

## **BMTA's CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP OF EUROLAB**

### Introduction

Periodically BMTA has reviewed its participation in EUROLAB to decide whether membership is still in the best interests of BMTA members. This was done in February 2017 when it was decided to continue our membership. With the continuing uncertainties of 'Brexit', the fall in BMTA membership, and BMTA's deteriorating financial position, Council at its meeting on 5 December 2017 decided that it would be appropriate to review our EUROLAB membership again. Council's discussion is recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Opinion in Council was divided with a very small majority in favour of retaining BMTA's membership at least for the time being. Discussions have been held with the EUROLAB Secretariat and Board to see if BMTA could reduce its annual subscription and change its membership status, but as yet these have produced no result. At its meeting on 2 May 2018 Council decided to seek BMTA Members' views directly on whether they found our membership of EUROLAB to be of value to them or not. This paper sets out to provide some information on the costs and benefits of BMTA's EUROLAB membership.

### **Members are asked to consider whether:**

- **Membership of EUROLAB adds value or is of benefit to their own companies or organisations;**
- **Represents good value for money for BMTA members;**
- **BMTA should continue to be a member of EUROLAB in 2019;**
- **They would pay BMTA an additional fee to contribute to the cost of EUROLAB membership.**

### History and background

BMTA was one of 17 founder members of EUROLAB in April 1990. EUROLAB was established to be the voice of the European testing, analytical and calibration laboratory community in response to the increasing focus on accreditation, quality and consumer protection arising from the Single European Act of July 1987. It grew to its present 27 Active and Associated members as the EU expanded.

EUROLAB's original objectives were:

1. To constitute a forum for exchange of opinions and experience for the testing and analytical community of (Western) Europe.
2. To coordinate the interface of the laboratory community with other sectors of the economy interested in their activities: industry, users, public authorities, accreditation and certification bodies etc.
3. To provide an infrastructure for scientific and technical cooperation for the laboratories in (Western) Europe.

EUROLAB is managed by the Board of Administrators chaired by the President. From 2011 there has been a permanent secretariat provided by CEOC International based in Brussels. EUROLAB aisbl is a non-profit distributing organisation established under Belgian Law.

EUROLAB has two permanent sub committees: The Technical Committee for Quality Assurance and Calibration (TCQA) and the Joint (with CEOC) Technical Committee on Product Testing and Certification (JTCPTC) which is currently co-chaired by Carol Erskine the BMTA Chair.

Its main activities are:

- Engagement in EA through its Advisory Board and Laboratory Committee to present the views of the laboratory community on accreditation to balance the influence of the National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) at European level.
- Participation in IAF and ILAC and their Laboratory Committees to present the views of the laboratory community on accreditation at a global level.
- Participation in ISO CASCO and its Working Groups to input to the development of standards relevant to the laboratory community e.g. ISO 17025, ISO 17011, and 17034.
- Engagement with EU commissioners, officials and MEPs to raise awareness of the importance of measurement and testing for the European economy, particularly in regard to consumer protection and product safety, food quality and safety, safety of medical devices and environmental protection. EUROLAB campaigns vigorously to promote third party independent testing of products and foods.
- Co-operation with Eurachem, EURAMET and UILL.
- Organisation of technical workshops and symposia.
- Production of Technical Reports.
- Production of simple training guides ('Cookbooks').
- Publication of regular Newsletters and News briefings on current topics of interest.

EUROLAB has an Annual General Assembly (GA) for its members in the Spring which essentially is its AGM and an annual meeting for its National Members (NMM) in the Autumn which is of a more technical nature. In recent years both have been accompanied by a small symposium and meetings of TCQA and JTCPTC.

A good overview of EUROLAB's history and operations is provided by the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report which can be downloaded from the website at <http://www.eurolab.org/publications.aspx>.

