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## **Slovak Forest Certification System – Description and Context**



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## Foreword

Products with a PEFC claim and/or label offer assurances that the raw materials that have been used in their manufacture originate from sustainably managed forests and Trees outside Forests (TOF) areas, recycled and controlled sources.

The document “Slovak Forest Certification System – Description and Context” had been developed within the standard revision process by the Technical Committee of the PEFC Slovakia with the participation of the main stakeholder groups.

This document was submitted to the national governing body of the Slovak Forest Certification System for formal adoption. The document was adopted as TD SFCS 1001:2021, Issue 1 on 1.8.2025.

PEFC Slovakia is the national governing body of the Slovak Forest Certification System and incorporates representatives of forestry, wood processing industry and other stakeholder groups.

PEFC supports gender equality. Hence, every term in this standard referring to a specific person (e.g. manager, owner, participant) embraces women and men likewise, without further accentuation.

This document replaces technical document TD SFCS 1001:2021, *Slovak Forest Certification System – Description and Context*.

## Introduction

### The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)

PEFC is a leading global alliance of regional and national forest certification systems. As an independent, international, non-profit and non-governmental organisation, it is dedicated to promoting sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification.

PEFC works throughout the entire forest supply chain to promote responsible practices in the forest and to ensure that wood and non-wood forest products are produced with respect for the highest ecological, social and ethical standards. Forest-based solutions offer much promise to achieve a more sustainable world.

It is PEFC's fundamental belief that forest certification needs to be local. Ensuring smallholder access to forest certification is one of the priorities. Owners of relatively small estates face specific challenges and PEFC certification system provides solutions to tackle these challenges.

As an umbrella organisation, PEFC endorses regional or national forest certification systems that have been developed through multi-stakeholder processes and tailored to local priorities and conditions.

While regional and national systems are developed locally, they need to be recognized internationally. To ensure consistency with international requirements, all regional and national forest certification systems undergo rigorous third-party assessment against PEFC's unique Sustainability Benchmarks before they can achieve endorsement.

### PEFC Sustainability Benchmarks – Setting global standards

The development of international standards and guides is at the core of what PEFC does. These can be called the PEFC Sustainability Benchmarks. These standards form the basis for nearly all PEFC's other activities; from providing certification solutions to assessing compliance with standard requirements and endorsing national systems.

Every standard goes through a detailed and rigorous development process and is reviewed after five years at the latest, and revised if necessary. When developing or revising a standard, stakeholders are invited to participate. This means that there is a representation of diverse stakeholders, so no single interest can dominate, and that the process is consensus-driven, open and transparent.

PEFC offers a wide variety of opportunities and channels to ensure that everyone interested can be involved and stay up-to-date. These may include:

- Participation in a standard setting working group. Working groups are the most powerful institution in the process as participants are responsible for the core of the revision work.
- Expert Forums, open to the public, to inform the working group.
- Regular updates, published on the PEFC website and disseminated through newsletter and social media channels, keep everyone informed.
- Stakeholder conferences and dialogues may offer further opportunities to contribute to the process.
- The enquiry draft is subject to a 60 day global public consultation.

All technical documentation requires formal approval by the PEFC Board of Directors and the association's members. Neither of these two bodies has the ability to modify the final draft submitted by the working group; they can only approve or reject it as a whole. Approved PEFC standards are published on the PEFC website together with a standard development report, which provides comprehensive information about the development process.

## **Regional and national forest certification systems - Adapting standards to local conditions**

Local adaption of global standards is accomplished through regional and national forest certification systems. These forest certification systems outline the rules, procedures and management criteria for carrying out forest certification at regional, national or sub-national level. They include a range of standards and guides, such as the requirements for sustainable forest management, group certification, standard setting and many more.

Through its regional and national systems, PEFC can ensure that the sustainable forest management requirements of each country are tailored to the specific forest ecosystems, the legal and administrative framework, the socio-cultural context and other relevant factors.

This also ensures that all stakeholders are represented in the process; that they participate in determining what sustainable forest management means in the context of their country and how it can best be implemented locally. Issues that are relevant at the local level, but not captured in PEFC's Sustainability Benchmarks, are also naturally incorporated into these standards. This is key to the success of PEFC, as it empowers those managing forests to do so in compliance with the standards that they themselves have participated in developing.

Just like standard setting processes at international level, regional, national or sub-national standards are developed through multi-stakeholder working groups with balanced representation, ideally as defined in Agenda 21 of the United Nations. These processes need to be consensus driven, open and transparent, with no single interest dominating – and provide ample opportunity for involvement.

## **PEFC's endorsement process - Ensuring alignment of regional, national and sub-national standards with PEFC's Sustainability Benchmarks**

To ensure that the requirements are consistently applied at regional, national and sub-national level, all forest certification systems applying for PEFC endorsement go through a comprehensive and thorough independent assessment and quality assurance process. This process takes on average nine months to complete, and includes the following elements:

- a) An independent assessment that evaluates compliance of the system with PEFC requirements and includes a global public consultation.
- b) A quality assurance process.
- c) After a system has successfully passed the assessment and quality assurance process, the PEFC General Assembly votes on its endorsement.

Documentation concerning all endorsed systems, including the full assessment report, is publicly available on the PEFC website.

Through this process, PEFC can ensure that the standards meet the globally accepted PEFC Sustainability Benchmarks. In practical terms, this means that wood- or non-wood forest products certified to a forest certification system are considered PEFC-certified anywhere in the world and when sold via a certified chain of custody they are eligible to carry our PEFC label.

## **Certification – Demonstrating compliance with standard requirements**

Certification is the actual process of validating that individuals or organisations wishing to obtain PEFC forest management or chain of custody certification are in compliance with PEFC requirements.

Credible certification requires certification decisions to be impartial, independent and competent. This means that standard setting, certification and accreditation must be completely separate in order to eliminate the risk of conflicts of interest and ensure the highest level of competency:

- The basic principle is that standard setting, the process of defining certification requirements in collaboration with stakeholders, is undertaken by PEFC or regional and national forest certification systems.
- Certification, the process of checking whether a forest manager or company fulfils the certification requirements, is carried out by a certification body.

- Accreditation, the process of assessing the competence of the certification body, is carried out by an accreditation body with membership within the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) or an IAF regional accreditation group.

Entities wishing to obtain PEFC certification are required to demonstrate their conformity with PEFC endorsed standards. If compliance is demonstrated, the certification body issues a certificate valid up to five years, after which re-certification is required.

Additional checks are done through annual surveillance audits to proactively verify on-going compliance with the requirements. Only if practices and operations continually meet the requirements of PEFC endorsed standards do entities earn the right to use PEFC claims and use the PEFC label.

Complaints against certified entities are dealt with by the respective complaints and appeals procedures put in place by certification bodies. Issues that remain unresolved at this level should be raised with the respective complaints and appeals mechanisms of national accreditation bodies and thereafter - as a third level of appeal - with the IAF.

If a certified entity does not comply with PEFC's requirements its certificate can be suspended or withdrawn. If the certification body, or indeed an accreditation body, is judged to not have dealt with a complaint appropriately, it risks losing its licence to operate.

# 1 Scope

This document provides comprehensive information on the nature and context of forest and chain of custody certification. It defines basic definitions, elements, procedures, tasks, authorities and relations between actors participating in the certification process as defined in the PEFC international standards.

## 2 Definitions and abbreviations

### 2.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the relevant definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2 together with the following definitions apply:

**Accreditation:** Third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks (STN EN ISO/IEC 17000).

**Accreditation body:** Authorised body that performs accreditation (STN EN ISO/IEC 17000).

**Audit:** Systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining objective evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled (STN EN ISO/IEC 17000).

**Auditor:** Person with the demonstrated personal attributes and competence to conduct an audit (STN EN ISO 9000).

**Audit team:** One or more auditors conducting an audit, supported if needed by technical experts (STN EN ISO 9000).

**Certification:** Third party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons (STN EN ISO/IEC 17000).

**Forest certification:** Procedure for conformity assessment of forest management in relation to the criteria identified in the forest management standard.

