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## GUIDE 68

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**Arrangements for the recognition  
and acceptance of conformity  
assessment results**

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

Guides are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

Draft Guides adopted by the responsible Committee or Group are circulated to the national bodies for voting. Publication as a Guide requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/IEC Guide 68 was prepared by the ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (CASCO).

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## Introduction

The primary objective of conformity assessment is to provide confidence for users that requirements applicable to products, services and systems have been met. Such confidence, in turn, directly contributes to the market acceptance (which may include regulatory compliance) of those products, services and systems.

One of the reasons why internationally traded goods and services are subject to repetitive conformity assessments is a lack of confidence by users of conformity assessment in one country regarding the competence of bodies carrying out conformity assessment activities in other countries. Confidence in the work of conformity assessment bodies and accreditation bodies is therefore essential to private and public purchasers, regulators and other users.

Such user confidence can be achieved through cooperation among conformity assessment bodies and/or accreditation bodies, resulting in mutual recognition and promotion across borders of each participant's work.

The elements and procedures used so far and found practical for establishing and maintaining such cooperations are described in this Guide.

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# Arrangements for the recognition and acceptance of conformity assessment results

## 1 Scope

This Guide provides an introduction to the development, issuance and operation of arrangements for the recognition and acceptance of results produced by bodies undertaking similar conformity assessment and related activities. The activities to which this guidance is intended to apply are those related to the conduct of unregulated marketplace transactions extending across borders from one country to another. While agreements among governments pertaining to transactions of regulated goods and services can take into account the agreements addressed by this Guide, the guidance provided here is introductory and general in nature and does not specifically address any special requirements that governmental agreements might generate.

Some countries may be concerned about having the necessary human and institutional resources with respect to conformity assessment infrastructures which would permit them to participate in such arrangements. Guidance on the acquisition and development of the resources required is beyond the scope of this Guide.

## 2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996, *Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary*

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2 and the following apply.

NOTE Clauses 12 to 17 of ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996 (on conformity assessment) are under revision as ISO/IEC 17000.

### 3.1

#### **recognition arrangement**

arrangement whereby participating bodies acknowledge to others that the conformity assessment results of the other participating bodies have been produced by competently performed, equivalent procedures

### 3.2

#### **acceptance arrangement**

arrangement whereby participating bodies use conformity assessment results of other participating bodies when these are acknowledged as having been produced by competently performed, equivalent procedures

### 3.3

#### **agreement group**

bodies that are signatories to the agreement on which an arrangement is based

**3.4 peer assessment**  
evaluation of a body, against specified requirements, by representatives from other bodies in, or candidates for, an agreement group

NOTE In this Guide the term “agreement” refers to the document signed by the participants of an agreement group.

## 4 Elements of an agreement

### 4.1 General

A comprehensive list of elements contained in agreements related to conformity assessment results is given in 4.2 to 4.12. In general, most of the elements are addressed in an agreement.

### 4.2 Title

The term “mutual recognition agreement” is sometimes used when the agreement has a legally binding nature, such as a mutual recognition agreement in regulatory fields among government authorities from different countries. Consequently, in order to distinguish voluntary applications from government agreements, “mutual recognition arrangement” or “multilateral recognition arrangement” is commonly used in voluntary applications, such as accreditation and certification/registration systems.

### 4.3 Introduction

Generally an introduction or preamble is provided, which briefly describes the reason for the agreement, the history behind its establishment, and details of the needs which it is intended to address (for example, facilitation of trade or reduction of multiple assessment activities).

### 4.4 Signatories

The organizations or types of organization forming the agreement group are specified including, when appropriate, details of their legal status and geographical or other eligibility conditions.

### 4.5 Scope

This subclause normally clearly specifies the category of product and/or sector and conformity assessment activity covered by the agreement.

### 4.6 Conditions for eligibility

Agreements generally specify the conditions for eligibility to enter into an agreement group. These conditions are generally document-based (see the Bibliography) and include satisfactory demonstration of the following:

- a) conformity to the requirements of the relevant documents applicable to the eligible bodies;
- b) procedures that result in competently performed assessments within the scope of the agreement;
- c) availability of resources to sustain commitment and the ability to continue to meet the obligations to the agreement group.

### 4.7 Individual obligations of signatories

A significant part of the agreement is the statement of what the signatories agree to undertake, or other requirements to which they commit themselves. Typical items of commitment included in existing agreements are as follows: