Inter American Accreditation Cooperation

IAAC PARTICIPATION IN THE EPTIS DATABASE

CLASSIFICATION

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1. PURPOSE

This document specifies the procedure for the management and the operation of IAAC participation in the EPTIS database of providers of proficiency testing.

2. INTRODUCTION

Proficiency tests are an excellent tool to demonstrate and assess the performance of laboratories with regard to specific measurement, testing, and analytical tasks. Proficiency tests can support accreditation procedures and, indirectly, give a feedback on the quality and impact of accreditation. Despite these benefits the participation in proficiency tests has been hampered not only by the restricted offer of suitable proficiency testing schemes in many areas but also by the lack of information on their availability.

In 1998, 16 organizations in 16 European countries joined forces to overcome the information barrier. A network was established under the auspices of the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) and the European laboratory organizations - Eurachem and Eurolab. The partners of this network extensively surveyed the availability of PT schemes and their characteristics within their respective countries. All this was entered into a database, which was made public on the Internet in the year 2000. A website was created to give access to the database, and to provide additional information concerning PT (www.eptis.bam.de). The network, website and database were called EPTIS for European PT Information System. The 16 partner organizations (so called EPTIS Coordinators) later on agreed to continue their co-operation on a voluntary basis, formalized their cooperation in a joint Protocol in 2001 and established a steering committee was established to co-ordinate the activities. The further development of EPTIS and its extension towards a worldwide service became explicit aims. The first supporting organizations were Eurachem, Eurolab and ILAC who joined in 2001 and 2002, EA joined in 2003, IRMM in 2004.

In 2003 IAAC decided that there was a need to establish a database of providers of proficiency testing in the region. IAAC then approached EPTIS to discuss the establishment of coordination for the IAAC region. The project was welcome by EPTIS, received support from the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB), and was then approved by the IAAC Executive Committee. The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination includes the following countries: Canada, Central and South America and Caribe. In 2004 IAAC also decided to join EPTIS as a supporting organization. Note the USA has already joined EPTIS with a national coordinator.

The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination will be composed by a Regional Coordinator nominated by the IAAC Executive Committee and one National Representative from each of the countries where there is an IAAC member.

Today, the EPTIS database contains more than 800 PT schemes from Europe and the Americas. These schemes are operated in various fields. The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination will allow any provider of proficiency testing in the region to be listed in an international database thus facilitating access to information on proficiency testing both to laboratories and accreditation bodies.

3. OPERATION OF THE EPTIS-IAAC REGIONAL COORDINATION

3.1 Structure of the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination

The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination is composed by a Regional Coordinator, who is supported by one National Representative for each country where there is an IAAC member. The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination includes all countries in South America, Central America, the Caribbean and Canada. Any of those countries may at any time decide to leave the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination in order to join EPTIS as a separate National Coordination, provided that the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator, the EPTIS Secretariat and the Chair of the Laboratory Subcommittee are notified six months in advance.

The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall be appointed by the IAAC Executive Committee based on a proposal made by an IAAC accreditation body member endorsed by the Laboratory Subcommittee.

The IAAC accreditation body member(s) in a country shall nominate the National Representative. National Representatives may be selected from accreditation bodies, laboratory associations, laboratories, or any other organization with an interest in proficiency testing. In case it is necessary to replace a National Representative, the IAAC accreditation body member(s) shall ensure the nomination appropriate replacement as soon as possible so as to avoid discontinuity in the operation of the EPTIS database in the country. The Chair of the Laboratory Subcommittee and the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall be informed of the nominations.

The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall maintain a list o IAAC National Representatives to EPTIS. This list shall be available on he IAAC website (http://iaac.org.mx) and the EPTIS website (http://www.eptis.bam.de/).

3.2 Responsibilities of the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator

The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall:

- Be the regional contact point for matters related to EPTIS.
- Represent the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination in the EPTIS Steering Committee.
- Cooperate and support the EPTIS Central Secretariat, as needed.
- Abide by the EPTIS Protocol.
- Inform the EPTIS Central Secretariat about problems in relation the database or the software for its operation.

