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Call to action: Developing a framework for an EU-UK mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment

A new EU-UK relationship

The relationship between the EU and the UK is entering a critical new phase. As both parties seek practical steps to build on the 2025 Common Understanding, a distinct strategic opportunity emerges for the parties to show a commitment to enhancing economic and regulatory cooperation and reduce unnecessary barriers to trade.

The practical reality of the current trading relationship can present challenges for businesses seeking to place products on both markets, with increased risks of duplicative regulatory product testing and certification requirements. This would bring heavier financial and administrative burden than necessary on companies supplying goods to both the EU and UK markets.

The EU and the UK already successfully leverage the international multilateral agreements on accreditation with their respective global partners through bilateral trading relationships, such as Canada and Japan, to reduce these costs. However, there is no mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment between the EU and the UK. This could force exporters, and ultimately consumers, to absorb the severe administrative overhead of duplicative evaluations, inflating production costs and degrading the global competitiveness of the EU's own industrial outputs.

Therefore, both parties should establish a formal framework to negotiate a mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment. This represents a pragmatic, mutually beneficial arrangement, that shows a commitment to deepening the trading relationship and address existing challenges faced by industry on both sides.

Reducing cost

The shared objective of EU and UK industry is to secure streamlined market access with minimal administrative and bureaucratic friction. By eliminating the prospect of duplicative conformity assessments, a mutual recognition agreement would significantly lower operating costs.

This would deliver a vital lifeline to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking to operate in both markets, as they are disproportionately impacted by overly burdensome compliance requirements.

Predictability for manufacturers

Without permanent mutual recognition of conformity assessment results, manufacturers do not have the regulatory certainty needed for investment, business scalability and long-term strategic planning, which ultimately impacts supply chain resilience. Should future requirements require duplication of conformity assessment, this would act as a severe brake on industrial competitiveness.

A mutual recognition agreement would provide long-term stability and predictability, building business confidence, unlocking inward investment and increasing the scalability necessary to drive export-led growth across Europe.

Expanding capacity and competitiveness

EU regulation increasingly calls upon third-party conformity assessment. As such, conformity assessment capacity could become a critical bottleneck, delaying effective implementation across several high-value manufacturing sectors.

A mutual recognition agreement would grant EU industry access to the UK's conformity assessment market, boosting competition, resource availability and supply chain resilience. This expanded capacity is vital to ensure compliant, innovative goods move from the factory floor to the market without costly delays.

Call to action

Industry encourages a pragmatic approach through creating a scalable framework for conformity assessment recognition, and therefore recognises the need for a targeted, sector-by-sector approach, focusing initially on high-priority manufacturing industries. This will serve as a foundational blueprint, allowing regulatory cooperation to expand organically as mutual trust deepens. In the medium term, we would seek a comprehensive agreement on conformity assessment recognition.

As likeminded trading partners, we urge the EU and the UK to fully recognise the shared challenges confronting our deeply integrated industrial sectors.

We call on both parties to construct a formal framework to consider the mutual recognition of conformity assessment in sectors where it is in the mutual interest. Taking this decisive step will safeguard the capacity, investment predictability and export-led growth that manufacturers need to secure a competitive global future.

Supportive statements

"A mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment between the UK and the EU would bring tangible benefits to home appliance manufacturers operating across both markets. It would reduce duplicated testing and certification costs, strengthen supply chain integration and provide the regulatory stability that manufacturers need to plan long-term investment. APPLiA supports practical steps that reduce barriers without compromising consumer protection or product safety standards."

Paolo Falcioni, Director General, APPLiA

"Regulatory duplication and non-tariff barriers place unnecessary costs and burdens on business, particularly SMEs, and are often quoted as reasons why companies are reluctant to trade between the UK and the EU. That is why European and UK business urge both sides to commit to an ambitious agenda to reduce regulatory duplication and friction across our economies, remaining particularly mindful of Northern Ireland's unique status under the Windsor Framework, underpinned by continued access to the EU Single Market for goods. Agreements on the mutual recognition of conformity assessment for products in the appropriate sectors would be an important way of reducing technical barriers to trade in goods."

Markus Beyrer, Director General, BusinessEurope

"European construction machinery manufacturers continue to serve customers in both the EU and the UK, making efficient conformity assessment procedures an important element of a well-functioning regulatory framework. However, the current lack of mutual recognition of conformity assessment between the EU and the UK creates unnecessary administrative burdens, can double the testing and certification processes and adds costs without improving product safety or compliance. Establishing a mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment would strengthen certification capacity, provide manufacturers with greater flexibility in choosing conformity assessment bodies and reduce delays in placing machinery on the market. Such an agreement would enhance the competitiveness of both EU and UK manufacturers, and reinforce a resilient regulatory framework that benefits industry, customers and the broader construction value chain."

