

ISO 17025 vers. ISO 17020 SUMMARY

E. Faivre d'Arcier raised the question of independence of testing labs with respect to the consulting/engineering jobs they provide.

In ISO 17020, the level of **independence** with respect to consulting/engineering is given by the category type: A, B or C.

In ISO 17025, nothing is clearly stated.

The discussion concluded:

The difference between both norms is as follows:

ISO 17020 regulates test labs which have to provide decision in terms of pass/fail decision.

ISO 17025 regulates test labs which have to provide measurement results. Obviously, labs regulated by ISO 17025 also have to give conclusion pass/fail based on the results of their measurements. ISO 17025 requires A type of independence only.

HJK said ISSS members should all be certified/accredited according to ISO 17025. Their independence should be of A type according to ISO 17020.

Information provided by Dr. Thomas Pimpl of Swiss Accreditation Service SAS (translation provided by H.J. Koltizus):

The standards ISO 17020 and ISO 17025 belong to the so-called sovereign norms which are supervised exclusively by the Accreditation Bodies (SAS in Switzerland). Thus, there is no application of these standards without accreditation by one of the accreditation bodies. If anybody would pretend to work under ISO 17020 without being accredited (see list on website) this would be illegal.

The standards are clearly distinguished in respect to their scope. Thus, ISO 17020 is valid for inspection entities, whereas ISO 17025 is valid for test and calibration entities. Inspection entities only testify "conformity" in the form of "passed" or "failed". However there are sometimes overlappings as will be shown with following example.

Example

An inspection unit/entity testifies only that the headlight of a car is "light enough". Of course, for this the light intensity needs to be determined in lux, but it is enough that the result - the numerical value - is larger than the requirement and "passes" accordingly. The inspection entity determines the light intensity value and certifies "passed" but the measuring device must be checked by an accredited calibration entity for its accuracy. A testing entity acc. ISO 17025 however provides the light intensity value - for instance 5099 +/- 2 since it is here about the value as such and not about the result "passed".

A certification entity must not issue a certificate confirming that you are working according to ISO 17020 or 17025. Only the accreditation body of the resp. country is entitled to certify conformity to these standards.

An inspection entity is accredited acc. to ISO 17020 only and a testing entity acc. to ISO 17025. The decision which of these two standards are to be applied is at the discretion of the accreditation body/authority. It is possible that an organisation may have several different accreditations.