**Certificate of conformity:** Document issued in accordance with the rules of certification system confirming that the defined product, procedure or system meet determined requirements.

**Certification body:** Independent third party assessing and certifying organisations against forest management or chain of custody standard or other documentation required within the system.

**Certified area:** Forest area covered by a sustainable forest management system according to the PEFC Sustainable Forest Management Standard (TD SFCS 1003). In the group certification context the certified area is the sum of forest areas of the participants and covered by a group forest certificate.

**Degraded forests:** Land with long-term significant reduction of the overall potential to supply benefits from the forest, which includes carbon storage, wood, biodiversity and other goods and services (definition based on FAO 2003).

**Forest degradation:** Structural changes to forest cover, taking the form of the conversion of:

- a) primary forests or naturally regenerating forests into plantation forests or into other wooded land;  
or
- b) primary forests into planted forests.

**Consensus:** General agreement characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. Consensus need not imply unanimity (STN EN 45020).

**Document confirming participation in group forest certification:** Confirmation on participation in the group certification issued by the group entity to the group participant.



*Note:* This document may be for instance a sub-certificate or a confirmation of participation.

**Surveillance audit:** On-site audit, but is not necessarily full system audit.

**Audit evidence:** Records, statements of facts or other information which are relevant to the audit criteria and verifiable (STN EN ISO 9000)

**Trees outside forests (TOF):** Trees growing outside areas of forest land. Such areas are registered in the Cadastre as agriculture land, urban environment or other land.

**Ecologically important forest areas:** Forest areas

- a) containing protected, rare, sensitive or representative forest ecosystems
- b) containing significant concentrations of endemic species and habitats of threatened species, as defined in recognised reference lists
- c) containing endangered or protected genetic in situ resources
- d) contributing to globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscapes with natural distribution and abundance of naturally occurring species
- e) forests below the upper forest line, forests significantly contributing to protection against erosion or landslides, forests in spring areas and wetlands and riparian vegetation

**Ecologically important non-forest areas:** Non-forest areas

- a) containing protected, rare, sensitive or representative non-forest ecosystems
- b) containing significant concentrations of endemic species and habitats of threatened species, as defined in recognised reference lists
- c) containing endangered or protected genetic in situ resources
- d) contributing to globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscapes with natural distribution and abundance of naturally occurring species

**Ecosystem services:** Benefits obtained from ecosystems. These include provisioning services such as food, water, timber, and fibre; regulating services that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality; cultural services that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits; and supporting services such as soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling (based on Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005).

**Genetically modified trees:** Trees in which the genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally by mating and/or natural recombination, taking into account applicable legislation providing a specific definition of genetically modified organisms.

*Note 1:* The following techniques are considered as genetic modification resulting in genetically modified trees (EU Directive 2001/18/EC):

- 1) recombinant nucleic acid techniques involving the formation of new combinations of genetic material by the insertion of nucleic acid molecules produced by whatever means outside an organism, into any virus, bacterial plasmid or other vector system and their incorporation into a host organism in which they do not naturally occur, but in which they are capable of continued propagation
- 2) techniques involving the direct introduction into an organism of heritable material prepared outside the organism including micro-injection, macro-injection, and micro-encapsulation;
- 3) cell fusion (including protoplast fusion) or hybridisation techniques where live cells with new combinations of heritable genetic material are formed through the fusion of two or more cells by means of methods that do not occur naturally.

*Note 2:* The following techniques are not considered as genetic modification resulting in genetically modified trees (EU Directive 2001/18/EC):

- 1) in vitro fertilisation
- 2) natural processes such as: conjugation, transduction, transformation
- 3) polyploidy induction

**Geolocation:** Geographical location of a plot of land described by means of latitude and longitude coordinates corresponding to at least one latitude and one longitude point and using at least six decimal digits; for plots of land of more than four hectares used for the production of forest and tree based

products, this shall be provided using polygons with sufficient latitude and longitude points to describe the perimeter of each plot of land.

**Audit report:** Report including the results of compliance of activities with the requirements of criteria. The report focuses mainly on the identification of nonconformities between the actual state and criteria requirements.

**Production forest:** Forest providing timber and other non-timber products while fulfilling public functions.

**Management plan:** Documented information specifying objectives, actions and control arrangements concerning the management of ecosystem resources and services for a set period of time.

*Note:* In the SFCS technical documentation, the term management plan means the forest management plan and the forest land management project

**Protected water management area:** Designated significant area of natural accumulation of surface water and groundwater, in which the reserves of surface water and groundwater are naturally formed and restored.

**Other wooded land:** Land covered with forest trees with the character of a forest stand, excluding land registered as forest land in the Cadastre and in the Forest Management Information System (§45 of Act 326/2005 on Forests).

**Integrated pest management:** The careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep pesticides and other interventions to levels that are economically justified and reduce or minimise risks to human health and the environment (FAO 2018).

**Internal audit:** Systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled, undertaken by the group organisation itself (first party audit).

**Landscape:** A socio-ecological system that consists of a mosaic of natural and/or human-modified ecosystems, with a characteristic configuration of topography, vegetation, land use, and settlements that is influenced by the ecological, historical, economic and cultural processes and activities of the area (Scherr et al. 2013).

**Criteria of sustainable forest management:** Comprehensive set of indicators for the assessment of forest ecosystems in relation to their main functions.

**Forest:** Land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than five metres and a canopy cover of more than 10%, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ, excluding land that is not registered in the Cadastre in register „C“ as a forest land according to the specification in § 3 Forest lands of Act 326/2005 on forests.

**Planted forest:** Forest predominantly composed of trees established through planting and/or deliberate seeding, provided that the planted or seeded trees are expected to constitute more than 50% of the growing stock at maturity; it includes coppice from trees that were originally planted or seeded.

**Plantation forest:** Planted forest formed by one or two tree species with regular spacing and the same age, with a maximum production function, the benefits of which are used for industrial use; they are usually located in locations with high production potential (§2t of Act 326/2005 on forests). It excludes forests planted for protection or ecosystem restoration, as well as forests established through planting or seeding which at stand maturity resemble or will resemble naturally regenerating forests.

**Forest land:** Land registered in the Cadastre in register „C“ as a forest land according to the specification in § 3 Forest lands of Act 326/2005 on forests.

**Forest section:** Integrated part of the forests for which forest management plan is elaborated

**Manager:** Person who leads and manages the organisation.

*Note:* Manager can also be a person executing traditional or customary tenure rights

**Minor nonconformity:** Single failure to fulfil the requirements of the forest management standard or chain of custody standard that may result in no systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of forest management or chain of custody and/or effects confidence in the supplier's claims on material originating from certified forests

**Non-production forest functions:** Ecological functions such as soil protection, water management and climatic function; social functions such as mainly health, cultural, educational, recreational, nature protection and water protection function.

**Monitoring:** Determining the status of a system, a process or an activity..

**Accidental felling:** Part of forest protection measures or measures related to the elimination of the effects of harmful factors in forests.

**National governing body of the Slovak Forest Certification System:** Legal entity responsible for the preparation, approval and amendments of the Slovak forest certification system.

**Non-wood forest products:** Products consisting of goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from forests.

**Non-wood products from TOF areas:** Products consisting of goods of biological origin other than wood, derived from trees.

**Non-forest ecosystem:** Land not meeting the definition of forest

**Continuous quality improvement:** Process of improving the quality of the management system and increasing performance in order to improve the economic, environmental and social aspects of forest management.

**Non-conformity:** A situation in which audits evidence shows that the activities were not carried out with the certification requirements (STN EN ISO 9000).

**Normative document:** Document including rules, regulations or parameters for particular activities or corresponding results – standards, technical specifications, working procedures and guidelines.

