CYPRUS ACCREDITATION BODY
CYSAB

Accreditation or Certification for Laboratories?

CYPRUS ORGANIZATION
FOR THE PROMOTION OF QUALITY (CYS)

Introduction

This leaflet is focused on the **clarification** of existing **differences** between **Accreditation** and **Certification** with regard to laboratories. It seems that after a long experience gained through the use of various quality assurance tools, there is still **confusion** to some extent among the users regarding the two activities and their usefulness when being implemented in laboratories. Could the two procedures be used as an alternative to each other? Emphasis is given to their characteristics leading to both similarities and differences.

Following the definitions...

- **Certification** is a procedure leading to a written confirmation that a product or a procedure or a service complies with specified requirements, i.e **Certification refers to assurance of conformity to specified requirements, while...**
- **Accreditation** is a procedure carried out by an authorized institution which assesses that a body is competent to carry out specific tasks, i.e. **Accreditation refers to the competence to carry out specific tasks.**

The aim...

With regard to **Accreditation**, the **technical competence of the personnel and the infrastructure** for the defined activities are assessed. The scope of Accreditation is limited and defined in each case.

Regarding **Certification**, the **management competence** of a wide range of activities is audited. It refers only to the organization and not to the technical competence with regard to the described activities. Certification activities themselves have to be accredited. Certification bodies shall document their technical competence for their activity.

Similarities and differences

Accreditation and Certification are both related to quality assurance policies which are considered of high importance in today's society with regard to the free movement of goods. The two activities present both

- **similarities** related to the audit-based nature of the procedures and
- **differences** with regard to the tasks and the resulting procedure.

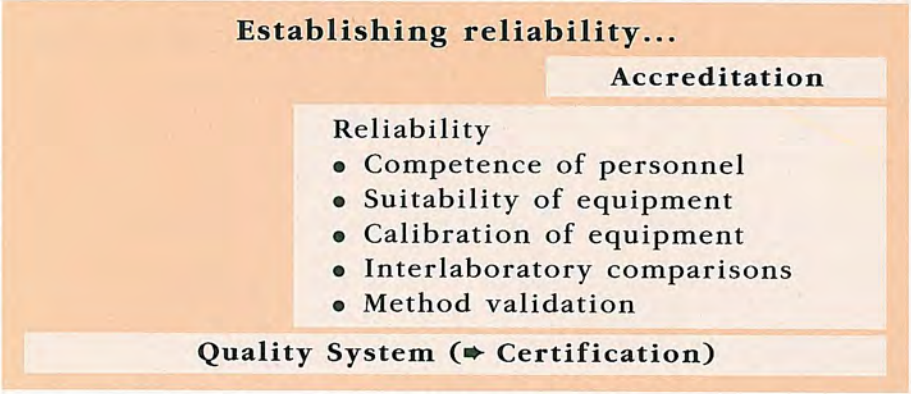
Main differences refer to:

- the objective and content
- how wide the scope is
- the standards to be implemented, namely ISO 9000 vs ISO 17025
- the needs for documentation
- the detailed terminology to be used (auditors/assessors, audit/assessment)
- the requirements for auditors'/assessors' competence
- the procedure for an audit/assessment
- the use of the logo
- the composition of the Audit/Assessment Team.

The structure of the Standards

The structure of the Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005 facilitates the comparison between the two Systems, thus reducing the cost from multiple/parallel procedures. In the said Standard, the management requirements (that correlate to those requirements of ISO 9000) and the technical requirements are included separately in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

The following diagram is illustrative.



The new edition of the Standard ISO 17025:2005 fully adopts the philosophy of ISO 9001:2000. (Note: The Standard ISO 15189:2007 that refers to medical laboratories, is equally adapted to this philosophy). As a result, the following statement may be included in the accreditation certificates:

> This laboratory is accredited in accordance with the recognized International Standard ISO/IEC 17025:2005. The accreditation demonstrates technical competence for a defined scope and the operation of a laboratory quality management System (refer joint ISO-ILAC-IAF Communiqué dated 18 June 2005).

In conclusion, it should be clear that in order to document the competence of the laboratory and the reliability of its results, accreditation is the tool to be used.

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