

## **099 AA Description of the certification procedure**

The certification procedure for the evaluation of the management system is divided into 3 stages. The head of the Certification Body selects auditors according to industry tolerances and qualifications.

The auditing and certification activities described below are mainly aimed at assessing the compliance of the management system of the organization being certified with the requirements of the main regulatory documents and certain processes, as well as the management system documentation developed by the organization. In addition, the ability of the organization's management system to meet applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements, as well as the effectiveness of the management system in ensuring that the organization continues to achieve its goals, is assessed. As a result of auditing and certification activities, scopes for improvement of the management system are identified, if necessary, or, if applicable, critical and non-critical nonconformities are recorded.

The scope of the audit required to carry out auditing and certification activities can be seen in the audit program (see commercial offer) and audit plan.

### **1 Application analysis**

The organization interested in certification is asked to indicate in the customer's questionnaire all the data necessary for drawing up a commercial offer, so that the Certification Body can assess and calculate the scope of certification in accordance with recognized rules. The contracting authority receives a non-binding commercial offer for certification, and upon agreement with the terms of certification, sends confirmation of its consent to the Certification Body.

If the Certification Body cannot carry out certification in the scope and with the scope declared by the organization in the customer's questionnaire, then the customer organization is not provided with a commercial offer for certification and is informed about the reasons for the rejection by the Certification Body.

### **2 1<sup>st</sup> stage of audit and evaluation of the documentation provided on the management system**

The certification audit begins with a 1<sup>st</sup> stage audit and review of the documentation provided on the management system (for example, manual, if any, organizational structure (organigram), methodological and work instructions, reports on internal audits and the latest management review).

The applicant submits the management system documentation in the current edition to the head of the audit team in an adequate period before the certification audit. The audit team leader evaluates the management system documents for their compliance with the specific requirements of the standard.

Part of the review of the management system documentation can take place on site at the customer during the 1<sup>st</sup> stage audit.

In due time before the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage audit, the customer receives the 1<sup>st</sup> stage audit plan.

The audit plan is agreed on the content with the customer at the introductory meeting before the start of the audit. The tasks of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage audit are: checking the documentation on the management system, assessing the location and location conditions specific to the organization, conducting surveys of the customer's employees to assess that there is an understanding of the requirements of the standard. The necessary information is collected regarding the scope of the management system, processes and locations (divisions), as well as related legislative and regulatory aspects, and an analysis of their compliance is carried out. In addition, it is assessed whether internal audits and management reviews have been carried out and whether the degree of implementation of the management system allows for a 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit.

The customer receives a report on the 1st stage of the audit, including an analysis of the management system documentation. Identified critical and non-critical non-conformities must be eliminated with evidence before the beginning of the audit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage. A maximum period of 6 months is allowed between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit. If there are significant changes in the client's management system being certified, it may be necessary to re-conduct all or part of the Stage 1 audit.

If necessary, the customer is informed that the results of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage audit lead to a shift in the terms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit to a later period or its cancellation.

After all nonconformities and/or ambiguities are eliminated, the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit is carried out. If the time frame of 6 months is exceeded, a new audit of the 1<sup>st</sup> stage must be carried out.

### **3 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of audit**

Before the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit, the customer receives the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit plan. During the audit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, the effectiveness of the management system is analyzed taking into account the specific requirements of the standard, as well as the provisions of the implemented management system based on specific examples and processes in accordance with the random check procedure.

The organization's task during a Tier 2 audit is to demonstrate the practical application of its documented management system. At the end of the audit at the closing meeting, the customer receives information about the result of the audit.

Nonconformities are documented on nonconformity reports. The audit team leader decides on the classification of nonconformities into critical and non-critical nonconformities. The result of the audit is reflected in the report.

#### **Approach for identifying critical nonconformities**

A critical nonconformity takes place if a section of the standard or an element of the process as a whole is not described and / or implemented to the proper extent, and because of this there is a possibility of supplying low-quality products / services.

The customer must analyze the cause of this non-conformity and carry out a correction, as well as develop corrective actions within 2 weeks after the audit. The implementation of corrections and corrective actions must be carried out within 3 months (difference in the certification audit: within a maximum of 6 months from the last day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, otherwise a new 2<sup>nd</sup> stage audit must be carried out).

A critical nonconformity leads to an additional audit, i.e. re-examination on the spot or to the provision of new documents and certificates. The scope of the additional audit is determined by the audit team leader, and only the management system processes related to the critical nonconformity are audited. An additional audit is calculated based on the required labor intensity.

The issuance of a certificate or its renewal may be recommended by the audit team leader only after confirmation of the implementation of corrections and corrective actions.