**Standardising body:** Body that has recognised activities in standardisation.

*Note:* A standardising body for a forest management system/standard is a body which is responsible for the development and maintenance of standards for the forest certification system. The standardising body can be a PEFC National Governing Body or the standardising body can be separate from the governance of the forest certification system.

**Agricultural plantations:** Tree stands in agricultural production systems, such as fruit tree plantations, oil palm plantations, olive orchards and agroforestry systems.

*Note:* Agricultural plantations are excluded from the definition of 'forest'.

**Agricultural use:** Use of land for the purpose of agriculture, including for agricultural plantations, and includes livestock and set-aside agricultural areas.

**Forest owner or manager:** Person, group of people or legal entity having the legal or tenure right, or executing traditional or customary tenure rights, to manage the forest in a clearly defined certified area, and the ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard in this area.

**Appealing body:** Body dealing with appeals against decisions, disputes and complaints.

**Forest protection:** A set of activities aimed at maintaining and increasing the resilience of forests, their ecological stability and eliminating the consequences caused by harmful factors.

**Organisation:** Company, corporation, firm, enterprise or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private, that has its own functions and administration (ISO 14050).

**PEFC recognised certificate:**

- a) A valid accredited forest management certificate issued by a PEFC notified certification body against a forest management system/standard that is endorsed by PEFC.
- b) A valid accredited chain of custody certificate issued by a PEFC notified certification body against PEFC COC standard or another chain of custody standard that is endorsed by PEFC.

*Note 1:* PEFC endorsed forest certification systems and chain of custody standards are found at the PEFC website.

*Note 2:* In case of a group or multi-site certificate where it is confirmed in a separate document, such as an appendix to the certificate or a sub-certificate, that a site or a group participant is covered by the certificate, the separate document and the certificate together are considered the site's/participant's PEFC recognised certificate.

**Periodic review of forest certification system:** Periodic review of sustainable forest management standards carried out at an interval not exceeding a period of 5 years. Reviewed standards shall be submitted to PEFC Council for re-endorsement.

**Audit plan:** Description of the activities and arrangements for an audit (STN EN ISO 19011).

**Group management plan:** Documented information specifying objectives, actions and control arrangements. It covers planned changes of the group management system and requirements of the sustainable forest management standard which are covered on group level.

**Policy:** Intentions and direction of an organisation, as formally expressed by its manager/owner or the group entity.

**Observation:** An audit finding that does not indicate nonconformity. It may be identified by the audit team as an opportunity for improvement.

**Requirements:** Quantitative or qualitative parameters describing the objectively and unambiguously the subject of the requirement and are evaluated in relation to the requirements. They shall apply to each manager participating in the certification. They set out the boundary requirements of management and important phases ensuring the sustainability of forest management or specify the framework procedures and the form of the results of important phases of forest management, in the achievement of which its management is considered sustainable.

**Primary forest:** naturally regenerating forest of native tree species, where there are no clearly visible indications of human activities, and the ecological processes are not significantly disturbed.

**Naturally regenerating forest:** forest predominantly composed of trees established through natural regeneration; it includes any of the following:

- a) forests for which it is not possible to distinguish whether planted or naturally regenerated;
- b) forests with a mix of naturally regenerated native tree species and planted or seeded trees, and where the naturally regenerated trees are expected to constitute the major part of the growing stock at stand maturity;
- c) coppice from trees originally established through natural regeneration;
- d) naturally regenerated trees of introduced species.

**Close-to-nature forest management:** Silvicultural and regeneration procedures aimed at the creation and cultivation of forests with a differentiated age, species, genetic and spatial structure as close as possible to the natural forest characteristic of the conditions of the given locality; these practices make maximum use of natural processes, in particular the natural regeneration of trees, the regenerative capacity of the forest ecosystem, the individual height and thickness growth of trees, the ability of autoreduction and the shape variability of forest trees.

**Forest conversions to other land use:** Direct human-induced change of forest to non-forest and non-agriculture uses (use of forest land for other than fulfilment of forest functions) (§5 of Act 326/2005 on forests).

**Forest conversions to agricultural use:** Change of forest to agricultural use whether human-induced or not.

*Note:* Regeneration by planting or direct seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources, to the same dominant species as was harvested or other species that were present in the historical species mix is not considered a conversion to agricultural use.

**Audit programme:** Set of one or more audits planned for a specific time frame and directed towards a specific purpose (STN EN ISO 9000).

*Note:* Programme includes all activities necessary for planning, organizing and conducting the audits.

**Forest management plan:** Tool of the state, forest owner and forest manager for sustainable forest management.

**Review of forest certification system:** Activity of identifying whether a system meets the demands and requirements of the system owner, stakeholders, customers etc. The review of a system can result in a system revision.

**Recertification audit:** Audit, which aims to confirm continued compliance and effectiveness of the management system as a whole as well as its continuing relevance and applicability to the scope of certification audit.

**Region:** Geographically defined territory, the borders of which are determined by the applicant for group certification based on the defined criteria.

**Group forest certification:** Certification of the group organisation under one group forest certificate.

**Revision of forest certification system:** Amendment to a system following a review of a system.

**Self-assessment:** Systematic, comprehensive and regular process of reviewing the activities and performance of organisation against the requirements of the certification scheme (STN EN ISO 9000).

**Group organisation:** A group of participants represented by the group entity for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification. A binding written agreement shall be established between a participant and the group entity.

*Note:* The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “regional organisation” if the group is defined by regional boundaries.

**Group forest certificate:** A document confirming that the group organisation complies with the requirements of a sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification system. Group entity is a holder of the group forest certificate.

**Chain of custody:** Processes of an organisation for handling forest and tree based products and information related to their material category, and making accurate and verifiable PEFC claims.

**Forest governor:** Legal entity whose founder or establisher entrusted the care of the forest property in their possession.

**Forest certification system:** System of standards, guidelines and rules referring to the criteria for forest management, chain of custody requirements, certification arrangements and requirements for certification bodies

**Environmental management system:** Part of the overall management system that includes organizational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining the environmental policy (ISO 14050).

**Group management system:** Set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organisation to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the sustainable forest management standard.

**Audited entity:** forest owner or manager, organisation or a group of forest owners or managers, organisations and other entities performing their activities within the defined forest area, which is subject to audit.

**Harmful factor:** Agent that can reduce the resilience of a forest, its ecological stability, damage or destroy the forest or its parts; is divided into:

- a) biotic, in particular insects, game or other living organisms
- b) abiotic, in particular wind, flood, drought, icing, snow or other natural phenomena
- c) anthropogenic, which is the negative effect of man

**Standard (technical document):** Document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context.

**Sustainable forest management standard:** Currently valid version of the technical document TD SFCS 1003 *Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements*.

**Technical expert:** Person who provides specific knowledge or expertise to the audit team. The technical expert is not considered an auditor.

**Third party:** Person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, as concerns the issues in question (ISO 14050).

**Sustainable forest management:** The stewardship and use of forests and forest land in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential in

order to fulfil now and in the future relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels and does not cause damage to other ecosystems.

**Participant:** A forest owner or manager covered by the group forest certificate, who has the ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard in a certified area.

*Note:* The term “ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard” requires the entity to have a long-term legal right, tenure right or traditional or customary tenure rights to manage the forest and would disqualify one-off contractors from becoming participants in group forest management certification.

**Initial audit:** Audit carried out at the forest manager requiring participation in the group forest certification during the validity of certificate.

**Lead auditor:** Person with a qualification which is required for the management and conduct of audits.

**Forest owner:** Entity with the ownership rights to the given forest land who is authorised to hold, use, utilise its products and utilities, and dispose of this property.

**Environmental impact:** Any change to the environment, whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an organization’s activities, products or services (ISO 14050).

**Fundamental ILO conventions:** Eight conventions (ILO 29, 87, 98, 100, 105, 111, 138 and 182) identified by the ILO’s Governing Body as “fundamental” in terms of principles and rights at work: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

**Reforestation:** Re-establishing the forests on forest land through planting or deliberate seeding of seeds or an activity that achieves natural regeneration.

