidence needed for market acceptance.

The IAF promotes the worldwide acceptance of certificates of conformity issued by organisations accredited by an IAF MLA signatory and seeks to add value for all stakeholders through its activities and programmes.

Accreditation is the independent assessment of an organisation against recognised standards, a code of practice or regulatory requirements to ensure their impartiality, competence and consistency.

The purpose of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) is to ensure mutual recognition of accredited certification between signatories to the MLA, and subsequently acceptance of accredited certification in many markets based on one accreditation.

Accreditation and the IAF MLA helps Regulators meet their legislated responsibilities by providing a globally recognised system to accept accredited certification.

Public Sector Assurance

Public Sector Assurance (www.publicsectorassurance.org) has been developed by the leading global quality infrastructure organisations to illustrate the value of accredited conformity assessment, where Government officials and Regulators are able to access case studies from around the world in key policy areas demonstrating how different tools are able to deliver results.

The site also contains links to independent research where conformity assessment is, and can be, used for policy areas such as economic development, healthcare, environmental protection, energy, food safety, construction, crime and security.

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