#### BMTA's engagement with EUROLAB

Although BMTA was a founder member of EUROLAB we have never held the Presidency or hosted the Secretariat. BMTA has nevertheless had a strong voice and considerable influence within the organisation. We have for most of the time since 1990 been a member of the Board of Administrators, and from 2010 until 2017 was represented on it by Jeff Llewellyn after which Carol Erskine took over. Jeff was also Vice President from 2011 until 2017. We have been members of TCQA since its inception in 1995, most recently represented by Paul King and now by Tony Smith. We have been members JTCPTC latterly represented by Paul Dixon and Adrian Rudd both from NMO. Since 2014 JTCPTC has been Co-chaired by Carol Erskine. We hosted the General Assembly in 1994 (Teddington), 2000 (Edinburgh), 2007 (Bristol) and in 2016 (East Kilbride). We hosted the National Members' meeting in 2012 (Teddington). The GAs in 2007 and 2016 and the NMM in 2012 were accompanied by small Seminars. Up until 2008 BMTA received significant financial support from DTI (now BEIS) for our membership of EUROLAB. Between 2008 and the end of 2013 our participation in EUROLAB was funded by a consortium of 10 members and since 2014 has been funded entirely through membership fees.

## Benefits of EUROLAB

The benefits of EUROLAB membership for laboratories tend to be long term and diffuse. They are nevertheless real, the principal ones being:

- Influencing the business and regulatory environment in Europe for the benefit of laboratories.
- Providing a voice for laboratories in EA: EA sets the rules by which National Accreditation Bodies conduct laboratory accreditations. EUROLAB ensures that these rules are not unreasonable from the perspective of laboratories and that they are applied consistently throughout Europe.
- Direct input into the development of standards: EUROLAB was represented on ISO CASCO WGs 42, 43 and 44 on revisions of ISO 17011, 17025 and the new ISO 17034 on Reference Materials. This ensured that the WGs were not dominated by NABs to the detriment of laboratories. EUROLAB canvassed European laboratories and consequently made significant comments on the draft standards and kept members abreast of progress. It is very difficult for individual laboratories to make such inputs through other channels.
- Lobbying EU Commissioners, Officials and MEPs: EUROLAB has been successful in raising awareness of the importance of reliable testing, measurement and analysis for the European economy. In conjunction with CEOC and IFIA it has conducted a major campaign on behalf of the Testing, Inspection and Certification (TIC) Sector to influence policy and regulation at the European level. This is virtually impossible for individual laboratories. Recent campaigns have focussed on consumer protection and product safety, calling for greater independent third party testing of products, more rigorous testing of medical devices and in food safety.
- Provision of market and technical intelligence: EUROLAB issues on average 4 Newsletters and 8 News briefings a year. These focus on developments in accreditation, standards, and regulation as well as business and market news. Gathering this information would be rather burdensome for individual laboratories. EUROLAB, through its National Members organises workshops symposia and seminars on topics of interest for laboratories throughout Europe.
- Expert Advisory Groups which provide a forum for experts from European laboratories to discuss key issues in selected topics.

## Cost of BMTA membership of EUROLAB.

BMTA's EUROLAB membership fee for 2018 is €12,499 (approx. £10,700). This is 14.4% of our budgeted income for the year. Tony Smith's and Carol Erskine's companies generously fund their travel and subsistence costs for TCQA and JTCPTC meetings respectively. BMTA pays the costs of Carol's attendance at the General Assembly and National Member's Meeting which will amount to around £800. For this year NPL has generously offered to contribute £2,500 towards the cost of EUROLAB membership. TUV NEL has offered to contribute £1,000 and LGC is considering making an additional contribution. BMTA is one of the five top rank funders of EUROLAB, the others being France, Germany, Italy and Spain. If BMTA decides to leave EUROLAB we must pay the full annual membership fee for the year in which we leave.

## Brexit considerations

According to EUROLAB's Articles of Association only EU countries or members of EFTA or the EEA can be Active Members of EUROLAB. Countries in the European Neighbourhood Policy area or EU applicants can be Associate Members (at a reduced fee). Other countries can be Observer Members

(with no voting rights). As things stand the UK will cease to be an Active Member of EUROLAB on 29 March 2019 following Brexit unless the EUROLAB Articles of Association are changed to allow former EU members or countries in the geographical area of Europe to be in membership. It is conceivable that the deadline might be extended to the end of the Transition Period, 31 December 2020. Without change to the Articles BMTA could only be an Observer member of EUROLAB post Brexit at a much reduced membership fee. This matter has been raised at the EUROLAB Board but as yet there has been no discussion about it.

**J W Llewellyn**  
**President and CEO**  
**BMTA**

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