#### **Approach for identifying non-critical nonconformities**

A nonconformity should be classified as non-critical if nonconformity is found in the description or in the implementation of one requirement of the standard or process element.

The customer must analyze the cause of this nonconformity and carry out a correction, as well as outline corrective actions within 2 weeks after the audit. If the audit team leader considers the correction and corrective actions sufficient to correct the nonconformities, then he may recommend issuing a certificate or renewing the certificate.

The implementation of correction and corrective actions is reviewed and evaluated by the audit team leader no later than at the next scheduled surveillance audit.

### **4 Certificate issuance and maintenance**

The certificate is issued after the approval of the certification procedure by the head of the Certification Body. As part of the approval of the certification procedure, the Certification Body may give an assessment of the fulfillment of the requirements of the standard, which differs from the assessment of the audit team leader. If the certification contract is signed, then the customer receives certificates (if necessary in several languages) along with the contract and the audit report. The certificate is valid for three years, subject to annual surveillance audits conducted by the organization to maintain certification.

If there are significant changes to the organization's scope or data within the certificate's validity period, these changes are reviewed during the next surveillance or extension audit. If necessary, both parties sign amendments to the certification contract.

#### Surveillance audits:

During the 3-year validity period of the certificate, surveillance audits are carried out annually. During the surveillance audit, it is checked randomly whether the certified management system continues to comply with the requirements of the standard.

The 1<sup>st</sup> surveillance audit after primary certification must be carried out within a year after the approval of the certification procedure. The offset of the audit from this deadline leads to suspension (immediate suspension if the deadline is exceeded) or revocation (cancellation) of the certificate (after 6 months after the deadline).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> surveillance audit is carried out similarly within 2 years after the approval of the certification procedure. Suspension of the certificate occurs 3 months after the deadline, and revocation (cancellation) of the certificate 6 months after the deadline.

In advance, before the planned surveillance audit, the customer is informed by the Certification Body about the upcoming audit and the formed (planned) audit team. At the same time, the customer is asked to inform the Certification Body about changes in the organization, such as a change in the number of employees or a change in the scope. The customer and the head of the audit team agree on the timing of the audit.

To prepare for the audit, the customer receives an audit plan with specific requirements of the standard to be verified. Not all requirements of the standard need to be verified in every surveillance audit.

In case of detection of critical or non-critical non-conformities, they act as in a certification audit. In case of detection of serious critical nonconformities, the certificate can be revoked. After the surveillance audit, the certificate holder receives a report on the results of the audit.

#### Suspending and recovering from suspend:

When the certificate is suspended, the customer's management system is considered not certified. During this time, the certified organization is not allowed to advertise its certification, including the use of the certificate and the certification mark. In the case of a successful audit with the approval of the certification procedure, certification may be updated and the validity of the certificate must be restored. Additional rules are contained in the Certification Contact.

#### Revocation (cancellation):

Revocation (cancellation) of the certificate is carried out by the Certification Body 6 months after the deadline for conducting a surveillance audit has been exceeded. After the withdrawal (cancellation) of the certification, the customer loses the right to advertise the certification. Revoked certificates must be returned to the Certification Body. After the revocation (cancellation) has been made, certification can only be carried out again.

#### Refusal of certification:

Refusal of certification may occur if the Certification Body, after submitting an application for certification by the customer, determines that certification of this customer is not possible, because, for example, competence is not ensured in the Certification Body or the organization does not comply with the basic principles. In addition, a denial of certification may be the result of a previous audit by the Certification Body. In this case, the organization must eliminate the nonconformities identified by the auditor and may apply for a new certification.

#### Expansion of the scope of certification:

An extension can be if, for example, new industries (codes)/separate divisions are to be included or other production or service processes are to be added. Based on the information provided by the customer, the scope of the extension audit should be determined. If necessary, the existing audit program is adapted for the remaining period of validity of the certificate.

An extension audit may be conducted as part of a regular surveillance audit, as well as during a re-certification audit, as well as on a specific date when additional aspects will be verified.

As a result of the extension audit, a new approval of the certification procedure and the issuance of a modified certificate follow. Previously issued certificates must be returned by the customer to the Certification Body.

#### Reducing or expanding the scope of certification:

A certified organization can apply for an extension of the scope of certification, for example, for certification of other types of activities or according to other standards as part of an integrated audit (audit against several standards at the same time using the synergy effect). The extension may also extend to the inclusion of additional separate divisions or the certification of additional manufacturing or service processes. Once an application has been submitted and an appropriately amended quotation has been received, an audit is conducted to verify the extended scope, approval is made by the Certification Body and an amended certificate is issued. If necessary, the existing audit program is adapted for the remaining period of validity of the certificate.

