



Snapshots of IO Practices

ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA)

Organisation(s): International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC)

The Snapshots of IO Practices present examples of specific efforts undertaken by an international organisation to work towards more effective international instruments. They aim to highlight examples of practices within the five focus areas of the Partnership of International Organisations for Effective International Rulemaking (IO Partnership), namely the variety and development of international instruments, their implementation, evaluation, ensuring stakeholder engagement, and co-ordination among IOs. The snapshots are submitted by the secretariats of the relevant international organisations implementing the relevant practice. The practices were compiled by the OECD Secretariat and focal points of the IO Partnership (UNCITRAL, OIE, WHO, ISO, WCO, BIPM, and SIECA), with a brief review to ensure consistency and comparability of the information provided within the snapshots. The inclusion of a practice in these snapshots implies no endorsement or assessment of that practice on the part of the OECD Secretariat or the focal points of the IO Partnership.

1	Overview of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
1.1	Organisation	ILAC	
1.2	Area of relevance among the IO partnership focus themes (variety of instruments, implementation, stakeholder engagement, evaluation, co-ordination)	Implementation	Some intersections exist with themes of WG 4 on evaluation.
1.3	Name of the Practice	ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA)	
1.4	Name of person(s) completing the template	ILAC Secretariat	

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2	Description of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
2.1	Please describe the practice shortly, providing information on its core features.	<p>The ILAC MRA is a multilateral agreement that offers coherence across regional recognition agreements and arrangements, and can be seen as enabling evaluation of ILAC decisions on the signatory status of accreditation bodies.</p> <p>The ILAC MRA links the existing regional MRAs/MLAs of the Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies. For the purposes of the ILAC MRA, and based on ILAC's evaluation and recognition of the regional MRAs/MLAs, ILAC delegates authority to its Recognised Regional Cooperation Bodies for the evaluation, surveillance, re-evaluation and associated decision making relating to the signatory status of the accreditation bodies that are ILAC Full Members (ILAC MRA signatories).</p> <p>The accreditation bodies that are signatories to the ILAC MRA have been peer evaluated in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 to demonstrate their competence.</p> <p>The ILAC MRA signatories then assess and accredit conformity assessment bodies according to the relevant international standards including calibration laboratories (using ISO/IEC 17025), testing laboratories (using ISO/IEC 17025), medical testing laboratories (using ISO 15189), inspection bodies (using ISO/IEC 17020), proficiency testing providers (using ISO/IEC 17043) and reference material producers (using ISO 17034).</p>	<p>The integration of ISO/IEC 17011 - Conformity assessment — Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies into the peer review processes of ILAC represents an intersection between the evaluation (WG4) and co-ordination (WG5) aspects of international rulemaking. The assessment and accreditation of conformity assessment bodies through the prism of dedicated international standards in various sectors (ISO/IEC 17025, ISO 15189, ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17043, ISO 17034) demonstrate further instances of this phenomenon, and the complementarity between ISO, ILAC and IEC more broadly.</p>

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2.2	What are the objectives of the practice?	<p>The ILAC MRA provides significant technical underpinning to the calibration, testing, medical testing and inspection results, provision of proficiency testing programs and production of the reference materials of the accredited conformity assessment bodies that in turn delivers confidence in the acceptance of services and results:</p> <p>https://ilac.org/ilac-mra-and-signatories/</p>	
2.3	What have been the key results of the practice?	<p>The ILAC MRA signatories (104 as at 23 August 2021. This represents 105 economies) agree to accept the results of each other's accredited conformity assessment bodies under the ILAC MRA. Hence, the results from the conformity assessment bodies accredited by the ILAC MRA signatories are able to be recognised internationally enhancing the acceptance of products across national borders.</p> <p>By removing the need for additional calibration, testing, medical testing and/or inspection of imports and exports this assists in the support of the reduction of technical barriers to trade and therefore the promotion of international trade.</p> <p>The ILAC MRA also supports the provision of local or national services, such as providing safe food and clean drinking water, providing energy, delivering health and social care and maintaining an unpolluted environment.</p>	
2.4	In what year was the practice introduced?	<p>In 2000, the 36 ILAC Full Members consisting of laboratory accreditation bodies from 28 economies worldwide, signed the ILAC Mutual Recognition Arrangement (ILAC MRA), to promote the acceptance of technical test and calibration data for exported goods. The ILAC MRA for calibration and testing laboratories came into effect on 31 January 2001.</p>	

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2.5	Has the practice been updated/reformed since then? If yes, when and how has it evolved over time?	<p>Yes</p> <p>The ILAC MRA was extended in October 2012 to include the accreditation of inspection bodies and as at 23 August 2021 includes 81 signatories for this scope. In May 2019 it was further extended to include the accreditation of proficiency testing providers (37 signatories at 23 August 2021) and in May 2020 for the accreditation of reference material producers (25 signatories at 23 August 2021).</p> <p>ILAC R6 provides details on the process used to extend the ILAC MRA: https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/ilac-rules-series/</p>	
2.6	What do you consider to be the primary strengths of the practice?	<p>All ILAC members involved in development of the criteria for the ILAC MRA and the evaluations are carried out by peers. The peer evaluation process has delivered benefits including the gains from the extensive knowledge and expertise of the peers that are experienced in the implementation of the standards in their own organisation as well as the opportunity to share experience and to learn across regions and signatories. It is also a cost effective process for ILAC if only the direct monetary aspect is considered in conducting evaluations, as the costs for peer evaluators are not directly attributed to the ILAC Secretariat.</p>	
2.7	What do you consider to be the main challenges faced during the implementation of the practice?	<p>Reliance on volunteer (peers) to carry out the evaluations of the regional co-operation and accreditation bodies</p>	
2.8	Does the practice have a formal/normative basis within the organisation or is it conducted informally? Does this basis make the practice mandatory or voluntary?	<p>The ILAC MRA is a formal process documented in ILAC P4 and P5: https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/ilac-policy-series/</p>	

