

## Conformity assessment techniques – Inspection

The ISO/IEC 17000 definition for inspection is:

*“Examination of a product design, product (3.3)\*, process or installation and determination of its conformity with specific requirements or, on the basis of professional judgment, with general requirements*

*NOTE inspection of a process may include inspection of persons, facilities, technology and methodology.”*

\*ISO/IEC 17000 Clause 3.3 quotes the ISO 9000:2000 Clause 3.4.2 definition of product as “the result of a process” which includes services, software, hardware and processed materials.

One of the key phrases in the definition of inspection is “on the basis of professional judgement”. This underlines the fact that the competence of inspection bodies is highly dependent on the knowledge, experience and interpretive skills of the inspection bodies’ personnel.

For some types of inspections there may be specified requirements for the qualifications and experience of the inspectors involved. In some cases certification of such personnel may be a requirement. This is common, for example, in some types of safety-related inspection activities.

Inspection also covers a very broad spectrum of sectors and characteristics being inspected. It may, for example, cover cargo-superintending of commodities and products, for determination of quantity, quality, safety, fitness for use, and compliance of plants, installations, operating systems, and design suitability. Inspection might also, for example, embrace the rating systems used to classify accommodation, airline services, tourism services, etc.

Conformity assessment can be an elastic concept in that particular types of techniques might be called testing in some fields, inspection in others and certification in yet further fields. This fact highlights the need to concentrate on deciding what is needed for a particular situation and specifying it accordingly. For example, is the inspection required in its own right, such as that relating to regulatory inspection of pressure vessels, or is it one of the inputs to a certification process?