**Afforestation of non-forest land:** Establishment of forest on the basis of forest management project through planting or deliberate seeding on land that, until then, was under a different land use, implies a transformation of land use from non-forest to forest.

**Group entity:** A legal entity that represents the participants, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the certified area to the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification system. For this purpose the group entity is using a group management system.

*Note:* The structure of the group entity should follow the operations, number of participants and other basic conditions for the group organisation. It may be represented by one person.

**Stakeholder:** A person, group, community or organisation with an interest in the subject of the standard.

**Affected stakeholder:** Stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by implementation of the standard, or a stakeholder who might be a user of the standard and therefore is subject to the requirements of the standard.

*Note 1:* Affected stakeholders include neighbouring communities, indigenous people, workers, etc. However, having an interest in the subject matter of the standard (e.g. NGOs, scientific community, and civil society) is not equal to being affected.

*Note 2:* A stakeholder who might be a user of the standard is likely to become a certified entity, e.g. a forest owner in the case of a forest management standard, or a wood processing enterprise in the case of a chain of custody standard.

**Major nonconformity:** The absence of, or failure to implement and maintain, one or more requirements of the sustainable forest management or chain of custody standard, that may result in a systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the sustainable forest management or chain of custody and/or affect confidence in the client organisation’s claims on certified raw material.

*Note:* A major nonconformity may be an individual nonconformity, or a number of minor but related nonconformities that when considered in total are judged to constitute a major nonconformity.

**Documented information:** Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation using any format and media, from any source.

**Audit findings:** Results of the evaluation of the collected audit evidence against audit criteria (STN EN ISO 9000).

**Environment:** Surrounding including air, water, land, flora and fauna that can be somehow affected by the operations of the applicant.

## 2.2 Abbreviations

For the purposes of this document the following abbreviations apply:

<b>ATO</b>	African Timber Organization
<b>BOZP</b>	safety and health at work
<b>COC</b>	Chain-of-Custody
<b>EA</b>	European Accreditation
<b>FZ ČSSR</b>	Federal Assembly of ČSSR
<b>HaZZ</b>	Fire and Rescue Corps
<b>HSLT</b>	management set of forest types
<b>CHA</b>	protected areal
<b>CHKP</b>	protected landscape element
<b>CHVO</b>	protected water management area
<b>IAF</b>	International Accreditation Forum
<b>IEC</b>	International Electrotechnical Commission
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IS LH</b>	forestry information system
<b>ISO</b>	International Organization for Standardization
<b>ITTO</b>	International Tropical Timber Organization
<b>JPRL</b>	unit of spatial forest distribution
<b>KZSL</b>	comprehensive survey of forest state
<b>LC</b>	forest unit
<b>LHE</b>	forest management records
<b>LOS</b>	Forest Protection Service Centre
<b>LSR, š.p.</b>	Lesy Slovenskej republiky, š.p.
<b>MCPFE</b>	Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe
<b>MLA</b>	Multilateral Agreement
<b>MOP</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>MP SR</b>	Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic
<b>MPRV SR</b>	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic
<b>MPSVaR SR</b>	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
<b>MŽP SR</b>	Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic
<b>NLC</b>	National Forestry Centre
<b>NPP</b>	national natural monument
<b>NPR</b>	national nature reserve
<b>NRO</b>	national governing body
<b>NR SR</b>	National Council of the Slovak Republic
<b>OLH</b>	professional forest manager

<b>OOPP</b>	personal protective work equipment
<b>OSN</b>	United Nations
<b>PAC</b>	Pacific Accreditation Cooperation
<b>PBHL</b>	close-to-nature forest management
<b>PEFC</b>	Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
<b>PEFCC</b>	PEFC Council
<b>PEOLG</b>	Pan European Operational Level Guidelines for SFM
<b>PP</b>	natural monument
<b>PR</b>	natural reservation
<b>PSL</b>	forest management plan
<b>SAŽP</b>	Slovak Environmental Agency
<b>SFCS</b>	Slovak Forest Certification System
<b>SIŽP</b>	Slovak Environmental Inspection
<b>SLDI</b>	Slovak Forestry and Wood Inspection
<b>SR</b>	Slovak Republic
<b>SRZ</b>	Slovak Fishing Association
<b>ŠOP SR</b>	State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic
<b>ŠS</b>	state administration
<b>ŠS LH</b>	forestry state administration
<b>ŠS ŽP</b>	environmental state administration
<b>SVP</b>	Slovak Water Management Enterprise
<b>TOF</b>	trees outside forests
<b>TD</b>	technical document
<b>TUOL</b>	sustainable forest management
<b>ULZI</b>	Institute for Forest Resources and Information
<b>UNCED</b>	UN Conference on Environment and Development
<b>ÚSES</b>	territorial system of ecological stability

### 3 The character and context of forestry in the Slovak Republic

For the forestry in the Slovak Republic it is characteristic that:

- a) sustainable forest management has a historical tradition
- b) from the point of view of ensuring sustainable management it is a very strongly regulated sphere by the state
- c) the diversity of forest communities and the diversity of their tree composition correspond to the diversity of natural and habitat conditions and the large altitude variability varying from 100 m above sea level to 1550 m above sea level
- d) most forest areas are dominated by forests with suitable age structure
- e) the complex system of forest management planning respects the principles of sustainability in the long run



- f) the ownership structure of forests is very diverse. Some 39.7% is in the state ownership, 11.7% in private ownership, 33.4% in the ownership of land communities, 9.5% in municipalities, 1% in churches and 4.7% of forest land does not have a known owner
- g) most work in the forest is carried out by contractors

### 3.1 Forest management planning and Forest Management Plans (FMP)

The first forest management plans in Slovakia were elaborated from 1764 to 1765. They already contained a relatively detailed survey of the state of the forest, including the spatial division of the forest, forest mapping, harvesting and management instructions. In 1879, the Hungarian Forest Act was issued, which stipulated the obligation to manage forests according to the approved management plans for state, municipal and community forests. Since 1930, the obligation of management according to management plans has been introduced for all forests over 50 ha, i.e. for about 85% of forests. On January 1, 1952, the state organization Lesoprojekt was established. In 1958, the Decree on Forest Management No. 75 was issued, which unified the content and form of forest management plans, including the inclusion of the so-called special surveys into the elaboration of FMPs.

At present, according to the Act NR SR 326/2005 Coll. on forests, as amended, the forest care program (hereinafter referred to as the "forest management plans") and the forest land management project are the state tools for ensuring the sustainable forest management.

Forest management planning includes the survey of the state of the forests, natural, social, technical and economic conditions of management, production and harvesting possibilities. Based on these surveys, it sets goals for ensuring the long-term development of forestry and sustainable forest management. It plans a prospective focus of forestry and management measures aimed at increasing the productive and public benefit functions of forests and their optimal and rational use, forest protection and sustainable harvesting in the long term. It monitors and evaluates the fulfilment of objectives and tasks and the implementation of the planned as well as unplanned forest management measures. As a scientific discipline as well as practical activity it integrates, uses and applies knowledge and experience in forestry, forest protection, harvesting, economics and other forestry disciplines. The result of forest management planning are the FMPs and other forest management works.

The pillars of forest management planning:

- **Detailed forest division** - all land that is forest land is divided into units of spatial forest division (JPRL) as a basic framework for forest mapping, forest state survey and management planning.
- **Quality forest maps** - the basis of forest mapping in Slovakia are the basic forest maps (ZLM) in the scale of 1: 5,000. They are used for the creation of forest stand maps in the scale of 1: 10,000 used in forestry operations. These maps contain the basic geographical situation, the outlines of all JPRLs with a colour indication of their age, the detailed situation of the forest transport network and trails and other information important for forestry operations. Contour (non-coloured) stand maps serve as a basis for the creation of various thematic forest maps. These maps are developed as a thematic state map work with the content of forestry in vector, digital form as forest digital maps (LDM) - Forest digital map work - the basis for the Forest Geographic Information System (LGIS).
- **Comprehensiveness of survey of the forest state** - all basic data on forest management planning are surveyed on the whole area, by evaluating individual JPRLs.