An expansion audit can be carried out as part of a regular surveillance or recertification audit, or at a specially appointed time (date) in which aspects of the expansion are checked.

A certified organization may request a reduction in the scope of certification if parts of the certified scope should no longer be certified or if the number of standards to which certification is to be reduced should be reduced. The organization is informed about the changed scope of the audit, and after a successful corresponding audit, amended certificates are issued.

A scope reduction must be made if it is found during an audit or approval by the Certification Body that a portion of the certified scope does not meet all of the certification requirements. If, despite a new audit or submission of documents, all the necessary evidence to maintain the previously issued certification has not been provided, the scope of the certification is reduced and amended certificates are issued.

As a result of the audit, for expansion and, if necessary, reduction, a new approval of the certification procedure and the issuance of amended certificates are carried out. Previously issued certificates must be returned by the customer to the Certification Body

## **5 Recertification or re-audit, renewal of certification**

Before the expiration of the certificate to renew the certification for the next three years, the organization must conduct a recertification (repeated) audit. The start of a recertification audit is unacceptable after the expiration of a valid certificate on the terms of recertification; in this case, primary certification with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage must be carried out.

The customer in advance, together with the questionnaire, provides the Certification Body with information about the existing management system or changes in the existing certification. In the commercial offer for recertification for the customer, an audit program is drawn up for the next 3-year certification cycle.

During the re-audit, the effectiveness of the entire management system is checked selectively. The audit is carried out in accordance with paragraph 3 of this description.

Recertification audit activities may require a Stage 1 audit if significant changes have occurred in the management system, in the organization or in the environment in which the management system operates (for example, changes in legislation).

A new certification cycle begins with the approval of the recertification procedure.

The recertification procedure, including its approval by the head of the Certification Body, must be completed within the validity period of the current certificate to ensure the continued validity of the certificates.

If the recertification (including the elimination of all nonconformities and approval by the Certification Body) is not completed within 6 months of the expiration of the existing certificate, then a new Stage 2 audit should be conducted in accordance with the scope of the primary certification audit.

To further maintain certification, annual surveillance audits should be carried out in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year after recertification. The established deadline corresponds to the date of approval of the recertification procedure +1 and +2 years, respectively.

## **6 Audits with or without short notice**

Where necessary, audits may be conducted at the certified organization with or without short notice, for example, to investigate complaints or to check for changes that have occurred or, if necessary, to reinstate suspended certification.

For short notice audits, the Certification Body reserves the right to inform the certified body of the main items to be audited no earlier than 3 days prior to the date of the visit.

The certified organization is not notified of audits without notice.

In both cases, the certified organization is obliged to provide employees or auditors of the Cert International s.r.o. access to relevant separate divisions of the organization.

## 7 Joint Certification

Joint certification is used in organizations with several separate divisions. For the purposes of certification, one of these divisions is designated by the organization as the central office that plans, coordinates and controls certain activities of all separate divisions. The central office does not have to be the headquarters of the organization.

Separate units may be independent legal entities, but they must be legally or contractually linked to a central office. The central office and a delegate from the top management of the central office should be given the authority to legally intervene in the work of all separate divisions (for example, on a contractual basis).

With joint certification, in addition to the audit of the central office on site, other separate divisions will be audited in accordance with the random audit procedure. This is set in the audit program (see commercial offer) for certification audits and annual surveillance audits.

A spot check procedure is possible for joint certification if the following conditions are met:

- Define, implement and maintain a management system that is unified **for all separate divisions**. This also applies to important (essential) process descriptions.
- Monitoring of the entire (overall) management system under **unified leadership** by a representative of the head office. He must be authorized to give instructions to all detached units.
- Holding **internal audits in all separate divisions** and for all requirements of the standard with evidence of the implementation of the management system before the audit by the Certification Body.
- Holding **centralized** analysis by management and work with claims to the management system.

Inclusion or withdrawal of separate subdivisions requires adaptation (adjustment) of the audit program for the remaining certification cycle. However, after the audit, it is impossible to remove separate subdivisions from the scope of certification (for example, if a critical discrepancy is found in one of the separate subdivisions).

The process of conducting an audit and maintaining the validity of certification through annual surveillance audits is carried out in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of this description.

[Information on procedures for handling claims/complaints](#)

On the website of Cert International s.r.o. contains information on how to contact Cert International s.r.o. in case of claims and complaints: [www.certin.sk/certification](http://www.certin.sk/certification)

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