

International Accreditation Forum (IAF)

Key features

Type of organisation: Trans-governmental network

Charter/Constitution: Bylaws of the International Accreditation Forum Inc., www.iaf.nu/upfiles/iafpl22015bylawsissue7publicationversion_26112015.pdf

Membership

- Nature: Accreditation bodies, regional Accreditation Groups and Associations
- Number: 107 members

Year of establishment: 1993

Secretariat location: Chelsea, Canada

Secretariat staff: 4 (2017)

Total budget: EUR 500 000 (2016)

Type of activity: Accreditation of third-party certification bodies and verification and validation bodies

Sectors of activity: Accreditation of third-party conformity assessment bodies in the fields of management system certification, product, process and service certification, certification of persons, verification and validation, or similar conformity assessment activities

Webpage: www.iaf.nu

Members

IAF has 3 classes of Members: Accreditation Body Members, Association Members, and Regional Accreditation Group Members.

Accreditation Body Members consist of entities that have recognition by authorities, regulators or industrial or trade organisations within an economy, region or internationally and are engaged in developing, or conducting and administering, accreditation of entities that perform conformity assessment. IAF currently has 81 Accreditation Body Members, 66 of whom are signatories to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA)* and which represent 92 economies: Albania, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand (joint accreditation body), Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China (People's Republic of), Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Gulf Cooperation Council (joint accreditation body for: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen), Germany, Greece, Hong Kong (China), Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kosovo, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Southern Africa (joint accreditation body for: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates (Dubai), United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vietnam.

Association Members consist of organisations or associations that represent a similar group of entities internationally or within an economy or region. IAF has 20 Association Members: ABCB, APEDA, BDI, CGF, DTA, EFAC, EOQ, FAMI-QS, FSSC 22000, GLOBAL.G.A.P., IAAR, IAQG, IFIA, IIOC, IPC, IQNet, JACB, LBNL, PEFCS, QuEST Forum.

Regional Accreditation Group Members consist of associations of organisations that co-operate within an identified geographic region to establish and maintain a multilateral recognition agreement based on a peer evaluation system. Recognised Regional Accreditation Groups are those whose regional multilateral recognition agreements have been successfully peer evaluated by IAF. IAF currently has 6 Regional Accreditation Group Members: AFRAC, ARAC, EA, IAAC, PAC, SADCA.

Relationship with non-Members

IAF formally recognises Observers in cases where it is in the organisation's best interest to develop closer relationships with a particular entity. This category is generally for prospective members in IAF, and is for a maximum period of three years. Non-member organisations and stakeholders (e.g. prospective applicants, applicants, government officials and industry regulators) may also be invited to participate as observers in IAF meetings. IAF also has a program to assist accreditation bodies that are not yet members of IAF to learn about IAF and the MLA process (e.g. through publication of documents, brochures, etc.). IAF has also signed MoUs with the international organisations with whom it has common or shared interests.

Mandate

The primary purpose of IAF is two-fold. Firstly, to ensure that its accreditation body members only accredit bodies that are competent to do the work they undertake and are not subject to conflicts of interest. Secondly, to establish mutual recognition arrangements (MLA) between its accreditation body members, which reduce risk to business and its customers by ensuring that an accredited certificate may be relied upon anywhere in the world. The MLA contributes to the freedom of world trade by eliminating technical barriers to trade. IAF works to find the most effective way of achieving a single system that will allow companies with an accredited conformity assessment certificate in one part of the world, to have that certificate recognised elsewhere in the world. The objective of the MLA is that it will cover all accreditation bodies in all countries in the world, thus eliminating the need for suppliers of products or services to be certified in each country where they sell their products or services. Certified once – accepted everywhere.

* The purpose of the MLA is to ensure mutual recognition of accredited certification between signatories, and signatories are peer evaluated to ensure this.

IRC processes taking place within the International Accreditation Forum



Categories of legal and policy instruments

	Is it taking place within the IO?	Approximate number
Treaties for ratification by States (excluding the funding one)		
Legally binding decisions	√	46
Recommendations		
Political declarations		
Model treaties or law		
Production of technical standards		
Non-binding guidance/best practices document	√	20
Other (Mutual Recognition Agreement)	√	1

Interactions with other international organisations active in the field

Mechanisms of interaction		Approximate number of IOs involved	Examples
Develop joint instruments	√	1	IAF works very closely with the ILAC, holding meetings jointly since 2001. IAF and ILAC have formal relationships in the form of MOUs with a large number of other organisations involved in standards and conformity assessment, facilitation of trade, and development of quality and trade infrastructures, such as ISO, IEC, ITU, OIML and UNIDO. IAF also has informal relationships with the WTO/OMC Technical Barriers to Trade Committee.
MoU or other agreements	√	7	
Participate in co-ordinating institution	√		
Joint meetings that provide forum for co-ordination	√	2	
Observe relevant actions of other bodies	√		
Exchange information	√	7	

IAF history

The IAF was formed as a result of the first meeting of "Organisations that Accredite Quality System Registrars and Certification programs", held on 28 January 1993, in Houston, United States.. The purpose of the IAF was to operate a program for the accreditation of bodies dealing with conformity assessment, in order to ensure that certification of products, processes or services in one region or country should be accepted in other regions or countries. Also, through the program the IAF aimed to ensure that equivalent conformity assessment procedures used by organisations should be developed.

Source: Updated from OECD (2016), *International Regulatory Co-operation: The Role of International Organisations in Fostering Better Rules of Globalisation*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264244047-en>