



**European Information System
on Proficiency Testing Schemes**

Protocol

for the maintenance and development
of the
European Proficiency Testing Information System

Approved by the EPTIS Steering Committee in September 2001

European Proficiency Testing Information System EPTIS

Preamble

The European Proficiency Testing Information System (EPTIS) was developed in the framework of the concerted action SMT4-CT98-8002 "Information System and Qualifying Criteria for Proficiency Testing Schemes" (October 1998 - September 2000), sponsored by the European Union (EU) and supported by the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), EUROLAB and EURACHEM. Sixteen European countries took part in the concerted action, which was co-ordinated by the Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM, Germany). EPTIS was published on the worldwide web in March 2000.

At the third meeting of the Consortium on 26th/27th June 2000 in Berlin, Germany, it was agreed to maintain and continue to make the database available for users after the completion of the project. The partners of the consortium agreed to continue their work on EPTIS. A Steering Committee was established to back up the further development of EPTIS on the basis of joint actions.

Having started as a European activity, EPTIS may be expanded into an international activity.

Chapter I – Aims and objective of EPTIS

The aim is to facilitate the dissemination of information about proficiency testing schemes to interested parties, e.g. testing laboratories, accreditation bodies and regulatory authorities, in order to satisfy current needs better, to enhance the international co-operation in the field of interlaboratory comparisons and to reduce unnecessary duplication of effort.

Chapter II – Scope of this document

This protocol sets general rules according to which the various partner institutions listed in Annex I/II, collaborate and manage the European Proficiency Testing Information System (EPTIS).

Chapter III – Organisation

The organisation of EPTIS and the subsequent operations are based on the following structure:

- EPTIS Steering Committee (SC)
- EPTIS Co-ordinating Organisations (CO)
- EPTIS Supporting Organisations (SO)
- EPTIS Central Secretariat (CS)

Chapter IV - EPTIS Steering Committee (SC)

Terms of reference

The steering committee is the body responsible for guiding the running and development of EPTIS work. Its work includes the designation of the central secretariat, of new supporting organisations and of new co-ordinating organisations, proposed, e.g. by supporting organisations.

The steering committee will consist of representatives of the co-ordinating organisations and the supporting organisations. The steering committee elects its convenor.

Tasks

The tasks of the steering committee are:

- to keep EPTIS up-to-date
- to ensure the continuous improvement of the contents of EPTIS on the basis of the state-of-the-art
- to support the dissemination of EPTIS and its contents
- to evaluate possibilities for the geographical, sectoral and functional extension of EPTIS
- to look for financial resources and to distribute them to cover the costs
- to examine potential subsequent projects based on EPTIS
- to update and develop the "Quality Characteristics for Proficiency Testing Schemes"
- to decide the location of the central secretariat
- to take decisions about membership issues

Meetings

Ordinary meetings are scheduled once a year. Extraordinary meetings are possible on the recommendation of the central secretariat or on request of one-third of the steering committee members. However, a meeting will be cancelled if an absolute

majority decides that the draft agenda does not justify convening a meeting. Invitations for meetings are to be sent out by the central secretariat.

The central secretariat and co-ordinating organisations can propose the participation of experts whose advice on current work could be useful. However, these experts have no voting rights on decisions to be taken.

Decisions

As a rule decisions should be taken by consensus of the steering committee members present at the respective meeting. Where this is not possible, decisions are taken by the absolute majority of the participants of the respective meeting (exception see chapter IX / article 4.). The quorum for voting by the steering committee is that more than one-third of all entitled to vote members of the steering committee are present at the meeting. No decisions can be taken imposing obligations on a co-ordinating organisation without its agreement.

In the case of an urgent call for action, voting may be made by mail, fax or e-mail, which should be co-ordinated and documented by the central secretariat.

Chapter V - Co-ordinating Organisations (CO)

Terms of reference

The co-ordinating organisations, e.g. accreditation bodies or testing laboratories, are supposed to nominate a national or regional EPTIS co-ordinator, who collects the information for EPTIS in a given country or region. The co-ordinators are acting as representatives for their respective countries/regions in the steering committee. Each co-ordinating organisation should designate also a deputy co-ordinator, if possible. The co-ordinating organisations are listed in Annex 1.

Tasks

A co-ordinator is responsible for realising the following tasks for one country/region:

- to update the offer of PT schemes in EPTIS for his/her country/region periodically
- to enter new registered PTS continuously
- to be at PT providers disposal for their country/region as contact person for questions relating to EPTIS
- to establish contacts to new, known PT provider(s)
- to support the dissemination of EPTIS
- to co-operate with and support the central secretariat
- to inform the central secretariat of problems with the software, which is provided by the central secretariat, or of other problems

Chapter VI – EPTIS Supporting Organisations (SO)

Terms of reference

Organisations interested in proficiency testing which are prepared to give official patronage and active support to EPTIS on an ideational and/or financial way may also join this protocol as supporting organisations. They are expected to formally endorse a commitment like e.g. in the Annex 2.

Supporting organisations have the possibility to attend the meetings regularly. They have complete voting rights in the steering committee and their advice shall be considered with special attention.

