

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EA MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT COUNCIL (EA MAC)

1. Structure and Operation of the EA Multilateral Agreement Council (MAC)

1.1 MAC members

The MAC is composed of one representative from each EA Full and Associate member.

1.2 Voting members

Voting members are Full and Associate members which are signatories of the EA MLA/BLA (see EA Articles of Association).

1.3 Chair and Vice-Chair

The Council Chair is elected by the General Assembly in accordance with EA rules of procedure (EA-1/17). The Chair is assisted by a Vice-Chair elected from amongst the Council delegates and acts as Acting Chair in cases where the Chair is not available (e.g. illness or similar circumstances) or until election of a Chair by the General Assembly has taken place in the event that the Chair resigns.

1.4 Observers

The following may attend MAC meetings as observers:

- One representative from the EA Advisory Board;
- One representative from the European Commission;
- One representative from any National Accreditation Body (NAB) which has signed a Cooperation Agreement for Mutual Recognition (COAMR) with EA in accordance with EA-1/13;
- One representative of the monitoring authority of a NAB, at the meeting when the NABs Peer Evaluation report is being discussed;
- Representatives of IAF and ILAC as part of the evaluation of EA as a region;
- Further observers can be invited by the MAC Chair, as appropriate.

1.5 EA MAC Management Group (MAC MG)

1.5.1 The EA MAC Management group (MAC MG) shall be established by the MAC.

1.5.2 The ToR of the EA MAC MG shall be decided by the MAC.

1.6 Task Force Groups (TFG)

1.6.1 Task Force Groups shall be established by the MAC for reviewing of peer evaluation reports and for eventual reporting to the MAC.

1.6.2 The EA MAC may also establish Task Force Groups to deal with specific topics as and when necessary.

1.7 MAC Meetings

1.7.1 MAC meetings shall normally take place twice a year.

1.7.2 Voting can be undertaken between formal meetings using electronic means (e.g. e-mail), where necessary.

2. Responsibilities and Tasks of the MAC

2.1 The MAC is responsible for the effective and impartial management and monitoring of the peer evaluation process. It is the ultimate decision-making body on the Multilateral Agreement (MLA) and Bilateral Agreements (BLA) of EA.

2.2 The decisions of the MAC concerning the signatory status to the EA MLA and BLA, as described in EA-2/02, are taken by the MAC voting members according to the relevant dispositions in EA-1/17. The EA MAC shall inform the EA General Assembly about all decisions made on the EA MLA and EA BLA. These decisions do not need to be endorsed by the EA General Assembly.

2.3 The MAC is also responsible for the peer evaluation process, including decision-making, regarding COAMR signatory status according to EA-1/13.

2.4 Pursuant to the above functions, three major tasks are identified, each with related subtasks:

2.4.1 Operational issues

- Establishing and updating peer evaluation criteria and procedures in line with ILAC and IAF procedures;
- Identifying concerns of customers or stakeholders about acceptance and relevance of the MLA and seeking solutions;
- International evaluations of EA as an IAF/ILAC Regional group;
- Discussing issues in relation to the MLA;
- Reporting to the EA-General Assembly on these issues.

2.4.2 Managing evaluations and making decisions on acceptance into the EA MLA and BLAs, and further decisions - as described in EA-2/02 - on the signatory status of EA Accreditation Bodies as well as COAMR signatory status in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the members.

- Processing applications for evaluation;
- Managing and monitoring the peer evaluation activities, studying evaluation reports and deciding on admitting new signatories, continuation of signatory status, and on suspension or withdrawal;
- Interacting whenever appropriate with other regional groups, IAF and ILAC on combined evaluations;
- Maintaining a system of control (re-evaluations) on the signatories;
- Informing the EA General Assembly on the outcome of decisions.

2.4.3 Management of resources

- Conducting evaluator training sessions and evaluator harmonisation events;
- Ensuring that enough peer evaluators are available, with the skills necessary to cover the full scope of the MLA;
- Ensuring a balanced contribution of resources by MLA/BLA signatories to the peer evaluation process;
- Cooperating with regional groups, IAF and ILAC on evaluator training;
- Identify areas for additional harmonisation.

3. Complaints and appeals

3.1 Complaints and appeals against MAC operations or decisions are handled through the EA Complaints and Appeals Procedure EA-1/17 S3.

4. Confidentiality

4.1 The MAC members and observers are required to use all information from Peer Evaluation reports and subsequent discussions in a confidential and professional manner.

5. Promotion of the EA MLA

5.1 The MAC members are strongly encouraged to exchange information and experiences and to promote the EA MLA.

6. Delegation of tasks

6.1 The MAC can delegate tasks to the MAC MG as appropriate but shall ultimately remain responsible for decisions made by the MAC MG. Decisions in relation to EA MLA/BLA signatory status cannot be delegated.