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	If there is formal basis, please provide the relevant link or documentation.	<p>The practice is mandatory for all Full Members that are signatories to the ILAC MRA.</p> <p>The evaluation processes are documented in IAF/ILAC A1 and A2: https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/joint-ilac-iaf-series/</p>	
2.9	At what frequency is the practice applied? i.e. is it conducted once or on an iterative basis?	<p>The evaluations of each body are conducted on an iterative basis every 4 years or less if a need is identified.</p> <p>The documents that contain the requirements are reviewed every 4 years.</p>	
2.10	Is this practice applied systematically, (e.g. with respect to every normative instrument, according to specific criteria or on an ad hoc basis)?	<p>ILAC P4 and P5 and IAF/ILAC A1 and A2 include the systematic process for the evaluations.</p> <p>ILAC R1 describes the systematic process for reviewing the ILAC publications including the documents containing the requirements for the evaluation process: https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/ilac-rules-series/</p>	
2.11	Please provide specific details or examples to illustrate the practice (including supporting links and documents).	<p>ILAC R6 includes details of the structure of the ILAC MRA: https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/ilac-rules-series/</p>	
3	Design of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
3.1	Who designed the practice (e.g. Was it developed internally, in collaboration with other organisations, etc?)	<p>The evaluation criteria were (and continue to be updated as required) developed using a committee structure, comment and balloting process that involves input from ILAC members including stakeholder members. It is carried out in conjunction with IAF colleagues.</p>	<p>The integration of stakeholders in the development of the evaluation criteria signifies an intersection between the development of international instruments (WG1), stakeholder engagement (WG3), and evaluation (WG4).</p>

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3.2	Which stakeholders were engaged with in the design of the practice?	All ILAC stakeholder members are eligible to participate in aspects of this process including the design of the practice.	
3.3	How long did it take to design the practice?	Four years	
3.4	What resources were needed to design the practice initially (i.e., staff, budget etc.)?	Primarily reliant on volunteer resources provided by the members of ILAC.	
3.5	What challenges were encountered during the design of the practice and how were they overcome?	<p>This practice was initially developed more than 20 years ago using volunteer resources.</p> <p>Whilst this process has been reviewed and evolved over this time period and the principles remain current and relevant, the dependence of the peer evaluation process on voluntary peers to carry out the majority of the evaluation process presents significant challenges in the 21st century business environment that accreditation bodies are now operating.</p>	
3.6	Has the practice been tested before implementation (i.e. pilot phase)? If yes, please describe.	See above.	
4	Implementation of the Practice		Comments and intersections
4.1	Which units are responsible for implementing the practice within your IO?	There is a volunteer (peer) committee structure responsible for the implementation of the ILAC MRA with the peak body in this structure being the ILAC Arrangement Council as the decision making group: https://ilac.org/about-ilac/structure/	
4.2	Are IO members involved in implementing the practice? If so, how?	Yes, via the provision of evaluator resources and in the decision making.	

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4.3	Are external actors beyond the organisation or its membership involved in implementing the practice? If so, how?	Yes, IAF via joint development of criteria and processes for evaluations. As well as carrying out joint evaluations.	The involvement of the IAF in the development of criteria and processes governing evaluations, and its participation in their practical application, indicates an intersection between the co-ordination of international activities (WG5) and the evaluation of instruments (WG4).
4.4	Which resources are needed to implement the practice (e.g., staff and budget)?	Primarily based on volunteer resources provided by the members. ILAC Secretariat provides some services such as supporting the committee responsible for identifying and appointing evaluation teams, supporting team leaders with enquiries and information throughout the process and ensuring the time lines for carrying out the evaluation remain on track. The Secretariat is also responsible for managing the review and decision making processes with the relevant committees and seeking the feedback at the conclusion of the process.	
5	Outputs and Evaluation of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
5.1	Has the practice been evaluated or reviewed?	Yes. The individual layers are evaluated, ie the regions evaluate the accreditation bodies and ILAC (and IAF) evaluate the regions. The activities carried out by the ILAC Secretariat in administering the ILAC MRA are reviewed via an audit process.	
5.2	If yes, who carried out the evaluation (please specify whether it was done internally or externally)	Peer evaluators are used for the evaluation processes.	

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5.3	If yes, please describe the evaluation methodology? (e.g. were any quantitative or qualitative indicators/criteria used to measure/assess the outcomes of the practice?).	The requirements for the evaluation processes are included in IAF/ILAC A1 and A2 (https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/joint-ilac-iaf-series/).	
5.4	If yes, what were the conclusions of the evaluation, and has the practice evolved subsequently? If possible, please attach related documents or provide a link.	Yes, the requirements for the evaluations have evolved over the past 20 years. This evolution is a result of both routine reviews and feedback on each evaluation carried out as well as strategic planning sessions that are carried out in relation to this significant activity to ensure it continues to meet the needs of members, stakeholders and regulators that use the ILAC MRA.	
6	Additional comments and information	Answers	Comments and intersections
6.1	Is there any more information or documentation that would be valuable to share in relation to the practice (e.g. links, reports, meeting minutes, supporting documents)?	https://ilac.org/ilac-mra-and-signatories/ https://ilac.org/publications-and-resources/ Evaluation reports and minutes of the committees responsible for the criteria and review of the evaluation are not publically available. Examples of the implemented use of the ILAC MRA by regulators and other users are available from https://publicsectorassurance.org/	
Sources			