Forest management planning processes:

- **Forest categorization** - addresses the classification of spatial units of forest division.
- **Spatial arrangement of the forest** - proposes the spatial division of the forest into forest management units (from individual stands to large units), recommends the spatial location of tending/regeneration operations in stands, the division of forest stands and areas.
- **Time arrangement of the forest** – addresses the time frame of planning harvesting and silvicultural operations in forest stands, so that the required management goals are achieved.
- **Harvesting arrangement of the forest** - determines the volume of logging (regeneration and tending) and its steadiness so as to ensure long-term balance of timber harvesting with the

optimal use of production potential of forest stands and their permanent fulfilment of other (non-productive) forest functions.

Forest management planning procedures are based on the principles of differentiated forest management, which is defined in § 2, point j) of the Forest Act as a purposeful system of forest management, which takes into account the diverse natural, stand, management, economic and social conditions and requirements applied in the elaboration and implementation of the forest management plan. Based on scientifically based criteria, a basic scale for the division forests according to their functions was established: production, anti-erosion, water management, anti-avalanche, watercourse protection, anti-deflation, water protection, recreational, spa treatment, nature conservancy, anti-emission, hunting, educational and research, which is more detailedly structured into 62 functional types (multifunctional approach).

In terms of the use of functions, three categories of forests were created, for which separate forest management planning frameworks are developed:

- a) protective forests
- b) special purposes forests
- c) production forests

The survey and assessment of the state and development of forests within the framework of forest management planning are carried out in the following stages:

- a) comprehensive survey of forest state
  - A comprehensive survey of forest is a survey of data on the natural, social, technical and economic conditions of forest management and development for the purpose of confirming the correctness of the functional classification; these data are the basis for the framework planning, detailed survey of forest state and detailed planning
- b) framework planning
  - Framework planning serves to identify the management model for the homogenous set of forest stands determined by the category of forest, forest form, framework habitat conditions, stand conditions and forests threats.
  - Management model includes:
    - i. management goal, which is the target tree species composition, target timber production and the target structure of the forest,
    - ii. basic management framework, which is the silvicultural system and its forms, rotation and regeneration period, securing period and the period of return,
    - iii. management principles, which are the fundamental principles of forest tending, forest regeneration, forest protection and restoration of the forest.
- c) detailed survey of forest state
  - Detailed survey of forest state is forest mapping and survey of data, in particular about the forest form, operational unit, terrain exposure and gradient, area, forest stand age, stocking, growing stock in the forest stand and data on tree species composition, mean height, mean thickness, site quality, stand damage and the phenotypic class; these data are used for elaboration of forest stand description and serves as a basis for detailed planning.
- d) detailed planning
  - Detailed planning is the determination of management measures for the units of spatial forest division for the period of FMP validity with the aim to meet the management objectives according to their functional classification. It is carried out according to the instructions for the FMP elaboration and instructions for implementation of forest management planning.

Forest management plans are elaborated for a ten-year period for all forest lands in Slovakia. The elaboration of forest management plans is paid for by the state, procured by the state public procurement body (National Forestry Center Zvolen, Institute of Forest Management Planning) and provided by

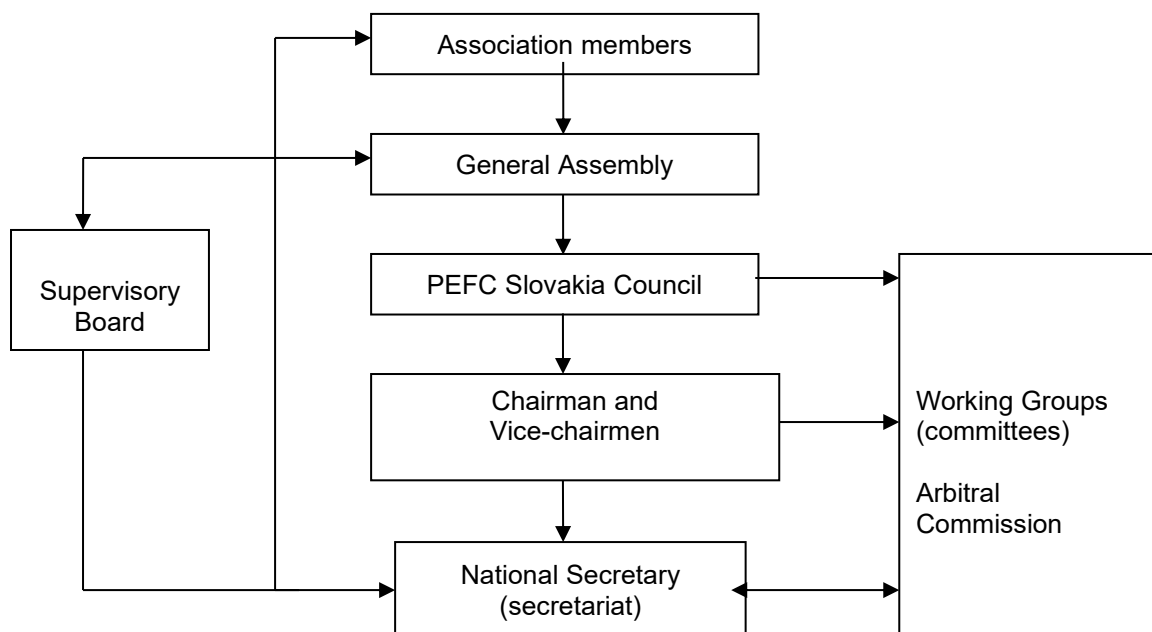
natural and legal persons who have the professional and technical competence. Forest management plans shall be approved by district authorities. The data of forest management plans are used primarily for sustainable forest management, but also for other areas such as nature and landscape protection, spatial planning, landscape planning, land consolidations. The duty of the owner, administrator or manager of the forest is to ensure forest management in accordance with the Act NR SR 326/2005 Coll. on forests, as amended, according to the forest management plan or the extract from it, or the forest land management project through the professional forest manager.

Forest management plan includes:

<b>Mandatory components</b>	<b>Voluntary components</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- general part</li> <li>- description of forest parts</li> <li>- plan of management measures</li> <li>- table of plots</li> <li>- survey tables</li> <li>- contour and forest stand map</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- harvesting map</li> <li>- record part of the management plan</li> <li>- survey and plan of the forest transport network</li> <li>- survey and plan for torrent gardening in forests</li> <li>- plan of forestry and technical meliorations</li> <li>- economic survey, including a quantification of the effects of special management regimes</li> <li>- valuation of forest property, including the value of the effects of non-productive forest functions</li> </ul>

## 4 Organisational arrangement of PEFC Slovakia

PEFC Slovakia is an independent voluntary professional association of legal entities with the aim to promote sustainable forest management and consumption of forest based products as a renewable resource, nature protection and sustainable development of the society. It represents a national governing body of the Slovak Forest Certification System and is the PEFC Council member. The objectives and activities are defined in the association's status. Description of organisational arrangement is shown in figure 4.1



*Figure 4.1 Organisation arrangement of PEFC Slovakia*

On the basis of prevailing activities, each member of PEFC Slovakia belongs to the “Chamber of forest owners”, “Chamber of wood processing industry” or to the “Chamber of other stakeholders”.

The General Assembly, consisting of all members, is the highest authority of the association.

PEFC Slovakia Council is the supreme managing body. It holds the power to elect and withdraw both the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the association. It is a collective body. Decision-making process is based on the absolute majority of votes of all Council members. In case of equal count of votes the Chairman vote is decisive.

Chairman represents the interests of the association outwards. He is held accountable for the association state to the Council. During the Chairman's absence, Vice-Chairmen in the order of member chambers act on his behalf.