- Report to the IAAC Laboratory Subcommittee about the development of the EPTIS database in the region.
- Participate in the IAAC Laboratory Subcommittee in activities related to EPTIS and other issues related to information about proficiency testing.
- Support the development of the EPTIS database in the region.
- Support the National Representatives all matters related to the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination.
- Maintain a list of IAAC National Representatives.
- Coordinate the entry new proficiency testing providers and new schemes in the EPTIS database.
- Ensure that the information on the EPTIS database is up to date.

3.3 Responsibilities of the National Representative

The National Representative shall:
- Be the national contact point for matters related to EPTIS.
- Abide by the EPTIS Protocol.
- Report to the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator about the development of the EPTIS database in the country.
- Cooperate and support the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator, as needed.
- Inform the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator about problems in relation to the database or the software for its operation.
- Support the development of the EPTIS database in the country.
- Ensure that the information on the EPTIS database is up to date.
- Establish contact with providers in his/her country.
- Help the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator enter new proficiency testing providers and new schemes from his/her country in the EPTIS database as defined in section 3.4 bellow.
- Make sure that the information given by a proficiency testing provider is plausible and correct and that the relevant forms have been properly filled out. (See details in 3.4.)
- Confirm that any proficiency testing scheme that is entered in the database is either operated on a regular basis or, if not operated regularly, has been conducted al least once and intends to be conducted again in the next two years.

Note: In the questionnaire that needs to be filled out by the providers (Part 1) there are questions about the regularity of the frequency of the scheme. The National Representative needs to make sure that the provider responds these questions and give the required information. (See 3.4.5 bellow.)

3.4 Entry of data in EPTIS

3.4.1 The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination will only operate in those countries where a National Representative has been nominated, i.e. only providers of proficiency testing from countries where there is a National Representative can be entered in the database.

3.4.2 The detailed instructions on the operation of the EPTIS database are published in the EPTIS Database Manual, available from the EPTIS website. The instructions

given below aim at defining the specific roles of the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator and the National Representatives in operation of the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination.

3.4.3 An account in EPTIS has been created for each country of the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordination. The National Representative will be informed of its country account, i.e, user name and password. The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator will be informed of all IAAC accounts. It must be noted that the account number will give the National Representative full access to the EPTIS database for his/her country. However, the procedure below defines activities that shall be performed by the National Representatives and others that will only be performed by the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator. Both the National Representatives and the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall strictly follow this procedure so as to avoid inadequate use of the database and its software.

3.4.4 Each provider shall complete the two forms (Part 1 and Part 2) available on www.eptis.bam.de/provider.

3.4.4.1 The provider shall send Part 1 to the National Representative by e-mail as an attached file in Word format.

3.4.4.2 The name of the PT Scheme should be according to the following format: <Title in the local language (Title in English)>.

3.4.4.2 Part 2 is a fully a automated form which s placed directly onto the server of EPTIS once it is completed by the provider in HTML format.

3.4.4.2.1 The provider will receive an automated email from the EPTIS server informing that the information has been received by the database. The National Representative is also automatically informed of this by an e-mail from the EPTIS server. (See the text of this email in Note 2 bellow.)
Note 1: Part 2 will be saved in the server as a temporary file and will only be available to the public after approval. In case a provider is already listed on the EPTIS database for a scheme, the information on Part 2 already registered for that specific scheme may be used for another new scheme of the same provider.
Note 2: Find below the text of the automated email from the EPTIS server to the National Representative.

Dear EPTIS coordinator,

A PT provider in your country / region has just submitted a new EPTIS part II to you.
Please go to http://www.eptis.bam.de/coordinator/index.html to handle this request.
Contact the secretariat (eptis@bam.de or +49-30-81043748) if you need any help.

Submitted by: email of the person who registered Part 2
Submitted on: Date and time that the provider registered Part 2.
Temporary filename: name of the HTML temporary file e.g., BR-temp3.HTML
Message: Any additional message that the provider wishes to send to the National representative
With kind regards
The EPTIS database server at BAM, Berlin, Germany

3.4.5 The information about the proficiency testing providers and their schemes is given in the EPTIS database based on a self-declaration by the provider. The National Representatives is not responsible for the content of that self-declaration but needs to check that the information is plausible and coherent. Below some directions about this checking.

