

**Interview with Jacques McMillan,
Head of Unit, DG Enterprise, European Commission
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The adoption of the new legislative package is a win-win achievement for all operators on the internal market and will facilitate the development of an open and fair European market.

- 1) *How would you best qualify the adoption of the new legislative package in terms of benefits for the European society, the European business operators, the European conformity assessment bodies, and for EA and its member accreditation bodies?*
 - The adoption of the Regulation constitutes a major breakthrough because it gives a legal basis in two areas where it was missing. Market surveillance has been beyond the Commission's political reach for 25 years and, for accreditation, the package is providing the stabilizing and reinforcing instrument that we have been looking for about 25 years as well.
 - It is a win-win achievement for everyone, interested parties, economic operators, conformity assessment community, public authorities, regulators and enforcement parties
 - It marks a new start for the internal market because it makes it possible to definitely abandon the distinction between the "Old" and "New" approach which means that modern instruments developed for the New Approach can now apply to all sectors irrespective of whether harmonised standards are used or not.
- 2) *What are the Commission's expectations vis-à-vis EA ?*
 - EA should now feel and operate in a strong position to ensure equal, comparable quality of accreditation services throughout the Union and, above all, transparency in the accreditation processes.
Transparency is fundamental to the operation of the internal market because it is the one element that turns the world "trust" into a reality with respect to the Member States work; transparency is the key feature for the whole infrastructure to operate as expected.
All quality instruments put in place, including accreditation, have been designed with one objective: to create the level of trust indispensable for an open market and a fair trade, building up confidence in their ability to safeguard the needs of economy and society.
- 3) *What are the next immediate actions to be undertaken - in the short term - to support implementation with regard to accreditation and EA?*
 - Our first task is to get an agreement on the guidelines for cooperation that will link EA not only to the Commission and EFTA but also to all EA major stakeholders including the national authorities. This entails the signing of a partnership agreement to translate the political guidelines in concrete terms for the implementation and reinforcement of the peer evaluation process, that must be seen as the major pillar of the whole European accreditation infrastructure. Also the agreement will help strengthen answerability of EA to public authorities both at European and national levels.

- One could see the road of accreditation in Europe over the last 25 to 30 years as a bit “bumpy”. The fact is that we have developed a policy which we have put in place and operated well over the last 10 years or so. Now the Regulation is and should be a new start in that it forms the legal foundation for accreditation in Europe, protecting accreditation against the temptation to go commercial. It also gives accreditation bodies the means to be and act as the last level control in the whole quality chain that should ensure that products marketed in Europe are safe and health and safety requirements of European citizens are met in general.
We should all see the Regulation as a launching pad to EA which gives EA and its members in relation with major stakeholders and Public Administrations the best framework to deliver their services properly and efficiently. We should definitely avoid to see the Regulation as an obligation to put into place protective measures but use it as a dynamic instrument to put EA and European accreditation in a position of authority.
I would add that the legislative package will also give European accreditation the means to be a leader in the world in ensuring and demonstrating in reality the added value of accreditation. Long life to EA and our cooperation with EA!

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