National Secretary is appointed by the PEFC Slovakia Council on the basis of tender. He carries out activities of the secretariat according to the resolutions of association bodies.

Supervisory board is entitled and authorised to control activities of association bodies, mainly financing. It is elected and the results of its activities are submitted to the General Assembly.

Arbitral Commission is an expert body of the association. The members of Arbitral Commissions are experts who, upon request of the participant in certification process, decide on the interpretation of technical documents of SFCS.

Working groups are established by the Council, if appropriate, for specific tasks regarding mainly the amendment of technical documents, revision of criteria of forest management and assessment of national schemes.

## **5 Structure of SFCS documentation**

The processes of the Slovak Forest Certification System are guided by documents elaborated in accordance with the PEFC requirements.

PEFC Slovakia Statute represents the basic constitutive document, registered at District Council in Banská Bystrica in the register of professional associations, No. 2002/11140.

### **5.1 SFCS technical documents**

TD SFCS 1001:2021 *Slovak Forest Certification System – Description and Context*

TD SFCS 1002:2021 *Group Forest Management Certification– Requirements*

TD SFCS 1003:2021 *Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements*

TD SFCS 1004:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements* (translation of PEFC ST 2002:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements*)

TD SFCS 1005:2021 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification*

TD SFCS 1006:2020 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard* (translation of PEFC ST 2003:2020 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*)

TD SFCS 1007:2020 *PEFC Trademarks Rules - Requirements* (translation of PEFC ST 2001:2020 *PEFC Trademarks Rules - Requirements*)

### **5.2 Normative documents**

ND SFCS 001 *Issuance of PEFC trademarks usage licences*

ND SFCS 002 *Development, review and revision of SFCS documentation*

ND SFCS 003 *PEFC notification of certification bodies operating forest management and chain of custody certification in the Slovak Republic*

ND SFCS 004 *PEFC Slovakia procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints and appeals*

ND SFCS 005 *Training of participants in the certification process for the application of Slovak forest certification system*

Documentation is publicly available on PEFC Slovakia web site [www.pefc.sk](http://www.pefc.sk).

## **6 Normative references for the development of the Slovak Forest Certification system**

The Slovak Republic is a party to almost all basic UN human rights conventions that are reflected in the legal order, including the main UN conventions covering human rights issues:

- - UN Charter
- - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

### **6.1 National normative references**

Slovak Forest Certification System is based on the state of forestry in the Slovak Republic, its historical development, structure of ownership, forest management planning and information system in the area of forestry.

It respects the general legislative system of the Slovak Republic. It is in compliance with the legislation in the field of:

- a) forestry
- b) environment, protection of nature, landscape and water resources
- c) protection of ownership rights, social affairs and employees rights
- d) labour and health safety and protection
- e) fire protection
- f) information providing
- g) protection of monuments and public use of forests
- h) business relations
- i) tax and royalties payment

## **6.2 International requirements of PEFC Council**

### **6.2.1 PEFC standards and documents**

Slovak Forest Certification System also takes into account international requirements of PEFC Council set out in the international technical documents and guides as follows:

#### Benchmark standards

PEFC ST 1001:2007 *Standard Setting - Requirements*

PEFC ST 1002:2018 *Group Forest Management Certification - Requirements*

PEFC ST 1003:2024 *Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements*

#### International standards

PEFC ST 2001:2020 *PEFC Trademarks Rules - Requirements*

PEFC ST 2002:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements*

PEFC ST 2003:2020 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*

Annex 1 of PEFC Technical Document *PEFC Terms and Definitions*

Annex 6 of PEFC Technical Document *Certification and Accreditation Procedures*

#### Guidance documents

PEFC GD 1004:2009 *Administration of PEFC scheme*

PEFC GD 1007:2017 *Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of National Systems and their Revisions*

### **6.2.2 Overview of the basic applicable legislation ensuring the international benchmark requirements of PEFC ST 1003**

Requirements regarding the forest management planning processes:

- Act NR SR 326/2005 Coll. on forests as amended
- Decree MP SR 453/2006 Coll. on forest management and forest protection as amended
- Working procedures for forest management no. A/2008/1611
- Act NR SR 543/2002 Coll. on nature and landscape protection as amended

### 6.3 International ILO conventions

The fundamental ILO Conventions (table 6.1) as amended have been ratified by the Slovak Republic and implemented into the national legislation. Therefore, it is not necessary to cover them directly by the SFCS certification criteria.

Tab. 6.1 The fundamental ILO conventions ratified by the SR

No.	ILO conventions	Ratification by SR
29	Forced Labour	1997
87	Freedom of Associations and Protection of the Right to Organise	1997
98	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining	1997
100	Equal Remuneration	1997
105	Abolition of Forced Labour	1997
111	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)	1997
138	Minimum Age for Admission to Employment,	1997
182	Worst Forms of Child Labour	1999

The decree of MPSVaR SR 46/2010 Coll., laying down details on ensuring the safety and health at forest work and details on professional competence for the performance of certain work activities and the operation of certain technical equipment correspondents in terms of its content to the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work. (*ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work, Geneva, International Labour Office, 1998*).

### 6.4 Other international conventions

The Slovak Republic as a signatory state has ratified and implemented other international conventions listed in table 6.2 into the national legislation.

Tab. 6. 2 Other international conventions ratified by the SR

International conventions	Place	Ratification by SR
Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage	Paris	1990
The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat	Ramsar	1990
Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context	Espoo	1991
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES)	Washington	1992
Convention on Biological Diversity	Rio de Janeiro	1994
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals	Bonn	1994
Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats	Bern	1994
Convention on cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of the Danube river	Sofia	1994

Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters	Aarhus	1998
Kyoto Protocol	Kyoto	1999
Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes	Helsinki	1999
Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds	Haag	2000
Protocol on Water and Health	London	2001
Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians	Kyiv	2003
Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	Stockholm	2004

Requirements covered by these conventions relevant to forest management are included in SFCS through the national legislation.

## 6.5 International standards

MD 1 *Mandatory Document for the Certification of Multiple Sites Based on Sampling (IAF MD 1)*

STN EN 45020 *Standardization and related activities - General vocabulary. (ISO/IEC Guide 2)*

STN EN ISO 9000 *Quality management systems. Fundamentals and vocabulary. (ISO 9000)*

STN EN ISO 9001 *Quality management systems. Requirements. (ISO 9001)*

ISO 14001 *Environmental management systems -- Requirements with guidance for use.*

ISO/IEC 14020 *Environmental labels and declarations - General principles.*

ISO/IEC 14021 *Environmental labels and declarations -- Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling).*

STN EN ISO/IEC 17000 *Conformity assessment. Vocabulary and general principles (ISO/IEC 17000)*

STN EN ISO/IEC 17021 *Conformity assessment. Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems (ISO/IEC 17021)*

STN EN ISO/IEC 17065 *Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services (ISO/IEC 17065)*

STN EN ISO 19011 *Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing (ISO 19011)*

STN EN 45011 *General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*

EN 643:2001 *Paper and board – European list of standard grades of recovered paper and board.*

## 6.6 Certification criteria

Certification criteria cover all essential aspects of management of SFM and chain of custody processes including the organization and implementation of their certification according to standards and procedures developed by the Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). SFM certification criteria cover all range of forest functions including all economic, ecological and social functions. They directly follow the Resolution H1 “General Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe” and H2 “General Guidelines for the Conservation of the Biodiversity of European Forests” and reflect the structure of the six Pan European criteria that were adopted as the key principles for sustainable forest management.