Riccardo Viaggi, Secretary General, Committee for European Construction Equipment (CECE)

"At a time when Europe is seeking to strengthen its industrial competitiveness and resilience, reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers between trusted partners should be a priority. For manufacturers of advanced production technologies, a mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment would eliminate duplicative testing and certification, improve investment certainty, reduce time-to-market and allow companies to focus resources on innovation rather than administrative procedures. CECIMO therefore supports establishing a pragmatic, sector-by-sector framework that strengthens EU-UK regulatory cooperation while maintaining high standards of safety and conformity assessment."

Filip Geerts, Director General, CECIMO – European Association of Manufacturing Technologies

"For the European construction products sector, deeply integrated supply chains and long-term regulatory predictability are vital to keep building projects moving on both sides of the Channel. Duplicative conformity assessment procedures would inflate construction costs and potentially delay projects. A UK-EU mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment is a highly pragmatic, common-sense step that would benefit manufacturers, increasing conformity assessment capacity and providing the commercial certainty they need to invest. We urge negotiators on both sides to establish a formal framework for dialogue to deliver a practical solution that safeguards our industry's global competitiveness."

Christophe Sykes, Director General, Construction Products Europe

"To advance agricultural machinery and solutions for sustainable farming, our industry relies on regulatory frameworks that harmonise rules without imposing excessive technical burdens. Because EU and UK regulations often require third-party evaluations, conformity assessment capacity has become a critical bottleneck for high-value manufacturing. In addition, with no formal agreement on dynamic alignment, potential regulatory divergence could see duplicative testing requirements further constrain these specialised resources, delaying the delivery of essential equipment to agricultural businesses. An EU-UK mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment is an indispensable tool to safeguard industrial competitiveness, optimise testing capacity and ensure smoother market access. We call on policymakers in the EU and UK to take a pragmatic approach and establish a formal dialogue toward a mutual recognition agreement, ensuring that cutting-edge, compliant machinery can reach the agriculture sector without needless bureaucratic friction."

Jelte Wiersma, Secretary General, CEMA - European Agricultural Machinery Industry Association

"The European Garden Machinery Federation would welcome dialogue between the EU and UK to explore the possibility of agreeing a mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment. Our members, regardless of their geographical location, would benefit from such an arrangement as it would give them a greater selection of conformity assessment bodies to choose from, which would likely lead to increased availability and an expansion of the range of competencies on offer. These are critical factors for member companies, since the imminent application of several new pieces of legislation, such as the Machinery Regulation, Artificial Intelligence Act, Cyber Resilience Act and Outdoor Noise Directive in the EU, as well as the implementation of their equivalents in the UK, will lead to greater demand for the services of conformity assessment bodies. It is essential that garden equipment manufacturers have assured access to conformity assessment bodies to ensure that they can bring their products to market in a timely manner. We would therefore fully support a dialogue to explore the establishment of an EU-UK mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment."

Ioana Smarandache, Secretary General, European Garden Machinery Federation

“A consequence of the UK leaving the EU is that UK-based conformity assessment bodies are no longer approved to certify for the purpose of CE marking, reducing capacity and expertise in the market. Conformity assessment recognition would enable UK conformity assessment bodies to certify for the EU market, increasing the overall number of conformity assessment bodies able to provide such certification. Thanks to expanded testing capacity and higher competition among conformity assessment bodies, EU and UK manufacturers would benefit from reduced lead time for evaluations and lower costs.”

Ulrich Adam, Director General, Orgalim

“An EU-UK mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment is a practical, business-friendly step that would deliver immediate benefits, particularly for SMEs. As SMEUnited has relayed to European Commission, regulatory barriers, such as duplicative conformity assessment requirements, reduce SMEs' willingness to trade across borders. A more stable and cooperative regulatory framework between the EU and UK would lower costs, allowing SMEs to scale, innovate and be more competitive. The UK remains an important market for the SMEs represented by our members, and we strongly urge both sides to be pragmatic and agree on a framework that backs small businesses and drives wider economic growth.”

Véronique Willems, Secretary General, SMEUnited

“The recognition of CE marking by the UK Government for certain product regulations was initially a necessary short-term decision to support supply chains into GB and Northern Ireland. To provide ongoing certainty, stronger and enduring legal measures now ensure supply chain longevity. However, a UK-EU mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment is now the immediate policy solution that would provide greater regulatory certainty for exporting manufacturers to the EU, and further afield, and encourage necessary investment. Make UK welcomes a pragmatic approach whereby sectors where permanent recognition is in the mutual interest, such as high-priority manufacturing industries, are focused on initially, bringing down costly overheads that may arise from duplicative conformity assessments.”

Richard Rumbelow, Director of International Business, Make UK

“EURIS supports an EU-UK mutual recognition agreement on conformity assessment. As the representative body for industrial product suppliers covering sectors with a turnover of over £148 billion, we know firsthand what a vital mechanism conformity assessment is for maintaining product quality, safety and reliability. Conformity assessment enables our members to demonstrate their products meet design and safety standards and gives consumers confidence when selecting products in the marketplace.”

Steve Brambley, Chair, EURIS