3.4.5.1 The National Representative shall check the information on Part 1 and correct it if necessary changing the appropriate Word file. In Part 1, it is particularly recommended to check for coherence among testing fields, products or set of categories, and nature of the test, tested properties or measured quantities, and testing methods. The National Representative shall also check that the information given on the frequency and regularity of the scheme confirms that the proficiency testing scheme is either operated on a regular basis or, if not operated regularly, has been conducted al least once and intends to be conducted again in the next two years.

3.4.5.2 The National Representative shall check the information on Part 2 in the HTML file, which can be accessed at www.eptis.bam.de/coordinator. As Part 2 is a questionnaire that has a number of default responses, it is recommended to verify responses that may lead to contradictions. Click on "Approve new Entry", enter the appropriate username and password for the country and select the relevant temporary HTML file.

3.4.5.2.1 At this stage, as the information on Part 1 has not yet been entered into the database, the National Representative will only be able to view the HTML file of Part 2, but will not be able to edit or approve it. So, in case of contradictory information or any other problems in Part 2, the National Representative should inform the provider, ask them to review it and, if necessary, fill out another questionnaire, and delete the incorrect Part 2 questionnaire form the database.
Note: The National representative may also choose to make the necessary corrections himself / herself later, after Part 1 has been entered in the database by the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator. (See 3.4.9 bellow.)

3.4.6 After checking Part 1 and Part 2 and making any necessary corrections in Part 1, the National Representative shall send Part 1 by email to the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator, together with a copy of the email from the server that contained the HTML temporary file name for Part 2 (See 3.4.3.2 above.)

3.4.7 The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall enter the data form Part 1 in the EPTIS database using the coordinator's site (www.eptis.bam.de/coordinator) and the appropriate username and password for the country. The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall follow the instructions on the EPTIS Database Manual. Once the data is completed, the software will automatically generate an identification number (PT ID number) for that provider and its scheme.

3.4.8 The EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator shall inform the National Representative by email of the PT ID number, together with the corresponding HTML temporary file name for Part 2 (See 3.4.3.2 and 3.4.5 above.)

3.4.9 The National Representative shall approve Part 2 for that provider. Using the coordinator's site (www.eptis.bam.de/coordinator), click on "Approve new Entry", enter the appropriate username and password for the country and select the relevant temporary HTML file, then couple it to the appropriate PT ID number. (See EPTIS Data Base Manual for details.)

Note: At this stage, if needed, the National Representative may make amendments to Part 2.

3.4.10 After coupling Part 2 to Part 1, the National Representatives shall inform the provider and the EPTIS-IAAC Regional Coordinator that the information is available in EPTIS.

3.4.11 The table below gives a summary procedure for the operation of the database.

Provider	National Representatives	Regional Coordinator
1) Completes Part 1 Word file, sends it to the National Representative by e-mail attachment. 2) Completes Part 2 which is placed into the database automatically as a temporary HTML file	3) Receives Part 1, performs a check for plausibility and coherence, edits the Part 1 file where necessary and sends it to the Regional Coordinator. 4) Receives an e-mail from the server that a new Part 2 has arrived which is awaiting approval. Checks Part 2 and if necessary, requests provider to review it fill out another questionnaire.	5) Receives the approved Part 1 and enters it into the database. The server generates a new PT ID number. 6) Regional Coordinator communicates PT ID number to the National Representative.
	7) Receives the PT ID number. Approves Part 2 by coupling it to the appropriate Part 1 with the help of the PT ID number. 8) Informs provider and Regional Coordinator that the information is available on EPTIS.	

4. IAAC AS A SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION TO EPTIS

4.1 Organizations interested in proficiency testing which are prepared to give official patronage and active support to EPTIS on an ideational and/or financial way may join EPTIS as supporting organizations. These organizations include international and regional cooperations of accreditation bodies, organizations that represent the laboratory community, professional associations. These Supporting Organizations have complete voting rights in the steering committee and their advice shall be considered with special attention by the EPTIS Steering Committee.

4.2 The IAAC Executive Committee approved the IAAC Commitment on EPTIS in July 2004 (Document number: IAAC AD 040), which is available In the IAAC website at www.iaac.org.mx, in the Laboratories section under EPTIS. As a result, IAAC was accepted as a Supporting Organization to EPTIS. The IAAC representative in the EPTIS Steering Committee is the Chair of the Laboratory Subcommittee.