Tasks

Supporting organisations take the following tasks:

- Allow reference to its official patronage for EPTIS on the EPTIS homepage and documentation with name and logo
- Definition of its internal structures where EPTIS can report to
- Support of EPTIS as far as possible with the recruitment of national or regional co-ordinating organisations, where not available
- Contribution to the maintenance of the database (host and national/regional co-ordinators), as far as possible and reasonable

Chapter VII – EPTIS Central Secretariat (CS)

Terms of reference

The functions of the Central Secretariat are carried out by one of the co-ordinating organisations having the necessary expertise, experience and resources to manage and carry out the necessary responsibilities. The organisation that provides the central secretariat will be proposed and designated by the steering committee. The central secretariat should provide the central co-ordinator as well as a secretary and a deputy of the central co-ordinator respectively.

Tasks

The central secretariat executes the following tasks on behalf of the steering committee:

- Secretarial work
- Implementation of the decisions taken by the steering committee
- Preparation, maintenance and development of software tools, necessary for making national PTS available on Internet through the national/regional coordinators
- Support of the dissemination of EPTIS
- Contact point for the national/regional co-ordinators and other parties interested in EPTIS
- Scheduling of the meetings, keeping the minutes
- Continuing development of EPTIS, in co-operation with the co-ordinating organisations, on the basis of the state-of-the-art

Chapter VIII - Observers and guests

The steering committee may decide on a permanent status of observer. The convenor may invite guests if he/she considers that useful.

Chapter IX - Designation, resignation and termination of collaboration

1. National co-ordinating organisations

Designation

Co-ordinating organisations must have the following profile:

- The organisation must belong to a country/region in which proficiency tests in testing fields covered by EPTIS are available
- The organisation must have expertise in proficiency testing
- The organisation must be expected to treat all providers of proficiency testing schemes applying for registration in EPTIS in the same way
- The organisation must have the personal and technical resources to fulfil the tasks of a co-ordinating organisation
- The organisation should be able to provide a representative as national/regional co-ordinator and to send her/him to the meetings of the steering committee

Applications by new co-ordinating organisations are reviewed beforehand by the central secretariat. If the candidate organisation fulfils the required qualifications, the steering committee confirms the co-ordinating organisation by absolute majority.

Resignation

When one of the co-ordinating organisations cannot or does not wish to fulfil the tasks of EPTIS any longer, it will inform the secretariat, giving a 3-months notice. The secretariat will then endeavour to find another competent organisation to be designated as co-ordinating organisation for the respective country or region. In the search of a competent partner, national organisations like members of EA, EUROLAB and EURACHEM should be contacted.

When a co-ordinating organisation wishes to replace its representative for the steering committee, it has to inform the secretariat as soon as possible. The central secretariat will inform the other members of the steering committee on this change.

2. Central secretariat

Designation

The designation of the central secretariat will be renewed every 2 years. Each co-ordinating organisation may apply, regardless of whether it has already fulfilled this duty or not. Applications will be sent to the acting central secretariat three months in advance to the voting date.

Designation will be decided by vote of the steering committee on the basis of an absolute majority. If the number of candidates is more than two, two candidates will be selected for a final vote by preliminary vote(s).

Resignation

When the central secretariat in charge cannot or does not wish to fulfil the tasks of EPTIS any longer, it has to inform the steering committee, giving a year's notice. The steering committee will then endeavour to find another partner to be designated as central secretariat.

In the case of a change of the central secretariat all necessary information including all software tools concerning EPTIS have to be handed over to the new central secretariat.

3. Supporting organisations

Designation

Supporting organisations must be non-profit supranational associations or institutions with a recognized interest in proficiency testing. They must be impartial with regard to the activities of the providers of proficiency tests listed in the EPTIS database.

Applications by supporting organisations are reviewed by the central secretariat. The steering committee decides on the acceptance of the candidate by absolute majority.

Resignation

When one of the supporting organisations cannot or does not wish to participate in EPTIS any longer, it has to inform the secretariat, giving a 3-months notice.

4. Termination of EPTIS collaboration

If the steering group decides by a 2/3 majority vote of all members of the steering committee that the present collaboration to continue EPTIS is no longer viable, this co-operation will be declared terminated after an interval of half a year. Organisations wishing to establish new collaborations with similar aims can take any initiative they will consider appropriate.

Chapter X- Financial aspects

The co-ordinating organisations may receive a reimbursement of their expenditures for the continuous development and updating of EPTIS, when there are sources of income. Possible sources of income should be in line with the EPTIS concept and must be accepted by the steering committee by absolute majority. The appropriation of funds has to be decided by the steering committee by absolute majority, on the basis of a proposal prepared by the central secretariat.

Chapter XI - Modifications and amendments to this protocol

This protocol is liable to be modified and/or amended by written addenda. Prior notice of each proposed addendum will be given by including it in the agenda to be discussed at a steering group's meeting. The amendment will be accepted only if approved by absolute majority of the steering group. New members joining the EPTIS consortium after adoption of addenda will have to accept both the protocol and the addenda.

ANNEX 1

List of national/regional co-ordinating organisations

ANNEX 2

Commitments to EPTIS, signed by the supporting organisations