



News

International Updates | Regional Cooperations | Accreditation Updates | Stakeholder News

From the Secretariat
Secretariat Update -
September 2014

[« Back](#)

Regional Cooperations
EA: Accreditation for
Notification
News from ARAC
IAAC - 19th General
Assembly
News from APLAC
APLAC Medical
Laboratory
Accreditation Workshop

International Updates
News from ISO/CASCO
WADA's Revised Code
and ISL

Accreditation Updates
SADC WAD
Commemorations
RvA Accredited Medical
Laboratories
UKAS Accreditation for
Inspection of Care
Providers
CALA Conference
Success
2014 in Hong Kong
PCA Accreditation -
'hitting the jackpot'
Swedac's Silver Jubilee
Introduction to AoV
Twinning Project in
Moldova
Activities by MAURITAS
News from ema
SANAS News
ACCREDIA Survey
Food Safety
JANAAC Celebrates
WAD
OGA hosted the 19th
IAAC GA
News from ATS
News from IAJapan,
JAB and VLAC
DAkKS: Competence in
Transplantation
Diagnostics

PCA Accreditation - 'hitting the jackpot'

It's been ten years since Poland's accession to the European Union (EU). The period of our EU membership has been marked by significant changes and adjustments in many social and economic areas of the country, which have also greatly influenced activity of the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA) and the PCA accredited bodies. The nationwide commemoration of the event coincides with 10th anniversary of signing by Polish Centre for Accreditation of the EA Multilateral Agreement (EA MLA) and consequently signing the IAF MLA and ILAC MRA in 2005. This was a huge step forward, since thankfully to the Agreements free movement of goods and services in Europe and worldwide became a fact.

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 765/2008, the accreditations granted by PCA, as well as the certificates and reports issued by PCA accredited bodies under EA MLA are recognized in the EU countries, and those issued under IAF MLA and ILAC MRA – worldwide. In practice it means avoiding multiple accreditation thus reducing the costs connected with applying for accreditation by organizations.

According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), the export expansion of Polish companies accounts for nearly half last year's GDP growth. The favourable trend continues in this year, as in the first quarter the value of exports of goods and services from Poland reached 39,6 billion Euro, whereas the value of imports totalled 39,3 billion Euro. This means a surplus of over 290 million Euro, in contrast to last year's trade deficit.

Exports, of both goods and services, have therefore become the main driving force of the Polish economy, thus the good manufacturers and service providers deserve special appreciation. Also PCA and the PCA accredited bodies contributed significantly to this positive trend. PCA, as a signatory to the international multilateral agreements, has made its contribution to the process of removing barriers to trade on international markets so that goods and services could be freely transferred across borders.

The number of PCA accredited bodies has been growing steadily for the last couple of years, reaching 1461 active accreditations in the middle of this year (1280 in 2010). This results in considerable growth in the number of PCA assessments and observations (PCA is approaching a milestone of 2 thousand assessments per year, as compared to 1500 in 2010).

In the recent years, Polish Centre for Accreditation has continued the intensive cooperation with the governmental administrative agencies on the application of accreditation in the designation and notification of conformity assessment bodies. In accordance with the EU legislation, each Member State has the right to decide on the method of verification of the competence of notified bodies and may use either accreditation or another method that is proved before the European Commission to deliver equivalent results as accreditation.

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Contact Us

The ILAC Secretariat
PO Box 7507
Silverwater
NSW 2128, Australia

T: +61 2 9736 8374

F: +61 2 9736 8373

Email: ilac@nata.com.au

Poland decided to use the accreditation of conformity assessment bodies for notification purposes, as enacted in the amendment of the Act on conformity assessment system. As a result, Polish Centre for Accreditation has been engaged in intensive cooperation with the competent designating authorities for particular directives. It has been implemented as a series of meetings involving two, three or on occasion more parties in mixed work teams, whose main task is to work out the position on the two fundamental matters: the accreditation scope and the method of the evaluation of the competence of conformity assessment bodies. Another valuable form of the cooperation is the agreements entered into by PCA and the regulators. All that means that accreditation is a proven tool used by the majority of the designating authorities of public administration.

In terms of the fast economic progress the country has made the so called "hitting the jackpot" for the PCA accredited bodies not only Poland's 10-year EU membership but also PCA signatory status to the international multilateral agreements: EA MLA, ILAC MRA and IAF MLA.

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