PEFC Council defines requirements for SFM in international standard PEFC ST 1003 Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements, which represents a benchmark for the development of national



certification criteria. This document is a result of a broad consensus on principles, guidelines, criteria and indicators for SFM at the international governmental level, including:

- ongoing Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE/FOREST EUROPE)
- Montreal Process (Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests)
- ITTO (International Tropical Timber Organisation) process for tropical forests or the ATO (African Timber Organisation)/ITTO process for tropical African forests
- Near East – the Lepaterique Process
- Regional Initiative of Dry Forests in Asia
- Criteria and Indicators for the Sustainable Management in Dry-zone Africa
- Tarapoto Proposal: Criteria and Indicators for the Sustainable Management of Amazonian Forests

Requirements of the respective intergovernmental processes defined in this standard shall be reflected in the criteria for sustainable forest management of the national schemes.

## 7 Credibility and independency

SFCS credibility is based on the mutual independency of the three internationally recognised entities that enter the process of forest management and chain-of-custody certification in relation to the applicant for certification (figure 7.1). Their authorities, responsibilities and mutual relations are defined by the SFCS documentation.

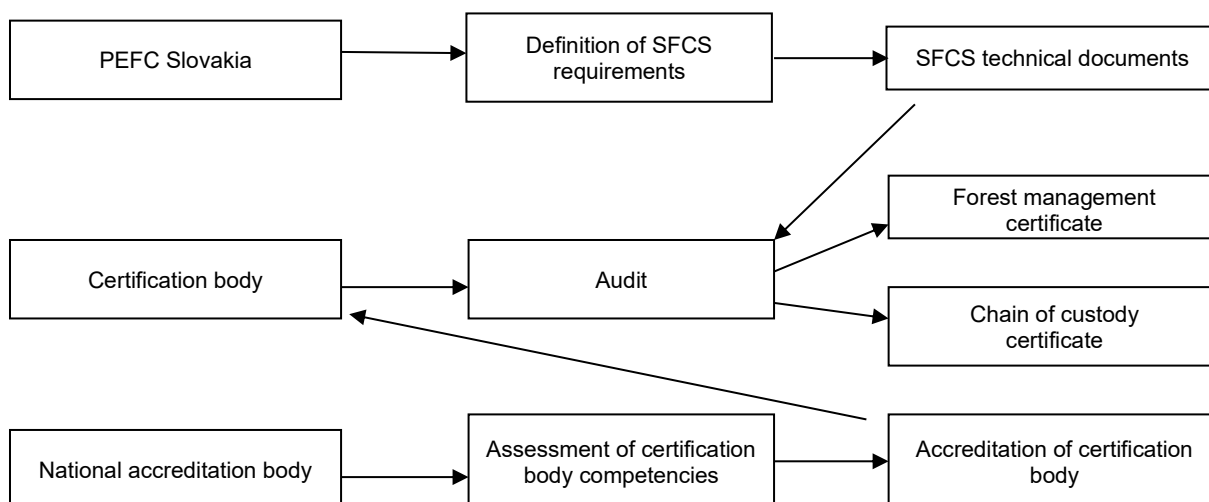


Figure 7.1 Diagram of competencies

## 8 Process of documentation development and revision

### 8.1 Documentation setting process

SFCS documentation setting and revision process is defined by ND 002 SFCS *Development, review and revision of SFCS documentation*. The process of SFCS documentation setting, review and revision shall be initiated by the PEFC Slovakia Council. Technical Committee is established on a temporary basis for the period of SFCS documentation development or revision. The Technical Committee composition shall provide for balanced representation and decision-making by stakeholder categories

relevant to subject matter and geographical scope of the document where single concerned interest shall not dominate nor should be dominated in the process.

The Technical Committee shall include stakeholders with expertise relevant to the subject matter of the specific document and those who are materially affected by the document and those that can influence the implementation of the document. The materially affected stakeholders shall represent a meaningful segment of the participants. The members of the Technical Committee shall be accessible the publicly available contact information on PEFC SK web page. The decision of the Technical Committee to recommend the working draft for public consultations or final draft for formal approval shall be taken on the basis of a consensus. Any sustained opposition to specific issues is resolved by means of dialogue whenever possible. The public consultations shall be at least 60 days and the enquiry draft shall be made publicly available and accessible on the PEFC SK website and on request. The work of the Committee is documented and publicly available.

## **8.2 Periodic review of standards**

The objective of periodic review of documents is their ongoing improvement in the light of new scientific knowledge and practical experience. SFCS shall be periodically reviewed at least every 5 years. On the basis of review results the PEFC Slovakia Council decides on document revision. Reviewed documents shall be submitted to PEFC Council for re-endorsement.

## **8.3 Revision of standards**

A normal revision can occur at the periodic review, or between periodic reviews, but does not include editorial revisions and time-critical revisions.

Editorial revisions can be made without triggering the normal revision process. PEFC SK General Assembly shall approve the editorial changes formally and publish an amendment or a new edition of the standard.

A time-critical revision is a revision between two periodic reviews using a fast-track process. A time-critical revision can be conducted only if there is a change in national laws and regulations affecting compliance with PEFC International requirements or according to instructions by PEFC International to comply with specific or new PEFC requirements within a timescale that is too short for a normal revision.

## **8.5 Transition period**

A revision shall define the application date and transition period of the revised standards. An application date shall not be more than one year after the publication of the standard. This allows time for endorsement of the revised standards, introduction of changes, information dissemination and training.

The transition period shall not exceed one year except of justified exceptional circumstances when a longer period may be determined.

# **9 Forest certification**

Ensuring the non-discrimination, voluntariness, credibility and cost-effectiveness of the process is the mandatory principle of forest certification. Group form of certification is used for forest certification in the Slovak Republic.

All participants in certification shall meet the requirements for certification. The rules and control mechanisms to ensure compliance with the certification criteria shall be demonstrated in the process of PEFC recognition and endorsement and further on it shall be monitored by certification bodies.

Requirements for sustainable forest management shall:

- a) include management and performance requirements that are applicable at the forest management unit level, or at another level as appropriate, to ensure that the intent of all requirements is achieved at the forest management unit level

*Note:* An example of a situation where a requirement can be defined as being at another level is monitoring of forest health. Through monitoring of forest health at group level, and communicating of results at the forest management

level, the objective of the requirement is met without the necessity to carry out the individual monitoring of each forest management unit

- b) be clear, performance based and auditable
- c) apply to activities of all participants in the process in the defined forest area that have an impact on achieving compliance with the requirements
- d) require record-keeping that provides evidence of compliance with the requirements of the forest management standard
- e) specify “100% PEFC certified”, or another system specific claim, as claim to be used to communicate the origin of products in an area covered by the standard to customers with a PEFC chain of custody

*Note:* System specific claims of PEFC endorsed standards and PEFC Council approved abbreviations of such claims and the claim “100% PEFC certified”, and their translations into languages other than English, are published online on the PEFC website [www.pefc.org](http://www.pefc.org).

- f) require that where owners and managers of forests are selling products from areas other than covered by the standard, only products from areas covered by the standard are sold with the claim “100% PEFC-certified” or a system specific claim
- g) require that claims on the origin of products in an area covered by the standard are only made by forest owners and managers covered by a PEFC recognised certificate issued against the standard
- h) specify requirements concerning the information which need to be provided to a PEFC chain of custody certified customer
- i) include an overview of applicable legislation, if requirements of PEFC international benchmark are not reflected in the regional, national or sub-national standard, because they are already addressed through the legislation.

All participants in the certification shall be responsible for ensuring that the activities and operations of contractors comply with the requirements of the certification criteria.

SFCS does not contain criteria for contractors and rules for the participation of contractors in group certification. Contractors shall not be participants in group certification.

## **9.1. Group certification**

Group certification is an alternative approach to forest certification that allows forest owners and managers to be voluntarily certified under a single certificate and share the financial obligations arising from forest certification as well as joint responsibility for forest management.

For the application of the national PEFC sustainable forest management standard (TD SFCS 1003) and its certification, the group forest management certification requires to establish a specific group organization of individual forest owners or managers - participants in certification.

In the certification process they are represented by a group entity that is a group participant or another legal entity representing the participants and authorized by them to submit an application for certification.

