

## ASEAN Standards And Conformance Overview

Conformity Assessment of products or services generates results that determine their marketability. A supplier may not be able to sell a product or service because the results of a conformity assessment process such as testing and certification are not accepted by the prospective buyer or by regulatory authorities in the target market. This does not necessarily mean that the product or services has failed to meet a certain standard.

Thus, more than standards themselves, it is often the duplicative testing procedures arising from different systems of conformity assessment in various countries have become serious barriers to trade.

Recognizing the contribution of these two "pillars" to facilitate and liberalize trade and investment in the region, ASEAN through the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) has endeavored to harmonize national standards with international standards and implement mutual recognition arrangements on conformity assessment to achieve its end-goal of "One Standard, One Test, Accepted Everywhere".

All Member Countries have accomplished the harmonization of standards for the 20 priority products and 81 standards for Safety and EMC. New areas for harmonization are currently being identified. Priority for harmonization will be given to those standards used in technical regulations in Member Countries.

Work on Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) has been accelerated. Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Electrical and Electronic was signed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers on 5 April 2002 in Bangkok, Thailand. To date, ten member countries have notified their participation either in acceptance of test report and/or product certification. Member countries have also agreed to work toward harmonization of regulatory regimes in electrical and electronic sector by 2010.

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The Agreement on ASEAN Harmonized Cosmetic Regulatory Scheme was signed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers on 2 September 2003 in Phnom Penh. The first part of the Agreement is an MRA under which signatories are to recognize the product registration approval of any signatory in accordance with agreed rules and procedures. The second part is the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive, which lays down the requirements for cosmetic products to comply with all signatory countries.

For Pharmaceuticals, efforts to develop harmonization schemes of pharmaceutical regulations in ASEAN to facilitate trade in pharmaceuticals continued. An ASEAN Common Technical Dossiers (ATCD), covering administrative data, quality, safety and efficacy and an ASEAN Common Technical Requirements (ATCRs), covering quality, safety and efficacy have been developed. The ACTD is the part of marketing authorization application dossier that is common to all ASEAN member countries while the ATCR is the set of written materials, intended to guide applicant(s) to prepare application dossiers in a way that is consistent with the expectations of all ASEAN Drug Regulatory Authorities. Series of guidelines for the implementation of the ATCR are being finalized.

The ASEAN Standards and Quality Bulletin is regularly published with a view to ensure dissemination of information and promote transparency on standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures in ASEAN member countries.

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