The group entity shall have the responsibility for the correct implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and for providing reliability in sampling-based certification activities. It is a holder of the sustainable forest management certificate.

All participants shall have a legal or contractual relationship with the group entity and in the certification process they shall follow a common management system, which is defined and established by the group entity.

Managers may request the group entity to participate in the certification during the validity of the certificate. The condition for concluding a contract on joining the certification shall be successful completion of the initial audit.

All participants in group certification shall comply with the SFCS requirements that is endorsed and mutually recognized by PEFC.

The group entity shall be responsible for ensuring the appropriate registration of individual participants in the certification of sustainable forest management.

## 10 Chain of custody certification

The main objective of the PEFC chain of custody is to ensure customers that forest and tree-based material included in products with PEFC claims are sourced from PEFC certified sustainably managed forests, recycled material and PEFC controlled sources.

PEFC rules for certification and verification of chain of custody are defined in the international PEFC standard PEFC ST 2002:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products - Requirements*. This international standard is a part of SFCS as the technical document TD SFCS 1004:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products - Requirements*. This document covers the requirements that need to be met by an organisation in order to successfully implement a chain of custody for forest and tree based products, and to make PEFC claims to customers on the origin of forest and tree based products in sustainably managed forests, recycled material and PEFC controlled sources. The requirements covered by chain of custody describe the process of classifying forest and tree based products to specific material categories in order to transfer information about the origin of the procured material to the products of the organization. It also defines management system requirements for the implementation and management of the chain of custody process, including social, safety and labour requirements.

## 11 PEFC trademarks

The PEFC trademarks provide information relating to the origin of forest based products in sustainably managed forest and other non-controversial sources. Trademarks information drives purchasers and potential purchasers to choose products based on environmental, as well as other considerations.

The overall goal of the PEFC trademarks usage is, through non-misleading communication of accurate and verifiable information, to encourage demand for and supply of products originating from sustainably managed forests and thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous improvement of the world's forest resources.

The PEFC trademarks are symbols that represent the visual identity of PEFC. There are two PEFC trademarks:

- a) The initials "PEFC"; and
- b) The PEFC logo. It consists of two trees surrounded by an arrow. The PEFC logo shall always be used within the PEFC labels

The PEFC logo and the PEFC initials are copyrighted material and are internationally registered trademarks owned by the PEFC Council.

Illustrative PEFC logo is in figure 11.1.



Figure 11.1 Logo PEFC

The PEFC trademarks shall be used under the authority of a PEFC trademarks usage licence that is issued by the PEFC Council or a PEFC authorised body. The licence shall be obtained through the signature of a licencing agreement (trademarks usage contract) between the organisation applying for trademarks usage and the PEFC Council or a PEFC authorised body. Based on the agreement, PEFC

Slovakia is an authorized body that is authorized by the PEFC Council to issue licenses on behalf of the PEFC Council in the Slovak Republic.

The usage of PEFC logo is defined in the international PEFC standard PEFC ST 2001:2020 *PEFC Trademarks Rules - Requirements*, which is a part of SFCS as the technical document TD SFCS 1007:2020 *PEFC Trademarks Rules - Requirements*.

This document covers the requirements for users of the PEFC trademarks to ensure accurate, verifiable, relevant and non-misleading usage of the PEFC logo, the PEFC initials, related claims and/or declarations. It also defines the legal protection of the PEFC trademarks, rights to use the PEFC trademarks, trademarks usage categories, and the requirements for on and off-product usage of the PEFC trademarks, both technical and graphic.

## **12 Certification procedures**

Certification and audit procedures applied within SFCS are based on the international standard of system management or on product certification.

Rules for certification and competencies of certification bodies operating forest certification are defined in the document TD SFCS 1005:2021 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification*.

Rules for certification procedures and competencies of certification bodies operating chain of custody certification are defined in the international PEFC standard PEFC ST 2003:2020 *Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*. This international standard is a part of SFCS as the technical document TD SFCS 1006:2020 *Requirements for certification bodies operating certification against the PEFC international chain of custody standard*.

Certification bodies are impartial and independent third parties that shall have appropriate technical competence in certification procedures, adequate know-how in forest management and forest products procurement and processing in general, respectively and shall have a good understanding of the certification criteria of national certification system.

When certifying forests, the certification body assess conformity of forest management with the technical document TD SFCS 1002:2021 *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements* and TD SFCS 1003:202 *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements* and issues a certificate after the conformity has been confirmed.

When certifying chain of custody, the certification body assess credibility in tracing the origin of forest based products against the requirements of TD SFCS 1004:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products - Requirements*.

The tasks of the certification body include:

- a) conduction of independent audits
- b) issuance, suspension and withdrawal of certificates referring to the Slovak Forest Certification System (i.e. forest managements and chain of custody) recognised by PEFC Council and information of PEFC Slovakia about them
- c) control of the use of forest management and chain of custody certificates and usage of PEFC trademarks

Certification, surveillance or recertification audits of forest management are conducted according to the technical document TD SFCS 1005:2014 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification*. This document is based on ISO/IEC 17021-1 and defines additional requirements for certification bodies operating forest management certification against the Slovak Forest Certification System.

Certification, surveillance or recertification audits of chain of custody are conducted according to the technical document TD SFCS 1006:2020 *Requirements for certification bodies operating certification against the PEFC international chain of custody standard*. This document provides additional scheme specific requirements for certification bodies operating chain of custody certification against PEFC ST 2002.

## 13 Accreditation and PEFC notification

Only those certificates of forest management and chain of custody are recognised by PEFC Slovakia which are issued by accredited and PEFC notified certification bodies within the scope of accreditation of certification bodies (accredited certification). SFCS requirements for accreditation and PEFC notification of certification bodies are defined in the technical document TD SFCS 1005:2014 *Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification* and in TD SFCS 1006:2020 *Requirements for certification bodies operating certification against the PEFC international chain of custody standard*.

Rules for granting PEFC notification are defined in the normative document ND SFCS 003 *PEFC notification of certification bodies operating forest management and chain of custody certification in the Slovak Republic*.

Forest management certification shall be carried out by certification bodies who are accredited by accreditation bodies that are signatories of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) or IAF's Regional Accreditation Groups. The accreditation body shall be signatories to the IAF MLA with a main scope of ISO/IEC 17021-1. The scope of the accreditation shall explicitly cover technical document TD SFCS 1003:2021 *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements* and TD SFCS 1002:2021 *Group Forest Management Certification - Requirements*, based on PEFC ST 1003 and PEFC ST 1002 in its valid version. The scope of accreditation shall also explicitly state ISO/IEC 17021-1, TD SFCS 1005:2021 and other requirements against which the certification body has been assessed.

Chain of custody certification shall be carried out by certification bodies who are accredited by accreditation bodies that are signatories of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification or IAF's Regional Accreditation Groups. The scope of the accreditation shall explicitly cover TD SFCS 1004:2020 *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements* and TD SFCS 1007:2020 *PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements* that are translations of PEFC ST 2002 and PEFC ST 2001 in its valid version. The scope of accreditation shall also explicitly state ISO/IEC 17065, TD SFCS 1006:2020 (PEFC ST 2003) and other requirements against which the certification body has been assessed.

Accredited forest management and chain of custody certificates shall bear an accreditation mark as prescribed by the relevant accreditation body.

## 14 Appeals, complaints and disputes settlement

Each participant in certification process is entitled to appeals and corresponding process of complaints resolution referring to the certification process.

Rules of the national governing body for procedures of disputes settlement are defined in the document ND SFCS 004 *PEFC Slovakia procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints and appeals*.

PEFC Slovakia has established „Arbitral Committee“, which deals with those complaints that are outside the scope of the respective certification of accreditation body.

Certification body deals with the appeals, complaints and disputes referring to the process of certification and its results within the scope of accreditation.

Relevant accreditation body deals with the appeals, complaints and disputes referring to the accreditation process and fulfilment of accreditation requirements.